

## Article

# The Host Community and Its Role in Sports Tourism—Exploring an Emerging Research Field

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**Abstract:** The increase in individual sports activities is stimulating the rise of sport-related forms of vacationing. This is further intensified by tourists seeking authentic experiences in host–guest relations, physical health and well-being, and the consumption of local products and services. Communities, especially those in developing countries, do not yet fully recognize the potential of local sports as a resource and competitive advantage in their destination development. In the same way, tourism research is lacking analyses regarding the role of the community and its specific sports identity. Given this, the present paper aims to systematically review the promising interface between community development and sports tourism. The research questions are based on the potential of identity-based sports and necessary local engagement. These efforts are pursued through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) with 49 articles. The results reveal the thematic clusters, research features, and prevalent challenges and benefits that the community has to deal with. The discussion proposes the utilization of local sports identity in systematic product development and highlights increasing local engagement. In conclusion, we call for future research on non-event-related sports tourism, in-depth case studies, and multi-disciplinary concepts to foster local sustainability.

**Keywords:** local community; sports tourism; community-based tourism; local engagement; local sports identity; systematic literature review

## 1. Introduction and Problem Definition

The COVID-19 pandemic and the related social and physical distancing have disrupted many regular aspects of sport and physical activity. Simultaneously, COVID-19 has amplified trends related to natural awareness, mental- and physical health, and well-being [1]. Moreover, these circumstances have led to a boom in independent sports activities, especially running [2–4]. In combination with changing consumer behavior and a value shift in some societal layers, the potential for sports tourism has emerged. Sports tourism covers more than mega-events (e.g., the Olympic Games), which have been prevalent in impact assessments and created a rather negative image of mega infrastructure projects.

For a long time, sports events were regarded too uncritically, and their value in long-term regional development was not questioned. The involvement of the population in decisions about hosting major sports events, such as the bid for the Olympic Games, has shown an especially strong divergence of local opinions in recent years [5–7].

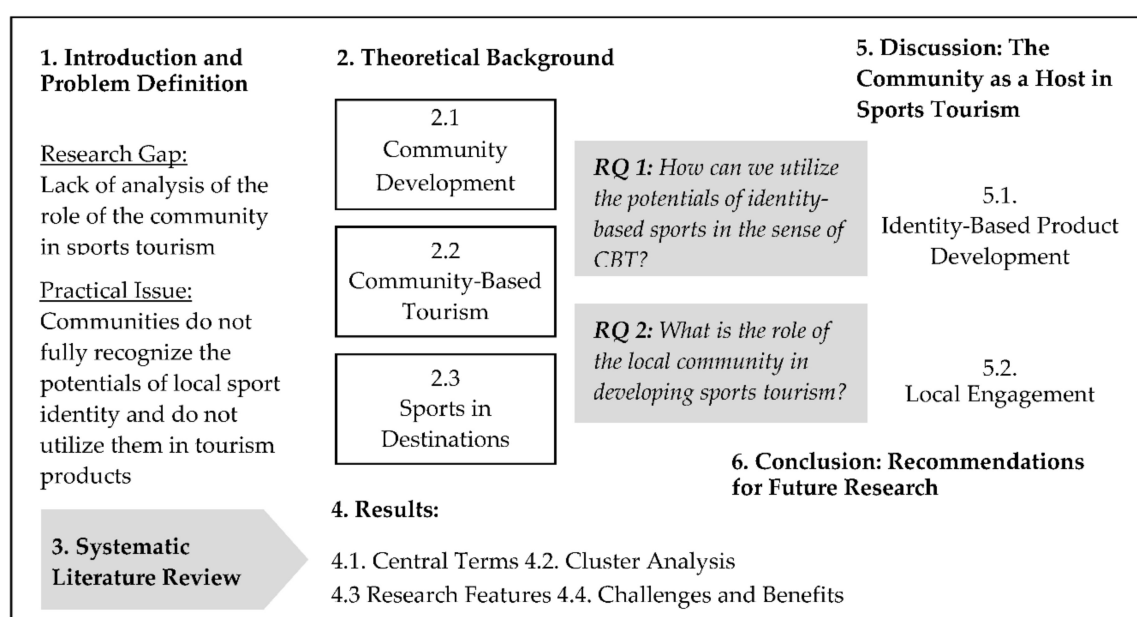
Those factors call for an examination of the extent to which locals can benefit from sports tourism. Indeed, sports have the potential to bring people together worldwide [8,9]. In particular, small-scale events provide an opportunity for close guest–host relationships [10–13]. These relationships can be further supported by more traditional sports activities ranging from those with low infrastructure and equipment requirements, such as running and street soccer, to those with extended requirements, such as skiing, motorsports, or golf.

Such sports are frequently practiced and likely rooted in local identity, thus reflecting a community's image [14,15]. In parts of Northern England and the Ruhr Area, soccer is the primary pace-setting sport and has a multi-dimensional influence on social life [16]. Further examples are ice hockey in Scandinavian countries and Canada [17], skiing in Alpine regions [18], and running in the plateaus of East Africa [19]. These destinations utilize their particular sports traditions in touristic offers that generate local income, jobs, production in value-added stages, and authentic experiences for tourists [20,21].

The worldwide pandemic has shown how sensitive some tourism destinations are to immense transformation processes. In many places, unilateral tourism strategies became fatal for key stakeholders, as well as primarily uninvolved members of the hosting communities. Since the United Nations proclaimed 2017 the international year of sustainable tourism [22], tourism scholars have engaged with several concepts, models, and theories for sustainable tourism development. Reflecting on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals [23], the community gains high importance in self-determined development to meet residents' needs. Transferred to tourism development, this concept means stressing local strengths and minimizing dependencies by gaining management control of touristic products and services. Such aims are widely included in the concepts of Community-Based Tourism (CBT).

The thematic fields of sports tourism and CBT are researched thoroughly throughout the scientific discourse but have only been considered separately so far. Scholars have addressed existing research gaps when exploring the social impacts of sports tourism on host communities [24–27], linking the model of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in sports with community value [28], comparing the roles of multiple stakeholder groups [29], or analyzing sustainable management practices [30]. Thus, “future research needs to integrate aspects of culture, sport and tourism that shape events and their potential to optimize social utility, including synergizing economic and social goals in the context of regional community and sport tourism development” [31] (p. 24). We identified a lack of analysis related to the community's role, with its perception of place and identity, which is significantly influenced by prevalent sports activities, and the resulting potential for alternative tourism product development lead by local stakeholders (Section 2).

Against this background, this study focuses on the following research framework (Figure 1), which involves using a Systematic Literature Review to identify critical issues and combine findings at the interface of community development and sports tourism.



**Figure 1.** Research Framework on the Interface of Sports Tourism and Community Development  
Source: Own elaboration.

## 2. Theoretical Background: Sports Tourism in the Context of Community Development

This study builds upon three mutually dependent fields of interest related to local sports tourism: *Community*, *Tourism*, and *Sports*. In our understanding, Tourism, among other things, acts as a tool for economic value creation, which positively impacts the host community under suitable conditions. We observe the community at the local level and discuss the production of place identity and its influence on the existence of historically predominant sports activities [32]. These sports activities form the basis for alternative tourism product development, which again affects the local community. In this triangle of key concepts, we identified local sports tourism as a connecting element, which also serves the normative idea of sustainable destination development. The formulated research questions (RQs) address the potential in utilizing sports activities with strong identity-forming characteristics for CBT (RQ 1). In this way, we explore the community and the role of its members in developing products and services for sports tourism (RQ 2).

### 2.1. Community and Community Development

Community development entails a normative perspective, which requires operationalization and concretization. To ensure a close link to community development, the scope of the term “community” needs to be defined first. According to Billings (2000) [33], a community can refer to those in the same geographical area, those who share similar interests, a feeling of belonging, shared cultural and ethnic values, or even a shared way of life. For the present study, we use the definition proposed by Matarrita-Cascante and Brennan (2012) [34], wherein a community is “*a locality comprised by people residing in a geographical area; the resources such people require to subsist and progress; and the processes in which such individuals engage to distribute and exchange such resources to fulfill local needs and wants*” (p. 295). Broader structural or economic changes and trends often call for the ongoing development of communities [35]. Since the 1960s, community development has evolved from being centered around economic needs to more modern and more holistic approaches that include a variety of economic, cultural, social, and environmental aspects [36]. Multiple actors are involved in community development, such as governments, banks, private corporations, city councils, intermediaries, foundations, community development corporations, existing local businesses, and residents [37]. In terms of sustainability, well-developed communities are more likely to succeed in sustainable economic growth [38].

There are various forms of community development. As proposed by Frisch and Servon (2006) [37], communities may build their development around four trends: asset (or resource)-based trends, which means to build up assets that already exist; market-oriented trends, which refers to business development and local needs; social capital-oriented trends, which means to support the production and provision of information; or faith-based trends. The common focus of these approaches is to merge and build resources to improve the quality and well-being of the residents [35].

### 2.2. Community-Based Tourism as a Development Approach

Within the abovementioned resource-based or market-oriented development forms, tourism is often perceived as a tool to achieve community development through either a community model or a corporate model [39]. A key success factor involves integrating the corporate model into a community-based development approach [40]. The community model comprises numerous individual tourism operators—mostly family-run businesses—and builds upon a consensus-based coordination system and a negotiated strategy or vision instead of top-down authorities and control systems [39,41]. This model can strengthen the ability of local identity and the cautious use of natural resources and mutual trust to reach a consensus in decision-making. However, a short-term strategic perspective and organizational barriers may prevent innovation [42]. Due to societal changes, the increasing relevance of sustainability and tourism-specific challenges (e.g., overtourism), alternative tourism forms that fulfil tourists’ need for authentic experiences are increasingly important [43]. Alternative tourism may

also support the broader development goals of a community by promoting participation alongside cultural and environmental considerations [36,44]. Popular forms of alternative tourism are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Alternative Forms of Tourism.

Form	Characteristics	Problems/Issues
Responsible tourism	Close relationship to the environment, economy, culture, and society Economic benefits for locals Enhances well-being	Establishing control and management frameworks for external corporations in terms of social justice
Ecotourism	Conserving the environment, sustaining the well-being of locals	Upgrading the local contribution and benefits in opposition to external operators and market players
Fair trade tourism	Building sustainable supply chains and distributing benefits fairly	Actors from developed countries may leverage control over developing ones Control of licensing remains external
Pro-poor-tourism	Increasing benefits for the poor Contributing to poverty reduction by unlocking opportunities	Partially used as an instrument for capitalist penetration due to international cooperation
Community-based tourism	Local ownership/management of tourism products	Possible lack of local skills/capabilities and risk of conflicts due to missing coordination system

Source: Own illustration based on Giampiccoli and Saayman (2014) [36].

Wandera et al. (2016) [45] highlighted the importance of involving residents and considering their needs in the decision-making and execution processes of community development. Therefore, the focus of this paper lies in community-based tourism (CBT). In contrast to the former concepts, CBT uses a bottom-up approach to minimize leakages of power and capital and, thus, ensures that the control, management, and revenues of tourism predominantly stay within the community. Consequently, CBT may help break dependence from external or even foreign corporations [46–48]. This is in line with Okazaki (2008), who depicts CBT as predominantly encompassing “community participation, including the ‘ladder of citizen participation’, power redistribution, collaboration processes and social capital creation” [49] (p. 512). According to Giampiccoli et al. (2016), there are three CBT models: (1) A single, community-owned structure that is owned and managed by community members; (2) multiple micro and small enterprises under a common organizational umbrella, which are owned and managed by community members; and (3) a joint venture or partnership between the community and some of its members and business partners [48]. Through each of these models, benefits can be distributed more equally among community members or even give them access to a permanent livelihood alternative while ensuring sustainable development and protection of the economy, society, and the environment [50].

In terms of socio-economics, CBT can contribute significantly to an increase in personal income [51] and hence living standards [52]. On a societal level, this can overcome the cultural disruption of tourism [53], strengthen local families, and counteract the exodus of labor and capital [54]. Together, the aforementioned impacts, as well as the tourists themselves, can support the diversification of local businesses and economies by, e.g., providing a complementary source of income beyond traditional activities, facilitating a broader local supply chain, and inspiring the formation of new businesses that meet tourists’ needs [47,55].

However, developing a community through CBT also entails risks. First and foremost, community members, specifically residents, need to show a willingness to be involved in and shape community development actively by taking over responsibilities and working packages [56]. As Reggers et al. (2016) [57] demonstrated with direct reference to tourism destinations, the community might be heavily dependent on seasonality or tourist demands. In addition, many communities lack appropriate

infrastructure, expertise, or financial conditions to execute CBT projects successfully [58]. There is also great internal risk of conflicts arising from differing interests or perceptions [49]. These barriers may be redressed with little effort, whereas issues like local and regional infrastructure [59], the competitive nature of tourism [60], and social, political, and economic structures [61] may restrict community participation beyond reach. To address the aforementioned obstacles, CBT participants need adequate skills and education [62] and may consider collaborations with domestic or international tourism operators to gain access to markets and market-ready products [50]. These risks require further research on community involvement in general, specifically as they relate to the example of sports tourism. Current research on sports tourism only roughly applies the bottom-up approach with a high degree of community involvement [63–66].

Therefore, CBT can manifest in various touristic components, such as demonstrating cultural traditions and guided tours (e.g., sightseeing or hiking). Sports activities, moreover, offer the potential for guests to interact with residents and require co-creation.

### 2.3. Sports Tourism and Its Relevance for Local Development

Scholars have characterized the development of sports as a tourism phenomenon according to various contemporary trends, including expanding demography, health orientations, demands for active engagement during holidays, and growing interest in sports events [67]. The different research strands and classifications of sports tourism were recently framed by the ‘Sport Tourism Cube’ [68]. In that model, Schlemmer et al. (2020) defined sport tourism as “*all travel-related activities of single persons or groups leaving their place of residence with a view to participating in sports events (professional and recreational) or in activities not related to sports events, to practising sports (physical activity) out of the home range or personally assisting and supporting athletes in their competition or training activities*” [68]. Emphasizing a stronger spatial context, sports tourism on the supply side incorporates various stakeholders and fosters local economic development, social-cultural exchange, and interactions [66,69,70]. Outside of this spectrum, recent studies have discussed the impacts of community sports hubs as a resource for urban regeneration [71], called for a necessary distinction and integration of sport and event tourism [68], or emphasized the growing interest in outdoor and adventure sports systems [69,72–75].

Examining sports at the local scale reveals different areas of action, as well as economic, social, and environmental impacts in their respective areas [76]. By hosting events, sports become monetized and may result in direct economic benefits [77]. However, studies also outline negative economic consequences of sports events on the hosting community, such as excessive costs exceeding revenues [78,79]. Apart from that, value creation resulting from actively practicing sports can be achieved through operating specific infrastructures or facilities (skiing lifts [80], swimming pools [81], race tracks [82], etc.), the organization of guided tours (canyoning [83], climbing [84], cycling [85], etc.), and the hospitality of athletes [86]. Sightseeing tours in stadiums or other sports facilities are another way to monetarize passive sport-related activities apart from hosting events [87]. These examples create a variety of potentials for touristic valorization based on local peculiarities. Tourism is also considered an expression of identity for a geographical region or social entity and impacts residents’ lives [42].

Furthermore, sports activities in an area are always linked to the local identity of that area’s residents. Sport serves as a vehicle for identity formation and consolidation in a region or place [88]. It is an expression of passion and a platform for emotions. People often identify themselves specifically with a particular sport that is primarily practiced or pursued locally. Local residents practice sports activities themselves and participate actively or passively in sporting events. This means that each sport has high value in its host society [89]. The affinity for specific types of sports varies throughout different regions. This affinity can be based on the degree of popularity, costs to practice, barriers to entry (e.g., infrastructure, resources, and equipment), or required skills. As a common feature of these examples, sport has a high degree of influence on certain public areas of life.

When marketing sports—either for local target groups or foreign visitors—certain categories of sports find their way into marketing. The “Global Association of International Sports Federations



(GAISF)“ distinguishes five general categories of sports activities: primarily physical (e.g., ball games and athletics); primarily mental (e.g., chess); primarily motorized (e.g., car racing); primarily coordination-based (e.g., billiards), and primarily animal-supported (e.g., horseracing) [90].

The segment of primarily physical activities can be practiced throughout all types of destinations. For example, mountain regions like the “Zillertal”, a valley within the Tyrolean Alps, intensively promote outdoor activities such as hiking, mountain biking, and skiing [91]. Coastal destinations like “Nazaré” in Portugal are famous for their giant waves that attract surfers worldwide [92]. Destinations specializing in other sports segments include the South Pacific islands (e.g., Cook Islands, American Samoa, Fiji, etc.). In those places, fishing as a form of animal-supported sport is an important tourism product and is promoted as such [93–96]. Rural regions like the Ardennes in Belgium and the Eifel in Germany are famous for motorized sport-related products such as race-weekends and individual test drives (or authentic racing experiences) on well-known race tracks such as the “Spa Francorchamps” and “Nürburgring Nordschleife” [97–99].

Aside from the abovementioned classification of sports activities, Mitchell et al. [100] (p. 866) proposed a different classification (Figure 2). The authors distinguished between the dynamic and static components of the exercises. Furthermore, a distinction was made regarding the intensity level (low, medium, or high) of dynamic and static activities. This classification also highlighted sports that have an increased risk of injury from physical contact with a teammate or opponent or an increased risk of circulatory problems.

	A. Low Dynamic	B. Moderate Dynamic	C. High Dynamic
<b>I. Low Static</b>	Billiards, Bowling, Cricket, Curling, Golf, Riflery	Baseball, Softball, Table tennis, Tennis (doubles), Volleyball	Badminton, Cross-country skiing (classic technique), Field hockey*, Orienteering, Race walking, Racquetball, Running (long distance), Soccer*, Squash, Tennis (singles)
<b>II. Moderate Static</b>	Archery, Auto racing*†, Diving*†, Equestrian*†,	Fencing, Field events (jumping), Figure skating*, Football (American)*, Rodeoing*†, Rugby*, Running (sprint), Surfing*†, Synchronized swimming†	Basketball*, Ice hockey*, Cross-country skiing (skating technique), Football (Australian rules)*, Lacrosse*, Running (middle distance), Swimming, Team handball
<b>III. High Static</b>	Bobsledding*†, Field events (throwing), Gymnastics*†, Karate/judo*, Luge*†, Sailing, Rock climbing*†, Waterskiing*†, Weightlifting*†, Windsurfing*†	Body building*†, Downhill skiing*†, Wrestling*	Boxing*, Canoeing/kayaking, Cycling*†, Decathlon, Rowing, Speed skating

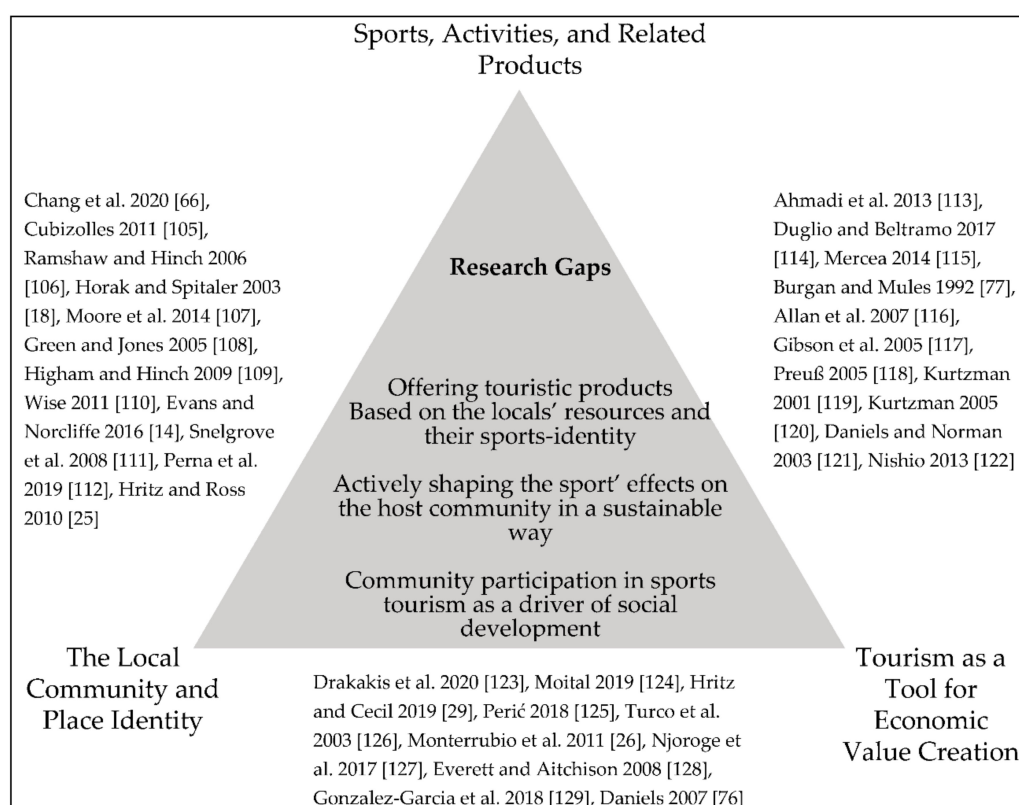
**Figure 2.** Classification of Sports Activities. \* Danger of bodily collision. † Increased risk of syncope. Source: own illustration after Mitchell et al. (1994) [100].

The classification system provides tourism managers a framework for approaching specific target groups and evaluating current tourism products and services based on their suitability or directing the view towards new market potentials. Destinations with good infrastructural connections and a higher average age of travellers focus more on sector ‘IA’ (e.g., golf resorts), whereas rural tourism regions with difficult access (e.g., high mountain areas) and higher numbers of young tourists promote sports activities from sector ‘IC–IIIC’ (e.g., running, cycling, and skiing). However, this strict classification is blurred due to emerging trends in lifestyles and technologies. With the rise of the e-bike sector, for instance, the older generation of guests now participates in very dynamic sports activities.

## 2.4. Deriving a Conceptual Framework for Local Sports Tourism

Summarizing the theoretical discussion of the initially suggested triangle between sports, community, and tourism, this study enhances current research in sports tourism in pursuit of sustainably embedded local sports tourism. Figure 3 illustrates this model and the specific research gaps detected. For example, the relation on the left hand between sports and the community has been researched frequently with a focus on the impact of sports activities on the local place, without referring directly to tourism issues. In addition, the interface of sports and tourism for economic development has been primarily event-driven and seldom embedded in the local place. Finally, CBT at the bottom of Figure 3 can be seen as a strategic instrument to minimize the leakage of power and revenue and increase communities' benefits. We assume that sports tourism provides promising linkages to CBT and the potential for touristic products. Both elements—CBT and sports—rely heavily on the participation and involvement of stakeholders. Another success factor for sustainable development in the context of CBT is the definition of common values within the community.

In this context, sport serves as a common identity consensus that bundles emotions and passions. Regions often identify strongly with a particular sport, which allows tourism products and services in this area to be delivered authentically [101]. In this setting, we identified a gap in a way that sports activities are a resource for offering authentic touristic products [102]. This is reinforced by a lack of considering active sports as an influencing factor of local identity building [103]. Moreover, we propose a need to actively shape the sports' impacts on the host community, especially in developing countries, in a sustainable way. One approach to meet this endeavor and act as a driver for social development is community participation [104].



**Figure 3.** Research Gaps within the sport-tourism-community triangle. Source: own elaboration [14,18,25,26,29,66,76,77,105–129].

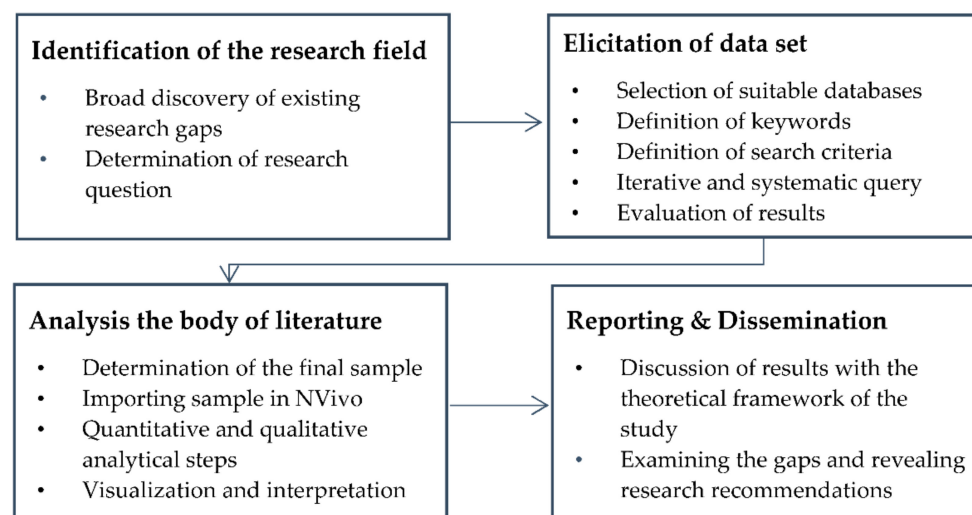
### 3. Methodology: Systematic Literature Review

The previous considerations have provided a theoretical basis for the underlying interface between the host community and sports tourism. The underestimated role of the local community in sports tourism literature requires an overview of the research characteristics at this interface. This can be achieved through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR). The reasons for conducting an SLR are twofold: First, there are many research articles on sports tourism, which remain unsorted for the area of community involvement. Furthermore, to “avoid research biases or missing essential information” (Concari et al. 2020) [130], the SLR provides a transparent and repeatable method to collect and analyze a broad base of research papers [131].

Second, the SLR can identify certain aspects within studies (i.e., the challenges of sport tourism in local development) upon which future research agendas may be based.

Literature reviews often fill an urgently needed research gap between a high quantity of studies within a topic spectrum and the demand for a condensed and critical discussion within one article [132]. The systematic searching scheme is aligned with this goal. A literature review is a process of collecting, summarizing, and critically reviewing previous research to answer specific research questions by means of pre-defined criteria for the selection of documents [133,134]. SLRs differ from traditional narrative reviews as they generate an objective, replicable, and comprehensible coverage of a pre-defined set of topics [135]. For this purpose, an SLR uses scientific articles selected according to explicit and reproducible criteria [136].

So far, SLRs in the field of sport tourism have focused on this field’s combination with sustainability issues [137–139], mobile technologies [140], and services [141] or engaged with a general knowledge agenda [142–144]. Multiple studies in tourism research conducting an SLR have followed various approaches; however, the basic content stays the same [145–152]. This paper uses a four-step approach (Figure 4). The current SLR aims to identify the existing body of knowledge that discusses and applies aspects of sports tourism in the context of community development.



**Figure 4.** Procedure of Systematic Literature Analyses. Source: Own elaboration based on Martin and Assenov (2012), Welty Peachey et al. (2019), and Thees et al. 2020 [139,153,154].

The theoretical framework provides the basis for determining appropriate keywords for the search query. Referring to the interfaces between community development and sports tourism, relevant keyword combinations using the Boolean operator ‘AND’ for the search operations were identified:

- ‘Tourism’ AND ‘Community’ AND ‘Sport’
- ‘Tourism’ AND ‘Development’ AND ‘Sport’
- ‘Destination’ AND ‘Sport’ AND ‘Tourism’.



We then defined a broad spectrum of scientific databases according to their scope of literature in the humanities to search for promising and diverse publications to obtain a preliminary overview of the available literature (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Quantity of hits after first search query without any filter criteria.

Database	Science-Direct	CAB International	Taylor and Francis Online	Web of Science	ECONLit	SURF	MDPI	SAGE Journals
Tourism AND Community AND Sport	8.862	1.443	28.410	269	1.940	45	638	7.738
Tourism AND Development AND Sport	11.662	2.839	38.190	551	7.824	347	843	10.343
Destination AND Sport AND Tourism	5.708	1.601	14.834	404	3.201	76	399	4026

Source: Own elaboration; last checked 2 December 2020; overlaps between the platforms are possible.

Due the immense quantity of articles, the systematic query proceeded with strict adherence to the search criteria and focused only on English-language journal articles from the last 10 years; further contributions were not considered (e.g., books, chapters, and conference papers). To develop an in-depth and qualitative SLR, we further applied a filter to relevant keywords in the article titles [143]. This criterion for inclusion refers to the determined field of research definition by the authors of the corresponding studies and should provide a comprehensible inclusion criterion for this analysis. Based on these strict search criteria, the SLR was limited step-by-step to a total of 49 articles as the final sample for further investigation (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Distribution of Publishing Dates.

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Quantity of publications	3	4	-	6	3	4	6	5	4	8	6

Source: Own elaboration.

Among the scientific journals represented, broad diversity can be observed. Analysis of the distribution of relevant journals also shows high heterogeneity. The ‘Journal of Sport and Tourism’ (8) appears the most frequently, followed by ‘Sustainability’ (4) and the ‘Journal of Convention and Event Tourism’ (3). On closer examination, the journals are rooted in tourism research, sports and health, environmental studies, or additional humanities. This shows that the understanding of sports as a development tool is not yet well established. For the in-depth analysis of the selected research articles, the NVivo software [155] was used to manage and visualize the data using descriptive and interpretative methods. NVivo is a set of tools that helps researchers analyze complex qualitative data [110], consisting of thematic clusters, coding, word frequency queries, and cross tables [156–160].

#### 4. Results: Framing the Research Field

The SLR identified a broad spectrum of interrelated issues within multi-dimensional themes, stressing the interfaces between sport, events, (sustainable) tourism development, and aspects of the hosting community. We conducted an iterative four-step-approach in NVivo to provide an overview of the examined research articles’ content. The subsequent presentation of the SLR results follows the idea of developing insights at different levels that emerge from a broad overview of central terms over thematic clusters to identify particular characteristics of research articles. The final section displays the related challenges and benefits.

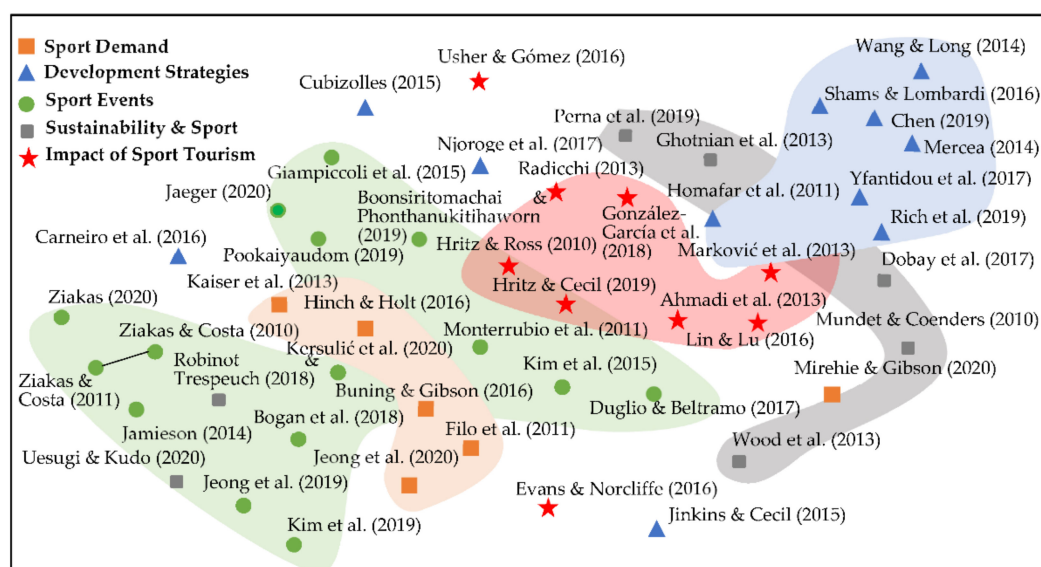


and sports industries with the resulting coupling mechanism [165] and strategies for sport tourism enterprises in fostering sustainable tourism development paths [30,166].

Research articles in the field of **Sport Events** contain, to a considerable extent, discussions on multi-dimensional impacts and sustainable development models for both the host community [24,26,114,167–169] and the destination itself [138], which demonstrates a close linkage between the proposed clusters. Thus, the community participation aspects in the creation, realization, and preservation of events [92], as well as the promotion of public private partnerships in sport tourism-related businesses, create socio-economic value for participant stakeholders in a destination [170].

Themes related to current climate change issues, such as environmental protection [94,95], are bundled within the **Sustainability and Sport** cluster. Enriched by works on the pro-environment behavior of outdoor sports tourists [74], eco-friendly green events [171], and knowledge creation for sustainable tourism products [172,173], this cluster is highly related to the ecological aspects of sustainability. Socio-cultural and economic issues are frequently discussed within papers featuring a research focus on tourism supply and demand.

The **Impact of Sport Tourism** cluster is a bundle of three research streams. Such studies observe the social interactions and reflect upon the synergies between local and foreign active sport tourism within a specific destination setting and its socio-economic environment [102,174]. Impact evaluation in the tourism destination space, in general, plays a crucial role, and is performed based on the perspectives of sport tourism among local residents [6,102,103] or done to recommend possible reductions in the negative aspects generated by sports tourism [175]. The impact of sport and tourism in one's home town has also been examined using residents' perceptions [16,115].



**Figure 6.** Thematic Clusters of Research Articles. Source: Own elaboration using NVivo©.

#### 4.3. Research Features of Articles

The third approach to paper-based features delivers lists of applied theories, concepts, and methods to address specific research targets (Table 4). According to the collection in Table 4, the reviewed articles frequently aim to contribute to an impact assessment of events and the derivation of development strategies, whereas evaluating specific stakeholder groups is of secondary interest. Worth mentioning are the first studies on the perception of place, which provide a reference for the host community. The related methodologies show a strong polarization between either qualitative research design, by conducting interviews or ethnographic methods, or quantitative operations, by using standardized questionnaires in large-scale surveys. Quantitative elaborations seem especially necessary because the impact assessment of events acts as a specific instrument in sports tourism. In opposition, qualitative

research focuses on knowledge creation in sustainable development models and the identification of residents' perceptions of sports tourism. Theoretical frameworks largely tackle elements from the social and psychological sciences or concepts of the leisure- and tourism-based literature. In light of this SLR, the applied concepts of CBT, localism, community participation, and sports-for-development are essential. A decisive gap appears in the combination and integration of such concepts.

**Table 4.** Theories, Concepts, Research Aims, and Methods.

Theories & Concepts	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leisure constraint theory [176]</li> <li>Serious leisure [164]</li> <li>Destination involvement [177]</li> <li>Destination marketing [170]</li> <li>Travel careers [164]</li> <li>Consumer behavior [112]</li> <li>Sport event models: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Event travel careers [114,164]</li> <li>Event portfolio [31,168,178]</li> <li>Active sport event travel career (ASETC) [164]</li> </ul> </li> <li>Active Sport Tourism [114,162,164]</li> <li>Management theories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service-/value chain design, resource-based view [30,179]</li> <li>Sponsoring [171]</li> <li>Relationship marketing [170]</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Localism [174]</li> <li>Globalization and glocalization [14]</li> <li>Place identity, attachment, and production [14,74,161,180]</li> <li>Coupling development [165]</li> <li>Social cohesion [24,30,181]</li> <li>Social Exchange Theory [25]</li> <li>Sport-for-development [181,182]</li> <li>Sustainable development [30,63,74,102,138,166,171–173,175,183,184]</li> <li>Community-based tourism [185]</li> <li>Community participation and engagement [15,24,63,186]</li> <li>Resident's perception [25,26,29,127,129,169]</li> <li>Lifestyle entrepreneurs [187]</li> <li>Experiential learning [15]</li> </ul>
Aim of the study	Methods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identification of development mechanism [115,165,176,181]</li> <li>Evaluation of the need of theoretical knowledge in the practical work of tourism decision-makers [179]</li> <li>Identification of the benefits for stakeholders [127,171]</li> <li>Impact assessment of sport tourism events on hosting destination [24–26,63,64,113,114,138,167,169,175,177,184,188,189]</li> <li>Exploration of demands from active sport tourists [162–164]</li> <li>Understanding of place from the visitor and resident perspective [14,161,174,180]</li> <li>Recommendations for development strategies [30,31,102,166,168,170,176,178,183,185–187,190]</li> <li>Quantification analysis [112]</li> <li>Relationship analysis between activities and individuals [74,174]</li> <li>Knowledge creation [29,172]</li> <li>Assessment of strengths and weaknesses [173]</li> <li>Alignment of theoretical model with practical case [15]</li> <li>Comparative analysis [182]</li> <li>Exploration of perceptions [29]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with qualitative data assessment [14,30,127,161,171,176,179,186,187]</li> <li>Quantitative interview analysis [113]</li> <li>Ethnographic approach [14,31,115,168,174,186]</li> <li>Photo elicitation [161]</li> <li>Focus groups [24,127]</li> <li>Netnography [171]</li> <li>Case study [15,170,181]</li> <li>Literature review [64,102,138,172,175,178,185]</li> <li>Questionnaire survey with quantitative operations [26,29,63,112,114,129,162,164,166,169,173,177,180,182,184,189]</li> <li>Quantitative data analysis based on existing data sets [165,167]</li> <li>Descriptive-analytical study [167,183,190]</li> <li>Questionnaire survey of qualitative data [25,74]</li> <li>Mixed-method approach [24,163,171]</li> </ul>

Source: Own elaboration.

#### 4.4. Challenges and Benefits of Sports Tourism in/for Local Communities

This section aims to identify and systemize statements from the reviewed articles according to challenges and benefits in sports tourism (Table 5). The contradictions in the potential of sports tourism are remarkable. Sports tourism is said to be underestimated for its local economic effects, while at the same time, its multiplier effects are stressed. However, there is a practical problem in communicating the relevance of sports tourism and its specific requirements. Beyond that, sports tourism seems to fail in promoting as many effects for the local community as called for by the usage of resources, which leads to environmental degradation or neglecting residents' interests.

Table 5. Challenges and Benefits.

Statements	Key Issues
<p><b>Challenges and Risks</b></p> <p>“[ ... ] the perceived benefits and drawbacks of sport tourism are not experienced evenly across small business owners.” [29] (p. 13)</p> <p>“Sports tourism makes sports more expensive for residents.” [129] (p. 151)</p> <p>“Sport tourism has resulted in traffic congestion, noise and pollution. [ ... ] Construction of sport tourist facilities has destroyed the natural environment.” [25] (p. 127)</p> <p>“Majority of local residents may find their participation in event planning irrelevant in influencing sports events tourism development.” [63] (p. 11)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Underestimation of sport tourism as a source of employment [182]</li> <li>• Balancing employment opportunities for local and foreign people [127,129,181]</li> <li>• Fair distribution of positive and negative impacts on local stakeholders [25,29,127,129]</li> <li>• Limitations in joint planning and decision-making between stakeholders [63]</li> <li>• Lack of community involvement [169]</li> <li>• Deflagration of residents’ participation effects [63]</li> <li>• Communicating the relationship between impact costs and willingness-to-pay for benefits generated on behalf of the residents [184]</li> <li>• Perceived place-image in relation to the behavior of the wider community and host community [138]</li> <li>• Preservation of local identities, cultural activities, and demands of residents [14,129]</li> <li>• Suitable marketing and promotion strategies [102]</li> <li>• Setting sustainable-oriented objectives [161]</li> <li>• Seasonality of specific sports [25]</li> <li>• Leakages with outside businesses [29]</li> <li>• Intensive use of natural resources by tourists [175]</li> <li>• Environmental impacts on local ecosystems and natural protection areas [63,129]</li> <li>• Economic costs for public bodies [127,129]</li> <li>• Polarization of economic benefits to small group of people instead of multiplier effects [114]</li> <li>• Infrastructure capacity issues [127,129,169]</li> <li>• Price increases of local goods and services [129]</li> <li>• Overcrowding [25,129]</li> <li>• Security issues (i.e., crime rate, terrorism) [127,129,169]</li> <li>• Neglecting alternative tourism attractions [25,29]</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities and Benefits</b></p> <p>“Sports tourism helps keep culture alive and helps maintain the ethnic identity of local residents.” [129] (p. 152)</p> <p>“Community support [ ... ] leads to the success of tourism in the destination.” [25] (p. 134)</p> <p>“Sport and tourism can play a major role in the bringing together of communities” [24] (p. 58)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Place-identity and place-pride enhancement [25,63,129]</li> <li>• Superior image of sport as a type of tourism in comparison to other forms of tourism (i.e., party- or sex-tourism) [129]</li> <li>• Community engagement and involvement [63]</li> <li>• Overall increase in quality of life [24]</li> <li>• Local business development [63,102]</li> <li>• Attracting investments in the community [129]</li> <li>• Multiplier-effects and diversification of tourism offers [29,102,114,129]</li> <li>• Year-around employment opportunities [25,64,114,182]</li> <li>• Creation of multi-level exchange between individuals and groups (i.e., traditions, cultures, heritage) [24,25,127,129]</li> <li>• Enhanced decisiveness for maintaining public facilities [25,63,129,169,184]</li> <li>• Financial and economic benefits for host community [25,63,129]</li> <li>• Eco-friendly (nature-based) sports create fewer environmental impacts and protect the ecosystem [102,114,185]</li> <li>• Promotion of non-sport-related attractions and activities [25,129]</li> <li>• Building strong bonds of costumers loyalty [114]</li> </ul>

Source: Own elaboration.

Against this background, several statements on the opportunities of sports tourism address these challenges by highlighting local business development, the joint interests of residents and tourists, and non-event-related sports. The latter especially opposes expensive and temporary mega-events with high infrastructural investments and calls for alternative sports activities that suit local sustainability.

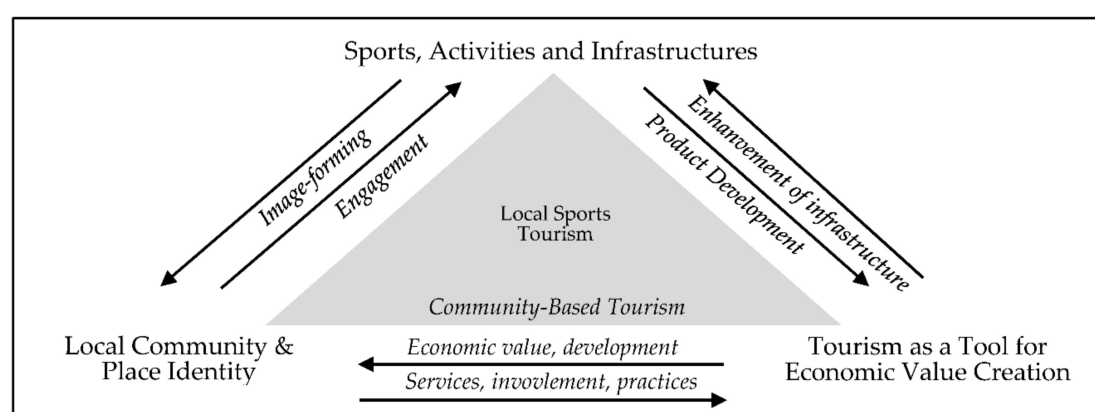
In summary, the SLR illustrates the linkage between sports tourism and the local community through central terms (Section 4.1), thematic clusters (Section 4.2), research features (Section 4.3), and benefits and challenges (Section 4.4). In this setting, the SLR reveals and collects the few researched



approaches related to the communities' roles. With these results, the SLR also contributes to highlighting the elements that remain under-researched, such as qualitative research, the preservation of identity, and guests–hosts interactions, along with sports tourism.

## 5. Discussion: The Community as a Host in Sports Tourism

Against the background of the challenges and benefits of sports tourism as an instrument for community development, it is important to focus on the local community and the role of sustainable development. Beyond the prevalence of research on sports events, we assume that community involvement and sustainability are valid principles for various sports tourism configurations. Figure 7 illustrates the expansion of the theoretical framework. The bottom of the triangle in Figure 7 refers to the well-researched approach of utilizing the effects of tourism by focusing on the communities' needs and empowering the community in its tourism development. In this way, the results of the SLR highlight the relevance of sports tourism with its various economic benefits but fail to discuss the role of the local community as a supporter, as a carrier of identity, and as a recipient of unintentional externalities. Based on the SLR, we further discuss the concrete support and engagement of the locals (Section 5.2). By recognizing existing practices in sports and established products, such as events or related infrastructures, it becomes a task of destination development to transfer these factors into touristic products (Section 5.1). Although this paper focusses on CBT, well-established concepts of destination development [102] remain valid, such as network governance [191], regional development [192], collaborative economy [193], and competitiveness [194], and need to be implemented according to the different development statuses of destinations. Sports Tourism needs to be broadened from its original definition (Section 2.3), emphasizing the categorization of event-relatedness, the type of physical involvement, the level of sport engagement, and a factor for economic value creation, in pursuit of a bottom-up process that increases the level of residents' involvement and meets the requirements of CBT. This could further promote the mutual relationship between the host community and its sports-identity and touristic products.



**Figure 7.** Addressing the interfaces within the sports-community-tourism triangle. Source: Own elaboration.

### 5.1. Approaching Identity-Based Product Development

Reflecting on the recent discourse of sports events, researchers identified various positive and negative effects on host communities' economic, social, and environmental dimensions [26,138]. However, calls have been made to critically emphasize increasing environmental awareness among marketers, tourists, and local residents [74]. A critical and fruitful dispute with sports tourism is necessary through sustainability challenges, which includes setting standards for [94], monitoring, and evaluating [81] the impacts of events and sports infrastructure. Such an assessment should follow the ideas of sustainable development or, more specifically, community development concerning long-term

effects, as “[...] sport has become a phenomenon of large dimensions and it is an important resource for the development of a local context” [102] (p. 44).

Moreover, sports tourism’s sustainability relies on the local degree of development, the number of tourists, the community size, and touristic development [138]. Popular and well-developed destinations might already be equipped with several service providers that also offer the necessary quality of transport, accommodations, leisure, or gastronomy infrastructure to host sports tourists [138,167]. Building upon that concept, the degree of the necessary infrastructure for particular sports activities significantly determine the environmental impact of those activities [102]. Here, the literature especially stresses the positive impact of small-scale events on economic and social sustainability by utilizing direct and indirect impacts on the community [114]. Even activities without comprehensive infrastructure requirements, such as running, can positively serve local economies [195] and benefit from intact natural surroundings [196].

Here, our research paper aims to summarize the potential benefits in community-based tourism by recognizing the need for a local discussion of sports tourism (RQ 1). As such, we perceive sports as a cultural phenomenon that relies on a kind of sports identity that, in turn, manifests in regional-specific sports activities [25] (Section 2.3).

A success factor of sports tourism is undoubtedly recognizing the local cultural peculiarities [161] and residents’ needs [35], which reflects a broad stakeholder approach (Section 5.2) and the prerequisites of authentic tourist experiences [43]. Following a specific resource endowment in identity, knowledge, and infrastructure, the community can create touristic products. This type of value-based product development [197] can serve as the starting point for the sustainable use of these local features. Nevertheless, touristic product development also includes a market-based view to recognize tourists’ needs and to market the respective products. This combination of resource- and market-based views involves balancing residents’ quality of life and tourists’ quality of experience (Section 2.1). For the touristic product, this means transferring the local sports identity into the tourism product: *“The dynamic created by the experience of physical practice matched with the enjoyment of tourism services within the territory [...] acts as a catalyst for local development and tourism”* [102] (p. 54). As an outcome, residents will be more likely to support tourism development when it is based on their specific values and activities. Thus, efforts in tourism infrastructure should also facilitate the locals’ quality of life [197,198]. In this respective field, sports activities could function as a transfer medium of local identity in pursuit of a touristic experience.

In summary, we can now answer RQ 1 on utilizing the potential of identity-based sports in the sense of CBT. Sport-related activities rooted in the local identity have the potential to deliver authentic experiences and products. Destination management involves seeking a good balance between locals and guests. As such, sports tourism offers provide a platform for social and cultural exchange.

## 5.2. Local Engagement as a Success Factor

In community-based tourism, the question arises: How can we manage tourism development through the involvement and participation of locals (Section 2.2)? Typically, consensus, trust, and job-sharing are the main principles of CBT. An accompanying factor is general local support, which has been widely neglected by past researchers. This applies to residents’ engagement in tourism services (as hosts, guides, or sports enthusiasts) but also to the subsequent discussions on managing CBT.

Scholars agree that CBT [25,37,45], as well as local efforts on sports tourism, rely on the broad management of stakeholders [185], who already have mutual dependency on tourism destinations [129]. Besides the demand side (foreign visitors, tourists, travelers [181,182], and event spectators [129]), important sports tourism stakeholders in the local community include:

- Tourism planners and developers [29,63]
- Event organizers and managers [24,29,63,161,169]
- Sportspeople and athletes [129,181]
- Tourism organization managers and marketers [102,169,182]

- Local authorities, politicians, and bodies [25,63,129,181]
- (Small-) business owners and entrepreneurs [29,187]
- Accommodation suppliers [29]
- Local residents and the population [25,29,63,129,138,161,169]

Sports tourism impacts are undoubtedly viewed differently by various stakeholders [29], but special attention should be given to the residents as *“one of the main interest groups linked to the development of tourism in a given locality”* [129] (p. 153). Indeed, residents are vital because locals are exposed to tourism’s long-term effects. In particular, the effects of sport tourism events have been frequently researched. Resident perceptions of social impacts resulting from hosting large-scale sport tourism events have also become important factors for obtaining community-wide event support [138,169]. Nevertheless, calls have been made to plan and implement events carefully [138] and to actively develop sustainability strategies [161].

A broad set of strategies exists to foster the various sustainability dimensions of sports tourism [30]. Thus, the local community needs to understand sustainable tourism with special consideration of capacity building [185] in touristic products, standards, and processes [30]. The involvement of stakeholders is a success criterion for sports tourism in general but especially for the sustainable development and generation of benefits for the local community. To counteract an uneven division of impacts [25,48,185], the participation of residents and visitors is required [161,172]. This is accompanied by the concepts of community participation, involvement, ownership, and empowerment [24,63,138]: *“community participation plays an important role in the development of sustainable tourism, especially community-based tourism.”* [63] (p. 5). Moreover, local engagement is bound to economic success, as the latter depends on the support and involvement of the local community [129]. Shared interests between visitors and residents are also analyzed against the background of a joint place attachment, which positively influences sustainability [161]. In addition, bridging the interests of residents and visitors can provide the basis for a positive welcoming culture [129]. There are a number of established tools for the joint development of tourism strategies, covering wide fields of communication, e.g., round tables, consultations, public meetings, field trips, seminars, forums, open spaces, and concrete agreements [56,154].

However, we argue that sustainable development and CBT do not exclude a focal organization in the network, such as a Destination Management Organization (DMO) or a kind of governance arrangement [129,185]. The presence of a DMO would also address the need for touristic promotion [199] and marketing strategies [115,127], as well as include sports tourism in the overall destination development strategy [127]. To further increase sustainability, the frequent monitoring of sports effects—especially events—could help adapt strategies and highlight the outputs of sports tourism [25,63]. This could support the positive perception of sport impacts among residents [63]. A DMO could further promote product development in sports through cooperation with non-tourism-related sectors [129]. The latter mainly addresses the potential of local value creation and diversification [200]. Local value chains meet the ideas of CBT to minimize leakages of power and capital (Section 2.2). In these terms, it is essential that tourism management remains under local control [46–48] and meets the prerequisites of trust, openness, and respect between individuals and groups [24].

Answering RQ2 on the role of the local community in developing sports tourism, local support and the engagement of residents are critical success factors. The visible transfer of local sports enthusiasm in the processes of co-creation with guests can create authentic experiences. The local community is a diverse set of stakeholders in which sports represents a field of potential business opportunities for everyone. Moreover, this community-based approach requires cooperation, trust, and a mutual understanding of place and identity.

## 6. Conclusions: Recommendations for Future Research

To fulfil this study’s aims, based on the community-based tourism approach, a Systematic Literature Review was conducted to identify characteristics in the interface between community

development and sports tourism within the sample of research articles. The SLR here allowed the systematic review of sports tourism and to support an emerging field. In summary, these insights from the theory and SLR highlight the increasingly community-based and sustainable development of sport tourism products.

In this way, we contribute to a broader understanding of the relevance of sports for the local community and as a source of an authentic experience for tourists. We identified an existing research gap within the triangle of sports, tourism and the community (Figures 3 and 7). We specifically address this gap, by emphasizing the importance of local engagement as a factor for success in the sustainable and long-term local development of space. Hence, we approach an identity-based development of new touristic products that are supported by sports activities to broaden the original definition of sports tourism (Section 2.3). On this basis, we further call to intensify research on, along with the practical recognition of, the host community and their specific sports identity. In this light, the previous discussion answered the two research questions. Moreover, this study developed various research recommendations related to the host community's role in sports tourism. These recommendations can be summarized by the following four criteria:

1. **Multidisciplinary:** The analysis of sports tourism should be expanded from an event focus towards sustainability issues and the local community. This also requires bridging development approaches, such as CBT, with the features of sports. The cultural theories and theories around "Sport-for-Development" offer a suitable perspective as they consider sports to "*facilitate personal development and social change by embracing non-traditional sport management practices through an interdisciplinary framework, blending sport with cultural enrichment*" [201] (p. 313). The sport-for-development stream discusses issues regarding the positive impacts on society and the economy from sports activities. What lacks in the discussions of SFD are tourism-based perspectives and development opportunities. This provides a legitimate starting point for future analyses to penetrate the gap between SFD aspects and CBT potentials.
2. **The diversity of sports:** Research should address different sports activities and their impacts on the local community. This also includes small-scale sports events and non-event-related activities, especially those that are practiced by locals. These potentially unpopular activities can be of great interest, as they are deeply rooted in communities' identities. Thus, these sports open space for dealing with tourism.
3. **Sustainability-orientation:** There is increasing awareness of the importance of sustainability in sports tourism. Research in this field is, nevertheless, still limited and is mostly confined to specific areas such as mega-events [30].
4. **Methods** should concentrate on in-depth case studies to illustrate local challenges and benefits. The assessment of impacts on local areas is also of relevance here.

The above research recommendations apply to community-based tourism destinations, which also limits this study. Nevertheless, community-based tourism follows the zeitgeist of independent, sustainable, and endogenous development. Analysis of additional megatrends could help prepare destinations for the future expansion of sports activities. However, due to the current restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, other types of physical activities with less contact, such as hiking, are requested. Megatrends like health aspirations, nature awareness, and regionalism are well-adapted to these new conditions. Consequently, the borders between the interests of the host community and the motivations of tourists are becoming further blurred.

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