

## Motivations of Sports Tourists and Their Companions in Participating in Rowing Activities in the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC)

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### **Abstract**

*This study explores the motivations of sports tourists and their companions in participating in rowing activities within Thailand's Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC). Water-based sports tourism, such as rowing, has increased in popularity due to its integration of physical activity with natural environments. A quantitative research design was employed, using structured questionnaires to assess five key motivational categories: physical health, personal achievement, social interaction, psychological well-being, and experiential enjoyment. A total of 200 participants, including sports tourists and their companions, were surveyed at various rowing events in the EEC. Results show high motivation levels across all categories, with experiential motivation being the most significant factor, followed by physical health and personal achievement. These findings underscore the importance of promoting rowing as an activity that addresses both physical and psychological needs while fostering social connections. Future research could explore how these factors influence long-term participation and retention in sports tourism.*

**Keywords:** Sports Tourism, Rowing, Motivation, Physical Health, Eastern Economic Corridor

### **INTRODUCTION**

Sports tourism is an emerging field within the broader tourism industry, driven by a global increase in interest in both recreational and competitive sports. Sports tourism integrates leisure and athletic participation, offering tourists the opportunity to engage in physical activities while exploring new environments. This sector has garnered attention due to its economic impact and the potential for sustainable development in many regions (Perić, Vitezić, & Badurina, 2019). As destinations worldwide recognize the benefits of sports tourism, there has been an increasing focus on water-based sports, such as rowing, which combine physical exertion with the natural environment, enhancing the appeal of sports tourism destinations (Ntelezi, Bama, & Muresherwa, 2024).

Rowing, a traditional water-based sport, has evolved into a popular activity within sports tourism, particularly in regions that can provide the necessary natural resources, such as rivers, lakes, and coastal areas (Ding et al., 2023). The Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) in Thailand, which encompasses the provinces of Chonburi, Rayong, and Chachoengsao, has emerged as a potential hub for rowing activities due to its abundant water bodies and scenic beauty (Muensriphum, Makmee, & Wongupparaj, 2021). The EEC has been strategically developed to support various sectors of tourism, including eco-tourism and sports tourism, making it a prime location for hosting rowing events and activities (Kamonmarl et al., 2023).

Understanding the motivations of sports tourists and their companions in participating in rowing activities is crucial for the successful development of sports tourism strategies. Motivation is a central concept in tourism studies, as it directly influences tourists' behavior, decision-making, and satisfaction levels. As Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (2020) suggests, motivation can be both intrinsic and extrinsic. Sports tourists often exhibit a range of motivations, from intrinsic desires such as personal achievement and self-improvement, to extrinsic factors like social recognition and physical health. These motivations can vary depending on the type of sports activity and the individual's level of involvement (Cerar, Kondrič, Ochiana, & Sindik, 2017).

In the context of rowing, sports tourists may be motivated by the opportunity to challenge themselves physically, improve their rowing skills, and enjoy the competitive aspect of the sport. Personal achievement,

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physical fitness, and the thrill of competition are often key drivers for participants in adventure and endurance sports (Pawid, 2023). Moreover, the scenic landscapes and natural beauty of rowing destinations can enhance the overall experience, offering a sense of connection with nature, which has been shown to positively impact participants' psychological well-being (Pawid, 2023)

Companions of sports tourists, although not always directly involved in the physical activity, also play a significant role in the sports tourism experience (Derman, 2019). Their motivations may differ from those of the primary participants, with factors such as supporting friends or family members, enjoying the social aspects of the event, and engaging with the destination's natural and cultural offerings often taking precedence (Perry, Ager, & Sitas, 2019). The motivations of companions are equally important in shaping the overall satisfaction and success of the tourism experience, as they contribute to the social dynamics and atmosphere of the event (Rejón-Guardia, Rialp-Criado, & García-Sastre, 2023).

The Eastern Economic Corridor offers a unique setting for both sports tourists and their companions (Eastern Economic Corridor Office, 2018). The region's combination of natural beauty, cultural heritage, and strategic tourism development makes it an ideal location for promoting rowing activities as a key component of sports tourism (Prasetyo et al., 2024). However, to fully capitalize on the region's potential, it is essential to understand the specific motivations driving both sports tourists and their companions. Such an understanding can inform the development of tailored marketing strategies, event planning, and infrastructure development, ensuring that the needs and expectations of both groups are met (Lin, Lee, Hong, & Tung, 2022).

This study aims to investigate the motivations of sports tourists and their companions in participating in rowing activities within the EEC. By identifying the key motivational drivers, the research seeks to provide insights that can inform the design and promotion of sports tourism activities in the region. Ultimately, this research aims to contribute to the broader body of knowledge on sports tourism, particularly in the context of water-based sports, and to support the sustainable development of the EEC as a premier sports tourism destination.

## **OBJECTIVE**

To investigate the motivations of sports tourists and their companions in participating in rowing activities within the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC).

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employs a quantitative research approach to investigate the motivations of sports tourists and their companions in participating in rowing activities within the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC). The methodology focuses on data collection through structured questionnaires, followed by statistical analysis to understand the key motivational factors.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

This study adopts a quantitative research design to measure and analyze the motivations of sports tourists and their companions in participating in rowing activities within the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC). The objective is to gather data on the key motivational factors that influence participation and to use statistical analysis to interpret these findings.

### **Measuring Motivation**

The study will utilize a structured questionnaire designed to measure five primary categories of motivation based on established frameworks in sports and tourism research. These categories are:

**Physical Health Motivation:** Motivation related to improving fitness and overall health.

**Personal Achievement Motivation:** The drive for self-improvement, goal achievement, and skill mastery.

**Social Motivation:** The desire for social interaction, group participation, and social recognition.

**Psychological Motivation:** Motivation linked to mental health, stress relief, and emotional well-being.

**Experiential Motivation:** The enjoyment of new experiences, adventure, and the unique aspects of the activity.

Each category will consist of several statements that participants will rate using a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 represents "strongly disagree" and 5 represents "strongly agree." Based on the average score of responses, motivation levels will be interpreted using the following scale:

Very High (4.21 – 5.00) Indicates a very strong level of motivation.

High (3.41 – 4.20) Reflects a strong motivation.

Moderate (2.61 – 3.40) Suggests an average or moderate level of motivation.

Low (1.81 – 2.60) Represents a low level of motivation.

Very Low (1.00 – 1.80) Indicates minimal or very low motivation.

This method provides a standardized approach for measuring motivation and ensures consistent data interpretation across different motivational factors. (Simms, Zelazny, Williams, & Bernstein, 2019)

### Sample and Sampling Technique

A convenience sampling method will be employed to recruit participants. The target sample size is 200 respondents, consisting of both sports tourists and their companions who are attending rowing events in the EEC. This sample size is sufficient to provide statistically reliable results and allow for meaningful analysis of the different motivational factors.

**Table 1 Number of Sports Tourists and Companions Used as the Sample in the Research**

| No. | Item   | Sample Group (people) |            |
|-----|--|-----------------------|------------|
|     |  | Sports Tourists       | Companions |
| 1   | River Audax Amateur, Chachoengsao Province                               | 20                    | 20         |
| 2   | Kayak Forest Trip, Phra Chedi Klang Nam Mangrove Forest, Rayong Province | 20                    | 20         |
| 3   | Traditional Rowing Competition, Chachoengsao Province                    | 20                    | 20         |
| 4   | Rayong Fishing Cup 2024 (Matcha Ha Khu, 2nd Edition), Rayong Province    | 20                    | 20         |
| 5   | Tiny Island Challenge 2024, Chonburi Province                            | 20                    | 20         |
|     | Total  | 100                   | 100        |

### Data Collection

The questionnaire will be distributed to participants in person at selected rowing events within the EEC. It will also be available online via a survey platform to reach a wider audience. Participation will be voluntary, and all responses will be anonymized to protect the privacy of the respondents.

### DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected from the questionnaires will be analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics

#### Descriptive Statistics

**Mean** and **standard deviation** will be calculated for each motivational category to provide an overall picture of motivation levels among sports tourists and their companions.

### ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This research adhered to strict ethical guidelines to protect the rights and privacy of all participants. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents prior to their participation in the survey or interviews. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of their involvement, and their right to withdraw at any time. Confidentiality was ensured through the anonymization of personal data, and all interview recordings and transcripts were securely stored to prevent unauthorized access. This research was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of Burapha University, with certification number HU043/2566.

**EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

The quantitative analysis will identify the main motivators for sports tourists and their companions to participate in rowing activities within the EEC. Physical health, personal achievement, and experiential motivation are expected to be key factors. Furthermore, the study will provide insights into how demographic factors influence motivation, which can be used to inform the development of sports tourism plans in the EEC area.

**RESULTS**

**Table 2 Shows the mean, standard deviation, and motivation levels of sports tourists and their companions in participating in rowing activities to promote sports tourism.**

| Motivations for Participating in Rowing Activities in the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) | Sports Tourists |                    |                  | Companions |                    |                  |
|---|-----------------|--------------------|------------------|------------|--------------------|------------------|
|   | Average         | Standard Deviation | Motivation Level | Average    | Standard Deviation | Motivation Level |
| 1. Physical Health  | 4.08            | 0.82               | High             | 4.12       | 0.75               | High             |
| 1.1 Rowing helps with weight control.   | 3.95            | 0.86               | High             | 4.16       | 0.66               | High             |
| 1.2 Rowing improves physical fitness, making the body attractive and appealing.           | 4.17            | 0.77               | High             | 4.19       | 0.66               | High             |
| 1.3 Rowing promotes overall health.   | 4.09            | 0.86               | High             | 4.11       | 0.81               | High             |
| 1.4 Rowing helps reduce the risk of diseases.   | 4.16            | 0.74               | High             | 3.92       | 0.92               | High             |
| 1.5 Rowing prevents illness and contributes to a longer lifespan.                         | 4.04            | 0.85               | High             | 4.24       | 0.69               | Very High        |
| 2. Achievement  | 4.19            | 0.75               | High             | 4.12       | 0.74               | High             |
| 2.1 Helps improve one's rowing skills, including speed and technique.                     | 4.08            | 0.82               | High             | 4.06       | 0.69               | High             |
| 2.2 Participates in competitions to achieve victory over others.                          | 4.19            | 0.75               | High             | 4.09       | 0.76               | High             |
| 2.3 Enhances rowing performance to compete at higher levels.                              | 4.24            | 0.73               | Very High        | 3.95       | 0.86               | High             |
| 2.4 Competes to overcome personal challenges.   | 4.11            | 0.81               | High             | 4.09       | 0.86               | High             |
| 2.5 Achieves better physical fitness and emotional well-being.                            | 4.35            | 0.64               | Very High        | 4.41       | 0.55               | Very High        |
| 3. Social Motives   | 4.13            | 0.78               | High             | 4.12       | 0.75               | High             |
| 3.1 Gains acceptance from friends and the general public.                                 | 4.22            | 0.81               | Very High        | 4.16       | 0.66               | High             |
| 3.2 Makes family or friends proud of oneself.   | 4.05            | 0.59               | High             | 4.04       | 0.85               | High             |
| 3.3 Builds personal recognition and opens doors to other networking opportunities.        | 4.15            | 0.81               | High             | 4.09       | 0.77               | High             |
| 3.4 Fosters a community of rowers for sharing experiences.                                | 4.22            | 0.81               | Very High        | 4.12       | 0.74               | High             |
| 3.5 Engages in activities that lead to business collaborations and income generation.     | 3.99            | 0.87               | High             | 4.18       | 0.71               | High             |

**Table 2 (Continued)**

| Motivations for Participating in Rowing Activities in the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) | Sports Tourists |                    |                  | Companions |                    |                  |
|---|-----------------|--------------------|------------------|------------|--------------------|------------------|
|   | Average         | Standard Deviation | Motivation Level | Average    | Standard Deviation | Motivation Level |
| 4. Psychological Motives  | 4.15            | 0.78               | High             | 4.13       | 0.79               | High             |
| 4.1 Helps reduce anxiety, worry, and address arising problems.                            | 4.39            | 0.58               | Very High        | 4.12       | 0.74               | High             |
| 4.2 Enhances emotional well-being, providing more time and focus for oneself.             | 4.32            | 0.70               | Very High        | 4.34       | 0.69               | Very High        |
| 4.3 Improves life, filling it with hope.  | 4.01            | 0.91               | High             | 4.26       | 0.66               | Very High        |
| 4.4 Encourages a positive outlook, making life more meaningful and valuable.              | 3.97            | 0.91               | High             | 3.83       | 1.11               | High             |
| 4.5 Boosts self-confidence.   | 4.07            | 0.82               | High             | 4.09       | 0.76               | High             |
| 5. Experiential Marketing   | 4.24            | 0.69               | Very High        | 4.19       | 0.71               | High             |

|   |      |      |           |      |      |           |
|---|------|------|-----------|------|------|-----------|
| 5.1 Participating in rowing activities gives you the opportunity to experience something new.     | 4.26 | 0.73 | Very High | 4.06 | 0.69 | High      |
| 5.2 Participating in rowing activities makes you feel happy.                                      | 4.32 | 0.70 | Very High | 4.12 | 0.76 | High      |
| 5.3 Participating in rowing activities helps create an atmosphere of creativity and innovation.   | 4.25 | 0.55 | Very High | 4.35 | 0.64 | Very High |
| 5.4 Participating in rowing activities gives you stories to share with others.                    | 4.26 | 0.66 | Very High | 4.30 | 0.66 | Very High |
| 5.5 Gaining rowing experience makes you want to participate in rowing activities more frequently. | 4.21 | 0.70 | Very High | 4.12 | 0.74 | High      |
| 5.6 Participating in rowing activities makes you feel modern and up-to-date with societal trends. | 4.15 | 0.81 | High      | 4.19 | 0.75 | High      |
| Total   | 4.17 | 0.76 | High      | 4.15 | 0.74 | High      |

**Table 2** presents the mean, standard deviation, and motivation levels of both sports tourists and their companions in participating in rowing activities within the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC). The results indicate that the overall motivation levels for both groups are **high** across various categories of motivation, including physical health, achievement, social motives, psychological motives, and experiential marketing. Below is a detailed breakdown of the findings for each category:

### Physical Health Motivation

**Sports tourists** had an average motivation score of 4.08, while **companions** scored 4.12, both falling within the **high** motivation level. This suggests that both groups recognize the physical health benefits of rowing, such as weight control, improved physical fitness, and disease prevention.

The highest motivation within this category for companions was **"Rowing prevents illness and contributes to a longer lifespan"** (average 4.24), indicating that health longevity is a significant motivator.

Both groups agreed strongly that **rowing improves physical fitness**, with sports tourists scoring 4.17 and companions 4.19, indicating a common perception of rowing's physical appeal.

### Achievement Motivation

Achievement motivation was **high** for both sports tourists (4.19) and companions (4.12). This indicates that personal accomplishment and skill development are important motivators.

The highest scores within this category were for **"Achieving better physical fitness and emotional well-being"** (sports tourists: 4.35, companions: 4.41), indicating that achieving a balance of physical and emotional well-being through rowing is a critical driver for both groups.

**Competing to overcome personal challenges** was also a significant factor, with high scores for both groups (sports tourists: 4.11, companions: 4.09).

### Social Motivation

Social motives were rated as **high** for both groups, with sports tourists scoring 4.13 and companions 4.12. This indicates that rowing activities are seen as opportunities for social interaction and recognition.

The highest-rated item in this category was **"Fostering a community of rowers for sharing experiences"** for sports tourists (4.22), highlighting the importance of community-building and shared experiences.

Companions, too, valued the social aspect of rowing, as reflected in their high rating for **"Engaging in activities that lead to business collaborations and income generation"** (4.18), suggesting that rowing can foster social and economic networking opportunities.

### Psychological Motivation

Psychological motives were also rated as **high** for both sports tourists (4.15) and companions (4.13). Rowing appears to offer significant psychological benefits, such as reducing stress and promoting emotional well-being.

The highest score within this category for both groups was for **"Enhances emotional well-being, providing more time and focus for oneself"** (sports tourists: 4.32, companions: 4.34), indicating that participants view rowing as a way to improve emotional health and personal focus.

**Helps reduce anxiety and address problems** was also highly rated, particularly for sports tourists (4.39), suggesting that the activity serves as an effective stress-relief mechanism.

### **Experiential Motivation**

Experiential marketing was rated the **highest** overall category for sports tourists (4.24) and **high** for companions (4.19). This reflects the fact that participants are highly motivated by the unique and enjoyable experiences that rowing offers.

Both groups gave high ratings to the statement **"Participating in rowing activities gives you stories to share with others"** (sports tourists: 4.26, companions: 4.30), indicating the value placed on creating memorable experiences to share.

**Creating an atmosphere of creativity and innovation** was also strongly valued, with sports tourists giving it a score of 4.25 and companions 4.35, suggesting that rowing activities foster a sense of creativity and engagement.

### **Overall Results**

The overall motivation levels for both groups are **high**, with sports tourists averaging 4.17 and companions averaging 4.15. This suggests that rowing activities in the EEC are perceived positively by both sports tourists and their companions, with strong motivations spanning physical health, achievement, social interaction, psychological benefits, and experiential enjoyment.

## **DISCUSSION**

The findings from this study indicate that both sports tourists and their companions are highly motivated to participate in rowing activities within the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC), with significant drivers of motivation identified across several dimensions: physical health, achievement, social interaction, psychological well-being, and experiential enjoyment. These results offer valuable insights into how rowing activities can be promoted to enhance sports tourism in the EEC, and they align with existing literature on sports tourism and motivation.

### **1. Physical Health Motivation**

Physical health was found to be a strong motivator for both sports tourists and their companions. The results show that participants are highly motivated by the physical benefits of rowing, including weight control, improved fitness, and disease prevention. These findings are consistent with previous research that highlights the role of health-related motivations in sports tourism (Carvache-Franco, Hassan, Orden-Mejía, Carvache-Franco, & Carvache-Franco, 2024). Rowing, as a physically demanding yet accessible activity, allows participants to experience the benefits of exercise in a natural environment. The high scores for statements like **"Rowing prevents illness and contributes to a longer lifespan"** suggest that both sports tourists and companions are particularly concerned with long-term health outcomes, which should be emphasized in marketing efforts for rowing events.

### **2. Achievement Motivation**

Achievement motivation was another significant driver for participation in rowing activities. Both groups rated the desire for personal accomplishment, skill development, and competition highly. The highest-rated item in this category—**"Achieves better physical fitness and emotional well-being"**—indicates that participants are not only focused on physical improvement but also on achieving a balance between mental and physical health. This supports previous studies that link achievement in sports tourism to a sense of personal fulfillment and well-being (Mirehie, Sato, & Krohn, 2021). For sports tourists, the opportunity to enhance their rowing

skills and compete at higher levels is a key factor, which suggests that organizing events that cater to both novice and advanced rowers could increase participation.

### **3. Social Motivation**

Social motivation was rated highly by both sports tourists and companions, indicating the importance of community, social interaction, and recognition in rowing activities. The desire to gain acceptance from peers, make family proud, and build social networks through rowing events was evident in the high scores for related items. The findings are consistent with the work of Yang, Ju, and Tian (2022), who suggest that social interaction is a key motivator in group-based sports tourism activities. The EEC can leverage this by promoting rowing as a communal activity, offering team-based competitions and social events that foster networking opportunities. The finding that companions value **"Engaging in activities that lead to business collaborations and income generation"** further emphasizes the potential for rowing activities to serve as a platform for social and professional networking.

### **Psychological Motivation**

The psychological benefits of rowing were also evident, with both groups rating this dimension highly. Rowing was seen as a way to reduce stress, improve emotional well-being, and enhance life satisfaction. The finding that sports tourists rated **"Helps reduce anxiety and address arising problems"** highly supports the notion that physical activity can play a significant role in mental health management (Sparks & Ring, 2022). Additionally, the high scores for **"Enhances emotional well-being"** suggest that rowing offers participants time for self-reflection and personal focus, contributing to a sense of mindfulness and emotional resilience. This finding highlights the importance of promoting the mental health benefits of rowing as part of a holistic sports tourism experience.

### **Experiential Motivation**

Experiential marketing emerged as the highest motivational factor, particularly for sports tourists, indicating that participants are motivated by the novelty, enjoyment, and storytelling potential of rowing activities. This finding aligns with Weed (2008), who emphasize the importance of creating unique, memorable experiences in sports tourism. The fact that both sports tourists and companions rated **"Participating in rowing activities gives you stories to share with others"** highly suggests that the social and narrative aspects of the experience are crucial in shaping their overall satisfaction. Additionally, the high scores for **"Creating an atmosphere of creativity and innovation"** indicate that participants view rowing as a stimulating and dynamic activity that goes beyond physical exertion.

### **Implications for Sports Tourism in the EEC**

The findings from this study have important implications for promoting rowing activities and enhancing sports tourism in the EEC. First, the high levels of motivation across all categories suggest that rowing has broad appeal, offering both physical and psychological benefits, social opportunities, and memorable experiences. Marketing strategies should focus on highlighting these diverse motivations to attract a wide range of participants, from health-conscious individuals to those seeking adventure and social interaction.

Moreover, the significant role of **achievement motivation** suggests that organizing competitive events at various skill levels could attract participants looking to improve their performance or challenge themselves. Offering skill-building workshops or training camps in conjunction with rowing events could further enhance the appeal for participants seeking personal achievement.

Finally, the strong emphasis on **experiential motivation** indicates that the EEC should focus on creating unique and immersive rowing experiences. By integrating cultural elements, local scenery, and storytelling opportunities, rowing events can be transformed into memorable experiences that participants will want to share with others, thereby enhancing word-of-mouth promotion and repeat participation.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that sports tourists and their companions are highly motivated to participate in rowing activities within the EEC due to the physical health benefits, personal achievement, social interaction, psychological well-being, and unique experiences associated with the sport. The findings provide valuable insights for the development of niche sports tourism initiatives in the EEC, particularly by emphasizing the holistic benefits of rowing and tailoring marketing strategies to appeal to the diverse motivations of potential participants. Future research could explore how these motivational factors influence long-term participation and retention in rowing activities.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research project was funded by the internal budget of the Faculty of Sports Science, Burapha University, for the fiscal year 2023.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding this research.

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