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Post-positivism Research Paradigm and Philosophical Assumption of Sport Tourism

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Abstract

A paradigm represents an all-encompassing set of beliefs, perspectives, or structures that direct research and practical applications within a particular field. Different paradigms have different ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological descriptions. Every paradigm has differing assumptions of reality and knowledge in which the researcher underpins his or her research approach; this is reflected in their methodology and methods. Post-positivism believes in multiple realities and perceptions by multiple persons in multi-social structures in multi-level. Ontology is the researcher's perception, belief, experience, and value of the topic. The ontology of sports tourism asserts a single, real impact of sports events on tourism, though this impact is understood as probabilistic and imperfectly known. Epistemology establishes a philosophical foundation for determining feasible knowledge types and serves as the method by which the researchers perceive sufficient and valid knowledge. It is deep rooted and socially constructed multiple reality in nature. The epistemological knowledge in sports tourism is seen as approximative and tentative, derived through objective, though inherently partial, data collection and analysis. Researchers strive for objectivity while acknowledging and transparently reporting the influence of their values and biases in sports tourism from axiological perspectives. Observation and focused group discussion can be used for qualitative information. Methodology in

sports tourism employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to approximate reality.

Keywords : paradigm, ontology, epistemology, methodology, axiology, and Sport tourism

Introduction of Paradigm

American philosopher, Thomas Kuhn (1962) first used the word "paradigm" to describe a way of thinking. The term originates from the Greek word meaning "pattern." In educational research, a paradigm refers to a researcher's "worldview" (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). This worldview encompasses the perspective, school of thought, or shared beliefs influencing how research data is understood and interpreted. As Lather (1986) explains, a research paradigm reflects the researcher's beliefs about the world they live in and aspire to. It includes the abstract beliefs and principles that shape a researcher's view of the world and guide their interpretation and actions within it. Essentially, a paradigm is a conceptual lens through which a researcher examines the methodological aspects of their project, determining the research methods to use and how to analyze the data.

A paradigm is a comprehensive belief system, worldview, or framework that steers research endeavors. It is also referred to as a model or framework for observation and comprehension, influencing both what the researcher perceives and how they interpret it. Paradigms imply widely acknowledged scientific accomplishments that temporarily furnish a community with model problems and solutions (Kuhn, 1970). It is also called the lens through which the researchers share world views that inform philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality, ways of knowing, and values and belief systems that guide us in how to solve the problem or issues of the research area.

A research paradigm constitutes a set of beliefs that dictate the approach to what ought to be investigated, how research should be conducted, how findings should be communicated or analyzed, and so forth, an exhaustive belief system, worldview, or framework that guides research and application in a particular field. Research philosophy is the foundational framework underpinning all scholarly inquiry, anchoring the methods, approaches, and paradigms that shape our understanding of the world (Lim, 2023). It shapes what is observed and how it is comprehended.

It is essential to recognize that each research paradigm is grounded in its own ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological assumptions, which shape the overall research approach (Lincoln & Guba, 1989). These assumptions fundamentally influence the researcher's understanding of reality, knowledge, and investigation methods. Thus, the

paradigm choice is theoretical and has practical implications for the entire research process. Positivism, post-positivism, interpretivism/constructivism, and critical paradigms are widely used in the research. (Creswell, & Creswell, 2017). Researchers choose paradigm as their perspective when conducting research. Post-positivism is widely used in the social sciences like Health, physical, and sports education (citation), which is described.

Post-positive Research Paradigm

The researcher selects the post-positivism paradigm, a philosophical stance that emerged in the 20th century as a response to the limitations of positivism. Unlike positivists, who contend that reality is absolute, verifiable, and quantifiable, post-positivists challenge these notions, recognizing human perception's inherent complexities and subjectivities. This departure from positivism is particularly significant in education, where the traditional positivist view upheld the authority of textbooks and teachers without question. This perspective, Thorndike's psychological theories prevalent at the time, emphasized obedience and discipline among students. The landscape of educational philosophy began to shift with the establishment of the Progressive Education Association in 1920 and the influential ideas of educators like John Dewey. These developments paved the way for perspectives beyond positivism, including post-positivism, championed by thinkers such as Comte, Mill, Durkheim, Locke, and Karl Popper (Maksimović et al., (2023). While discipline and obedience remained important, there was a growing recognition of the need for students to engage critically with their education, fostering an environment of intellectual freedom and safety conducive to active learning.

Post-positivism emphasizes knowledge through perception, belief, culture, thinking, and human acceptance (Scott et al., 2017). "Post-positivists hold a deterministic philosophy in which cause (probably) determines effects or outcomes. Thus, post-positivists' problems reflect the need to identify and assess the cause that influences outcomes, such as in experiments" (Creswell, 2014, p. 6). They recognize the non-singular nature of reality and the inherent inaccuracies in observations, which means theories can be revised.

"In sports tourism, the post-positivist research paradigm delves into the policy, principles, guidelines, and structures that define such sports environments and their impact on socio-economic conditions (Bazzanella et al., (2023). This paradigm's key ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology elements are carefully examined and interpreted. These components are imbued with post-positivism principles, which reject the idea of absolute reality and acknowledge human knowledge's inherent biases and limitations."

In the post-positivist framework, ontology acknowledges that reality is multifaceted

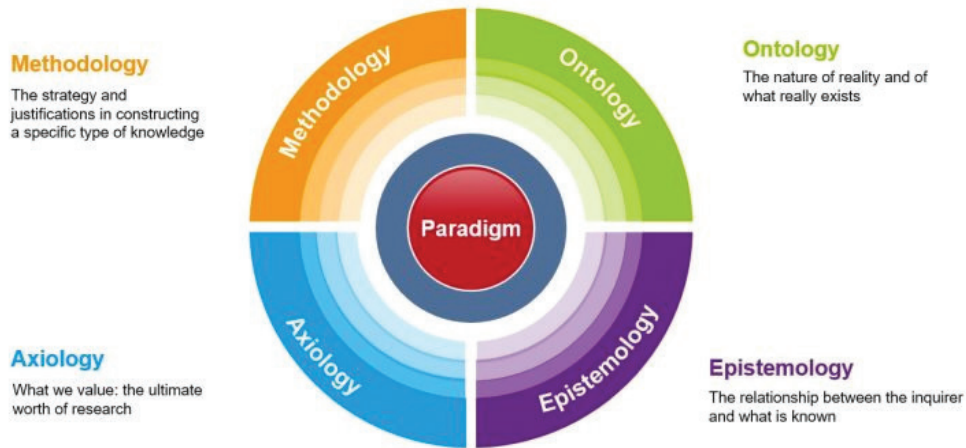
and may be perceived differently by different individuals. Epistemology explores how knowledge is constructed and understood, recognizing the role of empirical evidence and theoretical reasoning. Axiology considers the values and ethical considerations that underpin research, ensuring that studies are conducted with integrity and respect for human dignity. Methodology encompasses the strategies and techniques employed in research, emphasizing the importance of rigorous inquiry and critical analysis.

Methodology of the Study

Methodology is "the strategy, plan of action, processor design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of the methods to the desired outcomes" (Crotty, 2003, p. 3). Knowledge and its discovery are objective and subjective. Basically, in social science, there is no absolute truth. So, the researcher cannot prove any theory as the best theory, but he can refer to it. According to Perry (1968), dualism, multiplicity, context, and commitment in relativism are four categories of perspectives. It holds a multiplicity of absolutism. Reality is social rather than sensory only. While preparing this article, the writers consulted secondary sources like articles, books, etc. The linkage of variables is consciously observed, the answers to those relations are found, and new facts and knowledge regarding sports tourism are discussed as post-positive perspectives.

Result and Discussion

All the paradigms consist of ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology. Research approaches are made up of four main ideas: reality (ontology), knowledge (epistemology), values (axiology), and methods (methodology). These ideas guide how research is planned and carried out. According to Lincoln and Guba (1989), a paradigm comprises four elements: epistemology, ontology, methodology, and axiology. It is important to have a firm understanding of these elements because they comprise the Researchers' need to think about these ideas before starting their research. Researchers consider the paradigm in which they situate their work before starting the research (Alele, & Aduli, 2023). Figure 1 shows the research paradigm and its components.

Figure 1*The Components of Research Paradigm***The Research paradigm**

Source by (<https://jcu.pressbooks.pub/app/uploads/sites/60/2022/11/Research-paradigm-screenshot-768x426.jpg>). In this section, the writers clarify the methods and procedures used to study post-positivism's ontology, epistemology axiology, and methodology one by one.

Ontology of Sport Tourism

Ontology pertains to how researchers perceive phenomena and their underlying mechanisms. Post-positivists advocate for critical realism (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), acknowledging that absolute objectivity as detached observers within our world is unattainable. They recognize that not all social research can follow the model of natural sciences, yet they maintain faith in the existence of an objective reality. According to Crotty (2003), ontology involves the researcher's understanding of the subject matter or problem, essentially delving into the study of existence. "Post-positivists believe that humans' understanding of reality is inherently partial. Post-positivists believe that reality exists and that there is good reason to try to know it" (Tracy, 2013, p. 39). They stress the importance of multiple measures and observations for consistency. "The knowledge that develops through a postpositivist lens is based on careful observation and measurement of the objective reality that exists 'out there' in the world" (Creswell, 2017, p. 6).

Critical realism asserts that a 'real' reality exists independently of our perceptions but can only be imperfectly and probabilistically understood. This perspective acknowledges that while a single, objective reality exists, our ability to comprehend it fully is limited

by our observational and interpretative capacities. Therefore, our understanding of reality is always tentative and subject to revision as new information and better methodologies become available. Criticism of the positivist paradigm arises from its application of the scientific method to human affairs research. Unlike natural sciences, social constructs often lack uniform causal relationships. However, as Karl Popper suggested, this doesn't entail wholesale rejection of scientific research's merits but rather calls for minor adjustments to enhance objectivity in social science research. Theories cannot capture absolute truth; they can merely approach or approximate it (Cresswell, 2009).

Under the post-positivist paradigm, the ontological perspective suggests a 'real' but imperfectly graspable reality regarding the effects and experiences of sports tourists. Although a singular objective reality exists concerning the economic, social, and cultural impacts of sports events on tourism, our comprehension is hindered by the complexity and variability inherent in human behavior and environmental factors. For instance, a large-scale sporting event might enhance local economies and boost community pride. However, these outcomes are probabilistic and can vary significantly based on numerous contextual variables (Higham & Hinch, 2009). Sports tourism refers to traveling to another location, often a different country or region, to participate in, view, or celebrate a sporting event or activity. It encompasses many activities like active sport tourism, event sport tourism, and nostalgia sport tourism. It has health benefits by playing and making recreation, economic circulation, cultural exchange, and global awareness. Sports tourism is a dynamic and growing sector of the tourism industry in which participants and organizing countries take wide-ranging benefits.

Epistemology of Sport Tourism

The modified dualist/objectivist epistemology assumes that we can only approximate the nature of reality due to incomplete data. While it recognizes the importance of objectivity, it accepts that our knowledge is inherently partial and provisional. Epistemology examines the fundamental questions of what we know and how we come to know it. As Cohan (2007) concisely puts it, it concerns nature and various forms of knowledge. This branch of philosophy elucidates the mechanisms through which knowledge is generated, acquired, and conveyed, serving as a framework for understanding knowledge acquisition as articulated (Crotty, 2003). Post-positivism emerges as a refined approach to scientific inquiry within the social sciences, departing from the strict empiricism of positivism.

Post-positivism is the confidence that genuine knowledge is rooted in scientific inquiry, yet it acknowledges human observation and interpretation's limitations and

inherent biases. Critical realism is a prominent philosophical strand within post-positivism, which suggests that an objective reality exists independent of individual perceptions. This perspective contrasts with positivism in its emphasis on the falsifiability of theories rather than their mere verification, as elucidated (Ponterotto, 2005). Guba and Lincoln (1994) illustrate this distinction by comparing swans, emphasizing the importance of disconfirming evidence in scientific inquiry. Minimal interaction between researchers and subjects is encouraged to maintain objectivity, but it acknowledges that some interaction is unavoidable. This approach strives for an objective understanding while accepting that perfect knowledge is unattainable.

Epistemology is the study of knowledge and how we come to know things. It explores ways we acquire knowledge, such as through our senses, intuition, reasoning, and various logical methods. Critical realism, an important idea in post-positivism, highlights that human observation is imperfect and theories need constant updating with new evidence (Trochim, 2002). There are two main approaches within epistemology: empiricism and rationalism. Empiricism focuses on gaining knowledge through sensory experience and observation, while rationalism emphasizes reason and logic. These ideas influence how research is conducted, affecting decisions on research methods and tools for seeking truth. Epistemology also acknowledges that personal biases can affect our observations and understanding of reality, and this acceptance of possible errors and adaptable theories sets critical realism apart from the more rigid views of positivism.

Epistemology guides how we investigate social reality, focusing on the origins and nature of knowledge and the relationship between the knower and the known. It provides the basis for creating, acquiring, and communicating knowledge. Post-positivism, a less rigid form of positivism, encourages interaction between researchers and participants (Willis, 2007). It suggests that personal perceptions shape our understanding of the world and that absolute truths don't exist. Scientific theories are open to being proven wrong rather than confirmed. Research helps establish knowledge, which post-positivists see as beliefs supported by reasons and truth. They emphasize using multiple measures and observations to distinguish between knowledge and opinion.

Knowledge is gained as i) Sense-perception and experience, ii) Wisdom knowledge / logical knowledge, or deep knowledge/concept formation. application of knowledge, iii) Practical knowledge that is very scientific and reliable in daily activities. For example, a child can gain knowledge from his environment at the beginning via five sense organs, which may repeatedly interact with his living environment, followed by concept formation.

The second stage of knowledge formation via logical conclusion and concept formation. After forming a concept in any subject matter, we can describe or interpret the contents, such as concrete objects. After social interaction and material production, man involved in their daily activities acquire the practical knowledge that may be essential in each stage of life.

From an epistemological perspective, post-positivist research in sports tourism assumes that our understanding of the phenomena can only be approximated. Researchers strive to achieve objective comprehension through meticulous data collection and analysis while acknowledging their methods' inherent limitations and potential biases. For example, studies might employ surveys and economic data to estimate the financial impact of a major sports event on local tourism. However, the data might be incomplete or influenced by external factors such as weather or concurrent events (Gibson, 2005).

Sports tourism catalyzes promoting physical, mental, and cognitive health. Encouraging active lifestyles, providing stress relief, and fostering social connections significantly contribute to the well-being of individuals. Furthermore, the community and economic benefits derived from sport tourism create an environment that supports healthier lifestyles, thereby having a broad and lasting impact on public health. The government provides physical facilities like stadiums, gyms, locker rooms, medical centers, VIP boxes/ suites, sitting areas, parking facilities, food and beverages stalls, halls, grounds, courts, canteen, and other facilities for athletes and other game views. Money is circulated from different countries to each business. Ticketing of buses and planes, hotels, lodges, restaurants, and recreation centers are occupied by the athletes and their wishers. Knowledge can be gained from those areas and participants.

Axiology in Sport Tourism

Axiology, stemming from the Greek words for "worth" or "value" and "logic" or "theory," delves into the philosophical examination of goodness and value in its broadest sense. It seeks to uncover the intrinsic worth of entities and concepts, addressing the fundamental question of what is inherently valuable. As Heron and Reason (1997) articulated, axiology concerns itself with "values of being," focusing on the inherent worth of various human states simply by their existence. It is the branch of knowledge that deals with moral principles. It is the branch of philosophy recommending concepts of right and wrong conduct.

The term "axiology" was first coined by Paul Lapie in 1902 and subsequently by Edward Von Hartman in 1908. This field of study primarily explores two categories

of values: ethics and aesthetics. Ethics pertains to the concepts of right and good in individual and social conduct. In philosophy, ethics examines moral behavior in humans and prescribes guidelines for ethical action. On the other hand, aesthetics delves into the notions of beauty and harmony, exploring the subjective experience of sensory pleasure and artistic appreciation. Ethical review and approval should be obtained before conducting the research. Institutional Review Boards (IRB), also known as Independent Ethics Committees (IEC) in Europe or Nepal Health Research Council (NHRC) in Nepal, are the bodies that provide ethical approval for research. University and other research institutions can also provide the approval for conducting research. Cover of a letter indicating proposal for ethical review, submission of the protocol, photos, and CV of researchers, processing fee, list of bibliography, acceptance letter of the institution, consent form, an electronic copy of the proposal, study tools, and agreement with funding agency is needed to obtain ethical approval from NHRC. The link is [Ethical-Approval-Research-Proposal-checklist.pdf](#). User guidelines are available on the NHRC website. www.nhrc.gov.np.

Axiologically, post-positivist sports tourism research acknowledges the influence of researchers' values and biases but strives to minimize their impact to achieve objectivity. Researchers recognize that their personal and cultural values can shape their interpretation of data and interactions with subjects. For instance, researchers' perspectives on globalization and economic development might influence a study on the benefits of hosting international sports events. Therefore, researchers must remain familiar with these potential biases and transparently report their influence on the research process (Gratton & Jones, 2010). By doing so, they aim to present findings that, while influenced by values, are as objective and reliable as possible. The researchers must learn what is right and wrong to ask or behave towards other respondents and observe items. Necessary permission should be gained before entering the concerned institutions. One ethical conceptual frame was presented by Mangesh in 2017, and it can be used in sport tourism.

Figure 2

Reflection of Environmental Ethics on Nepali Himalayan Environmental Dynamics and Wellbeing

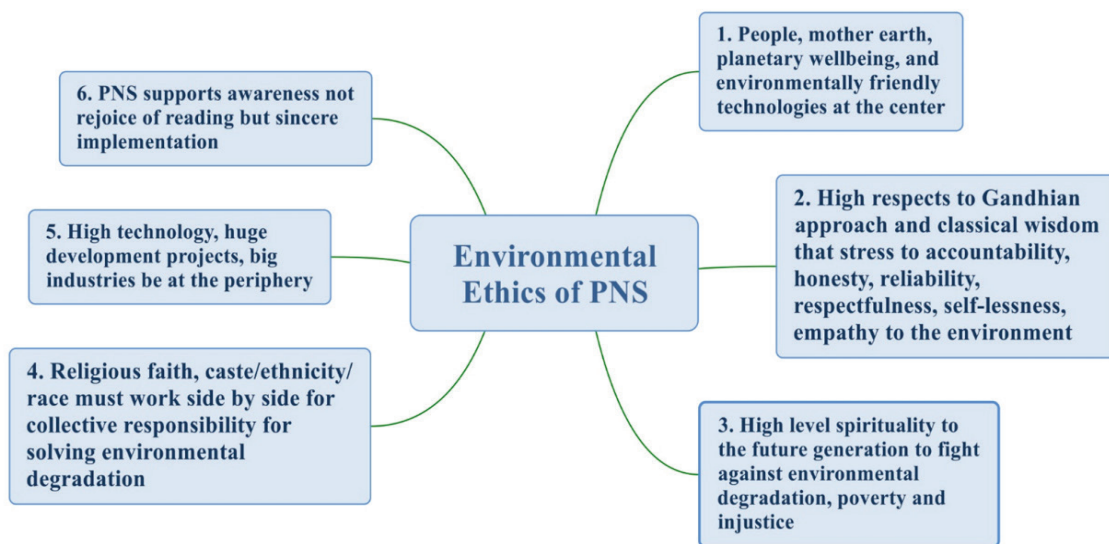


Figure 2 shows that the environmental ethics of post-normal science addresses complex, uncertain, and value-laden issues. Environmental ethics within PNS emphasizes the need for inclusive, participatory approaches to address environmental problems. It takes diverse perspectives and knowledge systems. After managing all facilities, PNS advocates with community people, policymakers, scientists, and project representatives about environmental change. Decisions are made based on ethical considerations, balancing ecological sustainability, social justice, and economic viability. PNS highlights the ethical responsibility to consider the long-term impacts of environmental decisions on future generations.

Methodology in Post-positivism

Methodology is the strategy or plan of action behind the choice and use of methods. Methodology concerns why, what, from where, when, and how data is collected and analyzed. Methods are the specific techniques and procedures used to collect and analyze data or information. Methodology is the broad term used to refer to the research design, methods, approaches, and procedures used in an investigation that is well-planned to discover something. For example, data gathering, participants, instruments used, and data analysis are all parts of the broad field of methodology. In sum, the methodology articulates the logic and flow of the systematic processes followed in conducting a research project to gain knowledge about a research problem. Methodology is the branch of philosophy

that analyzes the principles and procedures of inquiry in a particular discipline. The figure shows that methodology is determined by the ontology, epistemology, and axiology of the paradigm. Figure 3 shows the determinants of methodology.

Figure 3

Determinants of Methodology

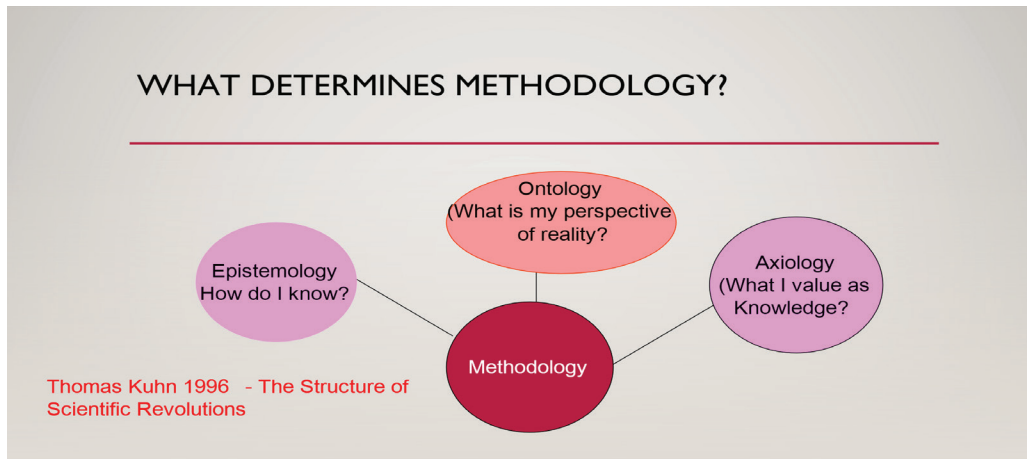


Figure 3 was presented in the workshop by Prof. Dr. Bhimsen Devkota on 8th May 2024, held by CERID. Modified experimental/manipulative methodology may include quantitative and qualitative methods to approximate reality. This mixed-method approach, often denoted as QUAN + qual, prioritizes quantitative methods for their robustness and reliability while incorporating qualitative insights to enrich and contextualize the data. This methodological flexibility allows researchers to manipulate variables in controlled settings and explore complex phenomena more comprehensively, aiming to achieve a more nuanced understanding of reality.

This paradigm uses a mixed method, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches, to study issues within individual contexts. Educational researchers developed post-positivism to address the limitations of positivism. The quantitative research method helps understand social reality, playing a crucial role in post-positivism by finding multi-reality across different contexts and respondents (Muijs, 2004). According to post-positivism, every theory is revisable; there is no absolute truth. We cannot prove anything true, only not untrue, known as falsification. Theories are revisable, indicating a multi-reality.

Post-positivism is a multidimensional, critical diversity research paradigm that allows scientific socio-educational research, providing partial conclusions and

recommendations for further study. Thus, post-positivism is applicable in health education research. It assumes all theories are revisable, with no absolute truth or untruth provable. Therefore, post-positivism is used to study the dynamic and changeable social reality. Creswell (2017) notes, "post-positivists seek to understand causal relationships; thus, experimentation and correlational studies are used. However, more than data from the senses is collected, participants' perspectives are often sought. Furthermore, as knowledge is tentative, hypotheses are not proved but not rejected" (p. 7). "Knowledge is conjectural. Absolute truth can never be found. The evidence established in research is always imperfect and fallible. They do not prove a hypothesis but indicate a failure to reject it" (Creswell, 2014, p. 6).

Educational researchers believe the positivism paradigm does not meet social sciences' requirements. Post-positivism is preferred for its basis in observable, empirical facts, supporting research in natural environments, repetition, and various methodologies to achieve less biased and more objective outcomes in social and educational research (Panhwar et al., 2017). Social and educational phenomena vary by situation, place, and time. This philosophy acknowledges multiple realities, with different research in various contexts yielding different findings. Thus, qualitative and quantitative methods are utilized in post-positivism to discover new multi-realities in society. Social sciences and education researchers developed a mixed paradigm combining positivism and interpretivism into a new post-positivist paradigm (Panhwar et al., 2017). This paradigm benefits social and health educational research and other disciplines, incorporating empirical data (quantitative) and people's perceptions, feelings, and experiences (qualitative).

The methodological approach in post-positivist sports tourism research often employs a mixed-methods design, integrating quantitative and qualitative techniques to approximate reality. For instance, researchers might use quantitative surveys to gather data on tourist spending and attendance figures while conducting qualitative interviews to explore tourists' experiences and motivations. This combined approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of sports tourism impacts. Quantitative data provides measurable and generalizable results, whereas qualitative insights offer depth and context to these findings, enhancing the overall analysis (Veal, 2017). This methodological flexibility helps address the complex and multifaceted nature of sports tourism.

The research design can be descriptive, analytical, or Mixed (QUAL & quan). A survey can be conducted on viewers on the issue of recreation and nationalism. An interview schedule or questionnaire can be used to take quantitative data. After collecting

and analyzing data, the researchers can use FGDs with athletes to collect qualitative information. Both qualitative findings and qualitative information can be triangulated. Quantitative data are analyzed in tables and figures. Appropriate themes are described. A theory is an explanation subject to revision as subsequent research supports or refutes various associated tenets. This collection of essays provides a compendium of theories that have been, or have the potential to be, applied to the study and practice of sports tourism.

Conclusion

Post-positivism provides a sophisticated framework for understanding sports tourism by recognizing the complexities and subjective nature of human behavior and environmental factors. Ontologically, it accepts that an objective reality exists but can only be imperfectly understood, requiring ongoing refinement in observation and measurement techniques. Epistemologically, post-positivist research aims for objective understanding through rigorous data collection and analysis while recognizing the limitations and biases of these methods. Methodologically, a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative techniques provides a comprehensive view of sports tourism impacts, balancing measurable data with contextual insights. Axiologically, post-positivism emphasizes minimizing researcher bias and transparently reporting value influences, striving for objective and reliable findings. Social and educational phenomena vary from place to place and from time to time. Using the post-positivism paradigm and mixed method is more useful in encouraging and promoting reinvestigation from different perspectives. Ultimately, this paradigm's flexibility and critical realism enable researchers to continually adapt and refine their approaches, fostering deeper insights into the multifaceted nature of sports tourism.

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