



# BIMP-EAGA

## JOURNAL FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

## Sports Tourism Driven from Cycling Event: Building Towards Positive Socio Economic Impacts

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### Abstract

Sports tourism is a dynamic and evolving sector within the broader travel and leisure industry, characterized by the intersection of sports and recreation with travel experiences. In recent years, the global landscape of tourism has witnessed a significant shift, as more and more travelers seek immersive and active engagements during their holidays. Sports enthusiasts are increasingly becoming active participants, traveling across borders to participate in or witness their favourite sports events. This surge in interest has given rise to a multifaceted phenomenon known as sports tourism, which encompasses a wide array of activities, events, and destinations tailored to cater to the diverse interests of sports enthusiasts. From marquee international sporting events such as the Olympics and World Cup to niche experiences like cycling, adventure sports destinations, sports tourism has carved out a niche that transcends traditional boundaries. The appeal lies not only in the thrill of competition but also in the cultural, social, and recreational aspects associated with these events. As a result, sports tourism has emerged as a powerful economic force, driving tourism revenues, promoting local development, fostering cross-cultural exchanges and enhancing health and wellbeing. This study aims to delve into the various dimensions of sports tourism, exploring its impact on local economies, its role in promoting cultural exchange, and the challenges and opportunities it presents for both destination hosts and sports enthusiasts. The focus of the study is in the context of cycling event that was organized in Miri, Sarawak as a case study by adopting quantitative survey research mixed with open ended questions to capture qualitative data. By examining the symbiotic relationship between sports and tourism of the case study, we can gain insights into the evolving dynamics of this vibrant industry and its potential to shape the future of this region travel experiences.

*Keywords:* sports tourism; cycling tourism; socio economic; Sarawak

### 1. Introduction

Sports tourism has emerged as a significant driver of economic growth and social development, particularly in regions hosting high-profile sports events (Kamenecka-Usova et al., 2024). This research explores the diverse impacts of sports tourism on Miri, with a focus on its economic contributions, the role of event organisation in driving repeat participation, and the promotion of health and well-being through active engagement in sports. The study specifically addresses three key hypotheses: (1) sports tourism positively influences regional economic growth through participant expenditure; (2) well-organised events increase the likelihood of participants returning for future events; and (3) the promotion of health and well-being through sports tourism encourages participants to adopt healthier lifestyles.

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Received: 02.12.2025

Accepted: 29.12.2025

Revised: 15.01.2026

Published: 18.01.2026

DOI: 10.51200/bejstd.v14i1.7292

As sports tourism continues to grow in significance, understanding its broader impacts is essential for optimising the benefits it offers to both the local economy and public health. By examining the relationship between participants' expenditure patterns and the economic impact of sports events in Miri, this paper highlights how spending behaviors contribute to the economic strength of the region. Furthermore, the research investigates how the organisation of events influences participants' satisfaction and their intention to return for future events, thus ensuring long-term economic sustainability. Lastly, it explores how sports tourism initiatives promote physical health, mental well-being, and healthier lifestyle choices, making a case for sports tourism not only as an economic driver but also as a public health initiative.

Drawing on theories such as the Push-Pull Theory, Economic Impact Theory, and Social Exchange Theory, this study aims to offer comprehensive insights into how sports tourism events can maximise their positive effects on both the economy and participants' health. The findings will contribute to the broader discourse on sports tourism and provide valuable recommendations for event organisers, policymakers, and stakeholders in the tourism and health sectors. Ultimately, this research emphasizes the important role of sports tourism in fostering sustainable economic growth, enhancing community well-being, and encouraging healthier lifestyles in Miri and beyond.

## 2. Literature Review

Sports tourism encompasses a broad spectrum of benefits, including the promotion of physical activity (Ito & Hingam, 2020), the enhancement of social well-being (Houge Mackenzie et al., 2023), and the stimulation of economic development in host regions (Herbold et al., 2020). While the various advantages of sports tourism have been widely acknowledged in the literature, this study narrows its focus to two critical dimensions: the promotion of physical activity among participants and the economic impact on host destinations. Through this literature review, this study aims to critically examine the theoretical basis and the development of hypotheses that explore the intersection of these two dimensions. Specifically, we explore how sports tourism influences individual health outcomes, contributes to the economic growth of regions hosting such events, and fosters economic sustainability in these regions. In doing so, this study advances our understanding of the dual role of sports tourism in fostering both personal well-being and regional economic sustainability.

The concept of sports tourism has evolved over time, with numerous definitions emerging in the literature. As mentioned by Ugi Nugraha et al. (2020), according to Gibson (1998), sports tourism refers to travel undertaken for the purpose of participating in or observing a sporting event. This definition highlights the role of sports as both a motivator and a medium for tourism. On the other hand, Weed and Bull (2004) define sports tourism more broadly as the movement of people for the purpose of engaging in or observing sports-related activities, which may include both recreational and competitive events. This more inclusive perspective emphasizes the variety of activities that constitute sports tourism, ranging from spectator-based tourism to participant-focused tourism.

Other scholars, such as Preuss (2007), further expand on this definition by identifying sports tourism as an integral part of the global tourism industry, offering economic, social, and cultural benefits to host destinations. Preuss (2007) also highlights the importance of understanding sports tourism as a complex phenomenon that influences various aspects of local economies, including hospitality, retail, and transportation.

Several theoretical frameworks have been used to explore the relationship between sports tourism and its broader impacts. Three prominent frameworks commonly discussed in the literature are the Push-Pull Theory, Economic Impact Theory, and Social Exchange Theory. These frameworks help explain the motivations for participation in sports tourism and the resulting impacts on both individuals and regions. The Push-Pull Theory is a key framework used to understand tourist behavior in the context of sports tourism. Push factors are internal motivations, such as the desire for adventure, physical activity, and personal challenge, while pull factors are external elements like the quality of the event, its location, and its organisational features (Dann, 1977). This theory is particularly relevant to sports tourism, as it captures both the intrinsic motivations (e.g., health benefits, social interaction) and extrinsic

attractions (e.g., well-organized events, desirable destinations) that influence participants' decisions to travel for sports.

Economic Impact Theory suggests that sports tourism can generate significant economic benefits for host destinations through direct expenditures made by participants and spectators (Chalip & McGuirty, 2004). This theory focuses on the financial aspects of sports tourism, emphasizing how participant spending on accommodations, food, transportation, and entertainment can stimulate the local economy. Moreover, it emphasizes the importance of well-organized events in maximizing these economic benefits. As sports tourism continues to grow globally, the economic impact of such events on local businesses and infrastructure has become an essential area of research.

Social Exchange Theory offers a lens through which to examine the long-term relationship between sports tourists and host destinations. According to Ap and Crompton (1993), participants in sports tourism evaluate the costs and benefits of their experiences, and their satisfaction with the event influences their likelihood of returning for future events. If the perceived benefits (e.g., social interaction, physical activity, mental well-being) outweigh the costs (e.g., travel expenses, time investment), participants are more likely to engage in repeat participation. This theory emphasizes the importance of event quality in ensuring continued engagement and loyalty among participants, thus contributing to sustainable tourism and economic growth.

Based on the aforementioned definitions and theoretical frameworks several hypotheses can be proposed to explore the diverse impacts of sports tourism on both participants and the host region. These hypotheses are systematically organized and visually represented in the hypothesis framework (Figure 1), which demonstrates the expected relationships between the key variables identified in the theoretical framework.

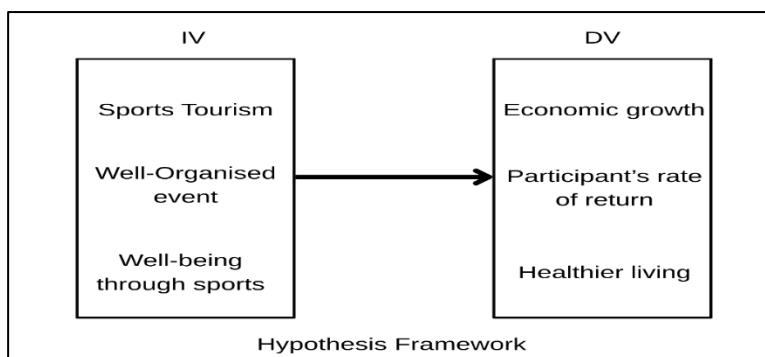


Figure 1: Hypothesis framework

H1: Sports tourism will positively influence the economic growth of the host region.

This hypothesis is grounded in the Economic Impact Theory (Chalip, 2004), which argues that sports tourism contributes to the economic development of the host region by generating direct expenditures through participant spending. Previous studies (e.g., Raso & Cherubini, 2024) have found that sports tourists spend significant amounts on accommodation, food, and other services, which stimulates local businesses and infrastructure development. Therefore, this hypothesis posits that increased participation in sports tourism events will lead to higher levels of expenditure, thereby positively influencing the local economy.

H2: Well-organized sports events will positively influence participants' likelihood of returning for future events.

According to Social Exchange Theory (Ap & Crompton, 1993), the quality of the event experience plays a crucial role in shaping participants' attitudes toward future participation. Well-organized events that provide smooth logistical arrangements, clear communication, and quality facilities are more likely to result in high satisfaction

and repeat participation. This hypothesis, therefore, suggests that improvements in event organisation will lead to increased participant retention, further contributing to the sustainability and growth of sports tourism.

H3: The promotion of health and well-being through sports tourism will contribute to participants adopting a healthier lifestyle.

The relationship between sports tourism and health promotion is grounded in the Push-Pull Theory (Dann, 1977) and Social Exchange Theory (Ap & Crompton, 1993). Participation in sports tourism events can serve as a "pull" factor, attracting individuals motivated by internal desires to improve their health. By emphasizing health-related activities such as physical exercise, fitness programs, and wellness initiatives, sports tourism events encourage participants to adopt healthier behaviors. This hypothesis proposes that involvement in sports tourism will result in long-term health benefits, including increased physical activity and improved mental well-being.

Numerous studies have demonstrated the positive relationship between sports tourism and economic growth. According to Gibson (1998), sports tourism is an important economic driver, as it stimulates demand for various services, including accommodations, transportation, food, and entertainment. Similarly, Raso and Cherubini (2024) argue that the direct spending of participants in sports events has a significant multiplier effect on the local economy, generating additional income and employment opportunities in the tourism, hospitality, and retail sectors. Furthermore, research has shown that sports tourism events not only attract participants but also create long-term benefits for the region, such as improved infrastructure and international recognition as a tourism destination (Preuss, 2007). This aligns with the findings from the Miri case study, where increased participant expenditure and event popularity contributed to regional economic development.

Event organisation is a critical factor influencing participant satisfaction and retention. Well-organised events that prioritise smooth registration, efficient communication, and convenient facilities are more likely to result in positive participant experiences and repeat visits. Studies by Greenwell et al. (2024) emphasise that the logistics of an event, such as race-day support services and venue accessibility, are key determinants of participant satisfaction and their likelihood to return. In the context of Miri, improvements in race organization and logistical arrangements have been shown to enhance participant feedback, reinforcing the importance of event quality in sustaining tourism growth.

Sports tourism has a significant role in promoting public health and well-being. As noted by Fromel et al. (2020), participation in sports tourism events often leads to increased physical activity and improved mental health. By emphasizing health and wellness, sports tourism not only benefits individuals but also contributes to public health outcomes, which can have long-term societal benefits. Participants in events like the Kuala Baram Race have reported improvements in their physical fitness, mental well-being, and overall lifestyle, supporting the idea that sports tourism can serve as a catalyst for healthier living.

In conclusion, the literature suggests that sports tourism is a diverse phenomenon that positively impacts local economies, participant satisfaction, and health outcomes. The frameworks of Pursh-pull Theory, Economic Impact Theory, and Social Exchange provide valuable insights into the motivations behind sports tourism participation and the resulting effects on individuals and regions. The hypotheses developed in this study, which suggest that sports tourism positively influences economic growth, participant retention, and the adoption of healthier lifestyles, align with existing literature and provide a foundation for further exploration in this field. By understanding the complex relationship between sports tourism and these various outcomes, event organisers and policymakers can better leverage sports tourism to promote sustainable economic growth and improved public health.

### 3. Methodology

Quantitative research is particularly appropriate for sports tourism surveys (Mollah et al., 2021) for several reasons. This approach ensures that data collection aligns with specific research objectives, making it suitable for

studying trends, behaviors, and relationships in sports tourism. For example, surveys with closed-ended questions can efficiently capture the preferences and satisfaction levels of sports tourists.

The survey was conducted over a period of almost six weeks in October-November 2024, following the event. A convenience sampling strategy was adopted with the aim of reaching a large sample of the population where each of registered participants was contacted via email with the consent of organiser. To increase response rates, extensive awareness promotions through electronic and social media were utilized to encourage participants to take part in the survey during this period. The survey questionnaire was circulated via Google Forms due to its ease of use and accessibility across device i.e smart phone, tablets and further its cost effective (Mondal et al. 2018). It is noteworthy to mention that participations were voluntary. A reasonable and acceptable response rate of 31% was achieved, with the complete returned questionnaires used for analysis. As a result, variations in responses to individual questions are expected.

It is important to note that the survey questionnaire underwent a rigorous process, including a pilot study followed by necessary refinements, to ensure a high degree of validity and reliability of the data collection, in line with quality assurance compliance. While the questionnaire was designed primarily to collect quantitative data, a number of open-ended questions were included to capture the qualitative data.

To strengthen the data analysis and discussion, SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) was employed to conduct more detailed statistical analysis. This approach helped in providing deeper insights into the data and validating the findings. Results and findings are presented in the following sections, with explanations and insights drawn from both descriptive statistical methods and thematic analysis of qualitative responses from open-ended questions.

## 4. Findings

This section presents the analysis of the data collected from the survey conducted following the 2024 Kuala Baram Cycling Race 3.0. The results are presented in the following sections, offering a comprehensive overview of the survey outcomes.

### 4.1. Demographic information of Participants

The 2024 Kuala Baram Cycling Race 3.0 attracted a total of 322 participants, with a significant gender disparity. Of the participants, 308 (95.7%) were male, and 14 (4.3%) were female. This shows a predominantly male participation in the event.

In terms of age distribution, the largest group of participants was in the Men Master A category (ages 30-39), which accounted for 101 participants (31.4%). Following closely was the Men Master B category (ages 40-49) with 91 participants (28.3%). The Men Open category (ages 18-29) had 45 participants (14.0%), and the Men Veteran category (ages 50 and above) included 36 participants (11.2%). The Men Junior category (ages 14-17) had the smallest representation with 20 participants (6.2%). All in all, 14 (4.3%) were in the Women Open category. Additionally, encouraging participation 15 participants (4.7%) were categorized under the Super XL BMI 33 category. It can be claimed that both Women and Super XL category promotes equality and diversity in sports tourism industry.

Geographically, the event attracted participants from diverse regions. The largest group of participants hailed from Kuching and Miri, both contributing 63 participants (19.6% each) to the event. Other notable contributions came from Bintulu with 34 participants (10.6%) and Brunei with 42 participants (13.0%) contributes highest international participations. Smaller groups of participants came from various states within Malaysia, including Betong (7 participants, 2.2%), Kedah (3 participants, 0.9%), Johor (2 participants, 0.6%), and others. Additionally, the event gained international participation from countries such as Indonesia, New Zealand, the Philippines, South

Africa, and the United Kingdom, each contributing 1 participant (0.3%). International participants, in total 47 individuals, represented 14.6% of the overall event participation.

In terms of the type of events, participants were allowed to compete in more than one event. A total of 442 event entries were recorded, with 120 (27.15%) participants opting for the Team Time Trial and 322 (72.85%) participants competing in the Road Race event. These statistics suggest a higher preference for the individual Road Race over the Team Time Trial. A summary of the sample profile is given in Table 1.1 below: Graphics and tables may be pasted directly into the template and positioned as they should appear in the final manuscript. Figures, Schemes, and Tables should be numbered.

Table 1.1 Demographics of Participants

<b>Gender</b>		<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Male		308	95.7
Female		14	4.3
<b>Total</b>		<b>322</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Age/Category</b>		<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Men Junior	14-17	20	6.2
Men Open	18-29	45	14.0
Men Master A	30-39	101	31.4
Men Master B	40-49	91	28.3
Men Veteran	50 and above	36	11.2
Women Open		14	4.3
Super XL BMI			
33		15	4.7
<b>Total</b>		<b>322</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>State/Country</b>		<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Malaysia</b>			
Betong		7	2.2
Bintulu		34	10.6
Johor		2	0.6
Kedah		3	0.9
Kuala Lumpur		1	0.3
Kuching		63	19.6
Labuan		11	3.4
Lawas		11	3.4
Limbang		5	1.6
Lundu		1	0.3
Melaka		2	0.6
Miri		63	19.6

Negeri Sembilan	1	0.3
Perak	1	0.3
Perlis	1	0.3
Sabah	30	9.3
Samarahan	4	1.2
Sarikei	4	1.2
Selangor	2	0.6
Sibu	19	5.9
Trengganu	8	2.5
<b><u>International</u></b>		
Indonesia	1	0.3
New Zealand	1	0.3
Philippines	1	0.3
South Africa	1	0.3
United Kingdom	3	0.9
Brunei	42	13.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>100</b>
<hr/>		
<b>Type of event</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Team Time Trial	120	27.15
Road Race	322	72.85
<b>Total</b>	<b>442</b>	<b>100.0</b>

#### *4.2. Overall Rating of Participant's Experience*

The overall experience of participants in the 2024 Kuala Baram Cycling Race was predominantly positive. A small percentage, 3.2% (2 participants), reported a poor or very poor experience. The fair experience category accounted for 14.1% (9 participants), indicating moderate satisfaction with room for improvement. A total of 28.1% (18 participants) rated their experience as good, while the majority, 54.7% (35 participants), described their experience as very good, reflecting strong overall satisfaction with the event. This is represented in Figure 1.1 below:



Figure 4.1 Rating of Participants' Experience

#### 4.3. Overall Rating of the Event Organization

The majority of participants in the 2024 Kuala Baram Cycling Race were satisfied with the event's organization. A significant 48.4% rated it as "very well organised," and 35.9% rated it as "well organised," reflecting strong approval of the race's management. However, a smaller portion of participants provided lower ratings: 7.8% rated it as "fairly well organised," 6.3% as "poorly organised," and 1.6% as "very poorly organised." While these lower ratings were from a minority, they suggest areas for improvement in the event's organization. Overall, the event was well-received, with most participants expressing positive feedback. This is represented in Figure 4.2 below:

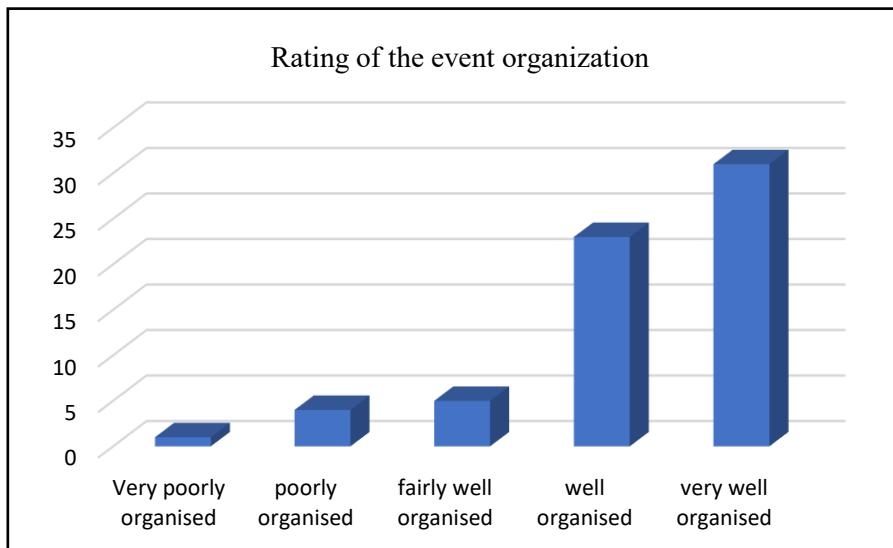


Figure 4.2 Rating of event organization

#### 4.4. Overall Rating on On-course Support-Event Organisation

The feedback on the quality of on-course support for the 2024 Kuala Baram Cycling Race was largely positive. A significant 42.2% of participants rated the support as "good quality," while 31.3% considered it "very good quality." Another 21.9% felt it was "fairly good quality," indicating some room for improvement. A smaller group, 4.7%, rated it as "poor quality," but no respondents rated it as "very poor quality." Overall, the feedback suggests that the on-course support was well-received, with most participants expressing satisfaction, though there were some areas identified for enhancement. This is represented in Figure 4.3 below:

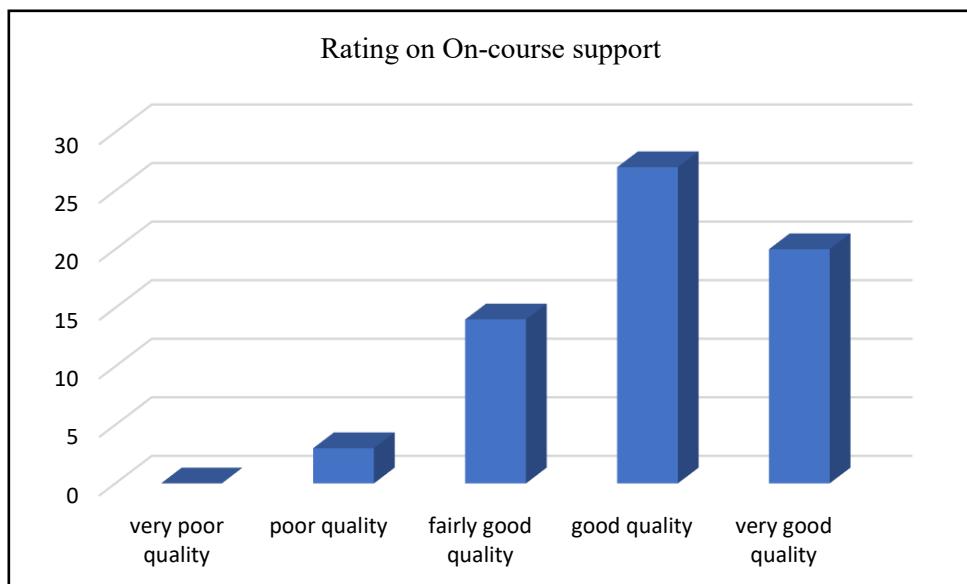


Figure 4.3 Rating on on-course support

#### 4.5. Overall Rating On-course Marking-Even Organisation

The quality of course marking in the 2024 Kuala Baram Cycling Race was largely positive, with 80% of participants rating it as "very good" or "good quality." However, 14% rated it as "fairly good," indicating some room for improvement. A smaller portion, 7%, felt the course marking was "poor" or "very poor," suggesting issues with clarity or visibility in certain sections. While most participants were satisfied, the feedback highlights areas for enhancement, which could help improve the marking system for future events. This is represented in Figure 4.4 below:

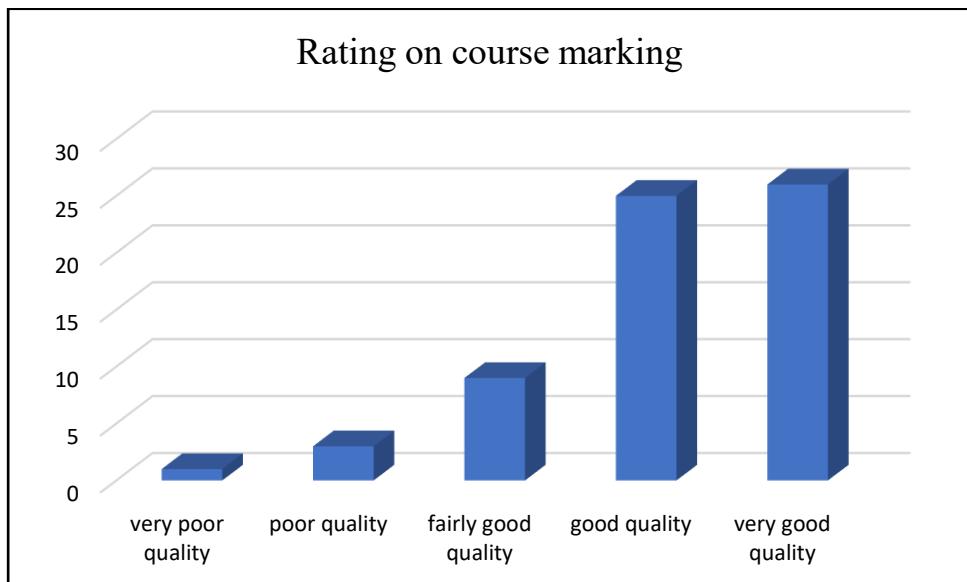


Figure 4.4 Rating on course marking

#### *4.6. Overall Rating of the Scenic Experience*

The 2024 Kuala Baram Cycling Race route received overwhelmingly positive feedback for its scenic beauty. A majority of participants, 56.3%, rated the route as "very scenically beautiful," while 39.1% considered it "scenically beautiful," reflecting widespread appreciation of the landscape. Only 4.7% described it as "fair scenically beautiful," with no participants indicating that the route was visually unappealing. Overall, the route was highly regarded for its scenic qualities, providing a visually enjoyable experience for the cyclists. This is represented in Figure 4.5 below:

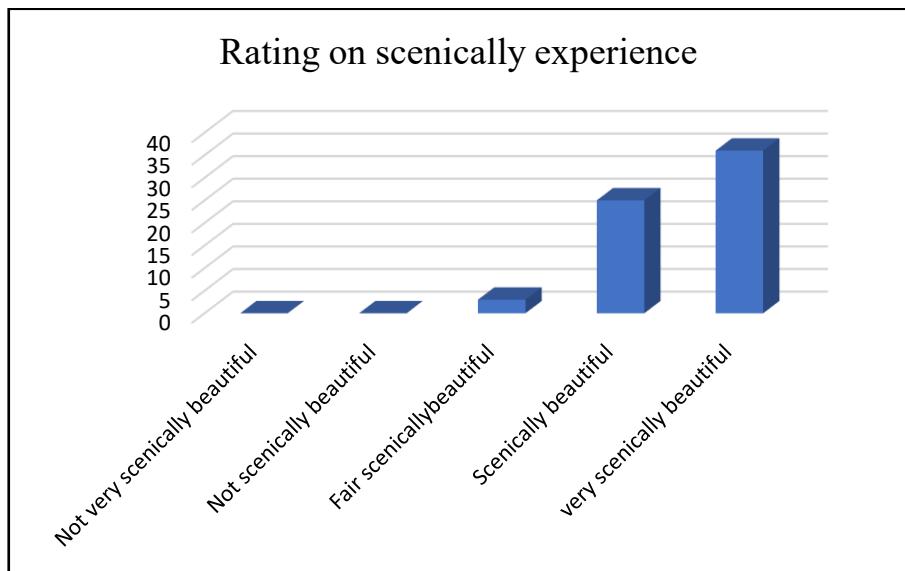
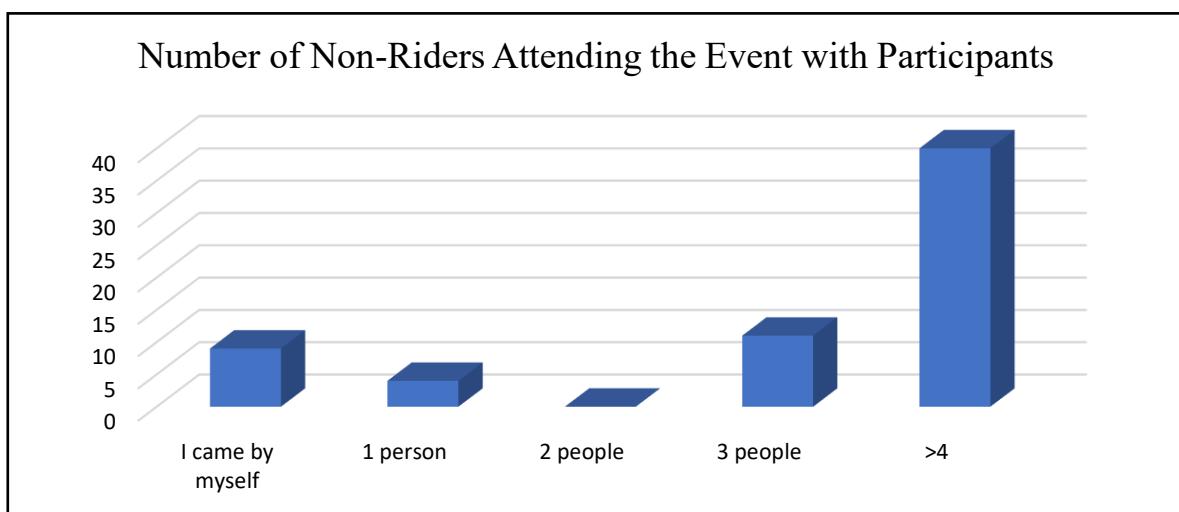


Figure 4.5 Rating on scenically experience

#### 4.7. Rating of Non-Riders Attending the Event with Participants

The data shows that a significant number of participants were accompanied by non-riders, with 62.5% bringing more than four companions. Additionally, 17.2% had three non-riders, 6.3% brought one person, and 14.1% attended alone. Overall, the event is strongly supported by participants' families, friends, and other supporters, with most bringing multiple companions. This represents in Figure 4.6 below :



4.6 Rating of non-riders attending the event with participants

#### *4.8. Rating on Plans to Extend Stay Before or After the Event*

The data reveals that 75% of participants planned to extend their stay before or after the Kuala Baram Race, indicating an interest in exploring Miri and its surroundings. In contrast, 25% of participants did not plan to extend their stay and chose to travel back after the event. This suggests that the race contributes to local tourism, with many participants viewing it as an opportunity for both competition and leisure. This represents in Figure 4.7 below:

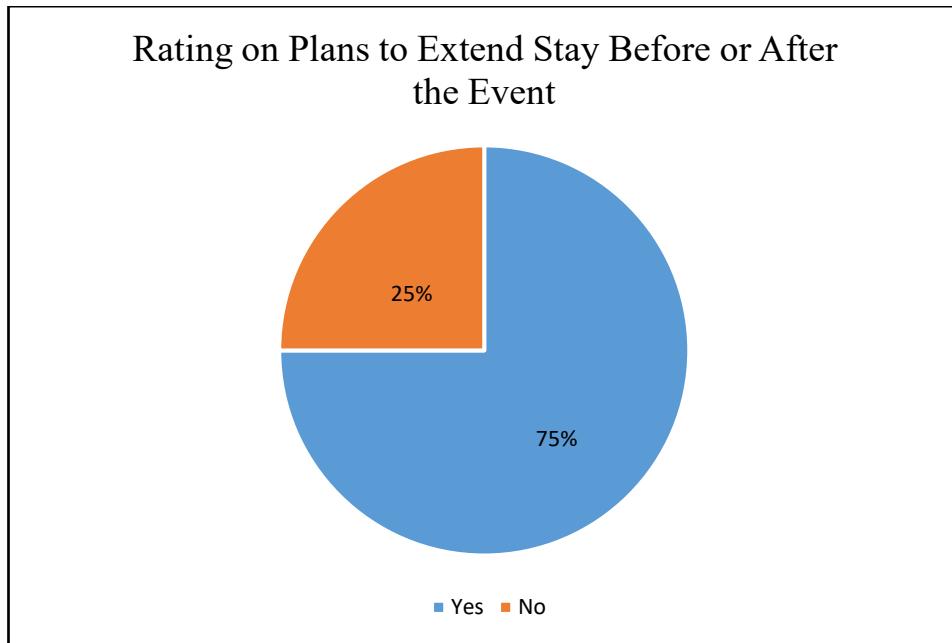


Figure 4.7 Rating on plans to extend stay before or after the event

#### *4.9. Rating on Duration of Stay in Paid Accommodation for the Event*

The data shows that most participants in the Kuala Baram Cycling Race stayed for two to three nights, with 39.1% staying for two nights and 34.4% staying for three nights. A smaller portion, 14.1%, stayed for just one night, while 12.5% stayed for more than four nights. This suggests that the majority of participants stayed between one and three nights, contributing to local tourism – hotel occupancy during the event. This represents in Figure 4.8 below:

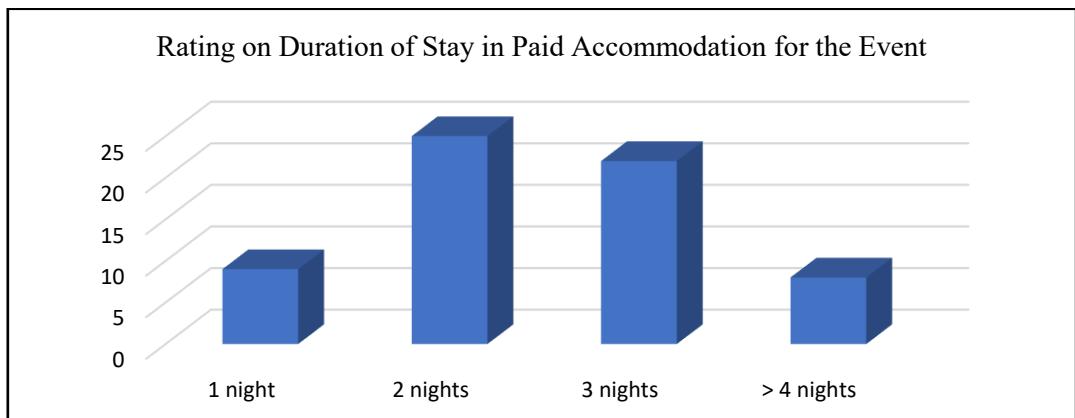


Figure 4.9 Rating on duration of stay in paid accommodation for the event

#### 4.10. Rating on Estimated Total Expenditure on Event Campaign

The estimated overall expenditure for the Kuala Baram Cycling Race showed a wide range of spending patterns. The largest group, 31.3%, spent between RM501 and RM1000, followed by 21.9% who spent between RM0 to RM500. A smaller portion, 14.1%, spent between RM1001 and RM2000, and 9.4% spent between RM2001 and RM3000. Higher expenditures of RM3001 to RM4000 and over RM4001 were reported by 4.7% each. Additionally, 14.1% of participants did not disclose their spending. Overall, most participants spent between RM500 and RM2000, with fewer individuals reporting higher or lower amounts. This represents in Figure 4.10 below:

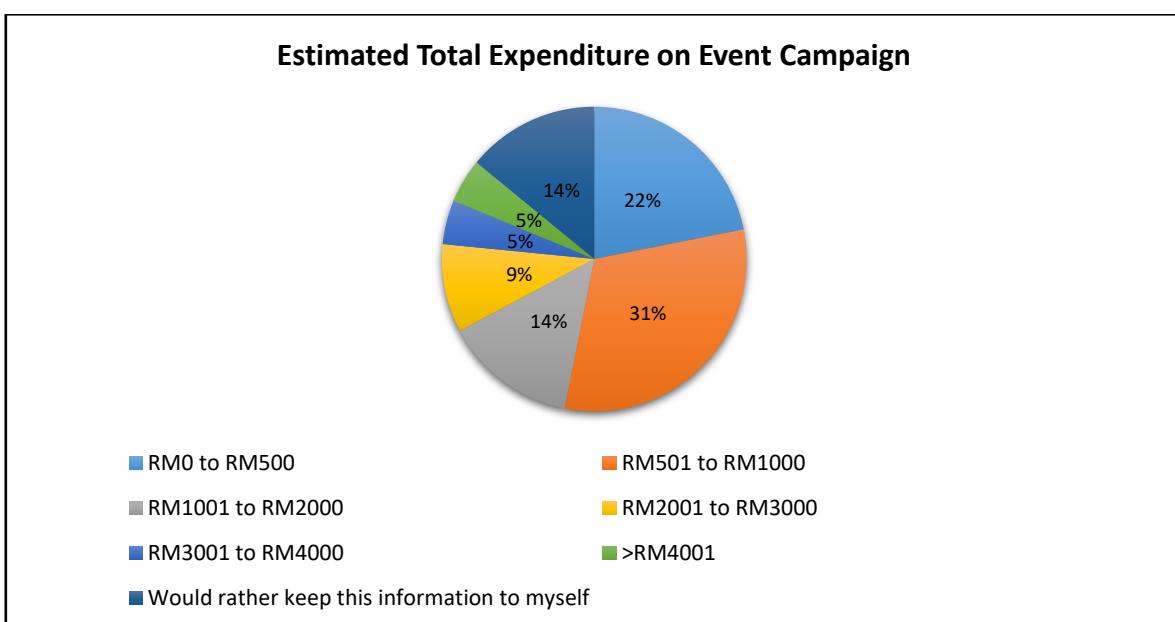


Figure 4.10 Rating on estimated total expenditure on event camping

#### 4.11. Overall rating on Likelihood of Returning to Kuala Baram Cycling Race Next Year

The survey results show a strong desire among participants to return to the Kuala Baram Cycling Race in the future, with 76.56% indicating they are "very likely" to return. An additional 9.38% stated they are "likely" to return, bringing the total of those inclined to return to 85.94%. Only 9.38% were neutral, and 4.69% expressed reluctance to attend next year. Overall, the majority of participants expressed a high likelihood of returning, reflecting a positive sentiment toward the event. This represented in Figure 4.11 below:

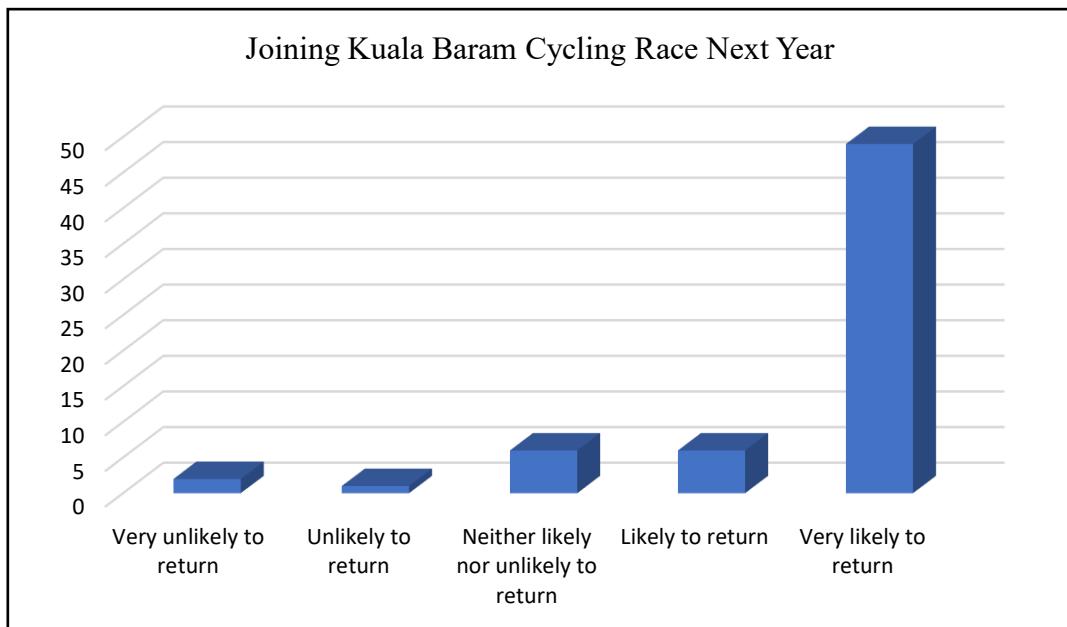


Figure 4.11 Rating on Likelihood of Returning to Kuala Baram Cycling Race Next Year

#### 4.12. Rating on Participant Agreement with Health and Fitness Statements Regarding the Event

The data on participant responses to statements about fitness, diet, and lifestyle changes reveals strong support for the positive impact of the event. For the statement "*The event set a purpose of fitness target,*" 45 respondents (70.3%) strongly agreed, and 15 (23.4%) agreed, showing that most participants felt the event provided a clear fitness goal. Only 2 respondents (3.1%) disagreed, and 2 (3.1%) were neutral, indicating that the event's fitness focus was generally well-received.

Regarding the statement "*I lose weight for this event,*" 29 participants (45.3%) strongly agreed, and 19 (29.7%) agreed, reflecting that a significant number of participants experienced weight loss as part of their preparation. Smaller numbers, 8 (12.5%) were neutral, while 5 (7.8%) strongly disagreed and 3 (4.7%) disagreed, suggesting that weight loss was not universal for all attendees.

When asked about having a "*healthy diet towards this event,*" 30 participants (46.9%) strongly agreed, and 27 (42.2%) agreed, indicating that most participants maintained a healthy diet as part of their training or event

preparation. Only 4 respondents (6.3%) were neutral, and 3 (4.7%) disagreed, showing that the majority of individuals adhered to a healthy diet.

For the statement "*My cycling activities have changed my life towards a healthy lifestyle,*" 45 participants (70.3%) strongly agreed, and 14 (21.9%) agreed, highlighting that cycling had a significant positive effect on participants' lifestyles. Only 3 (4.7%) were neutral, and 2 (3.1%) strongly disagreed, reflecting that cycling had a transformative impact on most respondents' health and lifestyle choices. This represents in Figure 4.12 below:

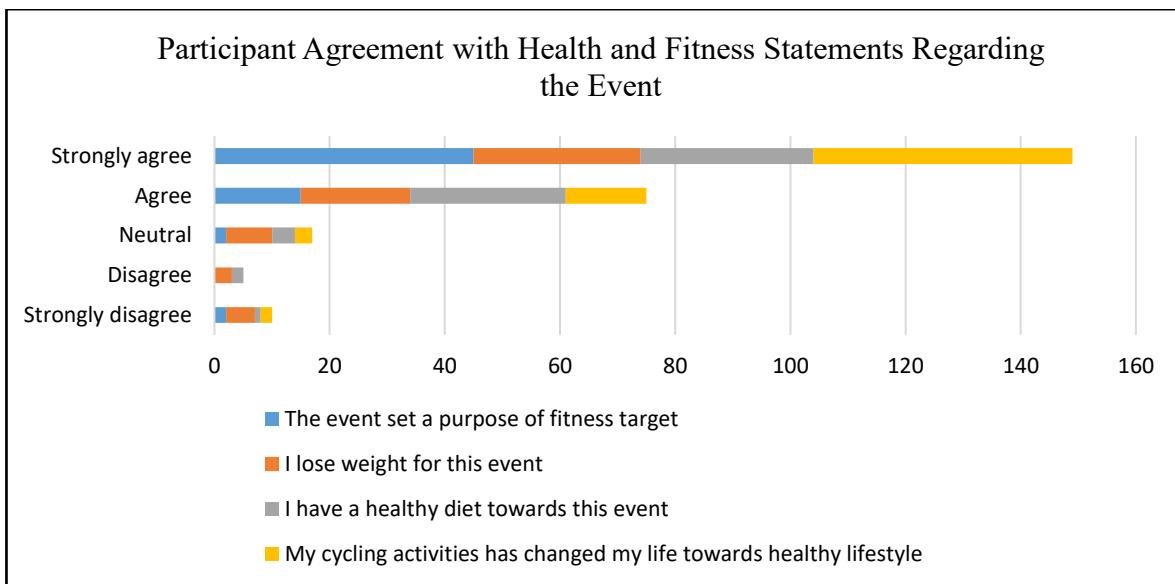


Figure 4.12 Rating on agreement with health and fitness statements regarding the event

#### 4.13. Rating on Participant Well-being and Emotional Impact of Cycling in Relation to the Event

The data on the emotional and psychological impact of cycling reveals strong positive responses from participants. For the statement "*Cycling provides me stress-free and avoids anxiety,*" 44 participants (68.8%) strongly agreed, and 15 (23.4%) agreed. Only 5 participants (7.8%) were neutral, and none disagreed.

Regarding the statement "*I feel happy when I am riding my bike,*" 45 respondents (70.3%) strongly agreed, and 15 (23.4%) agreed. Only 3 respondents (4.7%) were neutral, and 1 (1.6%) disagreed.

When asked whether "*Cycling boosts my mood and eases my mild/moderate depression (if any),*" 50 participants (78.1%) strongly agreed, and 10 (15.6%) agreed. Only 3 participants (4.7%) were neutral, and 1 (1.6%) strongly disagreed.

For the statement "*I feel I have good quality of life to be able to do cycling and also balanced work/study commitment,*" 47 respondents (73.4%) strongly agreed, and 13 (20.3%) agreed, suggesting that most participants felt they had a well-balanced lifestyle that allowed for both cycling and other commitments. Only 3 (4.7%) were neutral, and 1 (1.6%) strongly disagreed.

Finally, the statement "*My personal achievement in the event boosts my self-esteem*" saw 43 participants (67.2%) strongly agree, and 15 (23.4%) agree, indicating that the event had a positive effect on participants' self-esteem. Only 5 (7.8%) were neutral, and 1 (1.6%) disagreed. This represents in Figure 4.13 below:

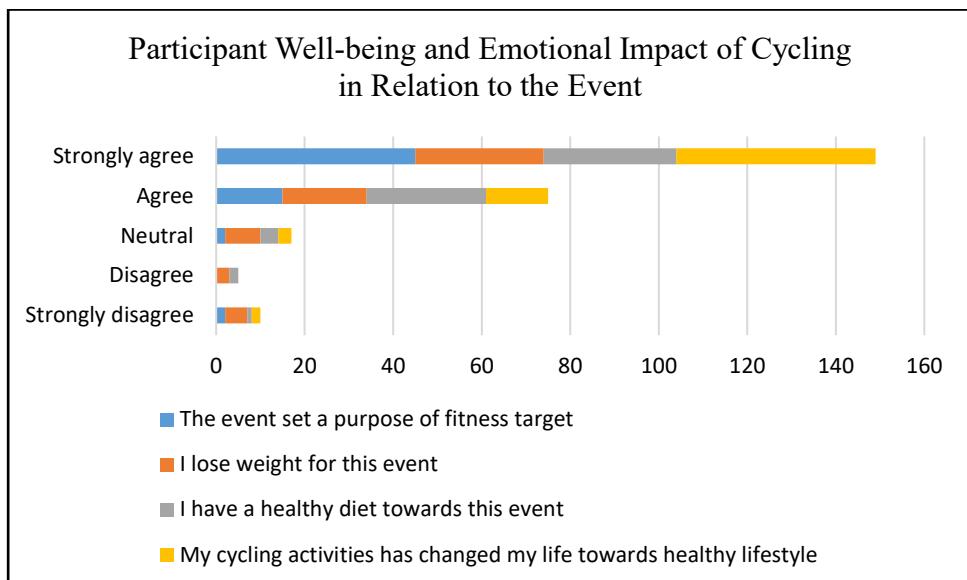


Figure 4.13 Rating on participant well-being and emotional impact of cycling in relation to the event

## 5. Discussion

The discussion revolves around the summary of analysis of the relationships as below.

Table. 5.1 Analysis of the relationships

	Beta	R	R(Square)	T-Value	P-Value
EX14->EX13	0.561	0.561	0.315	6.776	0.00
EX2->EX8	0.414	0.414	0.171	4.5.42	0.00
EX17->EX20	0.691	0.691	0.477	9.498	0.00

The regression analysis conducted in this study aimed to test the proposed hypotheses regarding the impacts of sports tourism on economic growth, participants' likelihood to return for future events, and the promotion of health and well-being through sports tourism. The results from the regression analyses are summarized below.

**H1: Sports tourism in Miri positively influences the economic growth of the country**

The first hypothesis suggested that sports tourism would positively influence economic growth, specifically focusing on participants' overall expenditure as the outcome variable. In this analysis, participants' daily expenditure was used as the predictor. The results revealed a moderate positive relationship between participants'

daily expenditure (EX14) and their overall expenditure (EX13). The Beta coefficient was 0.561, indicating that for each unit increase in participants' daily expenditure, their overall expenditure increased by approximately 0.561 units.

The t-value for this relationship was 6.776, which is statistically significant, showing that the relationship between daily expenditure and overall expenditure is robust. Additionally, the p-value of 0.000 confirms that the relationship is highly significant, as it is well below the commonly used threshold of 0.05. The R value was 0.561, reflecting a moderate positive correlation between the two variables, and the R<sup>2</sup> value was 0.315, which means that 31.5% of the variance in participants' overall expenditure can be explained by their daily expenditure.

The data from the 2024 event supports the hypothesis that sports tourism contributes to the economic growth of the area, as reflected in participants' spending behaviors. A significant portion of participants—29.69%—reported spending more than RM251 per day, indicating a strong willingness to invest in their overall experience. This trend toward higher daily expenditure highlights the positive relationship between sports tourism and increased economic activity in Miri, reinforcing the role such events play in stimulating local economic development.

An analysis of total spending on event participation in 2024 reveals a significant concentration in the higher spending brackets. Specifically, 31.3% of participants reported spending between RM501 and RM1000, highlighting a strong mid-range expenditure trend. The overall pattern reflects a positive trend in participant spending, highlighting the growing economic contribution of sports tourism events in the region.

The combination of these quantitative data and participants' reported spending habits illustrates a positive impact of sports tourism on the local economy. The increase in daily and total expenditures, particularly in the higher spending categories, provides strong support for Hypothesis 1, confirming that sports tourism in Miri contributes to the economic growth of the area. The greater willingness of participants to spend in 2024 serves as a promising indicator of the growing economic impact of such events, reflecting a positive trend in sports tourism-driven economic growth. This suggests that sports tourism has a meaningful impact on economic growth, as reflected in the participants' expenditure patterns. These results support Hypothesis 1, demonstrating that sports tourism in Miri contributes to the economic growth of the area through the spending habits of the participants.

## *H2: A well-organised event will positively influence participants' rate of return for future events*

The second hypothesis investigated whether the organisation of the event would have a positive influence on participants' likelihood to return for future events. The analysis focused on event organisation (EX2) as the independent variable and participants' rate of return for future events (EX8) as the dependent variable.

The results showed a moderate positive effect, with a Beta coefficient of 0.414, indicating that as the quality of event organisation increases, the likelihood of participants returning for future events also increases. The t-value for this relationship was 4.542, which suggests that the relationship is statistically significant. Similarly, the p-value of 0.000 confirms the statistical significance of this relationship. The R value was 0.414, reflecting a moderate positive correlation between event organization and the rate of return for future events. The R<sup>2</sup> value was 0.171, indicating that 17.1% of the variance in participants' rate of return can be explained by the quality of event organisation.

The data on event organisation ratings reflects participants' assessment of the event's management, reinforcing the relationship between event quality and the likelihood of return. In 2024, 47.8% of participants rated the event as "very well organised," with 35.8% rating it as "well organised." Additionally, 9% of participants rated the event as "fairly well organised," and 6% rated it as "poorly organised." A smaller portion, 1.5%, rated the event as "very poorly organised." These ratings provide insight into the overall satisfaction with the event's management in 2024.

Despite some shifts in ratings, the qualitative feedback indicates that participants' overall experiences remained positive, particularly with improvements in communication. Participants praised the smooth execution of the event, with one remarking, *"Everything was great, race pack collection was easy, and the race started right on time. I didn't feel rushed or confused about any part of the event."* However, some areas for improvement were also highlighted. For example, one rider noted, *"The race instructions weren't clear enough, especially for us beginners. I had to ask a few times where I should be, and parking was a bit tricky."*

By 2024, these concerns appeared to be addressed, as evidenced by a participant's comment, *"I loved that I got updates on social media about changes to the route and start times. That made a big difference!"* This improvement

in communication was well-received by participants, leading to greater satisfaction. Nonetheless, some participants still expressed the need for clearer communication regarding race rules. One participant commented, "*For future events, I hope we get the rules well in advance. I know it's for safety, but I like to read them carefully before signing up.*"

The participants' likelihood to return for future events highlights the relationship between event organisation and return intentions. In 2024, 49% of participants were "*very likely to return*," while 9.4% were "*likely to return*." Additionally, 9.4% of participants were "*neither likely nor unlikely to return*," and the proportion of participants who were "*unlikely*" or "*very unlikely*" to return increased slightly. These findings provide insights into participants' future intentions and their satisfaction with the event's organisation.

These findings suggest that while the organisation of the Kuala Baram Race had a moderate effect on participants' likelihood of returning for future events, there was a slight decline in satisfaction in 2024. The decrease in the proportion of participants rating the event as "*very well organised*" and the increase in those rating it as "*fairly well organised*" or "*poorly organised*" reflects this shift in organisational satisfaction. Despite these changes, the majority of participants still expressed a strong inclination to return, with nearly half in 2024 remaining "*very likely*" to return. The feedback also indicates that improvements made in 2024, such as better communication through social media, likely helped mitigate some of the negative impacts of organisational shortcomings.

Thus, the results confirm that event organisation plays a significant role in encouraging participants to return for future events, supporting the hypothesis that a well-organised event positively influences the rate of return. Moreover, this return rate directly contributes to the sustainability of the local economy, ensuring that sports tourism remains a valuable long-term economic asset for the region.

### *H3: The promotion of health and well-being through sports tourism contributes to the adoption of a healthier lifestyle*

The third hypothesis explored the relationship between the promotion of health and well-being through sports tourism (EX17) and the adoption of a healthier lifestyle (EX20). The regression analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between the promotion of health and well-being and participants' adoption of a healthier lifestyle.

The Beta coefficient was 0.691, indicating a strong positive effect. This suggests that as the promotion of health and well-being through sports tourism increases, participants are more likely to adopt a healthier lifestyle. The t-value of 9.498 shows a highly statistically significant relationship, and the p-value of 0.000 further supports the conclusion that this relationship is not due to chance. The R value was 0.691, reflecting a strong positive correlation between the two variables. The R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.477 indicates that 47.7% of the variance in participants' adoption of a healthier lifestyle can be explained by the promotion of health and well-being through sports tourism.

The quantitative data collected from the Kuala Baram Race supports the strong positive relationship between health and well-being promotion through sports tourism and the adoption of a healthier lifestyle. In 2024, 44% of participants strongly agreed that the event helped them set fitness targets, while 15% agreed with this statement. A small percentage, 2%, disagreed, while the remaining participants were neutral. This indicates that the event's fitness goals were widely embraced, and the promotion of fitness targets was still well-received by participants.

The findings strongly suggest that the promotion of health and well-being through sports tourism significantly contributes to the adoption of a healthier lifestyle, supporting Hypothesis 3. The data shows that a large proportion of participants in 2024 agreed that the event encouraged them to set fitness goals and led to positive lifestyle changes, particularly in the areas of weight loss and cycling-related health improvements.

This trend can be interpreted in light of the broader context of sports tourism's role in promoting public health. Sports tourism events such as the Kuala Baram Race can serve as catalysts for lifestyle changes by motivating participants to engage in physical activity, set fitness goals, and adopt healthier habits. Moreover, these results align with previous research suggesting that events which promote health and well-being not only influence immediate behaviors but also have the potential to create lasting lifestyle changes (Herbert, 2022). The continued success of such events, coupled with targeted health and well-being initiatives, can contribute to sustained health improvements among participants, ultimately fostering long-term behavioral changes that support healthier communities (Morfoulaki et al., 2023, Zhou et al., 2024).

In summary, the promotion of health and well-being through sports tourism, as evidenced by the Kuala Baram Race, significantly contributes to the adoption of a healthier lifestyle among participants. Further refinements in event planning and health-related initiatives could help strengthen this effect, ensuring that participants continue to benefit from the positive influence of sports tourism on their lifestyle choices. The regression analyses provided strong evidence supporting all three hypotheses. First, sports tourism in Miri was shown to positively influence economic growth through participants' expenditures. Second, well-organized events were found to significantly increase the likelihood of participants returning for future events. Finally, the promotion of health and well-being through sports tourism was shown to contribute significantly to the adoption of a healthier lifestyle. These findings have important implications for the development and promotion of sports tourism in Miri and beyond, highlighting the positive economic and social impacts of such initiatives.

Table 5.2 Summary of Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis	Statement	Finding
H1:	Sports tourism in Miri positively influences the economic growth of the country	Supported
H2:	A well-organized event will positively influence participants' rate of return for future events	Supported
H3:	The promotion of health and well-being through sports tourism contributes to the adoption of a healthier lifestyle	Supported

## 6. Conclusion

In this paper, the hypothesis testing results with both qualitative and quantitative data provide evidence of the impact of sports tourism on Miri's economy and participants' health. The analysis through hypothesis testing confirms that sports tourism events significantly contribute to the local economy by increasing participant expenditure, with statistical significance supporting the positive economic outcomes observed. The findings suggest that well-executed events lead to higher spending in local businesses, particularly in hospitality, retail, and food services, thus driving substantial economic growth. Furthermore, hypothesis testing reveals that the quality of event organisation is a key determinant in participant satisfaction and loyalty. The statistical analysis supports the notion that improvements in event logistics, such as better communication and efficient race-day operations, are strongly correlated with increased likelihood of repeat attendance. The findings confirm that events that meet or exceed participant expectations foster long-term economic benefits for the region. From a health perspective, hypothesis testing indicates that sports tourism events have a statistically significant effect on participants' adoption of healthier behaviors. The quantitative data reinforces the qualitative insights that participants are more likely to engage in regular physical activity, make healthier dietary choices, and improve their mental well-being as a result of their involvement in these events. The combination of these findings emphasizes the role of sports tourism as an effective tool for promoting long-term health improvements in the community. In conclusion, this paper provides strong evidence that well-organized sports tourism events not only generate economic growth but also promote public health benefits. Through the application of hypothesis testing, this paper confirms that the integration of high-quality event management and health-focused initiatives can create lasting positive impacts on both the local economy and the well-being of participants.

## Acknowledgments

Financially supported by Universiti Teknologi Brunei (UTB) through research grant UTB/GSR/2/2024 (9). The authors acknowledge the contribution of Nur Aqilah Abas (PhD), whose assistance with data analysis was significant to the completion of this research project.

We declare that Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies or AI-assisted tools were utilized at level of grammatical checking and referencing capacity during the writing and preparation of this article.

The author(s) declare(s) that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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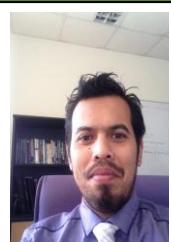
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