

PESTLE Analysis and Sustainable Event Marketing - Evidences from Mount Kinabalu International Climbathon Destination, Borneo

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Abstract

As an industry practitioner, this research strives to explore and engage in intellectual discourse on the current theoretical paradigm practice of sustainable marketing efficiency strategy design for tourism, hospitality establishments, and event staging from the viewpoints of Destination management organisations (DMOs). Critically, this industry-academic writing is committed to contributing to a better interpretation and, possibly, an assessment of the current marketing principle application by highlighting a potential gap between theory (academic) and practice (industry), accompanied by recommendations on holistic marketing, thereby bridging between conventional and sustainable marketing. A systematic qualitative review using explorative content analysis combined with PESTLE feasibility studies of the destination. Approximately 60 journals, book chapters, and relevant newspaper topics, including pertinent literatures, were screened for analysis. The PESTLE approach to DMOs marketing covers direction, product, service, positioning, branding, and niche segmentation. It also explores Muslim-friendly marketing ideas and their role in compelling destination and event hospitality management. The findings provide analytical perspectives of future hallmarks events for developing countries. Furthermore, it presents a distinct and explicit sustainable marketing policy for event marketers, event organisers, DMOs, and relevant bodies to embed sustainable marketing strategy execution in the event hospitality segment. Additionally, it includes an illustration of a sustainable framework for the future Mount Kinabalu International Climbathon (MKIC) event, recommended to the respective DMOs and event organisers.

Keywords: Sustainable Marketing Plan; Marketing Design; Destination Management Organisations DMOs; Mount Kinabalu International Climbathon Event (MKIC); PESTLE analysis.

A. INTRODUCTION

Three decades ago, the landscape of traditional marketing revolved around the power of Word of Mouth (WOM) within the peripheral business environment. However, with the rapid advancement of information and communication technology (ICT), this phenomenon has transformed remarkably into Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) through the expansive reach of social media platforms. Consequently, individuals such as guests, tourists, visitors, and travellers have become incessant contributors to destination reviews, capable of exerting substantial influence and impact on events, festivals, and the hospitality industry in the long term. Throughout history, marketing communications in the hospitality industry revolved around hotel branding, sales and advertising techniques, public relations, and sponsorship approaches. These encompassed various printed publicity materials such as brochures, direct mail, advertisements, and personal selling. Broadly speaking, marketing was centred around the ordinary Ps - Product, Price, Promotion, and Place - including Process, People, Physical Environment, and Public Relations. However, the invasion and advancement of ICT in marketing have expanded these Ps to encompass Positioning, Targeting, Segmentation, Branding, the business's Image, Customer Support, as well as the Company Creed (Kotler & Gertner, 2002; Tsiotsou & Goldsmith, 2012; Bowie, Buttle, Gursoy, & Brookes, 2016; Khan, Hakeem, & Naumov, 2018).

In today's era, WOM has evolved into a comprehensive marketing plan that serves as a blueprint for year-round operations and upgrades. It encompasses sustainable marketing design, complete with a

robust multi-year promotional strategy and an immersive event or tour experience. Moreover, it incorporates a premium theme package that adheres to the post-Covid-19 Standard Operating Procedure on Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) assessment (COSO, 2018). Throughout the process, marketers uphold the highest standards of professional conduct before, during, and after the event itinerary. However, unmonitored eWOM negatively affected the venue of the event, as was the case with the Mount Kinabalu International Climbathon (MKIC). Despite being hailed as the most prestigious mountain trail running event for the past 25 years, the MKIC has ceased to stage since 2017 due to the adverse effects of eWOM. The constant stream of discouraging reviews and feedback has played a significant role in this downfall, underscoring the importance of long-term event sustainability and longevity (Musgrave, 2011). It is imperative to ensure that the positive impact of such events continues to benefit the host resident's economy, quality of life, socio-cultural fabric, human relations, as well as constitutional and ecological concerns.

The Mount Kinabalu Climbathon Event (MKIC) has been a renowned mountain race in Southeast Asia since 1987, held annually in Kundasang, Sabah, Malaysia. Located in a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Mount Kinabalu, the race attracts elite athletes, professional mountaineers, and individuals from various disciplines. However, the event needs to capitalise on its potential to create a multiplier effect for the local community. The current infrastructure in Kundasang faces limitations, such as poorly maintained roadways, road holes, and vulnerability to landslides during heavy rainfall. Additionally, unregulated highland farming and unplanned homestay development may discourage participants and spectators, reducing the potential economic impact on the local community. To fully leverage the MKIC's success, Kundasang requires enhanced facilities and improved road connectivity to community villages. Addressing uncontrolled highland farming practices and promoting sustainable tourism initiatives can contribute to a more immersive experience for participants and spectators while increasing the economic benefits for the local community. By addressing these challenges and implementing effective marketing strategies, the MKIC can unlock its potential and catalyse sustainable economic growth and community development in Kundasang.

Therefore, this article aims to provide a cohesive analysis using a qualitative systematic review in an explorative manner combined with a feasibility investigation on the Mount Kinabalu International Climbathon (MKIC) event and destinations by adopting Sustainable Marketing and PESTLE policy. This innovative discourse further reinforces with factual evidence from approximately 59 selected journals, including relevant book chapters on event management. The article begins with event marketing with business risk management assessment. Then a comprehensive discussion on traditional, conventional and how ICT steadily disrupts the Destination Marketing Organisations' (DMOs) operational business was presented. Next, a focus on the Muslim market segment in precise data is highlighted due to its global economic multiplier effect. Finally, a case study of the Mount Kinabalu International Climbathon Event (MKIC) is demonstrated meticulously with illustrative sustainable PESTLE (diagram form) for the DMOs' marketing adoption in managing the future MKIC event.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

The study adopted a systematic qualitative review methodology (Bearman et al., 2012), (Watts et al., 2017), (Pickering & Byrne, 2014) and (Zawacki-Richter, Kerres, Bedenlier, Bond, & Buntins, 2020). This research will analyse the Mount Kinabalu International Climbathon (MKIC) event and its destinations, focusing on sustainable marketing and PESTLE policy adoption. A systematic qualitative review and feasibility investigation are used to conduct a thorough analysis. An extensive search strategy targets relevant scholarly literature, including articles, book chapters, grey literature (reports, theses, and conference proceedings), including newspaper publications. Key concepts include the PESTLE approach, sustainable marketing, DMO role in event marketing, PESTLE for hallmark events, and sustainable

marketing for MICE management. The rigorous search optimisation approach ensures the retrieval of articles that align with the research criteria, enhancing the validity and relevance of the findings. The remaining 60 articles undergo rigorous keyword and thematic relevance screening to identify and include articles that contribute to the research objectives and provide valuable insights into the MKIC event, sustainable marketing practices, and the implications of PESTLE policy. The findings will offer valuable insights and recommendations for practitioners, policymakers, and stakeholders involved in organising and promoting similar events, ultimately fostering the sustainable development of the MKIC event and its associated destinations.

Diagram II: Qualitative Analytic Model

Authors	Coding & Themes	PESTLE	Thematic Synthesis
Bowie, D., Buttle, F., Gursoy, D., & Brookes, M. (2016). Hospitality marketing.	Hospitality marketing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Economic impact of marketing strategies in the hospitality industry. 2. Technological advancements in hospitality marketing. 3. Legal and ethical considerations in hospitality marketing. 	The experts examines the ideological and cultural contexts of hospitality marketing, considering the importance of customer satisfaction and building strong relationships.
Buathong, K., & Lai, P.-C. (2017). Perceived attributes of event sustainability in the MICE industry in Thailand.	Event Sustainability Attributes, MICE Industry	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Environmental perception of event sustainability in the MICE industry. 2. Social implications of sustainable events in Thailand. 	The journal examines the social and cultural contexts of event sustainability in the MICE industry, considering the role of different stakeholders and their influence on sustainable practices.
Chhabra, D. (2009). Proposing a sustainable marketing framework for heritage tourism.	Sustainable Marketing Framework, Heritage Tourism	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Economic benefits of sustainable heritage tourism 2. Social and cultural preservation through sustainable tourism 3. Ethical considerations in marketing heritage tourism 	Author focuses on the ideological context of sustainable marketing in heritage tourism, emphasising the importance of preserving cultural heritage and promoting responsible tourism practices.
COSO, W. (2018). Enterprise risk management.	Enterprise Risk Management (ERM); Environmental Risk, Social Risk, Governance-linked Risk	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Legal and regulatory frameworks for managing ERM-related risks. 2. Ethical implications of ERM risk management. 	The work explores the social and cultural contexts of enterprise risk management, considering the importance of addressing environmental and social risks in organisational decision-making.
Data, H. B. (2015). Analytics, and the Future of Marketing & Sales. In: McKinsey & Company.	Data Analytics, Marketing and Sales	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Technological advancements in marketing analytics. 2. Economic impact of data analytics on marketing and sales. 	This article analyses the technological context of marketing and sales, focusing on the impact of analytics on decision-making and customer engagement.
Gregoric, M. (2014). PESTEL analysis of tourism	PESTEL Analysis, Tourism Destination,	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Economic factors affecting MICE tourism destinations. 	The journal explores the social, cultural, and ideological contexts of

destinations in the perspective of business tourism (MICE).	MICE Perspectives, Business Tourism	2. Environmental perception and sustainability in MICE tourism.	tourism destinations, considering the impact of external factors on the attractiveness of destinations for business tourism.
Hartl, A. (2002). Developing marketing strategies for tourism destinations in peripheral areas of Europe.	Marketing Strategies, Tourism Destination, Europe & Peripheral Areas	1. Economic development in peripheral tourism destinations. 2. Social and cultural factors influencing tourism strategies.	The research examines the social and cultural contexts of marketing strategies in peripheral tourism destinations, considering the unique challenges and opportunities they face.
Hays, S., Page, S. J., & Buhalis, D. (2013). Social media as a destination marketing tool.	Social Media, Media Social Intervention, Destination Marketing Tool	1. Technological advancements in destination marketing. 2. Legal and ethical considerations in using social media for tourism.	This article investigates the social and cultural contexts of destination marketing, focusing on the role of social media in promoting tourism and engaging with potential visitors.
Hussin, R., & Kunjuraman, V. (2014). Sustainable Community Based Tourism (CBT) through homestay programme.	Sustainable Community-Based Tourism (CBT) Homestay Hospitality East Malaysia Homestay	1. Environmental sustainability in community-based tourism. 2. Social and cultural impact of homestay programs.	The study examines the social and cultural contexts of sustainable community-based tourism, emphasising the role of homestay programs in promoting community empowerment and cultural exchange.
Jamil, J., & Rahim, Z. A. (2022). Islamic hospitality philosophy.	Western Hospitality, Islamic hospitality, Host-Guest Relationship HGR, Traveller Psychographics Muslims Affairs	1. Political interest of Islamophobia agenda in hospitality industry. 2. Social and cultural aspects of Islamic hospitality philosophy. 3. Ethical considerations in HGR. 4. Legality aspect of Islamophobia hospitality by the service providers.	The researchers delves into the cultural and ideological contexts of Islamic hospitality, addressing the challenges of Islamophobia and examining traveler psychographics within the Muslim world.
Kamarudin, K., Wahid, S., & Chong, N. (2020). Challenges for Community-Based Rural Tourism Continuity and Resilience in Disaster Prone Area: The Case of Mesilou, Sabah.	Community Based Tourism Challenges, Rural Tourism Resilience, Natural Disaster, Mesilou, East Malaysia	1. Economic impact of natural disasters on rural tourism. 2. Social and community resilience in disaster-prone areas. 3. Environmental perception and sustainability in rural tourism. 4. Technological advancements in rural tourism development. 5. Legal and ethical considerations in disaster management for tourism.	This study examines the challenges faced by community-based rural tourism in disaster-prone areas, specifically focusing on the case of Mesilou in Sabah. It explores themes related to continuity, resilience, and the impact of disasters on tourism.

<p>Kara, E. (2018). A contemporary approach for strategic management in the tourism sector: PESTEL analysis on the city Muğla, Turkey.</p>	<p>PESTEL Analysis for City Strategic Management, Tourism Sector, Muğla city, Turkey.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Economic factors affecting tourism in Muğla. 2. Social and cultural aspects of tourism in Muğla. 3. Environmental perception and sustainability in tourism development. 4. Technological advancements in the tourism sector. 5. Legal and ethical considerations in tourism management. 	<p>Author presents a contemporary approach to strategic management in the tourism sector, using a PESTEL analysis specifically focused on the city of Muğla, Turkey. It explores themes related to strategic management and the impact of environmental factors on the tourism industry.</p>
<p>Khan, Y. H., Hakeem, S. M. A., & Naumov, N. (2018). The use of branding and market segmentation in hotel marketing: A Conceptual Review.</p>	<p>Branding, Market Segmentation, Hotel Marketing, Hospitality Marketing,</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Economic impact of branding and market segmentation in the hotel industry. 2. Social and cultural implications of hotel marketing strategies. 3. Legal and ethical considerations in hotel marketing. 	<p>This work provides a conceptual review of the use of branding and market segmentation in hotel marketing. It explores themes related to branding strategies, market segmentation techniques, and their impact on hotel marketing effectiveness.</p>
<p>Kim, S. S., Lee, C.-K., & Klenosky, D. B. (2003). The influence of push and pull factors at Korean national parks.</p>	<p>Destination Push factor, Destination Pull factor, National Parks, Case studies – Korea</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Economic impact of push and pull factors on Korean national parks. 2. Social and cultural factors influencing tourism at national parks. 3. Environmental Perception of Korean national parks. 	<p>Authors examines the influence of push and pull factors on visitor behaviour and preferences at Korean national parks. It explores themes related to motivations, destination attributes, and the impact of push and pulls factors on visitation and satisfaction.</p>
<p>Kinabalu, S. (2016). Socio-Economic Impacts of Natural Disasters in Rural Region of Kundasang, Sabah.</p>	<p>Social Impact, Economic Impact, Natural Disasters, Rural Region, Kundasang, East Malaysia</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Economic consequences of natural disasters in Kundasang, Sabah. 2. Social and community livelihood analysis after natural disasters. 	<p>The journal focuses on the socio-economic impacts of natural disasters in the rural region of Kundasang, Sabah. It explores themes related to livelihood analysis, community resilience, and the consequences of natural disasters on the local population.</p>
<p>Kler, B. K. (2016). The world's toughest mountain race Key success factors of 25 years of the Mount Kinabalu International Climbathon.</p>	<p>Success legacy, Mount Kinabalu International Climbathon (MKIC)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Economic impact of the MKIC. 2. Social and cultural significance of the MKIC event. 3. Environmental considerations in organising the MKIC. 	<p>The article explores the critical components of the successful MKIC. Through a comprehensive analysis of event planning, participant engagement, and pivotal factors showcase the triumph of past-event success.</p>

<p>Knott, B., Fyall, A., & Jones, I. (2015). The nation branding opportunities provided by a sport mega-event: South Africa and the 2010 FIFA World Cup.</p>	<p>National branding, Event Legacy, Socio-economy legacy, Mega Sport Event, FIFAL World Cup, Case Study</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Economic impact of the 2010 FIFA World Cup on South Africa. 2. Social and cultural impacts of World Cup to nation branding. 3. Environmental perception and sustainability in mega-event hosting. 4. Legal and ethical considerations in organising sport mega-events. 	<p>The authors focuses on the branding possibilities that emerged as a result of the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa, which was a significant sporting event. It explores subjects such as destination branding, the effects of the event, and how mega-events can impact a country's image and legacy.</p>
<p>Kovjanić, G. (2014). Islamic tourism as a factor of the Middle East regional development.</p>	<p>Islamic Tourism, Key Indicator, Regional Development, Middle-East, Case Study,</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Economic implications of Islamic tourism in the Middle East. 2. Social and cultural significance of Islamic tourism. 3. Environmental perception of tourism development in the region. 	<p>This study delves into the social, cultural, and ideological contexts of Islamic tourism in the Middle East. It analyses the impact of this tourism on regional development, including its economic and social effects. Additionally, it explores the challenges and opportunities that Islamic tourism offers to destination stakeholders.</p>
<p>Lockett, A. R. (2018). Online Marketing Strategies for Increasing Sales Revenues of Small Retail Businesses.</p>	<p>Online marketing, Sales & Revenue Strategies, Small Businesses,</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Economic impact of online marketing strategies for small businesses. 2. Social and cultural implications of online marketing. 3. Technological advancements in online marketing. 4. Legal and ethical considerations in online marketing. 	<p>The article helps small retailers increase sales with proven online marketing strategies. It covers digital techniques and emphasises the importance of a strong online presence for financial success.</p>
<p>Kotler, P., & Gertner, D. (2002). Country as brand, product, and beyond: A place marketing and brand management perspective.</p>	<p>Nation Branding, National products, Destination Marketing, Branding Management, Marketing Perspectives,</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Economic impact of place marketing & brand management. 2. Social and cultural implications of country branding. 3. Environmental perception and marketing sustainability. 4. Legal and ethical considerations for country branding. 	<p>Study delves into the idea of a country being viewed as a brand and how it impacts place marketing and brand management. It covers topics such as country branding strategies, techniques used in place marketing, and the influence of branding on a country's image.</p>

Researcher's Thematic Synthesis Review

Marketing Benchmark and Segmentation for Muslim Travellers

The foundation of the marketing benchmark is based on market targeting and segmentation, which provides clear direction for DMOs, destination brands, or resources. A successful sustainable marketing policy serves as a communication blueprint for travellers, hosts, guests, shareholders, and stakeholders in the hospitality industry (Narkiniemi, 2013). Creating a sustainable marketing event strategy that

promotes consistent economic and social growth is crucial. This approach improves the general well-being of the host community, including reducing crime and social conflict, and preserves a meaningful legacy in the short and long term (Mahadewi & Bali). According to (Morrison) a Marketing Organisation, best known as DMO, is professional public or private entity management responsible for coordinating and integrating ground infrastructure efforts in the tourism and hospitality destination.

This facilitation includes the administration of destination mixes, such as managing attractions, facilities & amenities, events, festivals, accessibilities, infrastructure, superstructure, hospitality resources and ancillary services (Hartl, 2002). Tourism and hospitality owners, stakeholders, guests, visitors, tourists and travellers are all involved in this collaboration capacity building. Long-term tourism marketing strategic planning, constant monitoring, and outcomes assessment from tourism and hospitality activities determine successful destination management. In addition, destination marketing design physical access (land, air and sea) transportation accessibility is best to integrate into facilitating the tourist and traveller movement to the event location. A well-designed and robust marketing plan considers the visitor and traveller segments. With Muslim travellers beginning to dominate many of the world's travel destinations, the business sector has become more dynamic, fluid, and global. Hence, to demand lawful, halal, Shariah-compliant, Muslim-friendly travel, event and hospitality activities/establishments. The Muslim population has risen to 1.8 billion, accounting for 24% of global tourism (Randeree, 2020). Another report by the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) states that Muslim travellers made 168 million international trips in 2019, and the market is expected to reach 300 million travellers by 2030. The GMTI report also found that Muslim travellers are young, well-educated, and affluent, with a strong focus on cultural and adventure travel. They also tend to prioritise halal-compliant and family-friendly hospitality options.

Therefore, marketing managers today face a challenging job acquiring a sense of understanding toward Muslim guests/tourists. The ability to customise a combination of lawful travel itineraries, including ground arrangements yet exceeding Muslim guests' expectations, will enable marketers to adopt comprehensive halal marketing resources and techniques to sustain their brand loyalty in the future. The hospitality industry has the potential to reach a vast and diverse audience, including Muslim travellers. By categorising these travellers based on psychographic segmentation, destination marketing organisations (DMOs) can tap into a shared set of values, interests, and lifestyles that transcend the school of thought and country of origin. However, the rise of Islamophobia tourism (Stephenson & Ali, 2010) poses a significant challenge for global marketers looking to establish finely-tuned marketing strategies in this segment. Despite this hurdle, there is hope for the industry. Big-data analytics and Marketing Return on Investment (MROI) can be used to optimise the Net Present Value (NPV) of the Muslim travel market while also gaining a deeper understanding of the demographic makeup of this emerging market (Data, 2015). By leveraging these tools, marketers can unlock the full potential of the Muslim travel market and establish themselves as experts in this niche segment.

The Muslim travel market has proven to be a lucrative segment of the hospitality and tourism sectors, generating a staggering 457 billion USD from Europe alone (Kovjanić, 2014). Statista.com (2022) states that the global Muslim world market share is USD 2 trillion, with Islamic Finance alongside halal Food & Beverage leading the hospitality business by almost 32%. The Muslim traveller global market has shown impressive growth in sustainable consumption and green guest/traveller preferences (White, Habib, & Hardisty, 2019). This trend is driven by increased awareness of social and environmental factors, with travellers seeking destinations that align with Islamic values. Emotional branding has proven to be the most effective strategy, regardless of faith preference. For travellers interested in heritage tourism, particularly those concerned with destination conservation, appreciation, and traditional legacy, sustainable consumption may be a key factor in their decision-making (Chhabra, 2009). By tapping into these values and interests, DMOs can establish themselves as leaders in this emerging market and create

lasting connections with Muslim travellers worldwide. A massive marketing challenges for future hallmark event, particularly those claimed to be world-class, is the discriminatory treatment of Muslim athletes. While MKIC is free from Islamophobia toward the athletes, unfortunately, studies collectively and consistently highlight the presence of Islamophobia towards Muslim athletes in various sporting arenas, emphasising the need for greater awareness, inclusivity, and efforts to combat discrimination in the world of sports.

Islamophobia towards Muslim athletes is concerning, as evidenced by various studies. Research has highlighted discrimination and marginalisation. Muslim athletes face different sporting contexts. For example, in sports apparel, news coverage of Nike's Pro Sports hijab revealed the presence of Islamophobia, patriarchy, and corporate hegemony (Moore, 2018). British Muslim experiences in English first-class cricket have highlighted the challenges Muslim athletes face in navigating their identities within the sporting community (Burdsey, 2010). Similarly, British Muslim female football players have encountered struggles related to Islam, identity, and wearing the hijab (A. Ahmad, 2012). Media portrayal of Muslim sportswomen has often perpetuated stereotypes and created a sense of otherness (Samie & Sehlkoglou, 2015). Furthermore, Islamophobia has been observed in non-Western contexts, such as Japan, where the country grapples with issues of Islamophobia at a societal level (Takahashi, 2021). In the digital realm, Muslim sportswomen have had trouble navigating online environments in the digital age, with everyday exposure and hashtag politics contributing to their visibility and acceptability (N. Ahmad & Thorpe, 2020).

Consequently, any effective marketing benchmark and design for events and destination should be effectively addressing the Islamophobia polemic in sport event henceforth enhance the destination's legacy on social, economy and investment benefits as preached by (Ma & Kaplanidou, 2017) and (Tsaour, Yen, Tu, Wang, & Liang, 2017). That includes paying attention to infrastructure, positive environmental legacy, and preserving the destination's natural ecology and local resources even after the event. Additionally, the marketing design should focus on preserving the destination's appealing image, energy and green facilities, growth in community engagement, enhanced hospitality, and community social well-being. This benchmark may anticipate when the event has elevated the quality of life for the host residents. Similarly, (Buathong & Lai, 2017) suggest that any Meeting, Incentive, Convention & Exhibition (MICE) staging should incorporate sustainable practices to intensify the DMO's competitive edge, with specific attention to the hospitality industry and event location. Likewise, (Preuss, 2015) believes destination legacies should be benchmarked with transparent PESTLE metrics that consider the tangible or intangible benefit over depletion welfare enhancement in host residents, thereby stimulating the actual economic benefit (Net worth rather than gross sales alone), and upgrade of local community facilities and amenities (Higham, 1999).

Consider, for example, the 2010 FIFA World Cup, which brought 10 billion Rand to the South African economy through enormous job creation and restoration of existing venues and public amenities for the nation's society. (Lockett, 2018) stated that a long-term marketing strategy should include a complete E-marketing strategy by a group of trustworthy DMOs. Significant social media e-marketing sites require compelling content with an appropriate advertising flyer, which can be extensively viewed by social media reviews using rigorous marketing data analytics. DMOs must carry out successful destination promotions to engage repeat guests and travellers. Field studies, white papers, online reviews, and social media platforms are frequently used to acquire customer data. Efficient online E-marketing aids in brand recognition, revenue growth and market share retention, particularly in small-scale hospitality establishments. Another analysis of the Indonesian travel sector (Paramadita, Sasongko, & Candra, 2019), found that 50% of Indonesian millennials aged 25 to 34 documented their travel exploits on Instagram (IG). This User-Generated Content UGC of IG influences public interest in visiting tourist and event places due to Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) reviews. DMOs require this information to maximise

destination-promoting efforts. Blogs, Google+, Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest, YouTube, Email Marketing, Smartphone applications, Pay-per-click, and Search Engine Optimisation or SEO, are among the most engaging digital advertising platforms and work best when paired with banner adverts. DMOs should use E-marketing (Hays, Page, & Buhalis, 2013), & (Rihova (Rihova, Buhalis, Moital, & Gouthro, 2015), since it is cost-effective, reliable henceforth, producing immediate results.

In contrast, a good characteristic of event management and destination marketing (Yeoman, Robertson, Ali-Knight, Drummond, & McMahon-Beattie, 2012), and (Yeoman, Oskam, & Postma, 2016), plan is its design with PESTEL. Theoretically, a PESTEL or PESTLE method (Gregoric, 2014), (Kara, 2018), (Zarkasyi, Kuniawan, & Darma, 2021), and (Ngoc, Tien, & Trang, 2021) generally refers to a systematic analysis study for market and industry assessment that applies to tourism and hospitality, which stands for Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental, and Legal variables influencing organisational success and failure. Initially, PESTEL was originally rebranding of SWOT analytics. However, an effective PESTLE combination produced prudent strategic planning and decisions as well as alternatives in tourism-hospitality MICE, Community Based Tourism and destination forecasting. As Gregoric (2014) and (Nicula & Spanu, 2019) highlighted, PESTEL and SWOT analysis are beneficial for long-term planning. They comprehensively understand the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that tourism destinations, hospitality, or event venues face due to various political, economic, social, technical, environmental, and legal issues.

These issues include government policies on travel and border controls during or after the Covid-19 pandemic, economic interventions to support severely impacted hospitality businesses, government initiatives to revive the nation's Gross Domestic Product GDP or Gross National Product GNP, market growth, inflation, foreign exchange rates to encourage outbound travel, and the recovery of the hotel labour workforce, many of whom were laid off due to the strict Movement Control Order. Surplus ICT consumption and how internet things help alleviate business severity problems among tourism and hospitality service providers (including tourism product/service innovation, extensive data application + emerging communication technologies), adapting to online business practises, and event staging. Additionally, destination natural resources requiring environmental preservation (global warming and waste management) would require regulation. Marketers could use the PESTEL technique for marketing design, which may help reevaluate the global traveller segment and hospitality demand and integrate with post-Covid19 Standard Operating Procedure whenever hallmark event restarts.

However, (Mataruna-Dos-Santos, Zardini-Filho, & Cazorla Milla, 2019) contend that a brand strategy should be based on a combination of SWOT, PESTLE, and CATWOE analysis. CATWOE, which stands for Clients, Actors, Transformation, World View, Owner, and Environmental Constraints, is a framework used to understand any analysis involving input or output conversion through a process highlighting framework. This paradigm is a universal thought construct that helps identify challenges faced by Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) and offers impact solutions to marketers and business holders. Essentially, CATWOE accelerates the alternative steps for addressing concerns faced by DMOs.

Sustainable Marketing Philosophy & Practice for Mount Kinabalu International Climbathon MKIC

Success due to its mountain running race experience. The event investigates the theoretical foundations for Borneo event marketing based on event staging portfolios spanning 30 years (1987-2017). The DMOs' roles via Sabah Parks, Sri Pelancongan Sabah, including Sabah Tourism Board's joint cooperation with other travel agencies, NGOs with the residents have carried out a massive destination marketing works while leveraging its implementation toward Borneo tourism, hospitality and event optimisation. This toughest mountain race in South East Asia is acclaimed as a marketing and management best practice event (Taks, Kesenne, Chalip, & Green, 2011), and (Thomson, Schlenker, & Schulenkorf, 2013), competition for similar scale sports games in the region. It continually delivers host and community

awareness programs while finding innovations to enhance destination and event attractiveness, particularly in the pandemic aftermath. Diversifying existing products, services, or MICE staging is crucial to speed up and rejuvenate post-Covid19 recovery.

Tourism themes such as nature-based tourism, cultural & heritage, community-based tourism (Razzaq et al., 2011), (Nair & Hamzah, 2015) & (Nair, Amran, & Musa, 2020), and host-guest relationships hospitality (Jamil & Rahim, 2022) are all essential for future MKIC sustainable rebranding. Approach to marketing tourism, hospitality or MICE staging could radically differ after the post-pandemic due to increased health and safety awareness, sensitivity and standards. However, responsible travellers with sustainable ethics unquestionably prefer by DMOs. Regarding destination branding, MKIC event has successfully branded this most challenging running event as a hallmark event. Its ability to deliver brand efficacy through active residents' engagement as hosts and athletes' competitors has a sense of gratitude and trust among stakeholders, shareholders, Climbathon athletes, spectators, and the local community in terms of supportive Host-Guest relationship.

Furthermore, the brand equity embedded brand name, slogan, logo or graphic signifies the cumulative accrued brand recognition worthy of marketing communication design. Henceforth, the MKIC sporting festival has a long-standing local and international legacy. Unfortunately, the MKIC DMO's and main organiser's abrupt decision to cancel this prestigious event since 2017 has sparked widespread outrage among Sabahan. The fury signifying this iconic event had a long history of significant *economic impact & image legacy* (Knott, Fyall, & Jones, 2015) & (Richards, 2017) to Borneo island and the Sabahan Community for the last 30 years. The Mount Kinabalu International Climbathon, the exclusive sporting event that has been organised since 1987, concluded after 30 years, driven by the accomplishment of its marketing objectives, as affirmed by its race director. However, this decision overlooks the local community's considerable economic and livelihood benefits. The MKIC attracted a multitude of athletes and spectators, generating contributions to the local economy through foreign exchange and event expenditures.

The discontinuation of the event has resulted in a substantial loss of economic advantages for the local community. While the event's organisers contend that promoting Mount Kinabalu as a World Heritage Site (UNESCO, 2000) has been excessive, more viable solutions exist than terminating the MKIC. It is imperative to develop alternative approaches for managing and regulating tourism activities, ensuring the preservation of Mount Kinabalu's cultural and natural heritage while fostering sustainable economic opportunities for the community. Effectively managing and regulating climbing activities, such as imposing a daily limit on the number of climbers and enforcing existing regulations, play a pivotal role in safeguarding the mountain's cultural and natural heritage. Discontinuing the event without duly considering the economic benefits to the local community and exploring alternative solutions for managing tourism activities may have adverse consequences for the local communities.

Therefore, after failing to be carried out since 2017, the MKIC certainly needs brand rejuvenation. Brand deterioration is inevitable due to Covid19 and competitiveness factors. The DMOs face challenges in finding a solution and alternative to restaging MKIC in the new norm. Any resilient and sustainable marketing framework for event management (Hoyle, 2002), (Presbury & Edwards, 2005), (Chhabra, 2009), (Gordon, Carrigan, & Hastings, 2011), and (Getz & Page, 2019) leveraging sport events (O'Brien & Chalip, 2007) strategic planning and execution for future MKIC should be able to re-integrate, re-build and re-coordinate the local infrastructures, attractions, accommodations, amenities along with ancillary services, economic and social, with lesser impact to destination ecological that linked directly to future MKIC. To ensure the MKIC exists as a hallmark sporting event for Malaysia, particularly in Borneo – Event competitiveness will remain a significant apparatus for any destination, and hospitality efficiency remains crucial in the event marketing sector. Overall, MKIC destination best positioned as a Community-Based Tourism Event or CBTE (Getz, 2000), (Mohamad & Hamzah, 2013), (Hussin & Kunjuran, 2014), (Yong

& Hassan, 2019), with 62 per cent of travellers to Borneo preferring eWOM combined with E-marketing booking & reservation in communicating their travel narratives. Almost 44 per cent of tourists visiting Borneo are inspired by a *push and pull factor* (Kim, Lee, & Klenosky, 2003) to boost their social status, escape from a hectic lifestyle, vacation, or relaxation. While Borneo's biodiversity abundance ecotourism influences *pull factor*, and according to (Som, Marzuki, & Yousefi, 2012), the Land Below the Wind's natural beauty consist of tropical rainforest, pristine islands, cultural heritage and Sabahan hospitality.

C. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Visual descriptions are used to present the PESTLE landmarks analysis of the destination. During the feasibility investigation of Kundasang Sabah, East Malaysia, the Qualitative Analytic Model of Diagram II was utilised by the researchers. The PESTLE issues and challenges faced by the destination are showcased in the following images. The field analysis revealed that there are some issues with the public and tourism infrastructure in Kundasang, such as poorly maintained roadways, potholes, and a lack of homestay sewage treatment. Heavy rainfall may also cause landslides in the area. In addition, unregulated highland farming and unplanned homestay development may discourage potential visitors and reduce the socio-economic viability and sustainable benefits for the local community in the long run.

Picture I: Kundasang PESTLE Major Challenges



Source: Researchers'

In order to address the significant challenges faced by Kundasang, it has been deemed necessary to establish eight key task forces for the local municipalities of Majlis Daerah Ranau and Majlis Daerah Kundasang. These task forces are focused on a variety of important areas, including the development and

revitalisation of Kundasang as a destination through the implementation of Tourism and Hospitality Environmental Impact Assessment (THEIA) guidelines. Proposed as a PESTLE - THEIA code of conduct – Table I, this initiative is designed to ensure that the tourism industry in Kundasang remains resilient, sustainable, and in harmony with the environment, while also promoting social justice. Such measures have been recommended by leading researchers, including (Schianetz, Kavanagh, & Lockington, 2007), (McCombes, Vanclay, & Evers, 2015), (Yeoman, 2015), (Tian, Peng, Zhang, Zhang, & Wang, 2020).

Table I: PESTLE Taskforce and THEIA Code of Conduct

PESTLE Taskforce	THEIA Code of Conduct
Develop a sewage treatment system (Social and Environment)	It is essential to prevent pollution and protect public health. Options include building a wastewater treatment plant, implementing septic tank systems, or promoting composting toilets.
Limit the number of new homestays and hillside development (Social, Legal and Environment)	Limiting the number of new homestays and other tourism developments may be necessary to reduce the strain on the local environment and infrastructure. That could involve implementing a cap on the number of such establishments or requiring developers to meet specific environmental and infrastructure standards before approval.
Promote sustainable tourism & hospitality practices (Economic, Social and Ecological)	Encouraging sustainable tourism practices such as eco-friendly accommodations, waste reduction, and supporting local businesses is helpful as it involves providing information or resources to tourists and business owners, as well as implementing policies and incentives to encourage sustainable practices. This effort helps reduce the possibility of flash floods, landslides, and severe impacts caused by tourism activities on the local environment and community.
Implement flood prevention measures (Social, Economic and Environment)	Given the recent flash floods and landslides, it is essential to implement prevention measures or mitigate future flood disasters. This could involve building levees, improving drainage systems, and planting vegetation to stabilise slopes and absorb water. It may also be necessary to relocate infrastructure and buildings out of flood-prone areas.
Establish environmental conservation and protection measures (Legal & Environment)	To preserve the natural beauty and ecological balance of the Kundasang Highlands and Mount Kinabalu serenity, it is critical to establish conservation and protection measures such as protected areas, conservation easements, and regulations on development and land use. This could involve working with local communities, NGOs, and government agencies to develop and implement such measures.
Invest and refurbish the road, electricity and water infrastructure to support tourism and local needs (Eco, Social, Tech and Environment)	To accommodate the needs of tourists and residents, it is necessary to invest in infrastructure such as roads, water and sewage systems, and electrical and telecommunications networks. It could involve working with local and regional authorities to prioritise and fund such projects.
Promote economic development and diversification to reduce reliance on tourism (Eco, Social, Tech and Environment)	To reduce the negative impact of over-tourism and promote long-term economic stability, the state government could assist in promoting economic development and diversification in the Kundasang Highlands. That includes supporting local businesses, the SMI industry and encouraging the empowerment of agriculture, retail or other service sectors.
Good governance and transparency practice of Ranau council, shareholders and stakeholders (PESTLE)	Good governance practices, a holistic approach, and upgrading public and community services for the Kundasang district requires commitment and cooperation from politicians at all levels of government. It may require significant time and resources, but the long-term benefits are well worth it. For example, the politicians can initiate a thriving hospitality industry that benefits Kundasang, Mesilou, Kouluan and Ranau residents by creating a transparent, sustainable development that prioritises the needs of locals and tourists. In addition, investing in infrastructure such as roads, public

	transport, and waste management facilities means investing in humanity's well-being while enhancing residents' quality of life.
Engage with local communities and stakeholders to provide or gather input & build support for Kundasang highland tourism sustainable planning efforts (PESTLE)	It is crucial to involve local communities and stakeholders in the Kundasang future planning process to ensure that they are educated about the plan; hence their needs and concerns are considered. This could involve holding public meetings, setting up committees or working groups, and engaging in ongoing dialogue with community members and stakeholders.

Source: Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental (PESTLE) of Author's field feasibility research to Kundasang District

Specifically, to ensure Kundasang destination ready for MKIC 2024 event and onward, the researchers outlines twelve Destination Management Organisation (DMOs) responsibilities to ensure the PESTLE Sustainable Marketing Strategy being executed effectively on the Table II below:

Table II: The PESTLE Sustainable Marketing Strategy for DMOs

1.	The DMOs are responsible for strengthening the upcoming Mount Kinabalu International Climbathon Event as a Community-Based Event with prominent Sabahan or Borneo hospitality.
2.	The DMOs are urging to upgrade the Employee Service Delivery aligned with an effective Host-Guest relationship to ensure lasting positive vibes of MKIC as a hallmark event.
3.	A close collaboration between DMOs, stakeholders, shareholders and the Sabah government to monitor the designated areas of infrastructure development is hugely needed to preserve Kundasang ecology biodiversity.
4.	Strict monitoring and observation of the carrying capacity are compulsory across the Kundasang highland due to its proximity to the MKIC location. These includes: A need for solid waste management; sewage treatment; Energy & water management (water reservoir & stable electricity energy supplies), organic waste produced, waste recycling policy etc. Sabah Electricity Sdn Bhd and Jabatan Air Sabah must promptly solve residents' complaints about electricity blackouts and frequent water shortage.
5.	A continuous approach to sustainable development and green maintenance on critical infrastructures & superstructures in the MKIC event location and Kundasang is essential. The community's current concern is zero assessment on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) feasibility study on the new hillsides exploration due to unmanageable physical development found to be the greatest threat to the undisturbed wilderness, frequent natural disasters - Road landslides and prone to earthquakes).
6.	The DMOs are responsible for executing the event's social and economic impact (cost-benefit analysis) & event legacy – Impact toward residents for future MKIC events.
7.	The DMOs are equally significant in maintaining the destination Event facilities, amenities, ancillary service functionality and accessibility at all times before, during and after the MKIC staging.
8.	The DMOs are responsible for reinforcing event and Hospitality services training & competencies for the local community, such as training those who work directly with lodging service providers, Food & Beverage operators, event patrons, transportation providers, ambulance personnel, mountain guides, and the local community.
9.	The DMOs are recommended to enhance upscale entrepreneurship through organisational structure streamlining and increase statistical data distribution effectiveness.
10.	The DMOs, in collaboration with the organiser, are to provide future MKIC recovery policy, funding & strategy due to economic loss caused by prolonged covid19 and post-pandemic slow business growth.
11.	The DMOs are culpable for integrating Advertisement, Promotion Mix and Marketing Communication via E-Marketing, Social Media Marketing, Redefined MKIC & Hospitality Ps, Branding & Equity, Destination Positioning, Image & Legacy).
12.	The DMOs are liable for event integration with other world-class Climbathon events to attract sufficient quality athletes worldwide to participate in the upcoming MKIC 2024 onwards.

Source: Researchers

Picture 2 shows the critical analysis of the PESTLE & Sustainable Destination Practice in visual illustration for the future MKIC event staging.



Source: Researchers'

The framework is also presented in compact mode (Appendix 1) outlines the list of DMOs: Hospitality Industry Providers, Event and festival Management shareholders/stakeholders, Destination Tourism and resources. This framework, which includes a PESTLE assessment, was designed using previous studies and academic data. It is designed to be easy to implement for future MKIC events and aims to support Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) in Borneo, as well as anyone involved in the event. By incorporating DMOs, this concise policy will ensure accountability for sustainable event practices. It also addresses the potential risks of staging the toughest mountain race for seven consecutive years (2017-2023). Furthermore, it will activate Sabah's state Ministry of Tourism to organise the MKIC post-pandemic.

Appendix 1

Compact Mode of Sustainable Hallmark Event Practice Framework for MKIC	
Hospitality Industry Provider	PESTLE Sustainable Event Policy & Practice for Future MKIC
Event Organiser (Shareholder/Stakeholder/Local Community Kudasang Homestay (Approximately 80 premises across Kudasang) Kinabalu Heritage Hotel & Spa Food & Beverage Establishment (Restaurant/Café/Food Truck/Street Stall/Catering & other F&B outlets) Travel Agencies & DMOs' extra miles' service	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strengthening the Community-Based Event with Sabahan hospitality. 2. Employee Service Delivery @ effective Host-Guest relationship 3. Provide designated areas for destination development and preservation of Kudasang ecology biodiversity. 4. Observation of the carrying capacity in Kudasang highland: A need for solid waste management, sewage

Government & Private Organisation Non-Government Agencies (NGOs) – Red Cross, Heath & Medical Personnel Ground Handler/Tour Guide/Tour Operator Public transportation / E-hailing Kundasang Community Mesilou Community Ranau Town and Community	treatment plant, energy & water management (quality water & stable electricity energy supplies), Organic waste produced, and a waste recycling policy 5. Sustainable development & maintenance of the critical infrastructures & superstructures in the event location and Kundasang. (current concern: zero assessment on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) feasibility study unmanageable physical development threat to the undisturbed wilderness, frequent natural disaster - Road landslides and prone to earthquake). 6. MKIC event social and economic impact (cost-benefit analysis) & event legacy – Impact toward residents. 7. Destination Event facilities, amenities and ancillary service functionality & accessibility. 8. Reinforcement of Event and Hospitality services training & competencies. 9. To enhance upscale entrepreneurship and increase the organisational structures and statistical data. 10. The post-pandemic MKIC recovery policy, funding & strategy. 11. Integration of Promotion Mix & Marketing Communication (E-Marketing, Social Media Marketing, Redefined Tourism & Hospitality Ps, Branding & Equity, Destination Positioning, Image & Legacy). 12. Integration with another world-class Climbathon event to attract sufficient quality athletes worldwide.
Event & Festival Management	
Pre MKIC Planning During MKIC Event Post-MKIC Closing, shut down and Evaluation Athletes & Attendees Administration Crowd Management Carrying Capacity MKIC facilities & Amenities Event SOP - Check-point, Water stations, Porterage, Physiotherapy, MKIC Athletes Transportation MKIC Event Logistic Ambulance & Security service	
Destination Tourism & Resources	
Kinabalu National Park Mount Kinabalu The great Mount Kinabalu Nature Trails Kundasang Highland - Villages Kundasang World War II Memorial Ranau Hot Spring - Langanan Waterfall, Canopy Walks, Botanical, Garden Butterfly Farm Marayang Hill Sosodikon Hill Tinorindak Hill Mesilou Dairy Farm Mesilou Cat House Strawberry Park Mesilou Golf Course Mesilou 360 Peak Other event landmarks	

Inspired from: (Hartl, 2002), (Mastura, Kalsom, Tangit, & Mohd, 2013), (Xin & Chan, 2014), (Kinabalu, 2016), (Yaacob, Abd Manaf, & Ash'aari, 2019), & (Kamarudin, Wahid, & Chong, 2020)

D. CONCLUSION

To successfully market hospitality and event destinations in today's world, marketers need to navigate potential threats like natural disasters, political instability, and the aftermath of the pandemic. That's why it's crucial to develop a sustainable marketing plan that incorporates PESTLE, SWOT, or CATWOE analysis. By doing so, marketers can ensure the longevity, resilience, and adaptability of destination marketing organisations (DMOs) in uncertain environments. The well-being of the community should always be the top priority in designing such a plan. This includes factors like socio-economic status, quality of life, and ecological preservation. To diversify the strategic marketing leadership role in Kundasang, Borneo, the MKIC event location, a proposed Sustainable Event Marketing Practice Framework is suggested for the event organiser. Marketers are expected to contribute strategically through the DMOs and follow sustainability themes in destination marketing activities. In the future, more

research is needed to investigate the actual impact of post-war or post-invasion economic and social destruction on tourism, hospitality, and event destinations.

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