Research on the Optimized Development of the Festival from the Perspective of Tourism Experience

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Received: 15 May 2018; Accepted: 25 May 2018; Published: 28 May 2018

Abstract:
In view of the fact that tourism development of ethnic cultural heritages emphasizes resource exploitation and neglects tourism experience, this paper makes relational assumptions between tourism experience, satisfaction and behavioral intention. It takes a sampling from tourists attending the Nadam Festival (a traditional Mongolian Festival) and employs SPSS21.0 software to analyze the questionnaires recovered. The results show that tourism experience of these tourists mainly consists of two parts, namely, cognition and enjoyment. Tourism experience has significant positive impact on tourist satisfaction while tourist satisfaction has significant positive impact on behavioral intention of tourists and shows the strongest correlation with knowledge increase. Therefore, this paper proposes to improve tourism experience by enhancing the authenticity of ethnic culture, thereby providing theoretical basis for the formation of positive tourism experience during ethnic events.

Keywords:
Tourism Experience, Satisfaction, Behavioral Intention, Mongolian, Nadam Festival

1. Introduction

Festival event is the concentrated embodiment of social life, religious belief, aesthetic interest and spiritual feature of a region or ethnic group. It enriches people’s lives, enhances national cohesion and occupies an important place in intangible cultural heritage. By virtue of development, packaging and promotion, festival events have attracted a large number of domestic and foreign tourists and created considerable economic benefits. Intangible cultural heritage included in the World Heritage List (such as Japan’s Noh drama and kabuki, Javanese wayangkulit and puppet show in Sicily), in particular, is becoming important tourism resources and tourist attractions in the country or region where the heritage is located.

Festival event is more focused on the formal experience provided, rather than the content carried. Heterogeneity of traditional festival events of ethnic minorities is the
key to attracting tourists. In the context of emphasizing the development of traditional cultural tourism resources as well as the diversified, emotional, personalized and high needs of tourists, only in-depth researches on tourism experience shall enable tourism product (service) providers to make pertinent plans for the optimization of tourism experience development and develop various tourism projects, thereby enriching tourism experience, providing tourists with new and memorable experience, facilitating the formation of positive behavioral intentions and promoting sustainable development of tourism products.

The Nadam Festival is a traditional Mongolian Festival. It was listed in the first batch of national intangible cultural heritage in 2006 and has become an influential brand event and important tourist attraction in Inner Mongolia. What is incompatible with the development of this festival event is that academic researches on the Nadam Festival are mostly focused on its rheological feature, cultural value and feasibility as a tourism resource[1,2], without regarding it as an empirical result of tourism products. Under the rapid scale and benefit growth of ethnic culture tourism industry and the increasingly fierce homogeneous competition, it is urgent for local management authorities of national cultural heritage to provide tourists with high-quality tourism experience, thereby prompting them to generate positive behavioral intentions.

This research proceeds from the perspective of tourism experience for the first time. It analyzes tourism experience factors of the Nadam Festival in details, explores relations between tourism experience and satisfaction and behavioral intention, summarizes shortcomings of the event and presents valuable suggestions for event organizers and managers to further enhance the quality of tourism experience.

2. Literature Review and Research Hypotheses

2.1. Related Concepts and Research Status

Experience originated from the Latin word “experiential”, meaning practices, trials, understandings and feelings. It is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as “encountering or undergoing an event and feeling an emotion or sensation”. The word, which can be used both as a noun and as a verb, emphasizes on the process and outcome of personal experience. In other words, experiences have a certain understanding of both the process and the outcome.

The researches on tourism experience started in the mid-1960s(1990s in mainland China). Although researches describe tourism experience differently, they reach a consensus that tourism experience is a special physical and psychological experience generated from interactions of tourists and tourism elements during travel. Cohen argues that tourism experience is the relationship between individuals and the center (the spiritual world)[3]. Due to the difference in interests and backgrounds, tourists may explain the same tourism products differently and form different tourism experiences. Even if they claim to have the same experience, the intensity and impression are different[4]. Manfredo, Driver & Brown [5] regard tourism experience as an important part of travel and a psychological state of goal achievement. It is the memory and feeling of tourists about humans, events and things they contact, belonging to a kind of emotion changes[6]. In addition, such feelings are formed during travel, which is different from everyday experiences[6,7]. Tourism experience originates from contacts and interactions between tourists and tourism elements [8]. It is essentially a subjective interpretation of tourists for objective objects provided by
tourism enterprises[9,10]. By combing existing researches, Kim summarizes 19 components of tourism experience, including happiness, relaxation, knowledge, adventure, stimulation and challenge[4].

XieYanjun points out that people travel to obtain some pleasure and tourism experience refers to the process by which tourists make a temporary connection with the outside world to improve their psychological state and adjust their psychological structure[11]. Tourism experience is the result of interactions between internal psychology of tourists and surface morphology and profound implications of tourism objects, which is universally recognized by domestic scholars. In addition, tourism experience is deemed as an interpretation of symbols, a psychological and emotional experience based on interactions between tourists and products[12], a sense of well-being, an interaction of fields[13] and the satisfaction of needs[14]. Although it is interpreted differently, it does not exceed the above categories as a whole.

To sum up, tourism experience is the perception formed on the basis of contacts and interactions between tourists and the various tourism elements during travel.

Satisfaction refers to the psychological state formed by the interaction between tourists and destinations after tourism product purchase and involves the comprehensive evaluation of tourism landscapes, infrastructure, entertainment facilities, environments and reception services in meeting the demand for tourism activities[15]. As a psychological comparison process, it is significantly influenced by experience quality[16] and ultimately shown as a result of consumption activity or experience[17]. In related researches, satisfaction is often treated as an intermediate variable between its pre-variable and behavioral intention.

Behavioral intention refers to the subjective judgment about future behaviors in the process of consumption or after the participation in experimental services[18]. For tourists, behavioral intention is the psychological tendency that tourists may take a certain action for tourism products (services) or destinations after tourism experience. Behavioral intention, which shows strong correspondence with future behaviors, is considered as the subjective probability of engaging in a particular behavior[19]. It can be measured from three perspectives: revisiting intention, word-of-mouth promotion and recommending intentions[20]. When tourists show a high level of satisfaction, they shall produce positive behavioral intentions[21].

2.2. Relations Between Variables

The researches of Ragheb & Tate, Otto & Ritchie, Yoon & Uysal, Costa Mendes, Oom do Valle, Guerreiro & Silva suggest that tourism experience shall affect satisfaction and behavioral intention of tourists[22,23,24,25]. Since the outcomes of experiences are expressed by satisfaction or dissatisfaction, satisfaction is regarded as an important indicator for evaluating tourism experience[26].

Studies have shown that tourists have the intention to revisit a place and recommend it to other tourists when they are highly satisfied with it[27]. In addition, this contributes to the formation of word-of-mouth effects[28]. Satisfaction serves as an intermediary between tourism experience and behavioral intention in most researches.

2.3. Research Hypotheses and Questionnaire Design
According to the literature review, tourism experience, satisfaction and behavioral intention are mutually interactive. Based on the research contents, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: tourism experience has significant positive impact on tourist satisfaction.

H2: satisfaction has significant positive impact on behavioral intention of tourists.

The questionnaire consists of four parts: tourism experience, satisfaction, behavioral intention and personal information. Wherein, the tourism experience scale, which uses the Memorable Tourism Experience Scale (MTES) of Kim, Ritchie & McCormick, is composed of four dimensions: hedonism, novelty, local culture, and knowledge increase[4]. The satisfaction scale adopts the Overall Satisfaction Measurement Scale of Lee, Lee & Yoo[29]. The behavioral intention scale is composed of three dimensions: revisiting intention, word-of-mouth promotion and recommending intention[30]. The three scales involve a total of 20 questions and employ Likert seven-point scale to judge the recognition of tourists for questions. Tourists’ recognition for the question items is judged in accordance with the scores given. For example, 1 point means “strongly disagree” while 7 points means “strongly agree”. If the project analysis and reliability analysis after pretest identify no question items that need to be deleted or modified, the scales are deemed to be reliable.

3. Research Object and Data Analysis

Nadam means “entertainment and recreation” in Mongolian. Most scholars believe that the Nadam Festival originated from military or production activities of northern nomadic tribes around the 10th century and gradually evolved into a folk custom that integrates sports, entertainment, gathering and celebration into one. It has become a traditional festival for Mongols in Inner Mongolia, Gansu, Qinghai and Xinjiang. The Nadam Festival, which consists of horse racing, wrestling and archery, is regarded as a contest of “strength” and “skill”. It is thrilling and exciting, with a strong visual impact, thereby attracting plenty of tourists.

During July and August when the weather is nice and the pastoralists are at leisure in Inner Mongolia, the Nadam Festival shall be held in various Mongolian settlements. In August 2017, foreign tourists attending the Nadam Festival in Naiman Banner, Siziwang Banner, Damao Banner, Tuzuo Banner and Etuoke Banner of Inner Mongolia were conveniently sampled. The respondents were required to fill in questionnaires by themselves and return the questionnaires after completing them. A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed and 381 valid questionnaires were recovered, suggesting an effective response rate of 76%.

According to the reliability analysis of questionnaires recovered by SPSS 21.0 software, the overall Cronbach’s α coefficient was 0.978: 0.968, 0.895 and 0.902 for tourism experience scale, satisfaction scale and behavioral intention scale respectively. In addition, the overall reliability coefficient was greater than 0.80, indicating good reliability of the scales [31].

In terms of the tourism experience scale, its KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) measure of sampling adequacy=0.933, Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity Approx. Chi-Square=5217.806, degree of freedom=78 and p<0.01, indicating that the scale was statistically significant and suitable for factor analysis.

During the factor analysis of tourism experience variables, principal component analysis and varimax rotation were adopted and factor loading greater than 0.4 was
considered to be statistically significant. Wherein, principal component analysis enabled components to represent observed variables to the maximum extent while varimax rotation maximized the load capacity of variances. After deleting repeated question items and factor extractions, we obtained a total of three factors: hedonism (involving 4 question items), local culture (involving 4 question items) and knowledge increase (involving 3 question items). In other words, novelty in the original scale was not preserved, which was possibly because some tourists had known something of Inner Mongolian culture in advance. In addition, it was ascribed to the unattractiveness of local culture.

Table 1 demonstrates factor analysis of tourism experience. As the figure shows, the overall Cronbach’s α coefficient was 0.925 and that for the three factors was 0.852, 0.883 and 0.879 respectively. Since all these coefficients were greater than 0.7, the scale was highly reliable. In addition, cumulative variance explained of the three factors was 76.435%, indicating good reliability and construct validity of the scale.

Table 1. Factor Analysis of Tourism Experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Number</th>
<th>Factor and Question Item</th>
<th>Factor Loading</th>
<th>Explained Variance (%)</th>
<th>Cronbach’sα Coefficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Grassland tour is a novel experience.</td>
<td>0.785</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Grassland tour puts me in a good mood.</td>
<td>0.793</td>
<td>25.841</td>
<td>0.852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>It is a kind of enjoyment.</td>
<td>0.764</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Grassland tour lifts my spirits.</td>
<td>0.730</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I understand local customs.</td>
<td>0.718</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I’m deeply impressed by the warmth and hospitality of local people.</td>
<td>0.754</td>
<td>27.540</td>
<td>0.883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I get acquainted with local people and establish contact with them.</td>
<td>0.799</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Local people treat tourists kindly.</td>
<td>0.772</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Grassland tour widens my experience and broadens my horizons.</td>
<td>0.718</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I’d like to know more about Mongolian culture.</td>
<td>0.782</td>
<td>23.054</td>
<td>0.879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Overall, the culture is unique and the place is worth a visit.</td>
<td>0.766</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cumulative Variance Explained (%) 76.435
Overall Cronbach’s α Coefficient 0.925
KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy 0.933
Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity Approx. Chi-Square 5217.806 (p<0.01)

Correlation analysis showed that the correlation coefficient between overall tourism experience and satisfaction was 0.692 (P <0.01), indicating that the two were moderately positively correlated. In other words, the better the overall tourism experience was, the higher the overall satisfaction shall be, and vice versa. In terms of the dimensions of tourism experience, knowledge increase and satisfaction enjoyed
the highest correlation, which indicated that knowledge increase was most closely related to satisfaction of tourists with the Nadam Festival (see Table 2).

The correlation coefficient between tourist satisfaction and overall behavioral intention was 0.703 (P<0.01), indicating that the two were highly positively correlated. In other words, the more satisfied tourists were with the Nadam Festival, the more positive their behavioral intentions shall be. In terms of the dimensions of behavioral intention, revisiting intention and satisfaction enjoyed the highest correlation, which indicated that revisiting intention of tourists intensified with the increase in satisfaction with the Nadam Festival. In addition, satisfaction showed moderate positive correlation with revisiting intention, word-of-mouth promotion and recommending intention, as shown in Table 3. All these results verified validity of H1 and H2.

Table 2. A Summary Table of Correlation Coefficients between Tourism Experience and Satisfaction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Local Culture</th>
<th>Hedonism</th>
<th>Knowledge Increase</th>
<th>Total Tourism Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>0.600**</td>
<td>0.603**</td>
<td>0.623**</td>
<td>0.692**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Table 3. A Summary Table of Correlation Coefficients between Satisfaction and Behavioral Intention.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Revisiting Intention</th>
<th>Word-of-Mouth Promotion</th>
<th>Recommending Intention</th>
<th>Overall Behavioral Intention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>0.692**</td>
<td>0.629**</td>
<td>0.634**</td>
<td>0.703**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

According to the regression analysis, standardized regression coefficient and determination coefficient between tourism experience and satisfaction were 0.692 and 0.479 separately while those between behavioral intention and satisfaction were 0.703 and 0.494 respectively. All Beta values were positive, indicating that tourism experience had a positive impact on satisfaction and satisfaction had a positive impact on behavioral intention. In other words, the higher the scores for satisfaction were, the higher scores tourism experience shall receive. By the same token, high scores for satisfaction always corresponded to high scores for behavioral intention, as shown in Table 4 and Table 5.

Table 4. Regression Analysis between Tourism Experience and Satisfaction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>T Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>1.431</td>
<td>0.180</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism Experience</td>
<td>0.522</td>
<td>0.024</td>
<td>0.692</td>
<td>21.680***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R=0.692 R²=0.479 Adjusted R²=0.478 F=470.033***

Note: ***p<0.001
According to the stepwise multivariate regression analysis, correlation coefficient and determination coefficient between tourism experience, satisfaction and behavioral intention were 0.738 and 0.544 separately, both of which could explain 54.4% variances of behavioral intention. Wherein, satisfaction possessed the highest explanatory power, reaching 49.41%. All its standardized regression coefficients were positive and had positive impact on behavioral intention, indicating that the scores for behavioral intention increased with the increase in scores for tourism experience and satisfaction (see Table 6).

Table 5. Regression Analysis between Satisfaction and Behavioral Intention.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>T Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>1.616</td>
<td>0.169</td>
<td>1.1616</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>0.700</td>
<td>0.031</td>
<td>0.703</td>
<td>23.336***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R=0.703</td>
<td>R²=0.494</td>
<td>Adjusted R²=0.493</td>
<td>F=498.902***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ***p<0.001

The standard regression equation is as follows:

Behavioral intention = 0.310 × tourism experiment + 0.488 × satisfaction

4. Conclusions and Discussions

Tourism experience of tourists attending the Nadam Festival mainly depends on two factors, namely, cognition and enjoyment. Wherein, cognition refers to tourists’ understanding of humanistic knowledge conveyed by the Festival and local ecological environments while enjoyment means experience and external appearance of positive emotions (such as excitement and pleasure) after the above two aspects are satisfied. In addition, tourist satisfaction shows significant correlation with knowledge increase in cognitive experience and influences substantial behavioral intention. The results are consistent with certain behavioral characteristics of hedonic consumers in experience economy.

The Nadam Festival should satisfy tourists’ curiosity for ethnic culture and its planners and organizers should accurately grasp ethnic cultural traditions, manifestations and contents of the event, enhance the authenticity, enrich the contents and improve the quality of tourism products, so that tourists can form high-level cognition. The design of ethnic cultural tourism projects should emphasize on the majesty and mystery of sacrificial rites before the event, reflect traditional nature of the event and advocate the reverence for nature. In addition, attention should be paid to the design and manufacturing of contestants’ garments and accessories as well as the restricted use of performance products. Besides, raw materials and manufacturing...
processes of traditional Mongolian production and life appliances, handicrafts, food, clothing and medicine shall be displayed on the spot. These elements, which are closely related to the production and life of ethnic minorities, not only represent heterogeneous culture in Mongolia, but also serve as a major part of traditional value that tourists are concerned about[32].

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Acknowledgments

The work described in this paper was fully supported by a grant from the colleges and universities scientific research foundation of Inner Mongolia (No. NJSY18088).

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