

Effects of Event Quality, Destination Image, Perceived Value, Attendees' Satisfaction and Destination Loyalty on the Tawau International Cultural Festival

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Abstract

This study examined the interplay between event quality and destination loyalty and investigated the mediating influence of participant satisfaction, perceived value and destination image in the context of special events. Confirmatory factor analysis, factor loadings, average variance extracted, construct validity and correlation analysis were used to validate the measurement scale, and the reliability of the scale was confirmed by Cronbach's alpha analysis. Partial least squares structural equation modelling with maximum likelihood estimation was used to examine the structural relationships between the variables in the proposed model, based on onsite questionnaire responses from 215 participants. The results indicate that attendee satisfaction, perceived value, event quality and destination image significantly influence loyalty to the destination. In addition, the study found that destination image and perceived value mediated the relationship between event quality and attendees' satisfaction with destination loyalty, emphasising the importance of event planners prioritising attendee satisfaction in their marketing strategies to improve quality and loyalty. The outcomes of this study imply that future researchers should apply this model in various event settings.

Keywords: Event Quality, Destination Image, Perceived Value, Attendee Satisfaction, Destination Loyalty

Background of the Study

Events are powerful platforms that bring people together for a wide range of purposes, from entertainment and cultural exploration to professional networking and play a significant role

in shaping how attendees perceive the host destination, contributing to its economic, social, and cultural growth (Hernández-Mogollón et al., 2017; Salem et al., 2024; Weru & Njoroge, 2021). High-quality events leave a lasting impression (Van Manen, 2023), boosting attendee satisfaction (Ramli et al., 2018), increasing the perceived value of the experience (Armbrecht, 2021; Meeprom & Silanoi, 2020), and building loyalty to the destination (Gapor et al., 2023). At the same time, well-organized events enhance the destinations image (Xu et al., 2021), creating a sense of pride and identity among both visitors and locals (Folgado-Fernández et al., 2021), which is vital for staying competitive in the tourism industry.

In the realm of tourism, loyalty is a key factor in choosing and revisiting destinations (Jeong & Kim, 2019). Destination image is defined as the overall impression tourists form about a destination (Jebbouri et al., 2023; Pan et al., 2020), and it influences their decision-making process, evaluations, and their future intentions (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020; Tavitiyaman et al., 2021). Notably, cultural and sporting events are especially effective at improving a destination's image, showcasing local products, creating job opportunities, and fostering community pride (Bazzanella et al., 2023; Hsu et al., 2020). Similarly, perceived value, which represents tourists' overall assessment of their experience, plays a crucial role in driving satisfaction and loyalty (Regalado-Pezúa et al., 2023; Valverde-Roda et al., 2022). In turn, tourist satisfaction plays a pivotal role in ensuring destination loyalty, as satisfied tourists are more likely to return and recommend the destination to others (Vieira et al., 2021).

Despite the extensive research on destination image, perceived value, satisfaction, and loyalty, there still remains a significant gap regarding the role of event quality impacts on these factors (Jeong & Kim, 2019; Kusumah & Wahyudin, 2023; Pai et al., 2021). For instance, the relationship between event quality and other variables such as destination image and perceived value has not been explored in depth (Gan & Wang, 2017; Jiang et al., 2017). According to Romiti and Sarti (2016), studies on sporting events show that the quality of events and associated services strongly influences tourists' perceptions and behaviour. However, there is limited evidence of how this association relates to smaller cultural events, which leaves a gap in our understanding.

Furthermore, while destination image and perceived value are known to influence tourist satisfaction, their role as mediators between event quality and destination loyalty hasn't been fully explored (Armbrecht, 2021; Kusumah & Wahyudin, 2023). Similarly, the mediating effect of tourist satisfaction in this relationship has not been adequately examined. This lack of understanding constrains the ability of event organizers and destination managers to design effective strategies that effectively enhance loyalty through better event experiences. Thus, the Tawau International Cultural Festival offers an excellent case study for examining these relationships. As a small-scale yet impactful cultural event, it has the potential to boost destination branding and encourage tourist repeat visitation. Therefore, this study aims to determine the extent to which the Tawau International Cultural Festival has a significant impact on event quality, destination image, perceived value and loyalty among attendees. By addressing existing research gaps, this study seeks to provide valuable insights on how Event Quality (EQ) impacts Destination Image (DI), Perceived Value (PV), Attendees' Satisfaction (AS), and Destination Loyalty (DL), including the mediating roles of DI, PV, and AS.

Literature Review*Tawau International Cultural Festival*

Tawau International Cultural Festival is a prominent annual event held in Tawau, Sabah, Malaysia, celebrated for its rich showcase of the region's diverse cultural heritage through performances, exhibitions, and various activities. It serves as a vital platform to promote cultural tourism by providing authentic experiences that highlight the traditions of Tawau's multicultural population, including Cocos, Bajau, Chinese, Bugis, and Murut and participated by international performers from Kazakhstan, Thailand, India and Indonesia. These vibrant cultural showcases not only help preserve intangible heritage but also instil a sense of pride and identity among the locals. Moreover, festivals like the Tawau International Cultural Festival play a critical role in enhancing destination branding by positioning Tawau as a culturally vibrant and unique destination that attracts both domestic and international tourists who seek meaningful cultural experiences. In 2025, the Tawau Municipal Council, which is also the organizer of the Tawau International Cultural Festival, made the Malaysia Book of Records with three outstanding achievements, which are the longest-running multiple ethnic festival, the most ethnic dance performances in an event, and the most ethnic groups in a parade.

Hence, with a sustainable approach, the Tawau International Cultural Festival significantly contributes to Tawau's local economy by drawing visitors who increase spending in sectors such as accommodations, food services, and transportation. The festival also creates job opportunities, supports local businesses, and encourages community involvement. Its inclusive nature allows local residents to actively participate as performers, vendors, and organizers, thereby fostering a sense of ownership and shared responsibility. This aligns with the broader goals of cultural festivals, which aim to drive economic growth while promoting sustainable practices that benefit host communities.

Event Quality

Event quality has become a pivotal focus in tourism research due to its profound influence on tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty. High-quality events greatly enhance attendees' experiences, which then shape their perception of the destinations. According to Jeong & Kim (2019), event quality positively impacts tourist satisfaction and loyalty, underscoring the need to integrate quality measures into tourism marketing strategies to prioritize quality enhancements to attract visitors and improve destinations' appeal. Research on sporting events further emphasizes the multifaceted nature of event quality including both tangible aspects like venue and service delivery, an intangible factor such as atmosphere and organizational reliability. For instance, Hua et al., (2019) discovered that the overall ambience and assurance provided by event organizers strongly influence tourists' decisions to attend. Similarly, study by Armbrrecht (2021) explored how cognitive and emotional aspects of events affect perceived value and behavioural intentions, showing that these elements are crucial for strengthening the connection between event quality and positive tourism outcomes.

More broadly, research has proven that event quality has also been proven to be a key driver in creating competitive destinations and fostering tourist loyalty. It is often described as the overall excellence of an event, encompassing factors like the content of the program, organizational effectiveness, entertainment value, and accessibility. Jin et al. (2013) and Srisiri et al. (2022) highlighted that these attributes play an essential role in shaping attendees'

satisfaction and influencing their future behaviour, specifically in the context of sporting events. Additionally, Naqvi et al. (2018) and Sisson and Alcorn (2021) found that cultural festival offerings provide authentic and engaging experiences, which significantly contribute to attendee satisfaction and encourage word-of-mouth. Further studies have demonstrated that event quality influences crucial tourism outcomes through mediating factors like perceived value and destination image. For instance, (Mohamad et al., 2019) demonstrate that perceived quality directly impacts satisfaction, which in turn fosters destination loyalty. Similarly, Wang and Butkouskaya (2023) showed that event quality positively affects perceived value and destination image, ultimately influencing loyalty intentions in mega-events.

Destination Image

Destination image is an important factor that determines plays how tourists perceive, evaluate, and behave toward a destination, making it a central focus in tourism and event studies. Destination image encompasses the overall impression tourists associate with a destination, including cognitive, emotional, and behavioural elements (Yang et al., 2022). The cognitive component refers to tourists' knowledge and beliefs about a destination's features. The emotional aspect reflects their feelings about the destination, while the behavioural dimension pertains their intentions to visit or recommend it. Research by Jebbouri et al. (2023) revealed that destination image strongly influences tourists' decision-making, satisfaction, and loyalty. Similarly, Abbasi et al. (2021) emphasized that a positive destination image increases the likelihood of revisits and positive word-of-mouth. In the context of events, studies by Kusumah and Wahyudin (2023) showed that hosting high-quality events like sporting tournaments, enhances the destination's image, helping it stand out in a competitive market and fostering loyalty among visitors.

Moreover, several studies have explored the role of destination image as both an independent and mediating variable in tourism research. For instance, Jeong and Kim (2019) examined the relationship between destination image, perceived value, tourist satisfaction and loyalty, showing that a positive destination image directly influences satisfaction and loyalty. Other research has shown that destination image mediates the effect of event quality on tourist satisfaction and loyalty (Aliedan et al., 2021). Furthermore, empirical studies have examined destination's image from a variety of perspective, emphasizing its dynamic and complex nature. Previous research has shown that tourists develop their destination image through a combination of information sources, with domestic tourists often having more nuanced and complex perceptions due to their familiarity with the destination (Huete-Alcocer et al., 2019). (Ferreira et al., 2022) observed that mega-events help improve destination image by highlighting unique cultural and infrastructural attributes. While (Taberner et al., 2022) highlighted the potential of smaller-scale events to positively influence destination image by showcasing cultural authenticity. Consequently, these findings suggested a potential relationship between the event quality and destination image:

H1: Event Quality (EQ) positively influences Destination Image (DI).

Perceived Value

Perceived value has emerged as a critical construct in tourism research, where scholars recognize its significant role in understanding tourist behaviour and decision-making. According to research, perceived value is commonly defined as the overall assessment

tourists make by weighing their perceived benefits against the costs or sacrifices incurred in a specific tourism context (Zhang et al., 2023). Early studies in the 1990s introduced this concept into tourism research, with subsequent investigations exploring its multidimensional nature. Researchers have identified various dimensions of perceived value, including functional, emotional, social, cognitive and self-actualization values (Zhang et al., 2023). Studies consistently show that perceived value significantly influences tourist preferences, satisfaction, and loyalty. Higher levels of perceived value have led to potential repurchase intentions, intentions to revisit, recommending the destination and other positive behavioural outcomes.

Research on perceived value spans a wide range of tourism settings, leading to the development of tailored tools to measure its impact. For instance, Petrick (2004) introduced the SERV-PERVAL scale for cruise tourism, which encompasses quality, price, reputation, and emotional responses. Similarly, other studies have explored how perceived value influences local knowledge tourism, destination experiences, and event-based tourism (Jeong & Kim, 2019). Research has highlighted that perceived value is not fixed but rather a dynamic process influenced by subjective elements such as tourists' preferences, attitudes, motivation, even physical conditions. Therefore, it implies that the quality of the event has a positive influence on perceived value:

H2: Event Quality (EQ) positively influence Perceived Value (PV).

Attendees Satisfaction

Attendees' satisfaction is an important variable in shaping behavioural outcomes such as loyalty, positive word-of-mouth, and repeat visitation in tourism and event management research. Satisfaction refers to the overall contentment of attendees with their event experience, which encompasses factors like event quality, service delivery, and the fulfilment of expectations. Satisfaction is influenced by both tangible factors such as the facilities at the venue and logistical arrangements, and intangible aspect including entertainment value, cultural authenticity, and interpersonal interactions. For instance, Erdem (2024) highlighted that satisfaction levels during cultural festivals were significantly impacted by the authenticity of performances, ease of accessibility, and organizational efficiency. This underscores the multidimensional nature of satisfaction, where both operational excellence and the emotional resonance of the event experience contribute to its success.

Recent research has further expanded understanding of attendee satisfaction across various event contexts. A study on the Bali Spirit Festival by Swandewi et al. (2024) demonstrated that multiple event attributes, including festival area, food quality, entertainment, escapism experience, and educational components, directly impact attendee satisfaction. The findings highlighted the complex nature of satisfaction, showing that these attributes not only influence immediate satisfaction but also contribute to future event loyalty. Additionally, satisfied attendees are more likely to return to the destination but also to promote it through recommendations, making satisfaction a key driver of long-term success for events and destinations (Mainolfi & Marino, 2018). Ali et al. (2016) emphasized that satisfied attendees exhibit higher levels of loyalty and more inclined to share positive experiences with others. Furthermore, satisfaction also acts as a bridge between variables like event quality, perceived value, and destination image, enhancing their overall effect on behavioural outcomes. Hence, these hypotheses were proposed:

- H3: Event Quality (EQ) positively influence Attendees Satisfaction (AS).
- H4: Destination Image (DI) positively influence Attendees Satisfaction (AS).
- H5: Perceived Value (PV) positively influence Attendees Satisfaction (AS).

Destination Loyalty

Research shows that destination loyalty is often shaped by factors like satisfaction, perceived value, and destination image, which play a crucial role in tourist behaviour. For instance, research indicates that tourists who have positive experiences and feel emotionally connected to a destination are more likely to revisit and share their experiences with others (Lu, et al., 2022). This loyalty process typically starts with a positive evaluation of the destinations, followed by emotional attachment, and results in behaviours like revisiting and recommending the destination to others (Malmiri et al., 2021). These behaviours are not only indicators of loyalty but also contribute significantly to the destination's reputation and long-term success. Furthermore, destination loyalty is influenced by a range of interconnected factors. As mentioned by (Al-Kwafi, 2015) studies, destination image is an important factor that influences tourists' decisions and preferences.

Similarly, past research demonstrate that perceive value is a strong predictor of loyalty. When tourists perceive a high value, they are more likely to develop a sense of commitment to the destination and exhibit loyal behaviour (Mengkebayaer et al., 2022). Furthermore, a study by Jeong and Kim (2019) showed that higher levels of tourist satisfaction led to increased destination loyalty, highlighting the importance of delivering quality experiences to foster long-term loyalty among visitors. Therefore, these loyalty-driven behaviours extend beyond individual tourists, contributing to the overall success and competitiveness of the destination. A strong sense of loyalty among visitors reflects the ability of a destination to consistently meet or exceed expectations and create memorable experiences that resonate deeply with tourists. Hence, these hypotheses were developed:

- H6: Destination Image (DI) positively influence Destination Loyalty (DL).
- H7: Perceived Value (PV) positively influence Destination Loyalty (DL).
- H8: Attendees Satisfaction (AS) positively influence Destination Loyalty (DL).

Mediating effects of Destination Image

The growing body of research emphasizes the dynamic and multidimensional nature of destination image and its ability to connect various elements of the tourism experiences. Various studies have increasingly focused on the role of destinations' image as a mediating variable in understanding the complex factors that shape tourist behaviour. A study by Manyangara et al. (2023) explored how destination image mediates the relationship between service quality and tourist satisfaction. The findings demonstrate how destination image serves both because of positive service experiences and critical factor in driving satisfaction. Similarly, Sorrentino et al. (2020) explored the relationship between event quality and destination image. Their findings revealed that a favourable event experience strengthens the destination's image, then positively influences attendee satisfaction. Therefore, this hypothesis was proposed:

- H9: Destination Image (D) mediates the relationship between Event Quality (EQ) and Destination Loyalty (DL).

Mediating effects of Perceived Value

Research has consistently shown that perceived value is an important factor that determines tourist satisfaction and influences their loyalty to a destination. For instance, Mohamad et al. (2019) found that perceived value mediates the relationship between destination quality and tourist satisfaction, showing how tourists' view of quality affect their overall satisfaction. Similarly, Abbasi et al. (2021) examined the connection between the destination image, perceived value, and revisit intention, showing that a positive destination image enhances perceived value, then subsequently drives tourists' intent to revisit. In the realm of events, perceived value serves as a crucial bridge between event quality and attendee satisfaction. Research by Hervás et al. (2020) explored the context of sporting events and found that perceived value acts as a mediator between service quality and audience engagement, highlighting its importance in tourism and event experiences. Therefore, these hypotheses were proposed:

H10: Perceived Value (PV) mediates the relationship between Event Quality (EQ) and Destination Loyalty (DL).

Mediating effects of Attendee Satisfaction

Attendee satisfaction plays a significant role in shaping tourist behaviour and fostering destination loyalty among many tourists, as well as in event research. Studies by Bayih and Singh (2020) have shown that while push factors alone may not directly influence behavioural intentions, satisfaction plays a crucial mediating role in translating these factors into future travel behaviours. Furthermore, recent studies have expanded the understanding of satisfaction as a mediating variable across different tourism contexts. For instance, Siregar et al. (2021) highlighted the mediating role of satisfaction on destination image and intention to recommend, showing its importance in connecting various tourism experience components. Besides that, a study focusing on virtual events demonstrated that overall satisfaction mediates the relationship between event attributes, online content engagement, perceived usefulness, and loyalty (Nordin et al., 2024). Another research by Jeong and Kim (2019) examined the mediating roles of destination image and satisfaction in sports tourism events revealed how these variables interact to influence participants behavioural intentions. Based on these past studies, these hypotheses were proposed:

H11: Attendees Satisfaction (AS) mediates the relationship between Event Quality (EQ) and Destination Loyalty (DL).

Therefore, Figure 1 shows the research framework developed for the study.

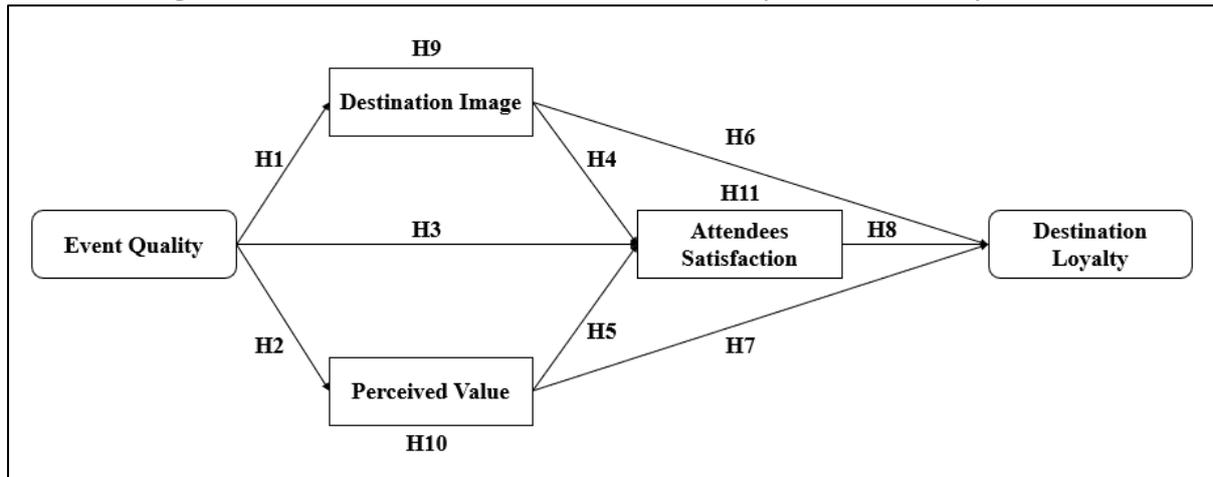


Figure 1: Research Framework adopted from Jeong et al., (2019)

Research Methodology

Data Collection

This study used the purposive sampling method because it specifically targets attendees of the Tawau International Cultural Festival during the time of data collection period. Considering that this study employed structural equation modelling using SmartPLS, the sample size was determined by the power analysis, as was the minimum number of samples needed to verify the study hypotheses (Hair et al., 2017). The researcher must predetermine parameters for the significant level (α), statistical power ($1 - \beta$), and population effect size (f^2) (Cohen, 1988). By applying the default values commonly used in statistical analysis software through G*Power version 3.1, it was calculated that a minimum of 160 responses would be sufficient for this study.

The data for this study were gathered from visitors who are 18 years old and above attending the Tawau International Cultural Festival in 2024. A total of 215 individuals were invited to participate in the survey voluntarily, and all respondent completed it. Thus, a 100% response rate was achieved. This robust response aligns with the recommendation by Hair et al. (2017), which suggest that an ideal sample size for research typically ranges between 200 and 400, a range that corresponds to the sample size used in the study. Roscoe (1975) recommends that most research studies should aim for a sample size between 30 and 500 respondents, further supporting the adequacy of the sample size employed in this study.

The sample consisted of 116 females (53.9%) and 99 males (46%). The largest age group among respondents was 18-24 years old, accounting for 48.3% of the total. Additionally, 50% of participants were single. In terms of education, the majority (55.8%) of respondents had completed SPM /SPMV/A-level qualifications. Regarding employment status, 36.7% of respondents were self-employed. Furthermore, the majority of participants were Malaysian, representing 73.9% of the sample. A detailed demographic profile of the respondents is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Profile

Profile	Frequency
Gender	
Male	99
Female	116
Age	
18-24	104
25-34	36
35-44	30
>45	45
Marital Status	
Single	127
Married	88
Level of Education	
SPM/SPMV/A-level	120
STPM/Matriculation/Foundation/Diploma	38
Bachelor's degree	47
Postgraduate	10
Occupation	
Government Servant	36
Private Company	36
Self-employed	79
Student	64
Nationality	
Malaysian	159
Non-Malaysian	56

Instrument Development

The survey instrument was designed based on the study's objectives and an extensive review of relevant literature. A seven-point Likert scale was utilized from 1 (unimportant) to 7 (extremely important). The event quality was evaluated using 11 items, and these items were adapted from Jin et al. (2013) and Ko et al. (2011). Destination image was assessed using 5 items derived from Kaplanidou (2009), while perceived value was measured using 4 items based on Petrick (2002). Attendees' satisfaction was evaluated with 3 items adapted from Lee et al. (2007) and Toon and Uysal (2005). Destination loyalty was assessed using four items drawn from Grappi and Montanari (2011), Lam and Hsu (2006), and Prayag et al. (2007). To ensure their validity and reliability, a panel of experts, including academics and tourism practitioners in the tourism industry, carefully reviewed the survey instruments.

Data Analysis

SPSS and SmartPLS: PLS-SEM were used to analyze the data and address the study's objectives, research questions, and hypotheses. The advanced statistical approach of PLS-SEM was applied to examine intricate predictive relationships between constructs and to assess their influence and existence.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure the reliability of individual items, loadings were carefully examined. Only measurement items above 0.5 are regarded as acceptable and the factor with a loading value less than 0.5 should be dropped. The constructs demonstrated strong internal consistency, as reflected in Cronbach's alpha scores higher than 0.60. Additionally, composite reliability values surpassed 0.70, further confirming the reliability of the construct (Hair et al., 2017). Moreover, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for all constructs exceeded 0.50, establishing solid convergent validity (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 2

Reliability Analysis

Construct	Indicators	Outer Loading	Average Variance Extracted	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
Event Quality	EQ1	0.764	0.925	0.933	0.925
	EQ2	0.742			
	EQ3	0.682			
	EQ4	0.787			
	EQ5	0.771			
	EQ6	0.763			
	EQ7	0.694			
	EQ8	0.725			
	EQ9	0.844			
	EQ10	0.823			
	EQ11	0.718			
Destination Image	DI1	0.794	0.666	0.908	0.874
	DI2	0.790			
	DI3	0.762			
	DI4	0.856			
	DI5	0.871			
Perceived Value	PV1	0.903	0.847	0.957	0.940
	PV2	0.941			
	PV3	0.914			
	PV4	0.922			
Attendees Satisfaction	AS1	0.936	0.851	0.945	0.912
	AS2	0.914			
	AS3	0.917			
Destination Loyalty	DL1	0.859	0.723	0.912	0.872
	DL2	0.870			
	DL3	0.859			
	DL4	0.812			

The analysis of Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values indicates that multicollinearity is not a concern in this study, as all values remain well below the critical threshold of 5 (Hair et al., 2017). The findings demonstrate that event quality (EQ) has a direct impact on both destination image (DI) and perceived value (PV), with a VIF of 1.000, indicating no collinearity issues. Additionally, EQ and PV significantly influence attendee satisfaction (AS) with both showing a moderate correlation with a VIF of 2.670. Destination image (DI) also plays a key role in directly affecting AS (VIF = 1.913) and destination loyalty (DL) (VIF = 1.486). reinforcing

its importance in shaping tourists' perceptions and behaviours. Similarly, PV is a strong predictor of DL (VIF = 2.478), while AS also contributes to DL (VIF = 2.539). These results confirm that the variables used in this study interact without causing issues with multicollinearity, indicating that the model is reliable and its predictions are robust.

Table 3

Variance Inflation Factor Values

Construct	DV	Path	VIF Value
EQ	DI	Direct	1.000
EQ	PV	Direct	1.000
EQ	AS	Direct	2.670
DI	AS	Direct	1.913
DI	DL	Direct	1.486
PV	AS	Direct	2.670
PV	DL	Direct	2.478
AS	DL	Direct	2.539

The Structural Model Assessment

The results of the hypotheses testing offer helpful insights into the relationships between event quality, perceived value, destination image, attendee satisfaction, and destination loyalty. The findings demonstrate that event quality has a significant positive impact on both destination image ($t = 9.279$, $p = 0.000$) and perceived value ($t = 11.842$, $p = 0.000$), confirming that a well-organized and high-quality event enhances attendees' perception of the destination and increases the perceived value of their experience. However, event quality did not directly influence attendee satisfaction ($t = 1.372$, $p = 0.085$), suggesting that other factors such as personal expectations or prior experiences may play a more crucial role in shaping overall satisfaction.

Similarly, destination image did not significantly impact attendee satisfaction ($t = 1.003$, $p = 0.158$), indicating that while a positive image may attract visitors, it does not necessarily translate into higher satisfaction. In contrast, perceived value demonstrated a strong positive influence on both attendee satisfaction ($t = 6.789$, $p = 0.000$) and destination loyalty ($t = 4.169$, $p = 0.000$), highlighting its crucial role in shaping post-event behaviour. Moreover, the findings also show that a destination image positively affects destination loyalty ($t = 2.137$, $p = 0.016$), reinforcing the idea that a favourable perception of the destination encourages revisitation and recommendation. Additionally, attendee satisfaction was found to have a significant impact on destination loyalty, showing that satisfied attendees are more likely to return and advocate for the destination.

Regarding the indirect effects, the analysis confirms that destination image mediates the relationship between event quality and destination loyalty ($t = 1.723$, $p = 0.042$). The findings show that event quality enhances destination image, which in turn increases the attendees' loyalty. Similarly, perceived value played a key mediating role between event quality and destination loyalty ($t = 3.543$, $p = 0.000$), indicating that when attendees locate an event as valuable, they are more likely to feel connected to the destination. However, the mediation effect of attendee satisfaction in the relationship between event quality and destination

loyalty was not supported ($t = 0.943$, $p = 0.173$), implying that satisfaction alone may not be a strong mechanism for loyalty. Therefore Table 5 shows the full hypothesis results.

Table 5

Result of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesized Path	t Value	p Value	Result
Direct Path			
Event Quality (EQ) – Destination Image (DI)	9.279	0.000	Supported
Event Quality (EQ) – Perceived Value (PV)	11.842	0.000	Supported
Event Quality (EQ) – Attendees Satisfaction (AS)	1.372	0.085	Not Supported
Destination Image (DI) – Attendees Satisfaction (AS)	1.003	0.158	Not Supported
Perceived Value (PV) – Attendees Satisfaction (AS)	6.789	0.000	Supported
Destination Image (DI) – Destination Loyalty (DL)	2.137	0.016	Supported
Perceived Value (PV) – Destination Loyalty (DL)	4.169	0.000	Supported
Attendees Satisfaction (AS) – Destination Loyalty (DL)	1.807	0.035	Supported
Indirect Path			
Event Quality (EQ) – Destination Image (DI) – Destination Loyalty (DL)	1.723	0.042	Supported
Event Quality (EQ) – Perceived Value (PV) – Destination Loyalty (DL)	3.543	0.000	Supported
Event Quality (EQ) – Attendees Satisfaction (AS) – Destination Loyalty (DL)	0.943	0.173	Not Supported

Discussion*Managerial Implication*

The finding of this study provides valuable insights for event organizers, tourism officials, and destination marketers looking to enhance visitor experiences and encourage long-term loyalty. Since event quality plays a key role in shaping destination image and perceived value, organizers should focus on delivering well-organized, engaging, and memorable events. This means ensuring smooth logistics, offering a diverse range of cultural and entertainment activities, and creating immersive experiences that captivate attendees. When visitors perceive an event as high quality, they are more likely to form a positive impression of the destination, making them more inclined to return or recommend it to others.

Second, perceived value is a strong driver of both visitor satisfaction and loyalty, emphasizing the need to make attendees feel that their experience was worthwhile. Event planners and destination managers should ensure that visitors receive more than just entertainment but also offer unique and enriching experiences that justify their time and money. This could involve special perks like exclusive behind-the-scenes access, interactive cultural workshops, or bundled offers that include discounts for local attractions. Providing added value enhances visitors' connection to the event and the destination. Third, while destination image positively influences visitor loyalty, it does not directly impact satisfaction. This means that simply having a good reputation is not enough, while the actual experience must live up to expectations. Marketers should create authentic and realistic promotional campaigns that accurately reflect what attendees will experience. Encouraging user-generated content,

testimonials, and social media engagement from satisfied visitors can also help reinforce a positive image and attract future attendees.

Fourth, since attendee satisfaction alone does not fully explain visitor loyalty, organizers should go beyond just meeting expectations and focus on creating meaningful experiences that leave a lasting impression. One way to achieve this is through post-event engagement, such as personalized follow-up emails, loyalty programs, or exclusive invitations to future events. Building a strong relationship with attendees increases the likelihood of repeat visits and long-term connections with the destination. Finally, to foster long-term visitor loyalty, destinations should focus on strengthening emotional and psychological ties with attendees. Collaborations with local businesses, hotels, and cultural institutions can help enrich the overall visitor experience. Offering incentives like discounts for returning attendees, special packages for eventgoers, or community-driven tourism experiences can further enhance visitor retention. By prioritizing event quality, delivering real value, and maintaining a strong, authentic destination image, tourism stakeholders can create more meaningful and memorable experiences for visitors. This, in turn, leads to greater satisfaction, stronger loyalty, and sustainable growth for the destination

Research Implication

The findings of this study highlight the significant role that event quality plays in shaping both destination image and perceived value, expanding on previous research by Jeong & Kim (2019). Their work suggested that event quality is crucial in influencing tourist satisfaction and loyalty. This study takes that idea further by showing that event quality has a direct impact on how tourists perceive a destination, as well as how valuable they regard the experience. This builds on the work of Hua et al. (2019) and Armbrrecht (2021), who found that factors like the atmosphere and the reliability of event organizers are essential in creating a positive experience. The results suggest that tourism marketing should place more emphasis on quality-driven strategies to attract visitors and boost the destination's overall appeal.

This research challenges existing theories that assume a straightforward link between event quality and attendee satisfaction. Yi & La (2003) pointed out that satisfaction is influenced by more than just the quality of the event; psychological factors, like expectations and personal experiences, also play a significant role. The findings indicate that emotional involvement, cultural influences, and individual expectations serve as significant mediators between event quality and satisfaction. These psychological aspects are often overlooked, but they deserve more attention in future research to fully understand their impact on the overall event experience.

Perceived value was identified as a key factor in influencing both attendee satisfaction and destination loyalty, supporting previous research by Jeong & Kim (2019) and Mohamad et al. (2019). This study revealed that was a stronger driver than satisfaction, which did not act as a mediator between event quality and loyalty. This finding aligns with Zhang et al. (2023), who emphasized the importance of perceived value in shaping tourist behaviour. Given its significant role, perceived value should be viewed as a primary driver of long-term loyalty, and future studies should continue to explore its dynamic nature in more depth.

The study also makes an important contribution to understanding destination loyalty, revealing that perceived value and destination image play a bigger role in fostering loyalty than satisfaction alone. This aligns with Al-Kwafi (2015), who found that destination image significantly influences tourists' preferences and choices. Similarly, Mengkebayaer et al. (2022) noted that when tourists perceive a high level of value, they are more likely to feel a sense of commitment to the destination, which leads to repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth. This suggests that destination loyalty is driven by a combination of cognitive and emotional factors, rather than just the immediate satisfaction of a single event.

Lastly, the study showed that destination image acts as a mediator between event quality and loyalty, implying that tourists' loyalty may be more tied to how they view the destination as a whole rather than their satisfaction with a specific event. This supports the findings of Sorrentino et al. (2020) and Manyangara et al. (2023), who highlighted the mediating role of destination image in shaping tourist behaviour. The study also raises important questions about the psychological mechanisms behind destination loyalty and suggests that future research could explore how factors like digital engagement, social media influence, and destination branding might reinforce or alter these relationships. These areas of exploration are critical for a more comprehensive understanding of visitor behaviour and destination loyalty, as suggested by Nordin et al. (2024).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the outcomes of this study provide clarity on the complex relationships between event quality, destination image, perceived value, attendee satisfaction, and destination loyalty. It shows how event quality significantly shapes both the image of a destination and the perceived value for visitors, ultimately influencing their long-term loyalty. While satisfaction does play a role in how visitors behave, the findings suggest that perceived value is a stronger driver of loyalty. This challenges traditional thinking that links event quality directly to satisfaction, emphasizing the need to consider psychological factors, such as emotional engagement and personal expectations, which deserve more attention in future tourism research.

Moreover, the study points out the importance of destination image as a mediator between event quality and loyalty. It points out that tourists' overall perception of a destination is just as important as their satisfaction with individual events. This opens up new possibilities for future research to dive deeper into the psychological processes that influence destination loyalty, as well as the growing impact of digital engagement, social media, and branding. By expanding our understanding of these factors, tourism and event studies can better inform strategies for improving destination marketing and creating more enriching visitor experiences.

Focusing on event quality and enhancing perceived value are key strategies for improving attendee experiences and building lasting loyalty. By implementing rigorous quality control throughout the event such as ensuring top-tier vendors or offering a diverse innovative program, organizers can create memorable experiences that resonate with attendees. Investments in infrastructure, such as comfortable seating and efficient services, also play a big role in elevating the overall experience. Enhancing perceived value through exclusive access will add convenience, and high-quality merchandise further strengthens the

connection with attendees and encourages repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth. By paying attention to these details, event organizers can improve customer satisfaction, boost brand loyalty, and enhance the destination's reputation. Moreover, the development of Tawau International Cultural Centre (TICC) shows the Tawau Municipal Council together with the State Government are committed to promoting various inclusive tourism initiatives and programmes in efforts to make Tawau as one of the most attractive tourist destinations in Malaysia for both domestic and international visitors. Moreover, the Chief Minister of Sabah, YAB Datuk Seri Panglima Haji Hajiji bin Haji Noor said the TICC would serve as a new landmark for Tawau to attract tourists and visitors.

While this study offers valuable insights into the integrated approach to improving event quality, destination image, perceived value, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty, there are a few limitations to consider. Since attendee satisfaction does not directly correlate with event quality as expected, this indicates that further research is needed to understand the components that drive satisfaction. Furthermore, future research could benefit from gathering more detailed feedback from attendees through post-event surveys, which would assist in identifying components that contribute to their overall satisfaction. Additionally, analysing satisfaction across different attendee groups such as age, interest or location could help tailor experiences to meet diverse needs. Moreover, external factors such as weather conditions or local hospitality may also influence satisfaction. Therefore, exploring this aspect in future research could lead to better event planning and stronger collaboration with local businesses. Lastly, implementing a continuous feedback system during events such as through mobile apps or interactive kiosk could allow organizers to make real-time adjustments and improve the experience for attendees.

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