

The influence of Event Destination Attributes towards Social Impact

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Abstract. The demand of special events in Malaysia has created the need among event organizers in choosing the best destination attributes as these attributes create an impact to society. This paper attempts to examine the relationship between destination attributes namely familiarity, uniqueness and excitement towards social impact. Three broadly hypothesized relationships were tested in a field study among the residents of Langkawi Island, Malaysia. Out of 500 questionnaires that had been distributed, only 389 had participated in the survey (78% return rate). By and large, the result from regression analysis provided a relationship between excitement, uniqueness and familiarities toward social impact. The residents believe that familiarity, uniqueness and excitement of the event destination will influence the number of visitors and shapes the society.

Keywords: Social impact, event destination, excitement, uniqueness and familiarity.

1. Introduction

Event tourism has become one of the main economic contributors in most countries. In Malaysia, this sector is verified as one of the economic contributor which explains the government's revenue [2]. High budget allocations in upgrading tourism infrastructures have been provided for the tourism sector, to encourage more tourists to the country. Based on this, the tourism industry has widened its scope into other sectors such as education, health, heritage, ecotourism and special events. These sectors develop into event tourism attractions and consequently result in the upsurge of the event industry. Event destinations are important as part of event tourism attraction. Thus, event tourism contributes to economic and social development; it leads to higher expenditure and increasing job opportunities. This paper will discuss on how the understanding of special event destination factors influence social impact. This is because event tourism contributed to society as part as community development.

2. Event Tourism

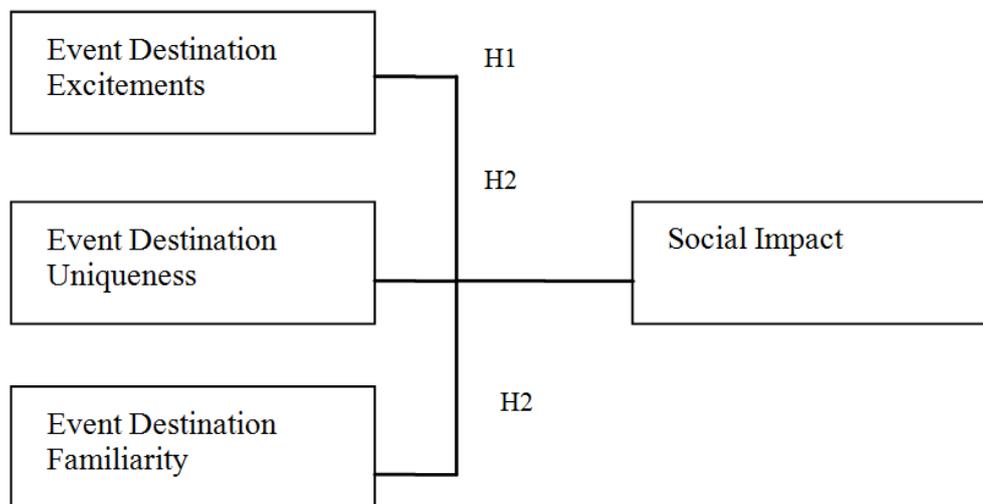
Event tourism is rapidly growing, as fast as tourism industry. Many states and countries all over the world are contending to host mega events such as the Olympic Games, Formula One, international conferences etc. The increasing demand of organizing an event has led to a growing body of research to study on social impact [5] thus, encouraging more competition among countries to organize and host these types of events as it creates economic and social impact on the destination. Although there are many studies underpinning the importance of evaluating an event impact [4, 6] there is a dearth of research identifying the destination as event destination factors that leads to social impact.

One important issue in event tourism is the selection of location or destination of the event. A good destination strategy will determine the number of visitors. This is because, event tourism improves the tourist infrastructure of the destination [3] and this will attract number of visitors. There are substantial competitions

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among tourist destinations for the growing domestic and international tourism markets. Hence, novelty preference is one of the key determinants in destination attributes as discussed by Ahmad Azmi M. Ariffin, 2008. The construct of novelty preference is defined as ‘the extent to which a corporate meeting planner prefers a destination setting that creates an unusual, unique and exciting meeting travel experience’ (Lee & Crompton, 1992; Wahlers & Etzel, 1985; Callan & Hoyes, 2000 and Leask & Hood, 2001, cited in [1, p. 84]. Thus, destination familiarity, destination uniqueness and destination excitement contributes to tourist satisfaction. Destination familiarity is defined as ‘the extent to which the destination setting is perceived as different and/or unusual from those in their common place for corporate meeting’. Next, destination uniqueness is defined as ‘the extent to which the destination setting is perceived as being special when compared to their usual place for corporate meeting’. Destination excitement is defined as ‘the extent to which the destination setting is perceived as offering a stimulating and/or unpredictable meeting experience’ [1].

Research Framework and Hypotheses



Therefore, based on the above, the following hypotheses are formulated:

- H1: There is a relationship between event destination excitements toward social impact.
- H2: There is a relationship between event destination uniqueness toward social impact.
- H3: There is a relationship between event destination familiarities toward social impact.

3. Methodology

There are three constructs for the mentioned destination attributes. These constructs are applicable to the study and are adapted from Ahmad Azmi M. Ariffin, 2008. Five hundred questionnaires were distributed to residents in Langkawi using convenience sampling. 389 of the questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 78%. The survey instrument used for this study comprised of 3 sections. The first section dealt with the demographic profile, the second section asked on the community's perception on having their area as an event destination, and the final section includes on how the event would affect the community and their area. The instrument for social impact was adapted from Small, 2007.

The construction of novelty preference which is used as an event destination attribute is measured by calculating the mean responses, where 5 depicted a very strong novelty preference and 1 depicted a very weak novelty preference. In order to ascertain that all the measurements used in this study are reliable, the data was then analysed and it demonstrated a Cronbach alpha between .83 to .92.

4. Result and Discussion

This study found out that, 60% of the respondents are female and 31% are male. In an attempt to investigate the relationship between event destination attributes and social impact, correlation analysis was conducted. A summated scale of the determinant was calculated by averaging the mean of each dimension. It

shows the values of Pearson's r range from .448 to .534 ($p < 0.05$) suggesting significant and moderate relationships between event destination excitement, uniqueness and familiarity and social impact. To test the hypotheses, multiple regression tests were performed to predict the variance in the dependent variable. The normal probability plots show that the residuals are normally distributed. Based on the above analysis, all regression assumptions have been satisfied.

Based on the test results, we conclude that regression as a whole is significant (f . value =59.273, p .value = 0.000) with R^2 of .32. This implies that 32% of the variance in social impact can be explained by event destination excitement, uniqueness and familiarity. It is also found out that all these dimensions have significant positive relationship with social impact (t -value =12.663, p = 0.000). Thus, it shows that all three hypotheses are supported and it shows that event destination excitement, uniqueness and familiarity are seen to have a significant effect on social impact.

This study shows that there is an influence of event destination excitement, uniqueness and familiarity towards social impact. This is because the excitement of event participants in attending an event at a particular location is also based on the natural environment provided by the destination. For example, Langkawi Island is well-known as one of the most beautiful islands in Malaysia and this will also influence participant perception towards event destination. The result also revealed that uniqueness of an event destination influence numbers of event participants in attending an event. The uniqueness of Langkawi Island as one of the green island in Malaysia has attracted tourists to the island. Furthermore, this impact is also being influenced by familiarity of event participants towards the island. As a result, these elements contribute to higher number of tourists to the island and create impacts on the society such as inconveniences, entertainment and socialization opportunities.

5. Conclusion

It can be concluded that event destination excitement, uniqueness and familiarity have a significant influence towards social impact. In other words, in order for an event organizer to select a location for an event, they have to ensure that the selection is based on these three elements. These elements are important in determining the satisfaction of the participants. The uniqueness of the event destination is predetermined by the facility and location uniqueness. Furthermore, the excitement feeling of the attendees will enhance participants' urge to return to the location. Event destinations that include these attributes will bring positive benefits to the local community. Furthermore, higher numbers of visitors coming to the event destination will lead to social impacts to the local community namely inconveniences, entertainment, and socialization opportunities.

This study provides practical contribution to the body of knowledge as it does not only propose a framework as a guide in understanding the antecedents of social impact, but it also creates awareness among event organizers on considering these elements when selecting destinations for organizing events. This study addressed three elements of event destination attributes. Future studies can focus on other perspectives such as environmental impact that created by event as destination.

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