

Mediating Effect of Visitors' Event Experiences in Relation to Event Features and Post-Consumption Behaviors

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A special event is an important experiential product that depends heavily on its ability to produce ranges of sensations, imaginative responses, emotions, and involvement within its consumers. Hence, a special event requires special consideration when conceptualizing and measuring the event outcome based on experiential perspective. The aim of this study is to examine the mediating effect of visitors' event experiences in relations to event features and post-consumption behaviors. Survey data were collected at a public community event in Malaysia. Findings revealed that visitors' event experiences fully mediate the relationship between event features and post-consumption behaviors (overall satisfaction and future intention).

KEYWORDS event experience, event features, satisfaction, intention, experience realms

INTRODUCTION

Conventionally, event producers examine the success of an event based on performance of physical aspects of event products such as programs, settings, facilities, and other relevant amenities. However, the traditional approach of staging events concentrating only on physical aspects of products

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and services is no longer of adequate or even arguably realistic these days due to intense business rivalry and increased consumer demands (Mascarenhas, Kesavan, & Bernacchi, 2006). Event producers need to realize other important elements, such as emotional and value aspects, play a significant role in determining the success of a special event. According to Mascarenhas et al. (2006) and Nunes and Cespedes (2003), many service providers tend to overlook the importance of emotional and value aspects of their customers as they are intensely focused on physical aspects of the products. Hence, special events that fail to create engaging and memorable experiences for their visitors might be inadequate in creating significant differentiation and sustainable customer loyalty in today's ever more challenging business arena.

Moreover, Carbone (1998) raised concerns about the issue of *management myopia*, where businesses tend to view themselves exclusively as product and service businesses. Consequently, these businesses fail to take account of a broader aspect created by their products and services, which is a total customer experience (Carbone, 1998). Therefore, event producers need to acknowledge that the conventional tangible attributes of products and services can no longer address the needs of events or services (Berridge, 2007). Instead, modern day event producers need to view production in a holistic manner that covers creation of visitors' event experiences. Carbone (1998) suggested that effective tools or assessment mechanisms are required to measure events performance through the visitors' total event experience. Seventy-nine percent of event marketing agencies do not have any specific tracking or measurement systems for evaluating their event performances (Wood & Masterman, 2008). Attendance of visitors and achieved sales are the common methods or evidences used by event organizations. These conventional methods may lead to an overstatement of the number of attendees at their events (Ayob, 2003).

It is believed that an experiential approach would be a relevant and constructive measurement for event researchers and producers to use in measuring and examining a broader outcome of event performances. However, application of the experiential approach appears deficient within the study of special events. According to Berridge (2007), use of the experiential paradigm in event-based publications is still somewhat limited and underdeveloped.

This study proposes that event features have direct effect on visitors' event experiences that sets forth post-consumption behaviors (overall satisfaction and future intention). Event experience outcome for visitors should be viewed as "the total immersive outcome that combines all the various elements that are experienced, as individuals and as a collective" (Berridge, 2007, p. 169) or as "enjoyable, engaging, memorable encounters for those consuming these events" (Oh, Fiore, & Jeoung, 2007, p. 120). Hence, the aim of this study is to examine the mediating effect of visitors' event experiences