

AWARENESS OF THE EMERGING EVENT INDUSTRY AMONG TOURISM STUDENTS IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract

The event industry is becoming one of the fastest growing and most lucrative areas of the tourism industry worldwide. Malaysia continues to gain world recognition for the excellence of its convention and exhibition facilities and on their attractive places to organize an event. Since event management has emerged to become a key sector of the Malaysian tourism industry, this has given some impetus to the need for tertiary educated event managers. Taking an initiative to highlight the needs of an appropriate conservation maintenance management, this study will present an evaluation the relationship between event education and awareness of the students of its emergence and student awareness of the emerging event industry in Malaysia. Among others, this study will explores and examines the emerging event industry from student's view on the types of event that they are most interested in, the skills and attributes for a successful event management and their potentiality to be involved in the event industry in future.

Keywords: Event Industry, Tourism, Awareness, Economic Prosperity, Leisure-Oriented

INTRODUCTION

Event tourism is becoming popular in Malaysia. Hence, it can be viewed as a significant segment of the Malaysian tourism industry. There are strong evidences on the increasing popularity and diversity of festivals and special events in Malaysia over the years. Thus, they have just become a significant component in the Malaysian tourism industry. As implied by Getz (1991), general reasons for the increasing growth of this festival and special event phenomenon is because of economic prosperity, a more leisure-oriented lifestyle, and ever-improving global communication.

Festivals and special events can be found in all kind of societies in Malaysia. Traditionally, most of the celebrations started as rituals of traditions, beliefs and religions. There are special ceremonies to celebrate the end of harvesting season, and specific rituals to appease the spirits of sea, land and forest, such as Gawai Harvesting Festival, Sarawak and Keamatan Harvesting Festival, Sabah. There are also special days that marked phases of the moon and key moments of people's lives. Examples are Chinese New Year and Muslim Eid Celebration. Event management consists of festivals, sports, meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions. This sector was commonly represented by the acronym MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions), but is increasingly referred more broadly as "events" (Getz, D., 1997). Most countries in the world are now involved in event tourism to some extent, either as a destination or as a source market.

According to Getz (1997) events constitute one of the most exciting and fastest growing forms of leisure, business and tourism related phenomena. Their special appeal stems in part from the limited duration and innate uniqueness of each event, which distinguishes them from permanent duration and built attractions. Inevitably, the spectacular growth in the number and diversity of events has given rise to new business opportunities, careers, tourism implications and professionalism. Event management has become recognized as a separate field of study in a growing number of educational institutions and the related professional associations have flourished.

Further indications of the emergence of an event industry, noted by Harris and Griffin (1997) are the formation of the industry associations and the establishment of training courses and accreditation scheme. A number of industry associations have been formed that represent the various specialisations within the industry. A major concern however, is the fact that the emergence of the event industry in Malaysia has become a key component of the local tourism activities and indirectly creates need for events education in all university. Similar situation occurs in Australia, as highlighted by Harris & Jago (1999). The research had confirmed that 17 out of 29 universities in Australia offered at least one subject in the event area and four universities offered specialization in the event field. A pilot study conducted earlier had confirmed that the same development occurs in Malaysia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Every year millions of events took place throughout the world. Many are oriented towards tourists markets. The vast majority, however, are held primarily for tourism's host communities and local people. Events vary in scale from the mega events of world significance, such as Olympics, to the village fair/carnival. Despite of their nature and character, these events share a common objectives and have one general aim; to attract people (spectators, visitors, residents, guests) to a focal point of a short-lived, organized activity in which the visitor may participate, watch, view, learn from the enjoy. This definition shows how closely related events are to visitor attractions, both have the same general purpose.

An event is something that happens, not just exist – somebody has to make it happen. Goldblatt (1997) defines an event as 'a special event recognizes a unique moment in time with ceremony and ritual to satisfy specific needs. It requires physical setting in urban or rural areas, in forests, by rivers, in open fields and purpose built amenities. Events entertain locals and provide recreational activity in and out of season for visitors. Media coverage generated by events helps destinations build confidence and a positive image in the tourism marketplace

(Yeoman, I. et al, 2004). In addition, the term awareness implies that something has been perceived and understood. Following from this, Dourish and Belotti (1992) define awareness as an understanding of the activities of others, which provides a context of your own activity. In other words, awareness enables an individual to perceive up-to-date information or occurrences that are triggered by the presence, activities and availability of persons, or changes to objects, and it enables the individual to act accordingly on the basis of this perception. Event management has a long history.

However, the basic elements of event management have changed little, only what is possible, what suits the taste of the consuming public and what is morally and ethically acceptable to modern society. There is evidence that market demand for events has risen in the western world and has been attributed to wealth, demand of comfort, relative peace and an increasing awareness of tradition leading to reinvention of historical and religious events and rituals (Shone, 2001).

Further indications of the emergence of an industry noted by Harris and Griffin (1997) are the formation of the industry associations and the establishment of training courses and accreditation schemes. Shone (2001) suggests that somewhat cryptically, that event management is 'more art than science'. According to Tarlow (2002), it is the intuitive knowledge built-up from firsthand experience of the entire events industry that moves event management from 'pure science to art'. Goldblatt (2002) stated that the event manager is responsible for 'researching, designing, planning, coordinating and evaluating events'. Getz (1997) indicates that academic institutions are slowly beginning to offer event specific programs. George Washington University (USA) appears to be the first institution to offer a concentration in event management for graduate program.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data for this exploratory research were collected from secondary and primary sources through structured questionnaires. A pilot test was conducted on a few tourism students from the Faculty of Tourism Management, UiTM (Shah Alam, Malacca, Sabah and Penang) and University School of Tourism Management, UUM. The pilot study was undertaken specifically to confirm the perception and awareness factors as these may cover unlimited extent. Based on the result a few amendments were later made for wording justification to avoid confusion and some questions were added to give more useful data and better result in the study. The final contributing factors obtained during the pilot study were synthesized, grouped and then used as answers in accordance to questions specified in the questionnaire set.

The collection of data was carried out through a self-administered survey in August 2004. Initially, the targeted sample was from senior tourism students of UiTM and UUM campus. The reason for choosing senior students as subjects was that these students might have more serious thoughts on their choices and therefore provided valid responses in connection with the key aspects of this research. However, due to the needs to confirm the relationship of students' enrolment and their perception on the event industry, new students or Year 1 students were also selected as part of the respondents. The questionnaires were distributed by the researcher to students before the beginning of the lecture with the class lecturer's permission who have been informed earlier through email about this survey. The students were given a time 5 – 10 minutes to feel free to answer the survey.

A total of 239 questionnaires were returned, which indicated the number of students that took part in the survey. Quantitative method is used as the analysis approach as this generally concerns with counting and measuring aspects of social life. By quantitative methods, researchers have come to mean the techniques of randomised experiments, quasi-experiments, paper and pencil objective tests, multivariate statistical analyses, sample surveys and the like (Blaikie, 2000). The commonly used quantitative data gathering methods in the social sciences are undoubtedly the self-administered questionnaire and the structured interview, both of which keep the distance from natural social processes. In this study, the researcher used self-administered questionnaire as one of the quantitative method to gather the data from the respondents.

An important feature of the use of quantitative methods is their highly structured nature. They are located within a research design that includes a set of predetermined stages, and the data gathering will be accomplished by the use of predetermined procedures and pre-tested instruments. In using such methods, the researcher is aiming to have maximum control over the data gathering and to achieve uniformity in the application of the techniques. The main justification for the uniformity, control and rigid stages is to achieve some notion of objectivity and replicability (Blaikie, 2000).

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

Reliability of the Data Collection Instrument

One of the most useful recent discussions of reliability and validity in research methodology is offered by Gilbert (1993: 26–28). It will be recalled from the earlier discussion 'From data to theory' that Gilbert views theories as comprising one or more hypotheses each of which comprises concepts linked by relationships. To test a theory, it is necessary to compare the

predictions made by the theory with measurements of those parts of the real world to which the theory appertains. In practice, this means measuring the concept or concepts that go to make up the theory. The problem is that concepts, being essentially abstract in nature, cannot be measured directly. Concepts must be operationalized, that is, for each concept there must be some indicator, normally a method of measurement, which stands for the concept and is accepted as allowing for the inference of accurate measurement of the concept. These indicators must be valid in that they accurately measure the concept, and reliable in the sense that they are consistent from one measurement to the next. Reliability test was done with the purpose to check whether the data obtained from the survey is reliable. It is an indication of stability and consistency with which the instrument measures the concept and helps to assess the “goodness of a measure”.

For this research, all questions which used the Likert scale design would be tested to confirm the reliability. The result is shown in Table 1 and Table 2. In this case The Cronbach’s Alpha is 0.892 which is considered as okay/reliable as it falls between the range 0-1. The reliability test is confined to the rule where the space saver method is used. Noted, the covariance matrix is not calculated or used in the analysis.

Table 1: Case processing summary for reliability test

	N	%
Cases Valid	192	80.3
Excluded-a	47	19.7
Total	239	100.0

- List wise deletion based on all variables in the procedure

Table 2: Reliability statistic

Cronbach’s Alpha	N of Items
0.892	30

Hypotheses Testing

There are several testable hypotheses that can be derived from the findings. The importance of the hypothesis as stated by Sekaran (1992), is to identify the important variables in a situation and established the relationship among them through logical reasoning and to test whether the relationships that have been theorized do in fact hold true.

Test of Hypothesis 1

H1: There is a relationship between the students' enrolment and the students' perceptions towards the event management course.

To test this hypothesis a cross tabulation is needed as the measuring method to get the chi-square result. The Chi-Square Test result is given in Table 3.

Table 3: Chi-square Test for Hypothesis 1

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig
Pearson Chi-Square	62.758 ^a	4	0.000

If "Asymp. Sig. (2 sided)" ≥ 0.05 it is not significant

If "Asymp. Sig. (2 sided)" < 0.05 it is significant

From the table above it shows that the value is equal to 0.000. Therefore it is significant and has an association between student enrolments of an event management course at the university with the students' perceptions towards an event management course. Thus, this Hypothesis 1 is acceptable.

Test of Hypothesis 2

H2: There is a relationship between work experiences in the event industry and the perceptions of students on event management course.

To test this hypothesis the T-test is used. Table 4 below shows the result of T-Test.

Table 4: T-Test for Hypothesis 2

	T-test For Equality of Means		
	T	Df	Sig. (2 tailed)
Perception of students on event management course	0.404	161	0.687

The table above shows that there is no significance because the number is greater than 0.05. It means that there is no relationship between work experiences in the event industry and the perceptions of students on event management courses. Therefore, the hypothesis two (2) is not acceptable.

Test of Hypothesis 3

H3: There is a relationship between the sex and also the type of event that they are most interested in.

To test this hypothesis the cross tabulation is used to get the chi-square result. Table 5 below shows the result of chi-square test.

Table 5: Chi-Square Test for Hypothesis 3

Types of event	Asymp Sig. (2 sided)
Sport Event	0.000
Cultural Event	0.767*
Business Event	0.310*
Art/Entertainment	0.552*
Recreational	0.031
Private Event	0.006
Educational	0.015
Political	0.005

If "Asymp. Sig. (2 sided)" ≥ 0.05 it is not significant

If "Asymp. Sig. (2 sided)" < 0.05 it is significant

Based on the table above, it shows that there is an association between the sex and the type of event that they are most interested in except for cultural events, business events and also art/entertainment events, which scored ≥ 0.05 . This means there is no association between the cultural events, business events and art/entertainment with the sex group because there are independent. Therefore, this hypothesis is acceptable for another five more event types.

Test of Hypothesis 4

H4: Working experience has the impact with their understanding of the required skills and attributes.

To test this hypothesis a cross tabulation is needed as measuring method to get the chi-square result. Table 6 below shows the result of chi-square test.

Table 6: Chi-Square Test for Hypothesis 4

Skills	Value	Df	Asymp.Sig (2 sided)
Organization & Planning	1.789 ^b	1	0.181*
Communication	1.474 ^a	2	0.479*
Leadership & Decision Making	2.075 ^a	3	0.354*
Budget & Financial Management	3.539 ^a	3	0.316*
Marketing	2.304 ^a	3	0.512*
Teamwork	4.592 ^a	3	0.204*
Customer Service	11.305 ^a	4	0.023
Building Relationship	2.300 ^a	4	0.681*
Problem Solving & Analytical	8.507 ^a	3	0.037
Funding & Sponsorship	2.821 ^a	3	0.420*

If "Asymp. Sig. (2 sided)" ≥ 0.05 it is not significant

If "Asymp. Sig. (2 sided)" < 0.05 it is significant

From the chi square result above, it can be concluded that most of the skills criteria such as organization & planning, communication, leadership & decision making, budget & financial management, marketing, teamwork, building relationship and funding & sponsorship the values are more than 0.05. In this case the skill with the asterisk (*) in the table above is not significant. This means that these skills do not have any relationship with the working experience. For customer service and problem solving & analytical there is a significant relationship with the working experience in the event industry. Thus, this hypothesis is only acceptable for the other two skills, namely, customer service, and problem solving and analytical.

Meanwhile, the table follow (Table 7) shows the chi square test between the attributes and the working experience in the event industry. The result shows that the attribute criteria that have a significant value are positive attitude, dynamism & energy, flexibility and friendliness. This criteria has a significant value because the asymp. Sig (2 sided) is less than 0.05. This shows that there is a relationship between the criteria that have a significant value with working experience in the event industry. While the attributes with the asterisk (*) sign is not significant because the value is more than 0.05. Thus this hypothesis is only acceptable for positive attitude, dynamism & energy, flexibility and friendliness.

Table 7: Chi-Square Test between the attributes and the working experience in the event industry

Attributes	Value	Df	Asymp.Sig (2 sided)
Motivation	0.700 ^a	2	0.705*
Positive Attitude	6.172 ^a	2	0.046
Dynamism & Energy	9.000 ^a	2	0.011
Commitment	1.568 ^a	3	0.667*
Creativity	0.109 ^a	2	0.947*
Initiative	5.951 ^a	3	0.114*
Flexibility	9.586 ^a	3	0.022
Accuracy	2.170 ^a	3	0.538*
Respect / Maturity	4.673 ^a	3	0.197*
Friendliness	10.926 ^a	3	0.012
Trustworthiness / Responsibility	1.819 ^a	2	0.403*
Sensitiveness	7.245 ^a	4	0.123*

If "Asymp. Sig. (2 sided)" \geq 0.05 it is not significant

If "Asymp. Sig. (2 sided)" $<$ 0.05 it is significant

CONCLUSION

Globally, festivals and special events are now treated as a part of tourism products. More and more events are initiated and established by countries as an added value to their tourism industry. Thus, events are now increasingly perceived as an industry of its own. Similar to other countries, Malaysia is also starting to concentrate more on producing festivals and special events in order to assist its tourism development, the government and private sectors seem to take initiatives related to events.

However, in order to achieve maximum potential of the event tourism, various aspects of the industry in Malaysia need first to be studied and understood. In this paper, a basic but essential analysis of the supply side of the Malaysia events has been produced to assist the initial study of growth and trends of event tourism in Malaysia. Basically, festivals and special events in Malaysia are going through a considerable growth in numbers, size and attendance, diversity and professionalism. It is evidence now that there is an apparent growth in the event industry in Malaysia.

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