

Understanding sport tourists' motives and perceptions of Sabah, Malaysia as a sport tourist destination

ERICA E DOLINTING¹, AMINUDDIN YUSOF², CHEE CHEN SOON³
^{1,2,3} Faculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, MALAYSIA

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Abstract:

With the focus on Mount Kinabalu as a sport tourism destination, the push and pull theory (Dann, 1981) was adopted as framework to examine the travel motivation of sport tourists visiting Sabah, Malaysia. The Leisure Motivation Scale (Beard & Ragheb, 1983) and semantic differential instrument by Attle (1996) were utilized to measure the push motives and pull factors. Analyses of data include descriptive statistics, t-test and logistic regression. A sample of 195 mountain climbers was selected with the majority comprising of international active sport tourists respondents (71.1%). Statistically, domestic active sport tourists at Mount Kinabalu were more significantly motivated by two out of four push motives namely; competence-mastery and social factors. With respect to the pull factors, analysis of result from the logistic regression shows there were few attributes which has been identified to be perceived differently by the domestic and international tourists. The findings of the study implied that: (1) market segmentations can be made according to the demographic and travel characteristics information as well as by their travel motivations among domestics and internationals sport tourists; (2) theoretical significance and practical marketing implications in addition with the recommendations for local tourism authority, destination managers and marketers are discussed.

Key words: travel motivation, active sport tourist, push and pull factors.

Introduction

Malaysia was listed in the top ten international tourism destinations in 2009 to 2011 and the country was ranked as the tenth most visited place in the world (UNWTO, 2013). As the international tourist arrivals to Malaysia continue to increase, there is no doubt that Malaysia has a huge potential for world's tourism. The government realized the importance of the tourism industry in terms of contributions to the socio-economy and generator of jobs in the country (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2013). Continuous demand from the growing market has tourism as one of the major industry in Malaysia today. The significance of this industry to the economy led to the refinement of its development and increasingly diverse tourism industry. Among the tourism components, sport tourism appears to be the most emerging tourism component in Malaysia (Tah Fatt et al., 2010). Malaysia was awarded as Asia's Leading Sports Tourism Destination in 2011 by the World Travel Awards. In addition, the fact that sport tourism in Malaysia has been increasingly growing is not new especially in the participatory sports (Yusof et al., 2009). Sport tourism is a form of activity that involves people travelling away from primary residence for the purpose of participating in a sport activity for recreation or competition. It is also include travelling for the purpose of watching sport events or visiting sport attractions at a specific time (Gibson et al., 1997). Specifically, Hinch & Higham (2004) suggested that there were two types of sport tourism; active sport tourism and passive sport tourism. Active sport tourism is related to the participation of tourists to the sporting experiences while passive sport tourism concerned with the activity of attending and watching the sporting events. In Malaysia, as the country offers a wide range of outdoor adventure sports, active sport tourism is by far the most diverse and draws the most participants.

Sabah is one of the states in Malaysia that possesses a great potential in the development of sport tourism aiming especially at international visitors. The existence of suitable sport tourism environment in Sabah allows the state to host several annual small-scale international sport events such as Mount Kinabalu International Climbathon, Sabah Dragon Boat Race, Borneo International Marathon and Borneo Safari International off Road Challenge (Tourism Malaysia, 2012). Moreover, the state is blessed with unique geography and natural resources that makes it a perfect place for adventurous and sporting activities such as mountain torq's activities, mountain climbing, water sports activities, scuba diving, jungle trekking and golfing (Mat Som at al., 2012; Sabah Tourism, 2012). It is surprising, however, that there is a relatively scarce amount of research done on travel motivations in South East Asian Countries (Kim & Prideaux, 2005), travel and sport

tourism in Malaysia (Aminuddin et al., 2009; Yousefi & Marzuki, 2012), be it the main sport events or the small-scale sport events in Sabah to be specific.

Consequently knowledge on sport tourism behaviour in Sabah is lacking. Without this information, it is impossible to address any practical issues concerning the development and marketing matters. As much as the information on sport tourism behaviour is affecting the tourism marketing activities, its effects on the economy sector also essentially yet still unknown. A distinction between the domestic and international sport tourist would provide a better picture on how much sport tourism market affected the economy of Sabah. Nationalities may determine the extent of common resemblance between a destination and the tourist's home country (climate, lifestyle, money value) thereby influencing destination choice for those seeking familiar experiences. In short, undertaking domestic-international group's comparison can be used as an effective market segmentation variable and for understanding tourists' push motives and preferences in terms of destination attributes (Prayag & Ryan, 2011).

Since sport-based activities appeared to be the primary tourism product in Malaysia (Tah Fatt et al., 2010), the market potential and decision making process of sport tourists need to be observe before launching any marketing campaigns. Effective sport tourism management and right sport tourism development are among the key to determine the destination choice (Shifflet & Bhatia, 1999). In addition, knowledge and clear perceptions on the pull factors are critical in order to maximize the economic benefits of the abundant nature-based sport tourism product (Mahadzirah et al., 2012). So, by using the push-pull framework to explore the travel motivations of sport tourists visiting Sabah, both personal needs and their opinions on destination image of attributes and activities can be identify.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the demographic and travel characteristics of sport tourists visiting Sabah.
2. To examine the push motives of sport tourists visiting Sabah.
3. To identify the pull factors (destination images) of sport tourists visiting Sabah.

Material & methods

Participants

Data were obtained from a total of sample of $n = 195$ active sport tourists visiting Sabah at Mount Kinabalu for mountain climbing or mountain torq's activities in the second week of February 2013. The quantitative methodology in the form of a survey questionnaire was used to collect data from domestic (36.4%, $n = 71$) and international (63.6%, $n = 124$) mountain climbers. It is important to note that respondent who currently stay in Malaysia were considered as domestic sport tourists while those who filled up their origin from other country than Malaysia were treated as international sport tourists.

Procedure/ Instruments

Since it is impractical to assume that the researcher can collect data from the entire population, the convenience sampling technique was utilized for this study. The survey questionnaire was in English and Malay prior to the inclusion of both domestic and international sport tourist respondents. The ten pages paper-based questionnaires instrument was divided into four parts measuring travel characteristics, demographic background, push motives and pull factors. Items in the Part 1 and Part 2 were developed by the researcher from a review of literatures and previous study (Gibson, Attle & Yiannakis, 1998; Yusof et al, 2012) while items in Part 3 and Part 4 which measuring the push and pull factors were adopted from previous studies (Beard & Ragheb, 1983; Attle, 1996).

The Leisure Motivation Scale developed by Beard & Ragheb (1983) questionnaire has been used in several leisure and sport tourism studies by Ryan & Glendon (1998) examining tourist motivation in the UK, small-scale sport event as tourist attraction in Malaysia (Yusof et al, 2012) and investigating adolescent identity development (Campbell, 2007). In fact, there were two version of LMS exist, a long version with 48-items and a short 32-item version. These two versions basically measuring the same thing, however, Beard & Ragheb (1983) suggested the use of the short version in research settings in which time is a limitation. As time was one of the large constraints in this study, the short version of the instrument was utilized. In addition, the short version is more often used by researchers such as by Beggs & Elkins (2010), Ryan & Glendon (1998), Yusof et al (2009, 2012).

The pull factors of destination images were measured by using a 23 pair semantic differential scale developed by Attle (1996). The pull items in the Attle's instrument were mostly adapted from Crompton (1977, 1979). Additionally, the semantic differential type of instrument to measure respondents' image of tourist destinations also was adapted from many previous tourism research work such as Crompton (1977, 1979), Gartner & Hunt (1987) and Yusof et al (2009, 2012). According to Echtner & Ritchie (1993), destination image should be comprised the element of individual perception of both functional (e.g., weather, price, transportation)

and psychological images (e.g., safety, dynamicity of the surroundings). So, the evaluative and descriptive dimensions of images are best measured by the two measuring instruments comprised of identical semantic polar terms (Crompton, 1979).

Data collection and Statistical analysis

The data collection took place at Laban Rata Rest House, Mount Kinabalu. Laban Rata is the place where climbers stay overnight before climbing to the peak at 4 am the next morning. The survey was conducted for 3 weekdays during public holiday (Chinese New Year Holiday). Although the sampling technique used was the convenience sampling, there were specific time sessions for the survey, which is two sessions per day. In each session 50 sets of questionnaires were distributed. The sessions of 7 – 9am and 3 - 7 pm were the duration time where climbers were to be found at the restaurant area. Particularly, climbers finished their climb from the peak and had their breakfast before going down to the Kinabalu Park in the duration time of 7 – 9 am.

Data were analysed by the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze items on travel characteristics and demographic information. The T-tests were performed to determine the significant difference between two sets of scores (domestic and international sport tourists) for the push motives. As to examine whether there are significant differences between the domestic and international sport tourists visiting Mount Kinabalu in terms of the pull factor, the logistic regression was used.

Results

Demographic Background

Table 1 shows the result for demographic profiles of active sport tourists visiting Mount Kinabalu. In general, males active sport tourists dominated the number of respondents by 55.9% (n= 109). It indicates that male sport tourists have more interest to participate in the vigorous activity of mountain climbing than female. In terms of age, of the 195 sport tourists, the early adulthood group aged 22-27 which were relatively young was found to be the lead group among all other age group range (29.7%). The 28-32 and 33-39 years age group sample were also among the active sport tourists visiting the high altitude place (25.6% and 19.5%). Interestingly, there are results on sport tourists of very late adulthood age (60 and above) for 2.1% (n=4). The proportion of international sport tourists was greater in significance than the domestic proportion by 63.6%. It suggests that international tourists were more likely to visit Mount Kinabalu than the domestic tourists.

Table 1. Demographic Profiles of Sport Tourists Visiting Mount Kinabalu

Variables	n	%	Variables	n	%
Gender			Employment Status		
Male	109	55.9	Government Servant	27	13.8
Female	86	44.1	Company Employee	122	62.6
Age Group (Year)			Self-Employed	10	5.1
17-21	23	11.8	Student	24	12.3
22-27	58	29.7	Retired	5	2.6
28-32	50	25.6	Unemployed	5	2.6
33-39	38	19.5	Others	2	1.0
40-44	12	6.2	Highest Level of Education		
45-49	3	1.5	Elementary school	1	0.5
50-54	4	2.1	High school	23	11.8
55-60	3	1.5	Certificate	11	5.6
60 and above	4	2.1	Diploma	35	17.9
Marital Status			Bachelor Degree	74	37.9
Single	137	70.3	Master/PhD	50	25.6
Married	51	26.2	Classification		
Divorced	6	3.1	Domestic	71	36.4
Widowed	1	0.5	International	124	63.6

For marital status, almost three quarters of the total respondents were single with a percentage of 70.3%. It indicates that singles were more likely to engage in sport tourism in Sabah compared to married couples ,divorced and widowed person. Most respondents were bachelor degree holders which contribute one third of the total respondents and 25.6% indicated having their Master’s or PhD. It suggests that respondents were well-educated, with more than three quarter of the samples (81.4%) having the education qualification at diploma, bachelor and postgraduate level.

Travel Characteristics

There were four elements in the questionnaire that measure travel characteristics namely, vacation group size, length of vacation, type of accommodation stayed while in vacation and also their vacation's type. Figure 1 presents the percentage of vacation's group size in the island and mountain which shows five types of travel group size. Majority of the respondents travelled in pair (29.7%) and in a group of more than eight people (28.2%).

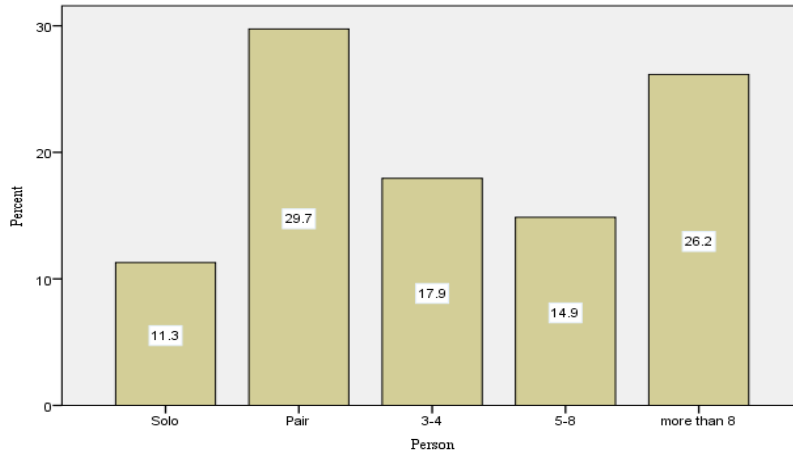


Figure 1. Vacation Group Sizes of Sport Tourists Visiting Mount Kinabalu

With respect to the length of vacation, Figure 2 shows that most sport tourists spend their stay for 2-4 days (49.2%) followed by 5-7 days (25.1%). From figure 3, it turns out that hostel/ dorm (41%) and hotel (22.6%) were the most chosen type of accommodation while homestay, campgrounds and home of friends/relatives were their least pick.

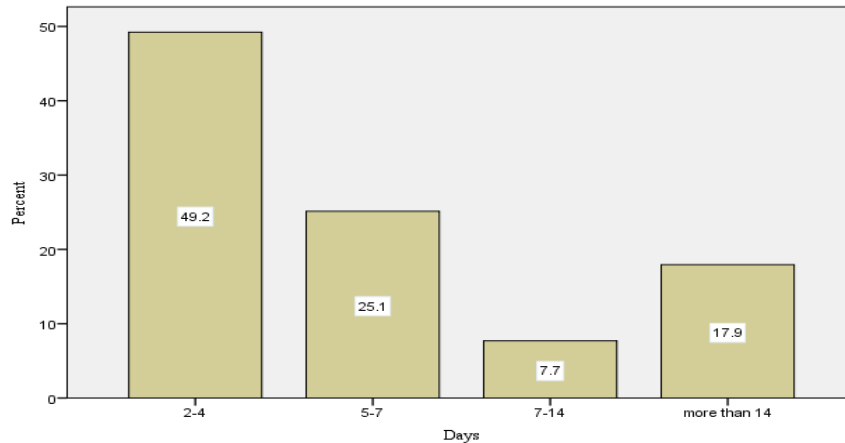


Figure 2. Length of Vacation of Sport Tourists Visiting Mount Kinabalu

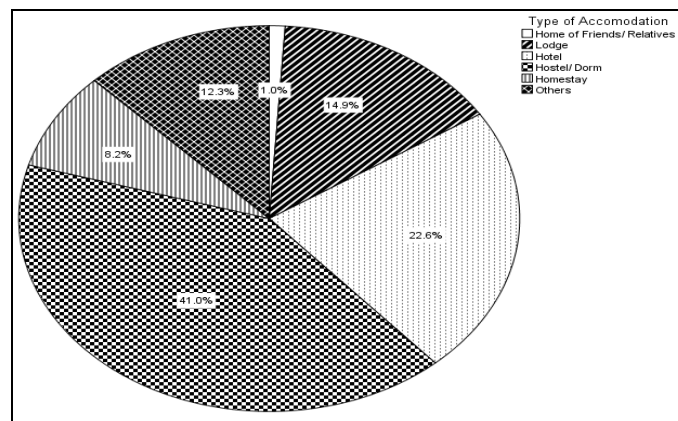


Figure 3 Type of Accommodation of Sport Tourists Visiting Mount Kinabalu

Results from Figure 4 illustrate that the type of vacation used by respondents were with the package tour (54.4%) and by self-guided tour (40%). There is however small portion of respondents that utilized the mix of both package tour and self-guided tour during their visit as active sport tourists to Sabah for about 5.6%. The phenomenon of group travel as well as undertaking package tour, partially arranged or fully inclusive, is appeared to be common among the general enthusiasts of adventure travellers as it will accommodates safety as well as promotes carefree vacation (Sung, 2004).

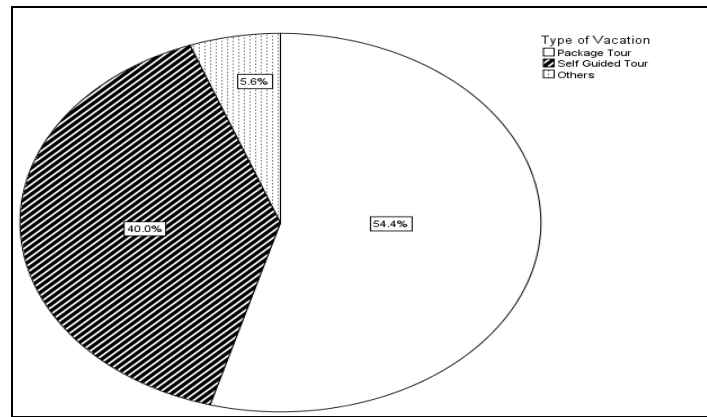


Figure 4. Types of vacation

Comparison on Push Motives

In completing the analysis for discovering the travel motivation of sport tourists visiting Mount Kinabalu, Sabah, there were four salient push motives been used for measurement. The push variables consisted of competence mastery, stimulus avoidance, social and intellectual motives. Table 2 below shows the result of comparison between the domestic and international sport tourists visiting Mount Kinabalu using the T-test.

Table 2. Push Motives of Domestic and International Sport Tourists Visiting Sabah at Mount Kinabalu using T-test

Variables	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig (2-tailed) p
<i>Competence Mastery</i>						
Domestic	71	4.15	.69	3.92	151.25	.01*
International	124	3.74	.73			
<i>Stimulus Avoidance</i>						
Domestic	71	3.33	.92	-.63	135.74	.53
International	124	3.42	.85			
<i>Social</i>						
Domestic	71	3.83	.79	5.24	155.55	.01*
International	124	3.19	.86			
<i>Intellectual</i>						
Domestic	71	4.14	.66	1.76	142.90	.08
International	124	3.97	.65			

*The mean different is significant at p<.05

First, no significant difference were found in stimulus avoidance scores for domestic sport tourists (M = 3.33, SD = .92) and international sport tourists (M = 3.42, SD = .85). Same scenario applied to the intellectual motive scores for domestic (M = 4.14, SD = .66) and international (M = 3.97, SD = .65) sport tourists visiting Mount Kinabalu. From these, it can be consider that, both domestic and international sport tourists have the same degree of motive for tranquillity or escape besides self and place discovery desire. However, inspection of the groups of domestic and international active sport tourists on the competence mastery motives shows that the average scores for international sport tourists (M = 3.74, SD = .73) is significantly lower than the domestic sport tourists (M = 4.15, SD = .69). It means that domestic sport tourists were more likely to have the desire to participate in mountain climbing for the purpose of improving skills as well as self-challenge compared to the international sport tourists. The result was also consistent in other studies in the sport tourism setting in which Allman et al., (2009) reported in their study that the extreme sport enthusiast of BASE jumpers in West Virginia

rated sense of accomplishment as their primary values of participation in the sport experience. Likewise, same scenario can be explained to the motivation of sport tourists at the Mount Kinabalu. The journey up Mount Kinabalu is a test of mental and physical strength. To take the vacation for the purpose conquering the mountainous challenges, one has to be mentally prepared and physically fit. Secondly, domestic sport tourists tend to adopt greater push in terms of the need for social motives than the international sport tourists. The social motive displays significance difference in scores for local ($M = 3.83$, $SD = .79$) and international sport tourists ($M = 3.19$, $SD = .86$). In this scenario, by engaging in mountain climbing, local sport tourists hope to enhance relationships, achieve sense of belonging as well as to be able to meet new and different people.

Pull Factors

The direct logistic regression was used to assess the attributes and destination images of Mount Kinabalu captured by sport tourists. The results of the assessment of tourist's perceptions of attributes and images are important to identify the strong and positive values or even negative dimension of Mount Kinabalu as destinations with strong, positive images and attributes are more likely to be chosen in the travel decision process (Goodrich, 1978; Woodside & Lysonski, 1989). Table 4.7 displays some attributes of Mount Kinabalu with positive and negative coefficients which contribute statistically significant data to the study.

Table 3. Sport Tourists Opinions on Attributes of Mount Kinabalu using Logistic Regression

Attributes/ Destination Images	Coefficient (B)	Sig. Level
Coastal/ Inland	-.662	.01
Expensive/ Inexpensive	-.478	.02
Busy/ Quiet	.801	.01
Domestic/ Foreign	-.756	.01
Group Oriented/ Individualistic	-.606	.01
Family Oriented/ Adult Oriented	-0.515	.01
Safe/ Risky	.478	.02
Close To Home/ Far Away	-.445	.01
Deserted/ Crowded	-.654	.01

Based on the table, there were nine variables with significant values. First, domestics saw that the ambiance at Mount Kinabalu is foreign and far away while internationals perceived it as domestic and close to home. This may be due to the fact that domestic climbers found the place was compact with foreigners given the fact that almost 70% of the respondents there were internationals. The nature of the mountain climbing which acquire one to climb up to 4-7 hours from starting point to the accommodation place were also among reasons why domestics feel they are far away from home. It was the other way around for the international sport tourists because of the weather (extremely cold, just without the snow), the food that were served (variety of food include western cuisine) as well as seeing and meeting many English speaking people makes them feel like it was mutual with their atmosphere back in their place. Cohen (1972) in his study on international tourism stated that people would experience pleasant trip as long as the destination has some similarities with their origin namely, food or another person from their country. Therefore, even though they were travelling thousand miles away from their countries, they still feel like they are close to home. However, according to Pearce (1982) there is a possibility that tourists may perceive changes in holiday destinations due to the consequences of travelling overseas especially when travelling to a lot of destinations in one set of travelling period. Domestics also characterized the life condition at Mount Kinabalu as busy and crowded. There is a possibility that their everyday routine is not as hectic as when they participate in tourism especially mount climbing where you got to see hikers climbing up and down on your way up to the stay overnight point. It is important to note that the trails at Mount Kinabalu are narrow; at certain areas you even have to stop and move aside in order to allow other people to pass you. International tourists on the other hand, perceived the place as quiet and deserted. In addition, the domestic sport tourists perceived that sport tourism environment at Mount Kinabalu as individualistic and adult oriented. It is appropriate to say that the domestics aware that sport tourism at Mount Kinabalu are safe but do not think that mountain climbing is suitable for children or large entities of people. They might relate the issue of safety to the fact that even though they find the place foreign with many non-local people but they are still in the country, so they are secure from any threats. Conversely, the international sport tourists perceived that there is more risk to undertake sport tourism in Sabah, particularly at Mount Kinabalu. A possible explanation for this phenomenon takes account of the nature of the mountain climbing activity which required physical fitness and mental toughness especially when the weather is bad that can cause unpreventable accident. In addition, it is also possible to include their concerns on natural environmental health hazards travellers are exposed to, such as mountain sickness, 'cold-related' trouble, insect bites and more (Wilks & Oldenburg, 1995). Kaseva & Moirana (2010) in their study on solid management in Mount Kili Manjaro stated that the activity of tourism on the mountain is a challenge for tourism in relation to the potential environmental

pollution which can lead to environmental health hazards. To prevent this problem from happening hence, tackling this fear to environmental health threats among international tourists, the resources recovery followed by conservation measures are to be fostered by the Sabah Parks. Other than that, promotion and education of modern health should be introduced among the international tourists (Bauer, 2001; Helen, 1995). However, the evidence of some teenagers climbing in the group of four to eight and parents with two children of 8 – 10 years of aged among the international sport tourists suggests that mountain climbing is also sufficient for group and family oriented setting. This is supported by Weed & Bull (2004) stating that one of the many important factors to determine holiday destination is the opportunity to participate in sport tourism as a family, particularly with the involvement of children. Last but not least, in relation with the cost of getting to Mount Kinabalu for sport tourism, domestics said it is cheap while internationals found it is expensive. This is especially true given the accommodation, park entrance, food, permit and insurance fees for the non-Malaysian climbers are three times than the rates for Malaysian. It is also proper to mind that the transportation fares for the international tourists to come to Malaysia is not included yet and that is the reason why they were saying it is expensive.

Discussion

This study addresses some gaps in knowledge of sport tourism in Sabah through profiling the demographic backgrounds of the respondents. The findings would benefit marketing people concerning not only to what extent the background information and travel characteristic influenced travel decision making, but also through their motives for travel as well as their perception on Mount Kinabalu attributes. Based on the demographic profile result, a recommendation to Sabah Tourism as the state tourism authority should be made to target the tourists' profile on their marketing strategy to promote sport tourism in Sabah as follows: young people of 22-27 years old and age-30 transition of 28-32 years old of singles, company employee and well-educated. Interestingly, the profiling results obtained from this study resembled the findings of demographic profiles of sport tourists (active and passive) visiting small scale sport event tourism in Lake Kenyir, Malaysia identified by Aminuddin et al., (2009). This implies that the finding of this study may be generalized to other sport tourist involvement in tourism in this country.

Most active sport tourists in this study favoured to travel in a minimum group size of two. However, group size of more than 8 persons was ranked second in the vacation's size variable. It suggested that mountain climbing as a sport tourism experience is not only suits for small group but also appears as a large group oriented kind of activity. It also have been recognized that the climbers arranged their vacations through both package tour and self-guided themselves. Due to this, the Sabah Parks who are responsible for the arrangement of mountain climbing package and the Sutera Sanctuary Lodge (SSL) who provide arrangement for accommodation at the mountain should start to concentrate on designing and promoting packages for two as well as for groups. Sabah Parks and SSL both need to keep up the good performance via keeping record of the climbers' opinion on quality of services and also suggestions for future improvement. A quick paper-based survey can be distributed before climbers leave the rest house for example. Continuous feedbacks can be invaluable resources to maintain and encourage participation of sport tourism to the place.

Since the physically and mentally challenge climb can be completed in 2 days 1 night, travel tours could consider developing the existing package by adding some other non sport tourism experiences. For example, there are few places at the same district which offer the opportunity for leisure, sightseeing and relaxation, namely The Desa Dairy Farm and War Memorial in Kundasang (a 15 minutes drive from Mount Kinabalu). Kundasang is also famous as a spot for fresh fruits, vegetables and flowers due to its cool climate. Besides that, jungle trekking and canopy walking at Poring Hot Spring is only 45 minutes drive from Mount Kinabalu. Tourists really can favor relaxation after massive tiredness from mountain climbing by enjoying the splashing cool waterfalls and hot spring pools at the same time. While relaxing, tourists can also visit the park for the largest flower hunting, as Sabah has the largest concentration of Rafflesia population in the world. The variety interesting activities in a package will encourage tourists to stay longer and spend more money in the state just as promoting non sport tourism attributes available in the area. In addition, Sabah Parks and Sabah Sanctuary Lodge both need to keep up the good performance via keeping record of the climbers' opinion on quality of services and also suggestions for future improvement. A quick paper-based survey can be distributed before climbers leave the rest house for example. Continuous feedbacks can be invaluable resources to maintain and encourage participation of sport tourism to the place.

In addition to that, the most important findings offer some perceptive of market segmentation by travel motivations for sport tourism in Mount Kinabalu. The result from the analysis of push factors which were used to better understand the tourists' needs, suggest that the domestic active sport tourists differed from the international sport tourists in a way that they have greater desire for competence-mastery and social motives for visiting Mount Kinabalu. Mount Kinabalu appeared to be one of the prominent mountains in Southeast Asia and world's highest via feratta for mountain torq. Given the fact that domestic people have the opportunity to experience a world-class sport tourism destination in their very own country, the role of motivation in

competence-mastery context is genuinely understandable. It is within the adventurous people “natural range of behaviours”. Nicholls (1984) in his works on achievement goal theory on physical activity suggests that to be active by developing skills, challenging abilities and demonstrating mastery all play a part in how people can be competitive. It is best to know though that the normal mountain climbing and mountain torq’s via feratta activity are run by separate body with expensive price for each especially for the mountain torq. Therefore, a recommendation for Sabah Parks and Mountain Torq Sdn Bhd to work together is proposed. These two bodies can collaborate and come up with a package for both activities which of course offers lower price than to buy it separately. With the availability of such package, it will be able to attract more adventure seekers as it is like they “kill a bird with one stone”.

Mount Kinabalu is not the only mountain in the state. The second highest mountain in Malaysia also located in Sabah, just it is not under the management of Sabah Parks, but the Sabah Forestry Department. Hence, Sabah Parks also can work together with the Sabah Forestry Department whom in charge of the second highest mountain in Malaysia, Mount Trus Madi, again to come up with new sport tourism package for climbing both Mount Kinabalu and Trus Madi. Since these two mountains have their own challenges and climbing difficulties, the package offering two climbs will provide new opportunity for physically and emotionally tested which may act as the means for competence-mastery experience. Other spots include the Tawau Hills and Crocker Range Park which was under management of Sabah Parks is also suitable for jungle trekkers. From here, it is also rational to say that domestic people have the chance to prepare, develop and improve their mountaineering skills within the country before seeking for mountain climbing internationally.

The Mountain Torq Sdn Bhd who ran the mountain torq’s activities should properly promote the sport tourism opportunity. As it is new still and involve high-risk, the advertising should be very precise in which details on its high adventure and safety, should be highlighted. Advertisement via printed material (magazine) is suggested but electronic media (website, television) could be more effective. This approach could attract the competitive seeker namely domestic sport tourists whom more motivated by the competitive mastery and social push factors. Besides running promotional approaches via advertisement, Mountain Torq Sdn Bhd also could offer special package for couple or two persons. The nature of the activity itself really challenges an individual to face the adventure. There is a possibility that people are more likely to engage in it if their peers also participating in the mountain torq’s activities. Therefore, rather than just having individual package, Mountain Tors Sdn Bhd can develop other package with special price for registration more than four people at time for instance. This strategy could encourage participation as tourists may find it as interesting and worth deal. In addition, as some of the sport tourism destinations in Sabah were far away from one another, tour agents also can work together with local commuter airlines (MASwings) to come up with package of sport experiences and transportation from place to place. The main point of recommending this package is to suggest sport tourism in the state to be more cost-effective, to provide more options for various types of active sport tourists besides leading to the promotion of other unknown attractions in the state.

The pull factors portrayed as the individual perceptions of attributes of Mount Kinabalu. Domestic and international sport tourists perceived several differences of attributes and destination images in terms of describing Mount Kinabalu. Based on the results generated in this study, the promotion materials should be able to deliver the positive images of Mount Kinabalu from the perspective of both groups which basically are quiet, safe and it is suitable for adult as well as family orientation. As for the negative comments on images and attributes such as risky and expensive, necessary action to improve the flaw should be implement to promote positive images in the future. Lastly, it is highly recommended that Sabah Tourism Board, Sabah Parks and all tour operators at every sport tourism destinations in Sabah to make sure their websites are up-to-date at all times. Since website appeared as a great tool for communicating information, it is as well a mean to market the sport tourism product to the world wide audience especially targeting the group who prefer self-guide tour. This type of tourists basically plans their trip by collecting information and reading reviews of people from the respective websites.

Conclusions

These findings which investigated travel motivations of sport tourists visiting Sabah suggested implications for the academicians as well as practitioners. Theoretically, researchers and academicians want to understand the motivational force that drive people to travel and prompt to one particular destination. Practically, the knowledge of tourists’ behaviour and their preferences are beneficial in order to serve marketing purposes for boosting tourism in relation to economy significance. For the theoretical significance, this study contributed to the body of knowledge in the sport tourism setting in Malaysia. Other than that, it is also beneficial for researchers in the area of destination image research. Therefore, this study plays a big role in providing new information on the demographic profiling, travel characteristics, motivations as well as attributes identification of the sport tourism. The differences between domestic and international sport tourists are not only on the travel motivations, but also on the perception of destination. Sonmez & Sirakaya (2002) suggested that the inclusion of more than one destination in one study would provide more meaningful result. Such information is

crucial for further practical marketing implications as well as destination's development, and the importance of this sport tourism study is evident. Therefore, for future studies, the inclusion of more than one sport tourism destination is suggested as the findings will produce very valuable insights. Other than that, this study acted as a stepping stone onto more tourism academic research to better serve the tourism industry in the future. Practical significance was mainly based on marketing implications. Before this, active sport tourists were difficult to profile because little is known about them. But now that data on demographic profile, travel characteristics, travel motivations and attributes illuminated, a clear pattern of behaviour is available. The travel decision making is observed. Before this, marketing effort has been touted without the presence of proper research but now with the proper intellectual evidences from this study, marketers can improved strategies thus expect increase in the volume of visitation by tourists. Marketing efforts can be improve based on the information. Knowledge on market segmentation, product development and promotions can be beneficial for sport marketers and authority namely Sabah Parks, Sabah Tourism Board, private travel tours and tour operators. Product development should be made based on the push motives of the sport tourists according to their national groupings (domestic/ international). Once the sport product is developed, the targeting of appropriate market segment is of importance. In relation to market segmentation, sport tourism marketers are now possible to reach the right target market based on the discussed criteria in the section before. By targeting the right market, the new developed product can be offered via effective communication strategies or promotional campaign such as advertising. When sufficient information can get to the potential sport tourists, their visitations are expected. By doing this, domestic tourism as well as international tourist arrivals to the state will continue to increase therefore lead to economy boost through enhancement of foreign exchanges as well as continuity to employment opportunities.

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