



# Efforts in Promoting the Cultural Event “*Pesta Damas*” in Kinabatangan, Sabah

Abdul Karim Kiflee<sup>a</sup>, Muhammad Dannial Bin Abdul Mutalib<sup>a</sup>,  
Siti Audadi Maradhia Binti Amir<sup>a</sup>, Lau Ai Kee<sup>a</sup>  
and Shaik Azahar Bin Shaik Hussain<sup>a\*</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, Malaysia.

## **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

## **Article Information**

### **Open Peer Review History:**

This journal follows the Advanced Open Peer Review policy. Identity of the Reviewers, Editor(s) and additional Reviewers, peer review comments, different versions of the manuscript, comments of the editors, etc are available here: <https://www.sdiarticle5.com/review-history/102395>

**Original Research Article**

**Received: 08/05/2023**

**Accepted: 11/07/2023**

**Published: 25/07/2023**

## **ABSTRACT**

This research focuses on the efforts in promoting the cultural event *Pesta Damas* in Kinabatangan, Sabah. *Pesta Damas* was an annual event held and organised by the Sabah Association of Bangsa Sungai (SABAS). An effort to promote this cultural event is needed to be done holistically. The association needed more private and nongovernmental organisations' (NGOs) involvement. This study aims to highlight the promotional effort that can be made to promote the cultural event and to analyse the importance of the involvement from the private sector and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs). In addition, to suggest a strategic way to get a sponsor and promote from private and corporate organisations for this event. This study used methodological techniques involving a questionnaire survey and in-depth interviews with informants from SABAS. The findings show that the promotional effort, such as using different social media platforms and promotion

\*Corresponding author: E-mail: shazahar@unimas.my;

campaigns broadcast media with the help of the private sector and nongovernmental organisations, can promote this event widely. Overall, this research can help improve the promotional effort of the *Pesta Damas* in the future.

**Keywords:** *Efforts; Kinabatangan; promotion; cultural event; Pesta Damas; Sabah.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*Pesta Damas* is a cultural event organised and held by the Sabah Association of Bangsa Sabah (SABAS). *Damas* means a traditional boat for the Sungai ethnic group, which has become a main means of transportation for them to earn a living for generations. The main purposes of these events are to introduce Sungai's ethnic culture to the local community, especially to the young people from the ethnic group. *Pesta Damas* was first held in 2015 and then became an annual event. This event is usually held in September in Sukau, Kinabatangan. There are a lot of events in *Pesta Damas*, such as the decorated boat competition, traditional costumes, traditional dance, traditional music, and an exhibition of houses, clothes, and traditional handicrafts. *Pesta Damas* is a new and unique tourism product in Sabah. This event had help from governmental agencies such as MOTAC and Tourism Malaysia. Additionally, a cultural event is an event that not only preserves culture but also promotes the culture to local and foreign tourists [1].

Efforts to preserve the culture of the Sungai ethnic in the state of Sabah have been carried out by the Sabah Association of Bangsa Sungai (SABAS). Therefore, the involvement of various parties is needed to promote this cultural festival. In addition, according to Muhamma [2], in a published article, efforts to promote culture-based products must be made holistically with the cooperation of government departments and agencies. Efforts to preserve the culture of the Sungai people through the *Pesta Damas* require support in promotion and sponsorship. Moreover, according to Muhamma [2], more private and corporate companies hope to sponsor and promote more cultural programs. Therefore, *Pesta Damas* needs support in sponsorship and promotion to raise the event in Kinabatangan, Sabah.

## 2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The initial goal of this study is to discover the potential promotional efforts that can be made by SABAS toward the cultural event '*Pesta Damas*'

in Kinabatangan, Sabah. Next is to analyse the importance of the corporate sector and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) in promoting this event. Finally, this research recommends a strategy for obtaining sponsorship and promotion from private and corporate groups for '*Pesta Damas*'.

## 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

The researcher use a literature review to gather all the information or data related to the topic. *Pesta Damas* is a Sabah Association of Bangsa Sabah (SABAS) annual event. Moreover, this event consists of traditional costumes & music competitions [3]. The "*Pesta Damas*" highlighted the expressions of local culture, especially orang sungai culture, with most of the activities originating in this custom. In addition, Kunjuraman, Hussin, & Che Aziz [4] mention that *Pesta Damas* can be considered cultural aids for preserving cultural traditions, particularly for the orang Sungai tradition.

Cultural events such as *Pesta Damas* can significantly influence economic and cultural growth. Furthermore, Bob, Swart, Gounden, Gumedde, and Nkambule (2019) demonstrate the effects of celebrations and events on neighbourhood economic growth and residents' quality of life. These are critical activities for identifying cultural traits and interests and acting as a marketing catalyst for locations. According to academic documentation on promoting an event by Muhamma [2], cultural-based product promotion must be done holistically. These issues require the attention and cooperation of the corporate sector and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs). This relevance to it is intended that more private and corporate organisations would finance and promote cultural programmes such as *Pesta Damas*. [2].

Conforming to Kamus Dewan Edisi Keempat [5], promotion is any action made to promote or increase the sale of a product. In comparison, Belch and Belch [6] define promotion as the coordination of all seller-initiated efforts to establish channels of information and persuasion to sell goods and services or promote an idea.

The company may inform its clientele about what it does and what it can provide through promotion. Furthermore, promotion types include advertising, social media outreach, special offers, branding, public relations, and exhibitions. As told by Muhamma [2]), efforts to maintain the Sungai people's culture through the *Pesta Damas* require promotional and financial assistance. As a result, *Pesta Damas* needs sponsorships and promotion to grow the event in Kinabatangan, Sabah [7].

#### 4. METHODOLOGY

The research methodology for a study involves a mixed-method approach of qualitative and quantitative methods to obtain various data sources and information. A quantitative research method quantifies and analyses variables to get the results. It involves the analysis of numerical data using statistical tools to answer questions like who, how much, what, where, when, how many, and how using the who, how much, what, where, and what data [8]. The qualitative method involves in-depth interviews with a small group of respondents to obtain specific and accurate data on the research issue. According to Hennik, Hutter, and Bailey [9], qualitative research is a strategy that enables an in-depth examination of people's experiences using a particular set of research techniques, including in-depth interviews, observation, focus group discussions, content analysis, visual methods, biographies, and life histories.

For the quantitative method, the researcher used a questionnaire survey to obtain data and information from respondents about the *Pesta Damas*. The question focuses on how well the promotional effort that had done by the SABAS to promote *Pesta Damas* to local people in the Kinabatangan district. Next, the questionnaire also contains questions about the importance of the private sector and nongovernmental organisations' (NGOs) involvement in promoting the *Pesta Damas* and suggests a strategic way to get sponsors and promote them. The questionnaire survey was focused on the local people who have been to *Pesta Damas* in Kinabatangan, Sabah.

While for the qualitative method, the researcher used purposive sampling and conducted an in-depth interview session with two informants from the SABAS promotion unit that is Mr Haji Arbani bin Askal and Mr Mahjur bin Salleh.

Then, for the quantitative method, the researcher collects data and conducts a pilot test method, and the researcher analyses it through the IBM software Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 27 to determine the formulated questions by the researcher. The software makes it easier for researchers to conduct real field studies in the actual situation and time. The pilot test result be measured as follows:

- a> 0.9 – excellent
- a> 0.8 – good
- a> 0.7 – acceptable
- a> 0.6 – questionable
- a> 0.5 – poor
- a> 0.4 – unacceptable

After the researcher analysed the IBM Statistical Package for Social Science software (SPSS) version 27, the researcher obtained the pilot test results, an average of 0.860, in the > 0.8 – Good range. With the decision, the researcher can conduct a field study to obtain research findings and officially distribute questionnaires to respondents for answers [10,11].

**Table 1. Pilot test result**

Reliability statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha based on standardized item	N of items
0.860	0.879	20

#### 5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher discusses the results from findings that have been analysed clearly and thoroughly in the study. The researcher has used two qualitative and quantitative methods to obtain the precise data sources for this research.

##### 5.1 Qualitative Data Analysis

**Promotional effort that can be made to promote the cultural event "Pesta Damas" in Kinabatangan, Sabah:** Based on the in-depth interview with the informant, a promotional effort can be made to promote the cultural event. It indicated that one promotional effort could be made using a different strategy. SABAS has used different promotional strategies such as advertising, promotion through social media, and print media. It stated that it effectively attracted visitors not only on domestic but also globally. Using different promotional strategies proved

effective for them because not less than 20 thousand people came during the three days event. The visitors are foreign tourists from Europe, China, and Korea. They also state that they cooperate more with government agencies, the private sector, and NGOs. It shows that government agencies and the private sector like Lembaga Kebudayaan Negeri Sabah, Lembaga Pelancongan Negeri Sabah, Jetama Sdn. Bhd, Astro Awani can help promote this event widely.

**The importance of the private sector and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) in promoting the "Pesta Damas" cultural event in Kinabatangan, Sabah:** The involvement of the private sector and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) plays a crucial role in helping to promote *Pesta Damas* in Kinabatangan, Sabah. It states that with help from these two parties, it can encourage many visitors to come to *Pesta Damas*. The private sector and NGOs' involvement provides media coverage to *Pesta Damas*. The private sector, like KUPI-KUPI FM, Sandakan FM, and ERA FM doing coverage to help promote this event. The informants stated that some private sectors helped promote directly to tourists, such as putting posters and brochures in hotels around Sabah. These activities can help promote the event domestically and globally. The informant also states that they hope more private sector and NGOs can involve and contribute to *Pesta Damas*. SABAS hoped they could provide sponsorship and promotion for the *Pesta Damas*. As far as now, some private sector like Adabi Consumer Industries Sdn. Bhd provided product

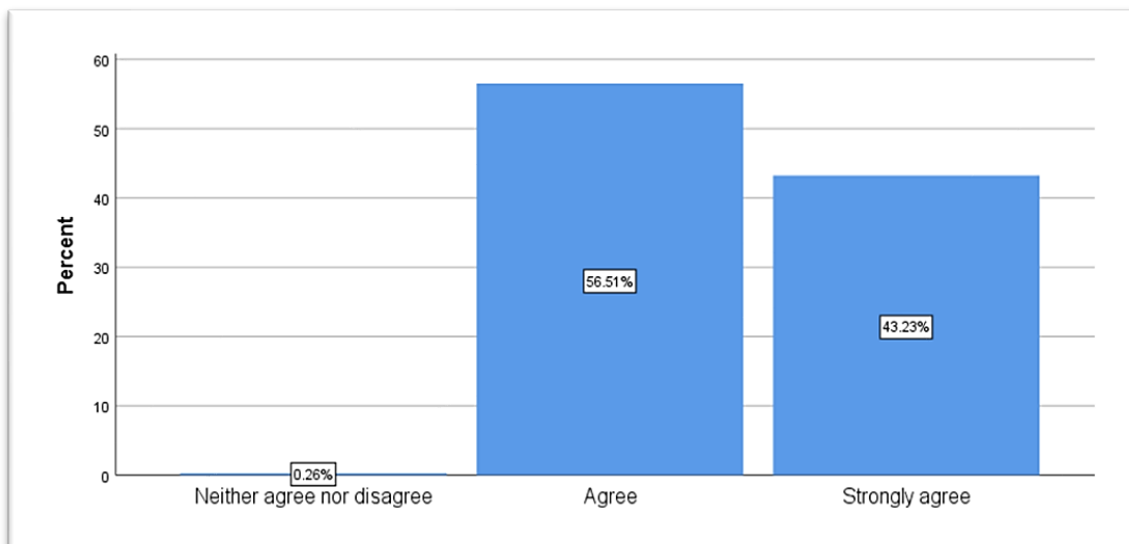
sponsorship to attract visitors to join the cooking competition.

**Strategic way to get a sponsor and promote from private and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) for Pesta Damas:** There are a few strategic ways SABAS carry out collaboration with private companies and NGOs. First, they call on any private companies or NGOs that wish to participate in the *Pesta Damas* to participate in their meetings. Meanwhile, for the existing parties, SABAS always be in touch with them to forge stronger cooperation. It stated that SABAS is in constant contact with them to exchange opinions and ideas to enliven the *Pesta Damas* in the future. With these strategic ways can expand the contacts network and be better known throughout Sabah. This strategic way has ensured that the relationship between SABAS and private companies and NGOs continues today. Lastly, the finding and results show that SABAS provide space for private companies and these NGOs to open booths or exhibitions to ensure our relationship continues to be strong.

## 5.2 Quantitative Analysis

**Using different types of promotional strategies such as using advertising, social media, and print media to promote the Pesta Damas in Kinabatangan, Sabah:**

Bar graph 1: Using different types of promotional strategies such as using advertising, social media, and print media to promote the *Pesta Damas* in Kinabatangan, Sabah.



(Source: SPSS descriptive data, 2023)

**Table 2. Using different types of promotional strategies such as using advertising, social media, and print media to promote the *Pesta Damas* in Kinabatangan, Sabah**

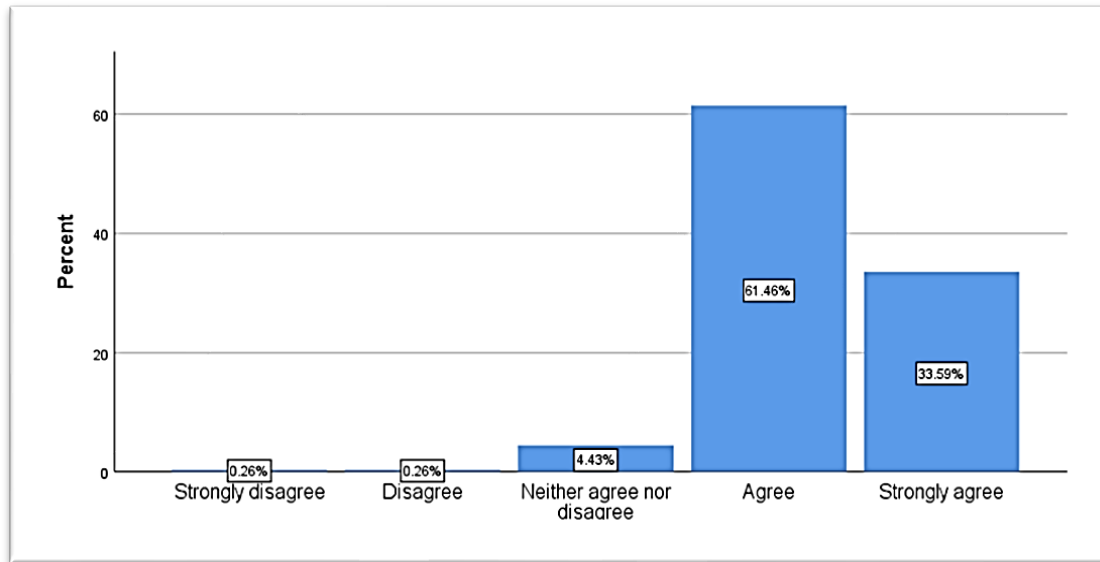
		They use promotional strategies such as advertising, social media, and print media to promote the <i>Pesta Damas</i> in Kinabatangan, Sabah.			
		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Per cent
Valid	Strongly disagree	0	0	0	0
	Disagree	0	0	0	0
	Neither agree nor disagree.	1	.3	.3	.3
	Agree	217	56.5	56.5	56.8
	Strongly agree	166	43.2	43.2	100.0
	Total	384	100.00	100.00	

Based on Table 2 shows that the number of respondents who "Agree" on using different types of promotional strategies, such as using advertising, social media, and print media to promote the *Pesta Damas* in Kinabatangan, Sabah recorded the highest record of 56.5%. Equal to 217 respondents. The second highest is "Strongly agree", 43%, equal to 166 respondents. Next, "neither agree nor disagree" recorded 3%, equal to only one respondent. Meanwhile, "disagree", & "strongly disagree" got zero frequency.

Based on the finding and results shows that most of the respondents chose "agreed" on this promotional effort that had been done to promote this event. Therefore, it indicated that most people think using a different strategy can promote the event more widely.

**Provide financial sponsorship, such as covering the cost of advertising and promoting the *Pesta Damas*:**

Bar graph 2: Provide financial sponsorship, such as covering the cost of advertising and promoting the *Pesta Damas*.



(Source: SPSS descriptive data, 2023)

**Table 3. Provide financial sponsorship, such as covering the cost of advertising and promoting the *Pesta Damas***

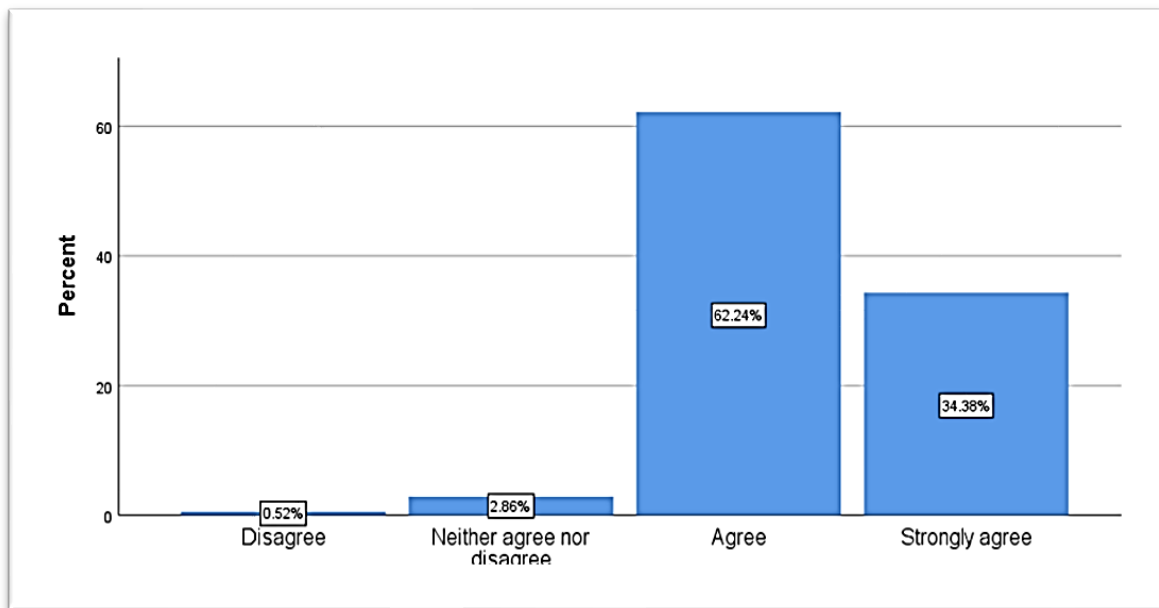
		Provide financial sponsorship, such as covering the cost of advertising and promoting the <i>Pesta Damas</i>			
		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Per cent
Valid	Strongly disagree	1	.3	.3	3
	Disagree	1	4.4	.3	5
	Neither agree nor disagree.	17	33.6	4.4	4.9
	Agree	236		33.6	66.4
	Strongly agree	129	61.5	61.5	100.0
	Total	384	100.00	100.00	

Based on Table 3 shows that one of the reasons for the importance of the private sector and nongovernmental organisation's (NGOs) involvement in promoting the cultural event "Pesta Damas" in Kinabatangan, Sabah is to provide financial sponsorship, such as covering the cost of advertising and promoting the *Pesta Damas*. The number of respondents who chose "Agree" recorded the highest record of 33.6%. Equal to 236 respondents. The second highest is "Strongly agree", 61.5%, equal to 129 respondents. Next, "neither agree nor disagree" recorded 4.4%, equal to 17 respondents. Meanwhile, "disagree", & "strongly disagree" got the same frequency of 3%, equal to only one respondent.

Based on the finding and results, most respondents think that the private sector and NGO involvement is important to give *Pesta Damas* financial sponsorship, such as covering the cost of advertising and promoting the *Pesta Damas*.

**Offering returns to private and corporate parties, such as trade fairs or free stalls in *Pesta Damas*:**

Bar graph 3: Offering returns to private and corporate parties such as trade fairs or free stalls in *Pesta Damas*.



**Table 4. Offering returns to private and corporate parties such as trade fairs or free stalls in *Pesta Damas***

		Offering returns to private and corporate parties such as trade fairs or free stalls in <i>Pesta Damas</i>			
		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Per cent
Valid	Strongly disagree	0	0	0	0
	Disagree	11	5	5	5
	Neither agree nor disagree.	2	2.9	2.9	3.4
	Agree	239	62.2	62.2	65.6
	Strongly agree	132	34.4	34.4	100.0
Total		384	100.00	100.00	

Based on Table 4 shows that most respondents chose "Agree", that is, 62.2%. Equal to 239 respondents. The second highest is "Strongly agree", at 34.4%, equal to 132 respondents.

Next, "neither agree nor disagree" is at 2.9%, equal to 2 respondents. Meanwhile, "disagree" got 5 %, equal to 11 respondents. Lastly, "strongly disagree" got no frequency.

Based on the finding and results, most respondents assume it is a strategic way to get a sponsor and promotion from private and corporate organisations for *Pesta Damas*. By offering them something, both parties be willing to cooperate for the *Pesta Damas*.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The promotional efforts undertaken by SABAS to date have had a positive impact. However, deeper attention needs to be made to ensure that this promotion effort can be continuously developed to a high level. The findings of this study are expected to provide a clear picture of the promotional efforts carried out by SABAS and with the assistance of government agencies, the private sector, and NGOs. The findings of this study show the importance of engagement and the assistance provided by the private sector and NGOs. The researchers hope that this study will expose the parties involved, such as the private sector and NGOs, always to be involved in helping promote cultural products to a higher level.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors wish to thank all from SABAS that had been involved in this study, and would also like to express deepest appreciation and gratitude to the final year project supervisor, Associate Professor Dr Qistina Donna Lee Abdullah, who has always guided this study so that this research can be carried out until its successful. We also thank Mr Shaik Azahar bin Shaik Hussain for helping publish this study. Finally, we would also like to thank the Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts at the University of Malaysia Sarawak for their cooperation and support in finishing this study.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

## REFERENCES

1. Bob U, Swart K, Gouden R, Gumede A, Nkambule S. Socio-economic impact of festivals and events: A case study of the Mzansi golden economy programme in South Africa. *Geo Journal of Tourism and Geosites*. 2019;27(1):1236-1250.  
Available:<http://dx.doi.org/10.30892/gtg.27410-429>
2. Muhamma, N. Promosi produk budaya secara holistik dengan kerjasama swasta dan NGO. *Utusan Borneo online*; 2019.
3. Jupin N, Dolhan NA, Indang E, Abdullah QDL. Awareness of social media basis as a promotional medium for Kulintangan traditional music of the Sungai tribe at Paitan. *International Journal of Applied and Creative Arts*. 2021;4(1):40-54.  
Available:<https://doi.org/10.33736/ijaca.3553.2021>
4. Kunjuraman V, Husin R, Che Aziz R. Community-based ecotourism as a social transformation tool for rural community: A victory or a quagmire? *Journal of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism*; 2022.  
Available:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jort.2022.100524>
5. Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka. *Kamus Dewan Edisi Keempat*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka; 2016.
6. Belch GE, Belch MA. *Advertising and promotion an integrated marketing communications perspective*. McGraw-Hill; 2018.
7. Asri A, Tugang N. Arts and aesthetic values towards parang ilang in the Culture of the Iban. *The International Journal of Innovative Design, Creativity and Social Sciences*. 2019; 3(1):1-7.
8. Apuke OB. Quantitative research methods a synopsis approach. *Journal of Business and Management*. 2017; 6(10):40-47.  
Available:<https://doi.org/10.12816/0040336>
9. Hennik M, Hutter I, Bailey A. *Qualitative research methods (2nd ed.)*. SAGE publications; 2020.
10. Alexandrescu MB, Milandru M. Promotion as a form of communication of the marketing strategy. *Land Forces Academy Review*. 2018;4(92):268-274.

- Available:<https://doi.org/10.2478/raft-2018-0033> Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research. 2020;45(3):553–572.  
11. Dolasinski MJ, Roberts C, Reynolds J, & Johanson M. Defining the field of events. Available:<https://doi.org/10.1177/1096348020978266>

© 2023 Kiflee et al.; This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

*Peer-review history:*  
*The peer review history for this paper can be accessed here:*  
<https://www.sdiarticle5.com/review-history/102395>