



Sports Marketing for a Greener Indonesia: Challenges and Opportunities in Building a Sustainable Sports Industry

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ABSTRACTS

Purpose This study examines the integration of sport marketing and sustainability within Indonesia's growing sports industry, employing a comprehensive mixed-methods approach to identify key challenges, opportunities, and practical strategies for implementing sustainable practices.

Materials and Methods The research employed a mixed-methods design, combining qualitative interviews with 30 industry stakeholders and quantitative surveys of 120 participants. The sample represented diverse sectors, including sports organizations, marketing professionals, athletes, event planners, policymakers, and fans.

Result Findings reveal a significant disconnect between sustainability awareness and practical application; while 65% of respondents demonstrated general awareness of sustainability concepts, only 30% understood their specific relevance to sport marketing. Current initiatives, such as eco-friendly merchandise and green events (25%), were found to be largely ad hoc rather than strategically implemented. Three primary opportunity areas were identified: leveraging Indonesia's high digital penetration, forming strategic partnerships with sustainability-focused brands, and developing targeted fan engagement campaigns. Notably, 70% of stakeholders recognized the brand reputation benefits of sustainable marketing, though 50% expressed concerns regarding implementation costs and complexity.

Conclusion These findings highlight the critical need for structured educational initiatives and policy support to bridge the awareness-implementation gap. Consequently, the research team developed the "Sustainable Sport Marketing for Indonesia" training program to equip professionals with tools to align marketing strategies with environmental and social goals. The study contributes to academic and practical discourse by demonstrating how sport marketing can drive sustainability in emerging markets, while addressing Indonesia's unique challenges, such as resource limitations and infrastructure constraints.

Keywords Sport marketing; Sustainability; Indonesia; Stakeholder engagement; Green marketing.



INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of the sports industry in Indonesia has brought about significant economic and social benefits, but it has also raised critical concerns regarding its environmental and social sustainability. The main problem addressed in this research is the lack of integration between sport marketing strategies and sustainability principles within the Indonesian sports industry. While sport marketing has traditionally focused on maximizing revenue, fan engagement, and brand visibility Shilbury et al. (2014), its potential to drive sustainable practices remains largely untapped. This disconnect is particularly problematic in a country like Indonesia, where environmental degradation and social inequality are pressing issues (Kusumawardhani, 2021). The absence of a strategic approach to align sport marketing with sustainability goals has resulted in missed opportunities to leverage the influential power of sports for positive environmental and social impact. To understand this issue, this research draws on the triple bottom line (TBL) framework, which emphasizes the balance between environmental, social, and economic dimensions (Elkington, 1997). Additionally, the theory of green marketing (Peattie & Crane (2005) provides a useful lens for examining how marketing strategies can be adapted to promote environmentally friendly practices. These theories, combined with insights from sport marketing literature Shilbury et al. (2014), offer a foundation for understanding how sustainability can be integrated into sport marketing strategies.

Despite the growing body of literature on sport marketing and sustainability, there is a significant research gap regarding the application of these concepts in developing countries, particularly in Southeast Asia. Most previous studies have focused on developed nations, where infrastructure, funding, and awareness of sustainability issues are more advanced (Kellison & Kim, 2018; Smith et al., 2021). In contrast, the Indonesian sports industry faces unique challenges, such as limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of awareness among stakeholders (Susanto, 2020). These factors create a disconnect between the theoretical potential of sport marketing to promote sustainability and its practical implementation in Indonesia. This gap is crucial because it highlights the need for context-specific studies that address the unique challenges and opportunities faced by developing countries (O'Brien & Slack, 2004). By focusing on Indonesia, this research aims to fill this gap and provide insights that are relevant not only to the local context but also to other developing nations with similar characteristics.

This research is important as it has the potential to address urgent environmental and social challenges while contributing to the sustainable development of the Indonesian sports industry. As the industry continues to grow, the need for sustainable practices becomes increasingly critical to mitigate its environmental impact and ensure its long-term viability (Trendafilova et al., 2013). This study is particularly timely given the global emphasis on sustainability, as reflected in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Nations, 2015), and the growing demand for corporate social responsibility (CSR) among consumers and investors (Walters & Tacon, 2010). The novelty of this research lies in its focus on Indonesia, a country that has been underrepresented in the literature on sport marketing and sustainability. By examining the unique challenges and opportunities in this context, the study offers new insights that can inform both theory and practice. The primary objective of this research is to explore how sport marketing can be leveraged to promote sustainability in the Indonesian sports industry. Specifically, the study aims to identify key challenges and opportunities associated with integrating sustainability into sport marketing strategies, develop a framework for sustainable sport marketing, and provide actionable recommendations for stakeholders. In terms of contributions, this research is expected to advance theoretical understanding by integrating concepts from sustainability and sport marketing while

also providing practical insights for sports organizations, policymakers, and marketers (Kellison & McCullough, 2018). By addressing the research gap and offering a novel perspective, this study aims to inspire further research and action toward building a more sustainable sports industry in Indonesia and beyond.

METHODS

Research Design

A mixed methods approach was employed, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques. The research was conducted in three phases: Qualitative Interviews: Semi-structured interviews with 30 key stakeholders explored challenges and opportunities in integrating sustainability into sport marketing. Open-ended questions were used to gather detailed insights. Quantitative Surveys: A survey was administered to 120 participants to assess the prevalence of sustainability practices and stakeholder attitudes. The survey included Likert-scale questions, multiple-choice items, and open-ended responses. Training Program Development: Based on the findings, a training program titled "Sustainable Sport Marketing for Indonesia" was designed to equip stakeholders with practical tools for implementing sustainable practices.

Study Participants

The study included 150 participants from the Indonesian sports industry, comprising sports organization managers, marketing professionals, athletes, event organizers, policymakers, and fans. Participants were aged between 25 and 55 years, with a balanced gender distribution (50% male and 50% female). Selection criteria required at least three years of experience in the sports industry, involvement in marketing or sustainability initiatives, and willingness to participate in interviews or surveys. Purposive sampling was used to ensure representation across key sectors.

Statistical Analysis

Qualitative Data: Thematic analysis was conducted using NVivo software to identify recurring themes and patterns. Quantitative Data: Descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, standard deviations) summarized the data, while inferential statistics (correlation analysis, regression modeling) examined relationships between variables, such as awareness levels and adoption of sustainable practices.

Program Design and Structure

The Sustainable Sport Marketing for Indonesia program consists of four modules: Introduction to Sustainability in Sports, Integrating Sustainability into Marketing Strategies, Case Studies and Best Practices, Developing Action Plans for Sustainable Sport Marketing. Each module includes interactive workshops, case studies, and practical exercises. The program was piloted with 20 industry professionals, and feedback was incorporated to refine its content and delivery. The goal is to empower stakeholders to align marketing strategies with sustainability goals while addressing Indonesia's unique challenges. This structured approach ensured rigor and relevance, providing actionable insights for the Indonesian sports industry.

RESULT

The survey results revealed that 65% of respondents were aware of the concept of sustainability, but only 30% understood its relevance to sport marketing. This gap highlights the need for greater

education and awareness-raising initiatives. Table 1 summarizes the levels of awareness among different stakeholder groups.

Table 1. Awareness of Sustainability Among Stakeholders

Stakeholder Group	High Awareness (%)	Moderate Awareness (%)	Low Awareness (%)
Sports Organization Managers	40	35	25
Marketing Professionals	50	30	20
Athletes	25	40	35
Event Organizers	35	45	20
Fans	20	30	50

Current Practices in Sustainable Sport Marketing, the survey results showed that 45% of sports organizations have implemented some form of sustainable marketing practices, such as promoting eco-friendly merchandise or organizing green events. However, these practices are often ad hoc and lack a strategic approach. Table 2 provides an overview of the types of sustainable practices currently in use.

Table 2. Current Sustainable Practices in Sport Marketing

Practice	Percentage of Organizations (%)
Use of eco-friendly merchandise	35
Promotion of green events	25
Partnerships with environmental NGOs	20
Digital marketing to reduce paper waste	15
Other	5

Opportunities for Sustainable Sport Marketing, despite the challenges, stakeholders identified several opportunities for integrating sustainability into sport marketing. These include leveraging digital platforms, building partnerships with sustainability-focused brands, and engaging fans through educational campaigns. Stakeholder Attitudes Toward Sustainable Sport Marketing, the survey results indicated that 70% of respondents believe that sustainable sport marketing can enhance brand reputation and fan loyalty. However, 50% expressed concerns about the costs and complexity of implementation. Table 3 summarizes stakeholder attitudes toward sustainable sport marketing.

Table 3. Stakeholder Attitudes Toward Sustainable Sport Marketing

Attitude	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Positive (enhances brand reputation)	70
Neutral (no strong opinion)	20
Negative (concerns about costs)	10

Table 3 presents stakeholder attitudes toward sustainable sport marketing. A significant majority (70%) view these initiatives positively, citing enhanced brand reputation. Conversely, 20% remain neutral, and only 10% express negativity primarily due to cost concerns. Overall, sustainable marketing is widely embraced as a strategic asset within the industry despite minor financial reservations.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that sports marketing has significant potential in promoting sustainability within the Indonesian sports industry, aligning with previous research highlighting the role of marketing in supporting sustainable practices (Goodway et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2021). The results confirm that low awareness and ad hoc implementation of sustainable practices in sports marketing are also present in other developing countries, where resource constraints and policy

gaps serve as major obstacles (Kellison & Kim, 2018). However, this study provides a new perspective by highlighting specific challenges faced by Indonesia, such as limited infrastructure and financial resources, which have not been extensively explored in previous research. Additionally, the positive attitudes of stakeholders toward sustainable sports marketing indicate the potential for change if appropriate intervention strategies are implemented. These findings are consistent with studies emphasizing the importance of contextual approaches in implementing sustainability in the sports industry (Babiak & Trendafilova, 2011).

Furthermore, this study found that digital platforms and strategic partnerships are key enablers of sustainable sports marketing in Indonesia. Given the high level of digital penetration and the central role of social media in marketing communications, sports organizations can leverage these technologies to disseminate sustainability messages and encourage fan engagement in environmental initiatives (Peattie & Crane, 2005). This aligns with global trends where digital marketing is increasingly being used to drive sustainability campaigns in sports (Kellison & McCullough, 2018).

The practical implications of these findings include several recommendations for stakeholders in the Indonesian sports industry. First, the development of training programs such as the "Sustainable Sport Marketing for Indonesia" initiative can help build capacity and raise awareness among sports organizations regarding sustainable marketing strategies. Second, policy support and strategic partnerships can serve as a roadmap for creating an enabling environment for sustainable practices, such as government incentives for green infrastructure and collaborations with sustainability-oriented brands (Smith et al., 2021). Third, utilizing digital platforms to enhance fan engagement with sustainability issues can be an effective strategy for building brand loyalty while increasing environmental awareness among the general public (Trendafilova et al., 2013).

For future research, several areas can be explored further. Longitudinal studies can be conducted to assess the long-term impact of sustainable sports marketing initiatives on stakeholder behavioral change. Additionally, comparative studies across different regions in Indonesia can provide insights into the varying challenges and opportunities between urban and rural areas. Lastly, research on the role of emerging technologies such as blockchain and artificial intelligence in supporting sustainability in sports marketing can open new avenues for innovation (Kellison & McCullough, 2018). Addressing these gaps can further enrich the understanding of sustainable sports marketing and its contribution to global sustainability goals.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that sport marketing holds strategic potential to catalyze sustainability practices in Indonesia, despite structural challenges including limited financial resources, infrastructure, and regulatory support. A primary finding is the significant literacy gap; although 65% of stakeholders are familiar with the general concept of sustainability, only 30% comprehend its practical application within sport marketing. Nevertheless, the prospect of adopting these initiatives is highly positive, evidenced by a 70% support rate from stakeholders who recognize its value in enhancing brand reputation and fan loyalty. As a practical intervention, this study developed the Sustainable Sport Marketing for Indonesia training program. To successfully align the local sports industry with global sustainability goals, future efforts must prioritize comprehensive industry education, cross-sectoral policy advocacy, the formation of strategic partnerships, and the optimization of digital platform campaigns.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest associated with this research. This study was conducted independently, and no financial or personal relationships influenced the design, execution, analysis, or interpretation of the findings. All data were collected and analyzed objectively, and the conclusions drawn are based solely on the evidence gathered during the research process. Any potential sources of bias were carefully considered and mitigated to ensure the integrity and credibility of the study. The authors affirm their commitment to transparency and ethical research practices.

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