What Drives Sport Tourists' Positive Word-of-Mouth?

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As competitions among countries and regions for attracting tourists accelerate, positive word-of-mouth (WOM) resulted from good experience and destination loyalty becomes of great significance in terms of survival and thriving of tourism destinations. A major challenge for managers or marketers of a tourism destination is to understand what factors drive WOM. In a recent study, perceived value has been found to be a cornerstone of developing customers’ behavioral intentions among both researchers and practitioners (Xiao, Guo, Yu, & Liu, 2019). Logically, destination managers and marketers should make every effort to create tourism attractions and experiences to improve tourists’ perceived value. Furthermore, some researchers have suggested that nostalgia sport tourism can be an important means of offering sport-based tourist attractions (Cho, Ramshaw, & Norman, 2014), which depicts that people visit sport halls of fame such as The Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield, Massachusetts, sport museums such as the Football Museum in Suwon, South Korea, and famous sport retail stores such as the Bass Pro Shops in Lawrenceville, Georgia (Gibson, 1998). Destination marketing organizations could regard nostalgia sport tourism useful marketing strategies to attract tourists.

Although existing studies are insightful and help build the necessary foundation for sport tourism studies, two major limitations have been identified: (a) few published studies attempted to address experiential value as a component of perceived value and (b) prior studies failed to consider the mediating effect of tourist satisfaction between perceived value and WOM. Therefore, through proposing a theoretical model based on a comprehensive review of literature, the purpose of this study was to the structural relationships among functional value, experiential value, tourist satisfaction, and WOM in the context of nostalgia sport tourism.

Deriving from the literature reviewed and conducting a test of content validity, a questionnaire was developed to measure functional value, experiential value, tourist satisfaction, and WOM. Research participants (N = 282) were visitors at the Football Museum in Suwon, South Korea, who responded to an on-site survey. A confirmatory factor analysis was performed to examine the factor validity of the measures, which revealed that the measurement model fit indices were satisfactory (χ²/df = 1.867, GFI =.950, NFI =.935, RFI =.911, and RMSEA =.056). Structural equation modeling analyses were carried out to examine the relationships among concepts and an acceptable model fit was obtained (χ²/df =1.247, RMR =.031, AGFI =.947, NFI =.933, Hoelter 0.1 =223, and RMSEA =.037), revealing sequential relationships and mediating impacts of functional value, experiential value, tourist satisfaction, and WOM.

The findings of this study revealed significant influence of functional value, experiential value, and tourist satisfaction to WOM in the setting of nostalgia sport tourism and indicated the importance and necessity of improving perceived value in order to build tourist satisfaction and WOM. Sports museum managers are advised offer a variety of sport experience programs in museum programming to tourists and in the meantime, the entrance fee of a sports museum should be appropriate and well-justified. It is suggested that future studies should test the research model in other nostalgia sport tourism settings and geographical locations.