The Influence of Destination Image and Event Image on Behavioural Intention of Sport Event: The Case of Penang Bridge International Marathon

See Siau Fern & Seah Wan Wei
KDU Penang University College, Malaysia

Abstract: Sport tourism has been known as the fastest growing type of tourism globally. It is used as marketing tool to promote the destination and market differentiation in the tourism segment. Hosting a sport event is vital in promoting the tourist destination, increasing the exposure of the host destination to the world, stimulating the host destination's economy and creating a number of media attentions. There are limited studies investigating small-scale sport event. In order to fill this research gap, this study targeted Penang Bridge International Marathon (PBIM) as the main research subject. This research focused on the sport event participants who were the guaranteed "customers" of sport events and the hosting destinations. This study aimed to investigate the influence of event image, destination image, sport tourists' previous destination visit experience and prior experience with sport event on sport event participants' behavioural intention. Three hundred and eighty three (383) questionnaires were collected from the participants of the Penang Bridge International Marathon on November 16, 2014 around Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah Bridge, Penang Second Bridge by using convenient sampling technique. The Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) results showed the insignificant impact of the previous destination visit experience on destination image. Prior experience with sport event insignificantly affected the event image. There was a significant impact of the event image on the image of destination. The impact of destination image on event image was significant as well. The sport event participants' behavioural intention was predicted by the image of destination and event. The image of event and destination should be managed effectively to attract more sport tourists in future. Destination and event marketers could implement the co-branding approaches to enhance the brand image of event and destinations.

Key words: Behavioural intention, destination image, event image, international marathon, Penang Bridge, SEM.

Introduction

Over the past twenty years, sport tourism has been known as the fastest growing type of tourism globally (Fan, 2008). According to Chin and Teoh (October 10, 2015), sport tourism

Correspondence: See Siau Fern; Email: *siaufern.see@kdupg.edu.my*

has been generated approximately €450bil (RM2.2tril) annually, which was over 25% of the contribution by global tourism industry to GDP in year 2014. Sport event is known as an important component of the marketing mix of the tourist destination. It is used as a marketing tool by destination marketers to promote the destination and to differentiate the destination from other destinations in the tourism market (Koo, 2013). Furthermore, hosting a sport event plays a vital role in promoting the tourist destination, increasing the exposure of the host destination to the world, stimulating the host destination's economy and creating a number of media attentions (Bennekom, 2014).

Sport tourism is one of the important sectors in Malaysia tourism industry and contributes approximately RM 5 billion annually. In year 2014, sport tourism in Malaysia had received 27.44 million tourist (Chin & Teoh, October 10, 2015). In Penang, Malaysia, Penang Bridge International Marathon (PBIM) is an annual marathon event and an anticipated run in Malaysia since its inception in 1986 (Penang BIM, 2013). This sport event is the largest mass-participation sports events in Penang. According to Adrian Sprints. Con (2013), over 3000 of Penang Bridge International Marathon (PBIM) participants came from various countries such as Australia, Africa, Thailand, China, Singapore, Kenya, United Stated and so on. The statistics showed that there was 99% increase of the number of participants from year 2008 to 2013, indicating this yearly marathon event has grown in popularity.

Scholars have reported that there are many factors affecting the sport tourists' behaviours and their decision making, including destination image (Lu, 2013; Jago *et al.*, 2003; Bennekom, 2014), satisfaction level and tourists' characteristics (Kaplanidou, 2009). Past researches have reported that the image of sport event significantly affected the host destination image because the image of the sport event may form an image that contributes to the development of an attractive destination for travelers to visit (Bennekom, 2014). In contrast, the destination can also affect the sport event image because they are providers of the destination experiences that are related to the event (Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007).

The influence of the image on the behavioural intentions has been reported of its important in the sport literature (Tasci & Gartner, 2007). According to Yang (2013), understanding of the sport tourists' behaviour intention is vital because organizers always wish tourists will revisit the sport event or visit the hosting destination again in the future. Therefore, it is important to identify the factors influencing sport tourists' behaviour intention in order to maximize tourism benefits. In addition, sport tourists' characteristics (e.g. previous destination visit experience, prior experience with sport event) showed the impacts on the destination and event image (Koo, 2013). The question that this study seeks to address is how these tourists' previous destination visit experience and prior experience with sport event in the relationship between event image and destination image.

Few empirical researches have studied the interrelationship between destination image, sport event image and sport tourists' previous destination visit experience and prior experience with sport event on the sport tourists' behavioural intention. The limited theoretical understanding of these relationships is the major hindrance to predict sport tourists' behaviour in the sport tourism context. Thus, the objective of this study was to investigate the influences of destination image, sport event image and sport tourists' previous destination visit experience and prior experience with sport event on their behavioural intention.

Literature Review

Previous Destination Visit Experience and Prior Experience with Sport Event

For both event and destination image, past experience is a crucial factor in the formation of cognitive images (Kaplanidou, 2009). Previous researches have showed the significant impacts of the past experience on the revisiting intention to a destination (Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007). Therefore, when destination image and event image are examined, past experience should be taken into consideration. Familiarity has been reported as a function of prior experience of visitation and familiarity of information. Familiarity was found to positively and significantly affect the destination image (Baloglu, 2001).

Kaplanidou and Vogt (2007) reported that spectators' previous experience with destination positively and significantly impact the destination image as well as their revisit intention to a destination. Furthermore, the past experience with the sport event was found insignificantly influenced by the image of sport event. This is supported by Fan (2008) who showed the significant impact of prior visitation experience to a destination on the revisiting intention to the destination and insignificant impact of prior experience in a sport event on event image. Furthermore, there was a positive and significant relationship between prior visitation experience to a destination and prior experience in a sport event. Past behaviour including prior experience with a sport event and the hosting destination has not been studied extensively to understand how they affect the event image and destination image. Therefore, in order to fill this research gap, the following hypotheses were examined:

H1: There is a positive influence of prior experience with sport event on event image.
H2: There is a positive influence of previous destination visit experience on destination image.

Destination Image, Event Image and Behavioural Intention

Destination image is defined as individuals' overall impression, beliefs, feelings and knowledge on a destination from time to time (Mendes, Valle & Guerreiro, 2011). In the tourism literature, destination image is one of the interesting areas to be studied among tourism scholars for more than four decades (Lita & Ma'ruf, 2015). The significant role of destination image on tourists' behavioural intention as well as tourists' decision making process has been acknowledged (Kaplanidou, 2009; Bigne *et al.*, 2001).

Destination image consists of three components, namely, cognitive, affective and conative component (Hallmann & Breuer, 2010). A successful destination must be differentiated from the competitors and positively positioned in the tourists' mind (Fan, 2008). Forming and managing an image of destination is crucial to promote the destination, reposition the brand and accentuate the differentiating features in the face of competition (Mendes *et al.*, 2011). Thus, positive tourism destination image should be invested to obtain more prominent position in the tourism market. According to Bigne *et al.*, (2001), destination image positively affects the tourists' intention to revisit a destination. Tourists will choose a visiting place with strong and positive image (Mendes *et al.*, 2011).

Hallmann and Breuer (2010) reported that the principles of destination image (i.e. the cognitive, affective and conative components) can be utilized to evaluate the image of

sport event. According to Lee and Cho (2009), the event images can be assessed cognitively and affectively. In Kaplanidou *et al.*'s (2009) study, the sport event image was qualitatively assessed based on the emotional, environmental, organizational, social, physical and historical attributes. In addition, event image has been measured quantitatively in the previous studies (Koo, Quartermann & Flynn, 2006).

According to Kaplanidou and Vogt (2007), it is critical to understand how the destination and event images work together for successful destination marketing and branding. Several studies have shown the positive relationship between image of destination and image of event. According to Xing and Chalip (2006) and Lu (2013), the exposure of the event as well as the event image can be enhanced by media propaganda. The event image was found to have significantly influenced the destination image when there was a higher profile of event image compared with the destination image. Both event and destination images would beneficially develop the individuals' intention to support the event.

Kaplanidou and Vogt (2007) who analyzed the relation between the image of destination and sport event in a small-scale sport event showed that there was significant impact of the sport event image on the destination image. However, the impact of destination image on the event image was insignificant. Furthermore, in the study of examining Taiwan Bicycling Race Sport Event, Fan (2008) reported that destination image and sport event image had the significant influence on the sport event participants' willingness to revisit.

Kaplanidou (2009) revealed that certain image of event affected some aspects of the destination image. The cognitive destination image was affected by cognitive event image. Lee, Ku & Lin (2012) supported that the destination image was positivity and directly affected by sport event image. It was also found that destination image significantly affected the tourists' event loyalty. According to Lu (2013), sport event image exerted the positive impacts on the event spectators' event support intention and destination image. Consequently, the following hypotheses were tested:

H3: There is positive influence of event image on destination image.
H4: There is positive influence of destination image on event image.
H5: There is positive influence of destination on behavioural intention.
H6: There is positive influence of event image on behavioural intention.

Methodology

The target population of this study was the participants of the Penang Bridge International Marathon 2014. Onsite survey was conducted at the area of Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah Bridge, Penang Second Bridge. The confidence interval approach was used to determine the sample size, where the estimated variability was 50% and level of confidence was 95% (Burns & Bush, 1995). The sample size of 383 was determined. By estimating the response rate of 50%, a total of 770 participants of this sport event were approached to join this survey. Ten trained panels administered the questionnaires at the several resting areas of this marathon event by using convenient sampling technique. A total of 380 questionnaires were returned.

A questionnaire was used as the research instrument. The participants' demographic profiles and behaviour which include gender, age, nationality, education level, nationality

and monthly income were collected. The items on sport tourists' previous destination visit experience and prior experience with sport event, destination image, event image and on sport event and participants' behavioural intention were based a review of the literature (Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007; Fan, 2008; Koo, 2013) and adapted to the research context. In particular, the prior experience with sport event was measured with two open-ended items relating to participants' frequency of joining PBIM event and similar sport event. Previous destination visit experience was also assessed by two open-ended items, which were related to the frequency of visiting destination for vacations as well as for sport event in Penang. For the construct of sport event image, six five-point semantic differential scale type items were used, including 'fulfilling' and 'unfulfilling', 'stimulating' and 'unstimulating', 'excellent' and 'poor', 'healthy and unhealthy', 'valuable and not valuable', 'adventurous and unadventurous'.

Measurement of destination image consisted of eight items. The set of cognitive items composed the Penang destination attributes (good nightlife and entertainment, personal safety, standard hygiene and cleanliness, suitable accommodations, friendly and helpful people, interesting historical and cultural attractions, beautiful scenery/natural attraction and opportunities for sport activities) and were assessed by using five point Likert scale which were ranging from 'offers very little' to 'offers very much'.

In order to assess the event participants' behavioural intention, five items were used to measure the degree to which they participate PBIM again, revisit Penang again for vacation, revisit Penang to participate in a sport or outdoor recreation activities, give positive recommendation of experience in Penang Bridge International Marathon to my friend and family, suggest friends and family to participate Penang Bridge international Marathon, suggest my friends and family to visit Penang as vacation destination. These items were measured by using five point Likert scale, which ranged from 1 = strongly disagreed to 5 = strongly agreed.

The data were analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software program, version 21.0 and AMOS version 22.0. In the analysis of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) for the measurement model, the assessment for model of fit, internal reliability, composite reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity for measurement models were conducted prior to modeling the structural model. The analysis of structural model was then conducted for the hypothesis testing in this study.

Findings and Discussion

Measurement Model

Table 1 showed the demographic profile of the respondents who participated in Penang Bridge International Marathon was studied. There were a total of 385 respondents. The total number of respondent consisted mainly of males with 65.7 % and 34.3% of the females. Majority of respondents were in the age group of 19-28 (53.2%). The nationality of the respondents were mostly Malaysian (83.1%) and 16.9% of the respondents were non-Malaysians originating from Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand and Australia. Most of the respondents hold degree education level (59.2%) with the monthly income of RM2001-RM4000 (36.1%). One hundred percent (100%) of respondents were participants in this event. Majority of them knew about this event via their friends and family (48.8%). Most of them participated in this event with their friends (69.9%) with the purpose of self-challenge (39.0%).

Table 1. Respondents' demographic profile and behaviour

	Demographic Profile and behaviour	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	65.7
	Female	34.3
Age	18 and below	7.5
	19-28	53.2
	29-38	22.9
	39-48	10.4
	49-58	4.4
	59 and above	1.6
Nationality	Malaysian	83.1
	Non-Malaysian	16.9
Education Level	High school	15.1
	Diploma	18.4
	Degree	59.2
	Master and above	7.3
Monthly Income	RM2000 and below	29.9
	RM2001-RM4000	36.1
	RM4001-RM6000	17.1
	RM6001-RM8000	8.6
	RM8001 and above	8.3
The role in this event	Visitor	0
	Participants	100
	Committee Member	0
	Volunteer	0
	Others	0
Came to know about this event from	Internet	39.5
	Newspaper	8.6
	Friends & Family	48.8
	Newsfeed (email)	1.0
	Others	2.1
Co-participant	Friends	69.9
	Family	16.4
	Colleagues	8.6
	Alone	5.2
	Others	0
Purpose of participating in this event	To experience the event	27.5
	For health	10.1
	Solely to enjoy the run	21.6
	To challenge myself	39.0
	Others	1.8

Table 2. Descriptive statistics, indicator loadings, Cronbach's Alpha (α), Composite Reliability (CR) and AVE values

Constructs	Mean (S.D.)	Indicator Loadings	α	CR	AVE
Prior experience with sport event (PEI)			0.702	0.701	0.540
PEI1	3.10 (1.17)	0.733			
PEI2	3.83 (1.44)	0.737			
Event Image (EI)			0.877	0.880	0.553
EI1	3.85 (0.94)	0.773			
EI2	3.82 (0.87)	0.828			
EI3	3.85 (0.86)	0.779			
EI4	4.16 (0.83)	0.685			
EI5	3.95 (0.88)	0.765			
EI6	3.86 (0.89)	0.609			
Previous destination visit experience (PDI)			0.694	0.723	0.576
PDI1	4.40 (1.48)	0.597			
PDI2	3.61 (1.57)	0.892			
Destination Image (DI)			0.826	0.835	0.510
DI4	3.67 (0.68)	0.568			
DI5	3.75 (0.71)	0.595			
DI6	3.98 (0.73)	0.877			
DI7	3.96 (0.75)	0.810			
DI8	3.74 (0.73)	0.668			
Behavioural Intention (BI)			0.867	0.878	0.592
BI1	3.82 (0.91)	0.724			
BI3	3.81 (0.82)	0.676			
BI4	3.88 (0.83)	0.846			
BI5	3.88 (0.86)	0.873			
BI6	4.08 (0.80)	0.709			

Assessing the Measurement Model

CFA was conducted to assess the measurement model. Specifically, the assessments of discriminant and convergent validity and reliability were conducted. Table 2 summarized the result of CFA. The standardized loading for the items of DI1, DI2, DI3 and BI2 were lower than 0.50, which did not meet the minimum threshold as recommended by Zainudin (2012). Therefore these items were removed to reduce measurement error and increase reliability. The model fit indices showed a satisfactory fit to the data (χ^2=277.29, df = 155, p < 0.001, χ^2/df= 1.789, GFI= 0.93, CFI= 0.962, RMSEA= 0.045, CFI= 0.962, NFI = 0.919).

Table 2 showed descriptive statistics, indicator loadings, Cronbach's Alpha (α), composite reliability (CR) and AVE values. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of all latent variables ranged from 0.702 to 0.877, which indicated that internal reliability of the latent variables were considered acceptable. The composite reliability of the constructs can be assured if the value

Table 3. Discriminant validity of construct

	BI	PDI	PEI	EI	DI
BI	0.770				
PDI	0.257	0.759			
PEI	0.108	0.430	0.735		
EI	0.296	0.013	0.050	0.743	
DI	0.244	0.055	0.044	0.152	0.714

Square root of AVE value appears as bold numbers along the diagonal.
PEI: Prior experience with sport event; EI: Event Image; PDI: Previous destination visit experience; DI: Destination Image; BI: Behavioural Intention
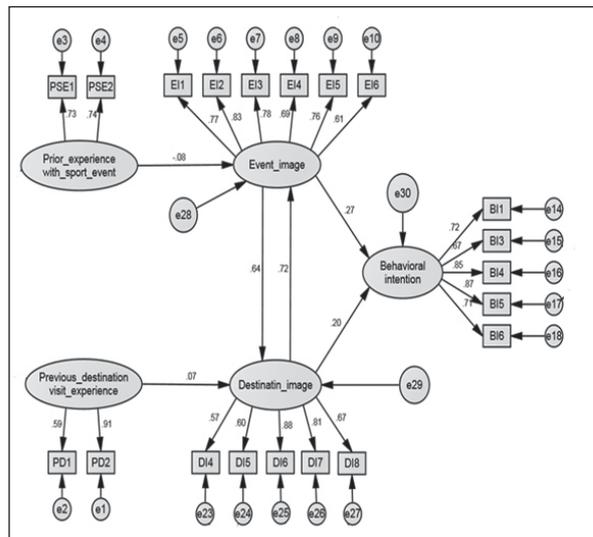
Figure 1. Structural Model on the Relationship among Prior Experience with Sport Event, Event Image, Previous Destination Visit Experience, Destination Image, and Behavioural Intention

of Composite Reliability (CR) is more than 0.6 (Zainudin, 2012). The composite reliabilities of the measurement model ranged from 0.701 to 0.880. This indicated that the reliability was adequate. After that, the model was examined for convergent and discriminant validity. First, all factor loading values were larger than 0.60 and significant at $p < 0.000$ (Zainudin, 2012). In addition, the average variance extracted (AVE) values were ranged from 0.510 to 0.592, which exceeded the recommended 0.50 threshold. This indicated that there was a satisfactory degree of convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 3 showed the result of discriminant validity. The discriminant validity was confirmed by comparing the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of each construct with the matching coefficients of correlation (Fornell & Larckers, 1981). Table 2 showed that each square root of the AVE value (in bold) was greater than the matching coefficients of correlation. This indicated that each construct met the requirements in line with discriminant validity.

Table 4. Results of path analysis of the structural model

Hypothesis	Factor/ Statement	Standardized Coefficient	Standard Error	P Value	Supported?
H1	PEI → EI	-0.078	0.083	0.423	Not Supported
H2	PDI → DI	0.071	0.021	0.346	Not Supported
H3	EI → DI	0.638	0.069	***	Supported
H4	DI → EI	0.723	0.084	***	Supported
H5	EI → BI	0.266	0.051	***	Supported
H6	DI → BI	0.205	0.095	***	Supported

***Significant at the $p < 0.001$ level (two-tailed)

Evaluating the Structural Model

Next, SEM was tested to evaluate the structural model. The results indicated a satisfactory model fit for the structural model ($\chi^2 = 296.82$, df = 158, $p < 0.001$, χ^2/df= 1.88, GFI= 0.929, CFI= 0.957, RMSEA= 0.048, CFI= 0.957, NFI = 0.913).

Figure 1 showed the structural model on the relationship among prior experience with sport event, event image, previous destination visit experience, destination image, and behavioural intention. Table 4 shows the results of path analysis of this structural model. Hypothesis 1, which suggested that there is a positive influence of prior experience with sport event on event image, was not supported (H1: β = -0.078, p > 0.001). Hypothesis 2, there is a positive influence of previous destination visit experience on destination image, was also not supported (β = 0.071; p > 0.001). As proposed by Hypothesis 3, there is positive influence of event image on destination image, was supported (H3: β = 0.638, p < 0.001). Hypothesis 4, which was indicating that there is positive influence of destination image on event image, was supported (H4: β = 0.723, p < 0.001). H5, there is positive influence of destination on behavioural intention (H5: β = 0.266, p < 0.001) and H6, there is positive influence of event image on behavioural intention (H6: β = 0.205, p < 0.001), were supported.

Discussion

The finding revealed that there was no positive influence of prior experience with sport event on the image of the event. This was supported by the previous studies conducted by Ya (2008) and Kaplanidou (2006). Both researchers presented that the past participation in the event image did not affect the image of the event. According to Ya (2008), sport tourists enjoy different sport activities which provided different event image and experiences to sport tourists. Thus, prior experience with the sport event is minimally impact on their perceptions of the event. Kaplanidou and Vogt (2007) reported that past experiences with the event should be included or excluded based on the nature of the event.

In addition, the result showed that there was no positive influence of previous destination visit experience on the destination image. This result was consistent with the finding reported by

Chen and Kerstetter (1999). However, it was not supported by Fakeye and Crompton (1991) and Kaplanidou (2006) who reported that tourists perceived a destination based on their prior experience of traveling destinations. In this study, the finding proved that the previous destination visit experience would significantly affect behavioural intention, which was supported by Guest (1995). According to Ya (2008), intention is predicted by past experience and past behaviour.

The results also suggested that there was significant and positive influence of event image on the destination image, which was consistent with findings from previous studies (Hagger, Chatzisarantis & Biddle, 2002; Ya, 2008; Kaplanidou, 2006). Destination image has a significant impact on the event image as well. This suggested that event can be used as the tourism stimulators as well as agent to form the destination image because sport event can drive the sport tourists to a particular destination.

Destination image and event image significantly affected participants' behaviour intentions. The result was consistent with existing literature, which showed that destination image positively affects behavioural intention (Ya, 2008; Kaplanidou, 2006). This suggested that if the sport tourists perceive event image and destination image positively, they would be willing to have post-travel behavioural intention (Kaplanidou & Gibson, 2012).

Conclusion

This study was conducted to investigate the influence of Penang Bridge International Marathon events image, destination image, sport tourists' previous destination visit experience and prior experience with sport event on participant's intention to revisit this sport event. The results showed the insignificant relationship between the previous destination visit experience and destination image. Prior experience with sport event insignificantly affected the event image. There was a significant and positive influence of the event image on the destination image. The impact of destination image on event image was significant and positive as well. The sport event participants' behavioural intention was predicted by destination image and event image.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

It was found that the event image is important in the formation of destination image in the sport tourists' mind. Sport event can be one of the major tourist attractions in particular destination. Therefore, destination marketers can project the event image into their destination promotion and marketing strategies. In order to expose tourists to the destination, destination marketers can provide, offer and promote quality service and product related to the event image. Destination image has a significant impact on the event image. This suggested that a destination with favourable and positive image will enhance the event image. It is preferably for event managers to select positive and favourable image of destination that host the recurring small-scale event.

The event image was a significant predictor of event participants' behavioural intention. In order to maintain a strong event image, event organizers can provide and offer positive event experiences to the event participants. It can be enhanced by the physical activity, environmental, organizational, social and fulfillment of the event (Kaplanidou, 2006).

It was reported that destination image significantly affected the participants' behavioural intentions. The managers should put the organizational and promotional effort to build up the

positive destination image since it can be used as the marketing tool to develop the destination. In order to manage the destination image effectively, destination marketers should offer efficient and effective marketing strategies such as public relations and advertisement, proper tourist information offices management as well as other promotional methods which include internet. These efforts may help to create and retain a positive image of destination which can then form and enhance word-of-mouth activities (Bigne *et al.*, 2001).

Convenient sampling technique was used to draw the subjects from a particular sport event in Penang. The finding of this study might not be generalized out of this setting. In order to strengthen the finding of this research, future study is needed, using probability sampling technique. In addition, future research is necessary to understand which component of the destination and event image (i.e. cognitive, affective) is more dominant in the tourists' decision making process with regards to sport tourism.

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