

EVENT ATTRIBUTES AND THEIR IMPACT ON SPORT TOURISM DESTINATIONS IN PENINSULAR MALAYSIA

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Abstract: The development of sport tourism destinations in Peninsular Malaysia is constrained by limited understanding of how event promotion, event quality, and event attachment influence tourists' perceptions and destination attractiveness. Clarifying the effects of these key event attributes is essential to assist stakeholders in designing meaningful sporting events that enhance tourist experiences, strengthen destination loyalty, and improve the competitiveness of sport tourism destinations. This study examines the influence of event attributes specifically event promotion, event quality, and event attachment on sport tourism destinations in Peninsular Malaysia. The research focuses on sport tourists attending sporting events in the region and employs a non-probability purposive sampling technique. A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed, of which 131 usable responses were returned. The findings indicate that event promotion, event quality, and event attachment each have a significant positive influence on sport tourism destination outcomes. Well-organised sporting events enhance tourist experiences, strengthen destination reputation, and encourage repeat visitation, thereby acting as important catalysts for tourism development. Accordingly, the study's hypotheses are supported. However, the findings are limited to specific events and are based on a cross-sectional research design.

Keywords: Event attributes, Event management, Peninsular Malaysia, Sport tourism, Tourism Destination

1. Introduction

Sport tourism destinations play a vital role worldwide, as millions of people attend or participate in major sporting events each year. Many countries regard sport tourism as a cost-effective and highly visible instrument for development and international promotion (Sousa & Maguire, 2022). Malaysia demonstrated its growing prominence in this sector by hosting several international sporting events in 2023, including the 4th World Deaf Football Championships, the Cameron Ultra, and the Ironman 70.3 Langkawi Asia Pacific Championship. These events attracted a substantial number of international participants and enhanced Malaysia's reputation as a destination for endurance sports, inclusive sporting events, and adventure tourism (Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau [MyCEB], 2023).

According to MyCEB (2023), such events are instrumental in strengthening tourism performance and elevating Malaysia's profile as a travel destination. Although global travel was severely disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic (Mohanty et al., 2022), Malaysia's tourism industry is projected to recover, with a notable increase in tourist arrivals reported in early 2024 compared with 2023 (Ho, 2024). The sports industry contributes significantly to Malaysia's gross domestic product, and sport tourism is increasingly recognised as an important driver of economic growth and a means of enhancing the country's international image (Wan Soraya Wan Abdul Ghani, 2023).

Earlier government initiatives, such as hosting the 1998 Commonwealth Games and developing world-class facilities including the Sepang International Circuit and the Bukit Jalil National Stadium, laid a strong foundation for positioning Malaysia as a competitive sport tourism destination. Nevertheless, the sector continues to face challenges arising from extreme weather events (Manjit Kaur, 2024; Lo et al., 2024), ongoing post-COVID health concerns (Pashaie & Perić, 2023), and security-related issues. These factors, together with infrastructural limitations, constrain participation in outdoor sporting activities. Addressing these challenges requires strategic planning, including the selection of venues with adequate facilities, scheduling events outside the monsoon season, and implementing robust crowd health and safety measures (Cheng et al., 2023; Dong, 2023). Such initiatives are essential for increasing the number of sport tourists visiting Malaysia.

2. Problem Statement

Despite the increasing prevalence of sport tourism events across Peninsular Malaysia, many destinations continue to face challenges in enhancing their sport tourism attractiveness and sustaining tourist engagement. A key issue is the limited understanding of how event promotion, event quality, and event attachment influence the development of sport tourism destinations. Ineffective event promotion restricts event visibility and reduces tourist participation, while inconsistencies in event quality manifested through poor organisation, inadequate facilities, or substandard service delivery negatively affect the overall tourist experience. At the same time, low levels of event attachment hinder the formation of emotional bonds that encourage repeat visitation and destination loyalty. On the whole, these shortcomings weaken the ability of sport tourism destinations to differentiate themselves and compete effectively at the regional level.

Furthermore, the lack of empirical evidence examining the combined effects of these three event attributes within the Malaysian context leaves tourism stakeholders without clear guidance on how to design and deliver impactful events that enhance destination image and competitiveness. Existing studies have largely examined these attributes in isolation, focused on major international sporting events, or drawn primarily on evidence from Western or global contexts. In response to these gaps, this study investigates the influence of event promotion, event quality, and event attachment on the development of sport tourism destinations in Peninsular Malaysia. By doing so, it seeks to address a significant research gap in the Southeast Asian context and provide context-specific insights to inform both theory and practice.

3. Literature Review

The literature indicates that sport tourism destinations must offer more than the mere hosting of sporting events. Destinations are required to provide distinctive and memorable experiences shaped by factors such as cultural diversity (Tsekouropoulos et al., 2022), safety (Chengo et al., 2024; Gonzalez-Garcia et al., 2022; Tsekouropoulos et al., 2022), accessibility (Guan & Zhang, 2024), and emotional engagement (Jin et al., 2022; Kobierecki, 2023). These elements contribute to the creation of positive experiences and lasting impressions. Long-term destination success is facilitated by favourable experiences and strong emotional attachment to a place, which encourages repeat visitation and sustained interest (Wan Soraya Wan Abdul Ghani, 2023; Wahyuni, 2023).

3.1 Tourism Destination Competitiveness (TDC) Theory

Tourism Destination Competitiveness (TDC) theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how event attributes (EvA), including event promotion (EP), event quality (EQ), and event attachment (EA), influence sport tourism destinations (STD) (Happ, 2021; Nur Shahirah Mior Shariffuddin et al., 2022). The theory emphasises that high event quality leads to positive tourist experiences (Tsekouropoulos et al., 2022), while dynamic and effective event promotion enhances destination competitiveness (Trajkova, 2022). In addition, TDC theory distinguishes between primary resources, such as cultural and natural attractions, and secondary resources, including infrastructure and support services (Moradi et al., 2022). Moreover, tourists who experience emotionally rewarding events are more likely to remain engaged with a destination, as emotional involvement strengthens attachment and influences future travel intentions (Guntoro, 2023; Yun et al., 2023; Zhao & Shen, 2024). Consequently, TDC theory supports the strategic application of event attributes to enhance Malaysia's competitiveness and attractiveness as a sport tourism destination.

3.2 Sport Tourism Destination (STD)

Sport tourism destinations (STD) are increasingly recognised for their ability to offer unique experiences that encourage tourists to engage with local cultures and landscapes, thereby fostering sustainable tourism development and entrepreneurship (Tsekouropoulos et al., 2022). Such engagement strengthens the relationship between travellers and destinations and promotes the creation of innovative tourism experiences. The diversity of sports offered enhances destination appeal and stimulates economic growth (Dong et al., 2022), while the integration of sport, leisure, and tourism significantly increases overall attractiveness and competitiveness (Borek & Polacko, 2023). Health and safety have become critical components of destination competitiveness, particularly in the post-COVID-19 context, where robust safety protocols are required for both participants and spectators (Chengo et al., 2024; Pashaie & Peric, 2023).

Promoting STDs therefore necessitates improvements in infrastructure, especially health-related facilities (Moradi et al., 2022). Effective event safety and security systems, with a strong emphasis on crowd management, are essential for handling large-scale events and enhancing visitor experience (Chengo et al., 2024). Involving local residents can further

improve perceptions of safety (Gonzalez-Garcia et al., 2022), while innovative, technology-enabled crowd management strategies contribute to improved security outcomes (Tsekouropoulos et al., 2022). Access to reliable information services is also crucial, as comprehensive information systems and digital platforms enhance tourist satisfaction and engagement (Moradi et al., 2022; Sousa & Maguire, 2022). Tourists are particularly attracted to destinations that offer enjoyable experiences, including entertainment, local cuisine, and cultural activities. Enjoyment is further enhanced by the availability of diverse sports and leisure options (Alexandra – Gabriela, 2022).

The capacity to host future events represents another important dimension of sport tourism destination. Successful events foster destination loyalty, while positive impressions generate interest in hosting additional events in the future (Gonzalez-Garcia et al., 2022; Jeong, 2023). Assessing and enhancing future event-hosting capacity requires active community involvement and stakeholder engagement (Senevirathna et al., 2023). Accessibility, both physical and financial, is equally vital for destination growth and visitor satisfaction. This includes well-designed transport systems, clear signage, and purpose-built infrastructure to ensure ease of access and navigation (Guan & Zhang, 2024). In summary, to remain competitive and attractive, sport tourism destinations must prioritise the delivery of unique and memorable experiences, ensure high standards of safety and security, provide effective information services, emphasise enjoyment, consider future event-hosting potential, and guarantee accessibility for all visitors (Chengo et al., 2024; Guan & Zhang, 2024; Moradi et al., 2022; Pashaie & Perić, 2023; Sousa & Maguire, 2022).

3.3 Event Attributes (EvA)

Event Attributes (EvA), comprising event promotion (EP), event quality (EQ), and event attachment (EA), are critical factors shaping the development and competitiveness of Sport Tourism Destinations (STD).

3.3.1 Event Promotion (EP)

Event Promotion (EP) is a key marketing strategy that stimulates the growth of sport tourism destinations by highlighting unique destination resources and strengthening competitive positioning. EP is closely aligned with Tourism Destination Competitiveness (TDC) Theory, which provides a conceptual framework for understanding how event-related attributes contribute to the competitiveness of sport tourism destinations. Effective EP involves, first, the use of major sporting events as destination marketing tools to foster positive perceptions of stakeholder efforts and, second, the adoption of innovative promotional approaches and competitive strategies. This includes the development of promotional packages that bundle sporting event tickets with local attractions, cultural activities, and recreational experiences (Wan Soraya Wan Abdul Ghani, 2023; Tichaawa & Hemmonsbey, 2022). Such packages can increase tourist expenditure, encourage longer stays, and enhance overall destination appeal.

In addition, effective event promotion requires collaboration among a wide range of stakeholders, including policymakers, sport tourism providers, and event participants

(Hallmann et al., 2024). This cooperation enhances visibility and supports the development of coherent and integrated marketing strategies. Promoting local communities while fostering a sense of pride and ownership can further result in more authentic and compelling promotional campaigns. Despite its potential benefits, large-scale event promotion may also place pressure on local resources and infrastructure due to increased tourist inflows, potentially leading to suboptimal visitor experiences. Therefore, prioritising special events and leveraging stakeholder collaboration to deliver enhanced promotional packages that extend beyond the core sporting event can contribute to sustained, long-term benefits for sport tourism destinations.

3.3.2 Event Quality (EQ)

Event Quality (EQ) is a central determinant of destination attractiveness and competitive advantage within the Tourism Destination Competitiveness (TDC) framework. High-quality events, particularly those supported by sustainable practices, generate positive tourist experiences and reinforce destination competitiveness. Enhancing EQ requires active stakeholder involvement, strategic management, effective use of community resources, and continuous evaluation of outcomes. The quality of the sport tourism experience, spanning from pre-trip planning to post-event assessment, plays a decisive role in shaping a destination's competitive position. Well-organised and successful events stimulate positive word-of-mouth and encourage repeat visitation.

Two primary elements underpin event quality. The first is the physical environment, which is highly valued by participants and strongly influences overall perceptions and satisfaction (Chandra et al., 2023; Manosudhikul, 2024). This includes venue design, amenities, seating arrangements, and cleanliness. The second element relates to core offerings, such as athlete performance and team achievements, which significantly affect attendance levels, visitor engagement, and perceived value (Wan Soraya Wan Abdul Ghani, 2023). Beyond these factors, effective communication services such as the provision of timely and accurate information and the use of technology for real-time updates are essential for ensuring positive visitor experiences, while poor communication can result in dissatisfaction (Wahyuni, 2023). The presence of professional and well-trained staff is also critical, as staff members serve as key points of contact and contribute to seamless service delivery, thereby increasing the likelihood of positive recommendations (Fernandez-Martinez et al., 2022).

The long-term sustainability of sport tourism destinations depends heavily on the delivery of high-quality events. An understanding of the emotional experiences generated by EQ-related factors enhances perceived destination value. Conversely, venues that fail to meet expectations or ineffective communication practices may lead to disappointment, negative experiences, reduced future attendance, and adverse impacts on destination competitiveness. The literature therefore highlights that event quality attributes can exert both positive and negative influences on sport tourism destinations.

3.3.3 Event Attachment (EA)

Event Attachment (EA) represents an important dimension of attachment within Sport Tourism Destinations (STD) as conceptualised by Tourism Destination Competitiveness (TDC) Theory. EA is influenced by favourable destination attributes (Wan Soraya Wan Abdul Ghani, 2023; Wahyuni, 2023), tourists' emotional experiences and sense of belonging (Gonzalez-Garcia et al., 2022; Wahyuni, 2023), and positive memories associated with the destination (Jin et al., 2022; Tsekouropoulos et al., 2022). First, tourists' sense of connection and belonging to a destination is strengthened through enjoyable and memorable experiences, which in turn significantly influence loyalty and revisit intentions (Jin et al., 2022). Higher levels of emotional engagement foster stronger attachment, while positive emotional experiences at sporting events reinforce satisfaction and destination loyalty. The literature indicates that destinations characterised by unique attributes such as scenic landscapes, cultural diversity, engaging local activities, high-quality facilities and accommodation, and active community participation are more likely to facilitate the emotional experiences necessary for attachment formation.

Second, the creation of memorable experiences through exceptional performances, immersive environments, and positive interactions with local residents further strengthens emotional bonds and attachment, resulting in lasting memories that motivate repeat visitation (Chandra et al., 2023; Jin et al., 2022; Tsekouropoulos et al., 2022). Making tourists feel welcomed and enabling meaningful engagement with local communities, as well as connections to local history, culture, or sporting traditions, are also critical components of event attachment (Chandra et al., 2023; Fernandez-Martinez et al., 2022; Gonzalez-Garcia et al., 2022; Wahyuni, 2023). Initiatives such as volunteer tourism and active community involvement can further strengthen emotional commitment by fostering a sense of belonging. Overall, an emphasis on emotionally engaging experiences enhances tourists' attachment to sport tourism destinations, thereby increasing competitiveness and long-term economic benefits. However, the literature also notes that negative experiences and memories can weaken attachment, leading to feelings of alienation or cultural misalignment. In line with TDC Theory, event attachment factors therefore play a direct role in shaping sport tourists' destination choice.

3.4 Hypotheses Development

This study examines the relationship between sport tourism destinations (STD) and event attributes (EvA), namely event promotion (EP), event quality (EQ), and event attachment (EA). Drawing on insights from the literature, a conceptual research framework is developed (Figure 1), and the following hypotheses are proposed.

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Event Promotion (EP) has a significant impact on Sport Tourism Destinations (STD)

The formulation of H1 is grounded in the literature that identifies event promotion (EP) as a critical mechanism for destination marketing and tourism growth. Previous studies

indicate that major sporting events, such as the Olympic Games, substantially enhance the international visibility of host destinations. Effective EP strategies ranging from stakeholder collaboration to comprehensive promotional packages play an important role in shaping tourists' decision-making processes and influencing destination development outcomes. However, the literature also presents conflicting evidence regarding these effects. Some studies suggest that aggressive promotion and the resulting influx of visitors may place considerable strain on local infrastructure and resources, potentially diminishing the quality of experiences for both tourists and host communities. In light of these competing perspectives, H1 is proposed to empirically examine whether and how event promotion influences the long-term success of sport tourism destinations.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Event Quality (EQ) has a significant impact on Sport Tourism Destinations (STD)

Hypothesis 2 is developed based on extensive literature demonstrating that high event quality (EQ) is fundamental to destination attractiveness and long-term sustainability. Prior research emphasises the role of tourists' emotional responses to various dimensions of event quality in supporting sustainable tourism development. These dimensions include the physical environment (such as venue aesthetics, comfort, and cleanliness), core offerings (including the quality of performances), service efficiency, and staff professionalism. At the same time, H2 is designed to empirically assess potential negative effects, recognising that inadequate communication regarding event logistics or a failure to meet promotional expectations may lead to negative tourist experiences. Such shortcomings can discourage repeat visitation and undermine sustainable tourism objectives. Accordingly, H2 posits that tourists' emotional responses to key event quality attributes, the memories formed, and the extent to which the event resonates with their personal identity will influence their commitment to the sport tourism destination.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Event Attachment (EA) has a significant impact on Sport Tourism Destinations (STD)

The development of H3 is informed by literature suggesting that event attachment (EA) is strongly influenced by tourists' perceptions of a destination as ideal, the creation of meaningful memories, and the destination's ability to connect with tourists' sense of identity and belonging. These factors are widely regarded as essential in fostering sustainable sport tourism development. Nevertheless, the relationship between EA and STD warrants empirical investigation due to mixed findings in previous studies. While a strong sense of belonging and emotional connection is associated with increased loyalty and revisit intentions, negative experiences, unfavourable conditions, or feelings of cultural alienation may weaken attachment and adversely affect destination outcomes. Therefore, H3 is proposed to examine the extent to which emotional bonds, identity affirmation, and meaningful experiences contribute to event attachment and, in turn, influence sport tourism destination development.

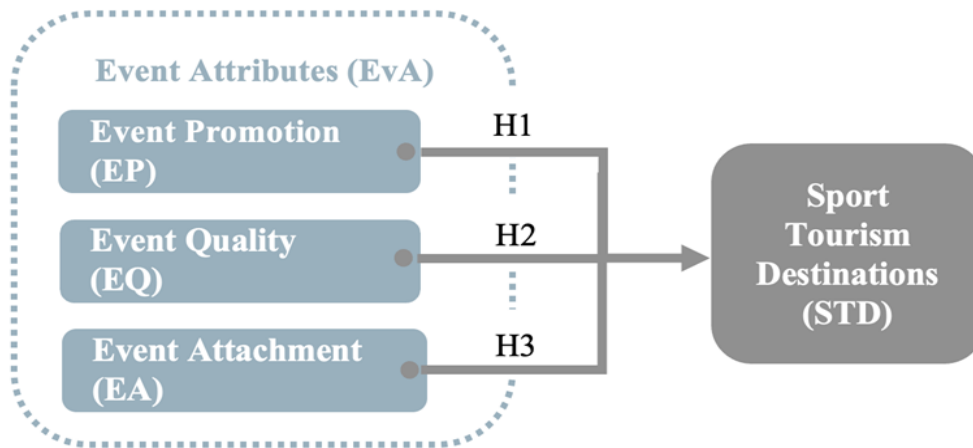


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Event Attributes and Sport Tourism Destinations

4. Method

The research was conducted in two phases. In the first phase, the research instruments were validated through a pilot study. In the second phase, the main data collection was undertaken, followed by statistical analysis of the collected data using appropriate quantitative techniques.

4.1 Data Collection

Data for this quantitative study were collected using a structured questionnaire through a systematic, multi-stage process. The target population comprised sport tourists who attended sporting events as spectators across Peninsular Malaysia. A non-probability purposive sampling technique was employed, as it provided a practical and effective means of obtaining relevant data from the specific target group, namely sport tourist spectators who had attended at least one sporting event in Peninsular Malaysia. This approach was particularly suitable given time and resource constraints, as it enabled the researchers to focus on key event locations rather than relying on random sampling. Prior to the main survey, a pilot test was conducted during an international sporting event at the MotoGP Sepang Circuit, Selangor, Malaysia, in November 2024. A total of 41 completed questionnaires were collected. The reliability of the pilot instrument was assessed using Cronbach's alpha in IBM SPSS Statistics Version 30.0, and the results indicated good to excellent internal consistency across all variables.

The questionnaire consisted primarily of closed-ended questions, including both subjective and objective items. Subjective questions measuring respondents' attitudes and perceptions utilised a six-point Likert scale, with the midpoint deliberately omitted to minimise central tendency bias. Objective questions employed binary "Yes" or "No" response options to facilitate efficient data processing. To ensure clarity and comprehension, the questionnaire was developed in both English and Malay (Bahasa Melayu). Content and language validity were reviewed by five experts, comprising both academics and practitioners.

The minimum sample size required for the main data collection was determined using G*Power analysis, which indicated a threshold of 129 respondents to achieve adequate statistical power. Within the designated data collection period, a total of 150 questionnaires were distributed at relevant event locations. Of these, 131 completed questionnaires were returned and deemed valid for analysis, exceeding the minimum required sample size. Participation in the study was voluntary. All respondents were informed of the study's objectives, and confidentiality was maintained, with no personal identifying information collected.

4.2 Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted in two main stages using IBM SPSS Statistics and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). Descriptive and preliminary analyses were performed using IBM SPSS Statistics, while the proposed structural model was tested using SmartPLS 4 based on the 131 valid responses. The measurement model was evaluated by assessing construct validity and reliability. Convergent validity was established using Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values greater than 0.50, while discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio, with values below 0.90. Reliability was confirmed through Composite Reliability values exceeding 0.70. Finally, the structural model was assessed by examining its explanatory power (R^2), testing the statistical significance of path coefficients through bootstrapping procedures, and evaluating collinearity using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values below 5.

5. Findings and Discussion

5.1 Demographic Analysis

Demographic analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 29.0 based on a robust dataset of 131 valid responses, with no missing values recorded for any demographic variables. The demographic profile of sport tourists (spectators) surveyed across Peninsular Malaysia comprises eleven key characteristics, which are summarised in Table 1. Male respondents constituted the majority of the sample, accounting for 77 individuals (58.8%), while female respondents numbered 54 (41.2%). In terms of age distribution, the 18–30 age group was the most represented, with 71 respondents (54.2%). This was followed by the 31–40 age group, comprising 35 respondents (26.7%), and the 41–50 age group, with 21 respondents (16.0%). The smallest proportion of respondents fell within the 51 years and above category, with four individuals (3.1%).

With regard to educational attainment, the majority of respondents held an undergraduate degree, representing 70 individuals (53.4%). This was followed by respondents with secondary school qualifications, who accounted for 42 individuals (32.1%). The smallest group comprised respondents with a diploma, totalling seven individuals (5.3%). Nationality data revealed a strong concentration of Malaysian respondents, with 122 individuals (93.1%) in the sample. The remaining respondents were international visitors, including Indonesian, Singaporean, Japanese, Indian, and Hong Kong citizens, each of whom constituted a small

proportion of the sample. Notably, Japanese, Indian, and Hong Kong nationals were represented by one respondent each (0.8% per category). Occupational categories were relatively evenly distributed across the sample. The largest occupational group was categorised as “Others”, comprising 39 respondents (29.8%), indicating a diverse range of professional backgrounds among sport tourist spectators.

The distribution across the remaining occupational categories was relatively even. Corporate employees constituted the smallest group, with 30 respondents (22.9%), while both the self-employed and unemployed categories recorded 31 respondents each (23.7%). In terms of marital status, single respondents formed the largest group, comprising 68 individuals (51.9%). This was followed by married respondents with children, who accounted for 52 individuals (39.7%). Married respondents without children represented the smallest group, with 11 individuals (8.4%). Regarding length of stay, the majority of sport tourists reported staying overnight for one night, comprising 58 respondents (44.3%). The next most common durations were three nights (26 respondents, 19.8%) and two nights (25 respondents, 19.1%). The smallest group consisted of respondents who stayed for more than one month, totalling four individuals (3.1%). With respect to accommodation type, there was an equal proportion of respondents staying in hotels and those staying at their own homes or unpaid accommodation, such as the residences of friends or relatives, with 56 respondents in each category (42.7% respectively). The least utilised accommodation types were homestays, parents’ houses, and tents, each reported by one respondent (0.8%).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Demographic Characteristics

Variable	Description	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	77	58.8
	Female	54	41.2
Age Group	18 – 30 years old	71	54.2
	31 – 40 years old	35	26.7
	41 – 50 years old	21	16.0
	51 years old and above	4	3.1
Highest Education	Undergraduate	70	53.4
	Secondary School	42	32.1
	Postgraduate	12	9.2
	Diploma	7	5.3
Nationality	Malaysian	122	93.1
	Indonesian	3	2.3
	Singaporean	3	2.3
	Japanese	1	0.8
	Indian	1	0.8
	Hong Kong Citizens	1	0.8
Profession	Others	39	29.8
	Self-employed	31	23.7
	Unemployed	31	23.7
	Corporate Employee	30	22.9
Marital Status	Single	68	51.9
	Married with child/children	52	39.7
	Married with no child/children	11	8.4

Length of Visit	1 night (Overnight)	58	44.3
	3 nights	26	19.8
	2 nights	25	19.1
	4 nights	9	6.9
	1 week	9	6.9
	Over 1 month	4	3.1
Accommodation	Hotel	56	42.7
	Own Home (Unpaid)	56	42.7
	Hostel	6	4.6
	Chalet	3	2.3
	Homestay	1	0.8
	Parents' House	1	0.8
	Tent	1	0.8

Source: Survey data

5.2 Construct Validity

Data for this quantitative study were collected using a structured questionnaire through a systematic, multi-stage process to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings. The reflective measurement model was assessed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) to confirm that the constructs adequately represented the theoretical concepts under investigation. The measurement model comprised four reflective constructs: Event Attachment (EA), Event Promotion (EP), Event Quality (EQ), and Sport Tourism Destination (STD). Validation procedures focused on assessing both convergent validity and discriminant validity to ensure that each construct captured distinct dimensions of sport tourism destination dynamics.

Convergent validity results demonstrated strong reliability and consistency across all constructs. All Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were 0.607 or higher, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.50, indicating that more than half of the variance in each construct was explained by its respective indicators. In addition, all Composite Reliability (CR) values exceeded 0.915, well above the minimum acceptable level of 0.70, thereby confirming high internal consistency among the measurement items (Table 2). These robust AVE and CR values indicate that the indicators for EA, EP, EQ, and STD reliably captured their intended constructs with minimal measurement error.

Overall, these findings confirm that the theoretical dimensions of emotional attachment, event promotion effectiveness, perceived event quality, and destination appeal are empirically sound and distinct. The strong evidence of convergent validity supports the adequacy of the measurement model for subsequent structural analysis and enhances the credibility of the study's findings. Moreover, the high level of consistency in respondents' interpretations of the measurement items strengthens confidence in the conclusions drawn from the structural model. By demonstrating that sport event attributes can be reliably operationalised using reflective indicators, this methodological rigour contributes meaningfully to the existing literature on destination competitiveness.

Table 2. Convergent Validity Results

Construct	# indicators	Composite Reliability (CR)	AVE
EA	7	0.953	0.742
EP	7	0.915	0.607
EQ	7	0.927	0.645
STD	7	0.926	0.611

Source: Survey data

Discriminant validity was further assessed using both the Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio (Table 3) and the Fornell–Larcker criterion (Table 4). The Fornell–Larcker criterion was satisfied, as the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct exceeded its correlations with all other constructs in the model (Lobo et al., 2022; Nhung et al., 2024). Notably, the highest inter-construct correlation was observed between Event Quality (EQ) and Sport Tourism Destination (STD), with a value of 0.818, confirming that each construct remained empirically distinct. In addition, all HTMT values were below both the conservative threshold of 0.85 and the more widely accepted threshold of 0.90 (Tengku Siti Aisha Tengku Mohd Azzman Shariffadeen et al., 2023; Chan et al., 2022). Collectively, these results provide strong evidence of discriminant validity and confirm the robustness of the measurement scales used for Event Promotion (EP), Event Quality (EQ), Event Attachment (EA), and Sport Tourism Destination (STD).

Table 3. Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT)

	EA	EP	EQ	STD
EA				
EP	0.775			
EQ	0.735	0.755		
STD	0.667	0.804	0.818	

Note: HTMT < 0.85

Table 4. Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	EA	EP	EQ	STD
EA	0.861			
EP	0.718	0.779		
EQ	0.690	0.687	0.803	
STD	0.624	0.724	0.741	0.782

Note: Diagonals (square root of AVE) are bolded and must be higher than the correlations in their respective rows and columns to confirm discriminant validity.

5.3 Structural Model Evaluation

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was employed to evaluate the structural model and examine the relationships between Event Attributes (EvA) and Sport Tourism Destination (STD) outcomes. The evaluation commenced with an

assessment of collinearity using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). The results confirmed the robustness of the model, as all VIF values were below the recommended threshold of 5, indicating that multicollinearity was not a concern among the predictor constructs (Table 5). Specifically, the VIF values for Event Attachment (EA), Event Promotion (EP), and Event Quality (EQ) were 2.540, 2.440, and 3.394, respectively.

These results indicate that the predictor constructs are statistically independent and do not exhibit excessive overlap in explaining variance in STD. Ensuring acceptable VIF values is essential in structural modelling, as high multicollinearity can inflate standard errors, reduce the precision of coefficient estimates, and lead to unstable or unreliable interpretations of causal relationships. The absence of multicollinearity therefore strengthens the predictive validity of the model and enhances confidence in subsequent analyses examining the effects of event attributes on sport tourism destination outcomes. Moreover, these findings support the conceptual distinction among the dimensions of sport event experiences examined in this study, demonstrating that each construct contributes independently and meaningfully to destination competitiveness, visitor attachment, and overall tourism appeal.

Table 5. Collinearity Statistics

Predictor Construct	VIF
EA	2.540
EP	2.440
EQ	3.394

Note: VIF < 5 indicates multicollinearity does not exist.

For the endogenous construct Sport Tourism Destination (STD), the model demonstrated a satisfactory level of predictive accuracy, as indicated by the coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.466 reported in Table 6. This value indicates that 46.6% of the variance in STD is explained by its predictor variables. In addition, the predictive relevance of STD, assessed using the Stone–Geisser Q^2 value, was confirmed at 0.556 (Table 7). As this value exceeds zero, it provides strong evidence of the model's predictive capability. The validation of these relationships supports the study's primary research objectives concerning the influence of event promotion, event quality, and event attachment on sport tourism destination performance. The findings indicate that the combined effects of event promotion (EP), event quality (EQ), and event attachment (EA) are both statistically meaningful and practically relevant. The model not only explains a substantial proportion of destination appeal but also demonstrates strong predictive power in forecasting STD outcomes.

Although these event-related attributes represent significant drivers of sport tourism destination performance, the moderate R^2 value suggests that additional factors such as service quality, accessibility, pricing, and event legacy may also contribute to a more comprehensive explanation of destination competitiveness. Nevertheless, the high Q^2 value underscores the model's strong predictive relevance, indicating that strategic event promotion, enhanced event quality, and the cultivation of emotional engagement can effectively support long-term visitation, tourist loyalty, and market competitiveness. Overall, the model's predictive accuracy and relevance affirm its suitability for future academic

research and practical managerial decision-making in the context of sport tourism destination management.

Table 6. Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Endogenous Construct	
STD	0.466

Table 7. Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

Level	Construct	Predict	Interpretation
Construct	STD	0.556	High predictive relevance

Based on the supported hypotheses, the analysis confirmed that Event Promotion (EP) (H1), Event Quality (EQ) (H2), and Event Attachment (EA) (H3) exert significant effects on Sport Tourism Destination (STD) outcomes, as presented in Table 8.

H1: Event Promotion (EP) positively influences Sport Tourism Destination (STD) ($\beta = 0.150$, $p = 0.018$).

This finding indicates a statistically significant positive relationship between effective event promotion and the overall appeal of sport tourism destinations. Consistent with prior studies, the use of major sporting events as destination marketing instruments enhances destination competitiveness by strengthening positive perceptions of stakeholder efforts, including those of policymakers, sport tourism providers, and event participants (Wan Soraya Wan Abdul Ghani, 2023; Tichaawa & Hemmonsby, 2022). Moreover, the implementation of innovative promotional strategies and attractive event-related packages increases destination visibility and facilitates the development of integrated and cohesive promotional approaches (Hallmann et al., 2024).

Table 8. Significance Testing Results of the Structural Model Path Coefficients

Relationship	Path Coefficient (β)	t Values	p Values	Significance ($p < 0.05$)
H1: EP > STD	0.150	2.374	0.018	Yes
H2: EQ > STD	0.171	2.530	0.011	Yes
H3: EA > STD	0.202	4.277	0.000	Yes

Promoting pride and a sense of ownership within the local community also supports authentic marketing initiatives that enhance the destination's reputation. Although event promotion substantially increases awareness, the influx of sport tourists generated by large-scale events may place pressure on local resources and infrastructure, potentially resulting in suboptimal tourist experiences if such growth is not managed sustainably. Consequently, sport tourism destinations can derive long-term benefits by prioritising distinctive events,

strengthening stakeholder partnerships to support sport-related activities, and developing promotional packages that complement major events. Accordingly, H1 is supported.

H2: Event Quality (EQ) moderately influences Sport Tourism Destination (STD) ($\beta = 0.171$, $p = 0.011$).

This hypothesis is supported, indicating that improvements in event quality enhance the attractiveness of sport tourism destinations. Prior studies highlight the physical environment as a critical dimension of event quality, as it is highly valued by attendees and strongly shapes overall perceptions and satisfaction (Chandra et al., 2023; Manosudhik, 2024). While core elements such as athlete performance, team achievements, and competitive standards play a significant role in influencing attendance, engagement, and perceived value, venue design, seating arrangements, cleanliness, amenities, and ambience contribute substantially to visitor comfort and destination image (Wan Soraya Wan Abdul Ghani, 2023).

Beyond physical and performance-related aspects, effective communication is also essential. The provision of timely and clear information, together with the use of digital technologies for real-time updates, significantly enhances visitor experiences (Wahyuni, 2023). In addition, professional and well-trained staff facilitate smooth interactions, thereby increasing tourist satisfaction and the likelihood of positive word-of-mouth recommendations (Fernandez-Martinez et al., 2022). Collectively, these findings suggest that high-quality events support the long-term sustainability of Sport Tourism Destinations (STD) by enhancing perceived value through positive visitor experiences. However, if venues fail to meet expectations or communication is inadequate, dissatisfaction may arise, potentially leading to negative experiences, reduced revisit intentions, and a decline in destination appeal. Thus, EQ can exert both positive and negative influences on STD outcomes. Consistent with Tourism Destination Competitiveness (TDC) Theory, well-managed and sustainable events strengthen destination competitiveness by fostering satisfaction, repeat visitation, and loyalty.

H3: Event Attachment (EA) strongly influences Sport Tourism Destination (STD) ($\beta = 0.202$, $p = 0.000$).

This result demonstrates that event attachment significantly enhances the attractiveness of sport tourism destinations. According to Tourism Destination Competitiveness (TDC) Theory, attachment develops when destinations possess favourable attributes (Wan Soraya Wan Abdul Ghani, 2023; Wahyuni, 2023), facilitate meaningful connections with the local community (Gonzalez-Garcia et al., 2022; Wahyuni, 2023), and create positive, memorable experiences associated with the place (Jin et al., 2022; Tsekouropoulos et al., 2022). Distinctive features such as scenic environments, cultural diversity, high-quality facilities, and memorable event experiences foster emotional bonds that encourage loyalty and repeat visitation (Chandra et al., 2023; Jin et al., 2022; Tsekouropoulos et al., 2022).

Furthermore, interactions with local residents, community participation, and engagement with local culture and sporting traditions reinforce a sense of belonging among

tourists (Chandra et al., 2023; Fernandez-Martinez et al., 2022; Gonzalez-Garcia et al., 2022; Wahyuni, 2023). Conversely, negative or culturally misaligned experiences may weaken emotional attachment. Overall, these emotionally engaging experiences strengthen tourists' attachment to sport tourism destinations, thereby enhancing competitiveness, satisfaction, loyalty, and long-term profitability in line with TDC Theory. Thus, H3 is supported.

In summary, the structural model evaluation confirms the robustness and predictive capability of the proposed model by demonstrating that Event Promotion (EP), Event Quality (EQ), and Event Attachment (EA) significantly influence Sport Tourism Destination (STD) outcomes. These findings support the central objective of the study, which posits that tourists' perceptions of sport tourism destinations are shaped by event-related attributes. Specifically, EP, EQ, and EA emerge as critical determinants of destination appeal and competitiveness, consistent with Tourism Destination Competitiveness (TDC) Theory.

Effective EP strategies such as leveraging sporting events as destination marketing tools to enhance visibility and competitive positioning—are essential for increasing awareness and attracting visitors. Similarly, high EQ, encompassing professional staffing, appealing venues, and high-calibre athletic performances, significantly enhances the overall tourist experience, which is a core dimension of destination competitiveness and long-term success. Moreover, strong EA, derived from emotional connections formed through favourable destination attributes, a sense of belonging, and the creation of memorable experiences, plays a crucial role in fostering tourist loyalty and revisit intentions. The structural model demonstrates substantial predictive relevance ($Q^2 = 0.556$) and a respectable level of explanatory power for STD ($R^2 = 0.466$), indicating that strategic investments in event quality, promotion, and emotional engagement are essential for enhancing destination appeal and achieving sustained success in sport tourism.

6. Conclusion

This study contributes to the sport tourism literature by extending Tourism Destination Competitiveness (TDC) Theory within the Southeast Asian context, specifically Peninsular Malaysia. By examining the combined influence of event promotion, event quality, and event attachment, the research addresses a notable gap in predominantly Western-focused studies and proposes a context-specific conceptual framework for analysing sport tourism events. The findings provide empirical evidence that event-related attributes play a critical role in shaping destination appeal and enhancing sport tourism outcomes, thereby advancing theoretical understanding in tourism, marketing, and management research.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The use of a six-point Likert scale without a neutral midpoint may have introduced social desirability bias, while the modest sample size limits the generalisability of the findings. In addition, the study was confined to Peninsular Malaysia and focused solely on passive sport tourists, which restricts the applicability of the results to other geographic contexts and to active sport tourism segments. Future research should expand the model by incorporating external risk and opportunity factors, such as environmental disruptions and lifestyle-driven travel motivations, as well as examining diverse tourist segments and regional settings. Further investigation into the direct and

moderating effects of event attributes would provide a more comprehensive understanding of sport tourism destination competitiveness.

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