

THE EFFECTS OF TOURIST EXPERIENTIAL VALUE ON SKI DESTINATION IMAGE AND TOURISTS' BEHAVIORAL INTENTION: THE MODERATING ROLE OF 2022 WINTER OLYMPICS GAMES IMAGE

Shubin Yu

Hokkaido University, Japan

Kaige Zhu

Hokkaido University, Japan

INTRODUCTION

With the boost of winter sports catalyzed by the 2022 Winter Olympics, China's ski tourism market has been rapidly heating up. As of October 2021, more than 346 million Chinese people have participated in skiing activities, and China's ski market has emerged as one of the fastest-growing markets globally (Vanat, 2020). Additionally, Zhangjiakou city, as one of the host cities for the Winter Olympic, its existing ski resorts receive nearly 3 million visitors each winter since 2021 (Xinhua News, 2022). Despite this growth and development in the ski industry, China's ski tourism faces certain challenges after the 2022 Winter Olympics due to the limited time and hasten development. In European countries, ski tourists hold a significant experiential value, and famous ski destinations have emerged as a crucial contributor to the national economy (Tuppen, 2000). According to Li (2018), the experiential value offered to ski tourists still lags behind Europe by a wide margin. However, ski tourism is a highly participatory and experiential activity, having a high rate of revisits and repeat consumption (Prebensen, 2017). And the experiential value that ski tourists seek is an essential factor in their decision to visit a particular ski destination. The ski destination and experiential value are closely related and understanding the experiential value of Chinese ski tourists is essential to development of the ski destination in China. This may have a significant influence on the sustainable and high-quality growth of ski tourism in the future.

The research of tourist experiential value and its effect on tourists' loyalty, tourists' satisfaction

and behavioral intention has been widely discussed (He and Luo, 2020; Wang & Sun, 2022). Recently, this trend has motivated scholars to explore the structural dimensions of tourist experiential value in different tourism scenarios, such as sports event tourism (Hervás et al., 2020), food tourism (Tasai & Wang, 2017) and ski tourism (Xu et al., 2022). In the context of ski tourism, the hierarchical experiential value emphasizes multidimensional interactions between tourists and destination, but most of these studies failed to analyze the effect on the ski destination image. In particular, the ski destination image of the Winter Olympics host cities. Thus, this paper based on the theory of tourist experiential value (Berbeka, 2018) to explore the effect on the ski destination image and aims to test the relationship between ski destination image and tourist behavioral intention.

In addition, destination markets have focused on hosting mega sports events as a strategy to enhance both destination image and the behavioral consequence of future visit intentions (Chalip & Green, 2001). And existing literature suggests that there has a significant impact of event image on destination image (Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007). In this trend, the impact of event image on the destination image cannot be ignored. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the influence of event image when examining the relationship between ski destination image and ski tourists' behavioral intention. However, the research on the moderating role of event image is rare. This study attempts to explore the moderating role of mega sports event image.

In summary, this paper uses Zhangjiakou city

as an example, which hosted the 2022 Winter Olympics Games, as well as investigates the effect of tourist experiential value on the image of Zhangjiakou ski resorts and tourists' behavioral intention. Meanwhile, it examines the moderating effect of 2022 Winter Olympic Games image.

METHOD

The measures of this study contain three major sections: the experiential value of Chinese ski tourists, the ski destination image, and tourists' behavioral intention. As for the tourist experiential value in different types of tourism not only has some common dimensions but may also have some unique dimensions due to the features of skiing (Xu et al., 2022). Therefore, this paper employed the measurement dimensions of ski tourism from the previous research by Xu et al. (2022) and Wang & Sun (2022) (facility value, financial value, safety value and service value, respectively). Consequently, it can more effectively measure the experiential value of Chinese ski tourists.

As for the ski destination images, it should accordingly be seen as constructs consisting of both a cognitive domain and affective domain (Andersen et al., 2017). Additionally, Zhangjiakou ski

destination have seven large ski resorts. In order to fully reflect the affective and cognitive image of Zhangjiakou ski destination and the moderating effect of the 2022 Winter Olympics Games image, this paper selected the skiers who have visited one of the ski resorts of Zhangjiakou for ski tourism after the 2022 Winter Olympics.

Finally, tourists' behavioral intention was measures with the intention to recommend the ski destination and intention to revisit destination for ski tourism (Tasai & Wang, 2017). The preliminary conceptual framework of this study is presented in Fig.1, and hypotheses were formulated.

The data collection took place online from March 15-31, 2023, with the help of a ski application (Huabei App) supported by Pow Snow Technology (www.fenxuekeji.com) based in mainland China. After 15 days of data collection, 306 valid responses were obtained from 566 Chinese individuals who had joined the online ski community of Zhangjiakou and experience with ski tourism in there after 2022 Winter Olympics. In data analysis, the measurement model and structural model were evaluated using the PLS algorithm and bootstrapping (5000 subsamples), respectively, with SmartPLS (version 4.0.8.7).

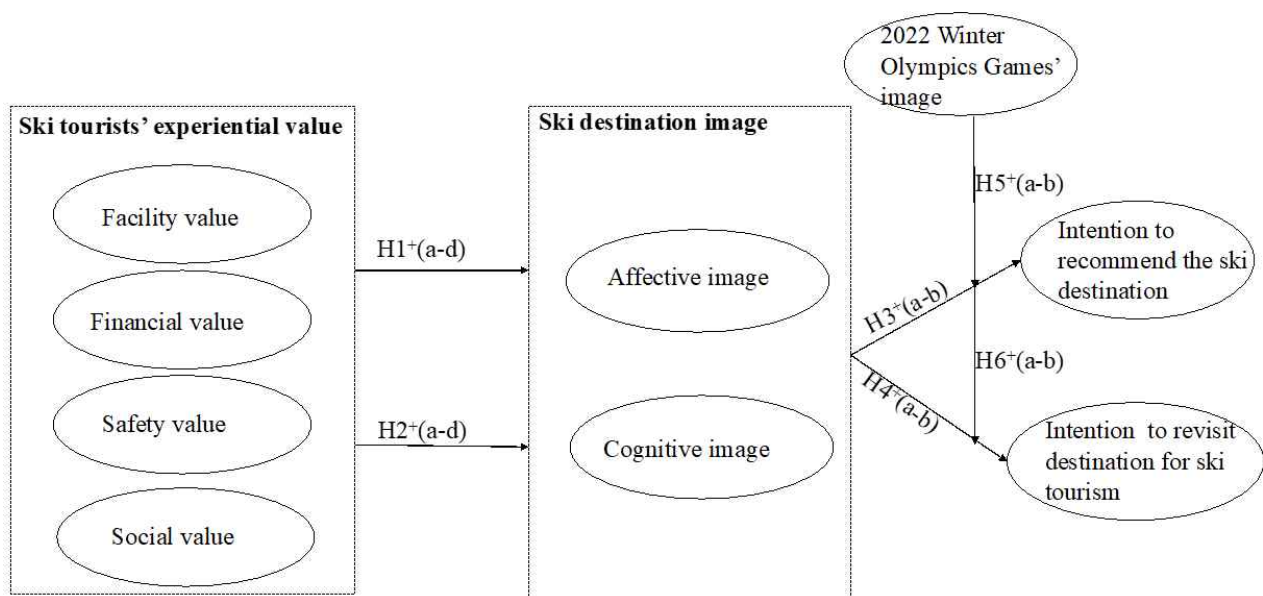


Figure 1. Research model

FINDINGS

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the survey sample, the respondents consisted of

slightly more males (51.6%) than females (49.4%), and relatively highly educated young people with a high annual income. Regarding the age structure of the respondents, individuals between the ages of 20

and 40 constitute 87.9% of the sample. Furthermore, they have utilized various ski applications excluding the Huabei App.

To assess the valid, the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used followed by the structural model analysis for hypothesis testing and model prediction. To measure the internal consistency and scale reliability, the Cronbach's α and CR were used. The Cronbach's α values ranged 0.797 to 0.914, while CR values ranged 0.894 to 0.933, which is a good indicator of internal consistency. Second, factor loading, and average variance extracted (AVE) were used to access the convergent and discriminant validity of the constructs. All the loadings were above 0.7 as recommended value. Furthermore, each AVE value was greater than 0.50, including a satisfactory degree of convergent validity. And the square root of the AVE for each construct was significantly higher than the correlations between constructs. Hence, it is concluded that the proposed theoretical framework

has an adequate discriminant and convergent validity as well as reliability of all the constructs.

The structural model was subsequently evaluated. The inner Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) were calculated and found to be less than 5 (1.063~1.287), indicating that there were no problems with multicollinearity. The value of SRMR was 0.053, which was less than the threshold of 0.08, suggesting a good fit. As shown in the Table 2, the proposed research model manifested relatively moderate to substantial explanation power (R^2 was 0.178, 0.211, 0.114, 0.216, respectively), all Q^2 values were greater than zero, which indicate the exogenous latent variables had good predictive relevance.

The results of hypothesis testing are presented in Table 2. The moderating results of H5a, H6a, and H3b were rejected, whereas the remaining hypotheses were found to be meaningful and supported.

Table 1. Demographic characteristic (N=306)

Gender			Age				Education				Annual Income (yuan)	
	freq.	%	old	freq.	%		freq.	%		freq.	%	
Male	158	51.6	10 ~ 20	4	1.3	Senior high school and below	18	5.8	<30000	6	2	
Female	148	48.4	20 ~ 30	105	34.3	Junior college	76	24.9	30000~100000	43	14.1	
			30 ~ 40	164	53.5	Undergrate	153	50	100000~300000	167	54.5	
			>40	33	10.9	Master and above	59	19.3	>300000	90	29.4	
Total	306	100	Total	306	100	Total	306	100	Total	306	100	

Table 2. Results of hypothesis testing

Regression paths	β	t-Value	p-Value	Result
H1a: FaV $\rightarrow$ AI	0.191	3.495	0.000	Accepted
H1b: FiV $\rightarrow$ AI	0.157	2.848	0.004	Accepted
H1c: SaV $\rightarrow$ AI	0.154	2.887	0.004	Accepted
H1d: SeV $\rightarrow$ AI	0.171	3.017	0.003	Accepted
H2a: FaV $\rightarrow$ CI	0.155	3.018	0.003	Accepted
H2b: FiV $\rightarrow$ CI	0.203	4.048	0.000	Accepted
H2d: SeV $\rightarrow$ CI	0.200	3.746	0.000	Accepted
H3a: AI $\rightarrow$ IR	0.135	2.295	0.022	Accepted
H3b: AI $\rightarrow$ IV	0.064	1.110	0.267	Rejected
H3c: SaV $\rightarrow$ CI	0.178	3.244	0.001	Accepted
H4a: CI $\rightarrow$ IR	0.156	2.613	0.009	Accepted
H4b: CI $\rightarrow$ IV	0.165	2.829	0.005	Accepted
		R^2	Q^2	
AI		0.167	0.121	
CI		0.201	0.144	
IR		0.099	0.079	
IV		0.203	0.150	
Moderation result				
H5a: GI x AI $\rightarrow$ IR	0.063	1.045	0.296	Rejected
H5b: GI x AI $\rightarrow$ IV	0.113	2.029	0.043	Accepted
H6a: GI x CI $\rightarrow$ IR	0.107	1.724	0.085	Rejected
H6b: GI x CI $\rightarrow$ IV	0.208	3.610	0.000	Accepted

Note. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, ns=non-significant. β =Standard regression coefficient. FaV=Facility value, FiV=financial Value, SaV=Safety Value, SeV=Service Value, AI=Affective Image, CI=Cognitive Image, IR=Intension to recommend the ski destination,

IV=Intention to revisit destination for ski tourism, GI=2022 Winter Olympics Game image. R^2 =explained variace, Q^2 =prediction relevance.

IMPLICATIONS

According to results of this study, the tourist experiential value in ski tourism has significant positive effects on ski destination image. Furthermore, it was found that the cognitive image has a stronger effect than the affective image, which expand the theory of tourist experiential value in tourism research. Additionally, the affective image of Zhangjiakou has little correlation with the intention to revisit, however the cognitive image of Zhangjiakou has significant influence on both revisiting Zhangjiakou and recommending its ski resorts. This finding differs from traditional sightseeing tourism studies (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020). Finally, the study found that the 2022 Winter Olympics Games image plays a positive moderating role in the impact of both affective and cognitive image on the intention to revisit Zhangjiakou for ski tourism. This result provides an innovative reference for future Winter Olympics host cities to develop ski tourism.

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