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Research Paper

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Examining the experiential value, leisure involvement, leisure satisfaction, and behavioral intentions of visitors participating in sustainable tourism

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Abstract: Globally, tourism is currently one of the most promising and flourishing industries. With the growing interest in sustainable tourism, countries are seeking to strike a balance between economic growth and sustainable development. This study examined the relationships between four variables—experiential value, leisure involvement, leisure satisfaction, and behavioral intentions of visitors participating in sustainable tourism. After reviewing relevant studies and developing hypotheses, this study designed a questionnaire for data collection and employed statistical methods for model validation. Purposive sampling was used to recruit visitors participating in sustainable tourism in Taiwan. The descriptive statistics of the data collected were analyzed using SPSS for Windows 20.0 software, while confirmatory factor analysis and validation of construct relationships were performed using LISREL8.7. The results of this study could function as a reference for the local leisure tourism industry, and the assessment framework may provide a methodological approach to future studies on this topic.

Keywords: Experiential value, leisure involvement, leisure satisfaction, behavioral intentions

I. Introduction

1.1 Research motivation and background

Citizens' rising tourism demands are a result of robust social and economic growth. However, high visitor numbers negatively affect tourist destinations in many ways. In 2005, the United Nations Environment Program, together with the World Tourism Organization, defined sustainable tourism as tourism that takes full account of current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts while best addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the natural environment, and local residents. Festival participation and motivations of visitors directly affect satisfaction and behavioral intentions, while satisfaction directly affects behavioral intentions(Lin, Hsu, Yang, & Fang, 2016). Lee (2007) described leisure satisfaction as the difference between pre-experience expectations and post-experience perceptions of visitors.

While memories of actual tourism experiences gradually fade away, the value of these experiences is more permanent(Pine & Gilmore, 1998). Perceived experiential value mainly arises from direct or remote interactions between consumers and products or services, and these interactions lay the groundwork for individual consumer preferences(Holbrook & Corfman, 1985). Involvement is a result of an individual's concerns and interests, which arise from situational stimuli and modes of action (Havitz & Dimanche, 1990). Leisure involvement refers to participants' enduring participation and interest in their favorite leisure activities due to their intrinsic activeness and enjoyment of these pursuits.

Agyar (2014) proposed that leisure satisfaction is a subjective comparison of relativity, based on latent criteria such as previous experiences and personal expectations, based on which an individual acquires or perceives a sense of accomplishment or satisfaction from leisure activities. According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), behavioral intentions are an individual's attitudinal expression in their decision-making process to whether or not adopt a particular behavior. This decision is made before the behavior, and is the individual's tendency to act before they intend adopting a particular behavior.

The intense competition between leisure tourism industry operators, in addition to growing tourist numbers,

has increased the scale of the tourism industry as well as economic growth. However, excessive tourist numbers increasingly damage the natural environments and ecosystems of destinations and compromise cultural conservation efforts to an irrecoverable extent. Hence, to achieve balanced development of economic, environmental, and social aspects, it is necessary to continuously implement measures that enhance public awareness of sustainable tourism and strengthen resource management and environmental monitoring (Chen, 2019). Based on the aforementioned research background, this study examined the effects of the relationships between the subjective experiential value and leisure involvement of visitors participating in sustainable tourism on their leisure satisfaction as well as behavioral intentions.

1.2 Objectives

Previous studies have seldom examined the relationships between the experiential value, leisure involvement, leisure satisfaction, and behavioral intentions of visitors participating in sustainable tourism. Against this backdrop, this study aimed to explore the correlations between these factorsofvisitors participating in sustainable tourism. The objectives of this study were as follows:

(1) To explore the associations between the experiential value, leisure involvement, leisure satisfaction, and behavioral intentions of visitors participating in sustainable tourism.

(2) To explore the associations between the experiential value, leisure involvement, and leisure satisfaction of visitors participating in sustainable tourism.

(3) To explore the association between the leisure involvement and behavioral intentions of visitors participating in sustainable tourism.

(4) To explore the association between the leisure satisfaction and behavioral intentions of visitors participating in sustainable tourism.

The results of this study illuminated the factors of and relationships between experiential value, leisure involvement, leisure satisfaction, and behavioral intentions, which were further applied to promote leisure activities related to sustainable tourism. The findings of this study may serve as a reference for government authorities and relevant entities, and the assessment framework developed in this study may offer a methodological approach to future studies in this domain.

II. Literature review

2.1 Sustainable tourism

Sustainable tourism is a concept that involves balancing economic, social, and cultural development without seriously damaging the environment. In sustainable development, continuous development is achieved without depleting the resources it needs. In general, resources are managed in this process so that they can be used within different scopes and for different applications, or can offer greater significance. Resources with a shorter renewal time are also used. Consequently, the extent of resource use in the future will be similar to that of the present (UNEP, 1994). Definitions of sustainability and sustainable tourism commonly include finding a balance between the economic, environmental, and social dimensions. Tourism planners and managers are encouraged to find a balance between the expectations of visitors, the needs of destination communities, and the pressure to protect the environment(Pearce & Moscardo, 2015). In this process of deglobalization, tourism operators are presented with unprecedented opportunities to reboot and redevelop the industry in line withthe principles of the Sustainable Development Goals proposed by the United Nations in 2015, as well aseliminate the many "dark sides" of tourism development, such as environmental degradation, economic overdevelopment, and overtourism (Feng, 2020).

2.2 Experiential value

Mathwick and Rigdon (2002) described experiential value as customers' perceived relative preference for consumption and their attitudes toward products arising from interactions throughout the process of consumption, with the goal of enhancing or assisting their attainment of consumer goals or intentions. In their study of the attractiveness and experiential value of tourism, Lan and Wamg (2018)stated that experiential value does indeed affect satisfaction. Mathwick, Malhotra, and Rigdon (2001) developed a scale that measures

experiential value based on consumer return on investment, service excellence, aesthetics, and interestingness. Kuo, Hsieh, Liang, and Huang (2016) suggested that experiential value consists of literary and artistic value, affective value, social interaction, and return on investment. Tsao (2018)stated that experiential value in recreational water sports is characterized by hedonism, return on investment, aesthetics, and service excellence, and that it affects leisure involvement and leisure satisfaction. Wang (2015) suggested that in addition to a product's extrinsic value, its psychological value to customers is also significant, and that the combination of both enhances the perceived value and serves as an implication of experiential value. They categorized experiential value into consumer return on investment, service excellence, aesthetics, and interestingness. The results revealed that experiential value affects leisure involvement. Based on these studies, this investigation categorizes experiential value into five observational variables: return on investment, service excellence, aesthetics, interestingness, and social interaction.

2.3 Leisure involvement

Leisure involvement is defined as an individual's unobservable and aroused psychological state of motivation or desire for or interest in a recreational activity, tourism destination, or product related to leisure and recreation. Leisure involvement is influenced by specific stimuli or situations and is able to drive certain behaviors (Havitz, Kaczynski, & Mannell, 2013). In their measure of leisure involvement, Tsai and Kuo (2016) adopted McIntyre and Pigram's (1992) definition of the term and used the three dimensions of attraction, self-performance, and centrality of life as the observed variables. Their findings revealed that leisure involvement affects leisure satisfaction. Tseng (2015) studied the relationships between visitors' leisure involvement, satisfaction, and revisit behavioral intentions using a leisure involvement scale that consisted of attraction, self-performance, and centrality. Their results showed that leisure involvement affects satisfaction and behavioral intentions. Chung and Tseng (2015) explored the relationships between tourism factory visitors' leisure involvement, environmental perception, brand identification, and post-visit behavioral intentions, and used importance, enjoyment, and symbolic value as indicators of leisure involvement. They found that leisure involvement affects behavioral intentions through visitor value. Leisure involvement, defined as an individual's general degree of perception of a leisure activity, and consisting of attraction, centrality, and self-expression, has been found to affect leisure satisfaction(Tan, 2018). Based on these findings, this study considered leisure involvement toincorporate importance, self-expression, and symbolic value.

2.4 Leisure satisfaction

Leisure satisfaction refers to the positive opinions or feelings of an individual partaking in leisure activities. In other words, it is the degree of satisfaction or fulfillment perceived by an individual in experiences or situations they are currently facing. Mannell and Stynes (1991) suggested that an individual is influenced by factors such as the environment, time, activity, and mood when they partake in leisure activities. As a result, physiological, psychological, environmental, economic, and social feelings are evoked in the individual, which turn into leisure satisfaction following their own appraisal of these emotions. In their study of the relationships between enduring involvement, group cohesion, and leisure satisfaction of campers, Tseng and Huang (2016) categorized the leisure satisfaction dimension into physiological, psychological, and environmental sub-dimensions. Lin (2019) defined leisure satisfaction as an individual's perceived degree of physical and mental satisfaction based on their needs during the process of participating in leisure activities. It is the difference between their expectations and actual participation; greater satisfaction is derived when expectations are more in line with reality, and vice versa. The authors adopted measurement indicators for the domains of psychology, education, society, relaxation, physiology, and aesthetics. In their study on the experiential value of recreational water sports, degree of involvement, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions, Tsao (2018) found that satisfaction positively affects behavioral intentions. Fang (2017) also reported similar findings. Based on this

discussion, leisure satisfaction in this study comprised six observed variables: the psychological domain, educational domain, social domain, environmental domain, physiological domain, and economic domain.

2.5 Behavioral intentions

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975)stated that behavioral intentions refer to an individual's attitudinal expression in their decision-makingprocess on whether or not to adopt a particular behavior. This decision is made before the behavior, and is also the individual's tendency to act before they intend adopting a particular behavior. The behavioral intentions scale employed byLin and Fang (2018) consisted of four dimensions: enduring loyalty, recommending to others, eco-friendly behaviors, and affective preference. Behavioral intentions, often used as a measure and indicator of future behaviors, refer to one's willingness to revisit a destination or recommend a destination to others (Chen & Tsai, 2007). In their study on the associations between affection, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions of traditional cultural festival participants, Kao and Lin (2019) divided behavioral intentions into four aspects: recommending to others, re-participation, priorities, and assisting in activity promotion. In the tourism context, Hu and Hu (2020) defined behavioral intentions as visitors' willingness to re-participate in similar responsibilities or ecotourism, recommend to others, or share their experiences after participating in a marine litter handicraft activity. In the study by Lin (2015), behavioral intentions in this study consisted of three observed variables: recommending to others, re-participation, and eco-friendly behaviors.

2.6 Hypotheses

This study investigated the relationships between experiential value, leisure involvement, leisure satisfaction, and behavioral intentions of visitors participating in sustainable tourism in Taiwan. Based on the abovementioned research background, motivations, and objectives, this study proposes the following hypotheses as well as the study framework shown in Figure 1.

- H1: Experiential value significantly affects leisure involvement.
- H2: Experiential value significantly affects leisure satisfaction.
- H3: Leisure involvement significantly affects behavioral intentions.
- H4: Leisure satisfaction significantly affects behavioral intentions.

III. Methods

3.1Research framework

Figure 1 presents this study's conceptual framework, in which it is assumed that experiential value influences leisure involvemen and leisure satisfaction factors, leisure involvemen influences behavioral intentions factors, and leisure satisfaction influences behavioral intentions factors.



Figure 1. Research framework

3.2 Participants

The participants of this study were visitorsengaged in ecotourism in Taiwan. Five hundred questionnaires were administered from August 1 to October 16, 2021, of which 280 were recovered. After invalid questionnaires were removed, 258 valid questionnaires remained.

3.3Instruments and variables

A questionnaire covering the experiential value, leisure involvement, leisure satisfaction, and behavioral intentions of visitors participating in sustainable tourism was developed in this study by referring to the scales in(Beard & Ragheb, 1980; Lin, 2015; Wang, 2015; Tsai & Kuo, 2016; Tseng and Huang, 2016; Lan & Wamg, 2018; Lan & Wamg, 2018; Tsao, 2018; Lin & Fang, 2018; Kao &Lin, 2019 and Feng, 2020). The questionnaire was revised in accordance with the objectives and conceptual model of this study, with relevant items in the questionnaire adopted as variables.

3.3.1 Exogenous variable

In structural equation modeling (SEM), latent variables that affect other variables are known as exogenous latent variables. In this study, experiential value served as an exogenous latent variable. It was expressed through five observed variables: return on investment, service excellence, aesthetics, interestingness, and social interaction.

3.3.2 Endogenous variables

Latent variables that are affected by other variables are known as endogenous latent variables. These variables can be further categorized into mediator variables and outcome variables based on causal relationships (Huang, 2006).

3.3.2.1 Mediator variables

The mediator variables in this study were leisure involvement and leisure satisfaction, with the former expressed through three observed variables, importance, self-expression, and symbolic value, and the latter expressed through six observed variables, the psychological domain, educational domain, social domain, environmental domain, physiological domain, and economic domain.

3.3.2.2 Outcome variable

Behavioral intentions served as an outcome variable in this study. It consisted of three observed variables: recommending to others, re-participation, and eco-friendly behaviors. The variables in this study were all measured using a seven-point Likert scale because seven-point scale measures are optimal (Bollen, 1989). The corresponding degree of agreement were as follows: 7 = strongly agree, 6 = agree, 5 = somewhat agree, 4 = neutral, 3 = somewhat disagree, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree. The scores of all combination variables were derived by dividing the sum of the score of an item by the number of items.

3.3.2.3 Data analysis

To avoid interfering with the model estimation and validation results, the skewness and kurtosis of the

2022

observed variables in the recovered samples were analyzed prior to LISREL model analysis. In general, variables with absolute values of skewness greater than 3 are regarded as extreme, and those with absolute values of kurtosis greater than 10 are regarded as problematic (Huang, (2002) and Kline (1998). Typical equation parameter estimations must not have negative error variances, exceedingly large standard errors, and standardized coefficients larger than 0.95(Kline, 1998). The fit of the overall model is usually estimated by means of the three following fit measures: absolute fit, relative fit, and parsimonious fit. Lastly, the fit of the model's internal structure, which indicates the internal quality of the model, was assessed. It typically includes the reliability of each item and each latent variable, the average variance of each latent variable, and all estimated parameters. Hypotheses testing was performed to evaluate whether the model data supported the hypotheses. The average variance represents the percentage of latent variables measured by the observed variables and is acceptable if greater than the recommended value of 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

IV. Results and discussion

4.1 Participants' basic data

Of the participants, 136 (52.7%) females and 122 (47.3%) males completed the questionnaire. The majority(57%) were in the age range 51-60 years. Most participants (192, 74.4%) were elementary/middle school or (vocational) high school graduates.

4.2 Choice of calculation method

In general, variables with absolute values of skewness greater than 3 are regarded as extreme, and those with absolute values of kurtosis greater than 10 are regarded as problematic Kline (1998); Huang (2002). The coefficients of skewness in this study ranged between -.687 and .001, with absolute values less than 3, while the coefficients of kurtosis ranged between -1.406 and -.051, with absolute values less than 10 (Table 1). Therefore, the maximum likelihood method could be used for analysis.

Construct	Mean	SD	Coefficient o	f Coefficient of
			skewness	kurtosis
Experiential Value				
ĒV1	5.4234	.79710	048	8550
EV2	5.5561	.75890	274	7640
EV3	5.4071	.82155	.006	-1.032
EV4	5.2281	.72261	129	-1.224
EV5	4.9970	.80512	128	8890
Leisure Involvemen				
LI1	5.6333	.61969	692	.546
LI2	5.6908	.73491	774	106
LI3	5.6896	.87580	649	454
Leisure Satisfaction				
LS1	6.0043	.82776	939	.642
LS2	5.9967	.60580	-1.064	.705
LS3	5.8624	.69007	-1.547	3.012
LS4	5.8838	.68001	-1.118	1.284
LS5	5.9167	.62320	696	083
LS6	5.8917	.63400	822	.166
Behavioral Intentions				
BI1	6.1969	.56985	968	.194
BI2	6.1581	.57703	-1.077	.549
BI3	6.1292	.53257	823	043

Table 1 The mean, standard deviation, coefficient of skewness, and coefficient of kurtosis of the observed variables

Parameter	Non-standardized parameter	Standard error	t-value	Standardized parameter
λ ₁	1.00			0.89
λ_2	1.03	0.04	23.64	0.90
λ3	1.02	0.05	21.32	0.86
λ_4	1.15	0.04	26.54	0.94
λ_5	1.26	0.05	25.37	0.93
λ_6	1.00			0.82
λ_7	1.26	0.07	17.85	0.89
λ_8	1.52	0.08	18.16	0.91
λ9	1.00			0.84
λ_{10}	0.82	0.04	21.53	0.92
λ_{11}	0.91	0.04	20.72	0.91
λ_{12}	0.86	0.05	18.94	0.86
λ_{13}	0.76	0.04	17.71	0.83
λ_{14}	0.76	0.04	17.51	0.82
λ_{15}	1.00			0.78
λ_{16}	1.20	0.07	17.40	0.92
λ_{17}	1.12	0.06	17.52	0.93
γ_1	0.21	0.05	4.14	0.25
γ_2	0.30	0.07	4.58	0.27
β_1	0.14	0.05	2.72	0.16
β_2	0.19	0.04	4.80	0.29

Table 2 Model parameter estimates

Table 3 R2 and constructed reliability

Construct	\mathbb{R}^2	Constructed	Average variance	e
		reliability	extracted	
Experiential Value		0.96	0.82	_
EV1	0.79			
EV2	0.81			
EV3	0.74			
EV4	0.89			
EV5	0.86			
Leisure Involvemen		0.92	0.76	
LI1	0.67			
LI2	0.78			
LI3	0.82			
Leisure Satisfaction		0.95	0.74	
LS1	0.70			
LS2	0.84			
LS3	0.82			
LS4	0.74			
LS5	0.68			
LS6	0.67			
Behavioral Intentions		0.91	0.77	
BI1	0.60			
BI2	0.84			
BI3	0.86			

4.3 Examination of unsatisfactory estimates

Typical equation parameter estimations must not have negative error variances, exceedingly large standard errors, and standardized coefficients larger than 0.95 (Kline, 1998). As shown in Table 1, the standard errors of all parameters were positive and statistically significant (the tests of significance revealed that the absolute *t*-values were all greater than 1.96), and the standardized coefficients ranged from 0.65 to 0.94. These values suggest that there were no unsatisfactory estimates and the goodness-of-fit (GFI) of the model was acceptable.

4.4 Reliability and validity assessment

The R^2 of each observed variable should be greater than 0.2(Bentler & Wu, 1993). The R^2 of the 17

ARJHSS Journal

observed variables in this study ranged between 0.6 and 0.89 and met the aforementioned criterion. As shown in Table 3, the construct validities were 0.96, 0.92, 0.95, and 0.91, which were all greater than the criterion of 0.5 recommended by Hair, Anderson, Tatham and Black (1998). The average variances were 0.82, 0.76, 0.74, and 0.77, which were all greater than the criterion of 0.50 recommended byKline (1998).

4.5Validation of the fit of the general model

Previous studieshave suggested employing at least the three following fit measures to evaluate a model's GFI (Huang, 2006):

4.5.1 Absolute fit measures

- a.A GFI greater than 0.9 is often suggested as an indicator of good model fit. The GFI of the model in this study was 0.93; therefore, the modelwas deemed satisfactory.
- b. A root mean square residual (RMR) smaller than or equal to 0.05 suggests a good model fit. The RMR of the model in this study was 0.033, demonstrating excellent model fit.
- c. A root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) ranging from 0.05 to 0.08 indicates good model fit (McDonald & Ho, 2002). The RMSEA of the model in this study was 0.053, suggesting good model fit.

4.5.2 Relative fit measures

- a.A model with a normed fit index (NFI) larger than 0.9 is generally regarded as acceptable. In this study, the NFI of the model was 0.97; therefore, the model was acceptable.
- b. A model with a non-normed fit index (NNFI) larger than 0.9 is generally regarded as acceptable. In this study, the NFI of the model was 0.98; therefore, the model was acceptable.
- c. A model with a comparative fit index (CFI) larger than 0.9 is generally regarded as acceptable. In this study, the NFI of the model was 0.99; therefore, the model was acceptable.

4.5.3 Parsimonious fit measures

- a.A parsimonious normed fit index (PNFI) larger than 0.5 is generally suggested as a criterion for determining the acceptability of a model. With a PNFI of 0.72, this study's model was acceptable.
- b. A parsimonious goodness-of-fit index (PGFI) larger than 0.5 is a criterion for determining the acceptability of a model. This study's model had a PGFI of 0.61;therefore, it was acceptable.
- c. A model with a normed chi-square (NC) smaller than 3 is regarded as having a good fit. With an NC of 1.84, the fit of the model in this study was excellent.

4.6Path analysis

Figure 2 shows the empirical results of this study. The parameter estimation yielded several findings: (1) the standardized coefficient of the effect of experiential value on leisure involvement was 0.25 (t = 4.14) and was statistically significant, which supported Hypothesis 1;(2) the standardized coefficient of the effect of experiential value on leisure satisfaction was 0.27 (t = 4.58) and was statistically significant, which supported Hypothesis 2; (3) the standardized coefficient of the effect of leisure involvement on behavioral intentions was 0.16 (t = 2.72) and was statistically significant, which supported Hypothesis 3; and (4) the standardized coefficient of the effect of leisure satisfaction on behavioral intentions was 0.29 (t = 4.80) and was statistically significant, which supported Hypothesis 4. Thus, all four hypotheses were supported by the validation results, which indicates that the empirical results are in line with expectations.

Owing to the dearth of local studies on the experiential value, leisure involvement, leisure satisfaction, and behavioral intentions of visitors participating in sustainable tourism, this study examined the casual relationships between these four latent variables by developing and validating a model of the leisure behaviors of senior citizens. The study then developed and predicted the behavioral modes of the experiential value of visitors participating in sustainable tourism. The findings of this study could serve as a reference for relevant tourism operators and authorities.

The results of the path analyses of the causal relationships between the variables supported Hypothesis 1 (experiential value has a significant effect on leisure involvement), Hypothesis 2 (experiential value has a significant effect on leisure satisfaction), Hypothesis 3 (leisure involvement has a positive and significant effect on behavioral intentions), and Hypothesis 4 (leisure satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on behavioral intentions).



Figure 2. Standardized paths

V. Conclusions and recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

This study examined the causal relationships between four latent variables—experiential value, leisure involvement, leisure satisfaction, and behavioral intentions of visitors participating in sustainable tourism. The following findings were obtained after validating the hypotheses by means of SEM:

- 5.1.1 In line with Wang (2015) and Tsao (2018), experiential value has a positive and significant effect on leisure involvement.
- 5.1.2 In line with Lan and Wamg (2018) and Tsao (2018), experiential value has a positive and significant effect on leisure satisfaction.
- 5.1.3 In line with Tseng (2015) and Chung and Tseng (2015), leisure involvement has a positive and significant effect on behavioral intentions.
- 5.1.4 In line with Fang (2017) and Pearce and Moscardo (2015), leisure satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on behavioral intentions.

5.2 Recommendations

The Tourism Bureau of Taiwan in its "Taiwan Tourism 2025" campaign stressed that destinations should continuously promote balanced development of the economy, society, and environment at an aggregate level amid the growing scale of the tourism industry and economy. Therefore, the means to enhance the perceived experiential value of visitors participating in sustainable tourism in Taiwan, as well as the degree of enjoyment and satisfaction derived from sustainable tourism activities, depends on the data provided by studies on sustainable tourism. This study surveyed visitorsonly in southern Taiwan, and the scope of the study did not cover sustainable tourism destinations in other regions of the country. Future studies are recommended to expand the scope to cover all parts of the country in order to construct a more complete model that delineates the causal relationships between visitors' experiential value, leisure involvement, leisure satisfaction, and behavioral intentions.

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ARJHSS Journal

2022

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