

## Assessing Event Quality and Destination Image: A Case of Royal Floria Putrajaya, Malaysia

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### Abstract

Organizing international events can yield numerous sociological and economic benefits such as increased employment opportunities, enhance local pride and awareness and favourable impression of the country. Understanding the importance of event quality in shaping the destination's image assists event managers in developing event marketing strategies. Moreover, the special event sector recognizes attendee views of service quality and event performance as indicators of quality of event organization, design and program execution. However, empirical studies exploring the relationship between the quality of international events and the destination image of host cities remain scarce. This research aims to examine the relationship between event quality and destination image of international event in Putrajaya, Malaysia. The data analysis uses 300 final survey responses that were collected onsite through judgemental sampling. The outcomes confirmed that event quality has a significant relationship with destination image. These findings will consequently offer implications for professional event organisers (PEO) to enhance the quality of the event industry and served as supplementary literature for future research on events and destination images.

**Keywords:** Event Quality, Destination Image, Event Sustainability, Attendee's Perception

### Introduction

Recent years have seen an uptick in interest from potential host cities and countries for major international events. One of the reasons destinations host events such as festivals is to benefit from the positive image enhancement that may occur in addition to any immediate economic benefit (Jago et al., 2003; Rozhda & Sheresheva, 2021). Similarly, for an event to be successful, the venue must not only appeal to the target audience but also inspire and motivate them to attend. A successful event can also enhance the reputation of the destination and sense of belonging among the locals (Malchrowicz-Moko & Poczta, 2018). Numerous articles have been published on the relationship between events and host destinations, focusing on how each may affect host destinations'

perceptions of the other rather than just the image of the event itself (Jeong & Kim, 2019). For instance, Mega international events like the Olympics, SEA Games, and World Cup have been used by cities and countries to boost their economies by raising income, employment and government revenues, which indirectly enhanced the image of the host country (Moon et al., 2011). Organizers must ensure that an event's design meets the needs of the city's roads, parking, and accommodations, while also preserving the public's use of infrastructure during the post-event period. This is crucial to maintain a balance between the event's requirements and the needs of the local community, ensuring the long-term sustainability of the event.

However, without proper event quality control and guidelines, creating sustainable tourism poses a challenge (Alfian & Wee, 2016). The authors emphasized the importance of organizers being motivated to develop and apply effective event management strategies to ensure top-quality events. By focusing on improving service quality, organizers can greatly enhance attendees' overall experience, leading to higher levels of enjoyment and satisfaction. This approach not only boosts the event's success but also strengthens its reputation, motivating attendees to return in the future and promoting long-term engagement with the event and its brand. If a destination creates a positive impression on attendees, they are more likely to recommend it to others, as asserted by Jeong and Kim (2019). Moreover, the empirical studies on the correlation between event quality and destination image is limited. Thus, this study was conducted to ascertain the effect of the destination's image on attendees' perceptions of the event's quality. The research question was developed as follows: What is the relationship between the quality of the Royal Floria Putrajaya event and Putrajaya's destination image?

## **Literature Review**

### *Event Quality*

From 2007 until its final attempt in 2019, just before the pandemic COVID-19 outbreak the following year, Royal Floria Putrajaya has been Malaysia's leading annual special event for 11 years in a row. In 2019, the festival, which includes 61 showcase garden lots and 43 international exhibitors from 23 countries, was one of the most popular events on Putrajaya's yearly calendar, with over one million visitors (Perbadanan Putrajaya, 2021). Event management is the preparation and implementation of an event to fulfil or exceed particular goals that benefit a person, community or institution (Madray, 2020). With that notion, understanding event quality perceptions and gaining local citizen cooperation is thus critical for special events such as Royal Floria Putrajaya. In addition, according to Armbrrecht et al (2020), through fostering a greater social sense of unity, local economic growth and tourism attraction, events operate as catalysts for constructive societal development. Furthermore, eventgoers' or attendees' positive perceptions of the quality of events, according to Moon et al (2011), help to improve the destination's image. Thus, event planners now encounter a new competitive market in which they must perform at their best to rejuvenate market share.

Furthermore, according to Wee and Thomas (2020), tourism has historically been a significant tool for community sustainability. Sustainable tourism is concerned with the natural environment as well as the social and cultural environment besides encompassing all facets and sectors of tourism. The combination of tourist development and

environmental sustainability has become a hot topic in the tourism sector as it strives to meet travellers' needs, produce resources to boost the economy, conserve natural resources, improve residents' quality of life and extend prospective opportunities (Nieżgoda & Markiewicz, 2021). Literature on special events and festivals concerning sustainability has been gaining the interest of policymakers and practitioners (Chirieleison et al., 2020; Collin & Cooper, 2017). According to the literature, sustainable events are planned and executed to promote economic welfare to minimise negative effects while making a positive impression on the host community and all stakeholders (Getz, 2009; Hall, 2012). Therefore, event sustainability becomes critical owing to the potential for disruption to the environment and the local community.

Attendees will recall positive experiences associated with a high-quality event for an extended period. They will also retain positive word-of-mouth publicity and memorable experiences of a high-quality event for the host destination. As a result, a growing number of governments and cities have recognised the value of hosting international events including Royal Floria Putrajaya. Among the numerous issues surrounding event sustainability, this study chose to focus on the gap between event attendees' and tourism organisations' perceptions of the quality of tourism-related products (events). In particular, professional event organisers should create beneficial techniques to strengthen the event's tangible and intangible qualities, as well as indirectly benefit prospective attendees. This research contributes by highlighting the need for organizers and volunteers to receive proper training to enhance the overall attendee experience and satisfaction. Their knowledge, attitude and behaviour all contribute to the achievement of this objective. Finally, attendees will form a favourable opinion of the destination, hence increasing their likelihood of returning. In the case of Royal Floria Putrajaya, the collaboration of event organisers, policymakers and local residents is required to ensure an exceptional tourist experience and enhance Putrajaya's destination image, thereby maximising the positive impact of hosting that special event regularly.

### **Destination Image**

This study demonstrates the contributions of events in the development of an appealing destination image, as well as positive implications for a sustainable tourism industry. It is also critical that countries or cities capitalise on such events or festivals by capitalising on their competitive advantages and short-term benefits in attracting investors, creative talent and attendees. Numerous city marketing and tourism studies have revealed an increasing reliance on events to promote marketplaces and, in particular, major cities (Jeong & Kim, 2019; Prayag et al., 2017). Furthermore, these destination images can be held both individually and collectively, according to Mun et al (2018), which represent all of a tourist's knowledge, beliefs and emotions about a tourism product or destination. Recent research on tourism and marketing indicated that a better destination image has a positive impact on visitors' purchase intentions and actual consumption behaviour (Chen et al., 2021; Moon et al., 2011). If the quality of the event is satisfactory, visitors are likely to have a favourable impression of the host event venue.

Another study has been conducted by Konecnik and Gartner (2007), to determine how tourism service quality affects destination image, which concluded that service quality can have a significant and positive effect on destination image. Given the importance of

the destination's image, event managers are focused on enhancing service quality to satiate visitors and give them a reason to return to the host city. Additionally, according to Sparks and Westgate (2002), poor service quality in any service industry reduces a business's potential and influences customers to seek out alternative providers, thus suggesting its significance in the tourism industry. If an event organiser falls short of providing a superior level of service, visitors will seek out another event and possibly another location. Furthermore, marketing experts have reported that individual behaviours, including attitudes and psychologies, are highly dependent on their perceived image. When customers perceive a product or service favourably, purchasing decisions become easier (Hallmann et al., 2015). In addition, the authors defined "destination image" as tourists' perceptions of the features present at a destination, thus concluding that destination image is crucial in the description, advertising, assimilation and delivery of a product at a destination. According to Lee et al (2014), a destination's perceived image is dynamic, realistic and unique, which is formed at three distinct stages, namely before, during and after the visit. According to the researchers, the pre-visit image, which affects visit intention and destination selection, is established by prior experience, knowledge, word-of-mouth, advertising, press reports and beliefs. This research highlights the importance of delivering and maintaining the quality of special events, such as Royal Floria Putrajaya, for ensuring their long-term sustainability. It contributes by emphasizing that a consistently high-quality event experience helps solidify the event's location in the minds of potential and returning visitors, encouraging them to remember the destination and return when the event is held again in Putrajaya. Considering these discussions, the following hypothesis was developed:

H1: There is a significant relationship between the Royal Floria Putrajaya event quality and the destination image of Putrajaya.

### **Methodology**

Based on previous research by Jago et al (2010), this study decided to focus on the attendee's perception of the relationship between Royal Floria Putrajaya's quality and image as a host destination. Following that, perceptions of event quality as a latent component were assessed. Sekaran and Bougie (2016), argued that the quantitative method's strength lies in its capacity to analyze large and complex groups of data and provide substantial information as evidence to support and defend any research findings. Thus, a judgmental sample of 300 participants was chosen from Dataran Putra, Alamanda Shopping Mall, IOI Shopping Mall, and Mosque Besi Putrajaya, all of which are located in Putrajaya. As proposed by Hair et al. (2017), a sample size of 200–400 is typically recommended and accepted as a critical sample size. Similarly, Roscoe (1975), suggested that most research should use sample sizes greater than 30 but less than 500. A self-administered questionnaire using a 7-point Likert scale was used to collect 300 questionnaires with 100% response rate. The respondents were asked to participate voluntarily, without bias. Data analysis was carried out using the 300 responses for statistical analysis. A study by Jago et al (2010), adopted and tailored the research questions to the study context. For each series of questions, an acceptable value (>.7) for Cronbach's alpha was chosen. The standard deviation for each component was used to ascertain the relationship between the variables, while the mean was used to assess the internal consistency of the variables. Furthermore, inferential statistics were employed to examine the relationship between the event quality and destination image variables.

**Finding and Analysis***Descriptive Analysis of Respondents*

Table 1

*Frequency Distribution of Respondents*

	Profile	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	138	46.0
	Female	162	54.0
Age	< 18	7	2.3
	18 - 28	86	28.7
	29 - 39	153	51.0
	40 - 49	36	12.0
	50 - 59	16	5.3
	> 60	2	0.7
	Education	Secondary School	8
	High School	51	17.0
	Graduated	241	80.3
Occupation	Public Sector	92	30.7
	Private Sector	176	58.7
	Retiree	9	3.0
	Student	23	7.7
Monthly Income	< RM1000	27	9.0
	RM1000– RM3000	170	56.7
	RM3000– RM5000	98	32.7
	> RM5000	5	1.7
	Average length of visit	1 Day	137
	2 Days	73	24.3
	> 3 Days	90	30.0

*(n=300)*

Table 1 summarises the respondents' demographic characteristics, which shows that, overall, women made up most respondents (54.2%) (n=162), while men made up 46% (n=138) of the total respondents. These findings indicate that females visit the Royal Floria Putrajaya at a higher rate than males. According to the analysis, the majority of visitors were between the ages of 29 and 39, accounting for 51% (n=153), followed by visitors aged 18 to 28 representing 28.7% (n=86). Additionally, 12.0% (n=36) and 5.3% (n=16) of all respondents were between the ages of 40 and 49 and 50 to 59, respectively. Only 0.7% (n=2) of visitors were over the age of 60, with the remaining 2.3% (n=7) being under the age of 18. These findings indicate that most visitors of Royal Floria Putrajaya are of working age. Meanwhile, 80% (n=241) of visitors had a bachelor's degree or higher in terms of education compared to 17.0% (n=51) who had graduated from high school and only 2.7% (n=8) who had completed secondary school. These findings indicate that the educational attainment of visitors to Royal Floria Putrajaya is consistent with their ages and profession. In terms of occupation, 58% (n=176) of respondents working in private sector, even though Putrajaya is a government office centre, while only 30.7% (n=92) working in government sector. Only 7.7% and 3.0% of

respondents, respectively, comprise students (n=23) and retirees (n=9). For monthly income, the largest group (54.7%) earned between RM 1000 and RM 3000, followed by RM 3000 and RM 5000 (32.7%) (n=98), and less than RM 1000 (9.0%) (n=27). Only 1.7% (n=5) of those respondents reported a monthly income of RM5000 or higher.

### Descriptive Analysis

Table 2

*Reported Mean Scores for Event Quality of Royal Floria Putrajaya*

<b>Variables (Event Quality)</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>
Each pavilion by exhibitor is well-designed.	5.63	0.94
The exhibits are well presented.	5.61	0.96
The festival I attended was exciting.	5.73	1.02
There is a lot of resting area in festival compound.	5.75	0.95
Resting areas are shielded from sun and rain exposure.	5.54	1.10
Restrooms are easy to find and clean.	5.45	1.16
The event broadened my knowledge of sustainable urban development.	5.60	1.01
I learned about different global lifestyle in this event.	5.69	1.03
It was an unforgettable green culture lesson gained from this event.	5.68	1.17

Note: *M = Mean; SD = Std. Deviation*

The psychological comfort of travellers was assessed in this study. According to the pattern indicated in Table 2, many respondents think that the festival area has an abundance of rest areas according to the mean (M=5.75) and standard deviation (SD=.95) calculated. To keep visitors from rain and sun exposure, the organisers, with the help of Putrajaya's local authorities, shielded the resting spots, with an average of (M=5.54) and a standard deviation of (SD=1.10). Additionally, the restrooms are easily accessible and in good shape, according to respondents. The mean was (M=5.45) followed by a standard deviation of (SD=1.16).

Additionally, this study sought perceived benefits from attendees attending the Royal Floria Putrajaya in Putrajaya within the category of event quality. The average response was (M=5.60) with a standard deviation of (SD=1.01), and respondents agreed that going to this festival will help them better understand sustainable urban development. Visitors were also exposed to a wide range of global lifestyles, represented by the standard deviation of (SD=1.03) followed by the mean of (M=5.69). The average score for learning about green culture through attendance at Royal Floria Putrajaya was (M=5.68) with a standard deviation of (SD=1.17). As a result, the overall mean score patterns indicate that respondents were pleased with the quality of Royal Floria Putrajaya throughout the event. Table 3 summarises the total mean score for event quality.

Table 3

*Overall Mean Score for Event Quality*

Variable	N	Min	Max	M	SD
Event Quality	300	5.45	6.00	5.63	.85

Note: *M* = Mean; *SD* = Std. Deviation

Overall, this data ( $M=5.63$ ;  $SD=.85$ ) shows that the Royal Floria Putrajaya event quality was quite satisfying, taking into account the tourist experience, attendees' perceived benefits and psychological comfort. The aggregate mean score for event quality indicates that event quality is one of the primary predictors of destination image, highlighting the critical role of event quality in strengthening host towns' destination image. Thus, it is critical to evaluate event quality following the conclusion of a particular event. As stated in Table 4, the reported mean score for the destination image is as follows:

Table 4

*Reported Mean Score for Destination Image*

Variables (Destination Image)	M	SD
This festival effectively addressed a major theme of Putrajaya a city-in-a-garden.	5.86	0.92
The festival achieved its goal.	5.85	1.01
Putrajaya enhances the visibility of Royal Floria Putrajaya in Malaysia.	5.86	1.05
Putrajaya can host a world mega event.	5.91	1.04
The Royal Floria Putrajaya is successfully hosted in Putrajaya.	5.99	1.00
I will (re) visit Putrajaya again.	6.33	0.94

Note: *M* = Mean; *SD* = Std. Deviation

To improve a destination's image, this study investigated how attendees perceive the value of one or more events as a collaborative branding activity. The majority of respondents strongly felt that the event effectively addressed a significant subject of Putrajaya as a city-in-a-garden, with a mean score of ( $M=5.86$ ) and a standard deviation of ( $SD=.92$ ). With this result, it can be certain that the festival's goal was achieved ( $M=5.85$ ,  $SD=1.01$ ) and that the festival's objective has been met. Respondents completely agreed that Putrajaya significantly increased the visibility of the Royal Floria Putrajaya for visits, as evidenced by the mean score of ( $M=5.86$ ) and a standard deviation of ( $SD=1.05$ ). The venue of an event is also crucial in promoting it. Respondents generally believed Putrajaya is capable of hosting a world mega event since the announcement of Royal Floria Putrajaya as an international event ( $M=5.91$ ,  $SD=1.04$ ). With a mean score of ( $M=5.99$ ) and a standard deviation of ( $SD=1.00$ ), it is clear that the Royal Floria Putrajaya is a success in the eyes of respondents. Additionally, most respondents strongly approved of the return to Putrajaya according to the mean of ( $M=6.22$ ) and the standard deviation of ( $SD=0.94$ ). Table 5 summarises the total mean score for event quality:

Table 5

*Overall Mean Score for Destination Image*

Variable	N	Min	Max	M	SD
Destination Image	300	5.85	7.00	5.95	.88

Note: *M* = Mean; *SD* = Std. Deviation

Overall, this study ( $M = 5.95$ ) with a standard deviation ( $SD = .88$ ) suggests that destination image and event sustainability are mutually beneficial. Despite its growing popularity, sustainable event management is still not widely used. As a result, the overall result helps event organisers engage and improve the festival's long-term event management.

**Reliability Analysis**

Consequently, the measurement's reliability was assessed in order to validate the quality of the research instrument employed in the present study. According to Pallant (2011), this assessment serves as crucial in assessing the amount of consistency in respondents' ratings across all collected data. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient is the most widely used indicator of internal consistency in quantitative measurement. Therefore, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was determined by the study using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Windows Version 27. The reliability test for this study is illustrated in Table 6, and the values exceeded the threshold value of 0.7, as suggested by Hair et al. (2017). Furthermore, it illustrates a strong relationship between the destination's image and the quality of the event. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the variables is presented in Table 6.

Table 6

*Reliability Coefficient for the Variables*

Variable	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Event Quality	9	.837
Destination Image	6	.847

**Correlation Analysis**

Table 7

*Spearman's Correlation Matrix*

		EQ	DI
<b>EVENT QUALITY (EQ)</b>	Spearman's Correlation	1	.763**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.00
	N	300	300
<b>DESTINATION IMAGE (DI)</b>	Spearman's Correlation	.763**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.00	.00
	N	300	300

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As seen in tables 2 and 4, all SD indicators were more than 0.7. Meanwhile, the composite reliabilities of the constructs were more than 0.9 and ranged between 0.91 and 1.26. Additionally, as shown in Table 6, the computed average variance was greater than



the 0.5 criteria, with a product of .763. According to Table 7, there was a statistically significant association between these dimensions. The degree to which an event's quality was seen related to its destination image ( $r=.763$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Regardless of these limitations, the correlation between independent variables (event quality) and dependent variables (destination image) was positive and significant. In conclusion, the findings showed a significant relationship between the dimensions investigated in this study. As a result of the high average square root variances obtained, the measures in this study met the convergent validity criterion for scales (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

As a result, the construct validity of scales was found to be satisfactory in this investigation. Meanwhile, linear regression analysis demonstrated a positive effect of event quality on event sustainability and destination image ( $\beta=.661$ ,  $p<0.01$ : Supported). This conclusion is in line with that of earlier research (Almeida-Santana & Sergio, 2019; Tian-Cole & Scott, 2004). The quality of event results also demonstrated that respondents' personal visit experiences to the event considerably increased their perception of Putrajaya, as all respondents expressed a high degree of pleasure with the destination. Second, the psychological comfort provided by the event location itself satisfied visitors' basic demands. Thirdly, respondents believed that by attending the event, the organisers impart critical knowledge, citing numerous practical and academic insights learned during the visit.

## **Discussion**

International events are now used to increase awareness of a location and its image as a tourist attraction. Green or sustainable techniques following sustainable event practices are no longer a choice for event planners; they have become a crucial component of being successful in the event sector. Owing to its central location in Southeast Asia, Kuala Lumpur is at its best when it competes as Asia's Favourite Business Event Destination for organising business events known as Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) events at the 13<sup>th</sup> China MICE Industry Golden Chair Awards, 2020. Meanwhile, the need of planning and hosting environmentally sustainable events is becoming more widely recognised and quickly turning into a primary concern and a standard in event design. The study findings thus revealed that the perceived positive image of an event's quality by eventgoers helps to strengthen the destination's image (attendees experience; psychological comfort; perceived benefits by attendees). According to the findings, most respondents believed that maintaining event quality is an important factor in determining event sustainability, but less so in determining destination image as attendees visit the location primarily to experience the event. This is in line with previous research findings (Jeong & Kim, 2019; Moon et al., 2011; MacCartney, 2005).

The quality of the pavilion, facilities and crowd management should not be overlooked by event organisers even if the event's quality did not directly impact Putrajaya's reputation since these aspects affect the event's sustainability, which in turn affects the reputation of the location. The event attendees are also a tourist destination's main source of revenue. It is a global struggle to recruit and retain qualified personnel in the sector. The best experience can be delivered with the right team of professional event organisers. High-quality customer service is vital to every tourism-related business, society, or destination's long-term survival and profitability. The quality of services provided to visitors throughout their stay, as well as

their interactions with locals and professional event organisers, can have a big impact on how they feel about a place as a whole. Providing cultural experience, knowledge exploration and cultural learning will motivate the event attendees to revisit the event in the future (Setyaningtyas et al., 2021). Based on the study's findings, training and business development strategies for personnel in the tourism industry must be designed with a thorough understanding of the customer's expectations and aspirations in mind. This research further contributes by showing that positive feedback on both the event and the destination's image enhances visitors' perceptions of the event's benefits. This demonstrates that event branding is an effective marketing strategy, not only for the sustainability of the event itself but also for the overall development of the host destination.

## Conclusion

The outcomes of this study confirmed that event quality has a significant influence on destination image. Event quality dimensions such as exhibition setting and exhibits must be well design to ensure the physical setting is attractive and safe for the event. Facilities like resting areas and restrooms that are hygienic and adequately cater for the type of event. Since, the Royal Floria Putrajaya event attract local and international tourists, thus those factors are critical to ensure everyone visited the festival is satisfied. Providing additional benefits in the event's features such as unforgettable sustainable event experience when the event is projecting a green culture practice in organizing the Royal Floria Putrajaya festival would enhance the image of Putrajaya. Having said this, event organizer and their collaborators or partners should continuously take into consideration other quality dimensions like event attendees' engagement, marketing, uniqueness and other psychological and environmental factors to create the comprehensive 'wow' factor of destination image components namely the cognitive, affective and conative in future events.

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