

THE EFFECT OF SPORT EVENTS VISITORS' EXPERIENTIAL VALUE ON THE FLOW, ATTACHMENT, AND BEHAVIOR INTENTION

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INTRODUCTION

As tourists' demand for diversified tourism products rises, sports are getting more and more attention. Tourism is becoming more and more integrated into people's daily lives, and sports tourism as a form of tourism has received great attention in the past 20 years. According to the "China Sports Tourism Consumption Big Data Report (2021)" jointly published by the China Tourism Academy and Mafengwo Tourism (2021), before the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of sports tourists in China increased by 40% every year. The data further illustrates the popularity of sports tourism in China. Although sports events have received more attention from researchers in recent years, few studies have focused on spectators at sports events. Spectators are an important part of sports events. Therefore, this study focuses on the experience of spectators at sports events.

The researchers identified nine variables for this study by reviewing previous literature and used SmartPLS 4.0 to construct a structural equation model (SEM). The main purpose of this study is to explore, through the survey of tourist experience, whether it affects the flow experience of spectators and the event attachment of spectators at sporting events, in order to understand tourist satisfaction. In addition, this study explored the relative importance of the four dimensions of experience economy in these influences. Secondly, this study discussed the role of satisfaction in theoretical models. Thirdly, this study examined whether satisfaction influenced their intention to revisit the event and understood

their intention to generate content on social media after watching the event.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pine and Gilmore (1998) put forward the concept of the experience economy, they believed that consumers want special experiences in the process of consumption, so consumers should be provided with a memorable experience to meet their expectations. And then, based on the type of consumer experience, they divided the experience into four dimensions (i.e. learning, aesthetic, entertainment, and escapism). Since then, experience economy has been widely used in tourism studies such as beer tourism (Chirakranont & Sunanta, 2021), wine tourism (Quadri & Fiore, 2012), and art performance tourism (Zhang, Liu, Li, & Tan, 2021). In this study, experience economy theory was used to examine visitor experience in the context of a sporting event.

Csikszentmihalyi (1975) defined flow as the overall feeling when people are fully engaged in an action and explained the flow experience as an emotional experience. Flow has been widely used in tourism research, such as rafting (Wu & Liang, 2011), nature tourism (Kim & Thapa, 2018), and mountaineering (Pomfret, 2006). Therefore, this study used flow to explore the emotional experience of tourists.

The attachment has its origins in psychology and psychoanalysis. It refers to people's basic needs regarding the relationship between individuals (Krolikowska, Kuenzel, & Morrison, 2020). Previous studies have mostly focused on destination

attachment (Veasna, Wu, & Huang, 2013), community attachment (Eslami, Khalifah, Mardani, Streimikiene, & Han, 2019), and brand attachment (Rather, Najar, & Jaziri, 2020). In these studies, attachment theory is transferred from the emotional connection between people to the relationship between people and places. Therefore, this study proposes a concept of event attachment, similar to destination attachment, to explore the relationship between spectator experience, event attachment, and satisfaction at sporting events.

Heung and Cheng (2000) described satisfaction as the subjective comparison and evaluation of tourists' expectations of products or services and the actual perceived performance. Satisfaction has also been studied in many areas such as consumer satisfaction in the hotel and restaurant industry (Alexandris, Zahariadis, Tsorbatzoudis, & Grouios, 2004) and spectator satisfaction in the Olympic Games (Brown, Smith, & Assaker, 2016). This study introduces satisfaction in sporting events for exploring the role of satisfaction in the model.

Stylos, Vassiliadis, Bellou, and Andronikidis (2016) defined revisit intention as an individual's intention or willingness to visit the same destination again. Hu and Xu (2021) explored the relationship between memorable travel experiences and revisit intention. In this study, the impact of spectator satisfaction at sporting events on their revisit intention was investigated.

Ana (2019) defined content generation as the content published by consumers on the internet. Antón, Camarero, and Garrido (2019), in a survey of museum visitors, found that satisfaction had a partial impact on the intention of visitor-generated content. In recent years, content generation as the main source of information for tourism consumers (Müller & Christandl, 2019) should be given more attention.

METHOD

The questionnaires were distributed by the researcher to the live spectators of the World Table Tennis (WTT) Champions Macao 2022 at the Macau Tap Seac Multisport Pavilion. As each WTT competition will attract many tourists from different regions. This study aims to gain a deeper

understanding of the visitor experience by interviewing tourists from different regions. Due to limited time and manpower, the researchers could not use random sampling, so this study used convenience sampling to collect data. The questionnaires were divided into two parts, with a seven-point Likert scale used in the first part. The second part contained demographic information. Researchers distributed the questionnaires to students at Macau University of Science and Technology and spectators on the first day of the competition for pre-test and adjust the questionnaire. And the formal survey was conducted from 20 October 2022 to 23 October 2022. A total of 429 questionnaires were distributed, and 396 usable samples were obtained.

FINDINGS

SPSS 23.0 and SmartPLS 4.0 were used to analyze the data. The result of the demographic information showed that: Males accounted for 43.4% of the respondents; Female accounted for 56.6% of the respondents; Respondents between 18 and 30 years old accounted for 85.4%; More than 90% of the respondents have a bachelor's degree or above; 81.1% of the respondents reported that they are from mainland China; 48.5% of the respondents' income is less than 5000MOP; Among all the respondents, students accounted for 58.3%; 37.4% of the respondents said that they had never seen such a competition in the field; 64.1% of the respondents think that only 300MOP or fewer tickets can be accepted.

Internal consistency measures, convergent validity, and discriminant validity were used to measure the reliability and validity of the scale. To assess reliability, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) were tested in this study. The analysis results show that the Cronbach's α value of each variable of this study was between 0.722-0.941, which was above the cut-off point of 0.6; and the analysis results show that the CR was between 0.811-0.948, which were above the cut-off point of 0.6 (Hair, 2010). The validity analysis of this study consists of two parts: Convergent Validity (CV) and Discriminant Validity (DV). The factor loading of all variables is in the range of 0.627-0.949, which is above the cutoff point of 0.7;

and the average variance extracted (AVE) of all variables is in the range of 0.518-0.859, which is above the cutoff point of 0.5 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). Therefore, all variables in this research model had high convergent validity. In addition, the square root of the AVE value is greater than the correlation coefficient value at the bottom left of the diagonal, which shows that it has good discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Therefore, this research has good reliability and validity.

The hypothesis 'Learning experience has a significant impact on tourists' dependence on events' is not supported by the hypothesis test. All the other hypotheses are supported. This result may be because the main purpose of some spectators is to cheer for their favorite teams, and countries or to support their favorite players. For this type of spectator, already have some knowledge about this type of competition, or they only pay attention to one player, like star chasing. Therefore, the learning experience of the event cannot make them dependent on the event.

IMPLICATIONS

Theoretical implications: Previous studies have rarely focused on spectators at sports events. In this study, the researcher fully takes the concept of experience economy into sports events, explores the psychological changes of spectators while watching the competition, and fills the gap of previous research in this area. Secondly, this research provides a theoretical foundation and a new direction for future research on spectators of sports events. Furthermore, the proposition of the concept of event attachment in this study provides a new research direction for researchers in the field of sports tourism.

Management implications: Event organizers should take the initiative to create better conditions for revisit. For example, if visitors from mainland China want to visit Macau, they need to apply for a visa in advance. Organizers can collect the latest visa requirements from different places and post them on popular social media platforms so that spectators can access such information. In addition, organizers can integrate the history, program, and rules of the event by printing them as a guide or placing them as a QR code at the entrance to the

track to give spectators a better experience.

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