

Research Paper

Re-participating in Running Events : The Subjectivity of Runners' Experience Economy Realms

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Abstract: Experience is necessary for all types of outdoor activities, including running events. However, very little is known about runners' experience and their intention to participate again in running events. This study specifically investigates the impact of runners' experiential factors on re-participation intentions using Pine and Gilmore's experience economy realms as a framework. Survey data were collected from 353 runners who participated in multiple running events in Malaysia, and the data were analysed using Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The results reveal that three of Pine and Gilmore's experience economy realms (aesthetic, education, and escapism) positively influence runners' intention to re-participate in running events. Surprisingly, the entertainment element did not have a significant impact on their behaviour. These findings offer valuable insights for event organisers and operators on enhancing and satisfying runners' experiences, thereby encouraging their participation in future running events and, in return, warranting the running event's sustainability.

Keywords: Runners, experience economy, experience, re-participation, running events, virtual events

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Introduction

In recent decades, running has become a well-known form of physical activity (Hulteen et al., 2017). Despite the widespread impact of COVID-19, the global interest in running events continues to grow, whether it's a virtual running event, a marathon spanning 42 km or 21 km, a 5 km fun run, or an arduous ultramarathon. To adhere to health and safety regulations, in light of the recent pandemic, marathons and races worldwide were transformed into virtual events (Helsen et al., 2021). This transformation allows runners to complete a specified running distance on their own time, via any route, with a GPS-tracking app (Justrunlah, 2018), making running events even more appealing and attracting more participants. The 2020 Asics report supports this claim, revealing that runners of all levels logged more strides and participated more frequently in virtual running activities after the COVID-19 outbreak. Globally, the number of runners increased by 47.3%, registrations rose by 252%, and monthly active users grew by 44% in 2020 (Asics, 2020).

Running has been proven to be a potent activity that provides a wide range of health benefits such as reducing the risk of chronic diseases and improving mental well-being, making it an appealing form of exercise for people in general (Atlas et al., 2018). It also offers runners new physical, emotional, and social experiences, allowing them to improve themselves and connect with fellow runners (Kutty, 2021). The Asics report (2020) further emphasised that runners participated in events to regain a sense of control and maintain their sanity, particularly during the ongoing pandemic. Compared to the traditional concept, modern running events have truly evolved into something more, providing a unique and enriching experience.

The success and growth of a running event relies heavily on it providing a unique experience craved by modern runners (Coetzee et al., 2019). Henceforth, organisers should prioritise elements that impact runner experiences as critical indicators of an event's success (Smit & Melissen, 2018). With an increasing number of event organisers, runners now have more choices and bargaining power when deciding which events to participate in. Therefore, delivering a valuable experience to runners allows organisers to foster sustainable and positive relationships with participants. By focusing on enriching runners' experiences and fostering re-participation, event organisers can establish a sustainable competitive advantage, contribute to the running sports, and support the local economy altogether (Wongsanun et al., 2022).

The current literature on the effect of Pine and Gilmore's realms of experience economy on runners' re-participation intention in running events, especially in the context of Malaysia, is limited. While previous studies have primarily focused on motivations for participation (Aicher et al., 2015), runner satisfaction (Sato et al., 2019), and risks and injuries in running events (Buist et al., 2010), there is a lack of research specifically examining the impact of experiential factors on runners'

decision to re-participate in such events. Correspondingly, this research aims to fill this gap by investigating how runners' experiential factors influence their intention to re-participate in running events, utilising Pine and Gilmore's experience economy realms as the conceptual framework.

By adopting Pine and Gilmore's framework, this study explores the various dimensions of the runners' experience, including the economic aspects and their subsequent effect on re-participation intention. The experience realms proposed by Pine and Gilmore can significantly influence the overall event experience. Hence, understanding how these factors impact runners' intention to re-participate in running events will provide valuable insights for event organisers to enhance and optimise virtual and physical event experiences. By identifying the key factors contributing to a positive and memorable experience for runners, event organisers can attract and retain more participants, ultimately benefiting the running sports industry.

It is also worth noting that this study is particularly significant in the Malaysian context, where research on this topic is scarce. By focusing on the unique experiences of runners in this specific setting, the findings of this study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on event management and provide practical implications for event organisers in Malaysia. Additionally, the insights gained from this research will enable organisers to understand the preferences and expectations of runners better, allowing them to tailor their offerings to meet these needs and create a more engaging and satisfying event experience.

In conclusion, this study aims to address the research gap in understanding the influence of Pine and Gilmore's experience economy realms on runners' re-participation intention in running events, specifically in the Malaysian context. By exploring the various dimensions of the runners' experience and their impact on re-participation intention, this research seeks to provide valuable insights for event organisers. The findings are expected to guide event organisers in enhancing and maximising virtual and physical running event experiences, ultimately attracting more participants and fostering the growth of the running event industry.

Literature Review

Running Events

Since the 1960s, the "running event" has grown internationally as part of a broader trend known as the "deinstitutionalisation of the sports sector" (Borgers et al., 2018). This trend suggests that people no longer participate in sports for its competitiveness, but rather for health, relaxation, adventure, or pleasure (Van Dyck et al., 2017). Running events have now become an essential component of modern holiday

experiences, offering recreational, glamorous, and health-related elements that are highly sought after (Wongsanun et al., 2022). As a result, running has evolved as an independent sport, apart from organised athletics. Similarly, the popularity of running events (e.g., virtual running events, 42 km marathons, 21 km marathons, and 5 km fun runs) has grown dramatically globally (Hulteen et al., 2017).

Malaysia is also one of the countries that has seen a significant increase in running events, as the country has become a popular destination for marathons and other running events. In Malaysia, running events are organised by a range of parties, including government agencies and commercial sectors (Atlas et al., 2018). The organisers usually advertise their running events on Checkpoint Spot, RaceXasia, JustRunLah!, Jomrun, Ticket2u, 42races and other internet platforms. Event organisers regard running events as a low-cost, high-impact opportunity for a company to position itself in the marketplace, convey the story of its brand, reinforce its corporate culture, and engage with its customers in a uniquely meaningful way.

To stay ahead of the competition, event organisers have had to get quite innovative with their events if they wanted to provide participants with a memorable experience (Dragin-Jensen et al., 2022). They have been using strategies such as thematic experiences, interactive elements, personalisation, entertainment, social media integration, and environmental sustainability to create memorable experiences and differentiate their events in the marketplace (Pulhin & Borbon, 2021; Türkmendağ & Türkmendağ, 2022).

Re-participation Intention

Re-participation intention is a part of behavioural intention. More specifically, behavioural intention in sports events is defined as a spectator's or participant's intention to attend an upcoming sporting event, re-participate, recommend the event to others, and purchase event-related merchandise and services (Biscaia et al., 2012). Hence, re-participation intention can be defined as an individual's intention to partake again in an upcoming event (Tosun et al., 2015). Re-participation intention is essential to event organisers alike because attracting repeat participants is less costly than drawing in new ones (Seetanah et al., 2018). According to Lee and Kang (2015), the intention to re-participate in future sporting events is a highly quantifiable dependent variable in the literature on sports marketing. Hence, re-participation or behavioural intention is crucial for an event to remain competitive in the long run (Xiao et al., 2020).

Pine and Gilmore's Experience Economy Realms

Globally, the present economy has evolved from product-driven to service-driven and is now transitioning to an experience-driven model (Zhang et al., 2018). Thus,

delivering unforgettable and unique experiences has been at the heart of the global economy and, more precisely, the event sector (Sorrentino et al., 2020). The event industry is fundamentally experience-driven (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). These authors asserted that companies need to provide their clients with extraordinary moments. Thus, the staging of an event not only serves to provide a single type of experience (e.g., to entertain runners at the running event) but to also engage them.

According to Hyun et al. (2020), participants (runners) in sports events (running events) are distinct from other events in that they generate their own experiences by devoting substantial time and effort to training, building their strength and endurance before taking part in running competitions. Hence, the experience gained from running events will have a more significant impact on runners. Pine and Gilmore (1999) asserted that staging experiences might result in satisfied patrons, repeat consumers, loyal customers, increased transactions, and enhanced brand identification. Hence, it can be deduced that experience offerings is one of the many ways that event businesses can employ to continue to survive in a competitive environment (Smit & Melissen, 2018). Pine and Gilmore (1999) believed that experiences encompass four aspects: education, entertainment, escapism, and aesthetics, which will be discussed next.

Education is acquiring and comprehending knowledge, skills, or attitudes through study, instruction, or experience (Jarvis, 2018). In this respect, many educational experiences can be gained by joining a running event. For instance, running teaches runners to be self-assured and more assertive than they believe (Mills, 2019). Running also teaches runners that there is no shortcut to success; significant effort and hard work are required (Risdon, 2022). These lessons apply not only to running but to life in general. Beni et al. (2017) asserted that running will result in meaningful experiences. However, these encounters may vary according to the runner's needs and interests (Packer & Ballantyne, 2002). A previous study by Radder and Han (2015) revealed a significant relationship between education and behavioural intention among visitors to the museum. Similarly, Park et al. (2015) also found that an educational experience strongly leads to satisfaction among visitors attending a film festival. Based on the above debate, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: There is a strong correlation between education and re-participation intention

Entertainment refers to distracting, pleasurable, or delightful activities appropriate for the audience's time and attention (Vogel, 2014). According to Pine and Gilmore's theory (1999), entertaining experiences occur when people passively observe or participate in the activities or performances of others using their senses

to describe pleasure and delight (Radder & Han, 2015). Joining a running event can be an enjoyable activity too. Running events allow runners to dress up in costumes and tutus for exciting theme races and fun runs. Likewise, runners can enjoy complementary concerts and other entertainment at the finish line or just the scenery. Entertainment has a significant relationship with behavioural intention. A previous study by Radder and Han (2015) agreed that entertainment significantly influences the overall experience in the museum context. A similar effect was seen in the Ice Music Festival's visitor satisfaction (Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011). Likewise, entertainment predicts pleasurable arousal and memory, which leads tourists to revisit rural destinations (Loureiro, 2014). Therefore, the subsequent hypothesis is suggested:

H2: There is a strong correlation between entertainment and re-participation intention.

Escapism. Darrat et al. (2016) described escapism as a brief detachment from stressful situations that may provide a sense of relief by detaching the individual from reality. In the idea advanced by Pine and Gilmore (1999), escapism presents dynamic involvement, immersion, and engagement in what happened before them (Radder & Han, 2015). In a related manner, runners may participate in running events to escape from their homes or workplaces, away from problems, or escape from daily stress and a boring life (Kerrigan et al., 2014). Radder and Han (2015) revealed a significant relationship between escapism and re-participation intention in the museum context. Similarly, Park et al. (2015) also identified a relationship between escapism and behavioural intention in their research on film festival visitors' experiences. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is posited:

H3: There is a strong correlation between escapism and re-participation intention

Aesthetics refers to the physical environment's overall atmosphere and mood (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). According to the authors, aesthetics occurs when individuals immerse themselves in their environment without active participation (Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011). Aesthetic components in running events include infrastructure, event site, and intangible elements that stimulate people's imaginations through the sensory stimuli. These tangible components of an event comprise venue, colours, lights, routes, techniques of orienting the runner, and of course, a wide range of enticing entitlements (Armbrecht, 2020). Many scholars contend that aesthetics has a significant relationship with behavioural intention. For instance, Ali et al. (2016) found a strong connection between aesthetic experience and the tourist's desired

behaviour. According to Hosany and Witham (2010), an aesthetic experience is a memorable experience that profoundly influences the satisfaction level and positively influences the participant's behavioural intention or intention to recommend in the context of the cruiser's experience. Similarly, Radder and Han (2015) also revealed a significant relationship between aesthetics and behavioural intention among visitors to a museum. In light of these observations, the following assumption is anticipated:

H4: There is a strong correlation between aesthetics and re-participation intention.

Method

Research Design

The study adopted a quantitative approach in a cross-sectional setting. Additionally, a non-probability sampling technique was used to identify the appropriate respondents for the current study. The researcher used G*Power to determine the sample size (Hair et al, 2021). The acceptable sample size for the current study was 85 respondents ($p = 0.05$; power of 80%, and a medium effect size of 0.15). However, to avoid sampling error, a total of 400 self-administrated online survey questionnaires were distributed to achieve at least an appropriate number of respondents. The respondents for this study were runners who had participated in at least one running event (virtual run, full marathon, half marathon, 5 km, Fun Run, and more). Between October and November 2020, the questionnaires were distributed online via Malaysian runners' virtual communities' Facebook pages. Initially, the researchers approached members of the Facebook pages and asked whether they would be interested in participating in the survey, before distributing the questionnaire.

Measures

The study questionnaire was devised to answer the research objective. The questionnaire was divided into the following sections: demographics, runner experience realm, and intention to re-participate. Demographic information such as age, gender, race, monthly income, educational background, and frequency in running activities was gathered. To measure runners' perspective of the experience realms, 17 items adapted from Radder and Han (2015) were used to represent Pine and Gilmore's (1999) four experience realms which are: education, entertainment, escapism, and aesthetics. Out of 17 items, four items represented education experience, four items belonged to entertainment experience, four items represented escapism experience, and five items were included in the aesthetic experience. In

addition, five items adapted from Kaplanidou (2010) as well as Hyun and Jordan (2020) were modified to assess runners' re-participation intention. A 5-point Likert scale was used to measure the responses with values ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Data Analysis

Prior to actual data collection, a preliminary small-scale study (N=30) was conducted to test the questionnaire, the feasibility of the research design, as well as data gathering and related procedures such as statistical and analytical tools. Next, the actual data analysis was performed using SmartPLS 3.3.3. PLS-SEM is a second-generation technique used to predict the relationships among multiple complex latent constructs, is suitable for researchers' forecast-oriented goals and accommodates minimal sample sizes (Hanafiah, 2020). The PLS-SEM path models are constructed in two steps (Hair et al., 2021). The two-step approach begins with estimating the measurement model, before moving on to the structural model analysis.

Findings

Demographics

Of the total 400 distributed questionnaires, 383 were completed and returned. However, 30 were found to be incomplete since the respondents had replied "No" to the screening questions, thus reducing the total number of responses to 353. Demographically, 69% of the runners in the sample were Malay, 57% were women, 47% earned a monthly income greater than RM2,000, and 57% held at least a degree. The respondents' average age was 21–30 (56%). About 40% preferred to participate in 5 km and themed races while 58% said they sometimes participate in running events.

Measurement Model

The measurement model depicts the connections between the constructs and the indicator variables. Indicators with low factor loadings (0.60) were eliminated as part of the measurement model evaluation (Gefen & Straub, 2005). Only two items (AES6 and AES7) were excluded from the study due to low factor loadings. The measurement model's initial component is the reliability analysis, which incorporates composite reliability. An ideal composite reliability minimum value of 0.70 is desired (Ringle et al., 2020). Accordingly, the model's latent constructs are deemed compositely reliable (Table 1).

Table 1. Factor loadings, reliability, and validity of study constructs

	A	Alpha	CR	AVE
Aesthetics		0.936	0.951	0.796
I sense harmony with my surroundings	0.896			
I sense a pleasing physical environment	0.914			
I sense a pleasing competition	0.903			
I appreciate the various entitlement	0.855			
I sense a pleasing running event theme design	0.891			
Education		0.956	0.968	0.884
Running stimulates my curiosity	0.937			
Running enhances my philosophy of living	0.966			
I share my running experience with my family and friends	0.912			
Running events increase my knowledge	0.944			
Entertainment		0.943	0.959	0.853
I interact with others in the running event	0.916			
I feel relaxed physically	0.941			
I feel emotionally stimulated when participating in the running event	0.946			
I have fun at the running event	0.891			
Escapism		0.908	0.935	0.782
I can be someone else when competing in a running event.	0.894			
I imagine living in a different time and place	0.848			
I feel like I escape from reality while participating in a running event	0.933			
I get away from a stressful social environment by participating in a running event.	0.859			
Re-participation intention		0.886	0.917	0.688
I have an intention to re-participate in the running event	0.862			
I have participated in a running event in the past.	0.853			
I have an attitude towards re-participation	0.728			
I intend to run regularly in running events	0.863			
I am likely to participate in any running event in the near future: Marathon, Half Marathon, or Fun run.	0.834			

Convergent validity is the second component of the measurement model. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) determines convergent validity, with a threshold value of 0.50 (Ringle et al., 2020). Therefore, convergent validity is established for the study constructs (see Table 1). Meanwhile, the Heterotrait Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio method was used to determine the discriminant validity of the constructs. According to Henseler et al. (2015), the most reasonable threshold value for the HTMT ratio is lower than 0.85. For this study, all HTMT values were less than the cut-off value of 0.85. Correspondingly, discriminant validity is established (see Table 2).

Table 2. Results of discriminant validity using HTMT

	Education	Entertainment	Escapism	Aesthetics	Re-participation
Education					
Entertainment	0.506				
Escapism	0.489	0.413			
Aesthetics	0.473	0.442	0.812		
Re-participation	0.488	0.270	0.624	0.703	

Structural Model

The structural model depicts the connections (paths) between the constructs on the suggested research model. Normally, the structural model is established on the values of R², Q², and a significant path. The strength of each structural path measures the model’s quality, which should be equal to or greater than 0.1 (Falk & Miller, 1992). The results in Table 3 demonstrate that the R² value is more than 0.1. Hence, the predictive capability is established.

Additionally, Q² confirms the predictive relevance of the endogenous construct. A Q² value of 0.325 in Table 3, greater than zero, indicates that the model has predictive relevance. In addition, the model fit was evaluated using Standardized Root Mean Squared Residual (SRMR). The SRMR value produced was 0.076, less than the acceptable value of 0.10, suggesting an acceptable model fit (Hair et al., 2016).

Furthermore, hypotheses were verified to determine the significance of the relationship. The first hypothesis (H1) assesses whether education (EDU) positively relates to re-participation (REP). The results showed that EDU significantly impacts REP ($\beta = 0.276, t = 4.671, p = <0.001$). Hence, the first hypothesis (H1) is supported. The second hypothesis (H2) assesses whether entertainment (ENT) significantly impacts REP. The results revealed that ENT has an insignificant impact on REP ($\beta = -0.113, t = 2.041, p = < 0.042$). Accordingly, the second hypothesis

(H2) is not supported. Next, the third hypothesis (H3) measures whether escapism (ESC) positively relates to REP. The results indicated that ESC significantly impacts REP ($\beta = 0.196, \tau = 2.999, p < 0.01$). Subsequently, the third hypothesis (H3) is accepted. Finally, the fourth hypothesis (H4) evaluates whether aesthetic (EST) positively relates to REP. The results specified that EST significantly impacts REP ($\beta = 0.375, \tau = 4.514, p < 0.01$). Hence, the fourth hypothesis (H4) is supported. The results are depicted in Table 3 and Figure 1.

Table 3. Results of hypotheses testing

	Path coefficient	Standard Deviation	T statistics	p-value	2.50%	97.50%
EDU-REP (H1)	0.276	0.059	4.671	0.000	0.165	0.414
ENT-REP (H2)	-0.113	0.055	2.041	0.042	-0.216	-0.011
ESC-REP (H3)	0.196	0.066	2.999	0.003	0.071	0.328
EST-REP (H4)	0.375	0.083	4.514	0.000	0.195	0.521
	R²	Q²	SRMT			
Re-participation	0.482	0.325	0.076			

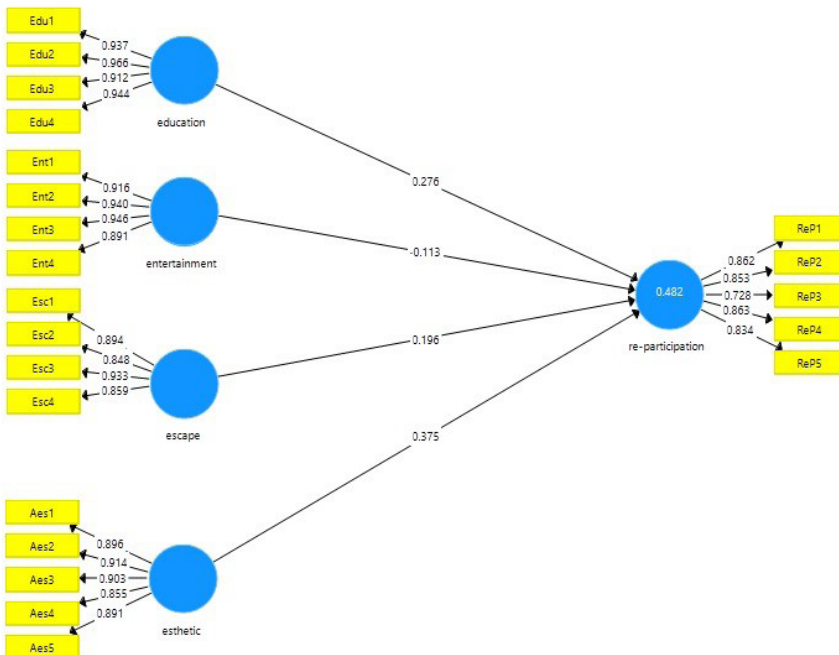


Figure 1. Results

Discussion

The findings shed light on the significance of aesthetics, education, and escapism in influencing runners' re-participation intentions, while entertainment did not demonstrate a significant effect. This study contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence regarding the relationship between experiential factors and re-participation intentions in the context of running events. The findings are consistent with prior research that highlights the significance of aesthetics, education, and escapism in enhancing the event experiences of participants (Dash & Samantaray, 2018; Howard, 2021).

Among the four experience realms, aesthetics emerged as the most influential factor in determining runners' intention to re-participate, highlighting the significance of visually appealing elements in running events. This preference for aesthetically appealing events, is consistent with Karampatzakis's (2020) findings that Asian runners are attracted to visually appealing entitlement items like jerseys and medals. Further, appealing visual components are essential for developing an ambiance that is memorable and engaging, grabbing people's attention, and inspiring pleasant feelings. When runners are surrounded by visually appealing components like eye-catching event branding, extravagant medal designs, vivid race themes, and aesthetically pleasing event locations, this improves their overall experience. It fosters a sense of excitement and anticipation. Hence, event organisers can focus on creating thematic runs, incorporating attractive design elements in race merchandise, and ensuring visually pleasing event settings as these contribute to a positive perception of the event and can increase participants' motivation and satisfaction, as well as leave a lasting impression.

The current study contributes to the understanding of the influence of escapism on runners' re-participation intentions. This finding aligns with Aicher et al.'s (2015) argument that escapism is one of the primary values associated with participating in running events. The study supports the notion that running events offer individuals an opportunity to escape the monotony of the pandemic. This is consistent with research conducted by Asics (2020) and Risdon (2022), which highlighted the role of running events in providing an avenue for individuals to divert their attention from work pressures and personal problems.

Participating in a running event creates a dedicated time and space for runners to immerse themselves in the experience, providing them with a sense of relief and release (Risdon, 2022). It allows them to temporarily detach themselves from the daily stressors and challenges they face, offering a form of respite. This escapism not only contributes to the enjoyment and satisfaction of the event but also influences runners' intention to participate in future events (Aicher et al., 2015). These findings underscore the significance of escapism as a motivational factor for individuals engaging in running events. By offering an escape from routine and providing a

unique experience, running events fulfil a psychological need for diversion and serve as a source of rejuvenation for participants.

The current study also shows that educational experience is a significant factor in influencing runners' intention to re-participate. This is consistent with Carter et al.'s (2016) findings that running events provide runners opportunities for learning, self-improvement, and personal growth. Runners can acquire knowledge and abilities through training, nutrition, and mental resilience (Mills, 2019). In addition, they can also experience personal growth and receive support from the running community. These educational opportunities provide a deeper meaning to the running experience, ultimately motivating them to participate in future events.

It is notable that entertainment did not significantly influence re-participation intentions. This could be attributed to runners perceiving these events as physical endurance tests rather than entertainment opportunities (Hyun et al., 2020). Furthermore, most respondents in this study were new to running events, specifically participating in 5 km fun runs, which may explain the lower emphasis on entertainment. For individuals new to running, the event may not be perceived as enjoyable, especially for those who are overweight or less physically fit (Ahmad, 2021). Hence, event organisers should consider this when designing event programs and ensure a balance between physical challenges and entertainment elements to cater to different participant preferences.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study used Pine and Gilmore's experience economy domains as a framework to investigate the influence of experiential elements on runners' intention to engage in running events again. The results demonstrate that entertainment did not majorly impact runners' intentions to participate again, but beauty, knowledge, and escapism did. These findings show that in order to improve the overall running event experience and promote repeat participation, event planners and operators should give special attention to designing visually appealing events, incorporating educational components, and promoting a sense of escapism.

Practical Implications

This study has several significant practical implications. First, the existing data will aid event organisers in staging good experiences and reviewing the current offerings' mix of activities to enhance the runner experience. By prioritising these experiences, they can enhance participants' experiences, strengthen re-participation intentions, and ultimately, create successful and engaging running events. Second, event organisers and marketers can build tools to assess runners' on-site experiences. These evaluations can yield valuable, pertinent data and may aid in identifying and

addressing the discrepancies between runners' expected and actual experiences. Thirdly, the research contributes to a better understanding of experiential marketing in running events. The event organiser should remember that desirable experiences should be tailored to the runner's specific requirements. This alignment enables event marketers to effectively allocate scarce resources and establish effective marketing and promotional plans. As a result, this assists businesses in growing their audience, and increasing the running event's competitiveness.

Theoretical Implications

This work undoubtedly contributes to the current knowledge body, particularly in the event experience domain. The study contributes to the existing event literature by extending the established linkages of the experience realms with other significant outcomes and evaluation dimensions including re-participation intentions. This contributes to the theoretical understanding of how these specific experience realms shape individuals' perceptions and motivations in the event context. Moreover, the current study's topic selection (running event) makes a persuasive justification for widening the research setting to include a helpful theoretical contribution as no prior study has ever been done in such setting. This expands the knowledge base by providing insights into the applicability and generalisability of the experience economy framework in a specific cultural and geographical context. In addition, this study also serves as a guideline for future study improvement, particularly on the current subject matter and the application of the experience realm scale to varied event experiences and situations.

Limitations and Future Research

The present study is subject to some limitations. First, the survey population was limited to runners who had competed in a running event and were members of related runners' virtual communities on Facebook in Malaysia. Therefore, the generalisability of the findings may be questioned. Future researchers can expand the study setting to other platforms to yield similar results. Second, the study findings represent runners' experiences from all backgrounds. Hence, future studies could examine the influence of different types of runs (virtual run, full marathon, half marathon, themed run, etc.) on runners' experience as each style of run presents a unique challenge and experience. Thirdly, Tung and Ritchie (2011) advocated creating memorable experiences. Thus, further research should examine the correlation between experience realms and the memorability of the runners' experience to guide event organisers in creating memorable and transformational running event experiences.

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