

DESTINATION CHARACTERISTICS, TOURIST SATISFACTION, AND REVISIT INTENTION IN SPORT TOURISM

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(Received 18th March 2026; revised 26th June 2026; accepted 28th July 2026)

Abstract. This research study investigates the role of destination characteristics in shaping sports tourists' revisit intention, with tourist satisfaction examined as a mediating mechanism in island sport tourism. Integrating the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and Leiper's Tourist Attraction System (TAS), the study develops a destination-centred framework to explain sports tourism behaviour beyond event-focused perspectives. Data were collected through a survey of 302 sports tourists who attended sporting events in Langkawi, Malaysia, from 2020 to 2023. The hypothesised relationships were tested using partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). The results of the study demonstrate that destination characteristics significantly enhance tourist satisfaction, which subsequently influences revisit intention ($\beta = 0.424$, $p < 0.05$). This research study findings emphasise the importance of destination attributes in creating positive tourism experiences and identify satisfaction as a critical behavioural pathway linking destination quality to tourists' future behavioural intentions in island sport tourism contexts.

Keywords: sport tourism, destination characteristics, tourist satisfaction, revisit intention, island destinations

Introduction

Sport tourism has become one of the fastest-growing segments of the global tourism industry, contributing to destination economies through visitor expenditure, longer stays, and greater visibility (Raso and Cherubini, 2023). As destinations increasingly leverage sporting events as strategic tourism assets, academic attention has gradually shifted beyond short-term economic impacts toward understanding tourists' post-visit behavioural outcomes, particularly satisfaction and revisit intention (Jia et al., 2025; Wang et al., 2025). Despite this growing interest, much of the existing sport tourism literature remains predominantly event-centred. Studies have largely examined issues such as event quality, event image, and event-related satisfaction (Jia et al., 2025). This emphasis limits understanding of how destination-based experiences shape sports tourists' evaluations and subsequent behavioural intentions. For sport tourists, engagement with the destination often extends beyond the event itself through pre- and post-event leisure activities, destination exploration, and interactions with local communities (Carvache-Franco et al., 2024; Jeong, 2023). These broader experiences may shape overall satisfaction more strongly than event attributes alone and may play a decisive role in determining whether tourists are willing to revisit the destination (Deng, 2024; Wang et al., 2025).

This issue is particularly salient for island destinations, where tourism competitiveness frequently depends on environmental aesthetics, landscape diversity, and recreational opportunities, alongside accessibility and service provision (Makoondlall-Chadee et al., 2024). Langkawi Island, located in north-western

Peninsular Malaysia, provides an appropriate context for examining these relationships. The island is internationally recognised for its natural landscapes and has developed tourism infrastructure capable of supporting international sporting events, including endurance races and water-based competitions such as the Petronas Le Tour de Langkawi, Langkawi Ironman Triathlon, International Paintball, and the Langkawi International Regatta. Despite the regular staging of such events, Langkawi has yet to firmly establish itself as a leading sport tourism destination in terms of repeat visitation, suggesting that destination-wide experience quality warrants closer examination (Jia et al., 2025). To address this gap, the present study develops and tests a destination-centred framework grounded in the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) and Leiper (1990) Tourist Attraction System (TAS). This integration allows for simultaneous consideration of psychological intention formation and the experiential role of destination attributes in shaping tourist evaluations (Gao et al., 2026; Liu et al., 2024).

Literature review and hypotheses development

Sport tourism

Sport tourism is widely recognised as a growing niche within the broader tourism system, encompassing travel undertaken to participate in, observe, or otherwise engage with sport-related experiences (Gibson, 1998). Early research in this field focused primarily on definitional issues and typologies of sport tourists, distinguishing, for example, between active and passive participation (Thirumaran et al., 2022; Sangpikul, 2018; Gibson, 1998).

Revisit intention

Revisit intention is a particularly important construct in tourism research because repeat visitors tend to generate higher lifetime value, exhibit stronger destination attachment, and contribute to more stable demand patterns (Chen and Tsai, 2007). Despite its importance, sport tourism research has largely examined revisit intention from an event-centred perspective, emphasising event quality, event image, and event-related satisfaction. Comparatively less attention has been paid to the influence of the hosting destination itself, even though sport tourists are simultaneously exposed to a broader destination environment that extends beyond the event (Newland and Yoo, 2021).

Hosting destination characteristics

From a tourism perspective, destinations are commonly conceptualised as composite products comprising attractions, amenities, accessibility, supporting services, and the broader physical and social environment (Lew, 1987). Island destinations often compete through environmental aesthetics, landscape diversity, and recreational opportunities, while simultaneously facing constraints related to accessibility, spatial limitations, and seasonality (Thirumaran et al., 2022; Sangpikul, 2018). Empirical studies have shown that natural scenery, recreational offerings, and perceived destination suitability significantly influence tourist evaluations and loyalty-related outcomes (Hallmann et al., 2024), underscoring the importance of the broader destination experience in sport tourism.

Sports tourist satisfaction

Satisfaction reflects an overall evaluative judgement formed through comparisons between expectations and perceived experience outcomes, integrating both cognitive assessments and affective responses (Agustina and Artanti, 2020). Recent empirical work confirms that destination image, perceived value, and place attachment each positively affect revisit intention among sports tourists, with satisfaction serving as a key mediating pathway (Gao et al., 2026; Hu, 2026). In destination contexts, satisfaction is shaped not only by service encounters but also by environmental, social, and experiential qualities embedded in the destination setting (Ramkissoon, 2022; Eusébio and Vieira, 2013). Although satisfaction is frequently examined as a direct antecedent of revisit intention, its mediating role is theoretically critical: it explains how tourists' perceptions of destination attributes are translated into behavioural intentions (Abbasi et al., 2021).

The theoretical framing draws on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) and Leiper (1990) Tourist Attraction System (TAS). TPB conceptualises behavioural intention as a function of evaluative judgements, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control, with satisfaction-related evaluations aligning closely with the attitudinal component central to intention formation (Lam and Hsu, 2004). TAS frames the destination as an attraction nucleus extending beyond the event itself to destination characteristics that shape experience quality (Newland and Aicher, 2018; Higham, 2005). Within this integrated framework, tourist satisfaction functions as a psychological mechanism linking destination characteristics to revisit intention, bridging experiential context with behavioural outcomes. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed: (H1): Hosting destination characteristics positively influence sports tourist satisfaction; (H2): Sports tourist satisfaction positively influences revisit intention; (H3): Sports tourist satisfaction mediates the relationship between hosting destination characteristics and revisit intention.

Materials and Methods

Data collection procedure

This study was conducted among attendees of sporting events held at Langkawi Island, Malaysia. A single-destination context was selected to minimise contextual heterogeneity and to allow a focused examination of how destination-based evaluations influence sports tourists' behavioural intentions. Data were collected using a self-administered online questionnaire distributed through sport-event and destination-related social media channels. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. To reduce common method bias, procedural remedies were applied, including neutral item wording, clear instructions, and separation of constructs across questionnaire sections. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the relevant institutional research ethics committee. The target population comprised sports tourists who had attended at least one sporting event in Langkawi during the reference period (2020–2023). Given the absence of a comprehensive sampling frame for sports event attendees, purposive sampling was employed via sport-event-related and destination-focused social media platforms. The data collection took place between May and August 2023, allowing ample data collection and response acquisition time. A total of 302 valid responses were

retained for analysis, exceeding the minimum sample size requirements for mediation analysis in PLS-SEM (Hair et al., 2022).

Measurement instruments

The measurement instruments were adapted from established and previously validated scales, with modifications made to align with the context of sport tourism events in Langkawi. Items measuring hosting destination characteristics were derived from Moon and Han (2018), Mat Som et al. (2012) as well as Crouch and Ritchie (1999), while the satisfaction items were adapted from Kruger and Viljoen (2019), Brown et al. (2017), as well as Shah and Yusof (2008). Meanwhile, with additional elements from Aicher et al. (2020). Hosting destination characteristics captured evaluations of environmental appeal, infrastructure and services, recreational offerings, and perceived destination suitability for sporting events. Sports tourist satisfaction measured overall evaluative judgement of the destination experience relative to expectations. Revisit intention assessed respondents' likelihood of returning to Langkawi in the future. All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Content validity was ensured through expert review, and a pilot test confirmed acceptable internal consistency.

Results and Discussion

Frequency analysis

This section reports the demographic profile of respondents, including gender, age group, educational attainment, marital status, monthly income, and employment status. The results are summarised in *Table 1*. A total of 302 valid responses were included in the final analysis. Female respondents constituted a slightly larger proportion (53%) than male respondents (47%). Most participants were between 18 and 34 years old, consistent with youth-dominant patterns in sport tourism (Newland and Aicher, 2018).

Table 1. *Demographic profile of the respondents.*

Characteristics	N	%
Gender: Male	142	47
Gender: Female	160	53
Age: 18–24	127	42
Age: 25–34	92	30
Age: 35 and above	83	28
Education: High School/Diploma	89	30
Education: Bachelor's Degree	191	63
Education: Postgraduate	22	7
Marital: Single	225	74
Marital: Married	69	23
Marital: Others	8	3
Income: Less than RM 2,500	45	14
Income: RM 2,501 – RM 7,500	184	61
Income: More than RM 7,501	73	24
Employment: Government Sector	71	23
Employment: Private Sector	92	30
Employment: Self-employed/Freelance	58	19
Employment: Student & Others	81	27

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Full collinearity

To address common method bias (CMB), full collinearity testing was conducted following Kock (2015). This procedure examines variance inflation factor (VIF) values; values at or below 3.3 indicate that CMB is unlikely to be present. All VIF values fall below the 3.3 threshold (*Table 2*), indicating that CMB does not pose a significant concern.

Table 2. Full collinearity testing.

Variable	HDC	RI
VIF	1.842	1.880

Note: HDC = Hosting Destination Characteristics; RI = Revisit Intention; S = Satisfaction.

Measurement model assessment

SmartPLS 4 software was used to conduct the statistical analysis in this study (Hair et al., 2022). The Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) approach was adopted because of its suitability for analysing complex models involving latent constructs. In addition, PLS-SEM is capable of handling data that do not meet the assumption of normal distribution, which is a common issue in survey-based research where responses often deviate from normality (Chin et al., 2003).

Table 3. Measurement model results.

Latent Variable	Items	Loadings	CR (rho_C)	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE
Hosting Destination Characteristics	A1	0.624	0.848	0.790	0.443
	A2	0.704			
	A3	0.631			
	A4	0.682			
	A5	0.668			
	A6	0.688			
Satisfaction	B1	0.764	0.885	0.839	0.607
	B2	0.748			
	B3	0.814			
	B4	0.816			
	B5	0.751			
Revisit Intention	C1	0.749	0.892	0.849	0.623
	C2	0.793			
	C3	0.821			
	C4	0.797			
	C5	0.786			

Indicator reliability and internal consistency

As shown in *Table 3*, Cronbach's alpha values range from 0.790 to 0.849 and CR values from 0.848 to 0.892, both exceeding the 0.70 threshold and confirming internal consistency. Loadings for Satisfaction and Revisit Intention items all exceed 0.70. For HDC, five of six indicators fall between 0.60 and 0.70; these are retained because loadings in this range are acceptable in exploratory research when their removal does not meaningfully improve CR or AVE (Hair et al., 2022).

Convergent validity

AVE values for Satisfaction (0.607) and Revisit Intention (0.623) exceed the 0.50 threshold. HDC's AVE (0.443) falls marginally below 0.50; however, given its CR of 0.848, the construct is retained, with scale refinement noted as a limitation in the Conclusion.

Discriminant validity

The Fornell-Lacker test assesses the squared inter-construct correlation, which measures the shared variance among all model constructs. In research studies, using the diagonal to represent the square root of the average of latent variables is a common practice as shown in *Table 4*. The values reported represent the highest coefficients observed within each row or column. The observed values fell within the range of 0.738 to 0.789, which meet the criteria established by Fornell and Larcker, indicating satisfactory discriminant validity. The researcher subsequently assessed discriminant validity using the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) correlation ratio. *Table 5* presents the results of this analysis using the HTMT ratio to evaluate discriminant validity. The results of this study indicate that respondents were able to clearly distinguish between the constructs being measured. Collectively, the outcomes of these validity assessments confirm that the measurement items exhibit both reliability and validity.

Table 4. Discriminant validity (Fornell and Larcker Criterion).

Category	HDC	RI	S
HDC	0.738		
RI	0.540	0.789	
S	0.559	0.684	0.779

Note: The diagonal is the square root of the AVE of the latent variables and indicates the highest in any column or row. HDC= Hosting Destination Characteristics, RI= Revisit Intention, S= Satisfaction.

Table 5. Discriminant Validity Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT).

Category	HDC	RI	S
HDC			
RI	0.681		
S	0.704	0.801	

Note: HDC= Hosting Destination Characteristics, RI= Revisit Intention, S= Satisfaction

Structural model assessment

After the measurement model satisfied all required validity and reliability criteria, the structural model was assessed following Hair et al. (2022). Bootstrapping procedures were used to evaluate path coefficient significance in accordance with PLS-SEM guidelines (Hair et al., 2022).

Path Coefficients (β) and hypotheses testing

Structural relationships were assessed using bootstrapping with 95 per cent confidence intervals. According to Hair et al. (2022), t-values greater than 1.645 (one-tailed) and p-values below 0.05 indicate significant paths. *Table 6* presents the direct relationship results.

Table 6. Direct relationship.

Hypothesis	Relationship	β	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	HDC $\rightarrow$ S	0.213	3.478	< 0.001	Significant
H2	S $\rightarrow$ RI	0.424	7.734	< 0.001	Significant

Mediation analysis

As shown in *Table 7*, the indirect effect of hosting destination characteristics on revisit intention through satisfaction is significant ($\beta = 0.090$, $t = 3.234$, $p = 0.001$), with the 95% bias-corrected bootstrap CI (LL = 0.040, UL = 0.151) excluding zero, confirming mediation and supporting H3. This is interpreted as indirect-only (full)

mediation, as the direct path was not estimated; testing for partial mediation is identified as a future research avenue.

Table 7. Results of the mediation analysis.

No	Relationship	β	Std Error	t-value	p-value	BCI LL	BCI UL	Decision
H3	HDC $\rightarrow$ S $\rightarrow$ RI	0.090	0.028	3.234	0.001	0.040	0.151	Supported

Explanatory and predictive power

The model explains 54.9% of variance in revisit intention, exceeding accepted benchmarks for behavioural intention research (Hair et al., 2022). PLSPredict confirmed satisfactory out-of-sample predictive capability.

Table 8. Summary of hypothesis testing.

Hypo.	Relationship	Result
H1	There is a significant positive relationship between hosting destination characteristics and satisfaction.	Supported
H2	There is a significant positive relationship between sports tourist satisfaction and revisit intention.	Supported
H3	Sports tourist satisfaction fully mediates (indirect-only) the relationship between hosting destination characteristics and revisit intention.	Supported

The findings provide empirical support for all three proposed hypotheses, confirming the relevance of a destination-centred framework for understanding revisit intention in sport tourism. The results demonstrate that hosting destination characteristics positively influence tourist satisfaction (H1), that satisfaction in turn positively influences revisit intention (H2), and that satisfaction mediates the relationship between destination characteristics and revisit intention (H3). The positive effect of destination characteristics on tourist satisfaction is consistent with prior research demonstrating that destination attributes including infrastructure, accessibility, hospitality, and recreational offerings contribute significantly to visitors' overall evaluative judgements (Taberner et al., 2022; Eusébio and Vieira, 2013). Within the framework of Leiper's TAS, these characteristics constitute the attraction nucleus shaping the overall tourism experience (Higham, 2005; Leiper, 1990). For sports tourists, satisfaction extends beyond the event to encompass the broader destination environment, including accommodation, transportation, and leisure opportunities (Newland and Aicher, 2018).

The strong positive effect of tourist satisfaction on revisit intention ($\beta = 0.424$) aligns with a substantial body of tourism literature (Abbasi et al., 2021; Albaity and Melhem, 2017). The mediating role of satisfaction is particularly crucial because it not only reflects the tourist's emotional response to the destination but also influences their decision to return in the future. Therefore, the findings consistently highlight that improving tourist satisfaction should be a key priority for destination managers aiming to strengthen loyalty and encourage repeat visitation. From a TPB perspective, satisfaction operationalises the attitudinal component of intention formation: favourable destination evaluations increase the likelihood of return (Lam and Hsu, 2004; Ajzen, 1991). Most importantly, the mediation finding (H3) demonstrates that destination characteristics influence revisit intention specifically through the satisfaction they generate. This confirms satisfaction as a critical translational mechanism between destination evaluations and behavioural intentions (Abbasi et al., 2021). This finding highlights the importance of considering both universal and destination-specific factors in shaping tourist satisfaction and their future intentions to revisit.

Conclusion

This study investigated revisit intention in sport tourism by examining how hosting destination characteristics influence tourists' behavioural intentions through the mediating role of tourist satisfaction. All three hypotheses were supported, indicating that destination characteristics positively influence tourist satisfaction (H1), that satisfaction positively predicts revisit intention (H2), and that satisfaction mediates the relationship between destination characteristics and revisit intention (H3). These findings carry practical implications for destination managers. These studies suggest that by offering personalised experiences that cater to individual needs, destination managers can increase immediate tourist satisfaction and encourage lasting engagement. This study lays a strong foundation for future research by addressing existing gaps in the literature. Although much tourism research, particularly in Malaysia, has focused on tourist revisit intention, the dual-theory approach in this study offers a more integrative perspective for understanding the dimensions of sports tourism. These insights are expected to enrich the sports tourism knowledge base. Furthermore, the findings can assist industry practitioners in aligning their strategies with the expectations and needs of sports tourists, thereby improving satisfaction and encouraging repeat visitation. Limitations include the single-destination focus, a sample spanning the COVID-19 pandemic (introducing contextual heterogeneity), and marginal convergent validity for the HDC construct (AVE = 0.443). Future research should test the framework across multiple destinations, formally distinguish full from partial mediation, and incorporate additional constructs such as destination image, perceived value, and perceived behavioural control.

Acknowledgement

This study received no external funding.

Conflict of interest

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest involved with any parties in this research study.

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