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## Small-Scale Event Sports Tourism as Visitors' Attractions: The Case of Northern States in Malaysia

### Abstract

Nowadays, many event organizers try to market their products based on small-scale sports events which are usually organized and held in rural areas. This is due to the type of visitors who participate in such events because of several reasons. This study aims to examine the factors that influence visitors to visit these small-scale sports tourism events and whether such events can become a potential tourism product to attract visitors. A survey was undertaken in the Northern States of Malaysia. A set of questionnaires were distributed to the visitors of this small-scale sports tourism event. Data was collected among 468 visitors during the event in two northern states of Malaysia. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) used to analyse the data. Finding from this study has confirmed that small-scale event sports tourism can become one of the potential products for sports tourism besides mega sporting events. As many event organizers tend to focus on mega sporting events, organizing these small-scale sports tourism events can also generate positive economic benefits towards the community and indirectly to the state government.

**Keywords:** *Sports tourism, Small-scale events, Event image, Event value, Intention to revisit*

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**Anisah Abdul Wafi, PhD Student.** (Corresponding Author). School of Tourism, Hospitality and Event Management. Universiti Utara Malaysia, 06010 Sintok, Kedah Darul Aman

Email: aniswafi@gmail.com / Phone: +604-928 8158/+6 013 442 0788, +604-928 8163

**Lim Khong Chiu, Associate Professor.** School of Tourism, Hospitality and Event Management.

Universiti Utara Malaysia 06010 Sintok, Kedah Darul Aman

Email: lkc@uum.edu.my / Phone: +604-928 8158, +604-928 8163

**Johan Afendi Ibrahim, Senior Lecturer, PhD.** School of Tourism, Hospitality and Event Management.

Universiti Utara Malaysia, 06010 Sintok, Kedah Darul Aman

Email: afendi@uum.edu.my / Phone: +604-928 8154, +604-928 8163

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Wafi, A.A., Chiu, L.K. and Ibrahim, J.A.

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## 1. Introduction

The progressive and competitive marketplace in many major tourism destinations offer highly rated attractions, accommodation and services which bring numerous challenges to the destination marketing officer (DMO). Besides facing these challenges, the destinations themselves also face other potential problems such as climate change and global economic slowdown (Koo et al., 2014). Even so, hosting an event for sports tourism has recently become one of the selection criteria for DMO or event organizer to differentiate and select a city or community from other competing tourism destinations. The events in sports tourism consist of hallmark event, mega event, and small-scale sports event (Higham, 1999). Due to their popularity, hallmark and mega events such as FIFA World Cup and Formula One Grand Prix frequently draw international attention compared to a small-scale sports event.

Hallmark event is defined as a large-scale event which occurs infrequently, developed primarily to enhance awareness, appeal and profitability of a tourism destination in the short to long-term (Sun et al., 2013). Mega events are defined as short-term events having long-term consequences that can draw a significant number of domestic and international tourists. The purpose of organizing a hallmark or mega sporting event is to position the destination as a tourist attraction, to obtain international recognition as well as to generate economic benefits. Meanwhile, Weidenfeld and Leask (2013) stated that events and visitors' attractions play significant roles in the development, management, and the overall success of these destinations. However, in recent years, there are issues and concerns on organizing these mega sporting events. According to Gibson et al. (2012), concerns have been raised on the financial burden, the utility of the facilities after events and the impact on environment. For instance, the issue of financial burden has affected the Formula One event in Kuala Lumpur. Starting from 2018, Malaysia will no longer be hosting this mega sporting event due to the decline in the number of viewers, visitors, and tourist arrivals (Awaina, 2017).

Besides mega sporting events, small-scale sports events also form part of event sports tourism. Gibson (1998) defined a small-scale sports event as a regular season or a smaller one-off sports event. Gibson et al. (2012) described small-scale sports tourism events as minor events, often held annually, where competitors may outnumber the spectators, with minimal national media interest and limited economic activities. These small-scale sports events can also yield benefits as they operate within an existing infrastructure, require a smaller budget, create a more manageable level of crowd congestion and have high-impact regional effects on the community (Higham, 1999). Regardless of the size, previous studies have shown that most of the sports events are focused on major cities or countries, with rural areas having been neglected despite the fact that they also have the possibility of becoming attractive tourist attractions (Hallmann & Breuer, 2011). Reza et al. (2016) agreed that there is lack of research on the potential and benefits of small-scale events. Hosting a small-scale sports event related to tourism can bring valuable benefits to the destination and event organizer, such as creating awareness about the destination, improving the image of the destination and moreover, increasing future inbound travel to the surrounding destinations (Bertella, 2014).

Hosting these sporting events can also benefit the local community, among others by providing entertainment and enhancing the local community's economy. This is because such sporting events can attract visitors during off-peak seasons, promote specific tourist attractions, and areas, as well as result in renewal of recreational infrastructures of the local community area (Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2010). Although most of the event organizers tend to focus on mega sporting events, small-scale sports events can also influence and provide several benefits to the local area or destination. This has been agreed to by Popa and Geok (2017) who stated that organizing small-scale sports tourism events is more beneficial to the community compared to organizing mega sporting events. Aside from the economic benefits, organizing this type of events also introduces visitors or tourists to the traditional culture of

the local community since this type of event always involves activities related to the local attraction. Hence, this type of event always promotes the local attractions within the community area. In the northern part of Malaysia especially in Kedah and Perlis, there are many small-scale sports tourism events which are organized annually. The objective of organizing such an event is to showcase its potential as one of the tourism products besides serving as one of the tourism development programs in that area.

Bertella (2014) stated that rural areas organizing this type of event will highlight their strengths, such as nature and culture, in their activities. This can be seen in Kedah's International River Sports Festival and Perlis's Pesta Angin Timur. These events have successfully attracted active sports tourists or spectators. For such events to attract a greater number of visitors, it is important to get some support from the surrounding community especially the local tourism authority. Ziakas and Boukas (2016) stated that this type of event cannot stand alone and would be unable to achieve those goals set by the organizers. Thus, in order to ensure this type of event can become one of the tourist attractions, especially in the northern part of Malaysia, event organizers, tourism managers and of course the local authority should explore and invent ways on how to promote this small-scale sports tourism event to become as popular as mega sporting events. Given the significance of organizing this type of events, this study attempts to identify factors which influence travel behaviours among visitors who attend this small-scale sports tourism events. This is to help the event organizer to better understand the visitors, so that they can implement and target specific market segmentation. Hence, the purpose of this study is two-fold: it firstly attempts to understand the psychological factor of visitors in attending small-scale event sports tourism and secondly, it seeks to determine whether this type of event can become a potential product for tourism and moreover become an attraction in itself.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Sports Event Tourism in Malaysia

The rapid growth of event sports tourism (EST) has led Malaysia to actively promote itself as an organizer and host of several world-class sports events. This is because EST is one of the leading sectors that contribute to the economy and provide profitable income to Malaysia. In addition, Malaysia has been hailed as Asia's Leading Sports Tourism Destination in 2011 by World Travel Award (Dolinting et al., 2013). Therefore, in order to boost this sub-sector in tourism, the Ministry of Youth and Sports has been appointed as the agency responsible for planning and organizing sports tourism. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Tourism is responsible for planning, promoting and implementing the effective marketing strategies to attract sports visitors. Before the Ministry of Youth and Sports was appointed as an organization that manages sports tourism in Malaysia, this sub-sector was under the purview of Malaysia Sports Tourism Council (MSTC) in 1994.

The establishment of this council is to develop and explore the sports tourism in the country besides helping the government organize the 16th Kuala Lumpur Commonwealth Games in 1998. This event became the turning point for Malaysia to look into the benefits of sports tourism. Meanwhile, the success of this event provided Malaysia with the biggest opportunity to organize other mega sporting events such as the Formula One Grand Prix, the Monsoon Cup, and Le Tour de Langkawi. This opportunity to organize mega sporting events had indirectly contributed to the economic growth of the nation, besides spurring the development of sports facilities such as Sepang International Circuit in 1999. Aside from mega sporting events, Malaysia also offers a wide range of sports tourism including spectator sports such as World Motorcycle Grand Prix 2017 in Sepang, traditional sports, and adventure sports. In general, the adventure sports tourism offers a wide range of outdoor adventure sport. The geographical location of Malaysia that is rich with a variety of flora and fauna becomes an attraction for the visitors. For example, Lake Kenyir in Terengganu became the



venue for the Kenyir 4x4 Challenge and Kenyir Mountain Bike Challenge. In addition, the traditional sports tourism should also be introduced to the visitors because of their uniqueness, showcasing the diversity of Malaysia that can become a tourist attraction. There are traditional event sports tourism annually organized in Malaysia such as Regatta Sarawak, Dragon Boat Regatta, World Kite Festival, and Labuan International Water Festival.

### **2.2 Small-Scale Event Sports Tourism in Malaysia**

Most event organizers tend to focus on mega-sporting events which, according to them, give more value and huge benefits, especially in terms of the economies of scale and profit. This trend has also influenced most of the literature to focus on mega-sporting, which emphasizes on the positive benefits and effects. However, the small-scale sports events should not be overlooked as they also contribute beneficial values to the host communities. This has been agreed to by Higham (1999). Besides, small-scale sports events can also serve as tourist attractions for the host communities. This is due to the uniqueness of such events which sometimes highlights the local sports activities. The local sports activities should be promoted as an attraction besides preserving the local heritage (Abdul Wafi et al., 2017).

Hence, nowadays, many organizers tend to organize small-scale event sports tourism. In Malaysia, many small-scale sports tourism events have been organized to promote both nature and culture. Many of these events have been organized either by the local authority or private event organizers. For example, the local authority of Perlis organizes Pesta Angin Timur Perlis, the Kedah state government organized Temasya Sukan Sungai and Hijau Kuning Color Run 2018, whilst the Batu Kurau International Mountain Bike challenge and Kellies Castle Run were organized by the Perak state government. The main purpose of organizing this event is to promote sports activities besides also promoting sports tourism. Furthermore, it can generate a positive economic outcome for the local communities. Besides the sports events mentioned, perhaps each local district in Malaysia should have their own local community's sports event.

Among the purposes of organizing such events is to promote healthy and active lifestyle and to treat sports as a culture, as stated in the National Sports Policy (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2009). Despite receiving little media attention, the community has organized such event in a special way that related to their regional and local significance. For example, school sports day, community sports day, and also events organized by the government agencies in Malaysia. These small-scale events are organized with the objective to establish the positive relationship among members of the community, friends, and also co-workers. However, events that have been organized at community level are unique and creative given that the activities incorporate elements of nature such as bowling using coconuts, pulling people on coconut leaves, and having football games with the players wearing kain sarong. All of these activities can enhance the image of the small-scale event sports tourism and become tourist attractions.

### **2.3 Event Image of Small-Scale Event Sport Tourism**

The development of event sports tourism for economic growth has led the researcher to discuss the importance and the components of the event's image. An image will be influenced by cognitive, affective, and conative components, and this has been accepted by the previous researcher (Kaplanidou & Gibson, 2012). The conative component of an image gives important implications to the visitors' behavioural intentions. This has been agreed by Kaplanidou and Vogt (2007) who found that visitors will decide whether to participate in the sports event based on their perception towards an image. On the other hand, understanding what are the characteristics that influence visitors' perception towards an image should also be investigated (Gibson et al., 2008). Despite the significant number of studies on events, there are still unexplored questions regarding the influence of events on visitors' perception.

(Valle et al., 2012). Ryu et al. (2008) stated that there is limited research on significant roles of the image that explains the post-purchase of visitors' behaviour. The strong reputation of the image should be recognized by the organizers in order to influence visitors to attend the sports tourism event. By spreading the event's image, organizers will help visitors in the decision-making process and build up their expectations leading to the event.

The importance of image towards the visitor's prediction is also supported by Ryu et al. (2008), who stated that it is difficult to maintain an image of a restaurant that will stick in the consumer's mind. Therefore, event organizers should have an in-depth understanding of the event's image because good images will always be remembered as a memorable experience. In addition, an assessment of the event's image should be done by the organizers to have further understanding of the visitors' revisit intentions. Preceding studies of the image have considered 'cognitive' and 'effective' as the dimension to study an image (Chew & Jahari, 2014; Song et al., 2013). Besides using cognitive and effective as the current study of the image, other dimensions such as place attachment and conative image, have also been used (King et al., 2015). This was supported by previous scholars, who used the 'conative' image as the revisit intention, 'cognitive' representing the functional attributes and 'effective' referring to the emotional attributes to measure tourists' revisit intention (Hallmann et al., 2015; Kaplanidou & Gibson, 2012).

#### **2.4 Event Value of Small-Scale Sports Tourism Event**

From past reviews, it can be seen that perceived value was used as a predictor to evaluate visitors' behaviour (Bajs, 2013; Yang et al., 2011). Value is defined as an overall appraisal of the service based on the assessment of benefits that visitors receive what they have already been given, such as sacrifice and cost (Chen & Tsai, 2008; Ryu et al., 2008). Visitors who attend an event have their early expectations based on their search information. Therefore, according to Bajs (2013), visitors can perceive the value of the event according to both prior and post event experiences. Moreover, perceived value is also a subjective construct in several senses and it differs between each visitor, influenced by culture and also time (Sánchez et al., 2006). This expectation varies depending on the particular moments that the visitors experienced. The perception and evaluation of the perceived value consist of products and services, information, delivery, service, and personal interaction which are derived from the attributions.

Furthermore, the findings of previous studies show that to perceive the value of any event, visitors' measurement depends on destination appearance, emotional experience, and the perception of service quality (Bajs, 2013). This was supported by Jamal et al. (2011) who found that to perceive the value in a community-based or homestay, emotional experience becomes the most important dimension; followed by an experiential value. Lee et al. (2010) also posited that visitor's experience can be achieved through emotional value and this was proven in their study of the Boryeong Mud Festival. The use of emotional value as the predictor of the perceived value in previous research studies showed the importance of this variable towards predicting visitor's revisit intention. This was agreed when emotion became one of the dimensions in evaluating the visitor's perceived value in a festival environment (Lee, 2014).

Emotion becomes part of the perception that influences the visitor's perceived value of the event. Meanwhile, another study focused more on the factors that influence visitors in perceiving the value of an event based on the overall assessment of attending an event, such as whether the sacrifice is felt to be worthwhile (Yang et al., 2011). The study of perceived value has shown that deciding factors become more influential in predicting the visitor's perceived value. This was supported by Meng et al. (2011) who found that a visitor who wants to travel with Star Cruise will consider the amount that they will have to pay against the experience that they will get in return. Meanwhile, Eid (2015) determined the use of

perceived value in the tourism industry based on quality, price, value, emotional value, social value, and Islamic value. Furthermore, the extension of the study regarding Muslim tourists in the hospitality and tourism industry showed that tourists have expectations of the benefits that they will get against the cost and sacrifice.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Sampling and Data Collection**

In this study, perceived event image and perceived value were used to investigate the visitors' psychological attributes which influence them to attend this small-scale sports tourism event. All the respondents are visitors who attended the small-scale sports event in the northern state of Peninsular Malaysia. In this study, 'visitors' are defined as spectators who visited this sports event. An on-site quantitative survey was felt to be an appropriate method because leisure visitors are willing to go through the on-site survey. Thus, simple random sampling was used at the survey location. The assistant researcher was tasked to distribute the questionnaires and collect the completed answers from the visitors within the event area. Out of 600 visitors who have participated in this survey, a total of 132 questionnaires were excluded due to incomplete answers. Only 468 of the questionnaires were found to be valid for analysis. Due to the total of 132 questionnaires that were excluded from the analysis, the response rate was 78%.

#### **3.2 Measures**

A self-administrated questionnaire consisting of three sections, which are event image, event value and demographics information was developed. The event image is defined as the sum of belief, impression, and perception that occur before and after attending an event. The questions of event image were adapted from Deng et al. (2015) and Kaplanidou (2010). The second psychological attribute is event value. The visitors' event value is measured based on questions from Lee et al. (2010). All the variables mentioned above used seven-point Likert-scales starting from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree. The use of this scale is to ensure the stability of the variables besides providing respondents with more options to answer. The last section was consisted of questions regarding visitors' demographic information such as age, gender, country of origin, education level, occupation, income level and marital status.

#### **3.3 Data Analysis**

Data collected in this study was analysed by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 19. The researchers was used descriptive statistics to analyse the demographic characteristics of the visitors and to identify which factors of event image and event value influence the visitors' to attend the SSEST in northern states of Malaysia. Moreover, the principal factor analysis was used to assess the reliability and validity of the scales.

### **4. Findings**

#### **4.1 Descriptive Statistics**

From the final total of 468 respondents, 52.8% were male and 47.2% were female. Most of the respondents fall within the average age range of 21-30 years old (38.9%) followed by 26.3% respondents come from the age group of under 20 years old. The descriptive statistics of the study are shown in Table 2 below. The descriptive statistics are divided into two psychological variables, namely event image and event value. Meanwhile, Table 1 provide the information on the reliability of the event image and event value. Principal factor analysis (PCA) with Varimax was used to assess the dimensionality, reliability, and validity of the scales, consisting of 10 factors for event image and 9 factors for event value. Table 1 shows the measurement analysis results for item loadings and reliability and it showed the values



range from .544 to .719 for event image. The values for event value are range from .573 to .754. Moreover, the reliability score for event image is .937 and .943 for event value. All items loading and reliability score. The estimate factor loading for the latent construct should be .5 or higher and reliability should be .7 or higher to indicate adequate convergence or internal consistency (Hair et al., 2010).

**Table 1:** Reliability and factor loadings.

Scale	Item Loading	Cronbach Alpha
<b>Event Image</b>		
1. This event has a good reputation	.711	<b>.937</b>
2. I learn about new things during attending this event sports tourism	.673	
3. The organizer has provided good security	.621	
4. The organizer has provided choices of food and beverages for visitors	.626	
5. Parking facilities are sufficient	.597	
6. The staff/volunteer is professional	.544	
7. The staff/volunteer is friendly and helpful	.719	
8. Registration counter is convenient	.697	
9. Waiting lines are orderly	.649	
10. This event can become as a tourist attraction	.612	
<b>Event Value</b>		
11. The event provides a good variety of games and attractions	.728	<b>.943</b>
12. This event is well managed,	.754	
13. This event is well organized	.723	
14. The entry fee of the event sports tourism is affordable	.573	
15. The time I spent at this event make me feel good	.656	
16. The quality of the event is outstanding	.688	
17. Attending this event was good value	.733	
18. My decision to attend this event gave me great pleasure	.684	
19. I felt good about my decision to attend this event	.671	

Table 2 lists out the means and standard deviation of the visitors' perceived event image. These measurement items consist of 13 items reflecting the image of this small-scale event sports tourism. The attributes of perceived event image consists of the facilities provided by the event organizer, the benefits, and the management of the event itself. The findings show that visitors believed that this event can become one of the tourist attractions ( $M = 5.24$ ) due to the highest mean score followed by "This visit broadens my horizon by providing the opportunities to experience different scale of sports tourism" ( $M = 5.16$ ), "The organizer has provided varieties of food and beverages for visitors" ( $M = 5.06$ ), "The staff/volunteer is friendly and helpful" ( $M = 5.04$ ), "This event has a good reputation" ( $M = 5.03$ ) and "The

staff/volunteer is professional" (M = 5.00). Meanwhile, the lowest range for the mean score of perceived event image is "The location of this event is near to the accommodation" (M = 4.63). In an attempt to understand visitors' behaviour towards small-scale event sports tourism, respondents were asked about how visitors perceived the value of this event. As stated before, visitors' perceived value of an event can be analysed prior to the event and after attending the event. From the findings, the majority of a high mean score of visitors' perceived value belonged to the respondents after attending an event. The highest mean scores range from between 5.11 to 4.99. Based on the mean scores of the items, respondents tend to agree that "This event is well organized" (M = 5.11), "Attending this event was good value" (M = 5.10), "My decision to attend this event gave me great pleasure" (M = 5.06), "I felt good about my decision to attend this event" (M = 5.06), and "This event is well managed" (M = 5.04). Furthermore, in terms of the cost and benefits, respondents also agreed with "The entry fee of the event sports tourism is affordable" (M = 4.99), "The event provides a good variety of games and attractions" (M = 4.99), and "The time I spent at this event makes me feel good" (M = 4.97). On the other hand, the lowest mean score of the perceived value was for "The quality of the event is outstanding" (M = 4.93).

**Table 2:** Descriptive statistics.

Scale	Mean	Std. Deviation
<b>Event Image</b>		
1. This event has a good reputation	5.03	1.41
2. I learn about new things during attending this event sports tourism	4.95	1.35
3. The organizer has provided good security	4.99	1.33
4. The organizer has provided choices of food and beverages for visitors'	5.06	1.35
5. Parking facilities are sufficient	4.66	1.62
6. The staff/volunteer is professional	5.00	1.33
7. The staff/volunteer is friendly and helpful	5.04	1.35
8. Registration counter is convenient	4.73	1.51
9. Waiting lines are orderly	4.77	1.40
10. This event can become as a tourist attraction	5.24	1.41
<b>Event Value</b>		
11. The event provides a good variety of games and attractions	4.99	1.38
12. This event is well managed	5.04	1.29
13. This event is well organized	5.11	1.26
14. The entry fee of the event sports tourism is affordable	4.99	1.35
15. The time I spent at this event make me feel good	4.97	1.46
16. The quality of the event is outstanding	4.93	1.41
17. Attending this event was good value	5.10	1.32
18. My decision to attend this event gave me great pleasure	5.06	1.36
19. I felt good about my decision to attend this event	5.06	1.40



## 5. Conclusion, Implications, and Limitations

Several past research studies have focused on the image of the destination and a few empirical studies have clearly defined the sports event image (Kaplanidou, 2010). As suggested by Prayag and Grivel (2014), the event organizer should consider other psychological variables to have a further understanding of visitors' behaviour. This was in line with Walker et al. (2013) who stated that it is unknown whether efforts made to strengthen the event image will have an impact on the image of the event. The findings of this study revealed that visitors who attended this event have paid attention to the event image. As for the image perceived by the visitors, it showed that visitors who attended this event had agreed that this small-scale sports event can become one of the tourist attractions and the image itself can preliminarily provide more information regarding the small-scale sports event.

Moreover, the event image perceived by the visitors was also influenced by the good reputation of the event itself. This is an important factor which should be noted by the event organizer, as the bad reputation of an event will ruin its image. The success in hosting an event will help to build up the positive event image formation for this type of event. Thus, as many of the sports event studies tend to focus on mega sporting events, this study has proven that the small-scale sports event can also become an attraction for tourism products. Hence, the positive event image perceived by the visitors has influenced the visitors' decision and more importantly, has attracted them to attend this event. The results of this study also show that visitors who attended this event are looking for good management system in organizing an event.

Visitors who attended this event tend to rate management as the most important attribute, followed by the facilities. This is because a better management system will also be reflected as part of the better image of the event. In addition, an effective management system will ensure that visitors appreciate the attractions and can influence the participation of the athletes through provision of services that are completely able to meet their expectations. Besides that, visitors who attend an event together with their families would consider facilities as an important attribute. The findings of this study are consistent with Liu (2015) who found that international students who attended the Shanghai FI were more concerned with the facilities provided by the event organizer. Deng et al. (2015) in their study relating to the Shanghai World Expo reached similar findings. Convenient facilities provided by the event organizer have gained the visitors' attention and moreover have encouraged visitors to attend the event and have impressed them with the facilities provided, such as a systematic parking system and its prime location.

Another psychological factor influencing small-scale sports tourism event as an attraction is the perceived value. Perceived value is defined as the overall assessment of the utility of the products based on the perception of what has been received and what has been given (Moon et al., 2013). This study revealed that perceived value is not an important indicator which the visitors look for when attending this type of event. The results of this study is inconsistent with that of Jin et al. (2013) which found positive results on the perceived value towards visitors' behavioural intentions. The differences in the findings are due to the type of events and also the purpose of visiting. However, Koo et al. (2014) agreed that perceived value is considered as an additional factor to have a better understanding of the event visitors' behaviours towards small-scale sports event.

The importance of perceived value should be recognized by the event organizer to develop and increase the value-added programmes and enhance the visitors' experience. Visitors who come for this event are hoping to get new experience, gain knowledge and enjoy their leisure activities. In spite of the importance to fulfil their needs and provide a valuable experience, there is also the need to acknowledge what the visitors had experienced and determined how they valued that event. Hence, in organizing an event, the event programme needs to attract the visitors because those who attend the event tend to focus on the activities or programme of

the events before deciding to attend. These assessments are influential in getting the visitors' positive decision and behaviour, whether or not to attend an event and to revisit in the future. Jin et al. (2013) agreed on the importance of event programme in creating memorable experience for the visitors.

Event programmes serve as guidance for the visitors when attending an event. A good event programme will ensure that the visitors stay put and participate in the activities. In contrast, an unorganized event program will lead to a bad experience for the visitors. The previous findings have also been agreed to by Lee et al. (2012), who acknowledged the importance of festival programme and suggested that festival programmes should also include several other activities. If the event programme does not meet the visitors' expectation or does not give positive, memorable experience to the visitors, it should be changed or improved to avoid any unfavourable experiences when attending an event. Hence, the event organizer should realise these important attributes as an effective role that influence the visitors' behaviour to attend this small-scale sports event in order to ensure this event is successful and can become an attractive sport tourism product.

Therefore, in an attempt to ensure that this small-scale sport tourism event can transform into an attraction, the event organizer should be aware of how visitors perceive the image of the event and how they value it. It is crucial for the event image and perceived value factors to be considered as important components in measuring the behaviour of visitors who attend this event. This information has benefited the organizer in terms of gaining knowledge and understanding the visitors' psychological behaviour and their perception. Thus, the organizer should consider the important aspects of perceived event image and value to ensure a greater number of interest and attendance for future events.

Small-scale event sports tourism has the potential to become one of the attractions for tourism products. This study serves as a next move for the small-scale sports tourism to be acknowledged by the surrounding visitors. The previous study has shown that this type of event did receive good publicity from the local community or by sports enthusiasts. However, the fact that this event can become an attraction for the destination development has been agreed upon by several scholars. Therefore, the sports tourism council and event organizer should plan for the development of this event to ensure this event can become a success.

Furthermore, in order to enhance the benefits of this event, there is need to link this small-scale event sports tourism with other tourism products. As discussed above, this small-scale sports tourism event has always been organized to incorporate nature and culture, thus this segment can be used as a key attraction for this event. Besides, the sports tourism council and the event organizer should understand how event image and value do affect the visitors' decision on whether or not to attend this type of event. Hence, it is recommended for future studies to investigate the promotional efforts that should be carried out by event organizers to promote their events worldwide. It is also recommended that based on the uniqueness of the event, the appropriate marketing strategies be implemented to attract visitors. Therefore, it is recommended for future studies to explore other psychological variables which can help this type of event to become an attraction and further garner attention in the future. Although our findings expand the extant knowledge on the visitors behaviour in attending the SSEST in Malaysia, several limitations were obtained in this study and should be addressed by other researchers to provide more effective findings on this important topic of the SSEST in the future. The finding of this study cannot be generalized to other events. This is due to the event location and the respondents which influence the different findings.

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### Author Bibliography



**Anisah Abdul Wafi** is a PhD student in Universiti Utara Malaysia, School of Tourism, Hospitality and Event Management, Malaysia. Her research interests include sports event, sport tourism and event management.



**Lim Khong Chiu** is an Associates Professor in Universiti Utara Malaysia, School of Tourism, Hospitality and Event Management, Malaysia. His research interests include physical and sport education, recreation and sport management, event management and sport tourism.



**Johan Afendi Ibrahim** is a Senior Lecturer in Universiti Utara Malaysia, School of Tourism, Hospitality and Event Management, Malaysia. His research interests include tourism planning and development, urban and regional planning and geographic tourism.

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