

# Does it matter where to run? Intention to participate in destination marathon

Participation in  
destination  
marathon

Kim-Shyan Fam

*School of Management, Harbin University of Commerce, Harbin, China*

Hiram Ting

*Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism Management, UCSI University,  
Kuching, Malaysia*

Kim-Lim Tan

*Faculty of Business and Law, The University of Newcastle, Singapore*

Kashif Hussain

*Centre for Research and Innovation in Tourism, Faculty of Social Sciences and  
Leisure Management, Taylor's University, Subang Jaya, Malaysia, and*

Jun-Hwa Cheah

*School of Business and Economics, Universiti Putra Malaysia,  
Serdang, Malaysia*

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of marathon enthusiasts' perceptions towards venue quality, race competition, organisation and service quality on their intention to participate in a destination marathon in the emerging region's context. It also seeks to investigate the mediating effect of perceived value and the moderating effect of intention to visit the destination on the intention to participate.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Using purposive sampling technique, 177 valid Singapore marathon enthusiasts were sampled to look into their intention towards participating in destination marathon in Sarawak (marathon held in Kuching). The data were analysed using the partial least squares–structural equation modelling (PLS–SEM).

**Findings** – The results show that amongst the other determinants, perceived organisation and perceived service quality do not contribute to perceived value and intention to participate in destination marathon. Perceived value is found to mediate all path relationships except the relationship between perceived organisation and intention to participate. Moreover, the relationship between perceived value and intention to participate is significantly moderated by intention to tour Sarawak.

**Originality/value** – This study makes a substantial contribution to the extant literature pertaining to destination tourism and value-based marketing in an emerging market. In particular, it highlights the importance of perceived value and the relevance of destination tourism in joining a sport event on foreign soil. The use of PLS–SEM also allows a rigorous assessment of the relationships under investigation and provides better estimations of the phenomenon.

**Keywords** Destination marathon, Perceived value, Intention to tour, Self-determination theory, Tourism, PLS-SEM

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

Tourism industry players operate in an extremely competitive environment characterised by high levels of ambiguity, complexity and constant changes (Alsawafi, 2017). Recent events such as an increase in security unrest, rising fuel prices, global slowdown of the economy and political instability can make cross-border tourism susceptible to losses (Huang *et al.*, 2015). In this volatile landscape, tourism industry players must develop capabilities in detecting environmental changes and offer an accurate response that positions them effectively. In this



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regard, it becomes essential for them to understand what causes various market segments to travel and visit a foreign destination (Chang and Chiang, 2019; Lee *et al.*, 2019; Shan *et al.*, 2020). This would provide marketing managers, travel agencies and even policymakers more significant insights into designing tourism products at a destination to facilitate touring intention.

One of the niche markets that has gained popularity is the destination marathon. Since the early 1970s, destination marathons have become a key event in tourism calendars. Destination marathons promise tourism industry growth, an enhancement to the image of the host city and improvement to social benefits for the community (Jeong and Kim, 2019; Qiu *et al.*, 2019). For instance, the 2017 New York City marathon saw participants from 124 countries, attracted 2.5m spectators along the course, and generated an economic impact of US\$415m (Forbes, 2017). Likewise, the Malaysian Investment Development Authority reported that some of the best marathons in Malaysia including the Standard Chartered Kuala Lumpur Marathon, Penang Bridge International Marathon, Kuching Marathon and Melaka Marathon, attracted more than 100,000 enthusiasts in 2018, and contributed to the overall RM5bn of sports tourism receipts (Mida, 2019). Given the economic potential of destination marathons, organisers are increasingly pulling out all the stops by involving the government, partners and other stakeholders to give the event the boosts and the support it needs to provide one of the best experiences for the marathon enthusiasts.

Various literature converges to three similar points on the growing popularity of destination marathons. First, it provides a distinct image of “active”, “heroic” and “mass participation”, which has, in turn, cast a positive image for the host destination. Secondly, destination marathons have been identified as an activity that improves participants’ mental health that facilitates the building of resilience, self-confidence and efficacy (Zach *et al.*, 2017; Nikolaidis *et al.*, 2019). Lastly, a related characteristic of destination marathons is in the provision of unique opportunities in allowing the participants to explore the destinations from different perspectives. Over the years, destination marathons have transitioned from a competitive race to a lifestyle activity where participants enrich their experience by running in a different setting and immersing in events surrounding the run (Qiu *et al.*, 2019).

Despite the burgeoning literature, gaps still exist from different perspectives. The service quality model (SERVQUAL) which has been widely used to measure the superiority of sports events (Ko *et al.*, 2011), is still inadequate as any sports event would involve elements of individual responses and perceptions of spectators or tourists (Jin *et al.*, 2013). Marathons, for instance, provide hedonic values that are highly sought after by enthusiasts which have been largely ignored by many marketing and tourism researchers (Jeong and Kim, 2019). Besides, many of existing literature such as Wicker *et al.* (2012b) examine how participating in a destination marathon influences intention to travel. However, with the evolution of destination marathon into a lifestyle event, it has come to our attention that studies examining the reciprocating relationship is conspicuously missing. Taking into consideration that a country’s hedonic values influence one’s decision to visit a locality, this study is one of the first few studies that extend the discourse by examining if the intention of touring a destination affects the intention to participate in a destination marathon.

Additionally, little attention has been paid to marathon events held in the far east and on how marathon enthusiasts perceive it from another country, especially when perceptions towards pursuing sports in the West cannot be construed to those in the East. Evidently, this reflects the embodiment of Confucianism in Asian culture (Liu and Wang, 2016). Confucianism advocates the “theory that man is an integral part of nature,” “yin and yang,” and “the five elements”. The integration of these thoughts in sports has become a belief or value system where the Asia populations view sports as a means to build the body as the foundation, and a means of self-cultivation (Liu and Wang, 2016). It focuses not only on winning over your competitors but also emphasising values such as winning over yourself.

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On the contrary, western populations pay more attention to the improvement of competitive ability and striving for excellence or superiority. The cultural differences between the Asian and western populations indicate that their perception of values and behavioural intention towards participation are likely to be different (Fam *et al.*, 2009).

Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the effect of marathon enthusiasts' perceptions towards venue quality, race competition, organisation and service quality on their intention to participate in a destination marathon in an emerging market. Moreover, perceived value and the intention to tour at the destination are constructed as mediator and moderator, respectively. While the former ascertains the impact of perceived value as an intervening factor on the intention to participate in destination marathon, the latter articulates the implications of destination tourism and marketing to joining a sport event in the Asian context.

## Literature review

### *Self-determination theory (SDT)*

In sports tourism, the choice to partake in a sport event can be explained using the self-determination theory (SDT). Unlike other theories such as the theory of planned behaviour that explains the changes in behaviour, SDT spotlight that the phenomenon of any changes resides with the human motivation that involves an individual's "personal development, self-regulation, universal psychological needs, life goals and aspirations, energy and vitality, non-conscious processes, the relations of culture to motivation, and the impact of social environments on motivation" (Deci and Ryan, 2008b, p. 182). Compared to other theories, SDT is said to fulfil three basic psychological needs that drive an individual's motivation. According to Gagné and Vansteenkiste (2013), they are (1) need for autonomy where individuals feel a sense of choice and volition to perform said action, (2) need for competence which relates to one's sense of self-efficacy and mastery over one's environment and (3) need for relatedness which is experiencing connections with the people and the environment. Further, Deci and Ryan (2008b) highlighted that one's motivation exists along a continuum that ranges from the least form of self-determination to the other end of intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, lies in-between the two ends, where its magnitude of self-determination is contingent upon the types of regulation (Zach *et al.*, 2017). For instance, individuals driven by introjected regulation are motivated to perform tasks generally out of guilt, anxiety or to enhance their ego. In contrast, individuals driven by the external regulator is associated with the fulfilment of rewards (Zach *et al.*, 2017).

Following SDT's postulations, we argue that participating in a destination marathon is one that involves both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. As it is, destination marathon provides two values that enthusiasts seek. First, utilitarian value as individuals see it as an appropriate physical activity that can help in training their perseverance, tenacity and building positive appraisal towards life (Huang *et al.*, 2015). Second, hedonic value as individuals partake in a destination marathon for its pleasure, fun and enjoyment, where they improve their affinity with the host destination by seeing it from a new perspective. Together, these form the perceived value of the event, which, in turn, influence one's decision to participate.

### *Perceived venue quality*

In sports tourism, the choice of location plays an essential role in influencing sports enthusiasts' decision of participation (Wicker *et al.*, 2012a). The multitude of definitions on venue quality spotlight that the perceptions of venue quality encapsulates "an interactive system of thoughts, opinions, feelings, visualisations, and intentions toward a destination" (Tasci and Gartner, 2007, p. 200). There are two dimensions involved in shaping one's perception of a venue. First, cognitive image, which is the perception resulting from the

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individual attributes of the venue. The second is known as “mental pictures or place imagery is based on both cognitive (e.g. safe for family) and affective images (e.g. enjoyable experience)” of the venue (Prayag and Ryan, 2012, p. 343). Simply, perception of a venue quality goes beyond just pure physical attributes.

#### *Perceived race competition*

An essential consideration for participation in a sports activity is the dimension of competency-mastery (Waskiewicz *et al.*, 2019). This dimension is described as the extent to which an individual engages in a sports activity to compete, master and unlock achievements (Nikolaidis *et al.*, 2019). It is found that participating in sports events to challenge participants’ physical and mental limits takes precedence over winning medals. These experiences build up one’s self-confidence (Hyun and Jordan, 2020). Interestingly, it does not ignore the facts of failure. Ability to overcome occasional defeats in sports events have a positive effect on building self-efficacy in completing future tasks. In other words, building self-efficacy is more than just applying routine actions, it involves “acquiring and applying cognitive, behavioural and tools for creating and executing action plans among the ever-changing life circumstances” (Bandura, 1997, p. 3).

In this context, perceived race competition, therefore, is an avenue to fulfil participants’ self-esteem needs by allowing them to determine their ability, to challenge their limits and to surpass it. The dimension of perceived race competition has served as a critical reason for changes in the sporting landscape such as the enhancement and upgrading of facilities to provide participants with opportunities to pitch their skills to a higher level. It is also for these reasons that destination marathon organisers offer different categories of race, such as leisure runs and competitive races of varying distances catering to the diverse segments of marathon enthusiasts

#### *Perceived organisation*

In a seminal work by Hallmann *et al.* (2010), it was mentioned that “active sports tourists linked emotions more closely with physical and organisational aspects” (p. 33). The same study reveal that tangible and intangible aspects of organisational components such as logistics, security, route, environmental associations as well as the incorporation of historical and cultural heritage potentially improve the perception of the sports events. Similarly, a study by Getz and McConnell (2011) elucidated that participants place importance on attributes that are non-associated directly to the sports events such as the website being user-friendly, the run route and the scenery along with it. Taken together, these studies pointed out that organisational elements of a sports events can influence participants’ perception of value and their decision to participate in the event.

#### *Perceived service quality*

Over the last few years, there is much literature on service quality within sports tourism. Considering that many countries are leveraging sports events to improve their economy, service quality is one of the critical determinants in distinguishing one event from another similar event (Ko *et al.*, 2011). From the available literature such as Cham *et al.* (2016), it highlighted that service quality is generally, a consumers’ impression on the service level provided, which reflects their judgment, attitude and expectations on the superiority of the service received. Often, such an impression can be influenced by factors such as one’s culture, education background and value system (Biscaia *et al.*, 2017). Given the dynamic and interactive cognitive processes involved in the forming of impressions and perceptions, scholars such as Biscaia *et al.* (2013) provided an alternate view that perceptions of service excellence would differ and should be considered specific to the uniqueness of each circumstance.

Within the context of sports tourism, a study by [Yoshida and James \(2010\)](#) found that the “core product and services coexist as antecedents of game and service satisfaction” (p. 355). At the same time, the same study shows that game satisfaction had an impact on behavioural intention as well. In major sports events, the quality of a staff interaction is measured from the quality of the relationship between the participants and them ([Tae et al., 2013](#)). Staff members with a good attitude, sound knowledge of the product and skills built a better relationship with the customer ([Tae et al., 2013](#)). Likewise, in a destination marathon, staff members must be able to cater to the support and needs of the participants. This explains why researchers have continuously advocated marketing professionals of sport tourism to include efforts in fostering customers’ service satisfaction which shapes a person’s perception of the event ([Jiang and Chen, 2019](#))

#### *Relationships with perceived value*

To develop long-term relationships with target consumers, value creation has become a fundamental proposition for any service provider. Besides, value creation does not happen in isolation. It is created when the value beneficiary accepts the value propositions offered by the service provider. In other words, it is crucial to establish the determinants that increase one’s perceived value on the service provider’s offerings. Perceived value is the overall assessment of a product or service that an individual place, after comparing the benefits received and perceived cost involved ([Zeithaml, 1988](#)). From the consumers’ perspective, perceived cost includes monetary and nonmonetary sacrifices such as money, time and effort. Perceive benefits, on the other hand, often include a “combination of service quality attributes and customer characteristics or tastes” ([Biscaia et al., 2017](#), p. 204).

Across different studies, perceived value plays an instrumental role in the satisfaction of sports enthusiasts ([Dmitrović et al., 2009](#)). It encapsulates both hedonic and utilitarian components ranging from the organisation, competitive level, to destination image, which in turn, influences one’s future purchase intentions and behaviours ([Jin et al., 2013](#)). It is on these premises that marketing practitioners and researchers focus on examining the importance of perceived value placed by consumers on products and services, as it affects one’s consumer behaviour, and potentially, could be the best predictor of competitive success in this constant changing tourism landscape ([Cronin et al., 2000](#)). Based on the existing literature and our research model, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H1a.* Perceived venue quality positively influences the perceived value of the destination marathon.
- H1b.* Perceived race competition positively influences the perceived value of the destination marathon.
- H1c.* Perceived organisation positively influences the perceived value of the destination marathon.
- H1d.* Perceived service quality positively influences the perceived value of the destination marathon.

#### *Relationships with intention to participate*

Rooted in the SDT, motivation takes place when individuals see value in the activity or in a particular task that is aligned with his or her life philosophies and beliefs ([Deci and Ryan, 2008b](#)). Motivations, as explained by [Deci and Ryan \(2008a\)](#), are often associated with outcomes such as an increase in persistence, demonstration of determination, enhancement in performance and better psychological well-being. SDT provides a theoretical explanation on why individuals develop an affectionate and emotional attachment to a specific event, and as

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a result making a deliberate decision to participate in it (Deci and Ryan, 2008a, 2008b). SDT further posits that the purpose of partaking in the event is to experience the pleasure and satisfaction derived from the event or knowledge gained from the activity (Carbonneau *et al.*, 2012). In the context of marathon participation, studies have shown that the attributes of perceived venue quality, perceived race competition, perceived service quality and perceived organisation influence marathon enthusiasts' intrinsic motivation to take part. For instance, the competition element of the marathon brings out their innate desire for testing and surpassing their limits. Similarly, Cham *et al.* (2016) and Jiang and Chen (2019) claimed that destination image is able to predict outcomes related to behavioural intentions, word-of-mouth communications and place attachment levels of active event sport tourists. Collectively speaking, these pieces of evidence gravitates towards the view that participating in a sport event is about an experience of place tied to an experience of physical activity (Alsawafi, 2017). Hence, the following hypotheses are formed:

- H2a.* Perceived venue quality positively influences the intention to participate in the destination marathon.
- H2b.* Perceived race competition positively influences the intention to participate in the destination marathon.
- H2c.* Perceived organisation positively influences the intention to participate in the destination marathon.
- H2d.* Perceived service quality positively influences the intention to participate in the destination marathon.

#### *Perceived value and intention to participate*

Perceived value is subsequently analysed as an endogenous variable on the intention to participate. As explained earlier, perceived value takes into consideration the perceived costs and benefits associated with the decision. Generally, marathon enthusiasts perceive positive value when the perceived benefits gained from participating in the destination marathon exceed the associated costs. However, perceived value is a dynamic process that fluctuates from moment to moment as the formation of perception takes place before, during and after the consumption of services (Pandža Bajs, 2013). In this context, it means that the destination marathon organisers must offer the facilities and suite of services that marathon enthusiasts expect, to strengthen their market position. This is especially so as the perceived value placed on the destination marathon affects one's motivation of participating, which is reflected in the following hypothesis:

- H3.* Perceived value positively influences the intention to participate in the destination marathon.

#### *Perceived value as a mediator*

In line with SDT, marathon enthusiasts' decision to partake in a destination marathon is driven by their intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. For instance, organisational factors such as the image of the event, the operational management, running along a scenic route as well as other potential rewards of prize money, recognition and ranking serve as a source of extrinsic motivation for individuals to participate. Similarly, the topography of the location and the level of competitiveness provide marathon enthusiasts intrinsic motivation to participate. The direct relationships of these dimensions to intention to participate are well-documented in numerous literature (e.g. Yeh *et al.*, 2016; Aicher and Brenner, 2015; Jin *et al.*, 2013; Nezakati *et al.*, 2013). Concomitantly, one can also argue that the presence of these determinants



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increases the perceived value of the destination marathon, which, in turn, increases their intention to participate. This perspective of examining perceived value as a mediator has been well supported in several tourism-related studies. For instance, [Kwok et al. \(2017\)](#) reveal that perceived value plays a mediator role in the service quality–satisfaction relationship in the tourism context. Likewise, [Oviedo-García et al. \(2017\)](#) found that perceived value mediates the relationship between ecotourism knowledge and ecotourist satisfaction. However, this relationship has rarely been examined in the context of the destination marathon. This study, therefore, is one of the first few works of literature to examine this relationship with the following hypotheses:

- H4a.* Perceived value mediates the relationship between perceived venue quality and intention to participate in the destination marathon.
- H4b.* Perceived value mediates the relationship between perceived race competition and the intention to participate in the destination marathon.
- H4c.* Perceived value mediates the relationship between the perceived organisation and the intention to participate in the destination marathon.
- H4d.* Perceived value mediates the relationship between perceived service quality and the intention to participate in the destination marathon.

#### *Intention to visit a touring destination as a moderator*

It is documented that the host country plays a significant role in event and destination tourism ([Mhanna et al., 2019](#)). Amongst the different sectors within the tourism industry, sports tourism presents a growing opportunity that reports highest growth in many countries ([Roche et al., 2013](#); [Alsawafi, 2017](#)). Several studies show that participants would consider factors such as infrastructure, facilities and services before making a decision to a tour a destination or making a purchase (e.g. [Shonk and Chelladurai, 2008](#); [Getz and McConnell, 2011](#); [Cham and Easvaralingam, 2012](#); [Cheng et al., 2014](#)). As such, Malaysia has invested heavily in such infrastructure and identifying niche markets would help to bolster tourism receipts as a whole. For many countries, including Malaysia, tourism has been a key economic pillar that contributes significantly to their respective gross domestic products and workforce employment.

On the contrary, deploying intention to visit as an antecedent or moderator has been far and few. A report by the *Singapore Business Review* (SBR) showed that when one displays the intention to travel, one is prepared to experience different forms of activities, especially if they are authentic to that destination ([SBR, 2017](#)). For instance, tourists visiting Japan would want to try consuming *sushi* – small balls or rolls of vinegar-flavoured cold rice served with a garnish of vegetables, egg or raw seafood. In Malaysia, visitors may attempt indigenous foods and explore the rich nature and diverse culture of the country ([Fam et al., 2019](#)). The determining factor influencing the eventual decision is, therefore, dependent on the perceived value placed on the experiences ([Wang and Wu, 2011](#)). For these reasons, we argue that when the intention to tour the host destination increases, it leads to extensive interest in activities unique to that locality, which in turn, increases the perceived value and intention of participation, leading us to the final hypothesis of this study:

- H5.* Intention to tour the host destination moderates the relationship between perceived value and intention to participate in the destination marathon.

#### *Context of the study*

Although sports tourism is established as a key contributor to Malaysia's economy ([Mapjabil et al., 2015](#)), little is mentioned from the perspective of a Singaporean. Singapore has been a

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key trading partner of Sarawak (at the eastern part of Malaysia) with the total exports to Singapore amounting to RM 1.2bn in 2018 (The Borneo Post, 2019). To further improve trade exports and attract more Singaporeans to Sarawak, the state government has recently launched the Sarawak Tourism and Trade Office in Singapore, which acts as a conduit for Sarawak enterprises to collaborate with Singapore's business community (The Borneo Post, 2018). Additionally, it acts as a "one-stop centre" that provides information about Sarawak's products and tourism packages, as well as serving as a promotion centre for holiday destinations (The Borneo Post, 2019).

Moreover, Kuching Marathon, a key sport event in Malaysia, is what the Sarawak government will continue to capitalise on to attract more international visitors, including those from Singapore (The Borneo Post, 2019). Kuching Marathon is held annually in the capital of Sarawak. It has consistently attracted 10,000 runners over the last few years, which is a one-fold increase compared to its inaugural edition in 2014 (Ling, 2017a, 2017b). Compared to the Borneo International Marathon, which is the only other marathon held in the eastern part of Malaysia, Kuching Marathon attracted more participants. For 2019, the Association of International Marathons and Distance Races (AIMS) reported that the Borneo International Marathon attracted approximately 5,000 participants, which is only half of what Kuching Marathon attracted (AIMS, 2019). Taking these into consideration, this study is timely as we examine the perceptions of Singapore marathon enthusiasts towards participating in a marathon at a foreign destination, and how the intention to visit Sarawak potentially affects their decision.

## Methodology

### *Sample and data collection*

The respondents were Singaporeans who participated in marathons locally or abroad regularly. As we do not have an exhaustive list, a purposive sampling technique was used, and the selection criteria were developed accordingly. These criteria, which were used as qualifying questions during data collection, were (1) the respondent must be a Singaporean, (2) the respondent is a regular marathon runner and (3) the respondent knows about Sarawak and has no issue travelling to Sarawak. The sample size was determined using the power analysis advocated by Cohen (1988). Unlike the traditional rule-of-thumb method which derives sample size based on a ratio to the number of predictors, power analysis is more robust and unlikely to design studies that have "insufficient power because of too few samples or excessive power because of too many samples" (Green, 1991, p. 509). In this regard, this study uses the G\*power analysis, which at the effect size of 0.15 and a power of 0.90, 123 respondents were set as the minimum number to draw findings with sufficient statistical power.

### *Instrument*

A self-administered and questionnaire-based data collection method was adopted. The questionnaire was made up of three sections. The first section was about the respondent profile. The second section consisted of statements related to the determinants of perceived value, namely, perceived venue quality, perceived race competition, perceived service quality, perceived organisation as well as the perceived value. They were all adapted from established studies (Shonk and Chelladurai, 2008; Ryan and Lockyer, 2002; Alexandris *et al.*, 2004; Yoon *et al.*, 2010; Koo *et al.*, 2014). The final section consisted of statements pertaining to the intention to participate in a marathon in Kuching and the intention to visit Sarawak as the tourism destination (Hellier *et al.*, 2003; Ting *et al.*, 2019). To reduce common method bias, 7-point Likert scale was used for the mediating and moderating variables, whereas a 5-point Likert scale was adopted for all other variables (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). In addition to expert check to ascertain face validity, a pre-test was conducted to ensure that any ambiguities in the



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questionnaire are revised so that the respondents could understand and respond to the statements/questions in the way they were intended and designed (Memon *et al.*, 2017).

#### *Data collection and analysis*

Questionnaires were distributed in public areas in Singapore over a two weeks period. 205 copies were collected. However, 28 copies were discarded due to serious data omission and straight-lining pattern. Data from 177 copies of completed questionnaire were then analysed using SmartPLS 3.2.8 software which performs the partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS–SEM) techniques (Sarstedt and Cheah, 2019). PLS–SEM is widely used across different social science disciplines such as marketing, strategic management, information technology, property management, tourism and hospitality (Cheah *et al.*, 2020; Hair *et al.*, 2012, 2014; Memon *et al.*, 2017; Ringle *et al.*, 2020; Ting *et al.*, 2019). PLS–SEM was adopted in the present study because it supports the estimation of the model with exploratory nature and is a causal-predictive approach to SEM. This allows researchers to assess both the explanative and predictive quality of the model (Shmueli *et al.*, 2019). Unlike the covariance-based SEM (CB–SEM), PLS–SEM focusses on optimising the endogenous constructs' prediction and not on the model fit (Hair *et al.*, 2017). In other words, PLS–SEM offers a more nuanced analysis of the hypothesised model, which would provide a holistic understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

### **Findings**

#### *Respondents profile*

A total of 177 participants responded to the survey. This number surpasses the minimum number required to maintain the power at 90%, meaning the probability of rejecting the null hypothesis when it is, in fact, false, is reduced. Common method bias is also tested statistically by using Harman's single-factor test. The results show that the first factor explained 43.45% of the total variance, well below the suggested 50% threshold (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). This suggested that the common method bias is not an issue in this study. Amongst the respondents, 62% are females while 28% are males. For age distribution, the majority (64%) falls in the age range of 25–34 years, and the next biggest group is 35–44 years at 26%. The remaining 10% comprises the age group of 18–24 years, 45–54 years and 55–64 years.

#### *Measurement model assessment*

In PLS–SEM, assessment of the reflective measurement model highlights internal consistency, convergent validity and discriminant validity. To achieve these, we examine the composite reliability (CR) as a measure for internal consistency. As shown in Table 1, all the outer loadings exceed the threshold value of 0.7, except for SERQ3, which has been removed. The average variance extracted (AVE) results show that all are above the expected minimum level of 0.50, providing support for convergent validity (Hair *et al.*, 2017). Discriminant validity, which aims to examine the degree to which an item is distinct from one another, is assessed via the heterotrait–monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) criterion. From Table 2, the values for each of the constructs are in the range of 0.336–0.891, thus fulfilling the requirement of discriminant validity at HTMT<sub>0.9</sub> (Memon *et al.*, 2017).

#### *Structural model assessment*

Before assessing the structural model, it is crucial to address the collinearity issue for each set of predictors in the structural model. The results show that collinearity is not a concern as the variance inflation factor (VIF) scores are below the threshold of 3.33 (see Table 3). After that, a bootstrapping approach with 5,000 sub-samples is employed to test all the path relationships in the model (Hair *et al.*, 2017). Table 3 and Figure 1 illustrates the results of the hypothesis. It shows that perceived venue quality (H1a:  $\beta = 0.245$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), perceived race competition

Construct	Item	Loading	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Perceived race competition (PRC)	COMP1	0.757	0.877	0.644
	COMP2	0.863		
	COMP3	0.914		
	COMP4	0.652		
Perceived organisation (PO)	INT1	0.912	0.915	0.782
	INT2	0.876		
	INT3	0.864		
Perceived organisation (PO)	ORG1	0.950	0.978	0.849
	ORG2	0.946		
	ORG3	0.933		
	ORG4	0.902		
	ORG5	0.921		
	ORG6	0.934		
	ORG7	0.896		
	ORG8	0.887		
Perceived service quality (PSQ)	SERQ1	0.957	0.957	0.918
	SERQ2	0.959		
	SERQ3	D		
Perceived value (PV)	VAL1	0.841	0.912	0.723
	VAL2	0.900		
	VAL3	0.889		
	VAL4	0.765		
Perceived venue quality (PVQ)	VENQ1	0.913	0.924	0.801
	VENQ2	0.884		
	VENQ3	0.888		
Touring sarawak intention (INT)	TOUR1	0.876	0.918	0.790
	TOUR2	0.885		
	TOUR3	0.904		

**Table 1.**  
Assessment of  
reliability and  
convergent validity

**Note(s):** D: Item deleted due to low loading

(H1b:  $\beta = 0.183, p < 0.01$ ) and perceived service quality (H1d:  $\beta = 0.610, p < 0.01$ ) are positively related to perceived value. However, perceived organisation and perceived value are inversely related (H1c:  $\beta = -0.155, p < 0.01$ ). As such, only H1a, H1b and H1d are supported. At the same time, perceived venue quality (H2a:  $\beta = 0.206, p < 0.01$ ), perceived race competition (H2b:  $\beta = 0.382, p < 0.01$ ) and perceived value (H3:  $\beta = 0.258, p < 0.01$ ) have a positive impact on intention to participate in the marathon, thus providing support for H2a, H2b, and H3. However, the effects of perceived organisation and perceived service quality on the intention to participate are found to be insignificant. As such H2c and H2d are not supported.

Next, the mediating analysis for perceived value is performed using Preacher and Hayes (2004) approach. By bootstrapping the indirect effect, the results indicate that the relationship between perceived venue quality (H4a:  $\beta = 0.063, p < 0.05$ ), perceived race competition (H4b:  $\beta = 0.047, p < 0.05$ ), perceived service quality (H4d:  $\beta = 0.157, p < 0.01$ ) towards intention to participate are significantly mediated by perceived value. Hence, H4a, H4b and H4d are supported. Conversely, perceived value does not mediate the relationship between perceived organisation and intention to participate. Thus, H4c is not supported.

The  $R^2$  values of both perceived value and intention to participate in marathon values are above the 0.26 value as suggested by Cohen (1988) which indicates that the model is substantial. At the same time, the effect size ( $f^2$ ) of all other path relationships are substantial, indicating their importance to the endogenous variables respectively. Using Stone-Geisser's  $Q^2$ , the model is also found to possess predictive relevance as the  $Q^2$  values for

Construct	INT	PO	PRC	PSQ	PV	PVQ	TOUR
INT	0.336 [0.250;0.436]						
PO	0.675 [0.544;0.782]	0.337 [0.240;0.425]					
PRC	0.396 [0.261;0.570]	0.864 [0.760;0.989]	0.340 [0.223;0.459]				
PSQ	0.589 [0.443;0.712]	0.474 [0.319;0.602]	0.501 [0.376;0.620]	0.711 [0.577;0.812]			
PV	0.627 [0.510;0.716]	0.404 [0.299;0.509]	0.615 [0.481;0.732]	0.475 [0.370;0.572]	0.618 [0.483;0.739]		
PVQ	0.891 [0.795;0.963]	0.500 [0.364;0.633]	0.642 [0.487;0.761]	0.419 [0.255;0.588]	0.519 [0.326;0.683]	0.581 [0.463;0.679]	
TOUR							

**Note(s):** The values in the brackets represent the lower and the upper bounds of the 95% confidence interval; (ii) PVQ: Perceived venue quality, PRC: Perceived race competition, PO: Perceived organisation, PSQ: Perceived service quality, PV: Perceived value, INT: Intention to participate, Tour: Touring Sarawak intention

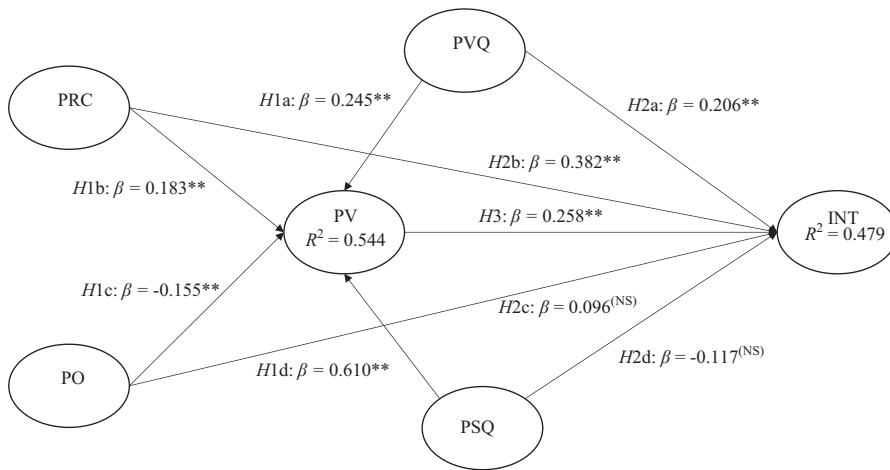
Participation in destination marathon

**Table 2.**  
Assessment of discriminant validity using HTMT

**Table 3.**  
Assessment of the structural model

Hypothesis	Relationship	Std Beta	Std error	t-value	95% BCa LB	UB	VIF	f <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup>	Q <sup>2</sup>
H1a	PVQ → PV	0.245	0.070	3.499**	0.128	0.360	1.653	0.079	0.544	0.363
H1b	PRC → PV	0.183	0.061	2.999**	0.083	0.282	1.536	0.047		
H1c	PO → PV	-0.155	0.064	2.443**	-0.237	-0.017	2.287	0.023		
H1d	PSQ → PV	0.610	0.060	10.130**	0.481	0.685	2.336	0.351		
H2a	PVQ → INT	0.206	0.059	3.502**	0.117	0.312	1.784	0.046	0.479	0.341
H2b	PRC → INT	0.382	0.059	6.439**	0.280	0.474	1.609	0.174		
H2c	PO → INT	0.096	0.105	0.908(NS)	-0.118	0.222	2.340	0.008		
H2d	PSQ → INT	-0.117	0.125	0.895(NS)	-0.250	0.131	3.143	0.008		
H3	PV → INT	0.258	0.089	2.897**	0.100	0.383	2.186	0.059		
H4a	PVQ → PV → INT	0.063	0.030	2.100*	0.012	0.135				
H4b	PRC → PV → INT	0.047	0.023	2.035*	0.009	0.097				
H4c	PO → PV → INT	-0.040	0.027	1.458(NS)	-0.090	0.001				
H4d	PSQ → PV → INT	0.157	0.058	2.689**	0.052	0.267				
H5	PV*TOUR → INT	0.134	0.078	1.710*	0.017	0.275				

**Note(s):** (i) H1a-H3: Assessment of direct relationships; (ii) H4a-H4d: Assessment of mediation relationships; (iii) H5: Assessment of moderation relationship. (iv) \*p < 0.05. \*\*p < 0.01. NS: Not significant; (iv) PVQ: Perceived venue quality, PRC: Perceived race competition, PO: Perceived organisation, PSQ: Perceived service quality, PV: Perceived value, INT: Intention to participate



**Note(s):** (i)  $*p < 0.05$ .  $**p < 0.01$ ; (ii) PVQ: Perceived venue quality, PRC: Perceived race competition, PO: Perceived organization; PSQ: Perceived service quality, PV: Perceived value, INT: Intention to participate

**Figure 1.** Structural model results

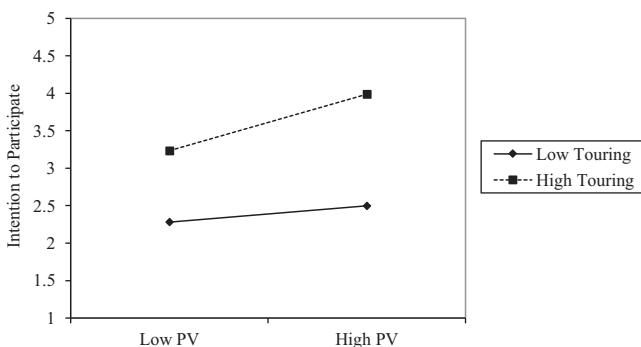
perceived value (0.363), and intention to participate (0.341) are more than 0 (Geisser, 1974). The predictive relevance of the model is further assessed using PLSpredict (Shmueli et al., 2016). Table 4 shows that the values of root mean square error (RMSE) and MAE for PLS estimation are lower than that of LM model except for item VAL2. Given the fact that PLS estimation has less prediction errors, the model is said to have a medium predictive power (Shmueli et al., 2019). Besides, the  $Q^2$  values produced by the PLS estimation being larger than that of the LM model further support the predictive capability of the model (Shmueli et al., 2019; Ting et al., 2019).

Lastly, Table 3 also demonstrates moderation results. The relationship between perceived value and intention to participate is found to be significantly moderated by the intention to visit or tour Sarawak ( $H5: \beta = 0.134, p < 0.05$ ). The finding is further elaborated by the interaction plot, as proposed by Dawson (2014). As shown in Figure 2, the gradient for high touring Sarawak intention (dotted line) is steeper than low touring Sarawak intention (solid line). It implies that the positive relationship between perceived value and intention to participate is stronger when the intention to tour Sarawak is high.  $H5$  is therefore supported.

	PLS			LM			PLS-LM		
	RMSE	MAE	$Q^2$	RMSE	MAE	$Q^2$	RMSE	MAE	$Q^2$
INT1	1.109	0.872	0.423	4.572	1.018	-8.794	-3.463	-0.146	9.217
INT2	1.109	0.927	0.347	2.952	1.062	-3.627	-1.843	-0.135	3.974
INT3	1.597	1.227	0.147	4.960	1.503	-7.226	-3.363	-0.276	7.373
VAL1	1.176	0.718	-0.045	1.286	0.669	-0.250	-0.110	0.049	0.205
VAL2	1.251	0.740	0.007	0.983	0.631	0.387	0.268	0.109	-0.380
VAL3	1.368	0.872	-0.180	2.101	0.775	-1.784	-0.733	0.097	1.604
VAL4	1.569	1.077	-0.203	1.943	0.967	-0.845	-0.374	0.110	0.642

**Note(s):** PVQ: Perceived venue quality, PRC: Perceived race competition, PO: Perceived organisation; PSQ: Perceived service quality, PV: Perceived value

**Table 4.** Assessment of PLSpredict



**Figure 2.**  
Interaction plot for  
moderator (PV\*TOUR  
→ INT)

## Discussions

This study extends the existing body of knowledge by developing a model exploring the effect of perceived venue quality, perceived competition, perceived organisation and perceived service quality on perceived value and on the intention to participate in destination marathon. It also examines how perceived value influences intention to participate as well as its role as a mediator. Lastly, this study further assesses how the relationship between perceived value and intention to participate is moderated by one's intention to tour the destination. These results provide evidence on the assessment, affective and behavioural response of the individuals concerned. As highlighted by Cronin *et al.* (2000), understanding the affective aspect of a tourist, in this case, a marathon enthusiast, is not sufficient in predicting the behavioural response. Therefore, this study provides interesting findings with significant implications for both theoretical and practical perspectives.

As seen from the results, there is a positive significant relationship between perceived venue quality, perceived race competition, perceived service quality and perceived value. It is in line with prior works on sports tourism (e.g. Jin *et al.*, 2013; Mapjabil *et al.*, 2015; Alsawafi, 2017), echoing the importance of these factors to perception towards destination marathon. Unexpectedly, the results also show that there is a negative relationship between perceived organisation and perceived value. This contradicts many of the existing literature advocating the organisation of an event as a key in ensuring revisit intention of sports enthusiasts (Hallmann *et al.*, 2010; Wicker *et al.*, 2012a; Getz and McConnell, 2011). One probable reason is that marathon enthusiasts from Singapore, in general, are familiar with Sarawak and the city of Kuching where most marathons are held. Despite the importance of event organisation, they are more inclined to challenging themselves and socialisation. Hence, perceived organisation is not what they look for in participating in Kuching Marathon. This may well explain why perceived service quality also did not establish any significant relationship with intention to participate in destination marathon. Many Singaporeans can speak English, Malay and Mandarin, and it is relatively easy for them to tour in Sarawak and seek for help compared to other foreigners. Their collectivist culture also means that they will likely join the event with companions or in groups (Ting *et al.*, 2019). Referring to the earlier assertion about Confucianism values, they focus on challenging themselves and socialising with others more than winning the marathon. This underscores the intrinsic significance of culture and value and the potential difference across different cultures in affecting individuals to participate in destination marathon or any cross-border events (Fam *et al.*, 2009).

This study also demonstrates that the effects of perceived venue quality, perceived race competition and perceived service quality on the intention to participate in destination marathon are mediated by perceived value. While the findings highlight the magnitude of perceived value as an intervening factor in general, it also points out precisely the need to



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create and offer value in all the services during the event. Service quality should not be just about getting things done. Instead, it should also be about co-creating or offering value in the process (Luo *et al.*, 2019; Ting *et al.*, 2018; Ting and Thurasamy, 2016). Although Singaporeans care less about service quality and event organisation when joining Kuching Marathon, they appreciate any excellent deeds that enhance their experience. Finally, the results also infer the implications of destination tourism and value-based marketing to participating in sports events in a foreign destination. Notwithstanding familiarity, having the opportunity to tour Sarawak to try local foods, explore its natural beauty or get an escape with friends from daily routines can likely strengthen the intention of marathon enthusiasts from Singapore to participate in Kuching marathon. Taken together with current literature elucidating that sport event can stimulate travel business and host destination plays a major role in attracting visitors (Alsawafi, 2017; Jiang and Chen, 2019; Roche *et al.*, 2013), the present study provides an additional perspective to understand how intention towards touring a destination can reinforce the relationship between perceived value and intention to participate in destination marathon in the context of emerging market in Asia.

#### *Implications and conclusion*

The present study has made several theoretical and managerial implications for destination tourism and marketing research, particularly in the context of destination marathon. One essential contribution would be the extension and application of SDT showing that perceived service quality, venue quality and level of competitiveness contribute to the perceived value of marathon enthusiast towards the event, which in turn, influence their intention to participate. Unlike earlier studies such as Chen and Chen (2010) that used service quality and satisfaction as the key antecedents in predicting behavioural intentions, this study includes another three salient factors pertaining to intention to participate in destination marathon so as to broaden the understanding of the subject matter. The inclusion of perceived value and the intention to tour Sarawak as a mediator and a moderator respectively further extend knowledge about the impact of value-based marketing and destination tourism on individuals' intention to participate in the marathon or any other sport events held on foreign land (González-Mansilla *et al.*, 2019; Jin *et al.*, 2013).

From a practical standpoint, destination marathon organisers in developing countries or emerging markets can leverage these findings to meet the demands of sport tourists. Also known as “chopstick marketing”, understanding Asian values in consumer behaviours could help event managers and marketers to design an effective marketing strategy to attract and retain customers as well as expand domain in the market share (Seo *et al.*, 2015). For instance, they may focus on enhancing destination image, improving venue and service quality with added-value products as well as ensuring the competitiveness of the events. Considering that intention to tour Sarawak moderates intention to participate in destination marathon, the relevant authorities, destination managers and marketers should relate the event to the social, historical and environmental aspects of Sarawak to invoke an emotional response from marathon enthusiasts in Singapore (Hallmann *et al.*, 2010). It can thus be surmised that when sport enthusiasts see the value in joining a destination event and are attracted to touring the host destination, they will most likely participate even if the event is held in an emerging (or less developed) region. Again, it underscores the magnitude of destination tourism and marketing and the need to incorporate the understanding of culture and value into marketing strategies to attract foreign tourists to participate in a destination sport in the Far East.

#### *Limitations and future research*

While this study establishes the perceptions of Singaporean marathon enthusiasts towards destination marathon in Sarawak and her capital, it cannot be globally claimed due to

differences of culture and value system across countries. Although many in Singapore and those living in Asia still highly regard the teaching of Confucius, the change of demographics and the societal development within the countries or regions mean that their understanding and application in the contemporary setting could be different. Furthermore, despite using PLS predict to ascertain the predictive relevance of the model, this study uses a cross-sectional design which might potentially limit the assessment of behavioural intention of the marathon enthusiasts. On this basis, this study recommends that the proposed model be tested in other geographical settings to determine if and how cultural differences affect one's perceived value towards destination marathon in an emerging region. Future researchers could also adopt a longitudinal study to investigate the intention of marathon enthusiasts to participate over a period of time to identify potential intervening and contextual factors which could drive or impede their actual behaviour. Finally, value-based marketing and its relevance to destination tourism and sport events should be further explored in cross-border studies to better understand the perceptions and intention of foreigners towards visiting a destination and participating in a destination event.

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### Corresponding author

Kim-Lim Tan can be contacted at: [kimlim.tan@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:kimlim.tan@newcastle.edu.au)

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