

A Study on the Willingness to Develop Sports Tourism in Taiwan

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ABSTRACT

Objective – This study aims to construct a model for the willingness to develop sports tourism, using the factors of place attachment, the impact of sports tourism, attitude and willingness to develop sports tourism.

Methodology/Technique – The study gathers data via questionnaires. Following this, purposive sampling is used to distribute the questionnaires and the collected data is analysed using descriptive statistics, confirmatory factor analysis and a structural equation model.

Findings – Once the aforementioned analysis is conducted, the following conclusions were drawn. First, the model construction fits well. Second, the factor of place attachment has a significant positive influence on the perceived impact of sports tourism. Both the positive perception of sports tourism and the attitude for developing sports tourism have a positive impact on willingness to develop sports tourism. Contrary to this, negative perceptions of sports tourism have a negative impact on the attitude to develop sports tourism, although it has no significant impact on the willingness to develop sports tourism.

Novelty – This study demonstrates that the higher the degree of place attachment associated with the inhabitants of Taiwan, the greater recognition there is of the impact of sports tourism. The most important finding of this study is that this positive impact enhances the attitude and willingness of inhabitants to develop sports tourism. The study also develops some practical strategies based on the study results.

Type of Paper: Empirical.

Keywords: Place Attachment; Willingness; Sports Tourism; Tourism Impact.

JEL Classification: Z30, Z39.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the rise of leisure and health awareness has led to an increase in the popularity of international sports competitions. In Taiwan, many activities such as marathons and carnivals have attracted a large number of participants.

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The combination of athletes and natural landscape resources provide participants not only with the ability to experience the beauty of nature, but also to enjoy the benefits of sports. Therefore, sports tourism creates opportunities to develop and grow national recreational tourism and also attracts public participation in tourism activities. Chen and Chen (2017) state that sports events attract tourism and give rise to the development of sports tourism. It can therefore be said that sport tourism has become a trend and contributes to the tourism industry, leading to an increase in its popularity in recent years.

As a result, the industry relating to sports tourism has begun to play an important role in national economic development. However, long term development of tourism activities without the willingness of local residents to participate will necessarily inhibit this. Some scholars also state that the higher the dependency of the residents, the more positive the attitude toward tourism is (Tsao and Lin, 2012). The rise of tourism activities has a different impact on local residents; this may be by creating employment opportunities, improving local public facilities, increasing income, promoting investment, and so on. However, it may also cause environmental damage, traffic congestion, rising prices or other negative issues. Therefore, tourism activities have a close relationship with the residents (Hung, Tsai, and Tsai, 2013). The literature in this space emphasizes the needs, behaviors, motivation and satisfaction of sports players. In recent years, some researchers (for example, Hsiao, Chang, and Lin, 2011) have also expressed concern for the awareness and attitude of residents toward sport tourism. Some scholars suggest that the importance of tourism development lies in the interaction between tourists and residents, with the residents themselves being part of the tourist experience (Chang and Sung, 2011).

Throughout the years, the tourism industry has made a significant contribution to the Taiwanese economy. Chang and Sung (2010) state that, in Taiwan, the Hualien area owns many rich tourism resources, and the government agencies and responsible units pay significant attention to the promotion of tourism and the hosting of sports events. Su (2013) also concludes that for the tourism industry, these activities could increase local tourism income and provide benefits for neighboring restaurants, hotels and recreational areas. Nowadays, the flourishing tourism industry not only attracts domestic as well as foreign tourists, but also successfully markets in Taiwan. However, all of the factors examined in this study, including place attachment, impact of sports tourism, development of sports tourism, and willingness of sports tourism development, have an influence on the willingness of residents to develop local tourism. Wang and Wei (2014) demonstrate that, in addition to helping people relax and pursue health and fitness, the combination of leisure, tourism, sports and health can also increase national revenue. Therefore, with a focus on the Hualien area in Taiwan, this study aims to gain an understanding of the current effect of place attachment, the perceived impact of sports tourism, the attitudes for developing sports tourism and the trend of sports tourism from the perspective of local residents, and to explore the relationship between the factors. These factors will then be used to construct a model for the development of sports tourism.

2. Research Methodology and Procedure

2.1 Research Subjects

Considering the richness of natural resources, this study focuses on the Hualien area, which is located in the eastern part of Taiwan. The study uses conception sampling to collect data from the population of over 18 years olds in the Hualian area. The study is conducted from 8 November 2013 to 10 November 2013. A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed, with 465 questionnaires being valid. The effective recovery rate is therefore 93.0%.

2.2 Research Tools and Validity Analysis

In this study, the factors used as variable measurement tools include personal basic information, place attachment, perception of the impact of sports tourism, and the attitude and willingness to develop sports tourism. With the exception of personal basic information, each of these factors is measured using a Likert seven-point scale. As for personal basic information, this is created by this study and a total of 8 questions is derived.

With respect to the scale of place attachment, this study makes references to Chang and Sung (2010). In total, 10 questions are used for the factors of place dependency and place identity, which attain a reliability as high as $\alpha=.926$ and explain 68.68% of the total variance.

Adopted from Hsiao, Chang and Lin (2011), the scale of sports tourism impact is composed of “positive impact” and “negative impact”, from which a total of 26 questions is derived. The scale of positive impact includes “positive economic”, “positive social culture” and “positive environment”, with a reliability of $\alpha=.92$. As for negative impact, three dimensions of “negative economic”, “negative social culture” and “negative environmental” are used which attain a reliability of $\alpha=.86$ and explain 73.18% of total variance.

To measure attitudes toward developing sports tourism, the scale in Yang (2013) is used. For this scale, 4 questions are derived, which are: “improving the visibility of Hualien sports tourism by races”, “complementing with Hualien tourism”, “supporting the holding of activities” and “taking as a great honor”. The reliability of these questions is $\alpha=.88$ and they are used to explain 73.90% of the variance.

Referring to Tsao and Lin (2012), this study develops 5 questions to measure the willingness to develop sports tourism, including “willingness to participate”, “willingness to assist”, “co-ordination”, “recommending participation” and “providing materials”. The reliability of these is $\alpha=.89$ and it is used to explain 69.39% of the variance.

2.3 Data Processing

This study uses SPSS 19.0 and AMOS 17.0 to analyze the collected data. According to the purpose of this study, statistical methodologies such as descriptive statistics, structural equation model and other statistical methods are applied to the analysis. The overall model of fitness is evaluated by the absolute fit measures, the relative fitness measures and the parsimonious fit measures. The goodness-of-fit measure corresponds to the assessment of whether the theory can explain the actual observation data.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Sample and Data Collection

After analyzing the collected sample, the demographic is as follows: male = 191 (41.1%) and female = 274 (58.9%). The main age group of participants is 21-30 years old (43.4%), with 48.4% being over the age of 21. 60.2% of respondents are residents living in Hualien City. 61.3% of respondents are engaged in the tourism and leisure service industry. 57.0% of respondents belong to the Minnan ethnic group and 61/7% of respondents are employed as services provider. 51.0% have a university education level.

3.2 Analysis of the Model Fit Goodness to the Willingness to Develop Sports Tourism

An important assumption to determine whether the data is suitable for the structural equation model is its consistency with the multivariate normal distribution. Therefore, this study uses descriptive statistical analysis to examine the data. West, Finch and Curran (1995) state that the skewness standard for each variable should be less than 2, while its kurtosis cannot be more than 7. All of the data in this study passed the normality test.

With respect to the scale of place attachment, its model fit goodness achieves the standard value however, the RMSEA of absolute fits with X^2/df and CN of parsimonious fit does not meet the standard value. After some amendment, all the items are up to the test standards. Therefore, we can say that the scale of place attachment has good construct validity. However, after the analysis of confirmatory factors, the two dimensions of local dependence and local identity, composed of 7 questions, accumulates a factor loading which is greater than .5, which means it should be retained. With reference to the literature, the reliability and validity for the scale of place attachment in this study uses an individual potential factor loading of convergent validity between .56~.80, an average variation extraction of between .31~.64, and the overall average of variation extraction is .56, reliability R2 is .51~.63, and component reliability is .81~.84. Therefore, the reliability and convergent validity of the overall place attachment scale are all good.

In respect of the positive impact of sports tourism, its model fit goodness achieves the standard value. Nevertheless, only the CFI and NFI of relative fitness with the PNFI of parsimonious fit meet the standard value. After some necessary amendment, all the items pass the test. Consequently, the scale with respect to the positive impact of sports tourism generally has good construct validity. The reliability and validity concerning the scale of place attachment attains the scholars' suggested values, which include that the individual potential factor loadings of convergent validity are between .62~.94, average variation extraction is between .57~.74, the overall average variation extraction is .68, reliability R2 is between .38~.88, and component reliability is between .79~.91. These outcomes demonstrate that the reliability and convergent validity for the scale of the positive impact from sports tourism are all good.

As for the negative impact of sports tourism, its model fit goodness achieves the standard value, although only the GFI of the absolute fitness, CFI and NFI of relative fitness with the PNFI of parsimonious fit meet the standard value. After some amendment, all the items satisfy the test standards. Hence, the scale of negative impact of sports tourism generally has good construct validity. The reliability and validity of place attachment scale attains the suggested values, being that the individual potential factor loadings of convergent validity as high as .62~.94, average variation extraction equal to .57~.78, the overall average variation extraction being .68, reliability R2 being .49~.88, component reliability being .79~.92. Therefore, the reliability and convergent validity for the scale of negative impact of sports tourism are all good.

Further, the reliability and validity of the scales evaluating attitudes toward developing sports tourism have attained the suggested values. The statistics show that the individual potential factor loadings of convergent validity are .78~.89, average variation extraction is .69, reliability R2 is .62~.79, component reliability is .87. In conclusion, the reliability and convergent validity of the aforementioned scales are all good.

Meanwhile, the model fit goodness for the willingness to develop sports tourism also achieves the standard values. The scale measuring the negative impact of sports tourism therefore has good construct validity. In addition, the reliability and validity of the willingness to develop sports tourism also attains the scholars' suggested values. For example, the individual potential factor loadings of convergent validity are .71~.84, average variation extraction is .61, the overall average variation extraction is .68, reliability R2 is .50~.71, and component reliability is .80. Therefore, as far as the willingness to develop sports tourism is concerned, its reliability and convergent validity are all good.

This study uses the confidence interval method and the AVE test method to examine the discriminant validity of overall behavior patterns. It concludes that the lower and upper bounds on the behavioral model do not include 1. This means that there is no correlation between the facets of the willingness to develop, so the facets have discriminant validity.

4. Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to construct a model regarding the willingness of residents to develop sports tourism. The analysis of the structural equation model shows that place attachment has a significant influence on the perception of the impact of sports tourism. Hence, place attachment can be used to improve the

awareness of the impact of sports tourism. However, the perception of the positive impact of sports tourism has a positive impact with respect to the attitude and willingness to develop sports tourism. Hence, the perceived negative impact of sports tourism will deter residents from developing sports tourism.

This study shows that local residents are associated with a high-intermediate level of place, making them believe that their home is more important than other regions. Residents also believe that sports and tourism activities need to be promoted, to promote local culture by highlighting local cultural characteristics and making use of local cultural landscapes. This can help promote social culture and improve local economic development. On the other hand, sports tourism also has some negative impact such as on the environment. The results of this study found that local residents demonstrate a medium degree of support for the development of sports tourism. This indicates that they have a high degree of support for the activities of sports and tourism and that they are generally happy to organize sports tourism activities in their localities. The residents also demonstrate a moderate willingness to develop sports tourism. Further, residents also displayed a high willingness to recommend family and friends to participate in sports and tourism.

Based on the analysis of this study, place attachment has a significantly positive and/or negative impact on the perception of sports tourism, because the emotions or identity of local residents are closely related with their place of residence. As a result, the perceived impact of sports tourism by the residents is influenced by place attachment. Although sports tourism does have some negative impacts, these impacts are not high. Whether the impact of sport tourism is positive or negative, it always produces a significant impact on the development of sports tourism. This result also confirms that sports and tourism activities have a positive influence on the economy, particularly on local economic income, which includes increased employment opportunities, improvement of public facilities and transportation, and so on. The positive and negative impacts perceived from sports tourism also have a significant effect on the willingness to develop sports tourism. The stronger the perceived positive impact of sports tourism, the higher the willingness of residents to develop sports tourism will be, and vice versa.

This study demonstrates that the willingness of local residents is a key factor to the development of sports tourism. In addition to the residents, local government must also be willing to host sports or tourism activities. In conclusion, sports or tourism organizers should focus on the feelings of residents in relation to sports tourism activities. If the activities of sports tourism have a positive impact on residents, they are more likely to support or assist the development of sports tourism activities.

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