

“From Fitness to Footfall: The Role of Physical Education Programs in Advancing Sports Tourism in Laguna, Philippines”

Jose Jerreme L. Marcelo ^a, Wilmar B. Evangelista ^b, Arnel D. Reyes ^c, Gilbert T. Cheng ^d,

Jonalyn, Lebico ^e

^a jjlmarcelo@mcl.edu.ph, ^b evangelistawilmar71@gmail.com, ^c reyesarnel241@gmail.com, ^d gtcheng@mcl.edu.ph, ^e

JonalynLebico15@gmail.com

Mapúa Malayan Colleges Laguna (Mapúa MCL), Pulo-Diezmo Road, Barangay Diezmo, Cabuyao, Laguna, Philippines

Abstract

In the pursuit of regional growth, the province of Laguna has long been recognized as a premier destination for recreation. This study explores the vital synergy between institutional PE programs and regional tourism development. It investigates how grassroots athletic training cultivated within the academic framework transforms into a powerful driver of economic and social activity.

Using a mixed-methods approach, the researchers engaged **300 diverse stakeholders** to map the journey from "fitness to footfall." The findings reveal a "competency-resource paradox": while Laguna boasts exceptional coaching expertise, a critical need for facility modernization persists. Currently, tourism in the province is primarily "delegation-driven," providing a significant **25% revenue boost** for local transport and hospitality sectors. Despite this clear economic impact and a deep sense of community pride (94% agreement), a significant communication gap remains between educational institutions and local government units.

To bridge this divide, the researchers propose a **Collaborative Framework** centered on "Strategic Event Leveraging." By synchronizing school athletic calendars with provincial festivals and establishing shared-use facility agreements, Laguna can evolve into a sustainable, world-class sports tourism hub. Ultimately, this research underscores that investing in Physical Education is not merely an academic mandate but a strategic investment in the province's collective prosperity.

Keywords: Sports Tourism, Physical Education, Economic Impact, Laguna Province, Collaborative Frameworks

1. Introduction

In the evolving landscape of global travel, sports tourism has emerged as a powerhouse for regional economic growth and cultural exchange. While traditionally viewed through the lens of mega-events like the Olympics, contemporary sports tourism is increasingly driven by grassroots participation and regional sporting hubs. In the Philippines, the province of Laguna celebrated as the "Resort Capital" is uniquely positioned to capitalize on this trend due to its diverse natural topography, world-class athletic facilities, and proximity to Metro Manila. However, the sustainability of a sports tourism destination depends not just on infrastructure, but on the cultivation of a local "sports culture." This is where Physical Education (PE) programs play a pivotal role. Beyond the classroom, robust PE curricula act as the primary engine for talent identification, community engagement, and the hosting of local meets (such as the Palarong Pambansa or regional SCUAA meets) that drive significant "footfall" to the province. Despite this connection, there is a scholarly gap in understanding how institutionalized physical education directly feeds the tourism value chain. This research explores the synergy between educational mandates and tourism development, investigating how Laguna's commitment to physical fitness translates into a competitive edge for its tourism sector. The primary goal of this study is to analyze the strategic link between the implementation of Physical Education programs and the growth of sports tourism in Laguna. Specifically, the research aims to:

1. Evaluate the current state of Physical Education programs in selected Laguna institutions in terms of facility quality, coaching expertise, and frequency of inter-school competitions.
2. Identify the key drivers of "footfall" resulting from school-based sporting events, including the influx of athletes, spectators, and support staff.
3. Assess the economic and social impact of PE-driven sporting events on local businesses, particularly in the hospitality and transport sectors of Laguna.
4. Determine the perception of local stakeholders (educators, tourism officers, and business owners) regarding the integration of school sports into the provincial tourism roadmap.
5. Propose a collaborative framework between educational institutions and local government units

(LGUs) to optimize PE programs as a sustainable vehicle for long-term sports tourism development.

1. Methodology

1.1. Research Design

To capture the dynamic link between classroom athletics and regional travel, this study adopts a mixed-methods research design. Think of this as a two-layered approach: first, we use a quantitative lens to gather the "hard facts" through surveys, measuring how the quality of Physical Education programs correlates with the actual number of visitors at sports events in Laguna. This statistical foundation allows us to see the big picture and identify clear patterns between student fitness levels and the province's growing reputation as a competitive sports destination. However, numbers only tell half the story, so we complement this with a qualitative phase to capture the "human" side of the data. Through in-depth interviews with local PE teachers, coaches, and tourism officials, we dive into the personal experiences and local policies that drive these trends. By blending statistical evidence with these real-world narratives, the research design provides a holistic view of how a simple school curriculum can transform into a powerful engine for local tourism and economic growth.

1.2. Research Locale

The researchers have selected the province of Laguna, Philippines, as the primary setting for this study due to its established reputation as a premier athletic and recreational hub. As illustrated in the map, Laguna serves as a vital corridor for sports in the Calabarzon region, housing world-class facilities such as the Laguna Sports Complex. By focusing on this specific locale, the researchers can effectively observe the direct interaction between grassroots physical education and the resulting influx of visitors, as the province's strategic geography and modern infrastructure make it a natural magnet for large-scale athletic gatherings.

Furthermore, the researchers identify Laguna as an ideal laboratory for this study because of its proven track record in hosting major sporting events, including the *Palarong Pampook* and various regional meets. These events generate a significant and measurable "footfall," providing the researchers with a rich environment to analyze how school-based sports

programs feed into the broader tourism economy. By situating the study within a province that actively integrates sports into its local development plan, the researchers aim to provide a comprehensive look at how educational initiatives drive regional travel and economic activity.



Figure 1. Laguna Province Map

1.3. Participants and Sampling

The researchers engaged a diverse group of stakeholders through a purposive sampling method to ensure a comprehensive understanding of Laguna's sports landscape. This approach allowed the researchers to intentionally select participants who were directly immersed in the province's sports ecosystem, including Physical Education (PE) coordinators, local tourism officers, and active student-athletes. By focusing on those who designed the curriculum and those who managed the influx of visitors, the researchers gathered expert perspectives on how classroom training successfully translated into large-scale event participation and regional "footfall." Beyond the administrative level, the researchers also captured the voices of the participants who represented the heart of sports tourism: the athletes and students themselves. This inclusive sampling strategy ensured that the data was not merely a collection of numbers, but a true reflection of the lived experiences of those on the ground. By synthesizing insights from this multi-layered group, the researchers built a holistic picture of how grassroots physical education served as the primary engine for Laguna's reputation as a premier sports destination.

Table 1. Roles of the Respondents

Stakeholder Group	Role in the Study
PE Teachers/Coordinators	Assessed the curriculum and talent identification processes.
Sports Tourism Officers	Provided data on footfall, event frequency, and economic impact.
Athletes/Students	Gauged how PE programs influenced their participation in local sports tourism events.

1.4. Data Collection Instruments

The researchers utilized a tripartite approach to gather evidence. First, **survey questionnaires** featuring a Likert scale were distributed to measure the perceived effectiveness of PE programs and their perceived link to sports tourism. To capture deeper institutional

perspectives, the researchers employed a **semi-structured interview guide**, which allowed provincial administrators to provide qualitative insights into local infrastructure and policy. Finally, the researchers conducted a **documentary analysis**, meticulously reviewing DepEd Laguna PE reports and provincial tourism "footfall" records spanning the last 3–5 years to establish a historical and factual baseline.

1.5. Data Analysis Plan

For the quantitative analysis, the researchers tested the relationship between variables using several statistical tools. A weighted mean was calculated to describe the state of PE programs, while Pearson r Correlation was used to determine the strength of the relationship between program success and tourism growth. To identify which specific factors such as facilities or coaching had the most significant impact on visitor footfall, the researchers applied multiple regression analysis. Simultaneously, the qualitative analysis involved a thematic analysis of interview transcripts. This allowed the researchers to identify recurring patterns and core themes, such as grassroots development and infrastructure synergy.

1.6. Ethical Considerations

Throughout the study, the researchers adhered to strict ethical guidelines to protect all involved parties. **Informed consent** was prioritized, ensuring that all participants, including minors who provided assent, fully understood the study's purpose. To maintain professional integrity, the researchers guaranteed **anonymity** and kept the identities of specific schools and officials confidential. Lastly, the researchers secured all necessary **permit clearances** from the Department of Education (DepEd) Region IV-A and the Provincial Government of Laguna before any data was collected, ensuring the study was fully authorized and compliant with local regulations.

2. Results and Discussion

This section presents the data gathered from 300 stakeholders across the province of Laguna, offering a comprehensive analysis of the intersection between Physical Education (PE) programs and the burgeoning sports tourism sector. By synthesizing quantitative survey results with qualitative insights, the following discussion evaluates the current state of athletic infrastructure, identifies the primary

drivers of visitor "footfall," and measures the socio-economic contributions of school-based sporting events to the local community.

The analysis is grounded in the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Social Exchange Theory (SET), providing a scholarly lens through which to view the transition of school sports from a purely academic requirement to a strategic provincial asset. The findings aim to bridge the gap between educational objectives and local government initiatives, culminating in a proposed framework for sustainable sports tourism development in Laguna.

1. Evaluation of PE Programs (Objective 1.1)

The findings indicate a "competency-resource paradox" within Laguna's educational institutions. While coaching expertise is rated highly, the quality of facilities remains a critical bottleneck. This supports the **Resource-Based View (RBV)**, which suggests that human capital (coaches) requires complementary physical capital (facilities) to achieve competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). In the Philippine context, *Dapiton et al. (2020)* noted that local sports development is often hindered not by a lack of talent, but by "infrastructure fatigue," where aging facilities fail to meet the technological demands of modern athletic training.

Indicator	Mean Score (1.0-5.0)	Interpretation
Coaching Expertise & Certification	4.42	Excellent
Quality of Physical Facilities	2.95	Needs Improvement
Composite Mean	3.61	Good

Table 2. Evaluation of PE Programs

2. Drivers of Footfall in School Sports (Objective 1.2)

The dominance of "Delegation-Driven" footfall (72%) suggests that Laguna's school sports ecosystem currently operates under "**Passive Sports Tourism**" (Gibson, 1998). Because the influx is composed primarily of participants rather than leisure-seeking spectators, the economic impact is stable but limited. *Higham and Hinch (2018)* argue that for small-scale sports events to drive sustainable tourism, they must transition into "Sporting Hallmark Events" that attract non-participant spectators through cultural integration and professional broadcasting.

Driver of Footfall	Response Percentage	Primary Impact Group
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Driver of Footfall	Response Percentage	Primary Impact Group
Large Athlete Delegations	72%	Participant-Based Influx
Casual Tourists/Media	10%	Leisure-Based Influx
Total	100%	

Table 3. Drivers of Footfall in School Sports**3.Economic and Social Impact (Objective 1.3)**

The reported 25% revenue increase in the transport sector aligns with the Economic Multiplier Effect found in regional sports events. *Preuss (2011)* emphasizes that "bottom-up" economic benefits are most pronounced in transit and micro-hospitality during short-duration events. Furthermore, the 94% agreement on "Community Pride" illustrates the Social Exchange Theory (SET), where residents tolerate the inconveniences of tourism (traffic, noise) because they perceive high value in the social prestige and "sense of place" generated by the events (Gursoy & Kendall, 2006).

Impact Sector	Reported Effect	Agreement Rate (%)
Transport Sector	25% Increase in daily earnings	92%
Social Pride	Improved Provincial Identity	94%

Table 4. Drivers of Footfall in School Sports**4. Stakeholder Perception and Tourism Integration (Objective 1.4)**

3. The significant gap between support for integration (4.55) and communication satisfaction (2.15) highlights a failure in **Stakeholder Collaboration Theory**. *Aman et al. (2022)*, in their study of Philippine local governance, found that "administrative silos" between the Department of Education (DepEd) and Local Government Units (LGUs) often result in fragmented tourism products. Stakeholders

in Laguna recognize the potential of sports tourism, but the lack of "lead time" prevents local businesses from optimizing supply chains to meet visitor demand.

Stakeholder Perception Indicator	Mean Score	Interpretation
Readiness for Tourism Integration	4.55	Strongly Agree
Satisfaction with LGU-School Communication	2.15	Disagree

Table 5. Stakeholder Perception and Tourism Integration

5. Collaborative Framework (Objective 1.5)

The prioritization of "Calendar Synchronization" reflects the need for **Strategic Co-branding**. According to *Chalip (2004)*, "event leveraging" occurs when sports are bundled with local festivities to extend the stay of visitors. By integrating PE meets with Laguna's existing festival economy, the province can mitigate the seasonality of sports tourism. This proposed framework aligns with the **National Tourism Development Plan (NTDP) of the Philippines**, which advocates for "convergence" between education, sports, and tourism sectors to create diverse regional attractions.

Framework Component	Priority Ranking	Strategic Focus
Calendar Synchronization	1st	Strategic Event Leveraging
Shared-Facility Usage	2nd	Infrastructure Convergence

Table 6. Collaborative Framework

The Role of Physical Education in Regional Athletic Development

Physical education in the school system is no longer viewed merely as a recreational requirement but as a critical "face of education" that shares the same developmental objectives as general pedagogy (Nijhof & Vinkers, 2018; ResearchGate, 2022). In the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) utilizes PE programs as the primary vehicle for talent identification. Recent studies published on ResearchGate emphasize that primary and secondary PE programs are the "top of the funnel" for the country's sports ecosystem, enabling students to develop the motor skills and discipline required for high-level competition (ResearchGate, 2022). This grassroots development is essential because the long-term success of sports destinations relies on a steady pipeline of local talent who can participate in and draw crowds to regional meets.

Sports Tourism as a Driver for Local Economic Growth

Sports tourism has emerged as a significant strategic tool for economic recovery and destination branding in the Philippines. According to recent findings from the *DigitalOcean* repository (2026), sports tourism in Laguna is increasingly recognized for its ability to foster small business growth and enhance local pride through event-based activities. High-impact regional competitions, such as those held at the Laguna Sports Complex, generate substantial "footfall," which refers to the influx of athletes, coaches, and spectators who contribute to the local economy through spending on accommodation, food, and transport (DigitalOcean, 2026). Furthermore, the Philippine government's Administrative Order No. 38 (2025) recently created the National Sports Tourism Inter-Agency Committee, formally acknowledging that leveraging local sporting events is vital for national economic growth and global profiling.

The Synergy Between "Fitness" and "Footfall"

The conceptual link between school fitness programs and tourism footfall is grounded in the "Experience-Based Tourism" model. Literature from 2020–2025 suggests that modern tourists seek participatory experiences, shifting from passive sightseeing to active engagement in sports like marathons and regional meets (Carvache-Franco, 2021). For a province like Laguna, the integration of school-based athletic training with provincial tourism infrastructure creates a "multiplier effect." Studies suggest that the sustainability of these tourism hubs hinges on "cross-sectoral synergy" between educational actors, local government units (LGUs), and tourism stakeholders (JIME, 2026). When PE

programs effectively identify and train athletes, they provide the "human capital" necessary to sustain the frequency and competitiveness of the events that drive tourism footfall.

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