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Edited by Kai Heuer, Wismar University, Germany
Chayanan Kerdpitak, IBEST Conference & Publication, USA
Nitaigour Premchand Mahalik, California State University, Fresno, USA
Bob Barrett, American Public University, USA
Vipin Nadda, University of Sunderland, United Kingdom
Kelum Gamage, University of Glasgow, UK
Wan-Hsuan Yen, National Taiwan Normal University, Taiwan
Maria Assif, University of Toronto, Canada

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PROMOTING SPORT TOURIST LOYALTY THROUGH SPORT EVENTS QUALITY: A CASE STUDY OF BANGKOK THAILAND

Teerapong Pongpeng

*College of Innovation and Management, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, 1-U-Thong
Nok, Dusit, Bangkok, Thailand
E-Mail: Teerapong.po@ssru.ac.th*

ABSTRACT

Sport tourist loyalty play an important role to support sport tourism business and a businesses related to sport tourism in Bangkok, Thailand as well as generating income and cash flow which drive the economic. In order to, promoting sport tourist loyalty, researcher focus on the affected of sport event quality . The research aimed to study the relationship sport tourist loyalty and sport event quality in Bangkok,Thailand. The mixed research method between quantitative and qualitative were used in this research. For the quantitative aspect, the sample group consists of 300 participators in sport tourists which was sampling Multi-Stage Sampling from the group of sport tourist in Bangkok Thailand. Data was collected by using questionnaires. The statistics used in the analysis were percentage, mean, standard deviation, Pearson correlation coefficient and structural equation modelling. In view of the qualitative aspect, an in-depth interview was applied among the target group of 17 sport tourism managements and expertise in Thailand. The findings revealed that the sport event quality and sport tourist loyalty were all at high level and the sport event quality influenced sport tourist loyalty in Bangkok,Thailand with statistical significance of 0.5. The research findings can be further applied as a guideline to define Sport tourism business model for sustainable sport tourist

Keyword : Sport Tourist, Sport Tourist Loyalty, Sport Event Quality,

INTRODUCTION

Tourism industries play an important role for enhancing competitiveness in order to take advantage from the world tourism market. The report from Ministry of Tourism and Sports Thailand shows that the number of tourist who visited Thailand was increased after COVID-19 pandemic and generated income for Thailand economic. (Ministry of tourist and sports (2022)). Therefore, Thailand Government saw an opportunity to boost the economic growth by developing and increasing the tourism industry revenue. The government come up with a strategy to accelerate campaigns in order to develop and promote tourism industry to support and attract tourists to travel in Thailand . Data from the Ministry of Tourism indicates that in July of 2022, the value of the tourism industry reaches 1.22 billion baht, which has increased revenue (The Division of Tourism and Sports Economics (2022). In the recent year, the special interest tourism of various types has become increasingly popular (Weiler & Hall, 1992). One form of special interest tourism which has garnered particular attention is travel related to sport or sport tourism. Sports tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors in tourism many tourists are interested in sport activities during the trip. Sport events of various kinds and sizes attract tourists as participants or spectators and destinations added folkways and local experience into sport events to created new tourist experience. Mega sport events such as Olympics and World Cups can be a catalyst for tourism development if successfully leveraged in terms of destination branding, infrastructure development and other economic and social benefits (UNWTO 2022).

Sport tourism has been considered one of most effective way to improving tourist competitiveness (Hodeck 2016). Gibson (1998) described sport tourism as “leisure-based travel that takes individuals temporarily outside of their home environments to participate in physical activities, to watch physical activities, or venerate attractions associated with physical activities”. Sport tourism can be categorized it into three groups: event, active, and nostalgia sport tourism. Over the years, one of the most noticeable phenomena in tourism industry has been an increased number of travelers who were willing to take part in competitive sport events, which has gained significant attention from government and sport tourism business (Kaplanidou et.al, 2012). The sport tourism business seeks to understand sport tourists, who can be referred to as those travelers who are seeking sport-related event participation opportunities at a destination. As they do for general tourists, several authors have suggested that satisfaction are closely related with before, during, and after trips of active sport tourists (Jeong et.al ,2020). In other words, sporting events such as marathon, cycling, and football events evoke tourist satisfaction of active sport tourists. Therefore, promotion of sports events quality would be a good strategy for a destination in bringing a steady stream of visitors, considering previous findings on the positive relationship between sport tourist loyalty (Kaplanidou et.al, 2012).

Understanding the role of sport events quality from sport tourist on outcome variables such as destination loyalty has also gained attention among destination marketers because it reflects and shapes tourists’ perspectives of tourism products and activities at destinations (Allameh et.al,2015), which applies to sport tourism as well. Specifically, whether it is passive or active sport tourism, the sport event quality of sport tourists’ spectating or participating in sports events significantly affects their post-visit experience. Jin, Lee, and Lee (Jin et.al,2013) claimed that the perceived value of sport event spectators’ experiences plays a key role in building destination loyalty, which has often resulted in securing a steady stream of sport tourists. Similar findings were reported among sporting event participants. Hence, it would be beneficial to identify the role of sport events quality in building tourist loyalty among sport tourists in diverse sporting event settings such as small to large sporting events.

The mainstream of previous literature on sport tourism has been on sporting events and event spectators, specifically focused on large to mega sporting events such as the Olympic Games and the World Cup. On the other hand, relatively little attention has been paid to small-scale recurring sporting events such as local marathons and their participants (Jeong et.al,2019) Unlike large-scale to mega sporting events that require heavy financial investment to host one (Zhang et.al,2018) , recent studies show that hosting small-scale sporting events is a viable option for small- and medium-sized cities, while these small events have the potential to attract significant number of participatory tourists, thereby being beneficial in fostering development of a region as an attractive tourist destination. Given the effectiveness and attractiveness of sports events that potentially bring in an increased number of visitors, the present study was conducted to investigate behaviors of active sport tourists in a marathon in Bangkok, Thailand.

The research objectives aim to study the characteristics of sport event quality that affect the tourist loyalty in Bangkok,Thailand, and study the influence of the adoption of sport event quality on the tourist loyalty in Thailand. The researcher realized that the study on the adoption of sport event quality affecting the tourist loyalty in Thailand. It will provide useful information to support the decision of tourists to visit Bangkok. Including entrepreneurs in the sport tourism industry. As well as the data from the study can be used to formulate appropriate strategic approaches in order to create innovative sport events that are more quality and meet the needs of sport tourists.

LITERATURE & THEORY

Sport tourism has grown significantly in recent years and becoming one of the factors that stimulate the economy of many countries around the world. Sport tourism also promotes a good image and able to attract sport tourists to travel to be a part of sport events (Rojas-Méndez, Davies, Jamsawang, Sandoval Duque & Pipoli, 2019). In sport tourism the important element is the way that organizer organizing sport events in a proper way to create activities that can attract a large number of people to travel and participate around the world which create economic activity, there is a flow of money in the system, creating jobs, creating jobs and creating income for the people in the area (Andersson, Bengtsson & Svensson, 2021). This can be seen in world-class sporting events such as the World Cup, Olympic Games and Southeast Asian Games (SEA Games), etc. The sports activities mentioned above are sports events that have a high number of people interested in attracting the attention of the sport tourist, whether as a participant or a spectator.

On the other hand, it becomes clear to executives that sporting events is an important marketing strategy for the tourism industry for creating a good image for the country and also able to attract travelers from everywhere to join the event and promote economic activities in the event area (Kim & Chalip, 2004) In this regard, in order to make the sports activities happen efficient and able to meet the needs of the sports participants and to create quality sports activities that meet standards and can impress the participants. Agencies or organizations must pay attention to the quality control of sport events or Sport Events Quality within the specified limits. In addition, the Sport Events Quality is a control to satisfy the sport tourist and help enhance shared experiences and create impressive memories for travelers. (Theodorakis, Kaplanidou, Alexandris & Papadimitriou, 2019) that create a lot of benefits for tourism business. The sport event quality is a practical guideline that will help the sports activities to create an impressive and memorable experience for the participants, regardless of status and tourist loyalty

Tourist Loyalty

Once in a while, customer satisfaction was viewed as the most critical component in the success of a business; it was believed that satisfied customers would come back for the product or service (Oliver,1999). Unfortunately, that myth found not to be true; Stewart (Stewart, 1997) claimed that satisfaction and loyalty move in tandem is simply incorrect. Loyalty refers to “a deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future” (Oliver,1999). Unquestionably, loyalty is a salient element of market tourism success as well; for this reason, a vast amount of tourism literature is dedicated to understanding how destination loyalty is formed. There is explicit consensus among tourism researchers that tourist loyalty may be dichotomized into the attitudinal and behavioral components. Behavioral loyalty is described as the action of repurchasing or an intended behavior related to the service or provider (Andreassen,1998) . On the other hand, attitudinal loyalty describes a positive (preferential) attitude by consumers toward a product or service; for example, attitudinal loyalty is demonstrated when a tourist recommends a place visited to others.

The relationship between sport events quality and tourist loyalty has gradually gained currency in tourism research and a large number of studies have investigated the proposed relationship. Evidence of this link is provided by the highly readable and compact study conducted by Ko et al. (2016). They examined structural relationships between sport events quality (e.g., game quality, interaction quality, physical environment quality, outcome quality) and destination loyalty, who concluded that tourist loyalty is uniquely enhanced by sport event quality. Likewise, Ko et al. (2011) developed a model of event quality and a corresponding

measurement scale of event quality in spectator sports which they referred to as the SEQSS. proposed a model describing relations between event quality such as game quality, interaction quality, outcome quality, and physical environment quality and tourist loyalty; among their findings, event quality was found to be a strong predictor of destination loyalty. Accordingly, it seems reasonable to suggest that event quality affects tourist loyalty.

A vast number of marketing, hospitality, and tourism studies have been devoted to exploring the path between sport event quality and tourist loyalty; the most common findings are that event quality leads to tourist loyalty. According to Cronin and Taylor (1992), service quality is an antecedent of consumer satisfaction and satisfaction has been shown to be a stronger influence on a customer's loyalty. This suggests there is most likely a positive link between event quality and tourist loyalty as consistent with other studies within the literature (Babikas, Bienstock, & Van Scotter, 2004; Cronin et al., 2000; Shonk & Chelladurai, 2009). Jin, Lee, and Lee (2015) suggest that tourist loyalty represent an individual's efforts to achieve a desired goal, and thus become a direct predictor of customer behavior. In their study of a professional football game in Greece, Theodorakis et al. (2013) found that satisfaction partially mediated the relationship between quality and the tourist loyalty of spectators. The idea that a spectator may be satisfied with the quality of an event and want to return is important because the marketing costs for repeat visitors are lower in comparison to first-time visitors and they are more like to provide positive word-of-mouth recommendations (Shonk & Chelladurai, 2008).

Sport Event Quality

It has been widely accepted that events offer many tangible and intangible benefits to host communities (Fourie and Santana-Gallego, 2011). Studies suggest when hosting events, organizers should prioritize service quality so as to satisfy spectators, sponsors and local residents (Moon et al., 2013). According to Bitner and Hubbert (1994, p. 77), service quality is best defined as "the customer's overall impression of the relative inferiority/superiority of the organization and its services." A high level of service quality is now recognized as a means of ensuring future success by many companies and organizations (Kim Ko and Park, 2013; Zeithaml, 2000). In other words, if a customer considers an event positive or valuable due to tangible (e.g. Design, equipment, ambience and parking) or intangible services (e.g. Reliability, security, communication and assurance), he/she might stay at the event longer, purchase souvenirs or recommend it to others through social media (Brady and Cronin, 2001; Ko et al., 2010). Previous studies have viewed event quality as a multi-dimensional construct consisting of tourist/spectator perceptions. In terms of sporting events, some research developed measurement scales allow spectator perceived service quality to be evaluated (Ko, 2005). Jin et al. (2013) proposed a four-dimension framework comprised of game quality, interaction quality, outcome quality and physical environment quality. Game quality refers to spectators' evaluations of player skill and information. Interaction quality concerns assessment of event staff and volunteers responsible for service delivery and satisfaction about interactions with other spectators. Outcome quality provides "a measure of consumer perception of gain received from interaction with the service provider" (Jin et al., 2013, p. 852), whereas physical environment quality concerns consumer evaluations of stadium ambience and the design, cleanliness and safety features of facilities. The components of sport service quality according to the sport tourist loyalty model used in this study are as follows.

1. Game quality (Ko et al., 2011) refer to the spectators' perception of the quality of the game's performance. Game quality refers to the core product, measuring spectators' perceptions about the quality of the actual game itself (Biscaia et al., 2013) it represents the service outcome, which directly contributes to service quality perception of the core service.

In the current model, this dimension stands for the perceived quality of skills and performances, of the characteristics of the participating team and player, and of the commentator.

2. Interaction Quality (Groenroos, 1982, 1984) refers to the customers' perception of the manner in which the service is delivered during service encounters (Lemke et al., 2011). Interaction quality is also related to customers' perception of the interactions with service providers (e.g. employees, staff, etc.) during service delivery and Jap (2001) suggests that employee's efforts and personal interactions intended to build and maintain the relationship with customers are antecedents of customer satisfaction.

3. Physical Environment Quality (Ko et al., 2011) to the evaluations of the physical facilities by the spectator. Foroughi et al. (2014) found that physical environment is a significant variable affecting fan satisfaction in the context of professional football events, which is in line with the general perception of the importance of the sportscape Ko and Pastore (2004) informed physical environment quality as a equipment and facility in the context of recreational sport. Greenwell et al. (2002) included facility access, scoreboard, layout and all other physical elements under the dimension of physical facility. Kim et al. (2013) also included all physical factors in one dimension, which was physical surroundings. Overall, physical environment is the dimension, which covers the tangible and intangible elements in the environment where the event is delivered to the spectators in sports.

4. Outcome Quality Service outcome refers to the outcome of the service act and what the customer is left with after service delivery is complete (Groenroos, 1984). Outcome quality reflects the customer's perception of the superiority of service experience. Previous research (Hsieh and Hsiang, 2004) notes that customer perceptions of service outcome quality, which is critical in forming an evaluation of service delivery (Rust and Oliver, 1994), lead to customer loyalty. Given this relationship, we posit that there exists a positive relationship between outcome quality and customer loyalty. That is, a higher (lower) level of outcome quality is expected to increase (decrease) customer loyalty.

METHODS

Population and sampling

The target population used in this research is people who are active sport tourists and live in Bangkok which cannot determine the exact population. The researcher used the formula of W.G. Cochran (1953) at 95% confidence level, the number of samples was 300 units, while the multi-stage sampling method was used.

Data collection

Research tools used to collect is a generated questionnaire in accordance with the definition of the operation according to the characteristics to be measured. The researcher tested the validity and reliability of the questionnaire to obtain accurate research results and achieve the stated objectives. In this regard, the researcher provided 40 preliminary pre-test and the results of the confidence check revealed that the confidence values of each question and the total confidence values are between 0.7-1.00. In addition, the questionnaire generated has passed the content review by the advisor. Therefore, it was concluded that the questionnaires could be used to collect data.

Data analysis

Statistics used in data analysis to answer the objectives of this research are descriptive statistical analysis used to describe the demographic characteristics of the sample, the statistics used were frequency and percentage, mean, and standard deviation. Also, inferential statistical analysis is used to test hypotheses which used a simple Pearson Product Movement Correlation Coefficient analysis to test the correlation of two independent variables, and multiple

regression analysis to test the influence of independent variables on dependent variables in the research conceptual framework.

RESULTS

Descriptive analysis

The general information of sample group were Thai tourists who used tourism services via social media in Thailand and lived in Bangkok, amounting to 300 samples. Most of them were male, 58.7%, age between 31-40 years old, 35.0%, status in marital, 52.25%, the highest level of education at the bachelor's degree level, 47.5%, worked as employees of private companies the most, 35.5%, and monthly income average between 30,001-45,000 baht, 34.25% and domiciled in Bangkok and its vicinities at most 72.00%.

Descriptive data on the sport event quality affecting sport tourist loyalty in Thailand, the overall factors are at a high level. If considering each aspect, the first is game quality at a high level, followed by interact quality, physical environment quality, outcome quality at a high level in all items.

Hypothesis testing

An analysis of the correlation coefficient between all variable in the model was used Simple Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient statistic, shown in Table 1.

Table 1 The correlation coefficient between all factors of the sport events quality affecting the tourist loyalty in Thailand

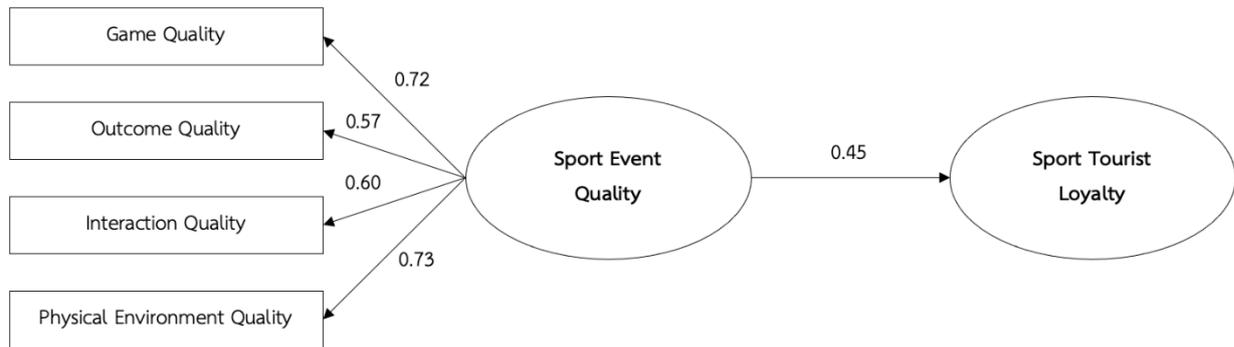
Model	Z	X ₁	X ₂	X ₃	X ₄
Z	1				
X ₁	.621**	1			
X ₂	.545**	.521**	1		
X ₃	.581**	.466**	.634**	1	
X ₄	.480**	.547**	.701**	.742**	1

* Significant level at .05 ** Significant level at .01

Z : Tourist loyalty X₁-Game quality X₂-Outcome Quality X₃-Physical Environment Quality X₄-Interaction Quality

Table 1 shown the correlation coefficient between all factors of the sport event quality was found that the correlation did not exceed 0.80. All independent variables did not exceed the multiple correlation between the factors because of multicollinearity (Hair et al., 2010). Therefore, all independent variables can be used in stepwise structure equation modeling, which is to bring the variables to predict in the model. The results of the analysis of sport event quality affecting the tourist loyalty in Thailand was shown in figure 1.

Figure 1 Structure equation modeling of the sport events quality affecting the sport tourist loyalty in Thailand



The result of structure equation modeling was found that the sport event quality in the aspect of game quality, outcome quality, interaction quality and physical environment quality can predict sport tourist loyalty with a statistically significant level at 0.5 and all variables could explain the variability of sport tourist quality in Thailand.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

Sport events quality affecting the tourist loyalty, the overall facrot level is at a high level. If considering each aspect, it was found that the first priority was the game quality the most level, followed by the by interact quality, physical environment quality and outcome quality at a high level, respectively. The fact that sport tourists see the importance of game quality over other factors, it shows that game quality is a form of player skill and performance that can represent perceived quality of skills and performances, of the characteristics of the participating team and player, and of the commentator during the game. The difference between sport player in each game has its own unique and diverse features that make it interest, fun and attractive way to hypnotize the participant with the game. Participants pay attention with the moment of the game with high quality because quality of player with high performance and incredible skills that hypnotize participants with the game with high perceived game quality. Therefore, the tourist loyalty is based on the service quality during the events especially game quality. The tourists will be aware of the perceived quality that contribute to improving tourist satisfactions. Interaction quality, physical environment quality and outcome quality also is a key factor in the improving sport tourist loyalty which is consistent with the research of many researchers such as Jeong & Kim (2019) who studied the development of tourist loyalty through the process of organizing sports marathons found that the quality of sporting activities that impress tourists in a tourist attraction has a positive impact on tourist loyalty. Therefore, developing and enhancing the image of tourist attractions by communicating travel information via online system to promote tourism can affect consumer satisfaction. The same applies to Khuong & Phuong (2017) who studied the loyalty of Foreign tourists in Ho Chi Minh City Vietnam It was found that foreign consumers perceive the value of tourism image, resulting in satisfaction and affecting tourist loyalty. Satisfaction of tourists found that The quality of sporting activities in tourist attractions affects tourism image, leading to tourist loyalty from satisfaction and perceived value in tourist attractions. In addition, Chiu, Zeng & Cheng (2016) studied tourists from participating in activities in Korea, it was found that the quality of sports activities organized from perceived values Repeat trips, recommend, tell others with loyalty from creating satisfaction for travelers.

The results of the analysis of sport tourist loyalty through sport events quality: a case study of Bangkok Thailand it was found that conformity with game quality, interaction quality, physical environment quality and outcome quality could jointly predict sport tourist loyalty in Thailand which was statistically significant. Sport Event Quality is very important for the satisfaction of consumers who participate in sports events and this satisfaction will have a positive effect on service providers in the future. Satisfaction to consumers through quality control of sporting events will lead to consumer behavior that will have a positive effect in the future, Jeong & Kim, (2019). It is very important to create a memorable image for consumers, that is, consumers can perceive the value of such activities through activities that will help create impressive images and valuable experiences for consumers. This attractive appearance will help consumers bring good things to say to close people and create the behavior of creating as a broad distribution process and data distribution will make new consumers want to travel. Pleasant experiences are a good strategy for attracting customers, Milovanović et al., (2019). In addition to the satisfaction benefits, the quality of the performance of sporting events is also a marketing strategy. There is so much efficiency that the service provider can control. If the service provider can effectively control the components of the activity quality and meet the standards that consumers expect, it will help the consumer to leave a good impression and create a good memory of participating in the satisfaction activities. Which has been responded directly and correctly, causing consumers to spread the behavior to the surrounding people, the distribution of large amounts of data, resulting in consumer awareness and helping the service users. More next in line generate revenue and grow your business. Koronios, Kriemadis & Papadopoulos (2019). In addition to the quality control of the event, it also gives consumers a sense of worthwhile participation. An activity that is worth the money and time wasted, which creates an inner feeling and fulfills the personal needs of the consumer, makes the consumer happy and happy. Consistency (Best Service Standard) to the work process. would be great for consumers. Shonk, Bravo, Velez-Colon & Lee, (2017)

Recommendations and Future work

Research Recommendation

From doing research on The model of promoting loyalty through sports activities in sports tourism destinations in Thailand The researcher suggests the following:

Policy recommendations

Policy recommendations are important in fostering attraction loyalty. sports city in Thailand The researcher suggests the following.

1. The government and the private sector should establish cooperation policies with relevant organizations from all sectors to develop loyalty to the sports tourism destination in Thailand.
2. Relevant agencies develop integrated policies and plans to strengthen the loyalty of tourists who are interested in sports. by developing the image of a tourist attraction quality of sports activities Service innovation and value recognition In order for the tourism business through sports activities in sports tourism destinations in Thailand to grow steadily.

Academic recommendations and implementation

From the research, there are findings that can be applied in academic and practical ways as follows:

1. The relevant agencies can apply the findings to academically promote the loyalty of tourists to the sports destination in Thailand.
2. The government by the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, as well as the private sector and related organizations. in conducting tourism business in Thailand Sports tourism

attractions should be developed to meet the needs and expectations of tourists in order to promote the loyalty of tourists to sports tourism destinations in Thailand.

3. The government, private sector and relevant agencies should take integrated actions to develop the image of tourist attractions. quality of sports activities Service innovation and tourist perception of value to foster loyalty to sport destinations in Thailand for sustainable success

Future Work

In the next research to strengthen the spot tourist loyalty in Thailand should study the following issues.

1. A comparative study between the loyalty of tourists to the sports tourism destination of Thailand in each province to study the level of variables and influences that affect between variables are different or not

2. Other variables should be studied, such as tourist attraction image variables that indicate the acceptance of sports tourists in Thailand because it is an evaluation of sport tourist loyalty in organizing sporting events as well as other services that tourist attractions can facilitate to sport tourists and as a guideline for the development of sports tourist loyalty in Thailand in the future

3. Studies should be conducted in countries with a high reputation and success in doing business in a to create success in business operations and to build loyalty for tourists in Thailand's to be internationally accepted by tourists.

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