

Reconceptualizing Ecological Value in Transformative Sport Tourism: An Inclusive Public Sector Marketing Approach to Consumer Wellbeing and Public Health

Rafailia Nikoletta Kallioupi

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

George Lekakos

Athens University of Economics & Business

George Tsourvakas

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

Cite as:

Kallioupi Rafailia Nikoletta, Lekakos George, Tsourvakas George (2026), Reconceptualizing Ecological Value in Transformative Sport Tourism: An Inclusive Public Sector Marketing Approach to Consumer Wellbeing and Public Health. *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, 55th, (133590)

Paper from the 55th Annual EMAC Conference, Bath, United Kingdom, June 2-5, 2026



Reconceptualizing Ecological Value in Transformative Sport Tourism: An Inclusive Public Sector Marketing Approach to Consumer Wellbeing and Public Health

Abstract

Ecological value in sport tourism is often framed through technocratic efficiency metrics, sidelining ethics, wellbeing, and social inclusion. This paper introduces the *Transformative Ecological Value Framework (TEVF)*, a normative, systems-level model that reframes ecological value as a co-produced construct integrating environmental integrity, psychosocial wellbeing, and institutional trust. TEVF synthesizes transformative service research, public sector marketing, and AI-enabled tourism governance, positioning inclusive sport tourism as a platform for identity, dignity, and restorative participation. Ethical public marketing enhances legitimacy and behavioral engagement, while AI functions as a socio-technical enabler of equity and accessibility. The framework proposes nine propositions linking structural mechanisms and moderating conditions to consumer engagement and public health. TEVF advances a socially responsible and ethically grounded vision for tourism governance, aligning ecological transformation with justice, wellbeing, and collective flourishing.

Keywords: Transformative Ecological Value, Inclusive Sport Tourism, Ethical Public Sector Marketing

Track: Social Responsibility & Ethics

1. Introduction

Despite growing prominence in sustainability discourse, ecological value in tourism and sport marketing remains conceptually fragmented. Prevailing frameworks typically rely on technocratic paradigms, carbon mitigation, environmental compliance, and resource efficiency (Becken, 2017; Weaver, 2011) that, while operationally useful, often reduce nature to an instrumental resource. This narrow lens sidelines the affective, ethical, and relational dimensions of human–nature interactions (Higham & Miller, 2018). Emerging ecological scholarship thus calls for a redefinition of ecological value as a multidimensional construct, integrating justice, interspecies ethics, and psychosocial wellbeing (Büscher et al., 2021).

Parallel streams of thought within transformative service research (TSR) frame marketing as a normative driver of human flourishing, emphasizing dignity, equity, and wellbeing (Anderson & Ostrom, 2015; Kuppelwieser & Finsterwalder, 2016). Yet, despite sport tourism's potential to foster identity, inclusion, and emotional restoration, the field remains detached from TSR and continues to privilege environmental metrics over existential or social justice concerns (Grimwood et al., 2015). This creates a critical gap: the transformative potential of sport tourism remains structurally under-theorized and ethically underutilized. At the same time, adjacent developments in public sector marketing and AI-driven digital governance suggest underexplored pathways for institutionalizing ethical engagement. Public marketing increasingly centers citizen-centric co-creation and legitimacy (Osborne, 2010; Trischler & Charles, 2019), while AI-integrated tourism infrastructures offer new mechanisms for accessibility, trust-building, and personalized ecological immersion (Gretzel et al., 2020). However, these institutional and socio-technical dynamics are rarely integrated within ecological value frameworks and remain disconnected from wellbeing and public health outcomes.

In response, this paper introduces the *Transformative Ecological Value Framework (TEVF)* a conceptual model that reframes ecological value as an ethically co-produced, psychosocially mediated process grounded in inclusive design and institutional trust. TEVF synthesizes three structuring forces: (1) *Inclusive sport tourism contexts*, as catalysts for relational wellbeing and equitable participation; (2) *Public sector marketing*, as a value-sensitive governance mechanism fostering legitimacy, ethical influence, and social cohesion; and (3) *AI-enabled infrastructures*, conceptualized as moral socio-technical systems advancing personalized, trust-based, and health-oriented tourism.

Building on recent work in digitally mediated engagement (Kallioupi, 2025), the model extends the logic of transformative marketing toward ecological and institutional domains. This paper contributes by: (1) Reconceptualizing ecological value to include wellbeing, inclusion, and ethical co-production beyond environmental metrics; (2) Positioning public sector marketing as a pivotal mechanism of value governance and legitimacy; and (3) Offering a cross-disciplinary foundation for exploring how ecological value, digital infrastructures, and sport tourism interact to support consumer wellbeing and public health.

2. Literature Review

Reframing Ecological Value in Sport Tourism

Ecological value in sport tourism has traditionally been framed through technocratic paradigms focused on environmental compliance, efficiency, and mitigation (Weaver, 2011). While operationally clear, these models neglect the emotional, relational, and institutional dimensions of human–nature interaction. Recent studies underscore sport tourism’s potential to foster meaning, identity, and wellbeing, yet ecological value remains conceptually siloed detached from broader constructs such as ethical design, public health, and governance. This creates a critical gap: ecological value is reduced to environmental outputs, overlooking its socially embedded and affective nature.

Transformative Potential Without Structural Anchoring

Transformative tourism and service research (TSR) highlight the potential of experiences to promote psychological restoration, emotional flourishing, and social cohesion (Anderson et al., 2015; Kuppelwieser & Finsterwalder, 2016). However, both literatures primarily address individual-level processes, offering limited insight into the institutional, policy, or technological infrastructures that support systemic transformation. In sport tourism, despite its experiential richness, transformation is rarely theorized as structurally enabled, limiting its ecological or public health implications on a scale.

Institutional Enablers and Conceptual Gaps

Public sector marketing increasingly embraces ethical governance and citizen co-creation (Osborne, 2010) yet remains under-integrated within ecological or wellbeing discourses. Inclusion in sport tourism is often reduced to physical access, overlooking its potential to

foster relational wellbeing and psychosocial recovery (Darcy et al., 2021). Furthermore, ecological value is inconsistently defined across disciplines—from green consumerism to moral signaling, weakening its theoretical coherence. Simultaneously, AI systems shape tourism experiences through personalization and feedback (Gretzel et al., 2020), but are seldom theorized as ethical infrastructures for inclusion or ecological engagement (Wirtz et al., 2021).

Synthesis of Gaps

Four persistent gaps emerge: (1) ecological value is narrowly framed, excluding wellbeing and ethics; (2) transformative research lacks institutional grounding; (3) public marketing is disconnected from ecological and health value creation; and (4) AI is not conceptualized as a socio-technical enabler. This fragmentation highlights the need for a holistic framework. In response, the next section introduces the Transformative Ecological Value Framework (TEVF) a model that reconceptualizes ecological value as a co-created, institutionally embedded, and psychosocially mediated process within inclusive sport tourism systems.

3. Conceptual Framework/ Model Development

3.1 Definition of Key Constructs

The Transformative Ecological Value Framework (TEVF) redefines ecological value as a multidimensional construct that integrates environmental, ethical, psychosocial, and wellbeing dimensions. Moving beyond technocratic sustainability metrics, TEVF synthesizes insights from sport tourism sustainability, transformative service research, public sector marketing, and AI-enabled governance (Higham & Miller, 2018; Anderson et al., 2015; Gretzel et al., 2020). At the heart of the model lies Reconceptualized Ecological Value (E1) a composite construct encompassing environmental integrity, experiential wellbeing, inclusion, and ethical legitimacy. This value foundation is shaped by two institutional antecedents:

- **C1: Transformative Sport Tourism Context** — inclusive, nature-based sport tourism environments that promote equitable participation and relational wellbeing.
- **P1: Inclusive Public Sector Marketing** — ethical governance and citizen-focused communication fostering behavioural change, social trust, and systemic inclusion.

Three moderating conditions influence how these institutional inputs activate value and engagement:

- **A2: AI-Driven Enablement** — socio-technical infrastructures that facilitate personalization, immersion, and inclusive experience design.
- **T1: Trust in Public Institutions** — public confidence in the fairness, transparency, and accountability of governance structures.
- **A1: Socio-Economic Accessibility** — structural equity in access to tourism infrastructure and wellbeing services.

Notably, the model identifies a synergistic interaction between AI (A2) and Accessibility (A1), a dynamic where inclusive technologies reduce functional and cognitive barriers to access. This **AI–Accessibility Synergy** reinforces participation and personalization, particularly for underserved groups, and enhances the inclusive capacity of public systems. These constructs are summarized in Table 1.

Construct	Definition	Indicative References
E1: Reconceptualized Ecological Value	Multidimensional value integrating environmental, psychological, ethical, and public health dimensions.	Büschler & Fletcher (2020); Higham & Miller (2018)
C1: Transformative Sport Tourism	Nature-based tourism promotes inclusive access and participation equity.	Misener & Darcy (2014); Ugolotti & Moyer (2016)
P1: Inclusive Public Sector Marketing	Government-led ethical communication to drive legitimacy, wellbeing, and engagement.	French & Gordon (2015); Boenigk & Roth (2022)
T1: Trust in Public Institutions	Perceived fairness and institutional legitimacy.	Osborne (2010); Sun & Medaglia (2019)
A2: AI-Driven Enablement	Socio-technical systems enhancing inclusion,	Gretzel et al. (2020); Wirtz et al. (2021)

	immersion, and behavioural insight.	
A1: Socio-Economic Accessibility	Equity in access to experiences and infrastructures.	Darcy et al. (2020); WHO (2018)
M1: Ecological Consumer Engagement	Cognitive, emotional, and behavioural alignment with ecological values.	Leonidou & Skarmeas (2017); Griskevicius et al. (2010)
W1 / H1: Wellbeing & Public Health Outcomes	Individual restoration, life satisfaction, and collective health benefits.	Stodolska et al. (2017); Sirgy (2021)

Table 1. Core Constructs of the Transformative Ecological Value Framework (TEVF)

3.2 Development of the Conceptual Model

TEVF conceptualizes ecological value not as an output, but as a transformative psychological and ethical mechanism embedded in inclusive, institutional ecosystems. Transformative Sport Tourism (C1) and Inclusive Public Sector Marketing (P1) serve as structural enablers of Reconceptualized Ecological Value (E1). This foundation supports Ecological Consumer Engagement (M1) a dynamic alignment of cognition, affect, and behavior with ecological principles. Through sustained engagement, M1 generates two downstream outcomes:

- **W1: Consumer Wellbeing**, capturing individual psychological restoration and lifestyle satisfaction
- **H1: Public Health Outcomes**, representing collective wellness and community health benefits

These relationships are shaped by three moderators:

- **A2: AI systems** that amplify personalization, emotional immersion, and feedback
- **T1: Trust** as a legitimacy-enhancing factor
- **A1: Accessibility** as the structural capacity for inclusion

Together, A2 and A1 form a synergistic mechanism, where technological enablement and equitable access reinforce one another to increase reach, responsiveness, and inclusion. These conceptual relationships are visually represented in Figure 1.

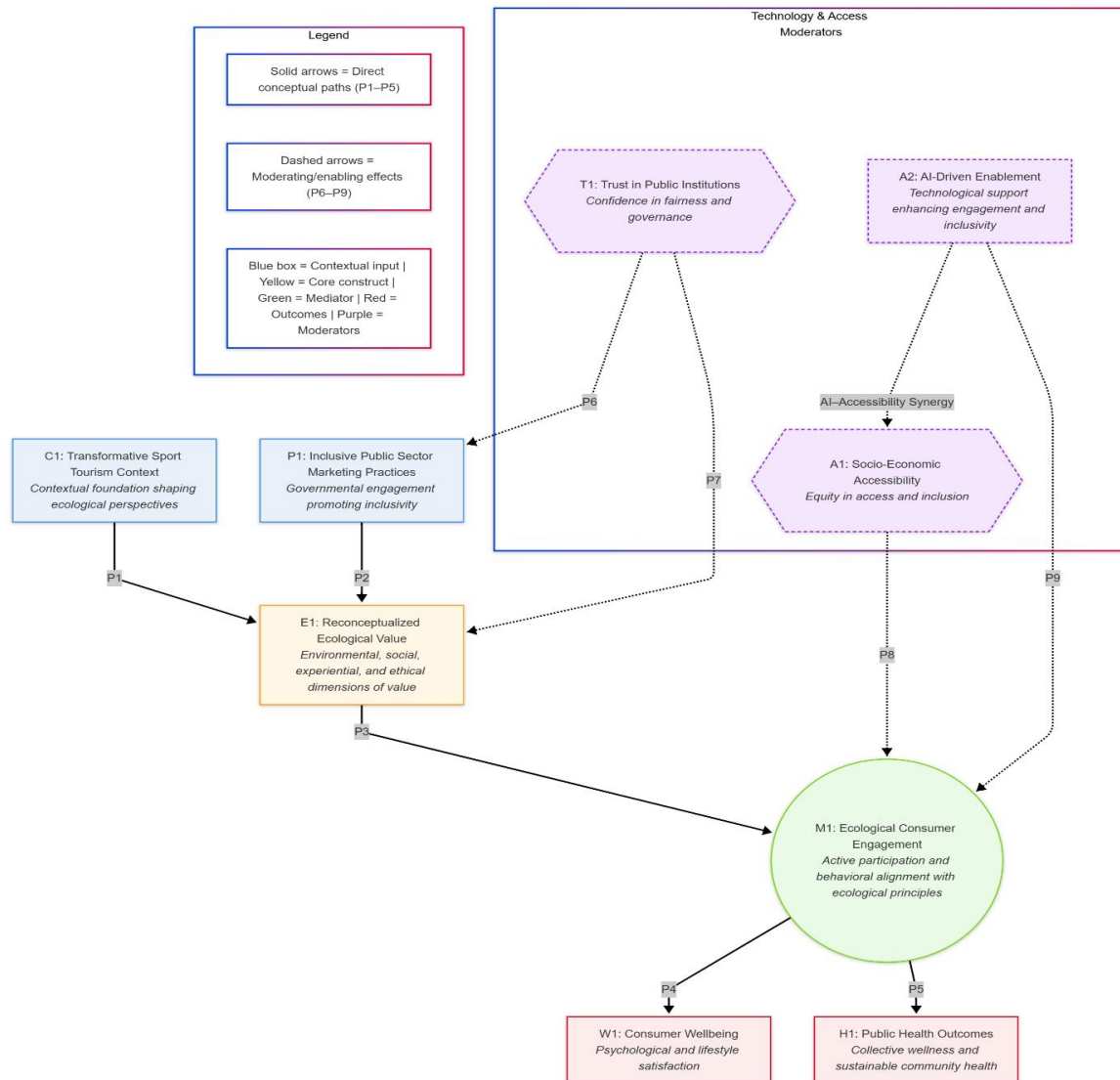


Figure 1. *The Transformative Ecological Value Framework (TEVF) illustrates institutional antecedents, the co-creation of ecological value, enabling conditions, and wellbeing outcomes. Dashed arrows represent moderating effects (P6–P9), and solid arrows depict core conceptual pathways (P1–P5). The synergy between AI enablement and socio-economic accessibility is indicated as a reinforcing mechanism within the model.*

4. Theoretical Propositions / Research Implications

The Transformative Ecological Value Framework (TEVF) articulates nine conceptual propositions that define the structural and contextual logic of the model. These propositions

are theory-building in nature and serve as a foundation for future empirical inquiry. The relationships are organized into two sets: core pathways (P1–P5) and contextual moderators (P6–P9).

Core Structural Pathways

- **P1:** A transformative sport tourism context (C1) positively shapes reconceptualized ecological value (E1) by enhancing access, perceived fairness, and emotional resonance.
- **P2:** Inclusive public sector marketing (P1) enhances the ethical legitimacy of tourism systems, contributing to the formation of ecological value (E1).
- **P3:** AI-driven enablement (A2) enhances the experiential salience of ecological value (E1) through personalization and immersive feedback.
- **P4:** Reconceptualized ecological value (E1) activates ecological consumer engagement (M1) by aligning cognitive, affective, and moral dimensions.
- **P5:** Ecological consumer engagement (M1) leads to improved wellbeing (W1) and public health outcomes (H1) through sustained prosocial and active behaviors.

Moderating Relationships (Boundary Conditions)

- **P6:** Trust in public institutions (T1) moderates the effect of inclusive marketing (P1) on ecological value (E1), reinforcing legitimate perceptions.
- **P7:** Trust also moderates the relationship between the sport tourism context (C1) and ecological value (E1), strengthening perceptions of fairness and transformation.
- **P8:** Socio-economic accessibility (A1) moderates the E1 → M1 pathway, enhancing engagement among structurally excluded or underserved populations.
- **P9:** AI enablement (A2) moderates the M1 → outcome pathway by increasing behavioral continuity, emotional immersion, and wellbeing impact.

These propositions offer a roadmap for empirical research using longitudinal, survey-based, or mixed-method approaches to examine the psychological, technological, and institutional mechanisms that drive sustainable, inclusive, and health-promoting tourism systems.

5. Theoretical Contributions

This study introduces the Transformative Ecological Value Framework (TEVF) and advances the literature through four interrelated theoretical contributions. First, it redefines ecological value as a dynamic, multidimensional, and ethically co-produced construct, moving beyond static environmental indicators to incorporate wellbeing, inclusion, and psychosocial meaning. Second, it repositions sport tourism as a public health–oriented system that fosters identity, emotional restoration, and social equity, thereby transcending its conventional framing as a consumer-driven or leisure-based activity. Third, it reframes public sector marketing as a normative governance function, emphasizing its role in building trust, legitimacy, and value-sensitive citizen engagement, particularly within socio-environmentally sensitive contexts. Finally, the framework conceptualizes AI infrastructures as moral socio-technical systems that mediate access, personalization, and ethical service delivery, bridging technological innovation with inclusive participation and health outcomes. Collectively, these contributions provide a cross-disciplinary foundation for research at the intersection of ecological sustainability, transformative service, and inclusive public governance.

6. Managerial and Policy Implications

TEVF offers practical guidance for embedding ethics, inclusion, and wellbeing into sport tourism governance. Policymakers should integrate ecological and wellbeing indicators in planning and evaluation. Local initiatives can enhance access and psychosocial benefits through inclusive, nature-based programs. Public marketers are urged to adopt ethical, trust-building communication. Finally, AI systems must operate within transparent, equitable frameworks, enabling personalized yet accessible experiences. TEVF thus reframes tourism as a system of public value creation and collective health.

7. Conclusion

The Transformative Ecological Value Framework (TEVF) redefines ecological value as a co-created, psychosocially embedded construct, integrating public governance, AI systems, institutional trust, and consumer engagement. It provides a unified model for advancing inclusive, health-oriented tourism and a foundation for interdisciplinary research and policy. Future studies may validate its mechanisms across socio-technical and cultural contexts, particularly among underserved populations. As global tourism faces mounting pressures for equity and regeneration, TEVF offers a timely, system-level contribution to sustainability practice and theory.

8. References

- Anderson, L., & Ostrom, A. L. (2015). Transformative service research: advancing our knowledge about service and well-being. *Journal of service research*, 18(3), 243-249.
- Becken, S., Stantic, B., Chen, J., Alaei, A. R., & Connolly, R. M. (2017). Monitoring the environment and human sentiment on the Great Barrier Reef: Assessing the potential of collective sensing. *Journal of environmental management*, 203, 87-97.
- Büscher, B., Feola, G., Fischer, A., Fletcher, R., Gerber, J. F., Harcourt, W., ... & Wiskerke, H. (2021). Planning for a world beyond COVID-19: Five pillars for post-neoliberal development. *World Development*, 140, 105357.
- Darcy, I., Rocca, B., & Hancock, Z. (2021). A window into the classroom: How teachers integrate pronunciation instruction. *RELC Journal*, 52(1), 110-127.
- Gretzel, U., Fuchs, M., Baggio, R., Hoepken, W., Law, R., Neidhardt, J., ... & Xiang, Z. (2020). e-Tourism beyond COVID-19: a call for transformative research. *Information technology & tourism*, 22(2), 187-203.
- Grimwood, B. S., Yudina, O., Muldoon, M., & Qiu, J. (2015). Responsibility in tourism: A discursive analysis. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 50, 22-38.
- Higham, J., & Miller, G. (2018). Transforming societies and transforming tourism: Sustainable tourism in times of change. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 26(1), 1-8.
- Kallioupi, R. N. (2025). *The power of influencer marketing in inclusive sports: a comparative study of athlete influencers and AI-driven avatars* (Doctoral dissertation, National & kapodistrian University of Athens). <http://dx.doi.org/10.12681/eadd/60165>
- Kellison, T. (2022). An overview of sustainable development goal 11. *The Routledge handbook of sport and sustainable development*, 261-275.
- Kuppelwieser, V. G., & Finsterwalder, J. (2016). Transformative service research and service dominant logic: Quo Vaditis?. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 28, 91-98.
- Osborne, S. P. (2010). Delivering public services: time for a new theory?.
- Trischler, J., & Charles, M. (2019). The application of a service ecosystems lens to public policy analysis and design: exploring the frontiers. *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, 38(1), 19-35.
- Weaver, J. D. (2011). *The nonviolent atonement*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing.