

Full Length Research Paper

A study of the relationship among experience value, destination image and place attachment

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Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) suggest that consuming experiences are derived from consumers' perceived value. This type of consumers depends on sensations, emotions and enjoyments to form their experiences. Hence, consumers' destination image and place attachment determine their destination choice. The aim of this study is to understand the relationships between experience values, destination image and place attachment. The image of the business circle inside Kenting national park is always controversial. However, the study of the relationships between the image of the business circle and visitors' recognition are scarce if not non-existed, which prompted this study. The study used convenient sampling method to survey the visitors inside the business circle of Kenting national park, which yield 418 valid responses. The finding suggests that: (1) consumer return on investment, service excellence and aesthetic value are the experience values that contribute most to the formation of destination image, especially consumer's return on investment (ROI), (2) product image, perceived facility quality and price image are the destination images that contribute most to the formation of place attachment, and (3) consumer's ROI, service quality, aesthetic value and playfulness value are the experience values that contribute most to the formation of place attachment, especially the playfulness value.

Key word: Experience value, destination image, place attachment.

INTRODUCTION

As an island with abundant oceanic resource, Taiwan's coastal tourism is growing much more rapidly than other types of tourism. According to the Annual Report on Tourism (2008) from Tourism Bureau, Republic of China (Taiwan), the main domestic tourists' destination choices are "Danshui and Bali", "Love River", "Cijin", "Shi-Hzuwan (Bay)" and "The Kenting National Park". The visit ratios on these destinations are all reached more than 5%, which indicates the importance of coastal tourism in Taiwan's domestic tourism. Coastal tourism involves more than just sun, sand and sea, but extended to shopping areas within the vicinity of coastal area. These shopping areas possess unique charms that attract visitors who are enthusiastic about oceanic atmosphere.

Pine II and Gilmore (1999) proposes that consumption is a process, and when the process is finished, the memory of the experience existed permanently. For the tourists, by participating in tourism activity implies the utilization of many services including accommodation, transport, catering, shopping, leisure and entertainment. The experiences are created during the process of tourism activity. Past studies of consumer behavior favors the concept of "information processing model", in which rational decision-making are implied. However, the model is insufficient in explaining some interesting phenomena in leisure activities, such as daydreaming, just for fun, or emotional reaction. Based on the inadequacy, Holbrook (1982) categorized customers' experience into fantasy, feeling, and fun, where he suggests that experiences are created from the pursuit of these elements. The argument is a milestone that marked the beginning of the age of experiential economy where consumer no longer just purchase a product, but also enjoys the purchasing

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Table 1. The operational definition of variables.

| Variable | Operational definition |
|-------------------|--|
| Experience value | Holbrook (1999) reported that, every products' value can be interactive, relative, preference and experience, and then customers can create the value of a products through consumption experience |
| Destination image | Fakeye and Crompton (1991) mentioned that, the destination image refers to a person's cognition (beliefs), feelings, and overall perception of a specific destination |
| Place attachment | Moore and Graefe (1994) suggests that, place attachment is created by a personal's identification and evaluation of a particular place |

experience. In addition, destination marketing is one of the method to enhance the attractiveness of destination (Lee, 2001). Marketing helps to create destination image that affect the tourists' decision making about the tourism destination selection (Bigné et al., 2001). Gunn (1972) proposed that, the formation of destination image start with organic image, then the induced image, and finally the complex image is created. Moreover, the processes of experience contribute partially to the creation of complex image, and the image initiate tourists to form connection with a destination. During the process of experience, understanding and awareness of a destination is formed, which helps tourists to evaluate the cognition and emotion aspect of a destination.

The Kenting National Park attracts nearly 30 million visitors per year (Kenting National Park Headquarters, 2008). The quantity of tourists alone makes Kenting an interesting research subject. Furthermore, Kenting's shopping area adopted a theme of oceanic holiday. Whether this action help Kenting to generate positive experience value, destination image and eventually place attachment, is an interesting topic. The importance and prosperity of Taiwan's coastal tourism prompt this study, which examines the experience value, destination image and place attachment in Kenting coastal tourism areas.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Experience value

Table 1 summarize some of the definitions regarding variables associated with destination image that are offered by various researchers. The article will discuss each variables and formulate a logical research framework. Walt Disney Company is the first corporation that adopts the concept of experience value in their business where they introduced cartoon characters to enhance the experience for their guests. The idea is that tourists are involved in the process of creating experiences and so their reaction is important in creating a memorable experience. In other words, an experience occurs when a company intentionally uses services as the stage, and

goods as properties, to engage individual customers in a way that creates a memorable event (Pine II et al., 1999). Sheth (1991) addressed the definition of the consumption value, which is to understand the factors and reasons for the consumers' choice of a particular product or service. Holbrook (1982) classified consuming experiences into "the perspective of experience" and "the perspective of rationality". The consumers who relied on perspective of experience attribute high importance on fantasy, feeling and fun. On the other hand, the consumers who relied on perspective of rationality will make decision and assessment through information collecting. Furthermore, Schmit (1999) proposed the adoption of experiential marketing to help consumers to find their own consumption value through the consumption process. Moreover, Mathwick et al. (2001) gave the definition for experience value which is consumers' perception and relative preferences of the product and the experience value can be enhanced by interacting with consumer, product and service.

The above discussion suggests that experience value attributed to the creation of consumers' consumption value, and different kinds of the experiences will induce different kinds of consumption value. The consumers are actively seeking their own value proposition in the diverse consumer environment (Mathwick, et al., 2001).

Destination image

"Destination image" is a frequently discussed issue in tourism field for the past three decades (Pike, 2002). Boulding (1956) addressed the concept of "image", and he point out that the human behaviors are not only affected by the knowledge and information, but also fallen under the influence of the image from personal perception. The Image is more than a photograph of a destination, but also is an evaluation of the expression and a subjective view (Gunn, 1972). Baud-Bovy et al. (1977) considered that the destination image is the objective knowledge, impressions, prejudice, imagination, thought and emotion of a particular place from an individuals or groups. Moreover, Pearce (1988) purposed that

the image never disappeared, but it is ambiguous and changeable. According to Olivia's (1997) research, a destination embodies by a specific image, and the image will change over time. Furthermore, the destination image is based on the thought, perspectives, understanding, impressions and prejudice of an individual or groups. The image is a combination of many perspectives, which means that destination image is multi-facet (Page and Connell, 2001). In addition, the tourists will process several sources and information from the tourism destination then reconstruct the image by inner thoughts and forms the image of the destination and consequently affect their decision (Birgit, 2001).

Place attachment

In Human geography, the concept of "sense of place" is consistent with environmental psychology notion of place attachment. Shamsuddin and Ujang (2008) define the "sense of place" as an individual's interactive communication to the physical elements, activities and meanings of a place. Shamai (1991) also purposed that "sense of place" is a concept to describe the relation between people and environment. Moreover, the "sense of place" has been used to describe the special and unique characteristics of a particular place (Foote and Azaryahu, 2009). The concept of place attachment is extending from the concept of "sense of place". Tuan (1974) indicates that the construction of the core meaning of a place is from the experience.

Furthermore, the term "place attachment" was initially proposed by the environmental psychology literature, and was considered an emotional connecting between an individual and special places (Hidalgo and Hernandez, 2001). Based on the place attachment researches in the fields of geography and environmental psychology, the leisure and recreation researchers reckoned that the place attachment is composed of place dependence and place identity. The place dependence refers to the attachment of the functions of a place. The place identity refers to the attachment of the emotions or symbols of a place. Furthermore, the place attachment has a positive effect on the revisiting intention (Backlund and Williams, 2003).

Experience value, destination image and place attachment

Fakeye and Crompton (1991) extended the theory from Gunn (1972) and reported the complex image is the modified result of a place from experiences of tourist's multiple visits to a destination. Once the tourist decided to travel or not, the decision usually stands on the previous experience (Birgit, 2001). Moreover, Fakeye and Crompton (1991) concluded that, the image of the destination will be changed with experience. Based on

the afore discussion, this study proposed hypothesis

H₁: The tourists' experience value has significant influence on their destination image.

Bigné (2001) suggested that destination image affect tourists' behaviors. For a destination, there is no good or bad image. However, the image may trigger different emotional responses (Davidoff and Davidoff, 1983). Furthermore, the attractiveness from the previous experience and destination image will have inference on the tourists' placing attachment for a destination (Lee, 2001). Hou et al. (2005) also suggested that the attractiveness of different destination images affect the intensity of the place attachment between different groups. Based on the discussion above, we concluded that the destination image affect tourists' behavior, and consequently the place attachment. The study then proposed hypothesis:

H₂: The tourists' destination image has significant influence on their place attachment.

Pine II et al. (1999) categorized experience into two dimensions, namely: the customer involvement and the relation between the customers and environment. Moreover, the "sense of place" is the combination of the experiences, extrinsic elements, activities and meanings of the place (Montgomery, 1998). Lee (2001) reported tourists' experience is vital in the formation of place attachment. Furthermore the customer value concept suggest that individual form their assessment after using the products or services, and establishes an "emotional bond" between the consumers and service providers (Butz and Goodstein, 1996). Based on the discussion above, this study established the following hypothesis:

H₃: The tourists' experience value has significant influence on their place attachment.

METHODOLOGY

Research framework and the purposes of this study

Based on the literature review, the study proposed a model showed in Figure 1. The idea is that tourists' experience value affects their place attachment both directly and through destination image. The purposes of this study are summarized below:

1. Understanding the relations between tourists' experience value and destination image
2. Understanding the relations between tourists' destination image and place attachment
3. Understanding the relations between tourists' experience value and place attachment.

Questionnaire design and the operational definition of variables

The questionnaire comprised of three parts, namely: experience

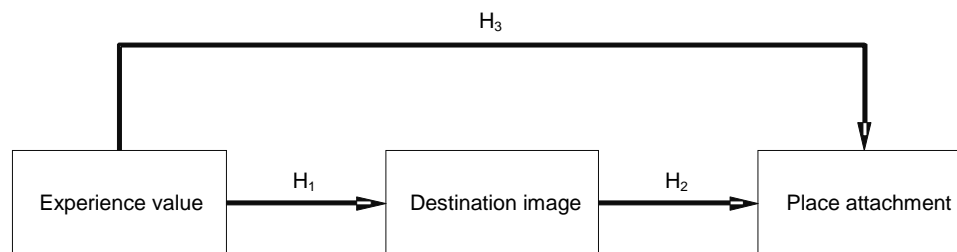


Figure 1. The research framework.

value, destination image and place attachment. The designing of the questionnaire and its items are based on careful literature review, which are discussed next.

Measurement instrument of experience value

Experience value was measured using items adapted from Mathwick et al. (2001), which include 4 dimensions: consumer's ROI, service excellence, playfulness and aesthetic with 15 items. Furthermore, the questionnaire adopts 5 point Likert-type scale, and uses the criteria of the measurement as follows: 5= Strongly Agree (Very Important), 4= Agree (Important), 3= Neutral, 2= Disagree (Unimportant) and 1= Strongly Disagree (Very Unimportant), to measure the respondents' intention for each question.

Measurement instrument of destination image

This destination image was measured using items adapted from Wei (2005), which included 4 dimensions: product image, facility and quality image, service image and price image with 20 items. The questions are also in the form of 5 point Likert scale.

Measurement instrument of place attachment

Place attachment was measured using items adapted from Bricker and Kerstetter, (2000), Moore and Graefe, (1994) and Williams et al. (1992). Their conceptualization consisted of measures capturing two dimensions: place dependence and place identity with 16 items. The questions are also in the form of 5 point Likert scale.

Research objects, sampling and data analysis

The survey focused on Kenting shopping area resides in the Kenting National Park area and targeted tourists who visited the Kenting shopping area. The survey was commenced with convenience sampling and personnel on-site interviewing to collect data, which was carried out during 1st of August 2009 ~ 31st of August 2009. The survey obtained 450 responses where 418 are valid and complete. The study used SPSS10.0 software to process data analysis include reliability analysis, descriptive statistics and regression analysis to discuss the casual relations between experience value, destination image and place attachment.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Reliability

Cronbach's alpha is used to test the internal consistency

of the data. Bryman and Cramer (1997) indicate that Cronbach's alpha of 0.8 or higher denote that the data possess adequate reliability. The Cronbach's alpha values of experience value, destination image, and the place attachment are 0.902, 0.938, and 0.946 respectively. The data is therefore reliable and further analyses were commenced.

Sample characteristics

Table 2 described the characteristics of the sample. The sample comprised of similar proportion of male (54.5%) and female (45.5%). The respondents are mainly distributed in 21-25 years old (53.4%) and most of them are students (50.7%). The residence of the respondents is mainly located in north Taiwan. In terms of the travel features, most of the respondents uses internet (32.1%) as their main source of information, and the most the interviewers' visiting time is more than 3 h (38.8%). Furthermore, the expenditure of the respondents is generally between NT 501-1000 (30.4%). The respondents are mainly repeat visitors with more than 4 times of visit (55.3%) and often accompanied by their friends and colleagues (76.1%) (Table 2).

Regression analysis

Experience value and destination image

This part analysis verifies the hypothesis 1 of the research, which states that the tourists' experience value has significant influence on their destination image. The result in Table 3 indicates that the casual relationship between tourists' experience value and destination image are statistically significant ($F = 67.063$ with $p < 0.05$). The R square is 0.394, which indicates tourists' experience value is able to explain 39.4% of variance of the changes in their destination image. The only factor that shows no significant influence to destination is playfulness. However, this result is derived from treating destination as one-dimensional. In order to broaden the understanding, the study conduct further regression analyses using four dimensions to represent destination image showed in Table 3.

Table 2. The basic information and travel features of interviewers.

| Basic information | Number of sample | Percentage | Rank | Travel feature | Number of sample | Percentage | Rank |
|-------------------------------|------------------|------------|------|------------------------------------|------------------|------------|------|
| Gender | | | | Main sources of information | | | |
| Male | 228 | 54.5 | 1 | Internet | 134 | 32.1 | 1 |
| Female | 190 | 45.5 | 2 | TV and broadcasting | 52 | 12.4 | 3 |
| | | | | Recommended by relative/friends | 131 | 31.3 | 2 |
| Age | | | | Dwell Time | | | |
| Under 20 years old | 83 | 19.9 | 2 | Under 2 h | 79 | 18.9 | 2 |
| 21-25 years old | 219 | 52.4 | 1 | Under 3 h | 59 | 14.1 | 3 |
| 26-30 years old | 70 | 16.7 | 3 | More than 3 h | 162 | 38.8 | 1 |
| Education level | | | | Expenditure | | | |
| High school | 54 | 12.9 | 2 | Under NT. 500 | 97 | 21.2 | 2 |
| College or university | 323 | 77.3 | 1 | NT. 501-1000 | 127 | 30.4 | 1 |
| Post graduate school or above | 33 | 7.9 | 3 | More than NT. 2001 | 88 | 21.1 | 3 |
| Occupation | | | | Visit times | | | |
| Student | 212 | 50.7 | 1 | Twice | 72 | 17.2 | 2 |
| Office employee | 45 | 10.8 | 3 | Thrice | 71 | 17.0 | 3 |
| Service industry | 55 | 13.2 | 2 | More than 4 times | 231 | 55.3 | 1 |
| Residence | | | | Companion | | | |
| North of Taiwan | 181 | 43.3 | 1 | Family and relatives | 85 | 20.3 | 2 |
| Central of Taiwan | 92 | 22.0 | 3 | Friends and colleagues | 318 | 76.1 | 1 |
| South of Taiwan | 128 | 30.6 | 2 | Others | 10 | 2.4 | 3 |

As indicated in Table 4, all experience value dimensions show significant influence to destination image dimensions, except for playfulness versus service and price image. The playfulness value, however, possess strongest influence on the product image ($\beta=0.492$). The service excellence value has the most influence on the facility and quality image ($\beta=0.403$).

Furthermore, consumer's ROI, service

excellence and aesthetic value have significant influence on the service image and price image. The service excellence value has the most influence on the service image and price image ($\beta=0.303$, $\beta=0.350$).

In addition, the f-value of the regression model are significant (186.008*, 95.506*, 50.305* and 54.711*). The hypothesis 1 is therefore supported by the result.

Destination image and place attachment

This part of analysis verifies hypothesis 2 of the research, which states that the tourists' destination image has significant influence on their place attachment. The result of the regression analysis (Table 5) indicate that, the casual relationship between destination image and place attachment is significant (f-value=92.781 with

Table 3. Regression analysis for experience value and destination image.

| Experience value | Destination image |
|-------------------------|---|
| | Standardized regression coefficients β -value |
| Consumer's ROI | 0.210* |
| Service excellence | 0.284* |
| Aesthetic | 0.173* |
| Playfulness | 0.075 |
| R ² | 0.394 |
| Adjusted R ² | 0.388 |
| f-value | 67.063* |

* means $p \leq .05$.**Table 4.** Regression analysis for experience value and destination image each dimensions.

| Experience value | Destination image | | | |
|--------------------|---|----------------------------|---------------|-------------|
| | Product image | Facility and quality image | Service image | Price image |
| | Standardized regression coefficients β -Value | | | |
| Consumer's ROI | 0.164* | 0.132* | 0.151* | 0.259* |
| Service Excellence | 0.091* | 0.403* | 0.303* | 0.350* |
| Aesthetic | 0.172* | 0.161* | 0.206* | 0.133* |
| Playfulness | 0.492* | 0.115* | 0.006 | -0.079 |
| R square | 0.643 | 0.481 | 0.328 | 0.346 |
| Adjusted R square | 0.640 | 0.475 | 0.321 | 0.340 |
| F-Value | 186.008* | 95.506* | 50.305* | 54.711* |

* means $p \leq .05$.**Table 5.** Regression analysis for destination image and place attachment.

| Destination image | Place attachment |
|----------------------------|---|
| | Standardized regression coefficients β -Value |
| Product image | 0.367* |
| Facility and quality image | 0.243* |
| Service image | 0.091 |
| Price image | 0.122* |
| R ² | 0.474 |
| Adjusted R ² | 0.469 |
| f-value | 92.781* |

* means $p \leq .05$.

$p < 0.05$). The R² is 0.474, which means destination image is able to explain 47.4% of variance of place attachment. Further analysis with place attachment's dimensions is shown in Table 6.

The result in Table 6 indicates that, product image possess strongest influence on place attachment. The facility and quality image also show significant influence on place attachment. Service aspect of destination image shows no significant influence on place attachment.

Finally, price image only show significant influence on place dependence aspect of attachment. Although some

of the destination image factors show relatively minor influence on place attachment, the f value and their corresponding p-value indicate that the casual relationship between destination image and place attachment are significant. Therefore, hypothesis 2 is supported by the analysis.

Experience value and place attachment

This part of analysis verifies hypothesis 3 of the research,

Table 6. Regression analysis for destination image and place attachment each dimensions.

| Destination image | Place attachment | |
|----------------------------|---|----------------|
| | Place dependence | Place identity |
| | Standardized regression coefficients β -value | |
| Product image | 0.360* | 0.408* |
| Facility and quality image | 0.287* | 0.259* |
| Service image | 0.076 | 0.092 |
| Price image | 0.172* | 0.030 |
| R ² | 0.571 | 0.469 |
| Adjusted R ² | 0.567 | 0.464 |
| f-Value | 137.286* | 91.267* |

* means $p \leq .05$.**Table 7.** Regression analysis for experience value and place attachment.

| Experience value | Place attachment |
|-------------------------|---|
| | Standardized regression coefficients β -value |
| Consumer's ROI | 0.114* |
| Service excellence | 0.193* |
| Aesthetic | 0.205* |
| Playfulness | 0.256* |
| R ² | 0.423 |
| Adjusted R ² | 0.418 |
| f-value | 75.656* |

Table 8. Regression analysis for experience value and place attachment each dimension.

| Experience value | Place attachment | |
|-------------------------|---|----------------|
| | Place dependence | Place identity |
| | Standardized regression coefficients β -Value | |
| Consumer's ROI | 0.161* | 0.080 |
| Service excellence | 0.178* | 0.170* |
| Aesthetic | 0.274* | 0.233* |
| Playfulness | 0.241* | 0.321* |
| R ² | 0.523 | 0.475 |
| Adjusted R ² | 0.518 | 0.470 |
| f-value | 113.211* | 93.561* |

* means $p \leq .05$.

which states that the tourists' experience value has significant influence on their place attachment. The result in Table 7 suggests experience value possess influence on place attachment (f-value= 75.656 with $p < 0.05$). The R² is 0.423, which means that experience value explain 42.3% of the variance of place attachment. Table 8 offers further analysis to understand the casual relationship between experience value and place attachment.

The result indicates that, consumer's ROI only show significant influence on place dependence, but not place identity. Service excellence, aesthetic and playfulness possess significant influence on both aspects of place attachment.

Conclusions

The result of the study is summarized into Table 9. As

Table 9. Summary of the result.

| Hypothesis | Relationships | Analyses | Result |
|----------------|--------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| H ₁ | Experience value → Destination image | Table 3 and 4 | Supported |
| H ₂ | Destination image → Place attachment | Table 5 and 6 | 2/3 Supported |
| H ₃ | Experience value → Place attachment | Table 7 and 8 | Supported |

discussed in the previously, all three hypotheses are generally supported by the data.

Further analyses reveal that certain aspect of experience value and destination image possess stronger influence on place attachment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Design merchandise

As revealed by the data, most of the tourists visit the Kenting shopping area will stay more than 3 h, but their expenditure is relatively low. Kenting is well known for its coastal sceneries and activities, but it would appear that its shopping area is yet to develop its full potential. The study indicates that consumer's ROI is a significant contributor for destination image and place attachment. Therefore, Kenting shopping area should take advantage of their coastal resources and create merchandise that can reflect an appropriate theme.

Enhance the service quality to promote the destination image

The service values come from the interaction between people, and that will create an unforgettable experience in customers' mind. Nice service quality has significant influence on destination image. The result of the study indicates that product and facility and quality image can significantly contribute to the formation of place attachment, which coincides with the past study (Dennis, 1978). Therefore, trade union and authorities should set the standard for the product and service quality in Kenting.

Heighten the place attachment

Holbrook (1982) divided the consuming experiences into fantasy, feeling and fun. The concept suggests that experience is more important than the tangible product. The most important thing is to create positive emotion so that respondents can relate when they evaluate and forms the image of the destination. Creating a pleasurable atmosphere for tourists can therefore promote the shopping experience and consequently enhance the purchasing experience. After all, the tourists will no longer

be just buying a product, but also a token of their memory in Kenting.

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