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EFFECTS OF SPORTS EVENT TOURISM SERVICE ON SOCIAL IMAGERY AND SOCIOECONOMIC BENEFIT

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Effects of Sports Event Tourism Service on Social Imagery and Socioeconomic Benefit

Zhiyong GUO¹, Zhenxin NIE²

Abstract

Current sports tourism market focuses on sports events. In terms of economic benefits, it does not simply create tourism output, but also increases consumption to further boost the economy and increase employment opportunities. Sports tourism present great influence on modern life, and hosting sports events allows the organizers enhancing exposure and visibility as well as resulting in considerable tourism receipts for the place. Sports events would increase tourists' consumption in host places and create new job opportunities and considerable income. Selecting people in Fujian Province, with experience in sports event tourism, as the research samples, total 800 copies of questionnaire are distributed. After removing ones without participating in sports event tourism and invalid/incomplete copies, 423 copies are valid, with the retrieval rate 53%. The research results show that sports tourists could feel the service provided by sports event organizers through actual participation and perceive certain value to achieve satisfaction and further promote social imagery and socioeconomic benefit and sports tourists perceiving quality and complete tangible products or intangible services in the activity and consistent sports tourism activity to the expectation before participation would present the worthy feeling and value and further positively affect the social imagery. According to the results to propose discussions and suggestions, it is expected to affect the social imagery and social benefit of host places in the future events to present good service quality and benefit domestic relevant events in the future.

Keywords: sports event; sports tourism; tourism service; social imagery; socioeconomic benefit.

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Introduction

Sports tourism reveals great influence on modern life, and there are distinct road running, bicycle race, or triathlon challenge held on almost every holiday. Striving for sports events to affect local tourism has become a trend. Sports tourism presents the functions of entertainment, fitness, and emotional regulation and is an important way to create people's beautiful mind and an important supplement of traditional tourism. Consumption on clothing, food, accommodation, and transportation due to the influx of sportsmen, trainers, and tourists in large games is lucky for local specialties and tourist attractions. Sports events are the focus in sports tourism market; holding sports events could increase the organizers' exposure and visibility as well as result in considerable tourism receipts for the places. Sports event would increase tourists' consumption in the places and create new job opportunities and considerable income. There are scholars studying issues related to holding events for sports tourism. Apparently, holding large and important sports events become an important route for social marketing or social development. In addition to social imagery, Haaker *et al.* (2021) considered that most products provided by organizations in sports industry were covered in the service. European Association for Sport Management, in the sixth annual meeting, listed service quality in the main projects for the first time, revealing the international emphasis on the service quality of sports industry (Feng, 2020). As mentioned, sports industry is classified into service industry. To cope with the intangibility, perishability, unable to save, heterogeneity, and indivisibility characteristics of service, sports event organizers could plan software and hardware facilities to reinforce the service quality of sports events to further enhance participants' satisfaction and affect the development of sports tourism in the society. For this reason, effects of sports event tourism service on social imagery and socioeconomic benefit are discussed in this study, expecting to present good service quality in the future events, affect the social imagery and social benefit of host places, and benefit domestic relevant events held in the future.

Literature review

Participants in sports events are more likely to directly connect the rational impression on events (e.g. service quality, traffic flow) with local social imagery. Moreover, the attitude and professional ability of service staff in events or the advance publicity of events do not appear influence on the promotion of local social imagery. Nevertheless, participants' satisfaction with the signposts, information, sites, medical facilities, or schedule of events might directly enhance participants' local social imagery (Fritz *et al.*, 2022). More importantly, large events would attract the reports of international media; organizers' construction on service, culture, image, and equipment would promote the international visibility and imagery of the society. For instance, South Korea government, in Olympic Games

Seoul 1988, strongly publicized the new status and new image of open democracy in the economic activity and sports events in the world as well as changed the negative image of “Korean War, North-South Korea separation”. The whole nation devoted to the event service and fully presented the enthusiasm and care of a host country to largely promote the international image and social imagery of Korea (Ahmed *et al.*, 2020). The Olympic Games attracted 10.5% tourists to Korea in the year (1988) and 14.1% after a year (199) (Qiu *et al.*, 2020). The World Games held in Akita City, Japan, in 2001 spent about 0.7 billion NT dollars to create high-level service and reception to the athletes. The obscure city then gained the international fame. Jiménez-García *et al.* (2020) indicated that organizers could impress on participants through large media exposure or reports and the service quality of events to enhance the international visibility and imagery. The following hypothesis is therefore built in this study.

H1: Tourism service shows significant and positive effects on social imagery.

Regarding the tourism development of a society, tourists' imagery cognition and satisfaction with the society is closely related to the intention to visit the society. Past research revealed the close relations between revisit intention, recommendation to others and tourist destination imagery; and, destination imagery played a critical role in the selection of tourist destination (Feng, 2020). Some researchers regarded positive effects of tourists' tourism imagery and event imagery on revisit intention, with 46% predictability (Ritter & Pedersen, 2020). Sports events, under the emphasis of relevant units, were applied to enhance the attraction of tourist destinations, activate tourist attractions, and become the catalyst of social construction and community development. Relevant studies indicated that tourist attractions, by holding special activities, could enhance the attraction of tourist destinations, prolong tourists' stay, enhance tourists' revisit rate, and induce the intention to visit and increase consumption. Regardless the nature of activity, tourists all over the world were attracted, during the activity, to create considerable tourism receipts and increase many local employment opportunities (Ariza-Montes *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, the large resources invested in the acquisition of hosting right, e.g. improvement of local infrastructure, sports venue, and transportation, would long-term affect the later economy or tourism development of the host region (Kaur *et al.*, 2021). A host region could precede social reform and accumulate complete infrastructure by holding such large sports event as well as bring long-term benefits for local people and tourists through the dense investment of public/private sectors. Event participants' impression of tourism environment might enhance the revisit to the event host place, while the attractiveness of local tourism resources would not affect participants' revisit intention (Giles *et al.*, 2020). Accordingly, the following hypothesis is built in this study.

H2: Social imagery reveals remarkable and positive effects on socioeconomic benefit.

Damanik & Yusuf (2022) regarded the direct effect of service quality on behavioral intention. Rosid (2021) considered that digital tourism service would affect customers' behavioral intention. In other words, the performance, reliable information service, consideration & care of service staff, and equipment would affect tourists' intention. Haaker *et al.* (2021) discovered that service quality could impress tourists with good word of mouth and high revisit intention. For this reason, satisfaction with service quality would directly and positively affect behavioral intention, i.e. the higher satisfaction, the higher revisit intention or willingness to recommend to others (Sheehan *et al.*, 2020). Some research indicated that the service quality of events would not influence the revisit intention of Japanese deaflympics team; merely the social imagery of sports event would affect the revisit intention (Pavlyuk, 2020). As a result, the following hypothesis is built in this study.

H3: Tourism service presents notable and positive effects on socioeconomic benefit.

Methodology

Conceptual framework

Summing up above literature review, the conceptual framework of this study is drafted (Figure 1) to discuss the relations among tourism service, social imagery, and socioeconomic benefit.

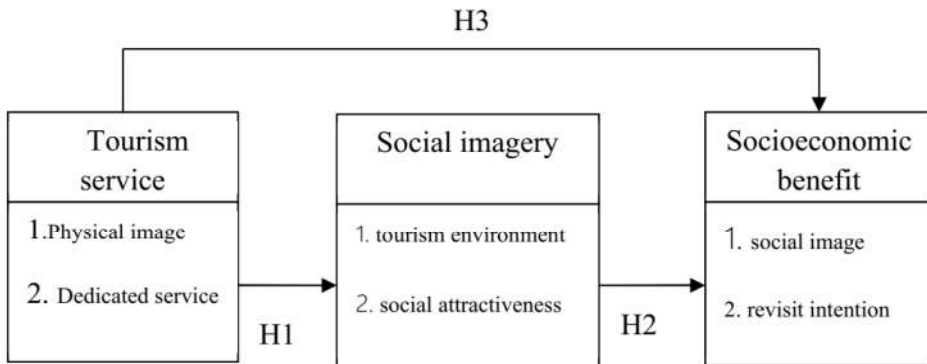


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Measurement and definition of variable

Tourism service. Referring to the event service scale constructed by Cham *et al.* (2022), two dimensions are used for the measurement in this study: (1) *Physical image*: the evaluation with the level of provided tangible services matching customers' expectation; (2) *Dedicated service*: the evaluation with the level of provided intangible services matching customers' expectation.

Social imagery. Referring to the factors in destination imagery proposed by Song *et al.* (2021), two factors are used as the factors in social imagery for understanding tourists' opinions about the society: (1) *Tourism environment*: perceptual feelings about scenery, equipment, and accommodation; (2) *Social attractiveness*: Tourism is the pull allowing tourists getting into touring spots for experience or consumption and is the motivation of tourists visiting the tourist destination.

Socioeconomic benefit. According to the benefit assessment of large sports event for the society of Ding *et al.* (2022), the socioeconomic benefit of events in this study contains: (1) *Social image*: Changes in social image to further attract tourists' visiting intention would benefit the development of social tourism; (2) *Revisit intention*: Tourists' satisfaction with the entire environment after social construction would enhance the revisit intention.

Participants

People in Fujian Province with experience in sports event tourism, as the research samples, are distributed 800 copies of questionnaire. After removing those without participation in sports event tourism and invalid and incomplete copies, 423 valid copies are retrieved, with the retrieval rate 53%.

Analysis method

Structural equation modeling is applied in this study to understand the relations among tourism service, social imagery, and socioeconomic benefit.

Results and discussion

Factor analysis

The factor analysis results in this study are shown in Table 1. With factor analysis, the tourism service scale is extracted two factors of "physical image" (eigenvalues=2.834, $\alpha=0.87$) and "dedicated service" (eigenvalues=2.275, $\alpha=0.85$). The cumulative covariance explained achieves 76.488%. Social imagery scale, with factor analysis, is extracted two factors of "tourism environment" (eigenvalue=3.371, $\alpha=0.88$) and "social attractiveness" (eigenvalues=1.852,

$\alpha=0.87$). The cumulative covariance explained reaches 75.216%. Socioeconomic benefit scale, with factor analysis, is extracted two factors of “social image” (eigenvalue=3.694, $\alpha=0.89$) and “revisit intention” (eigenvalue=2.526, $\alpha=0.92$). The cumulative covariance explained achieves 81.937%.

Table 1: Factor analysis

| Variable | Factor | eigenvalue | α | Cumulative Variance Explained |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------|----------|-------------------------------|
| Tourism service | Physical image | 2.834 | 0.87 | 76.488 |
| | Dedicated service | 2.275 | 0.85 | |
| Social imagery | Tourism environment | 3.371 | 0.88 | 75.216 |
| | Social attractiveness | 1.852 | 0.87 | |
| Socioeconomic benefit | Social image | 3.694 | 0.89 | 81.937 |
| | Revisit intention | 2.526 | 0.92 | |

Correlation analysis

Table 2 shows remarkable correlations among tourism service, social imagery, and socioeconomic benefit. Such results reveal preliminary support for H1, H2, and H3.

Table 2: Correlation analysis

| Dimension | α | Tourism service | Social imagery | Socioeconomic benefit |
|-----------------------|----------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Tourism service | 0.86 | | | |
| Social imagery | 0.88 | 0.28** | | |
| Socioeconomic benefit | 0.91 | 0.33** | 0.35** | |

LISREL model indicator

LISREL (linear structural relation) model, combining factor analysis and path analysis in traditional statistics and adding simultaneous equations in econometrics, could calculate multi-factor and multi-causal path. The model fit could be evaluated from preliminary fit criteria, overall model fit, and /fit of internal structure of model.

The research data are organized as below, and the preliminary fit, internal fit, and overall fit of the model are explained.

The complete model analysis results, Table 3, reveal that two factors of tourism service (physical image, dedicated service) could significantly explain tourism service ($t > 1.96$, $p < 0.05$), two factors of social imagery (tourism environment, social attractiveness) could remarkably explain social imagery ($t > 1.96$, $p < 0.05$), and two factors of socioeconomic benefit (social image, revisit intention) could notably explain socioeconomic benefit ($t > 1.96$, $p < 0.05$). Apparently, the overall model shows favorable preliminary fit criteria.

Table 3: Overall linear structural model analysis result

| Evaluation item | Parameter/evaluation standard | | Result |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|---------|
| Preliminary fit | Tourism service | Physical image | 0.689** |
| | | Dedicated service | 0.643** |
| | Social imagery | Tourism environment | 0.702** |
| | | Social attractiveness | 0.717** |
| | Socioeconomic benefit | Social image | 0.733** |
| | | Revisit intention | 0.751** |

Note: ** for $p < 0.01$

Table 4 shows positive and significant correlations between tourism service and social imagery (0.304, $p < 0.01$), social imagery and socioeconomic benefit (0.389, $p < 0.01$), as well as tourism service and socioeconomic benefit (0.357, $p < 0.01$) that H1, H2, and H3 are supported.

Table 4: Overall linear structural model analysis result

| Evaluation item | Parameter/evaluation standard | Result |
|-----------------|---|---------|
| Internal fit | Tourism service → social imagery | 0.304** |
| | Social imagery → socioeconomic benefit | 0.389** |
| | Tourism service → socioeconomic benefit | 0.357** |

Note: ** for $p < 0.01$

In terms of overall model fit, Table 5, the overall model fit standards $\chi^2/Df = 1.413$, smaller than the standard 3, and $RMR = 0.004$, revealing the proper standards of χ^2/DF and RMR . Chi-square is sensitive to sample size that it is not suitable for directly judging the fit. However, the overall model fit standards $GFI = 0.985$ and $AGFI = 0.936$ are higher than the standard 0.9 (the closer GFI and

AGFI to 1 showing the better model fit). This model therefore presents better fit indices.

Table 5: Overall linear structural model analysis result

| | | |
|-------------|--------------------|-------|
| Overall fit | X ² /Df | 1.413 |
| | GFI | 0.985 |
| | AGFI | 0.936 |
| | RMR | 0.004 |

Discussion of theoretical model

Figure 2 shows the overall research result. The path coefficients of research variables in this study reach the significance, revealing the path coefficients achieving convergent validity that it conforms to the basic requirement for model analysis. The model fit is then verified; i.e. this research model matching the theory and presenting validity.

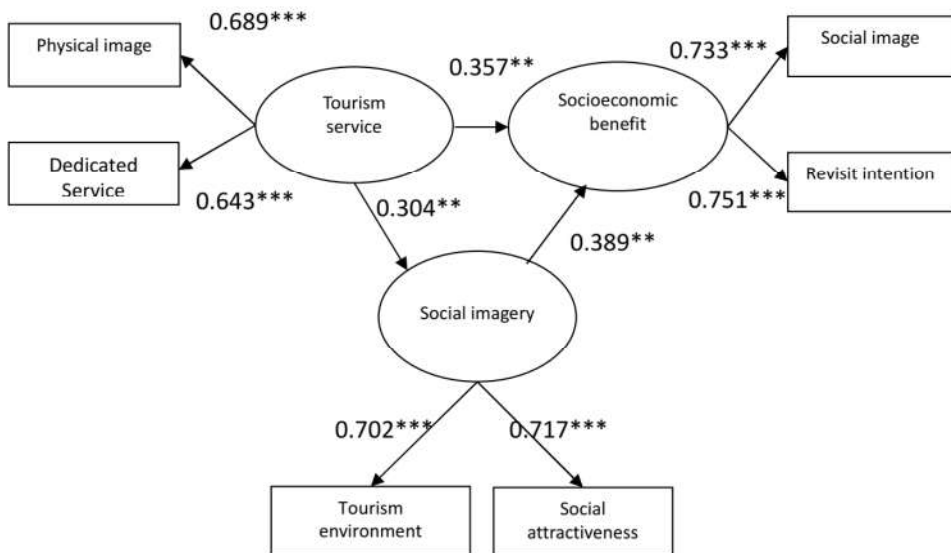


Figure 2: Path diagram

Conclusion

The research results prove that sports event tourism service could affect social imagery and socioeconomic benefit. In other words, sports tourists have to perceive the service content provided by sports event organizers through actual participation and feel the value to achieve the satisfaction and further promote social imagery and socioeconomic benefit. The good image built by sports tourists' beautiful experience in the past participation or the word of mouth from relatives, friends, and classmates would directly affect the high social imagery of sports event tourism. In the participation process, people perceiving quality and complete activity content of tangible products or intangible services, such as lifesaving safety, supplies offered by sponsors, and gifts from organizers, and feeling the evaluation of sports event tourism content consistent to the perceived service and expectation would appear feeling and worthy value to positively affect the social imagery and intangibly become the best spokespeople of the sports event tourism to positively publicize to others. It would further promote socioeconomic benefit.

Discussion

The research findings show important effects of sports event tourism service on social imagery and socioeconomic benefit. In other words, tourists participating in sports event tourism with high expectation and perceiving the quality and complete tangible products or intangible services in the process would show good feelings and worthy value on the activity and further influence social imagery and socioeconomic benefit. Sports event tourists present strong value perception of gifts, lifesaving service, free drink, chocolate, and ginger soup. In this case, sports event tourism related units have to stress on activity arrangement and design, reinforce staff training, and build complete service stations. Besides, aiming at sports event tourism activity, complete marketing and sponsor strategies should be drafted to raise sponsorship from more enterprises so as to diversify the service of sports event tourism activity.

Suggestions

Summing up the research results and findings, practical suggestions are proposed as followings.

- It still requires improvement on sports event organizers expanding the publicity and activity to participants of different ages. It is suggested to match interesting and ornamental activity with low competition for the involvement of people in different age groups. It would practice the spirit of citizen sports games.
- Sports event organizers, with cross-industry alliance, could promote saver tickets and package itinerary for sports event tourists enjoying sports event tourism

- and visit other tourist attractions in the region to prolong the stay and increase the overall socioeconomic benefit of the region.
- Sports event organizers could analyze the background data of sports tourists to grasp the target group and provide the cared and satisfied service. Meanwhile, by locking companies or enterprises as the marketing targets, group discount could be used for developing the mutual effect and encouragement among colleagues in the company or enterprise. It could achieve the fun of co-participation and have sports event tourism become the leisure activity for friends and family. Finally, sports event tourism organizers should pay attention to promoting the intention to re-participate in sports event tourism and leaving unforgettable experience to first-time participants.
 - To have the activity match expectation and needs, sports event organizers should extend the leisure, joy, and health value in the sports event tourism activity and plan perceived value for sports tourists, e.g. promoting the quality of gifts, creating added value like discount of entry fee, group discount, or cross-industry alliance, to promote sports tourists' price function and value perception.

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