# Secrets of Borobudur Marathon: Tourism atraction, culture, brand image impact on purchase decisions

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**ABSTRACT**

**Running** has become a global phenomenon, including in Indonesia, with the number of runners tripling over the past few years. The Borobudur Marathon, which combines natural beauty and local culture, successfully attracts up to 10,000 runners annually. This study aims to analyze the impact of local culture and tourism attractions on purchase decisions among participants of the 2023 Borobudur Marathon, with brand image as a mediating variable. Adopting a quantitative approach, data were collected from 400 respondents using structured questionnaires and analyzed with SmartPLS 3.0 software. This study uses the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework, considering tourism attraction and local culture as the stimuli, brand image as the organism, and purchase decision as a response. The results show that local culture and tourism attractions significantly enhance brand image, positively impacting purchase decisions. However, the direct relationship between local culture and purchase decisions was found to be insignificant, highlighting the critical role of brand image in shaping participant choices. These findings underscore the importance of leveraging local culture and tourism attractions to build a compelling brand image, fostering participant loyalty and engagement. For event organizers, these insights guide the development of strategic marketing approaches that enhance the overall participant experience. The study contributes to the theoretical understanding of the SOR and the dynamics between local culture, tourism attractions, brand image, and purchase decisions within the event object of sports tourism in the context of marketing communication. By applying these findings, organizers can create more memorable events.

**Keywords:** Tourism attractions; local culture; brand image; purchase decisions; Borobudur Marathon

## *Rahasia Borobudur Marathon : Daya tarik wisata, budaya, citra merek memengaruhi keputusan pembelian*

*ABSTRAK*

*Olahraga lari menjadi fenomena global, termasuk di Indonesia, dengan kenaikan jumlah pelari hingga 3x lipat. Borobudur Marathon menggabungkan keindahan alam dan budaya lokal, berhasil menarik 10.000 pelari setiap tahunnya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh daya tarik wisata dan budaya khususnya budaya lokal terhadap keputusan pembelian peserta Borobudur Marathon, dengan citra merek sebagai variabel mediasi. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan data yang diperoleh dari 400 responden, yaitu peserta Borobudur Marathon 2023. Data dikumpulkan melalui survei menggunakan kuesioner terstruktur dan dianalisis menggunakan perangkat lunak SmartPLS 3.0. Penelitian ini menggunakan kerangka kerja Stimulus-Organisme-Tanggapan (SOR), dengan mempertimbangkan daya tarik wisata dan budaya lokal sebagai stimulus, citra merek sebagai organisme, dan keputusan pembelian sebagai tanggapan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa daya tarik wisata dan budaya lokal memiliki pengaruh signifikan terhadap citra merek. Selanjutnya, citra merek terbukti memiliki dampak yang kuat terhadap keputusan pembelian peserta. Namun, hubungan langsung antara budaya lokal dan keputusan pembelian tidak signifikan, sehingga menegaskan peran penting citra merek sebagai variabel mediasi. Temuan ini menyimpulkan bahwa kesuksesan Borobudur Marathon tidak terlepas dari strategi memanfaatkan daya tarik wisata dan budaya lokal untuk memperkuat citra merek. Citra merek yang positif dapat meningkatkan keputusan pembelian dan pengalaman peserta. Implikasi dari penelitian ini mengajak penyelenggara event untuk fokus mengoptimalkan daya tarik wisata dan elemen budaya guna membangun citra merek positif.Ppenelitian ini juga berkontribusi pada pemahaman teoretis mengenai SOR, serta memahami hubungan antara daya tarik wisata, budaya, citra merek, dan keputusan pembelian dalam konteks komunikasi pemasaran. Dengan strategi pemasaran berbasis temuan ini, penyelenggara dapat menciptakan event berkesan.*

*Kata-kata kunci: Daya tarik wisata; budaya lokal; citra merek; keputusan pembeli; Borobudur Marathon*

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## INTRODUCTION

Running has evolved into a global phenomenon, especially in Indonesia. Based on Garmin activity data, the number of runners in Indonesia has seen a significant increase from 35.696 runners in May 2023 to 80.490 runners in May 2024 (Javier, 2024). This growth in the number of runners is accompanied by the proliferation of running events held annually (Indraswari, 2022). One event that perfectly encapsulates this fusion is the Borobudur Marathon, a remarkable spectacle that combines breathtaking natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, and competitive spirit into a single experience. This event has captivated thousands of runners from various regions and countries, while also generating a significant economic impact of IDR 61 billion during its most recent condition (Wahyu, 2024).

The Borobudur Marathon was chosen as the subject of this study because, despite being one of Indonesia's most renowned running events for the past seven years, it has been the focus of very few in-depth academic studies. As one of the largest running events in the country, it presents a unique opportunity to analyze the factors behind its success. Elements such as the iconic beauty of Borobudur Temple, the distinctive charm of Javanese culture, and the exclusive experiences offered make this event an exceptional case worth examining.

What lies at the heart of Borobudur Marathon's success? This research aims to uncover the answer, specifically by exploring how the appeal of tourism and culture influences runners' decisions to purchase event slots, with brand image as a critical mediating variable. The culture referred to specifically is local culture, the aspects brought by the local community that are consistently presented during the Borobudur Marathon event. This constitutes the novelty aspect of the research, as there has been limited exploration of brand image as an intervening variable linking tourism attractions and cultural to purchase decisions in the context of sport tourism events, in the context of marketing communication, which was researched using a quantitative approach. The Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework will explain whether tourism attractions and culture truly influence purchase decisions and whether brand image functions as an organism or a stimulus in purchasing decisions.

The Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework provides a solid foundation for understanding how external stimuli such as tourism attraction and culture, specifically local culture (S), and the brand image (O) influence the psychological and emotional reactions of participants. These reactions, in turn, shape participants' behavioral responses. This case

refers to the purchase decision (R) for Borobudur Marathon's slot. The SOR can be used to design effective marketing communication strategies. The Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) consists of the stimulus, which is the factor that exerts influence; the organisms, which refer to the internal factors that affect how the stimulus is processed and how the response is formed; the response is the reaction to the stimulus (Gao & Bai, 2014; Rayburn et al., 2022; Errajaa et al., 2022; Sengoz et al., 2024; Fan et al., 2023). The SOR framework model helps to examine how the stimuli create a favorable emotional response in participants, potentially leading to increased intentions to purchase event slots. This framework also explains, from a marketing communication perspective, how the variables can contribute to the success of the Borobudur Marathon and influence participants' willingness to purchase event slots.

Several previous studies have used the SOR framework to examine the influence of various factors, such as stimuli and organism factors, and their effect on purchase decisions as a response. The previous research by Gao and Bai (2014) The SOR framework will examine the impact of the relationship between website attributes in travel agencies in China and consumer perceptions (information, effectiveness, and entertainment), which leads to purchase intention and satisfaction. The SOR framework created a model that places the factors influencing purchase decisions and satisfaction with online purchases. In Gao's study, website attributes are the stimulus, the flow of information is the organism, and purchase decisions and satisfaction are the response (Gao & Bai, 2014).

The research focusing on marketing communication by Rayburn et al. (2022) also uses the SOR model to define how traditional physical atmospheric variables are related to consumers' internal value responses to the m-shopping experience. Furthermore, this research reveals how the fulfillment of consumers' utilitarian and hedonic values relates to their shopping flow experience and their intention to return to the m-shopping platform. The findings suggest that the stimulus-organism-response framework provides a viable perspective in designing mobile shopping experiences (Rayburn et al., 2022). Another study by Errajaa et al. (2022) uses the SOR model to examine the impact of store crowd and employee perceptions on the intention to revisit and generate word of mouth through transactional satisfaction, conducted by a quantitative approach, and surveyed 422 Abercrombie and Fitch store customers. The study concept considers crowd and employees as the stimuli, satisfaction as the internal response, intention to revisit, and word of mouth as the response (Errajaa et al., 2022).

Quantitative studies using the SOR framework to examine marketing communication strategies, such as the research by and Fan et al. (2023) which proved that the SOR framework helps understand the relationship between variables. It even helps to examine both direct and indirect relationships between variables to understand decision-making (Sengoz et al., 2024; Fan et al., 2023). Therefore, it would be interesting to use the SOR framework to examine the factors that contributed to the success of the Borobudur Marathon by looking at the level of engagement of runners in purchasing race slots.

Previous research on a similar subject, the Borobudur Marathon, found that media power plays a significant role in building brand image and fostering trust in the event (Kontessa & Sutresna, 2022). However, previous research by Kontessa and Sutresna (2022), utilized a qualitative approach, while no studies have yet examined the Borobudur Marathon event using a quantitative approach based on the SOR framework. Therefore, this study aims to explore the variables driving the success of the level of runner participation in the Borobudur Marathon more deeply and further analyze the relationship between variables using a quantitative approach. Thus, this study offers novelty that various stakeholders can utilize and provides benefits and new insights for implementation.

The variables in this study were determined based on pre-research to understand why runners choose the Borobudur Marathon. The findings indicate a tendency for participants to cite the enjoyment of running routes that showcase many scenic tourism advantages as a key factor. Tourism appeal emerges as the primary reason. The vibrant cultural diversity presented through cheering performances also contributes to the decision to choose the Borobudur Marathon. Testimonials from participants express pride after running in the Borobudur Marathon, highlighting its consistent positive impact on the community, reinforcing the event's highly favorable image. Therefore, this study focuses on finding answers to whether tourism appeal, culture, and brand image impact the decision to purchase running slots.

Other research on the factors driving purchasing decisions was found, but it follows a different framework. Brand image and tourist attraction significantly influence visit decisions, as Dedy et al. (2021) highlighted in their study. The research conducted amidst competition with other destinations in West Bandung Regency found that while both factors are influential, tourist attraction plays a more pivotal role in driving visit decisions. This study contributes to the marketing field by examining the influence of brand image and

tourist attraction on visit decisions. It also opens opportunities for further research to explore these factors about different variables across other research objects. However, the findings differ from those of Yuliviona et al. (2021), who studied the influence of tourist attractions, location, and promotion on visiting Air Manis Beach in Padang. The study found that tourist attractions did not affect the decision to visit. This raises an interesting question of whether the factor of tourist attractions influences purchasing decisions or not when it comes to an event like sport tourism, such as the Borobudur Marathon, which is widely known for its tourist attractions.

On the other hand, Keren and Sulistiono (2019) found that culture is a significant factor influencing purchasing decisions in the context of Indomie products. Slightly different from the research conducted by Bahari and Ashoer (2018), which found that culture has an influence but is not significant in the purchasing decisions of ecotourism at Malino Highland, while psychological factors have a very significant impact. The two findings regarding the effects of culture on purchasing decisions in tourism objects have different results; it is indicated that the influence of other factors affects the significance of culture's impact. This presents a research gap that would be interesting to explore further, with the Borobudur Marathon

as a sport tourism object suitable for this study.

Putra and Mustikasari (2020) found that brand image significantly influences purchasing decisions for Le Minerale bottled water products. Brand image can exert a substantial impact on purchasing decisions. Similarly, a study by Afwan and Santosa (2020) revealed that brand image plays a crucial role and successfully mediates other variables in influencing purchasing decisions for furniture. The role of brand image as a mediating variable was also significantly proven in a study by Permatasari et al. (2024), who examined brand image as an intervening variable in the factors influencing purchasing decisions among students in Batam City through the Shopee marketplace platform. The findings showed that brand image successfully mediated several factors significantly. Some of these findings form the foundation for this study to examine whether the brand image of the Borobudur Marathon can mediate the influence of other factors.

This research problem centres on how tourism attractions and cultural elements, specifically local culture, impact participants' purchasing decisions, both directly and indirectly through brand image mediation. The SOR framework is used because it is relevant to the hypothesis regarding the possible existence of an indirect influence of tourism attraction

and local culture on purchase decisions through brand image. This research aims to enrich this SOR framework by demonstrating that brand image can mediate the relationship between tourism attraction and culture to purchase decisions. Previous studies have highlighted the predictive and explanatory power of the SOR paradigm in understanding how consumers respond to make purchase decisions (Gao & Bai, 2014; Rayburn et al., 2022; Errajaa et al., 2022; Sengoz et al., 2024; Fan et al., 2023).

Thus, this research is conducted to uncover the secrets behind the success of the Borobudur Marathon. By adopting a quantitative approach and engaging 400 respondents who participated in the 2023 edition of the Borobudur Marathon, this study aims to find the answers. Data was gathered via structured questionnaires covering tourism appeal, culture, brand image, and purchasing decisions. The analysis is conducted using SmartPLS 3.0 software to uncover the research problem.

The findings are expected to serve as a strategic guide for Borobudur Marathon organizers in enhancing their promotional efforts with the best marketing communication strategy. The Borobudur Marathon's organizers could enhance tourism appeal and cultural aspects as key elements in building a strong brand image. Moreover, the insights gained can inspire other running event organizers

and provide new insights for designing more effective marketing strategies. In the academic realm, this study contributes to understanding the application of tourism attraction theory, culture, brand image, and purchasing decisions. Additionally, by employing the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework, this research offers valuable insights to marketing communication theory. It highlights how external stimuli affect consumers' cognitive and emotional states, ultimately influencing purchasing decisions. This study enhances the theoretical understanding of how marketing communications can be strategically designed to shape consumer behavior in the sport tourism event. Furthermore, this study seeks to decode and document the valuable lessons from an event that has become a source of pride for Indonesia.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a quantitative approach to analyze the influence of tourism and cultural attractions on participants' purchasing decisions at the 2023 Borobudur Marathon, with brand image as a mediating variable. The research methodology is designed to address questions regarding the relationships among these variables within a sports tourism event context. The study sample consists of 400 respondents, all participating in the 2023 Borobudur Marathon,

held annually at Magelang, Jawa Tengah. A purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure the respondents had direct experience with the event. Sugiyono (2019), states that purposive sampling is a technique based on specific considerations, where the researcher sets particular criteria to select respondents that align with the research objectives. Inclusion criteria included participants who completed the Borobudur Marathon 2023 offline and voluntarily agreed to fill out the questionnaire. The sample size was determined to accurately represent the population, as stated by (Sugiyono, 2017). Data were collected through a survey using structured questionnaires distributed directly to participants using Google Forms. The questionnaire was designed to measure the variables of tourism attraction, culture, brand image, and purchasing decisions. Tourism attraction consisted of six indicators modified from some expert opinions and previous research (Nuraeni, 2017; Pendit, 1994; Susianto et al., 2022; Harahap & Rahmi, 2020). Culture included five indicators adopted from some expert opinion and previous research (Hofstede et al., 2010; Jelinčić, 2021). This study adopted six of the brand image's indicators from previous research and expert opinion (Alma, 2016; Aaker, 1991; Kotler & Keller, 2016). Finally, the purchasing decision consisted of six indicators modified from expert opinion and

previous research (Ambolau, 2015; Iskamto, 2021).

These questionnaire items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neutral; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree) as Sugiyono (2017), stated that the Likert scale is used to measure the attitudes, opinions, and perceptions of an individual or group regarding social phenomena. Additionally, secondary data were obtained from event organizer reports, including participant statistics and promotional information (Sugiyono, 2017).

The questionnaire will be distributed to obtain accurate data explaining the relationship depicted in Figure 1. In Figure 1 of the SOR Model, tourism attraction and culture are predicted as stimuli, brand image is the organism, and purchasing decision is the response. Whether this aligns with the SOR model or not will be determined by analyzing the data obtained from the questionnaire.

The feedback on a questionnaire containing information based on a Likert scale will be processed and analyzed to explain the relationships between variables and hypotheses, as illustrated in Figure 1. The collected data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares (PLS) with SmartPLS 3.0 software. This technique was chosen because it handles complex models with latent variables while ensuring construct
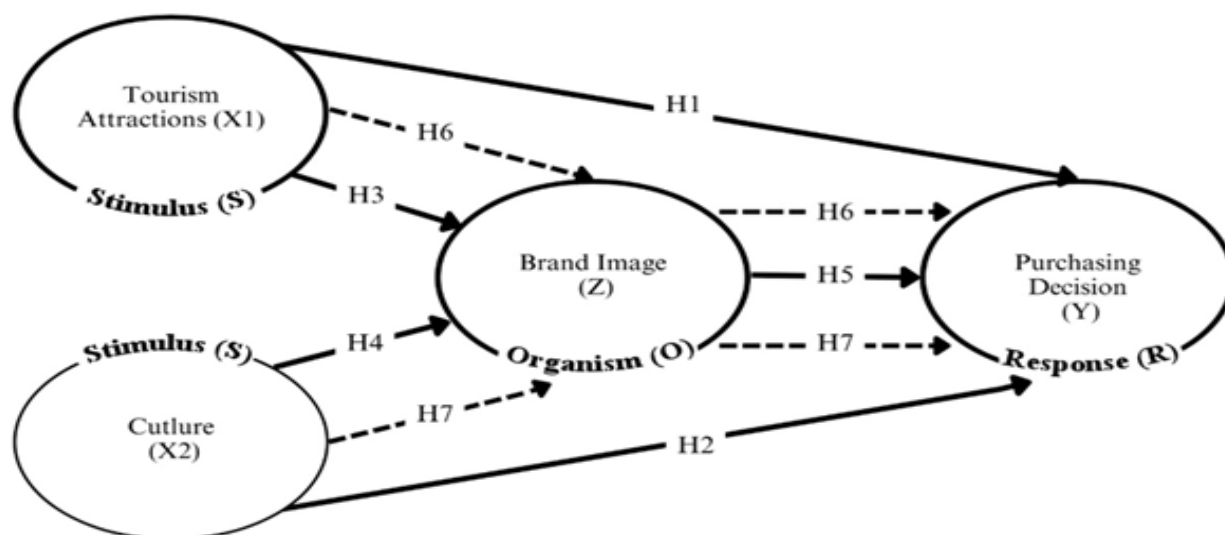
Source: Research Result, 2024

**Figure 1 Research SOR Model: Relationship Between Variables & Hypotheses**

validity and reliability. The analysis began with a validity test through Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and a reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability. Subsequently, the relationship between variables was examined through path analysis to evaluate the proposed hypotheses.

The research was conducted in several stages. First, the preparation stage conducted pre-research to uncover factors that resonate with runners regarding the Borobudur Marathon and involved designing the questionnaire. Second, data collection was conducted starting in November 2024 to gather feedback. Several steps were undertaken to distribute the questionnaire to respondents to achieve the target and obtain data that can accurately represent the population. Third, the collected data were reviewed to ensure completeness

and validity before analysis. The data analysis included testing direct and indirect relationships among tourism attraction, culture, brand image, and purchasing decision. By employing this methodology, the study aims to provide valid and reliable results that can be replicated in similar research contexts.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the feedback data obtained from 400 respondents, the respondents exhibit several characteristics. Regarding gender, 53% are male and 47% are female. This condition is similar to the composition of participants in the Borobudur Marathon, where the number of male participants also surpasses the female participants. This also aligns with findings by Rock (2024) From Medium, which explains that fewer women complete marathons. One key

reason is that men are more frequently involved in endurance sports than women. Additionally, women often face challenges such as limited time due to domestic responsibilities, a lack of support, and certain social perceptions.

The two most common occupations among respondents participating in the Borobudur Marathon are employees (56%) and entrepreneurs (30%). A recent study by Hafizh et al. (2022), found that runners incur significant expenses, employees and entrepreneurs allow allocating a budget for hobbies such as running. The other reason aligns with Sutriyanto (2024) Marathon running provides various employee benefits, promoting physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

In terms of age, the age range of 26-35 years dominated the characteristics of respondents, up to 48%. A study by Putri (2019), found that millennials' health begins to decline at 27. This could serve as motivation, as heightened health awareness drives individuals in the 26-35 age range to engage in activities that support their well-being. The most significant number of respondents comes from the Jabodetabek area (46%).

This aligns with data from the Borobudur Marathon organizers, which indicates that the most dominant participant demographic also originates from Jabodetabek. Participating in out-of-town marathon events like Borobudur

Marathon allows people from Jabodetabek to enjoy a calmer and more refreshing atmosphere. A recent case study on Jakarta residents willingly enduring traffic jams in Puncak is highly relevant to the motivations of Borobudur Marathon participants (Baihaqi, 2023)

This study yields several key findings regarding the influence of tourism attractions and culture on the purchasing decisions of Borobudur Marathon participants, with brand image serving as a mediating variable. Table 1 summarizes the descriptive statistics to show the Mean score on each variable; it also shows the highest and lowest scores on each variable:

Based on Table 1, the average score of the tourism attraction variable is 4,53. This means that the tourism attraction variable is considered necessary by respondents, with many aspects being relevant to them. The main contribution to enhancing tourism attraction is the natural beauty of the Borobudur Marathon route, as reflected in its scenic views, which have an average score of 4,67. Meanwhile, the indicator reflects the minor contribution, with a mean score of 4,39 from tourism experiences.

Table 1 also shows that the average score of the cultural variable is 4,61. This indicates that the cultural variable is considered necessary by respondents, with many aspects being relevant to them. The highest mean score comes from the indicator of attraction and the

**Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of Variables**

| Variable | Mean | Min. | Max. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Tourism Attraction | 4,53 | 4,39 | 4,67 |
| Culture | 4,61 | 4,53 | 4,66 |
| Brand Image | 4,64 | 4,56 | 4,71 |
| Purchase Decisions | 4,54 | 4,33 | 4,65 |

Source: Research Result, 2024

local community in the Borobudur Marathon, with an average score of 4,66. This is reflected in local dances, traditional clothing, local artists, and the Borobudur Marathon's impact on the surrounding communities. The lowest contribution, with an average score of 4,53, comes from the cultural identity indicator.

Brand image becomes the highest variable that is considered by the respondents, with an average mean score of 4,64. The lowest indicators come from brand benefit with a score of 4,56. Among these, brand loyalty stands out as the most influential factor in shaping the brand image of Borobudur Marathon, reflected in the highest average score of 4,71. This is demonstrated by runners' strong intent to repurchase slots and recommend the event to others.

The purchase decision variable achieves an average score of 4,54, emphasizing its relevance to respondents when choosing to participate in the Borobudur Marathon. The brand choice indicator emerges as the strongest contributor, with an average score of 4,65, driven by the trust in the Borobudur Marathon and recommendations from runners who have experienced the event to join the Borobudur Marathon. On the other hand, the indicator with the lowest contribution, scoring an average of 4,33, pertains to the alignment of the slot registration timing with participants' schedules. These findings illustrate that while brand trust and positive endorsements play a pivotal role, logistical factors such as registration timing may present an opportunity for improvement.

The feedback data obtained from 400 respondents was tested for validity, resulting in loading factors greater than 0,7 (as presented in Table 2). It is show that each indicator item is considered valid for explaining the variable. However, one question item was deemed invalid for explaining the tourism attraction indicator, as its validity score was 0.492. This might have occurred due to the question 'Tanjakan Cinta' at KM 35 is memorable, in the indicator creating confusion or using terms that not all participants could relate to, because it says KM 35, which is only Marathon category through KM 35 on the route. Therefore, this single indicator item was excluded, and this study continued using the remaining valid indicator terms. After that, the remaining indicator items are subjected to a reliability test to determine whether they can be consistently used and trusted.

**Table 2 Validity Test Results**

| Variable/ Indicator | Item | Loading Factor |
|---|---|---|
| **Tourism Attraction (X1)** | | |
| Beauty of Nature | Borobudur Marathon route show the natural scenery | 0,711 |
| | The natural scenery increases motivation to run | 0,724 |
| Architecture | Showcase the historical architectural heritage | 0,730 |
| | Borobudur Temple as a visual experience | 0,730 |
| Social | Interaction with locals as an experience | 0,759 |
| | Enhance the social experience through cheering spectators | 0,747 |
| Experience | International standard of route sparks motivation | 0,764 |
| | Route as a challenge to achieve a personal best | 0,758 |
| Uniqueness | Iconic photo spots along the route | 0,716 |
| | 'Tanjakan Cinta' at KM 35 is memorable | 0,492 |
| Facilities | Water station as a support | 0,709 |
| | Marshal medical ease runner | 0,731 |
| **Culture (X2)** | | |
| Values & Norms | Local hospitality creates harmonization | 0,720 |
| | Fruit by locals boost the runner | 0,768 |
| Attractions | Traditional dances as an impression | 0,731 |
| | Traditional costumes worn are attractive | 0,740 |
| Experiential | Local culinary from SME as a added value | 0,701 |
| | Running while enjoying cultural diversity | 0,737 |
| Cultural Identity | Regional language slogans as a distinctive feature | 0,737 |
| | Cultural themed design as an identity of the events | 0,792 |
| Local Community | Local artist as a positive impression | 0,753 |
| | Giving positive impact to surrounding communities | 0,702 |
| **Brand Image (Z)** | | |
| Awareness | Popularity as a running event | 0,714 |
| Brand Quality | Logo is recognizable | 0,779 |
| | Image as a prestigious event | 0,701 |
| | Image from the quality | 0,727 |
| Brand Benefits | Encouraging to love running more | 0,717 |
| | Fulfill the leisure needs | 0,744 |
| Brand Trust | The image is positive | 0,711 |
| | Willing to spend money more | 0,754 |
| Brand Value | Series experiences provided | 0,709 |
| | Empowering local community | 0,710 |
| Brand Loyalty | Re-purchase the slot | 0,727 |
| | Referring to others | 0,713 |
| **Purchasing Decision (Y)** | | |
| Product Choice | Meets the runner's expectation | 0,711 |
| | Offering a unique experience | 0,750 |
| Brand Choice | Trust in Borobudur Marathon | 0,776 |
| | Recommended as a must-attend | 0,711 |
| Provider Choice | Kompas known as a good organizer | 0,814 |
| | Kompas prioritizes the safety | 0,813 |
| Purchase Timing | Registration timeline is easy to understand | 0,820 |
| | Registration timeline fits to runner's timeline | 0,780 |
| Payment Method | The payment method is easy | 0,846 |
| | The payment is secure | 0,826 |

Source: Research Result, 2024

Table 3 explains a comprehensive overview of the reliability test results for the variables examined in this study. The reliability of each construct is assessed using three key indicators: Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The Table 3 explains The Cronbach's Alpha score from each variable. All constructs in this study

**Table 3 Reliability Test Results**

| Variable | Cronbach's Alpha | Composite Reliability | AVE |
|---|---|---|---|
| Tourism Attraction | 0,916 | 0,929 | 0,544 |
| Culture | 0,906 | 0,922 | 0,541 |
| Brand Image | 0,918 | 0,930 | 0,527 |
| Purchase Decisions | 0,931 | 0,942 | 0,618 |

Source: Research Result, 2024

demonstrate excellent reliability. Based on the Cronbach's Alpha values, tourist attraction, culture, brand image, and purchase decision show very high reliability, far exceeding 0,700. Composite Reliability score is approaching 1,00, means that the instruments, as represented by these indicators are consistent in measuring the constructs. Referring to Table 3, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values are all above 0,5. This implies that the constructs of tourist attraction, culture, brand image, and purchase decision can explain the variability in the data collected through the indicators distributed to the respondents. Based on AVE values, these constructs can explain more than half of the variability of the indicators used for measurement, or in other words, they are valid for use.

Overall, the constructs in this study can be considered reliable. Purchase decision shows the highest values across all reliability measurements. This indicates that purchase decision yields consistent and trustworthy results. Means that the results of the analysis of purchase decision factor reflect the existing reality and can be used as a trusty basis for conclusions and recommendations.

Based on the Figure 2, the result of path coefficients test using SmartPLS 3.0 indicate a strong and significant influence between variables, as all relationships have p-values below 0.05. The influence of tourist attraction on purchase decision has a t-statistic of 2,841, demonstrating a direct and significant effect since the t-statistic value is well above 1,96. However, its influence is relatively smaller compare to culture's influence on purchase decision, which has a t-statistic of 4,771. Brand image has a very substantial impact and serves a critical factor influencing purchase decision. This is evidenced by the t-statistic of 9,340. These values represent the highest influence compared to other variable relationships. The influence of tourist attraction and culture on brand image is both positive and highly significant, as reflected in their t-statistics of 6,877 and 6,648, both which are far above 1,96. This indicates that tourist experiences presented through appealing routes can improve runner's positive perceptions of the Borobudur Marathon brand, while rich cultural heritage also significantly shapes runners' perceptions of the Borobudur Marathon brand. Overall, culture
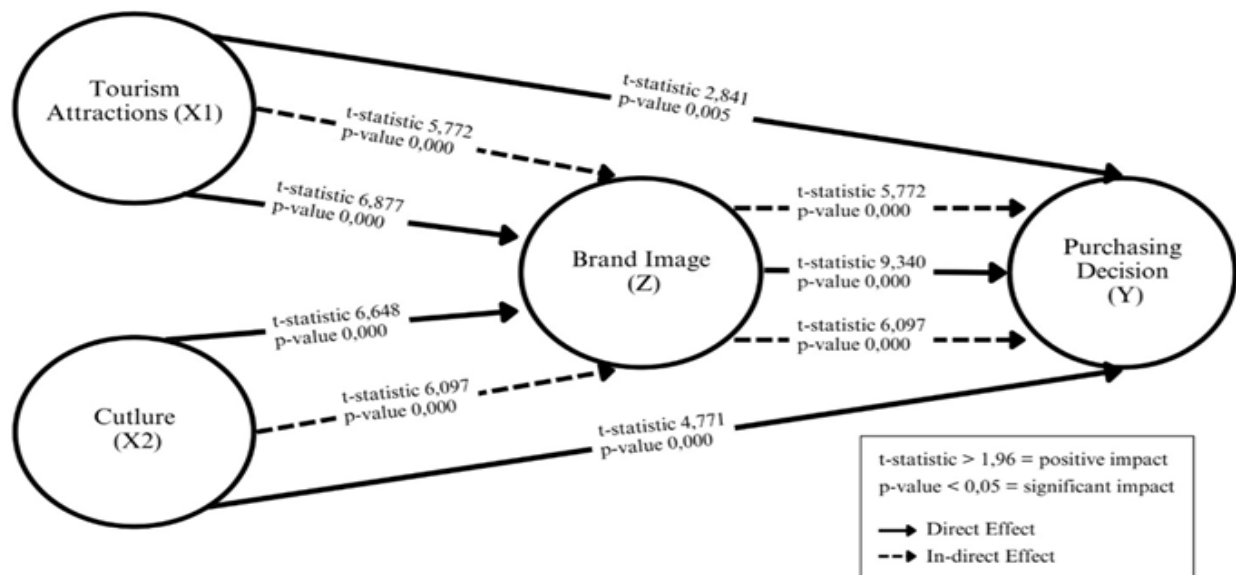
Source: Research Result, 2024

**Figure 2 Hypotheses Test Model and Relation Between Variables**

and brand image are the most critical factors in influencing purchase decision. Meanwhile, tourist attraction plays a more significant role in shaping brand image of Borobudur Marathon.

The results of the study align with the SOR (Stimulus-Organism-Response) model, which posits that external stimuli influence the internal processes of an organism. In this study, tourist attraction and culture act as stimuli affecting the internal state, represented by brand image. With t-statistics of 6.877 and 6.648, tourist attraction and culture (specifically local culture) positvely influence the internal processes of the participants, leading to the formation of a favorable brand image. Brand image, acting as the organism in the SOR framework, mediates the effects of these external stimuli and influences the final response, purchase decisions. This confirms the validity of the SOR

model in explaining consumer behavior in the context of the Borobudur Marathon.

Figure 2 also presents the results of hypothesis testing. The study confirms that tourism attraction significantly influences purchase decisions for the Borobudur Marathon, supporting Hypothesis 1. Factors such as the natural beauty along the route, the UNESCO-listed Borobudur Temple, the social aspects of the community encountered during the event, memorable experiences, and the available facilities, such as water stations and medical support, all motivate runners to purchase tickets. This finding aligns with previous research by Faisal and Berutu (2024) and Adomaitienė and Seyidov (2016) which emphasize the significant impact of tourist attractions (particularly those that offer natural beauty, unique features, and adequate infrastructure) on visitation and

purchase decisions. which is also aligns with the Hypothesis 1.

According to consumer behaviour theories by Schiffman et al. (2019) and Mothersbaugh et al. (2024), internal factors such as motivation and perception influence purchasing decisions. In the case of the Borobudur Marathon, the natural beauty of the tourist attraction plays a key role in shaping participants' motivation to join the event. Pendit (1994), stated that unique and authentic tourist attractions have a greater appeal. In total 263 out of 400 respondents strongly agreed that Borobudur Temple is perceived to make the tourism experience through the route more appealing. This finding is consistent with previous research by Kusumawardani (2020) and Dwiatmojo et al. (2024), which show that the presence of significant tourist attractions influences visiting and purchase decisions.

Figure 2 identifies that culture (X2) has a significant influence on purchase decisions, as indicated by the t-statistic value of 4.771 (p-value <0.05), confirming Hypothesis 2. This finding is in line with the research by Bahari and Ashoer (2018), who examined the role of cultural factors in influencing consumer decisions in ecotourism. At the Borobudur Marathon, culture elements such as traditional dances, local culinary offerings, and community involvement serve as a key drives of participants' perceptions

and purchase decisions. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2012), cultural experiences distinct from those typically encountered by tourists tend to attract more visitors. In this study, respondents, especially those from urban areas like Jabodetabek, expressed high appreciation for the traditional dances performed during the marathon, as these cultural experiences are less commonly encountered in urban settings.

In addition to traditional performances, other cultural aspects such as the friendliness of local residents, the involvement of the community, and offerings like fruit provided by locals also positively shaped participants' perceptions of the event. This aligns with Hofstede's theory on the influence of social norms and values on consumer behavior (Hofstede et al., 2010). A majority respondents (223 out of 400) strongly agreed that the warmth and friendliness of the local residents enhanced their experiences. The findings of this study about culture on Borobudur Marathon as a factor aligns with some previous research by (Santosa, 2021), which found that cultural has an important and significant impact on purchasing decisions on a wedding organizer in Surabaya. It is also aligning with the research by Susanto et al. (2016) and Hardin et al. (2019) who found that culture has a positive and significant impact on purchasing decisions for Tonasa Cement in Manado and women's clothing at Matahari

Department Store, Palopo City. In conclusion, Hypothesis H2 is confirmed, indicating that culture (X2) has a direct influence on purchasing decisions (Y).

The study further found that tourist attractions significantly shape the brand image of the Borobudur Marathon, as evidenced by a t-statistic of 6.877 (p-value <0.05), confirming Hypothesis 3. This suggests that the tourist attractions along the marathon route play a vital role in shaping participants' perceptions and trust in the event, which is curical for building a strong brand image. Aaker (1991), emphasizes that one of the key elements in building brand image is the consumer's experience with the product or service attributes. In this case, respondents strongly agreed that the event's high-quality organization and available facilities, such as water stations and medical support, helped shape a positive brand image of the Borobudur Marathon. This finding supports the idea that tourist attractions positively influence the brand image of the event.

Similarly, culture (X2) also positively influences the brand image of the Borobudur Marathon, with a t-statistic of 6.648 (p-value <0.05), confirming Hypothesis 4. The study supports Zhao et al. (2023), who argue that cultural elements help build a stronger and more relevant brand image for consumers. In the case of the Borobudur Marathon, local

culture aspects such as traditional attire, local food offerings, and community involvement enrich the participants' experience and shape positive perceptions of the event. Additionally, 272 out of 400 respondents strongly agreed that the Borobudur Marathon empowers the local community, which positively influenced their perception of the event's brand. This finding further supports the idea that culture plays a significant role in shaping brand image, aligns with Manggalania and Soesanto, (2021) research, that found culture represent country of origin influence purchasing decisions through brand image as the intervening variable on Samsung Galaxy S cases.

Brand image (Z) serves as a mediating variable between tourist attractions and culture in influencing purchasing decisions. However, in the research model, there is also a direct influence of brand image on purchasing decisions. In the study by Putra and Mustikasari (2020), which examined the influence of brand image on purchasing decisions for Le Minerale products, it was found that brand image significantly impacts purchasing decisions. This aligns with the findings in this study. The brand image of Borobudur Marathon enhances runners' trust in its quality and provides a sense of comfort in participating the event. Evidenced by data findings that indicate 53,3% of respondents have participated in the Borobudur

Marathon more than once.

Kotler and Keller (2016) and Aaker (1991), stated that brand image is built upon participants' experiences and perceptions of event quality. A positive brand image enhances participants' trust, which in turn drives ticket purchases. The majority of respondents strongly agreed with the indicators stating that the Borobudur Marathon is a prestigious event, has excellent organizational quality, and is a popular event. This indicates that the image of the Borobudur Marathon is perceived very positively by the respondents. The highest number of "strongly agree" responses came from 302 out of 400 respondents, who stated that they would strongly recommend the Borobudur Marathon to others, while the remaining 93 respondents agreed. This indicates that the Borobudur Marathon has an excellent brand image, encouraging runners to recommend it to others. The positive brand image drives the decision to purchase tickets and share positively to others.

Respondent's answer to the indicator asking if they are willing to spend money for the Borobudur Marathon experience show that 259 respondents strongly agreed, and 117 agreed. The higher of trust to Borobudur Marathon making them willing to spend money. This is also evident from 285 respondents strongly agreed and 100 agreed that they would purchase a Borobudur Marathon slog again. It can be concluded that Hypothesis H5 is confirmed, as brand image (Z) influence directly on purchasing decisions and has the greatest influence by the highest t-statistic value compared to the relationships between other variables.

Brand images mediate the influence of tourist attractions and culture on the decision to purchase slots for the Borobudur Marathon. It could be concluded from the Figure 2 which shows the t-statistic value on tourist attraction (X1) to purchasing decision (Y) through brand image (Z) is 5,772 (p-value 0,000 < 0,05). Similarly, the t-statistic value of culture (X2) on purchasing decision (Y) through brand image (Z) is 6,097 (p-value 0,000 < 0,05). Those value indicate that brand image mediates the relationship between the two independent variables to influence dependent variable. This demonstrates that the tourist attractions and cultural aspects of the Borobudur Marathon create a positive perception that strengthens the brand image, which, in turn, increases runner's confidence in making purchasing decisions.

According to the concept of perception of value by Kotler and Keller (2016), purchasing decisions are driven by consumers' perceived value. In the context of this research model, tourist attractions and culture provide a positive perception based on indicators confirmed by respondents. Since runners feel that participating in the Borobudur Marathon will offer visual

experiences, interactions with cultural diversity, and emotional engagement, they decide to purchase slot for the Borobudur Marathon. This study aligns with previous research which also highlights the influence of brand image as an intervening variable in affecting purchasing decisions. It can be concluded that Hypothesis H6 and H7 is confirmed, indicating that tourist attraction (X1) influence purchasing decisions (Y) positively through brand image (Z) and culture (X2) influence purchasing decisions (Y) positively through brand image (Z) (Suleman et al., 2022; Permatasari et al., 2024; Kumar et al., 2024; Afwan & Santosa, 2020; Laura, 2017; Dedy et al., 2021; Manggalania & Soesanto, 2021).

Lastly, the interpretation of this findings suggests that event organizers, such as the Borobudur Marathon's organizer, should prioritize enhancing tourism appeal by optimizing unique routes and facilities while strengthening cultural elements by incorporating more authentic interactions with the local community. Additionally, brand image must be effectively managed through marketing campaigns that highlight the participants' positive experiences. Overall, this study makes a significant contribution to understanding the relationship between tourism attractiveness, culture, brand image, and purchasing decisions in the context of sport tourism events, specifically through the lens of marketing communication using the SOR (Stimulus-Organism-Response) theory. The study highlights how various stimuli such as tourism attraction and culture specifically local culture affect the organism, brand image, which then leads to certain responses, such as purchase decisions on Borobudur Marathon's slots. However, limitations such as the sample being drawn exclusively from a single event should be considered when generalizing the findings. Future research is encouraged to broaden the scope of the population and incorporate additional variables, such as slot price and runners' demography, to provide more comprehensive insights.

## CONCLUSION

This study reveals the secret to the success of the Borobudur Marathon, which is influenced by several variables that drive purchasing decisions among runners. The variables like tourism attractions and cultural play a significant role in shaping a strong brand image, which influences the purchasing decisions of the Borobudur Marathon's slot. The findings emphasize that engaging tourism experiences and authentic cultural elements create positive perceptions of the event. Brand image serves as a crucial mediating element, linking tourism and cultural attractions to purchasing decisions.

These results provide in-depth insights into how these elements interact to create memorable experiences for participants and enhance their loyalty to the event indicate with some actions like re-purchase to the brand.

This study contributes to academic literature. Theoretically, the SOR model is proven in the context of this study. The stimuli (tourist attraction and culture specifically local culture) significantly influence the organism (brand image), which in turn affects the response (purchase decisions). The statistical analysis (t-statistics, p-values) and the relationships between the variables are consistent with the core components of the SOR framework, demonstrating that the model effectively explains the consumer behavior observed in the context of the Borobudur Marathon. The data provides strong evidence that the SOR model is an appropriate framework to understanding the dynamics between tourist attractions, culture, brand image, and purchase decisions on the sport tourism event in the context of marketing communications field.

Tourism attractions have a positive significant impact on purchasing decisions. The scenic beauty along the marathon route (Mean score 4.67) strongly motivates runners, while the challenge of achieving personal bests (Mean score 4.39) requires strategic enhancement. Culture specifically local culture positively and significantly influence slot purchases. Traditional dance performances and the marathon's economic contributions to local communities are key motivators (Mean scores 4.67 and 4.68). However, cultural-themed visual designs (Mean score 4.53) need further development.

Attractive marathon routes positively influence brand image. Natural scenery (Mean score 4.67) significantly boosts brand perception, while challenge aspects need improvement to enhance the brand image. Culture, seen from community benefits (Mean score 4.68) and traditional performances enhance brand perception, while cultural-themed visual designs (Mean score 4.53) requeire refinement. A strong brand image significantly influences purchasing decisions. High-quality event organization Mean score 4.67) encourages repeat participation, while fostering an emotional connection to running (Mean score 4.56) should be further developed. Brand image mediates the relationship between tourism attractions and purchasing decisions. Enhancing natural attractions improves brand perception, increasing slot purchases. Brand image also mediates the influence of cultural elements on purchasing decisions. Positive societal impacts enhance brand perception, leading to increased participation.

This study contributes to the practical

applications. For those who managing the Borobudur Marathon, should focus on strengthening tourism attractions through the development of more innovative routes and participant-friendly facilities. Furthermore, the integration of cultural elements should be enhanced by offering more interactive local cultural experiences. To support a stronger brand image, creative and digital based marketing campaigns should be implemented to attract new participants while retaining the loyalty of existing ones.

Study has important implications for both sport tourism and society. For sport tourism event managers to enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of their events in the long term, such as: (1) Tourism and cultural attractions should be strategically managed to create memorable experiences for visitor or participants. (2) A strong brand image must be built through consistent and innovative communication strategies, especially in the digital era. (3) These findings also highlight the need for event managers to utilize participant data as a guide for strategic decision-making, such as improving services and designing promotional efforts. For society, the study underscores sport tourism events' role in promoting local culture and supporting economic development. Integrating cultural elements and fostering community engagement

attract participants while benefiting local businesses and preserving cultural heritage.

Future research is recommended to broaden the population scope and explore other variables, such as the slot price and runner's demography in the context of sport tourism events. Cross-cultural studies could examine how tourism and cultural factors influence purchasing decisions in different contexts. Qualitative approaches could offer deeper psychological insights into participatn motivations, while including event organizers and sponsors' perspectives could provide a comprehensive understanding of factors driving event success.

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