



Developing Sports Tourism Attractions through Football Clubs: A Comparative Study of Indonesia, Thailand, and Ecuador

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the Study: This study aims to analyze the development of sport tourism through football clubs using a comparative study of Indonesia, Thailand, and Ecuador. The study focuses on examining the role of football clubs as tourism attractions, identifying internal and external influencing factors, and comparing sport tourism management strategies in the three countries.

Methodology: This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach with a comparative research design. Data were collected through literature review, documentary analysis, and previous research studies on football-based sport tourism in Indonesia, Thailand, and Ecuador. Data analysis used an interactive analysis model consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, combined with SWOT analysis.

Main Findings: The findings reveal that Indonesia's strength lies in strong supporter loyalty and match atmosphere, although managerial and financial issues remain challenges. Thailand demonstrates more professional sport tourism management through government support and tourism integration. Ecuador shows strong cultural identity and football enthusiasm but faces infrastructure and promotional limitations. All three countries utilize football as a driver of local economic growth and tourism attraction.

Novelty/Originality of this Study: This study introduces a cross-national comparative framework for examining football clubs as sport tourism attractions in emerging countries. It advances existing knowledge by integrating cultural, managerial, economic, and institutional perspectives to explain differences in football-based tourism development. The findings provide new insights into how contextual factors shape sustainable sport tourism strategies.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The development of global tourism has experienced a significant transformation from mass tourism toward special interest tourism, where tourists are no longer solely oriented toward visiting destinations but are increasingly seeking personal, authentic, and meaningful experiences. This transformation has encouraged the emergence of various thematic tourism sectors, including sport tourism, which integrates sports activities with travel experiences [1]-[3]. In the modern tourism industry, sport tourism has become part of experience-based tourism that emphasizes emotional engagement, entertainment, and social interaction as essential elements of tourist satisfaction [4]-[6].

Globally, sport tourism has developed into one of the fastest-growing sectors contributing significantly to economic growth [7]-[9]. The sector supports tourism income through increased tourist arrivals, tourism expenditure, job creation, and destination branding [10]-[12]. Sports-related travel motivations continue to increase, both in the form of active participation and spectator activities. As a result, sport tourism has become an important strategy for many countries in strengthening tourism competitiveness and stimulating local economic development.

Among various sports, football has become one of the most influential attractions in sport tourism due to its global popularity and strong supporter culture [13]-[15]. Professional football clubs are no longer viewed only as sports organizations but also as tourism attractions capable of generating economic activities and enhancing destination image [16]-[18]. Football matches attract large numbers of spectators, create tourism mobility, and stimulate supporting sectors such as transportation, accommodation, culinary businesses, and merchandise industries [19]-[21]. In many countries, football stadiums and club identities have become tourism icons that offer unique emotional and cultural experiences for visitors.

In Indonesia, football has a massive supporter base and strong fan loyalty that create a distinctive match atmosphere. Clubs such as Arema FC have become symbols of regional identity and social solidarity. The presence of thousands of supporters during matches demonstrates the strong potential of football-based sport tourism in attracting domestic visitors and generating local economic circulation [22]-[24]. Matchday activities not only function as sports entertainment but also as tourism experiences involving cultural interaction, emotional attachment, and community participation.

However, despite its significant potential, the development of football-based sport tourism in Indonesia has not been managed optimally. Several challenges remain, including inconsistent spectator attendance, limited infrastructure quality, managerial weaknesses, and financial instability caused by heavy dependence on ticket revenue. These conditions indicate that football-based sport tourism still lacks integrated and sustainable strategic management. As a result, the economic and tourism potential generated by football clubs has not been fully maximized.

Compared to Indonesia, Thailand has demonstrated more structured and professional sport tourism management through stronger collaboration between football clubs, tourism sectors, and government institutions. Football clubs in Thailand have successfully integrated stadiums, merchandise centers, and tourism facilities into tourism destinations. Meanwhile, Ecuador presents a different context in which football is strongly connected to cultural identity and community life. Ecuadorian football culture provides emotional and cultural tourism experiences, although infrastructure and tourism promotion remain relatively limited. These differences show that each country has distinct characteristics and strategies in developing football-based sport tourism.

Previous studies have generally discussed the economic impacts of sport tourism, tourist behavior, or destination competitiveness. Other studies have emphasized community perceptions and social impacts related to sport tourism development. However, most existing research has been conducted in developed countries and focuses primarily on event impacts rather than strategic development approaches [25]-[27]. Research comparing football-based sport tourism development in developing countries, particularly in Indonesia, Thailand, and Ecuador, remains limited. Furthermore, studies integrating strategic analysis to identify internal and external factors influencing football-based sport tourism are still relatively scarce.

This research gap highlights the importance of conducting a comparative study that examines how football clubs in different developing countries manage and develop sport tourism according to their cultural, economic, and managerial contexts. The urgency of this study lies in the growing need to optimize football clubs as drivers of local economic growth and sustainable tourism development. Understanding comparative strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats can provide valuable insights for policymakers, tourism stakeholders, and football club management in improving tourism competitiveness.

The novelty of this study lies in its cross-country comparative approach that integrates SWOT analysis into the examination of football-based sport tourism development in developing countries. Unlike previous studies that mainly focused on impacts or visitor perceptions, this research emphasizes strategic analysis by comparing internal organizational capacity and external environmental conditions in Indonesia, Thailand, and Ecuador. This approach offers a more contextual and comprehensive understanding of how football clubs can function as sustainable tourism attractions.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the development of sport tourism through football clubs using a comparative perspective between Indonesia, Thailand, and Ecuador. Specifically, this study seeks to identify the internal and external factors influencing football-based sport tourism and formulate strategic development approaches that can support sustainable tourism growth. The study is expected to contribute theoretically to the advancement of sport tourism studies in developing countries while also providing practical recommendations for football clubs, tourism sectors, and policymakers.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative comparative case study design based on systematic document analysis. The qualitative approach was selected because the research aims to obtain an in-depth understanding of the development of football-based sport tourism in different national contexts. Qualitative research allows researchers to explore social phenomena comprehensively by examining cultural characteristics, management practices, tourism dynamics, and stakeholder involvement related to sport tourism development [28]-[30].

The comparative study design was used to identify similarities and differences in the development of football-based sport tourism in Indonesia, Thailand, and Ecuador. Through this approach, the study compares how football clubs in each country function not only as sports organizations but also as tourism attractions that contribute to local economic development and destination branding [31]-[33]. The comparative design also enables a broader understanding of how social, economic, cultural, and managerial factors influence sport tourism development in different environments.

This study focused on understanding the interaction between internal organizational factors and external environmental conditions that support or hinder sport tourism growth. The descriptive approach was used to provide systematic and detailed descriptions of football club management, supporter culture, tourism activities, stadium facilities, and tourism integration strategies implemented in each country. The use of a qualitative comparative approach is considered appropriate because football-based sport tourism is strongly influenced by contextual and cultural dimensions that cannot be fully explained through quantitative measurements alone.

In addition, this research adopted a cross-country analytical perspective to examine how developing countries with different tourism systems and football cultures manage sport tourism potential. The study emphasizes the importance of contextual analysis in understanding the sustainability of football-based tourism attractions and the role of football clubs in creating tourism experiences. Through this design, the research aims to generate a comprehensive understanding of sport tourism development that can provide both theoretical and practical contributions.

2.2 Research Subject and Object

The research objects consisted of football-based sport tourism development models in Indonesia, Thailand, and Ecuador. The unit of analysis focused on football clubs, supporter communities, tourism integration practices, stadium facilities, and institutional strategies that contribute to sport tourism development.

A purposive case selection technique was applied to select representative cases based on the following criteria: (1) football clubs with significant cultural or tourism influence, (2) availability of documented information regarding club management and tourism activities, and (3) representation of different sport tourism development characteristics in developing countries. The selected cases were:

1. Indonesia: Arema FC as a representation of supporter-based football culture and community identity in Malang.
2. Thailand: Buriram United as a representation of professionally integrated football tourism development.
3. Ecuador: Barcelona Sporting Club as a representation of football culture, community attachment, and cultural tourism potential.

The selection of these cases enabled a comparative analysis of emotional-cultural assets, managerial capacity, infrastructure development, and tourism integration strategies.

2.3 Data Collection Techniques

The data used in this study were obtained from secondary sources through several data collection techniques. The research primarily relied on literature review, documentation analysis, and comparative examination of previous studies related to football-based sport tourism.

The literature review was conducted by collecting and analyzing academic journals, books, conference proceedings, government reports, tourism publications, and research articles discussing sport tourism, football tourism, tourism development, supporter culture, and football club management. The literature review aimed to provide theoretical foundations and empirical evidence related to the development of sport tourism in Indonesia, Thailand, and Ecuador.

Documentation analysis was also employed to obtain information regarding football club management, stadium facilities, tourism programs, supporter activities, tourism promotion, and tourism-related economic impacts [34]-[36]. The documents analyzed included club reports, tourism publications, media reports, official websites, photographs, and statistical information related to football tourism activities in the selected countries.

In addition, the study examined previous research findings discussing football-based sport tourism in different contexts. Comparative analysis of previous studies was conducted to identify similarities, differences, challenges, and development opportunities across the three countries. This process also helped identify research gaps and strengthen the analytical framework used in the study. The use of multiple data collection techniques aimed to increase data validity and ensure a more comprehensive understanding of football-based sport tourism

development. Triangulation of literature sources and documentation was applied to improve the credibility and consistency of the research findings.

2.4 Research Instrument

The main research instrument was a structured document analysis framework developed based on sport tourism development concepts. The framework was used to systematically extract, categorize, and compare information from various documentary sources. The coding framework was developed based on previous studies on sport tourism, football tourism, destination branding, and stakeholder collaboration. The instrument framework is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Research Instrument Framework

Variable	Indicators	Data Collection Technique	Instrument	Scale
Football club tourism attraction	Match experience, supporter engagement, club identity, cultural value	Document analysis	Document analysis matrix	Qualitative categories
Club management capacity	Professional management, financial sustainability, branding strategy, commercialization	Document analysis	Coding framework	Qualitative categories
Tourism infrastructure	Stadium facilities, accessibility, visitor services, tourism facilities	Document analysis	Evaluation checklist	Qualitative categories
Institutional support	Government policy, stakeholder collaboration, tourism integration	Document analysis	Comparative analysis sheet	Qualitative categories
Sport tourism development strategy	Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats	SWOT analysis	SWOT matrix	Strategic classification

The instrument was validated through theoretical alignment with previous sport tourism and destination development studies to ensure consistency between research objectives and analytical categories.

2.5 Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted using qualitative content analysis, comparative analysis, and SWOT analysis. The qualitative content analysis was applied to systematically examine documentary data obtained from academic publications, official football club documents, tourism reports, and relevant media sources [37]-[40]. The analysis process involved data organization, coding, categorization, and interpretation to identify key patterns related to football-based sport tourism development.

The coding process was conducted based on predetermined analytical categories, including football club identity, supporter engagement, management capacity, tourism infrastructure, institutional support, and development strategies. The coded data were subsequently compared across Indonesia, Thailand, and Ecuador to identify similarities, differences, and contextual factors influencing football clubs as tourism attractions.

Furthermore, SWOT analysis was applied as a complementary analytical framework to evaluate internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) and external factors (opportunities and threats). The SWOT matrix was developed to identify strategic options, including SO (Strength–Opportunity), WO (Weakness–Opportunity), ST (Strength–Threat), and WT (Weakness–Threat) strategies. This analysis was conducted through several steps:

1. Identification of internal factors, including the club's strengths and weaknesses in sports tourism development.
2. Identification of external factors, including opportunities and threats from the external environment.
3. Preparation of a SWOT matrix, mapping internal and external factors into a four-quadrant analysis.
4. Strategy formulation, including:
 - a) SO (Strength-Opportunities) strategy, which utilizes strengths to seize opportunities
 - b) WO (Weakness-Opportunities) strategy, which minimizes weaknesses by utilizing opportunities
 - c) ST (Strength-Threats) strategy, which uses strengths to overcome threats
 - d) WT (Weakness-Threats) strategy, which minimizes weaknesses and avoids threats

The use of SWOT analysis in this study aims to produce a comprehensive, contextual, and applicable strategy formulation for developing a sports tourism attraction based on a football club.

2.6 Research Procedure

The research procedure consisted of six sequential stages:

1. Research problem identification: identifying the research gap regarding football clubs as sport tourism attractions in developing countries.
2. Literature identification: collecting relevant academic publications and documentary sources related to sport tourism and football tourism.
3. Case selection: selecting representative football clubs from Indonesia, Thailand, and Ecuador using purposive sampling criteria.
4. Data extraction and coding: organizing documentary information based on predefined analytical categories.
5. Comparative and SWOT analysis: comparing development patterns and identifying strategic factors affecting football-based sport tourism.
6. Interpretation and conclusion development: synthesizing findings to generate theoretical and practical implications for sport tourism development.

This systematic procedure ensured methodological consistency and provided a comprehensive understanding of how football clubs can function as sustainable sport tourism attractions in different national contexts.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Thematic Findings of Football-Based Sport Tourism Development

The qualitative content analysis identified five major themes influencing football-based sport tourism development across Indonesia, Thailand, and Ecuador: (1) supporter culture and emotional experience, (2) football club management capacity, (3) tourism infrastructure development, (4) stakeholder and institutional support, and (5) tourism development strategies. These themes were derived from the coding process applied to academic publications, official club documents, tourism reports, and relevant media sources.

Table 1. Thematic Categories of Football-Based Sport Tourism Development

Theme	Key Indicators	Indonesia	Thailand	Ecuador
Supporter culture and emotional experience	Supporter loyalty, match atmosphere, community identity	Strong emotional attachment and large supporter communities	Organized supporter engagement through professional club management	Strong cultural authenticity and community-based football identity
Club management capacity	Professional management, commercialization, branding	Developing but limited financial diversification	Highly professional and commercially integrated	Moderate management capacity with investment limitations
Tourism infrastructure	Stadium facilities, accessibility, visitor services	Requires modernization and tourism integration	Advanced stadium tourism facilities	Limited infrastructure development
Institutional support	Government stakeholder collaboration	Emerging collaboration	Strong government-club-tourism integration	Limited institutional coordination
Tourism strategy	Branding, packaging, experience	Community-based tourism potential	Integrated sport tourism model	Cultural tourism potential

The thematic findings indicate that football-based sport tourism development is shaped by the interaction between tangible resources (infrastructure, management systems, and investment) and intangible resources (identity, emotional attachment, and cultural authenticity). These findings provide the basis for comparing the development patterns of the three countries.

3.2 Sport Tourism Development in Indonesia

The analysis indicates that Indonesia's football-based sport tourism development is primarily characterized by strong supporter culture and emotional attachment. Supporter communities such as Aremania, Bonek, and Jakmania represent more than spectator groups; they function as cultural communities that shape football identity and create distinctive matchday experiences. Their collective activities, including chants, choreography, rituals, and social interactions, generate an atmosphere that becomes an important intangible tourism attraction.

This finding highlights that the main tourism value of Indonesian football lies in experiential and cultural dimensions. Unlike conventional sports tourism that focuses primarily on competition, football tourism in Indonesia provides visitors with emotional engagement, social interaction, and a sense of belonging. This supports the perspective that sport tourism experiences are constructed through emotional involvement and memorable social experiences rather than only physical attendance at sporting events.

Football matches in Indonesia also contribute to regional mobility patterns, as supporters frequently travel across cities and provinces to attend matches. This movement creates opportunities for local economic activities surrounding stadium areas, including accommodation, transportation services, culinary businesses, and merchandise sectors. However, these economic activities remain largely event-based and have not yet been fully transformed into structured tourism products such as stadium tours, football heritage tourism, or organized supporter tourism packages.

Football clubs also play an important role in strengthening destination identity. Arema FC, for example, has become closely associated with Malang Raya's cultural identity. The emotional relationship between supporters and the club strengthens the attractiveness of the destination because visitors experience not only the football event but also the cultural narratives surrounding the club.

These findings indicate that football clubs can function as destination branding instruments by connecting sporting identity with local cultural identity. The Indonesian case demonstrates a community-driven football tourism model in which supporter culture becomes the primary tourism asset.

Despite these strengths, several challenges limit Indonesia's ability to develop internationally competitive football tourism. Infrastructure limitations remain a major issue, particularly regarding stadium facilities, transportation accessibility, visitor services, digital ticketing systems, and tourism-oriented facilities. These limitations reduce visitor comfort and restrict clubs from developing comprehensive tourism experiences.

Furthermore, football club management in Indonesia remains highly dependent on ticket revenue. Limited diversification through sponsorship management, digital commercialization, hospitality services, and tourism packages creates financial instability. Security issues related to supporter conflicts also influence perceptions of safety and destination competitiveness.

Therefore, the Indonesian football tourism development pathway requires the transformation of strong supporter-based cultural assets into professionally managed tourism products through improved infrastructure, governance, commercialization strategies, and safety management.

3.3 Sport Tourism Development in Thailand

Thailand demonstrates a more modern, structured, and professionally managed model of sport tourism development. The findings reveal that football clubs in Thailand have successfully integrated sports activities with tourism industries through strategic management, infrastructure investment, and government collaboration. Compared to Indonesia and Ecuador, Thailand shows stronger institutional readiness in transforming football clubs into tourism attractions.

One of the most notable examples is Buriram United, which has developed a football ecosystem that combines sports entertainment with tourism experiences. The club's modern stadium serves not only as a venue for football matches but also as a multifunctional tourism destination. The stadium area includes museums, merchandise stores, restaurants, fan zones, entertainment facilities, and tourism-oriented services that encourage visitors to spend longer periods at the destination. This integration increases tourist expenditure and strengthens the economic contribution of football tourism.

The professional management system implemented by Thai football clubs has become one of the key factors supporting sport tourism development. Clubs in Thailand actively utilize branding strategies, digital marketing, social media promotion, and commercial partnerships to strengthen their tourism appeal. The use of digital platforms enables clubs to reach broader audiences, promote tourism events, and create stronger engagement with domestic and international supporters. This marketing approach demonstrates how football tourism in Thailand has evolved into a commercially integrated tourism industry.

Another important factor contributing to Thailand's success is government support. The Thai government actively promotes sports events as part of national tourism development strategies. Investment in infrastructure, transportation accessibility, tourism promotion campaigns, and event organization has significantly improved the competitiveness of Thailand's sport tourism sector. International sports events are often integrated into tourism promotion programs to increase foreign visitor arrivals and strengthen Thailand's image as a sports tourism destination.

The findings also indicate that Thailand has succeeded in creating a more sustainable sport tourism model through collaboration among football clubs, tourism stakeholders, private sectors, and government institutions. This collaborative approach enables football tourism development to be supported by stronger financial systems, better infrastructure, and more effective destination management.

However, despite these advantages, Thailand still faces several challenges. Competition among tourism destinations in Southeast Asia continues to increase, requiring continuous innovation in tourism products and

visitor experiences. Thailand must consistently improve service quality, stadium experiences, tourism integration, and digital promotion strategies to maintain its competitiveness. In addition, maintaining long-term supporter engagement and balancing commercialization with authentic football culture remain important issues in sustaining tourism attractiveness.

Overall, Thailand represents a successful example of how football-based sport tourism can be professionally managed through strategic integration between sports industries and tourism sectors. The Thai model demonstrates that infrastructure quality, government support, professional management, and destination branding play crucial roles in strengthening tourism competitiveness.

3.4 Sport Tourism Development in Ecuador

The findings reveal that Ecuador possesses a unique form of football-based sport tourism strongly rooted in cultural identity and community life. Football in Ecuador is not merely viewed as entertainment but as an important social and cultural phenomenon that reflects national identity, emotional solidarity, and community pride. This cultural attachment creates a distinctive tourism experience that differs from football tourism models in Indonesia and Thailand.

Football matches in Ecuador often function as large-scale social gatherings involving local communities, families, and supporter groups. The emotional atmosphere created during matches becomes one of the primary attractions for visitors seeking authentic South American football culture. Tourists are attracted not only to the game itself but also to the emotional intensity, chants, rituals, and community interactions surrounding football events. This demonstrates that Ecuador's football tourism strength lies primarily in intangible cultural experiences.

Another important finding is that Ecuador's football culture offers strong destination authenticity. In tourism studies, authenticity is considered a valuable factor influencing tourist satisfaction and destination attractiveness. Ecuadorian football culture presents emotional and spontaneous experiences that are perceived as genuine and culturally meaningful by visitors. The integration of local traditions, music, supporter expressions, and football passion creates a unique tourism atmosphere that cannot easily be replicated by more commercialized football tourism destinations.

However, despite its strong cultural advantages, Ecuador still faces major limitations in infrastructure development. Several football stadiums lack modern tourism facilities capable of supporting international-standard tourism services. Transportation accessibility, spectator facilities, tourism information systems, and entertainment infrastructure remain relatively limited compared to Thailand. These infrastructure weaknesses reduce the ability of Ecuadorian football tourism to compete globally.

Investment limitations also become a major challenge in Ecuador's sport tourism development. Compared to Thailand, financial investment in football tourism infrastructure and tourism promotion remains relatively low. Tourism marketing strategies are still underdeveloped, particularly in reaching international tourism markets. As a result, Ecuador's football tourism potential has not yet been fully maximized despite its strong cultural attractiveness.

Furthermore, tourism integration between football clubs and tourism sectors remains limited. Football activities are often managed separately from broader tourism strategies, reducing opportunities for tourism diversification and destination packaging. This condition suggests that Ecuador requires stronger collaboration among football organizations, tourism institutions, and government stakeholders to optimize football tourism development.

Nevertheless, Ecuador possesses significant potential for developing cultural sport tourism because of its emotionally rich football culture. By improving infrastructure quality, tourism promotion, and stakeholder collaboration, Ecuador could strengthen its position as a unique football tourism destination representing authentic South American football experiences.

3.5 Comparative Analysis of Football-Based Sport Tourism Development

The comparative findings indicate that Indonesia, Thailand, and Ecuador share several similarities in football-based sport tourism development. First, football functions as an experience-based tourism attraction in all three countries. Visitors are motivated not only by sports entertainment but also by emotional engagement, social interaction, and cultural experiences surrounding football events.

Second, supporter loyalty plays a central role in creating tourism attractiveness. In all three countries, supporter communities contribute significantly to match atmosphere, destination identity, and emotional tourism experiences. Supporter culture becomes an intangible tourism asset that differentiates football tourism from other forms of tourism activities.

Third, football tourism generates economic impacts on local economies through increased spending on transportation, accommodation, culinary businesses, and merchandise. Matchday tourism activities stimulate local economic circulation and support small-scale businesses surrounding football stadiums.

Fourth, football clubs function as destination branding instruments. Clubs contribute to regional identity formation and strengthen the image of cities or regions associated with football culture. This finding highlights the strategic role of football clubs in tourism promotion and place marketing.

Despite these similarities, substantial differences were identified among the three countries. Thailand demonstrates stronger professionalism in management systems, infrastructure development, tourism integration, and government support. Thailand has succeeded in transforming football clubs into commercially integrated tourism destinations with modern tourism facilities and organized tourism management systems.

Indonesia, meanwhile, demonstrates exceptional strength in supporter loyalty and crowd participation. The emotional intensity and large-scale supporter involvement create powerful tourism experiences. However, Indonesia still faces challenges in infrastructure quality, security management, and financial sustainability. Ecuador differs from both Indonesia and Thailand because its football tourism strength lies primarily in cultural authenticity and emotional identity. Ecuadorian football experiences are deeply connected to local culture and social traditions, creating highly authentic tourism experiences. Nevertheless, Ecuador continues to struggle with infrastructure limitations, limited tourism promotion, and insufficient investment.

The comparison also reveals that infrastructure quality significantly influences tourism competitiveness. Thailand's modern stadiums and integrated tourism facilities provide more comfortable and commercially attractive tourism experiences. In contrast, Indonesia and Ecuador still need substantial improvements in infrastructure modernization to compete internationally.

3.6 SWOT Analysis of Football-Based Sport Tourism Development

The SWOT analysis demonstrates that each country possesses distinct strategic characteristics in football-based sport tourism development.

Indonesia's major strengths lie in supporter loyalty, emotional atmosphere, and strong football culture. However, weaknesses remain in financial stability, professional management, and infrastructure quality. The country's large domestic tourism market provides major opportunities for football tourism expansion, although security concerns and club competition remain significant threats.

Thailand's strengths are strongly associated with modern infrastructure, government support, and professional tourism integration. The country has significant opportunities to attract international sport tourists and expand regional tourism influence. However, increasing competition among Southeast Asian tourism destinations requires continuous innovation and strategic adaptation.

Ecuador's strengths are centered on authentic football culture and strong community identity. The country possesses opportunities to develop cultural sport tourism targeting visitors seeking authentic South American football experiences. Nevertheless, limited infrastructure, low investment, and weak international promotion continue to restrict tourism growth.

The SWOT analysis confirms that successful football tourism development requires balanced integration between emotional-cultural strengths and professional tourism management systems. Countries that can combine supporter culture, infrastructure quality, stakeholder collaboration, and tourism innovation are more likely to achieve sustainable sport tourism competitiveness.

Table 1. Comparative SWOT Analysis of Football-Based Sport Tourism Development in Indonesia, Thailand, and Ecuador

Country	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Indonesia	Strong supporter loyalty, emotional match atmosphere, massive football fan base, strong local football identity	Financial instability of clubs, limited professional management, inadequate infrastructure quality, dependence on ticket revenue	Large domestic tourism market, increasing interest in sport tourism, potential integration with cultural tourism, growth of digital promotion	Security issues, supporter conflicts, competition among clubs, inconsistent tourism management
Thailand	Modern stadium infrastructure, strong government support, professional club management, integrated tourism systems	High operational costs, dependence on continuous innovation, commercialization challenges	International sport tourism market, regional tourism expansion, event tourism growth, digital tourism promotion	Increasing competition among Southeast Asian tourism destinations, regional economic fluctuations, tourism market competition
Ecuador	Authentic football culture, strong	Limited infrastructure, low investment, weak	Development of cultural sport	Limited financial support, infrastructure

Country	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
	community identity, emotional supporter engagement, unique South American football experience	tourism promotion, insufficient international exposure	tourism, increasing interest in authentic tourism experiences, tourism diversification opportunities	limitations, low international competitiveness, weak tourism integration

The SWOT analysis reveals that each country possesses unique strategic characteristics in football-based sport tourism development. Indonesia demonstrates strong emotional and cultural strengths through highly loyal supporter communities and intense match atmospheres. Supporter groups such as Aremania, Bonek, and Jakmania create tourism experiences that are emotionally engaging and socially meaningful for visitors. These emotional and cultural dimensions function as important intangible tourism assets that strengthen destination attractiveness. However, Indonesia still faces several structural weaknesses, particularly in financial stability, infrastructure quality, and professional management systems. Many football clubs continue to rely heavily on ticket sales as their primary source of income, limiting long-term sustainability and tourism innovation.

In contrast, Thailand presents a more professionally integrated sport tourism model. The country's strengths are strongly associated with modern stadium infrastructure, effective tourism management, and substantial government support. Football clubs in Thailand have successfully transformed stadiums into multifunctional tourism destinations equipped with entertainment facilities, merchandise centers, restaurants, and tourism services. This integration enables Thailand to position football tourism as part of its broader national tourism strategy. Nevertheless, Thailand also faces challenges related to regional competition and the need for continuous innovation to maintain tourism attractiveness in the increasingly competitive Southeast Asian tourism market.

Meanwhile, Ecuador possesses distinct advantages rooted in authentic football culture and strong community identity. Football in Ecuador reflects emotional solidarity, local traditions, and cultural pride, creating unique tourism experiences for visitors seeking authentic South American football culture. The emotional atmosphere surrounding football matches becomes a major tourism attraction that differentiates Ecuador from other football tourism destinations. However, infrastructure limitations, weak tourism promotion, and low investment remain major obstacles preventing Ecuador from maximizing its football tourism potential in international markets.

Overall, the SWOT analysis confirms that sustainable football-based sport tourism development requires a balance between emotional-cultural strengths and professional tourism management systems. Emotional supporter culture alone is insufficient without adequate infrastructure, stakeholder collaboration, tourism promotion, and financial sustainability. Countries capable of integrating supporter culture, tourism facilities, professional management, and strategic innovation are more likely to achieve sustainable competitiveness in football-based sport tourism development.

This study contributes to the existing sport tourism literature by addressing a research gap concerning the limited comparative understanding of football clubs as tourism attractions in developing countries. Previous studies have predominantly examined sport tourism from single-destination perspectives, mega sporting events, or visitor motivation frameworks, while limited attention has been given to how football clubs create tourism value through different socio-cultural, institutional, and economic contexts [41], [42]. By comparing Indonesia, Thailand, and Ecuador, this study provides a cross-national perspective on how cultural identity, supporter engagement, management capacity, infrastructure development, and stakeholder collaboration interact in shaping football-based sport tourism development.

The novelty of this study lies in the identification of three distinct football tourism development pathways: a community-driven model represented by Indonesia, an institutionally integrated model represented by Thailand, and a culturally authentic model represented by Ecuador. This comparative framework extends existing knowledge by demonstrating that football tourism development does not follow a universal pattern but is shaped by contextual factors, including cultural characteristics, governance systems, economic conditions, and tourism policies. This perspective aligns with contemporary sport tourism research emphasizing that tourism development outcomes are influenced by the interaction between place identity, institutional capacity, and stakeholder networks [43], [44].

The findings provide several theoretical implications. First, the study expands the concept of sport tourism experience by emphasizing the role of supporter culture and emotional attachment as intangible tourism resources. Previous research has highlighted that sport tourism experiences are constructed through emotional involvement, social interaction, and memorable encounters rather than solely through attendance at sporting events [45]. Second, this study contributes to destination branding perspectives by demonstrating that football clubs can function as symbolic representations of regional identity and cultural narratives, strengthening the relationship between sport, place attachment, and destination image [46]. Third, the findings reinforce the importance of stakeholder collaboration as a fundamental mechanism for transforming football activities into sustainable tourism systems [47].

From a practical perspective, this study provides strategic implications for football clubs, tourism organizations, and policymakers. Football clubs should move beyond their traditional role as sports organizations by developing tourism-oriented products, including stadium experiences, cultural football tours, digital engagement platforms, and community-based tourism programs. Tourism authorities should strengthen collaboration with football stakeholders to integrate football events into broader destination marketing strategies. These recommendations are consistent with recent tourism governance studies emphasizing the importance of cross-sector collaboration, innovation, and destination management capabilities in achieving sustainable tourism competitiveness. In addition, investment in infrastructure, safety management, and professional governance is essential to maximize the tourism potential of football clubs.

This study also has several limitations. First, the research relied primarily on secondary documentary sources; therefore, future studies could incorporate primary data from supporters, tourists, club managers, and tourism stakeholders to provide deeper insights into visitor experiences and behavioral intentions. Second, the comparative analysis focused on three developing countries and selected football clubs, which may limit generalizability to other regions. Future research could expand the comparative scope by including more countries, different football leagues, or quantitative approaches to examine the relationship between football tourism development factors and tourism outcomes. These future directions are consistent with recent calls for more empirical, cross-cultural, and interdisciplinary approaches in sport tourism research.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the development of football club-based sports tourism in Indonesia, Thailand, and Ecuador has distinct characteristics, depending on the specific circumstances of each country. Indonesia's main strengths lie in fan loyalty and match atmosphere, but still faces management and financial constraints. Thailand demonstrates a more professional management system integrated with the tourism sector, serving as an example of effective sports tourism development in Southeast Asia. Meanwhile, Ecuador boasts significant potential in its football cultural identity and unique emotional experiences, but still faces limitations in infrastructure and investment. Overall, all three countries demonstrate that football can be a significant instrument for tourism and local economic development. Therefore, sustainable development strategies are needed through improving the quality of facilities, diversifying club revenue sources, strengthening sports tourism promotion, and collaboration between football clubs, the government, and the tourism sector.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGY

Not applicable.

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