

The emergence of serious leisure research: trends and directions for leisure-based entrepreneurship



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Abstract This study combines bibliometric analysis and a literature review to analyze the present state of serious leisure research. A bibliographic study focuses on the quantity and quality of publications pertaining to serious leisure. It investigates patterns in article creation, citations, the most cited authors, publications, and countries that contribute to the body of knowledge. In recent years, the number of articles on serious leisure has increased significantly, reflecting a growing interest in this field of study. The literature review investigates the connection between serious leisure and entrepreneurship. The review findings also emphasize the potential advantages of serious leisure entrepreneurship, such as enhanced quality of life and the development of customized special-interest goods. The study suggests a number of prospective research avenues for researchers interested in the junction of serious leisure and entrepreneurship.

Keywords: recreation, leisure satisfaction, tourism, innovation, entrepreneurship

1. Introduction

Serious leisure has fascinated researchers from diverse fields to carry out research for more than 30 years (Shen & Yarnal, 2010). Although the term was proposed and refined by the sociologist Robert Stebbins, serious leisure has gained popularity mostly within the literature of leisure studies experts (Gallant et al., 2013). In his conceptual work, Stebbins (1997) stated that serious leisure would be worthy enough to conduct empirical and theoretical studies in leisure sciences. Due to its similarity in fundamental ideas and concepts with positive psychology (Cheng & Pegg, 2016), serious leisure has been studied across a wide range of activities and populations (Zou & Scott, 2018). The concept has attracted many researchers around the world to contribute their knowledge to the literature on serious leisure. To determine its potential relationship with other disciplines, this study attempts to analyze the literature on serious leisure to provide a scope for future research. This article presents both bibliometric analysis and a systematic literature review using Scopus. Bibliometric study determines the research fields with the highest output, the nations that conduct the most serious leisure research, the journals that publish the most research, and the most relevant authors and their affiliated institutions. Additionally, co-occurrence analysis was attempted to spot the trends and research directions related to serious leisure. Overall, with the use of both bibliometric and systematic literature reviews, the authors intend to explore the knowledge aspects of serious leisure and its role in entrepreneurship. This study attempts to guide new researchers in serious leisure research so that they know which publications and authors to reference while examining this topic. A literature review was performed to understand the determinants of leisure-based entrepreneurship and to propose future research directions in the area of leisure-based entrepreneurship.

According to Stebbins (2001), "Serious Leisure" is the steady pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or career volunteer activity that captivates its participants with complexity and many challenges. It is a profound, long lasting, and invariably based on substantial skill, knowledge, or experience, if not on a combination of these three. Frame work of serious leisure synthesizes a) Amateurs – professionals who are in art, sports, science & entertainment b) Hobbyist – Not a professional and sometimes have commercial equivalents. c) Volunteers – willing to help others for altruistic reasons. The serious leisure concept, which is believed to be distinct from casual or project-based leisure, describes an intensive kind of leisure engagement exemplified by six distinctive qualities (i.e., perseverance, personal effort, career development, durable benefits, identity, and a unique ethos), as highlighted in the study of Lee et al. (2021). Stebbins (1992) has proposed six distinct qualities that identify serious leisure from casual leisure: i) perseverance, which generates pleasant sentiments and experiences despite adversity; ii) career development, career progress in leisure participants' pursuits; iii) individual effort based on specialized knowledge, training, and ability that will benefit participants' professional growth; iv) durable benefits involves self-actualization, self-enrichment, recreation or self-image, feelings of accomplishment, enhancement of self-image, self-expression, social interaction and belongingness, and lasting physical products of the activity; v) a distinct ethos that unifies and develops all of the previously listed attributes; vi) moral ethics, norms, and regular standards subcultures; and vi) strong identity with the pursuit, which means that individuals may want to discuss proudly and enthusiastically about



their unique interests. All these qualities are some of the hallmarks of serious participation in leisure (Doistua et al., 2022). Serious leisure qualities are distinct and can be attained through only stern leisure participation (McKay et al., 2021)

In the current economic and social climate, entrepreneurship is seen as an essential activity to be encouraged, as it plays a critical role in encouraging innovation and economic development. The meaning for entrepreneurship has been completely changed, as it is not only meant for starting business, but there must be an innovation in business operation (Wut et al., 2021). In the economics and management literature, attempts have been made to capture the changing nature of entrepreneurship, and there is an increasing interest in gaining a deeper knowledge of unconventional entrepreneurship. Since the pandemic (COVID-19) has presented innumerable problems to individuals, understanding entrepreneurial activity under uncertainty is at the heart of entrepreneurship research (Giones et al., 2020). Uncertainties are derived from nature, and innovative entrepreneurial activities have been proposed to be more effective during uncertain conditions (Jalonen, 2011; Garcia et al., 2021; Emami et al., 2022). Notably, innovation actively occurs throughout the value chain in the leisure industry, and it is frequently most apparent at the product or service level. Examples include eSports, eBooks, virtual reality sets, music and film streaming, etc (Marques & Pimentel Biscaia, 2019). Entrepreneurs in the active leisure market strive to be distinctive by specializing in certain disciplines and target groups, allowing them to customize their offerings accordingly (Gancarczyk, 2020). Moreover, Kim et al., (2015) hypothesized that people who integrate work and play through entrepreneurship choose a variety of avenues to start their businesses and are more likely to obtain financial benefits from their efforts. This type of entrepreneur has a shared passion for products and serious engagement in leisure activities and may start a new venture (Guercini & Cova, 2018). Apart from passion, an individual's psychological motivation and involvement in leisure-related activities may positively influence their career (Kelly et al., 2020). For example, in sport entrepreneurship studies, it is identified that both internal and external factors of motivation favor the individual to start the new venture (Pellegrini et al., 2020). Participation in leisure activity influences subjective wellbeing and happiness. The subjective wellbeing of leisure participation may influence the participant to be more resilient and make them more committed to the activity (Tsaur et al., 2021). To complement the serious leisure perspective of Stebbins, Vallerand (2016) with his DMP (Dualistic Model of passion) argues that most people will ultimately develop a preference for some activities, particularly those seen to be particularly entertaining and essential, as well as those that have some resonance with how they see themselves. Leisure as a critical component of social transformation and social innovation. While leisure is becoming increasingly essential in people's lives, little is known about its ability to impact entrepreneurial actions (Kelly et al., 2020). The literature has brought evidence of a strong connection between serious leisure and entrepreneurial qualities, but what are all the conducive factors that determine leisure-based entrepreneurship? This is still a question that needs to be answered. Therefore, an attempt has been made to unleash the determinants of leisure-based entrepreneurship.

2. Methodology

The study adopted two methodological approaches, bibliometric analysis and literature review. First, for bibliometric analysis, articles were included by searching the Scopus database. Databases were searched using six keywords, and only document titles were searched using keywords to extract valid articles related to serious leisure. The study aims to synthesize the body of knowledge of Stebbins' "Serious Leisure" from the beginning of time. A systematic literature review is more common in the management and entrepreneurship domain (Dangelico & Vocalelli, 2017). Second, for the literature review, searches in the Scopus database helped to find the studies that will be covered in the review. All journal articles (only empirical studies) related to leisure-based entrepreneurship were searched and extracted from the Scopus database using eight keyword combinations: leisure and entrepreneurship, leisure and entrepreneur, serious leisure and entrepreneurship, serious leisure and entrepreneur, hobby and entrepreneurship, hobby and entrepreneur, serious leisure constructs, and serious leisure and passion.

3. Study Selection & Data Extraction for Bibliometric analysis and literature review

For bibliometric analysis, data were extracted using 6 different combinations of title keywords. These combinations of keywords were drawn from the framework proposed by Stebbins. "Serious Leisure" OR "Serious Leisure Perspective" OR "Serious Leisure Framework" "Serious Leisure" AND "Amateur" "Serious Leisure" AND "Volunteer" 233 articles were selected from the Scopus and Web of Science databases. The R tool was utilized to perform bibliometric analysis. The tool is adaptable, quick to update, and compatible with other statistical R packages. Therefore, it is helpful in a field of study such as bibliometrics that is always evolving (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). Biblioshiny of R studio was used to perform the analysis, such as annual production of documents, total production of documents per author, authors affiliated institution, documents produced by source documents and their total citations, and countries' annual production. Co-occurrence network analysis was performed using author keywords to identify the major themes of research on serious leisure. Second, for the systematic literature review, we drew 186 articles from the Scopus database using 8 distinct keyword combinations. The titles and abstracts of the collected papers were then analyzed for a preliminary assessment of their relevance to the research themes, with those that were judged to be irrelevant being discarded. The method yielded 35 items that were identified as possibly

relevant in the full-text search. Twenty of them were found to be irrelevant and were deleted; ultimately, 15 papers were included in the systematic review. The steps of the study selection process are reported in Figure 1. Using Prisma of Page et al. (2021), the identification, selection, screening, inclusion and exclusion of articles are clearly briefed.

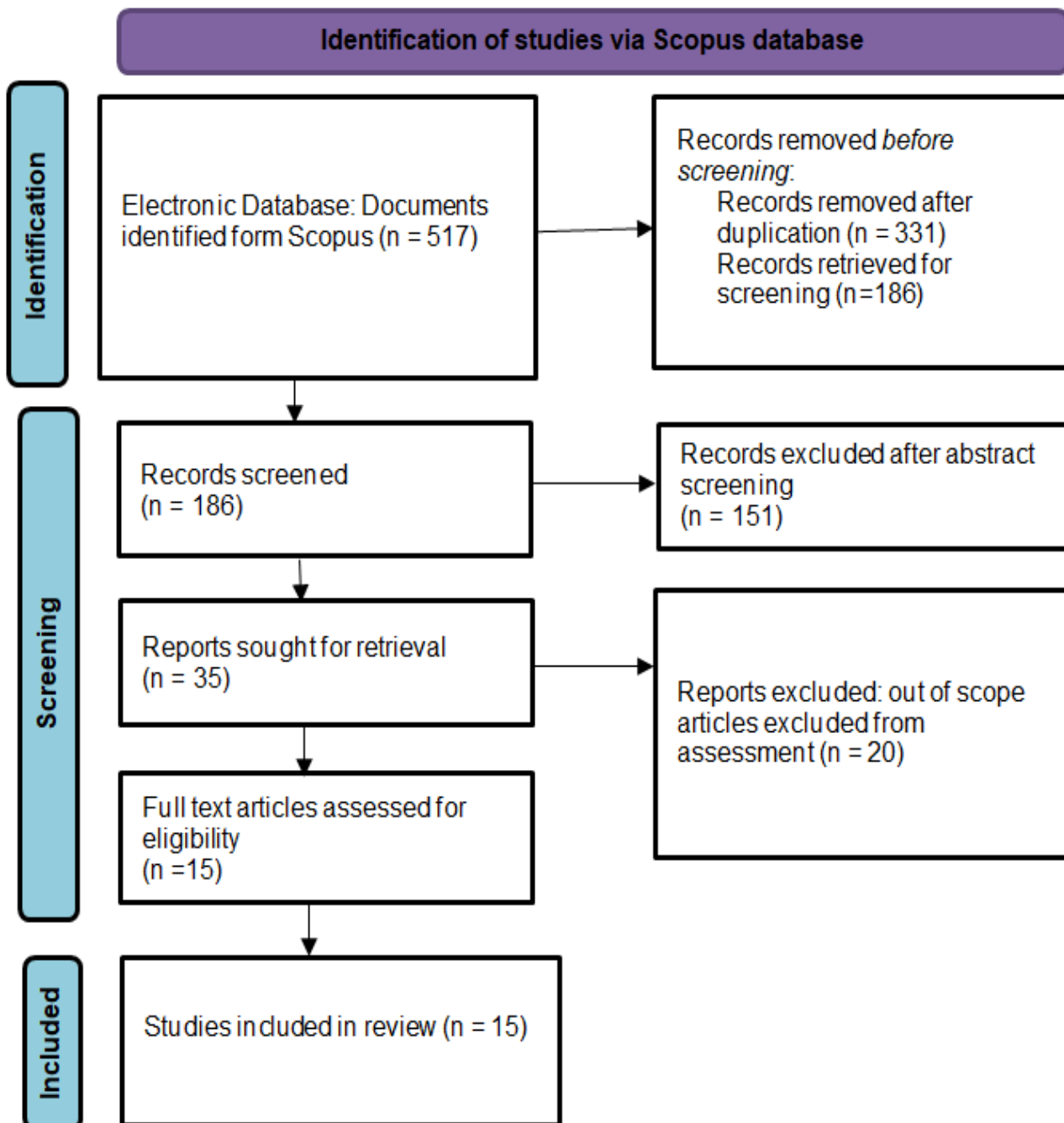


Figure 1 PRISMA diagram.

4. Results

Serious leisure research slowly increased after 1992, and the trend indicates that the number of articles published increased from 2010 to 2020 (figure 2). A total of 171 articles were published during this time period, accounting for more than 80% of all articles published. According to trends in the literature, various investigations on COVID-19's effects on the leisure industry were carried out during the pandemic (Khan et al., 2021). Table 1 lists the top ten authors in the area of serious leisure, of which Heo J. and Kim J. were the major contributors to serious leisure research. Additionally, Heo et al., (2013) jointly publishes articles on serious leisure in relation to sports participation, leisure satisfaction and successful aging of older adults.



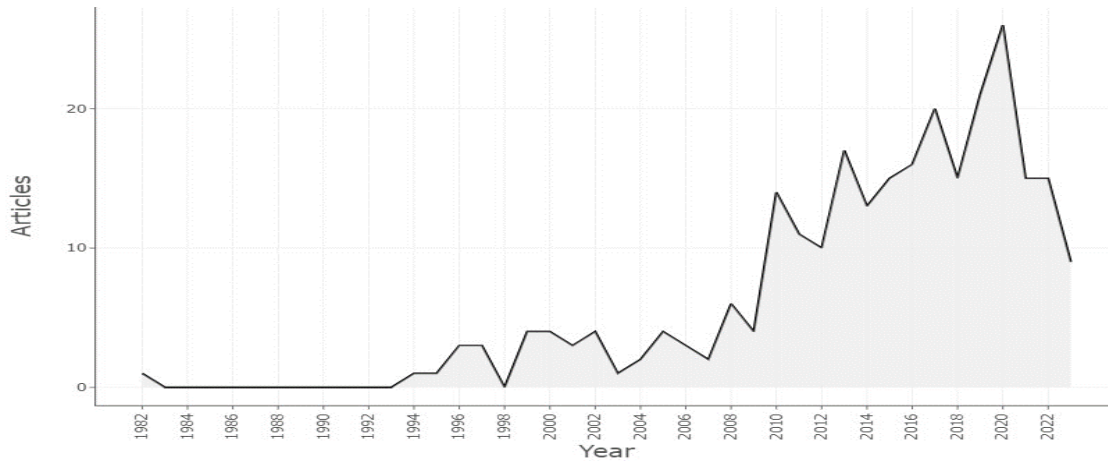


Figure 2 Annual Scientific Production.

Table 1 TOP Author’s Contribution and Affiliated Institution.

Authors	TP	Affiliated Institution	Country
Stebbins RA	14	University of Calgary	Canada
Heo J	13	Yonsei University	South Korea
Kim J	7	Indiana University	United states
Patterson I	6	The University of Queensland	Australia
Lee S	5	Palacky University	Czech Republic
Cox Am	4	University of Sheffield	United Kingdom
Gould J	4	University of Northern Colorado	United States
Hartel J	4	University of Toronto	Canada
Kennelly M	4	Griffith University	Australia
Lamont M	4	Southern Cross University	Australia

*TP Total Production.

Table 2 shows the top ten journals where the most articles on serious leisure are published until 2022—in which leisure studies journals are the most imperative source for serious leisure research—have published more than 30 articles related to serious leisure. The Journal of Leisure Research and the World Leisure Journal are the next imperative sources for serious leisure research. The Journal of Leisure Research, Leisure Sciences, and Leisure Studies are undoubtedly the most significant leisure journals in the Western world (Walker et al., 2014). Until 2022, these three journals will have published 72 journal articles.

The leisure studies journal ranks first with 1081 total citations, followed by the journal of leisure research with 922 total citations. The number of articles in leisure studies, leisure research, and the world of leisure journals has increased, and these journals have been listed in the Australian Business Dean Council (ABDC) journal category. Based on this trend, there will be more articles about serious leisure in these three journals in the future. Since serious leisure studies were mostly performed to determine how people felt about their own lives, it is clear that the most serious leisure articles are in the social science field.

Table 2 Most relevant sources.

Journals	TP	TC	ABDC Rating	1981-1985	1986-1990	1991-1995	1996-2000	2001-2005	2006-2010	2011-2015	2016-2020	2021-2022
Leisure studies	33	1081	A	x	x	X	2	4	3	7	12	5
Journal of leisure research	19	922	A	x	x	X	3	1	6	5	3	1
World leisure journal	18	293	B	x	x	X	1	4	X	4	8	1
Leisure sciences	15	514	A	x	x	X	X	X	3	7	4	1
Leisure/loisir	12	155	-	x	x	X	2	3	1	2	3	1
Loisir et societe	6	100	B	x	x	1	2	X	X	1	2	X
Annals of leisure research	5	35	B	x	x	X	X	X	X	X	5	X
Information research	4	99	C	x	x	X	X	X	1	X	3	X
Journal of documentation	4	120	B	x	x	X	X	X	1	2	X	1
Social indicators research	4	100	A	x	x	X	X	X	X	4	X	X

*TP Total Productions. *TC Total Citations. *ABDC Australian Business Dean Council. *X No publication.



The table 3 lists the leading contributors to serious leisure research and their citations. Developed and cultivated by Robert Stebbins over a number of decades, serious leisure and its leisure-wide conceptual framework, the serious leisure perspective (SLP), have spawned a remarkable quantity of published work from Stebbins as well as a wide range of research scholars and their supervisors (Veal, 2021). Serious leisure serves to understand the nature of dedication and engagement in various forms of leisure activity, and it has been used more frequently in the context of event tourism and sports event participation studies (Getz & Page, 2014).

Table 3 Most relevant sources.

Author/year	Title	TC	TC Per year
(Stebbins, 1992)	Sociological Perspectives	553	13.00
(Stebbins, 1992)	Cultural Tourism as Serious Leisure	170	6.11
(Green & Jones, 2005)	Serious leisure, social identity and sport tourism	166	8.89
(Gibson, 2002)	"We're Gators... not just Gator fans": Serious leisure and University of Florida Football	153	7.14
(I. Jones, 2000)	A model of serious leisure identification: The case of football fandom	141	5.91
(Kane & Zink, 2004)	Package adventure tours: Markers in serious leisure careers	133	6.95
(Gould et al., 2008)	Development of the serious leisure inventory and measure	133	8.60
(Gillespie et al., 2002)	If it were not for my hobby, I'd have a life: Dog sports, serious leisure, and boundary negotiations	130	5.95
(Dilley & Scraton, 2010)	Women, climbing and serious leisure	106	7.85
(Barbieri & Sotomayor, 2013)	Surf travel behavior and destination preferences: An application of the Serious Leisure Inventory and Measure	99	9.80

*TC Total citations.

Figure 3 of literature trend reveals that many serious leisure studies are associated with leisure industries such as tourism, culinary, travel, arts, hospitality, entertainment and sports, it is inevitable that studying serious leisure without its imprints on the leisure industry. In this case, the U.S.A. had an intense impact on their leisure and hospitality industry, as highlighted in Khan et al, (2021), and China is the worst affected country in the world due to the pandemic and their tourism industry (Corbet et al., 2022). Therefore, leisure and event tourism-based research on this scaling high on these landscapes. The result also indicates that serious leisure studies are not familiar or unseen in Southeast Asian countries such as India, Singapore, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Indonesia, although these countries are the most popular for their tourist places. Furthermore, there are few empirical studies examining COVID-19's effects on travel and leisure businesses, although various studies have concentrated on COVID-19's impact on stock returns (Lee & Chen, 2022).

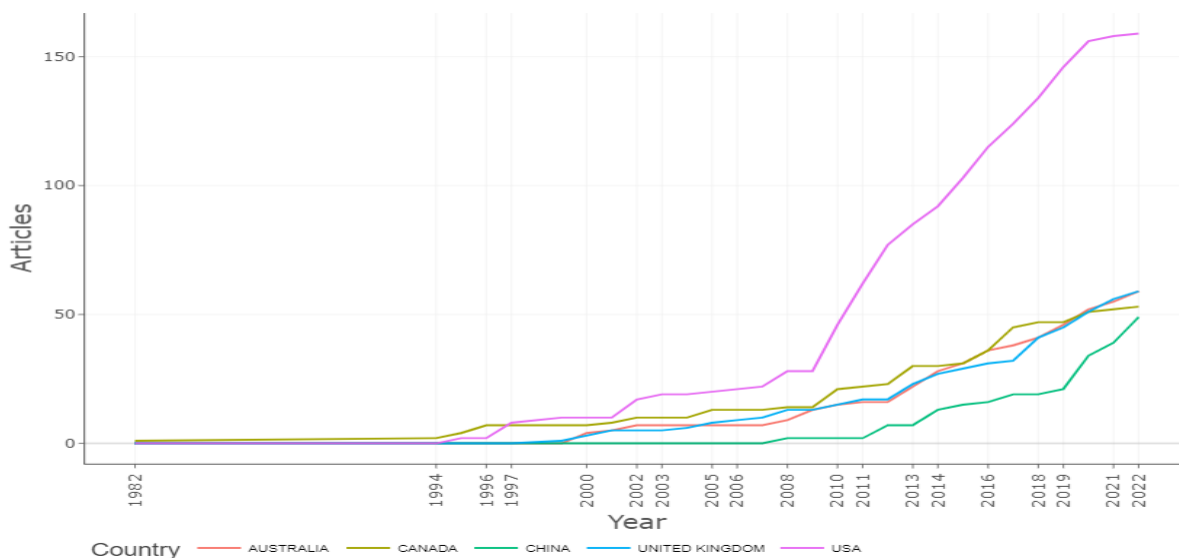


Figure 3 Countries Scientific production.

Figure 4 shows the co-occurrence network visualizations of author keywords in serious leisure research. Each node represents a keyword of the authors, and each line that connects other nodes represents the relationship between the nodes. The size of the node represents the intensity of the co-occurrence, and different colors represent the thematic clusters. The 43 author keywords in the co-occurrence network are shown. Co-occurrence analysis is a statistical method used to determine how two or more variables are related to each other. It is a type of correlation analysis that measures the



Figure 4 Co-occurrence network.

According to the present bibliometric analysis of serious leisure, China is the most productive country for serious articles, followed by the U.S.A. Serious leisure research is much grounded in subject areas such as sociology and business management. The concept was proposed by Stebbins (2001), and the first research area appeared in 1995 by Hastings et al. (1995), with a present total citation of 56. The number of studies grew steadily after 2010, and the co-occurrence analysis using author keywords showed that the evolution of serious leisure research was well connected to themes such as sports participation, subjective well-being, tourist experience, travel intention and leisure satisfaction. Unlike conventional entrepreneurship ventures, which are influenced by both personal and external environmental factors, leisure-based ventures are determined by entrepreneurs’ personal factors. Figure 5 have shown the drivers of leisure-based entrepreneurship. A literature review of 15 articles identifies that leisure-based ventures are greatly driven by the following personal factors:

(2, 9, 14) **Personal involvement:** A love for and involvement in leisure activities is a key motivator for starting a leisure-based venture.

(3, 5) **Passion:** Entrepreneurs who are passionate about their leisure pursuits are more likely to transform them into profitable businesses. This passion is key to their sense of self.

(4, 7, 13) **Career advancement:** For many serious leisure participants, the motivation to start a business is to find employment in a field they are passionate about.

(6, 10) **Product and process innovation intention:** Frequent interactions with customers in a leisure-based business can lead to the creation of customer-originated products and customized special interest goods. Hobby-based entrepreneurs are often a valuable source of information in the creation of various experiences.

(11, 12, 15) **Commitment:** A large monetary investment and a desire to succeed are important motivators for leisure-based entrepreneurs.

(8) **Sense of community:** A strong sense of belonging to a leisure community can significantly affect a hobbyist’s decision to become an entrepreneur. Hobbyists may be exposed to environmental cues that boost their entrepreneurial alertness through their active participation in their social environment.

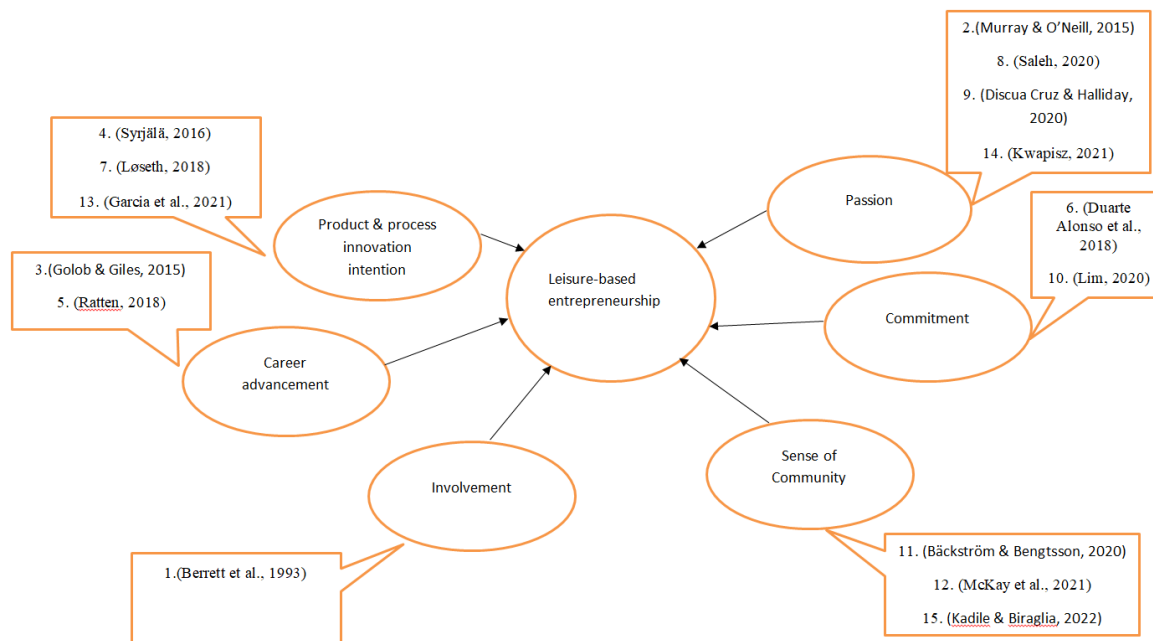


Figure 5 Drivers of Leisure-based entrepreneurship.

5. Limitations and future agendas

This study has the major limitation that the researchers have extracted data only from the Scopus database. In the future, others can concentrate on other databases to examine the different dimensions of serious leisure research. Based on the findings, there are some potential future research directions, and it is crucial to understand how personal aspects affect the success of a leisure-based enterprise. Therefore, relating the personality traits of individuals with leisure interest, involvement, participation and motivation in entrepreneurship studies may bring new dimensions of entrepreneurship. Future studies might examine how passion, commitment, and community affect leisure-based company performance and growth. Furthermore, the findings suggest that entrepreneurship in a leisure activity is motivated by the desire to improve one’s quality of life. Future research could explore the extent to which engaging in entrepreneurship in a leisure activity



improves overall well-being and satisfaction. Serious leisure participants who become entrepreneurs may play an important role in creating a sense of community and promoting social cohesion. Future research could explore the impact of leisure-based entrepreneurship on the wider community, including its role in creating jobs and contributing to economic growth. Leisure-based entrepreneurship is primarily driven by personal factors rather than external environmental factors. However, government policy can play a role in supporting and promoting leisure-based entrepreneurship. Future research could explore the impact of government policies on the development and growth of leisure-based businesses. The creation of customer-originated products and customized special interest goods in leisure-based businesses suggests that there may be opportunities for collaboration between the leisure sector and other industries. Future research could explore the potential for cross-sector collaboration in leisure-based entrepreneurship and the benefits that this may bring. The findings show that most leisure studies have adopted qualitative techniques, and Parry and Johnson (2007) also highlighted that leisure researchers will have another avenue for leisure academics to engage with other social scientists. Focus on leisure-based entrepreneurship is limited, as suggested by Kwapisz (2021). Many empirical studies need to be done in this area to uncover the potential of leisure activities on entrepreneurial orientation. Serious leisure has also been applied in some leisure studies, and they have applied the SLIM inventory measure developed by Gould et al. (2008). SLIM can be operationalized in leisure-based entrepreneurship research to explore and understand the enormous role of serious leisure on entrepreneurial outcomes. Through bibliometric analysis, it is confirmed that only developed nations have made greater contributions to the field of leisure research. Since a better standard of living has made it possible for more people than ever before in many developing countries to have the time, means, and opportunity to spend in sports, physical activity, and wellbeing, more research on leisure should come from these countries (Jones et al., 2020). Moreover, the majority of serious leisure studies to date have been on sports and physical activities, but there is a need for academic research and hands-on studies that clarify how entrepreneurship might be used in the fitness and lifestyle sectors. In addition, innovation is important for tourist company performance. Therefore, it would be beneficial to study the origins and repercussions of innovative behavior in tourism (Kallmuenzer & Peters, 2018).

6. Conclusions

This study provides the synthesis of knowledge related to serious leisure developed by Stebbins, particularly journal articles that have been produced after its origin. Our study mainly focuses on the development of a knowledge structure on serious leisure and contributions made by the authors of different countries. It is our assumption that this is the first study that provides the knowledge source structure on serious leisure and how leisure activities influence entrepreneurial interest. Future directions were prearranged to the research community to construct the remaining block that is left over. From the study results, the researcher can conclude that more empirical research is yet to be conducted in this area to unravel the hidden dimensions of leisure-based entrepreneurship.

Ethical considerations

Not applicable.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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