

# Indigenous Games as a Catalyst for Sport Tourism Development in South Africa

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**Abstract:** This preliminary study seeks to investigate the role of indigenous games as catalysts for sport tourism development in South Africa. By employing a mixed-methods approach, qualitative data will be gathered through in-depth interviews with key informants, including government officials responsible for cultural affairs, organizers of indigenous games, and various stakeholder groups. Quantitative data on its part will be sourced from residents in host communities and from event participants and spectators. By examining multi-stakeholder perspectives on the phenomenon, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how indigenous games can be utilised as tools for sport tourism development in South Africa. The anticipated outcomes of the study include insights into the ways indigenous games can enhance South Africa's appeal as a sport tourism destination. Understanding key stakeholders' perspectives regarding indigenous games could reveal the potential areas of leveraging indigenous games for sport tourism. The implications of this research could be far-reaching, offering guidance to policymakers, tourism boards, and cultural organisations involved in their hosting. By recognizing the value of indigenous games in the broader context of sport tourism, stakeholders could develop strategies to promote sustainable tourism practices, preserve cultural heritage, and foster inclusive economic growth. This study outcomes should contribute to the ongoing discourse on the intersection of culture, sports, and tourism, emphasising the importance of indigenous games as a unique and underexplored asset in South Africa's sport tourism landscape. Ultimately, the findings could inform initiatives that capitalise on the synergies between cultural heritage and tourism for the benefit of both local communities and the broader South African economy.

**Keywords:** Indigenous Games, Sport Tourism, Tourism Development, South Africa.

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## 1. Introduction and Background

Sport tourism, as an emerging field within the tourism industry, has gained significant attention as a niche market that combines travel, recreation, and cultural experiences. This tourism niche offers opportunities for economic growth, cultural exchange, and community development (Aghili *et al.* 2023; Bonang *et al.* 2022). The subsector also serves as a bridge for cultural exchange as sporting events often draw diverse audiences, including athletes, coaches, and fans from around the world. Many countries around the world are actively involved in the organisation and management of sporting events for the opportunities they present to destinations. As a result, these events are being integrated into national development strategies (Bama 2018).

Indigenous games, deeply rooted in the cultural fabric of nations, represent a unique and rich aspect of South Africa's sporting heritage and have the potential to be catalysts for sport tourism development. Moreso, indigenous games offer unique and authentic cultural experiences which position them as visitor attractions. Given the benefits presented by these games, research is required to understand their potential for sport tourism development and identify strategies for such leverage. South Africa, known for its vibrant multicultural society and rich history, has a diverse range of indigenous games that have been passed down through generations (Burnett and Hollander 2004). These games hold significant cultural and historical value, embodying the traditions, values, and identities of various communities across the country (South Africa. Department of Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation 2009). However, the potential of indigenous games as a tourism attraction and economic driver remains largely untapped and under-investigated. Indigenous games have the potential to provide an authentic and immersive cultural experience for tourists, offering insights into local traditions, customs, and values (Burnett and Hollander 2004). They can create opportunities for community engagement, cultural exchange, and the empowerment of local communities through the preservation and promotion of their heritage. Furthermore, the development of sport tourism around indigenous games can contribute to the economic development of local communities, generating income, employment, and infrastructure development.

Despite the potential benefits, the integration of indigenous games into the sport tourism landscape faces various challenges. These include a lack of infrastructure and facilities to support tourism activities, limited awareness and promotion of indigenous games among tourists, and the need for capacity building and skills development within local communities (Odounga-Othy 2020). Additionally, there may be cultural sensitivities and concerns about the commercialisation and commodification of indigenous traditions that need to be addressed in the development of sport tourism initiatives. Therefore, this proposed study aims to investigate the role of indigenous games in promoting sport tourism development in South Africa. By exploring the current status of indigenous games as a tourism product, identifying the barriers and opportunities for their integration into the sport tourism sector, and developing strategies and recommendations for leveraging indigenous games to drive sport tourism development, this study seeks to contribute to the body of knowledge on sport tourism, cultural heritage, and sustainable community development in the South African context.

### **1.1 Research Problem**

The development of sport tourism in South Africa presents a significant opportunity for economic growth, cultural preservation, and community empowerment. However, there is a lack of scholarly attention on the potential of indigenous games as catalysts for sport tourism development. Deeply rooted in the cultural heritage of South Africa's diverse indigenous communities, such games have the potential to attract domestic and international tourists seeking unique and authentic experiences. Despite the potential significance of indigenous games, there exists limited scholarly enquiry into their potential impact on sport tourism development in South Africa. The existing focus on mainstream sports events and facilities overlooks the untapped potential of indigenous games to contribute to tourism growth, community engagement, and socio-economic development. This study is thus premised on the dearth of a comprehensive understanding of how indigenous games can be effectively leveraged as a catalyst for sport tourism development in South Africa. This knowledge gap inhibits the development of strategic initiatives, policies, and infrastructure that can harness the economic and socio-cultural benefits of indigenous games for sport tourism.

### **1.2 Research Aim and Objectives**

The study aims to investigate the role of indigenous games as catalysts for sport tourism development in South Africa and provide insights, recommendations, and strategies to harness their potential for sustainable tourism growth and socio-economic development. As such, the study is guided by the following objectives:

- To assess the current state of sport tourism development in South Africa in relation to opportunities for incorporating indigenous games.
- To explore the socio-economic impacts of incorporating indigenous games into sport tourism.
- To identify the challenges hindering the integration of indigenous games into the sport tourism development framework in South Africa.

### **1.3 Rationale and Significance of the Study**

This proposed study is underpinned by a well-defined rationale driven by a convergence of critical factors. South Africa, known for its rich cultural heritage and vibrant indigenous games, presents untapped potential in the realm of sport tourism as indigenous games, deeply rooted in the traditions and identities of diverse communities, offer a unique avenue for sport tourism development. However, such potential remains largely unexplored, necessitating a comprehensive study to harness these cultural treasures. Additionally, the study presents a laudable opportunity to transform South Africa's sport tourism landscape. Indigenous games possess the power to attract domestic and international tourists seeking authentic and immersive cultural experiences, thus representing an opportunity to expand and diversify South Africa's tourism offerings, thereby leveraging their socio-economic benefits.

Beyond its practical implications, this proposed study aims to expand the scholarly discourse on the relationship between indigenous games and sport tourism development. It seeks to offer fresh insights and knowledge to the fields of sport tourism, cultural heritage, and sustainable tourism, especially within the South African context. This study further highlights the need to explore and capitalise on the cultural richness of indigenous games as catalysts for sport tourism development.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to inform policy and practice in the field of sport tourism. The findings could provide valuable insights for tourism organisations, cultural institutions, and community

stakeholders on how to harness the potential of indigenous games for sport tourism development. By showcasing the cultural heritage and unique experiences associated with indigenous games, South Africa can diversify its tourism offerings, attract a broader tourist base, and create opportunities for community development and economic growth.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Overview of Sport Tourism in South Africa**

Swart and Bob (2007) observe that the sport tourism sector in South Africa has not consistently fulfilled its inherent potential, a situation attributed, at least in part, to the historical sanctions imposed during the apartheid period. Consequently, the South African government has taken significant measures to proactively promote the development of sport tourism. This includes the provision of essential infrastructure, training programs, marketing initiatives, and broader promotional efforts aimed at fostering the growth of the sport tourism segment within the overall tourism industry on a national scale (Swart and Bob 2007). In line with this perspective, Cornelissen (2004) contends that South Africa has recognised the potential of sport tourism to serve as a means of establishing a national identity and as a catalyst for broader economic growth and development of the country.

South Africa established itself as a prominent sport tourism destination through its successful hosting of a spectrum of sporting events, from small-scale and recurring events to mega and one-time occurrences, as documented in the literature (Bama and Tichaawa 2015). Notably several iconic sport tourism events have been hosted in the country over the years, including the 1995 Rugby World Cup, the 1996 African Nations Cup, the 2003 Cricket World Cup, the 2009 FIFA Confederations Cup, the 2010 FIFA World Cup, as well as recurring events such as the Cape Town Cycle Tour, the Two Oceans Marathon, the annual Durban July, and the Comrades Marathon (Bama and Tichaawa, 2021; Knott and Hemmonsbe, 2015). These events collectively contribute to South Africa's status as a leading sport tourism destination.

### **2.2 Indigenous Games in South Africa**

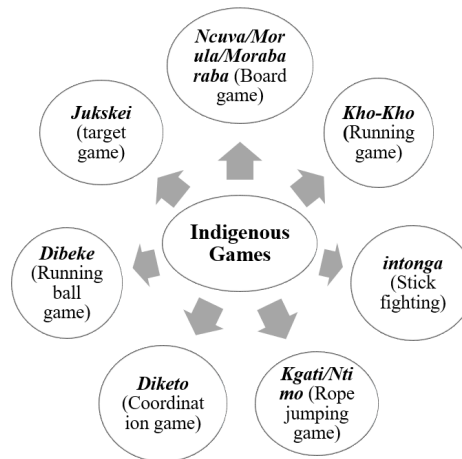
While various scholars have extensively studied various types of games, it is evident that there exists limited focus in the literature regarding indigenous games, mostly hosted in rural communities in South Africa (SA Sport Awards 2022). A plethora of scholarly focus has been dedicated to Western games, thereby overlooking the rich and diverse tapestry of indigenous games inherent to the South African cultural landscape. Annually, the Department of Sport and Recreation South Africa (DSRSA), in coordination with its provincial counterparts, orchestrates the Indigenous Games Festival (SA Sport Awards 2022). These festivals serve as a platform to honour the diverse cultures of Africa and represent a dedicated initiative to invigorate indigenous games. These games carry profound cultural significance and are integral to the identity and heritage of the communities. The DSRSA recognises the value of indigenous games in preserving and celebrating culture. Each province is encouraged to establish a unifying body that oversees the indigenous games hosted within its jurisdiction (SA Sport Awards 2022). This local-level structure helps streamline the organisation, promotion, and regulation of these games.

Once a particular indigenous game gains traction and is adopted by five provinces, with established rules and operational procedures, it is deemed ready to transition to the national stage. Thereon, the game's stakeholders are urged to establish a national governing body that operates independently (SA Sport Awards 2022). Additionally, the governing body can seek recognition and affiliation with the DSRSA, a process that ensures that indigenous games benefit from localised support and the broader national sports framework, contributing to their sustained development and promotion.

### **2.3 Historical and Cultural Significance**

Indigenous games possess a historical lineage that can be traced to the dawn of human civilization. Long before South Africa experienced the impact of colonisation, these games thrived as an integral part of the cultural and social fabric of the region (SA Sport Awards 2022). Knowledge and traditions associated with indigenous games were transmitted across generations through a combination of oral teachings and hands-on practice. Within the rural settings, children received their initial exposure to these games within the confines of their own homes, where informal education was practiced (SA Sport Awards 2022). This early home-based instruction made indigenous games the recreational pastime for children before they engaged in communal games.

These games form an integral part of the country's heritage and are deeply connected to the identity and traditions of various communities. Scholars have highlighted the role of indigenous games in promoting social cohesion, preserving cultural heritage, and fostering a sense of community pride (Segwapa, 2019). These games often carry symbolic meanings and serve as vehicles for passing down ancestral knowledge and values from one generation to another. Beashel and Taylor (1988) aptly contend that these indigenous games held an enduring appeal for people who relished the enjoyment and amusement they provided. The desire to partake in these games has been an enduring and robust characteristic of African culture. It is noteworthy that not only children but also adults participated in various indigenous games, such as those illustrated in Figure 1. These games serve as avenues for relaxation and pleasure, highlighting their significance as forms of leisure and entertainment among the local communities.



**Figure 1: Major types of Indigenous games in South Africa**

**Source: Western Cape Gov (2023)**

Sport tourism, through indigenous games, could create platforms for cultural exchange and interaction between visitors and host communities. They could allow for meaningful engagement with local communities, providing opportunities for mutual learning, understanding, and appreciation of diverse cultures. This enriches the overall sport tourism experience by going beyond mere athletic competition and delving into the cultural heritage and social dynamics of the destination. Additionally, the promotion of indigenous games through sport tourism can have significant socio-economic benefits for host communities. It can stimulate local economies by attracting visitors and generating revenue from tourism-related activities such as accommodation, transportation, and local crafts. This, in turn, could contribute to community development, infrastructure improvements, and the preservation of cultural endowments.

## 2.4 Challenges and Opportunities

Despite the potential benefits, several challenges need to be addressed for the successful integration of indigenous games into sport tourism. Lack of infrastructure, limited marketing efforts, and insufficient funding are common barriers faced by indigenous game initiatives (Dladla 2022). Additionally, issues related to cultural appropriation, intellectual property rights, and ethical considerations must be carefully navigated to ensure the respectful and sustainable promotion of indigenous games. However, there are also opportunities for collaboration and capacity building. Engaging local communities, establishing partnerships between tourism stakeholders and indigenous game custodians, and implementing responsible tourism practices can help overcome these challenges and create a positive impact.

### 2.4.1 Lack of Infrastructure

One of the primary challenges is the lack of infrastructure to support indigenous game initiatives. Many communities that host these games lack suitable facilities, equipment, and venues necessary to host such sport tourism activities. The absence of proper infrastructure hinders the organization and promotion of indigenous games as tourist attractions. In many communities where indigenous games are practiced, there is a significant dearth of essential infrastructure components such as suitable facilities, equipment, and venues that are necessary to host sport tourism activities. This deficiency in infrastructure impedes the ability to effectively

organise and promote indigenous games as tourism attractions. For instance, in South Africa, the game of *Jukskei* is a traditional target sport where participants throw a large wooden pin to knock down a group of smaller pins. Promoting *Jukskei* as a sport tourism attraction requires well-maintained playing fields with properly set-up target pins. Communities that lack the infrastructure for *Jukskei* may find it challenging to organise tournaments and attract tourists to experience the game. Conversely, regions with adequate infrastructure, such as well-maintained *Jukskei* courts and available equipment, are better positioned to leverage the game for its tourism potential. Tourists can participate in *Jukskei* competitions, and the presence of infrastructure allows for the effective organisation and promotion of the game as a cultural and sport tourism attraction. Therefore, while the potential for indigenous games as tourism attractions exists, their successful integration into the tourism sector in South Africa is hindered by the absence of infrastructure. Adequate facilities, equipment, and venues are essential for the effective organisation and promotion of these games, making the development of such infrastructure a crucial step in harnessing the tourism potential of indigenous games.

#### 2.4.2 Limited Marketing Efforts

Limited marketing efforts pose another challenge. Indigenous games initiatives often struggle to gain visibility and reach potential tourists due to limited promotional activities and awareness campaigns. Effective marketing strategies tailored to the unique cultural experiences offered by indigenous games are crucial to attract tourists and generate interest in these activities. Following are some key aspects of this challenge, along with practical examples from South Africa.

#### 2.4.3 Visibility and Awareness

Indigenous games are often not well-known outside the communities where they are traditionally played. As a result, potential tourists, both domestic and international, may not be aware of the existence and cultural significance of these games. Without awareness, there is a limited pool of tourists interested in experiencing them. For instance, the South African game of *Ncuvu*, a traditional Xhosa board game, is relatively unknown to tourists. In the absence of marketing efforts, it remains a hidden gem within Xhosa communities, with tourists missing out on the opportunity to engage with this culturally rich game.

#### 2.4.4 Insufficient Funding

Insufficient funding presents a significant hurdle for the sustainable development of indigenous games as a sport tourism niche. Financial resources are needed to invest in infrastructure development, marketing campaigns, capacity building, and training programs for local communities. Without adequate funding, it becomes challenging to realize the full potential of indigenous games as a catalyst for sport tourism.

### 2.5 Underpinning Theoretical Framework

Applying Freeman's stakeholder theory as the underpinning framework this study can ensure that the development of indigenous games as a catalyst for sport tourism in South Africa is inclusive, sustainable, and beneficial to all stakeholders (Freeman 2010). Prioritising open communication, collaboration, and mutual respect, the research can contribute to a thriving tourism industry that celebrates cultural diversity, supports local communities, and promotes long-term economic growth in South Africa. In addition, the application of the stakeholder theory helps enhance the study by giving a holistic understanding of the diverse interests, concerns, and relationships among the various stakeholders involved in sport tourism development (Nilsson and Aquino 2021; Getz and van Niekerk 2019; Vrontis *et al.* 2022). This helps facilitate the development of nuanced and inclusive approaches to leveraging indigenous games for sport tourism development in South Africa (Ernawati *et al.* 2019).

## 3. Research Design and Methodology

### 3.1 Research Approach

According to Papachroni and MacIntosh (2014) a research design is a plan from which research participants are obtained and information is processed. Creswell (2014:3) views the research approach or design as “plans and procedures for research that span the steps from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation.” Creswell (2014:12) further adds that research designs include “the types of enquiries within qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach that provides specific direction for

procedures in a research design". With the current study, both qualitative and quantitative approaches are envisaged whereby the sequential design will follow a QUAL-quant approach (Morse and Niehaus 2009). Since the primary focus of the study is on qualitative interviews, substantiated and supported by quantitative data, linked to the study's exploratory sequential design.

### 3.2 Research Paradigm

A paradigm is described as a set of basic beliefs that deal with ultimate or first principles (Guba and Lincoln 1994; Rahi 2017). Based on the nature of the proposed study, two research paradigms, constructivism and positivism will be adopted. A constructivist approach is dependent on the transactional and subjectivity of the study and indicates that the investigator and the object of investigation are assumed to be interactively linked so that the findings can be created as the investigation proceeds (Bogna *et al.* 2020). With the constructivist research position, the researchers believe that knowledge or phenomena can be better understood through social interaction between the researcher and the researched, thereby leading to the theory creation (Adom *et al.* 2016). In the proposed study, researchers will construct own understanding and knowledge of the world through "experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences" (Adom *et al.* 2016:1). For this study, interactive sessions involving in-depth semi-structured interviews with key sport tourism stakeholders including representatives of cultural institutions, policymakers, local community leaders, and business owners in locations where indigenous games are mostly hosted will be conducted.

Additionally, by adopting the positivist stance, embedded in the view that there is a 'single reality' that can be understood through scientific methods the researchers will implement a survey instrument comprising questions with mostly predetermined response options that relate to the research objectives to assist in confirming or refuting the views and opinions expounded in the qualitative data (Guba and Lincoln 1994). The positivist paradigm of exploring social reality assumes that one can best gain an understanding of human behaviour using only objective and observable facts (Park *et al.* 2020).

### 3.3 Data Collection and Fieldwork

A qualitative interview guide will be implemented for the semi-structured interviews with indigenous games' stakeholders including representatives of cultural institutions, policymakers, local community leaders, and business owners where these games are typically hosted. The interview questions will be determined based on the extant theory as well as the research aim and objectives. This will ensure the validity of the questions being posed. The semi-structured interview design will be guided by a set of questions since this protocol permits the researcher to probe where necessary (Curran *et al.* 2014).

Furthermore, the quantitative element of the study will use a structured, whereby a face-to-face survey instrument will be completed by spectators, participants of indigenous games as well as residents of host environments. Close-ended questions will be asked for respondents to indicate their perceptions regarding the socio-economic impact of indigenous games and elicit overall satisfaction and experience levels of these games. The instrument will be piloted to provide an opportunity to check if the instrument will be easy to use with the participants including testing for reliability (Goodman *et al.* 2003). The proposed questions in the survey instrument will be centred around the study's aim and objectives. Piloting will allow for the identification of any potential problems with the survey so that they are addressed prior to conducting the study.

### 3.4 Population, Sample Size and Data Analysis

The qualitative interviews will be conducted until data saturation is achieved. In the proposed study, at least 12 key informants (selected stakeholders) would be interviewed to achieve data saturation (Guest *et al.* 2020). However, for the quantitative survey, based on the population size of each participant group (event spectators, participants, and residents), the researchers would determine the representative sample size that enables the achievement of a 95% confidence level with a margin error of 5% (Isaac and Michael 1981). The data analysis would be informed by the methodological approaches. Content analysis and thematic analysis would be used for the interviews while SPSS version 29 would be used to assist in analysing quantitative data (frequency tables and graphs will be generated and presented).

### 3.5 Ethical Consideration

The study will comply with all ethical requirements including obtaining permission from the different stakeholder groups. In addition, permission to conduct the study was sought from the Faculty Research Ethics Committee, and an ethical clearance certificate was issued for the study. The purpose of the study and the confidentiality of participants' details will be explained before signing consent letters. Moreover, confidentiality will be guaranteed by not publishing the names of the participants during and after the interviews and the collected data will only be used for academic purposes.

## 4. Envisaged Outcomes and Conclusion

The envisaged outcomes of this research are manifold including providing an increased awareness of the value and potential of indigenous games as a unique aspect of South Africa's cultural heritage and tourism landscape. Additionally, the study offers opportunities for an enhanced understanding of the role of indigenous games on sport tourism development, drawing from the perspectives of various stakeholder groups and local communities. Since multiple stakeholder groups will contribute to the study, this could lead to an improved capacity of the stakeholders especially in the development and implementation of practical strategies that leverage indigenous games for tourism, while ensuring the preservation of cultural identity and the promotion of sustainable tourism practices. Moreover, the study could also solidify collaboration among the stakeholders, fostering a sense of shared ownership and responsibility for the development and promotion of indigenous games and sport tourism in South Africa.

The research findings will be disseminated through a variety of channels, including peer-reviewed publications, presentations at academic conferences and industry events, and policy briefs for relevant sport tourism stakeholders. The research team is also committed to engaging with local communities throughout the research process and ensuring that the findings are accessible and beneficial to all stakeholder groups.

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