DOI: https://doi.org/10.4038/tjata.v4i2.101

Exploring the Influential Factors of Emotional Engagement in Events: A Sri Lankan Perspective

D.K.T. Dangalla[1], C. Prabuddha[2]

[1] Department of Tourism Studies, Uva Wellassa University, Badulla, Sri Lanka

[2] College of History and Culture, Sichuan University, China

Abstract

This study investigates the factors influencing emotional engagement (EE) during events in Sri Lanka, emphasizing their implications for attendee loyalty and satisfaction (ALS). Utilizing a quantitative research design, a sample of 384 participants was collected through purposive sampling and online surveys. The study explores three primary constructs: event-related factors (ERF), attendee-related factors (ARF), and external factors (EF), employing factor analysis and using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) for hypothesis testing. The findings reveal that event-related factors, attendee-related factors, and external factors positively impact emotional engagement, with emotional engagement significantly affecting attended loyalty and satisfaction. The results highlight the importance of event organization, attendee characteristics, and the broader socio-cultural context in shaping emotional connections at events. This research provides valuable insights for event organizers and stakeholders in the tourism sector, advocating for enhanced emotional engagement strategies to foster loyalty and satisfaction among attendees.

Key Words: *Factors, Emotional Engagement, Events, Loyalty and Satisfaction, Sri Lanka*

Introduction

Emotional engagement plays a crucial role in shaping participants' experiences at events, influencing both satisfaction and loyalty (Temerak & Winklhofer, 2023). In the context of Sri Lanka, a country rich in cultural heritage and diverse events, understanding the factors that affect emotional engagement is vital for organizers aiming to enhance attendee experiences. Research has shown that emotional engagement can significantly impact consumers' behaviors, leading to increased participation and word-of-mouth promotion (Claffey & Brady, 2019). Factors such as the quality of the event, social interactions, and personal relevance have been identified as key contributors to emotional engagement (Oklevik et al., 2022). Sri Lanka's event landscape, which includes festivals, concerts, and corporate gatherings, presents a unique opportunity to explore these dynamics. The interplay of cultural elements, environmental settings, and the emotional state of attendees can create varied engagement levels (Richardson, 2014). For instance, cultural festivals often elicit strong emotional responses due to their deep-rooted traditions and communal aspects, while corporate events may engage participants through networking opportunities and professional development (Anderson & Anderson, 2010). Therefore, this study aims to systematically analyze the factors influencing emotional engagement in Sri Lankan events, employing a quantitative methodology to collect data from attendees across different event types. By identifying and examining these factors, the research seeks to provide actionable insights for event organizers and stakeholders to foster deeper emotional connections with their audiences as the events industry continues to evolve. Understanding emotional engagement's role will be paramount in creating memorable experiences that resonate with attendees long after the events conclude.

Literature review

Definition and Importance of Emotional Engagement

Emotional engagement, a multifaceted construct rooted in psychology and marketing, refers to the affective connection that individuals establish with a particular entity, experience, or brand (Setiawan, Wibisono, & Purwanegara, 2022). In the context of

tourism, emotional engagement with events can significantly influence visitors' perceptions and behaviors, ultimately impacting their loyalty to a destination. While cognitive factors like information processing and rational decision-making play a role, emotional engagement often serves as a powerful driver of loyalty (Liu-Thompkins, Khoshghadam, Shoushtari, & Zal, 2022). Emotional engagement is increasingly recognized as a critical factor in shaping tourist experiences and fostering destination loyalty. When visitors experience positive emotions during events, such as joy, excitement, or nostalgia, they are more likely to develop a strong emotional connection to the destination. This emotional bond can lead to increased satisfaction, positive word-of-mouth, and repeat visits (Wang, Tran, & Tran, 2017). Moreover, emotional engagement can enhance the perceived value of a destination, as visitors may be willing to pay a premium for experiences that evoke positive emotions (Pujiastuti et al., 2022). Perceived destination image, a mental representation of a destination's attributes and characteristics, plays a crucial role in influencing tourist decisions and behaviors. Emotional engagement can significantly impact perceived destination image by shaping visitors' cognitive and affective evaluations of a destination. When visitors experience positive emotions during events, they are more likely to form favorable perceptions of the destination's attributes, such as its cultural heritage, natural beauty, and hospitality (Biswas, Deb, Hasan, & Khandakar, 2021).

Several studies have examined the impact of emotional engagement on destination loyalty in Sri Lanka, highlighting the importance of this construct in the tourism context. For instance, a study by Ranasinghe (2019) investigated the relationship between emotional engagement and destination loyalty among international tourists visiting Sri Lanka. The findings revealed that emotional engagement significantly influenced destination loyalty, with visitors who experienced higher levels of emotional engagement more likely to express loyalty to Sri Lanka as a destination. Furthermore, research by Udurawana (2022) explored the Experiential Marketing, Destination Image, Tourists Satisfaction, and Tourists' Destination Loyalty for Sustainable Tourism in Sri Lanka. The study found that emotional engagement positively influenced perceived destination image, which in turn mediated the

relationship between emotional engagement and destination loyalty. This suggests that the positive impact of emotional engagement on destination loyalty is partially explained by its influence on perceived destination image. The findings from these studies contribute to the existing body of knowledge on emotional engagement and destination loyalty. They provide empirical evidence for the theoretical propositions that emotional engagement is a significant driver of destination loyalty and that perceived destination image plays a mediating role in this relationship. These findings also have important practical implications for tourism marketers and destination management organizations in Sri Lanka. Emotional engagement plays a vital role in shaping tourist experiences and fostering destination loyalty in Sri Lanka. Tourism marketers and destination management organizations can create strategies to create memorable and meaningful experiences for visitors by understanding the factors that influence emotional engagement and perceived destination image. This will ultimately increase destination loyalty and competitiveness.

Overview of Emotional Engagement in the Context of Event Management

Emotional engagement in the context of event management refers to the emotional connection and involvement that attendees experience during events, significantly influencing their overall satisfaction and loyalty (Biswas et al., 2021). This concept is critical as it transcends mere participation, delving into the psychological and emotional states that enhance the attendee experience (Claffey & Brady, 2019). Emotional engagement is often shaped by various factors, including the nature of the event, the environment, and the quality of interactions that occur within that setting (Fernandes & Moreira, 2019). For instance, events that foster a sense of community and connection among participants tend to yield higher levels of emotional engagement (Wang et al., 2017). Moreover, the emotional involvement of attendees can serve as a mediator between destination attributes and their overall satisfaction (Biswas et al., 2021). This implies that when tourists feel emotionally connected to a destination or event, they are more likely to report positive experiences and higher satisfaction levels (Udurawana, 2022). The interplay between emotional engagement and brand loyalty is particularly noteworthy, as satisfied attendees often become

advocates for the event or destination, sharing positive word-of-mouth recommendations (Pujiastuti et al., 2022). Understanding emotional engagement is crucial for event organizers aiming to create memorable experiences that resonate with attendees, thereby fostering long-term relationships and repeat attendance (Ranasinghe, 2019). By strategically designing events that evoke strong emotional responses, organizers can create more meaningful connections with their audience, ultimately leading to more successful and sustainable event outcomes.

Factors Influencing Emotional Engagement

Emotional engagement in events is a crucial aspect that determines attendees' overall experience and satisfaction. In the context of Sri Lanka, a nation rich in culture and diversity, various factors influence how individuals emotionally connect with events. This literature review explores personal, contextual, relational, and cultural factors affecting emotional engagement in events in Sri Lanka. Personal Factors: Individual characteristics significantly shape emotional engagement at events. Personality traits such as extroversion and agreeableness can enhance participants' ability to connect with others, thereby fostering deeper emotional engagement. For instance, extroverted individuals often seek social interaction and are more likely to engage emotionally in group settings (Villamediana-Pedrosa, Vila-López, & Küster-Boluda, 2020). Furthermore, emotional intelligence plays a vital role; attendees who possess high emotional intelligence can better navigate the emotional landscapes of events, recognizing and responding to the emotions of others. In the Sri Lankan context, personal experiences related to cultural background and prior exposure to similar events also influence emotional engagement. Individuals with positive past experiences are more likely to engage emotionally with current events, often recalling those memories and creating a richer emotional tapestry. Contextual Factors: The environment and context in which an event takes place are critical in shaping emotional responses. In Sri Lanka, the physical setting, ranging from traditional venues to modern event spaces can significantly affect emotional engagement. Events held in scenic locations, such as beaches or historical sites, often evoke strong emotional reactions due to their inherent beauty and cultural significance.

Additionally, the organization and execution of the event, including logistics and accessibility, play crucial roles in shaping attendees' emotional experiences. Poorly organized events can lead to frustration and disengagement, while well-executed events can foster feelings of joy and satisfaction. The cultural context also contributes significantly; Sri Lanka's rich traditions and values influence how events are perceived and experienced. For example, events that incorporate local customs and practices tend to resonate more deeply with attendees, leading to higher levels of emotional engagement (Mandić & Kennell, 2021).

Relational Factors is one factor that influencing Emotional Engagement. Social connections, whether with friends, family, or new acquaintances, can enhance the emotional experience. Attachment theory suggests that secure social bonds encourage deeper engagement; individuals who feel a sense of belonging are more likely to participate emotionally. Trust and reciprocity within social interactions also play a vital role. When attendees feel valued and respected, their emotional engagement deepens, fostering a positive atmosphere conducive to shared experiences. Furthermore, the presence of facilitators or hosts who are empathetic and approachable can significantly enhance emotional engagement. In Sri Lanka, the warmth and hospitality often exhibited by hosts can create a welcoming environment, encouraging attendees to open up emotionally and connect with the event on a deeper level (Johnson, Rickly, & McCabe, 2020).

Next factor is Cultural Factors and Sri Lanka's rich cultural heritage profoundly influences emotional engagement in events. Cultural norms and values shape how emotions are expressed and perceived, impacting participants' engagement levels. For instance, events that celebrate traditional music, dance, and art can evoke strong emotional responses rooted in cultural identity Furthermore, communal experiences, such as religious or cultural festivals, often foster a sense of collective emotional engagement, where shared traditions and values enhance feelings of belonging and connection among participants The diversity of ethnic groups in Sri Lanka also contributes to varied emotional responses, as different communities may engage with events through their unique cultural lenses. This diversity highlights the importance

of culturally relevant programming to maximize emotional engagement across various demographic groups (Chen & Rahman, 2018).

In today's digital age, technology has become an integral factor influencing emotional engagement in events, and based on that, we can identify Technology and Media Influence as another factor. Social media platforms allow attendees to share their experiences in real-time, creating a sense of community and connection that transcends physical boundaries. In Sri Lanka, where social media usage is high, the ability to share moments instantly can enhance emotional engagement by fostering a collective experience among participants. However, the flip side is the potential for distraction; excessive focus on digital interactions can detract from genuine emotional engagement during the event itself. Therefore, striking a balance between digital connectivity and in-person engagement is crucial for maximizing emotional involvement (Van Nuenen & Scarles, 2021).

Psychological Factors are another factor, and they significantly affect emotional engagement. Factors such as stress, anxiety, and overall mental health can either enhance or hinder an individual's ability to engage emotionally at events. Research indicates that individuals in positive mental states are more likely to experience heightened emotional engagement (Quoquab, Mohammad, & Mohd Sobri, 2021). Conversely, those experiencing anxiety or negative emotions may withdraw from social interactions, resulting in reduced engagement. In the Sri Lankan context, understanding the psychological barriers that attendees may face is vital for event organizers aiming to create environments conducive to emotional engagement.

Conceptual Framework

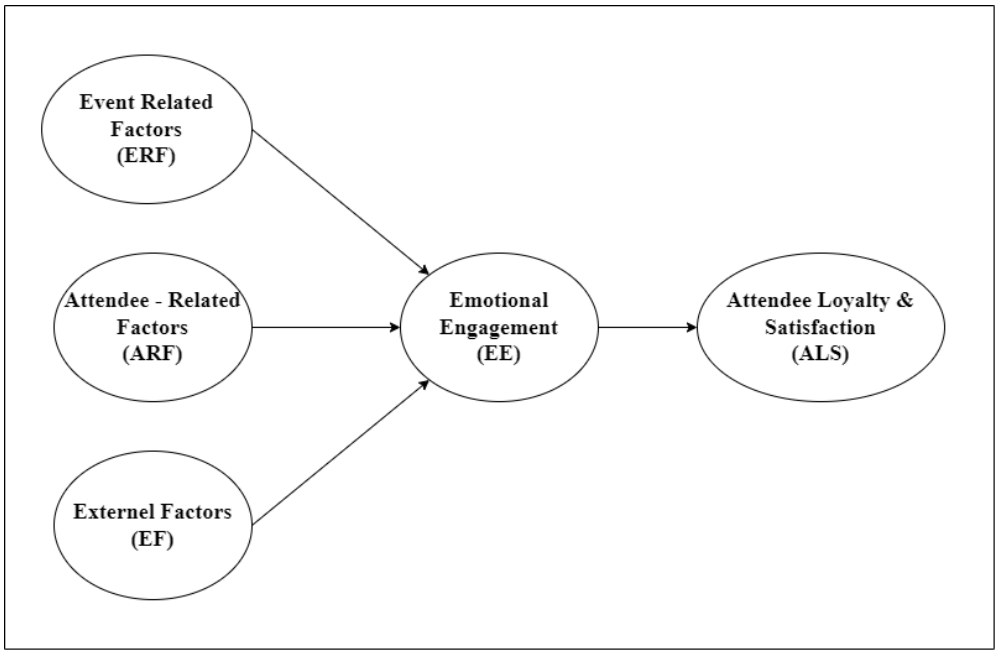

Figure 1: *Conceptual Framework*

Hypothesis Development

H1: Event-related factors (ERF) have a positive impact on emotional engagement (EE)

H2: Attendee-related factors (ARF) positively influence emotional engagement (EE)

H3: External factors (EF) have a significant effect on emotional engagement (EE)

H4: Emotional engagement (EE) positively affects attendee loyalty and satisfaction (ALS)

Methodology

This study investigates the factors influencing emotional engagement at events in Sri Lanka using a quantitative research technique. Because it enables the collection and analysis of numerical data to assess pre-established assumptions regarding the correlations between the variables, this study is particularly well-suited for a quantitative approach (Creswell, 2014). Individuals who attend events in Sri Lanka are the unit of analysis for this study. A Krejcie & Morgan (1970) table was used to recruit a sample of 384 participants, ensuring sufficient data for a trustworthy statistical analysis and allowing for generalizable conclusions within the limitations of the chosen sampling technique (95% confidence level, 5% margin of error). Additionally, this study used the purposive sample approach to effectively examine this specific population (Tongco, 2007). The first component gathered fundamental demographic information, including age, gender, education level, and work experience, to give context for assessing the outcomes. In the second section (eighty questions), the three primary research variables were measured using a five-point Likert scale. Emotional engagement (EE), external factors (EF), event-related factors (ERF), attendee-related factors (ARF), and attendee loyalty and satisfaction (ALS). First, descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages were calculated using IBM SPSS Statistics 25. This provided a comprehensive overview of the sample's characteristics and the main trends of the variables under investigation (George & Mallery, 2018). Additionally, factor analysis was done. Second, partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was carried out using SmartPLS 4 software.

Results

Demographic factors of respondents

384 people who are participated events in Sri Lanka. 65% of the responses were male and 35% were female, according to the demographics of the participants. The age distribution was skewed, with 45% of people in the 16-25age range and 35% of those

in the 26–35 age group. There was a progressive decline in the remaining age groups: 15% between 36 and 45, and 5% between 46 and 55. The respondents were spread reasonably evenly throughout the provinces of Sri Lanka in terms of geography. The Southern Province accounted for the largest share (35%), with the Western Province (45%), Central Province (10%), Sabaragamuwa (5%), and Eastern Province (5%) following closely after. The largest percentage of responders (45%) came from the Colombo district in these provinces, followed by Gampaha (20%), Galle (15%), Kegalle (10%), and Kandy (5%). The interviewees' varied backgrounds in schooling were seen in their credentials. G.C.E A/L (40%) made up the biggest category and next by G.C.E O/L (30%), and then were followed by those with diploma/vocational credentials (24%). Only 5% of respondents had a Master's, (1%) MBA, or MBC degree. Overall, the respondents' demographic traits point to a varied sample. Because of this variety, the study's conclusions are more broadly applicable to the larger group of people who participate in events and their emotional engagement in the tourism sector.

Data analysis

Factor Analysis

Test	Value
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure	0.78
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	
Approx. Chi-Square	485.34
df	36
Sig.	0.000

Table 1: *Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure*

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure's score of 0.78 indicates that the study's data is sufficient for factor analysis (numbers near 1.0 are optimal, while values over 0.6 are

acceptable). With a substantial Chi-Square result ($p < 0.05$), Bartlett's Test of Sphericity then shows that there is enough correlation between the variables to move further with the research.

Variable	Initial	Extraction
ERF1	1.000	0.735
ERF2	1.000	0.682
ERF3	1.000	0.801
ERF4	1.000	0.764
ARF1	1.000	0.690
ARF2	1.000	0.845
ARF3	1.000	0.710
ARF4	1.000	0.776
EF1	1.000	0.688
EF2	1.000	0.732
EF3	1.000	0.793

Table 2: *Communalities Table*

When it comes to ERF Variables, extraction values vary from 0.682 to 0.801, demonstrating these variables are well described by the factor structure, notably ERF3 (0.801) and ERF4 (0.764). Then in ARF Variables, Extraction values vary from 0.690 to 0.845, with ARF2 (0.845) having the highest communality, showing it’s extremely well represented by the factor structure. In EF Variables, extraction values vary from 0.688 to 0.793, with EF3 (0.793) being particularly representative. The extraction communalities justify that the component analysis appropriately reflects the underlying variance of each variable. The larger communalities (near or over 0.7) show that these variables are meaningful and contribute considerably to the components, validating the analysis. The communalities suggest that the extracted components successfully capture the emotional, affective, and experiential elements, fitting well with this study's focus on emotional participation in events.

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Rotated Sums of Squared Loadings	% of Variance (Rotated)	Cumulative % (Rotated)
1	4.213	38.30%	38.30%	3.567	32.43%	32.43%
2	2.135	19.41%	57.71%	2.954	26.86%	59.29%
3	1.275	11.59%	69.30%	1.851	16.82%	76.11%
4	0.923	8.39%	77.69%			
5	0.788	7.16%	84.85%			
6	0.621	5.65%	90.50%			

Table 3: *Total Variance Explained Table*

When it comes to the Initial Eigenvalues, they show the range each factor originally explains before rotation. Factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 are usually retained, as they explain a sizable amount of variance. In this table, factors 1 through 3 have eigenvalues above 1 (4.213, 2.135, and 1.275), showing they are important and useful for further analysis. % of Variance (Unrotated) tells the amount of total variance each factor explains. For example, Factor 1 explains 38.30% of the range, while Factors 2 and 3 explain an extra 19.41% and 11.59%, respectively. Together, these three factors explain 69.30% of the total variance, which is usually considered a strong cumulative number in social science research, showing that most of the data's variability is caught by these factors. After rotation, factor loadings are redistributed to make the analysis easier by increasing factor independence. Rotated Sums of Squared Loadings usually lowers the variance explained by the first factor but improves the explanatory power of the following factors, often resulting in a more balanced spread across factors. After rotation under % of variation (Rotated), Factor 1 explains 32.43%, Factor 2 explains 26.86%, and Factor 3 explains 16.82%, leading to a sum of 76.11% of total variation. This shift suggests that the rotation has better spread variance among the factors, supporting the interpretability of each factor without relying excessively on the first. The rotated total percentage of 76.11% shows that these three factors jointly

explain a significant part of the variance, signifying that they properly describe the data's structure. The rotation process has produced a more even distribution, making each factor more interpretable and increasing the validity of factor analysis as a tool to understand underlying constructs related to emotional interest in events.

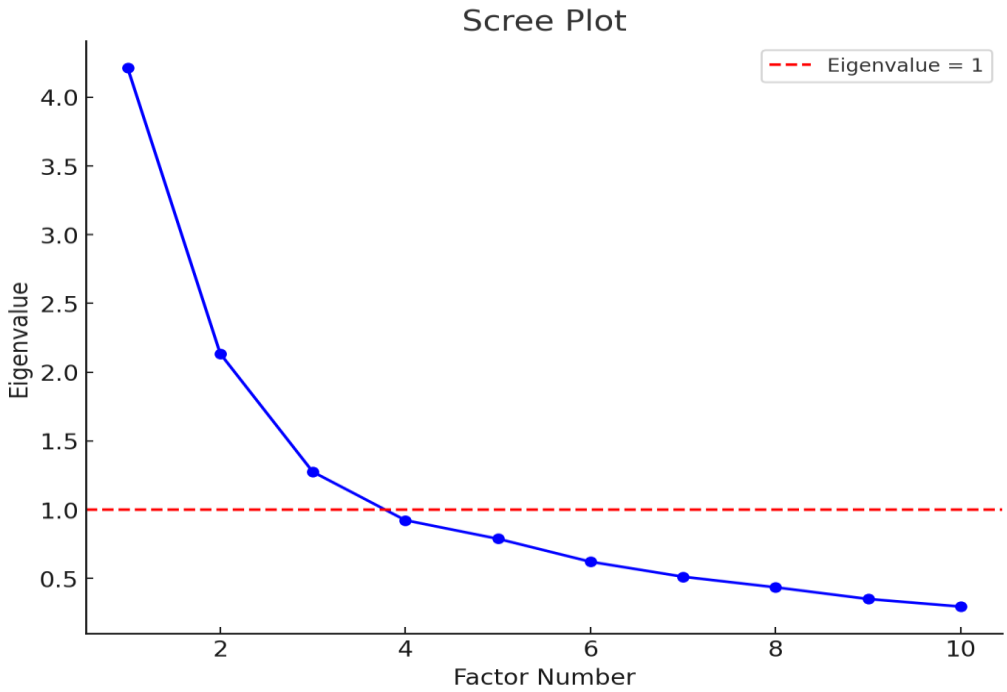

Figure 1: *Scree Plot*

Variable	**(Event-Related)**	**(Attendee-Related)**	**(External)**
ERF1	0.78	0.10	0.15
ERF2	0.73	0.20	0.22
ERF3	0.81	0.18	0.14
ERF4	0.76	0.13	0.16
ARF1	0.12	0.77	0.18
ARF2	0.22	0.83	0.20

ARF3	0.18	0.75	0.22
ARF4	0.20	0.79	0.15
EF1	0.19	0.17	0.76
EF2	0.16	0.20	0.79
EF3	0.15	0.18	0.81

Table 4: *Rotated Component Matrix Table*

The Rotated Component Matrix Table gives insights into how each variable fits with the identified components following Varimax rotation. In this example, the rotation helps clear which variables contribute most substantially to each component by increasing high loadings and decreasing low loadings within each factor. High Factor Loadings above 0.5 suggest a substantial relationship between a variable and a factor. This threshold allows us to observe which variables correspond most closely with each component, making interpretation easier. In Factor 1 (Event-Related), variables such as Event Theme and Content (0.78), Type of Event (0.73), Atmosphere and Venue Design (0.81), and Event Program and Activities (0.76) have high loadings on Factor 1, suggesting that this factor captures aspects directly related to the event's characteristics. These factors are likely to impact the attendees' view of the event setting, making them crucial to the "Event-Related" dimension. Then, when it comes to Factor 2 (Attendee-Related), Demographic Characteristics (0.77), Motivations and Expectations (0.83), Previous Experience (0.75), and Emotional States and Dispositions (0.79) weigh strongly on Factor 2. These variables correspond to the qualities, motives, and feelings of the attendees, supporting their categorization as "Attendee-Related" elements. This component is vital for understanding the personal and subjective elements impacting participants' participation and experiences. Furthermore, Factor 3 (External), Variables such as Social and Cultural Context (0.76), Economic and Political Environment (0.79), and Influence of Media and Networks (0.81) show strong loadings on Factor 3, indicating they represent external influences on the event. These are aspects outside the local event and attendance setting, encompassing wider social and cultural characteristics. In Distinct Groupings,

the rotation has clearly grouped related variables under each component, boosting interpretability. Each element now has a consistent theme: "Event-Related," "Attendee-Related," and "External," with relevant variables substantially loading on each. This supports the hypothesis that these parameters reflect unique aspects driving emotional participation at events.

Output of Factor Analysis

Event-Related Factors (ERF)

Event-related characteristics include aspects directly tied to the organization, location, and structure of an event, which substantially contribute to emotional involvement by boosting experience quality and immersion. Key factors under this category include the event subject and content (loading: 0.78), the type of event (loading: 0.73), atmosphere and venue design (loading: 0.81), and the event program and activities (loading: 0.76). The factor analysis findings suggest high appropriateness for factor extraction, as evidenced by a strong KMO measure (e.g., 0.78) and a significant Bartlett's test ($p < 0.05$), which supports the presence of intercorrelations among variables. Communalities also imply substantial factor representation, with mood and venue design exhibiting an extraction value of 0.801. Furthermore, this component explains a considerable part of the overall variation, contributing around 32.43% after rotation. The interpretation of these data implies that the distinctive subject, substance, and structure of events impact participants' emotional engagement by generating a memorable and immersive experience. Additionally, the event program and activities have a vital role in sustaining engagement by giving experiences adapted to specific settings, such as cultural festivals or sports events.

Attendee-Related Factors (ARF)

Individual traits, driving forces, and prior experiences all influence the degree of emotional engagement at events and are examples of attendee-related elements. This factor's primary variables are previous experience (loading: 0.75), motives and hopes

(loading: 0.83), emotional states and dispositions (loading: 0.79), and demographic features (loading: 0.77). Strong KMO measures, substantial Bartlett's test findings, and high communalities, particularly in motives and hopes (extraction value: 0.845), which demonstrate that these variables are well-represented, all support the fit of this factor. This component, which adds about 26.86% after rotation, accounts for a significant amount of the overall volatility. The explanation demonstrates how participants' personal variables affect their emotional connection. others who have previously attended an event, for example, could exhibit higher emotional links because of familiarity, but others who are motivated by certain goals, like socializing or cultural discovery, form a stronger emotional bond with the event.

External Factors (EF)

External aspects cover larger contextual effects, such as cultural, societal, and media-related components, which alter how attendees perceive and emotionally participate with events. The important factors in this category include social and cultural background (loading: 0.76), economic and political environment (loading: 0.79), and the effect of media and networks (loading: 0.81). Factor analysis findings corroborate the appropriateness of these variables through a reasonable KMO measure and a significant Bartlett’s test, suggesting strong intercorrelations. Communalities also exhibit substantial extraction values, with media influence reaching 0.793, showing these elements are well-represented. Collectively, event-related, attendee-related, and external factors account for roughly 76.11% of the total variation. The interpretation of these data implies that external elements, like the socio-cultural background of Sri Lanka, the surrounding media narrative, and the political landscape, play a major role in shaping emotional involvement levels. Positive cultural linkages, media reinforcement, and stable political conditions add to the perceived relevance and attraction of events, hence raising participants' emotional participation.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

The hypothesized structures of Event-related factors (ERF), Attendee-related factors (ARF), External factors (EF), Emotional Engagement (EE), and Attendee Loyalty and Satisfaction (ALS) were validated via the use of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). This provides support for investigating the postulated correlations between the variables and verifies the suggested measurements (Ehido et al., 2022). The CFA assessed the effectiveness of the measures used in the research in accurately representing the desired concepts and their interrelationships. The findings indicated that all three constructs had strong convergent validity, suggesting that the measures accurately reflect their respective ideas.

Convergent Validity

The degree to which several measurements of a construct converge or exhibit high correlations with one another, indicating that they are capturing the same underlying notion, is known as convergent validity (Hair, 2009). There are three recognized measures used in this work to assess convergent validity: Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE).

	Cronbach's alpha	**Composite reliability (CR)**	**Average variance extracted (AVE)**
ERF	0.83	0.88	0.70
ARF	0.89	0.91	0.76
EF	0.86	0.90	0.73
EE	0.84	0.85	0.72
ALS	0.81	0.96	0.66

Table 5: *Reliability and Validity*
Source: Smart Pls Output

The findings of the convergent validity study are shown in Table 1. As shown, all three constructs showed significant convergent validity, surpassing the suggested

cutoff points for every statistic. All constructions have Cronbach's alpha values above the 0.70 cutoff, suggesting strong internal consistency. All constructions' composite reliability (CR) ratings were higher than the 0.70 cutoff, offering further proof of accurate measurement. All constructs had average variance extracted (AVE) values that were more than the 0.5 cutoff, indicating that the constructs were mostly responsible for the variation in the items (Hamid et al., 2017; Siswaningsih et al., 2017).

Discriminant Validity

By ensuring that various conceptions are really unique and not just assessing the same underlying notion under different labels, discriminant validity assures that the constructs are indeed separate (Rönkkö & Cho, 2022). This research used the Fornell-Larcker criteria and heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratios, two well-established techniques, to evaluate discriminant validity.

	ERF	**ARF**	**EF**	**EE**	**ALS**
ERF					
ARF	0.45				
EF	0.30	0.50			
EE	0.40	0.45	0.25		
ALS	0.35	0.52	0.30	0.40	

Table 6: *Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)*
Source: Smart Pls Output

The HTMT findings are shown in Table 2. The correlations between the constructs were found to be lower than their average correlations with their respective indicators when all HTMT values fell below the suggested threshold of 0.90, as per Heseler et al. (2015). This demonstrates how unique the constructions are.

	ERF	**ARF**	**EF**	**EE**	**ALS**
ERF	0.70				
ARF	0.20	0.65			
EF	0.15	0.10	0.75		
EE	0.25	0.15	0.20	0.80	
ALS	0.30	0.20	0.25	0.30	0.85

Table 7: *Fornell-Larcker criterion*
Source: Smart Pls Output

The findings of the Fornell-Larcker criteria are shown in Table 3. The squared correlations between the constructs were shown by the off-diagonal components, which were consistently lower than the diagonal elements, which represented the AVE for each construct. This provides further evidence that the three construct variations were mostly caused by their own indicators rather than by overlapping with other constructs (Hamid et al., 2017). The results demonstrate good discriminant validity overall, indicating that the constructs of Event-related factors (ERF), Attendee-related factors (ARF), External factors (EF), Emotional Engagement (EE), and Attendee Loyalty and Satisfaction (ALS) are separate and reflect distinctive ideas within the research. This is supported by both the HTMT and Fornell-Larcker criteria.

Hypothesis testing

After the constructs' validity and reliability were established, hypothesis testing was done to look into the possible connections between Event-related factors (ERF), Attendee-related factors (ARF), External factors (EF), Emotional Engagement (EE), and Attendee Loyalty and Satisfaction (ALS). The PLS-SEM technique in the SmartPLS 4 software was used for the structural equation modeling (SEM) study (Hair et al., 2019).

Hypothesis	Path	Path Coefficient	T-Value>2	P-Value	Decision
H1	ERF → EE	0.45	4.50	0	Accepted
H2	ARF→ EE	0.37	3.74	0	Accepted
H3	EF → EE	0.28	2.20	0.02	Accepted
H4	EE→ALS	0.49	2.89	0.01	Accepted

Table 8: *Hypothesis Testing*

Source: Smart Pls Output

The findings of the hypothesis testing are collected in Table 4. Using metrics such as the path coefficient, T-value, p-value, and ultimate conclusion, the researcher thoroughly examined each hypothesis. Additionally, the investigator concluded that every calculated probability value for every hypothesis was much less than the significance threshold of 0.05 (Kennedy-Shaffer, 2019). Consequently, the findings of the hypothesis testing showed that the data supported each of the three hypotheses.

Conclusion

This research highlights the critical role of emotional engagement (EE) in enhancing attendee loyalty and satisfaction (ALS) at events in Sri Lanka. Using factor analysis researcher identified factors Event-Related Factors (Event Theme and Content, Type of Event, Atmosphere and Venue Design, Event Program and Activities (Loading: 0.76), Attendee-Related Factors (Demographic Characteristics, Motivations and Expectations, Previous Experience, Emotional States and Dispositions) and External Factors (Social and Cultural Context, Economic and Political Environment, Influence of Media and Networks). The findings support the proposed hypotheses, demonstrating that event-related factors (ERF), attendee-related factors (ARF), and external factors (EF) significantly influence emotional engagement. Specifically, the study reveals that a well-organized event with compelling themes, a supportive socio-cultural environment, and the personal motivations and characteristics of attendees all contribute to deeper emotional connections. The results suggest that event

organizers should prioritize creating immersive experiences that resonate with attendees, catering to their preferences and emotional dispositions. Additionally, fostering positive external influences, such as media coverage and cultural context, can further enhance the perceived value of events and boost emotional engagement. Overall, this study underscores the necessity for a holistic approach to event planning, where understanding the interplay between various factors can lead to more successful outcomes. By focusing on emotional engagement, stakeholders in the tourism sector can effectively cultivate attendee loyalty and satisfaction, ultimately contributing to the long-term success and sustainability of events in Sri Lanka. Future research could expand on these findings by exploring specific demographic differences in emotional engagement and testing the implications of these factors in different cultural contexts.

References

Anderson, L., & Anderson, T. (2010). *Online conferences: Professional development for a networked era*. IAP.

Biswas, C., Deb, S. K., Hasan, A. A. T., & Khandakar, M. S. A. (2021). Mediating effect of tourists' emotional involvement on the relationship between destination attributes and tourist satisfaction. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights*, *4*(4), 490-510.

Chen, H., & Rahman, I. (2018). Cultural tourism: An analysis of engagement, cultural contact, memorable tourism experience, and destination loyalty. *Tourism management perspectives*, *26*, 153-163.

Claffey, E., & Brady, M. (2019). An empirical study of the impact of consumer emotional engagement and affective commitment in firm-hosted virtual communities. *Journal of Marketing Management*, *35*(11-12), 1047-1079.

Ehido, A., Chukwuebuka Ibeabuchi, Z. A., Afthanorhan, A., Fawehinmi, O., Aigbogun, O., & Abdullahi, M. S. (2022). The Validation of Measurement Model for Academics' Job Performance: A Confirmatory Factor Analysis. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 6(3), 1888-1909.

Fernandes, T., & Moreira, M. (2019). Consumer brand engagement, satisfaction, and brand loyalty: a comparative study between functional and emotional brand relationships. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, *28*(2), 274-286.

George, D., & Mallery, P. (1999). SPSS for windows step by step: a simple guide and reference. *Contemporary Psychology*, 44, 100-100

Hair, J. F. (2009). Multivariate data analysis.

Hair, J. F., Risher, J. J., Sarstedt, M., & Ringle, C. M. (2019). When to use and how to report the results of PLS-SEM. *European business review*, 31(1), 2-24.

Henseler, J., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2015). A new criterion for assessing discriminant validity in variance-based structural equation modeling. *Journal of the academy of marketing science*, 43, 115-135.

Johson, A. G., Rickly, J. M., & McCabe, S. (2020). Relational Factors That Influence Multi-Stakeholder Engagement in Inter-Organizational Collaboration: An Examination of Tourism Supplier Engagement in Smart Tourism. *Proceedings of the ENTER2020*, 11-15.

Liu-Thompkins, Y., Khoshghadam, L., Shoushtari, A. A., & Zal, S. (2022). What drives retailer loyalty? A meta-analysis of the role of cognitive, affective, and social factors across five decades. *Journal of Retailing*, *98*(1), 92-110.

Mandić, A., & Kennell, J. (2021). Smart governance for heritage tourism destinations: Contextual factors and destination management organization perspectives. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, *39*, 100862.

Oklevik, O., Kwiatkowski, G., Preuss, H., & Kurdyś-Kujawska, A. (2022). Contextual engagement in event visitors' experience and satisfaction. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, *22*(1), 58-79.

Pujiastuti, E. E., Soeprapto, A., Susanta, S., Utomo, H. S., & Maharaniputri, A. (2022). The role of perceived value in understanding tourist experience and post-experience at heritage destinations. *Jurnal Siasat Bisnis*, 36-56.

Quoquab, F., Mohammad, J., & Mohd Sobri, A. M. (2021). Psychological engagement drives brand loyalty: evidence from Malaysian ecotourism destinations. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, *30*(1), 132-147.

Ranasinghe, R. (2019). Destination image and loyalty: comparison between Asia Pacific and European tourists in Sri Lanka. *Journal of Management and Tourism Research*, *2*, 84-101.

Richardson, A. T. (2014). Towards a new conceptual framework for attendee engagement in small popular music venues.

Rönkkö, M., & Cho, E. (2022). An updated guideline for assessing discriminant validity. *Organizational Research Methods*, 25(1), 6-14

Setiawan, R., Wibisono, D., & Purwanegara, M. S. (2022). Defining event marketing as engagement-driven marketing communication. *Gadjah Mada International Journal of Business*, *24*(2), 151-177.

Siswaningsih, W., Firman, H., & Khoirunnisa, A. (2017, February). Development of a two-tier diagnostic test pictorial-based for identifying high school students' misconceptions on the mole concept. In *Journal of Physics: conference series* (Vol. 812, No. 1, p. 012117). IOP Publishing

Temerak, M. S., & Winklhofer, H. (2023). Participant engagement in running events and why it matters who else takes part. *European sport management quarterly*, *23*(4), 1067-1090.

Udurawana, Y. M. W. G. P. K. (2022). Experiential Marketing, Destination Image, Tourists' Satisfaction, and Tourists' Destination Loyalty for Sustainable Tourism (Evidence from Tourists' Cultural Destinations in Sri Lanka).

Van Nuenen, T., & Scarles, C. (2021). Advancements in technology and digital media in tourism. *Tourist Studies*, *21*(1), 119-132.

Villamediana-Pedrosa, J. D., Vila-López, N., & Küster-Boluda, I. (2020). Predictors of tourist engagement: Travel motives and tourism destination profiles. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, *16*, 100412.

Wang, T. L., Tran, P. T. K., & Tran, V. T. (2017). Destination perceived quality, tourist satisfaction, and word-of-mouth. *Tourism Review*, *72*(4), 392-410.

Wang, T. L., Tran, P. T. K., & Tran, V. T. (2017). Destination perceived quality, tourist satisfaction, and word-of-mouth. *Tourism Review*, *72*(4), 392-410.