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Journal of Destination Marketing & Management

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jdmm

Research Paper

The antecedents and consequences of well-being perception: An application of the experience economy to golf tournament tourists

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 30 June 2015

Received in revised form

13 September 2015

Accepted 14 September 2015

Available online 17 November 2015

Keywords:

Well-being perception

Experience economy

Golf tournament tourists

Brand identification

ABSTRACT

The objective of this research is to examine the antecedents and consequences of well-being perception, focusing on golf tournament tourists. More specifically, it is proposed that four dimensions of the experience economy influence the formation of well-being perception. In addition, it is hypothesized that well-being perception can result in two managerial outcomes: brand identification and revisit intentions. During the theory-building process, the moderating role of customer involvement was proposed. Based on the theoretical relationships between the conceptual constructs, a model was proposed and then tested utilizing data collected from 230 golf tournament tourists. The results of the data analysis show that three dimensions of the experience economy (education, entertainment, and escapism) play important roles in the formation of well-being perception, which in turn positively affects two outcome variables: brand identification and revisit intentions. In addition, customer involvement moderates the relationship between well-being perception and brand identification. The theoretical and managerial implications of these findings are discussed in the latter part of the article.

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1. Introduction

The concept of well-being perception has received considerable attention from practitioners and scholars in recent times. This is because along with the goal of achieving economic growth, many people also hope to enhance their quality of life (e.g., Hwang & Han, 2014; Hwang & Hyun, 2012, 2014; Sirgy, 2001; Sirgy & Lee, 2008). Consumer well-being perception has been defined as consumers' perception of the extent to which a brand positively contributes to a quality of life enhancement' (Grzeskowiak & Sirgy, 2007, p. 289). It is widely accepted that well-being perception plays many important roles in people's lives. For example, high levels of well-being perception lead to high levels of a personal satisfaction with life (Grzeskowiak & Sirgy, 2007; Lee & Sirgy, 2004). For this reason, well-being perception is one of the most important factors when making a purchasing decision about products and services (Sirgy, Lee, & Rahtz, 2007).

Golf tournament tourists are no exceptions in this regard. Sports tourism is a popular leisure activity in many parts of the world, while golf is considered to be one of the most popular tourist sports (Humphreys & Weed, 2014; Markwick, 2000; Petrick

& Backman, 2001). Indeed, over 10 million tourists per year do so in order to watch golf tournaments (Ong & Mansor, 2014). More importantly, one of the most important motivations for attending golf tournaments is to satisfy well-being needs (e.g. physical health and mental relaxation) (Lyu & Lee, 2013). Through this leisure activity, golf tournament tourists hope to improve their quality of life. Golf tournament directors thus need to dedicate considerable effort to enhancing tourists' well-being perceptions. No studies have yet, however, focused explicitly on this subject.

One of the key factors in the formation of well-being perception is for the product or service concerned to provide memorable experiences (McCabe, Joldersma, & Li, 2010; Ross & Van Willigen, 1997). An individual's experience refers to some event that engages the individual in a personal way (Pine & Gilmore, 1999), and it plays an important role in explaining consumer behavior because consumers are primarily interested in experiential benefits such as fantasies, feelings, and fun (Gentile, Spiller, & Noci, 2007; Han & Jeong, 2013; Schmitt, 1999, 2009). For this reason, firms are required to develop differentiated products and services that can give memorable experiences to their customers (Berry, Carbone, & Haeckel, 2002; Oh, Fiore, & Jeoung, 2007).

This study attempts to address the research gaps outlined above by examining the antecedents and consequences of well-being perception. More specifically, this study sets out to investigate: (1) the effects of golf tournament tourists' experiences on their well-being perception, (2) the way in which well-being

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perception may influence brand identification and revisit intentions, and (3) the possible moderating role of involvement in this process. The findings are intended to provide golf tournament directors with useful insights for developing effective and efficient strategies for marketing golf tournament tourism.

2. Literature review

2.1. Well-being perception

There is a strong correlation between well-being perception and quality of life, as well-being needs are satisfied through high levels of quality of life (Grzeskowiak & Sirgy, 2007; Lee & Sirgy, 2004). For example, if a tourist perceives that his or her quality of life is improved by watching a golf tournament, such an experience plays an important role in meeting their well-being needs. Recently, it has been increasingly critical for consumers to enhance their quality of life in diverse fields, including higher levels of life satisfaction, overall happiness with life, absence of ill-being, greater social well-being, greater travel well-being, and higher levels of dining well-being (Grzeskowiak & Sirgy, 2007; Hwang & Han, 2014; Hwang & Hyun, 2012; Lee & Sirgy, 2004). To this end, people aim to enhance their quality of life as one of their life goals (Lee & Sirgy, 2004; Sirgy, 2001; Sirgy et al., 2007).

Previous studies have suggested theoretical models that explain the importance of well-being perception in consumer behavior. For instance, Nakano, MacDonald, and Douthitt (1995) supported the possession satisfaction model, suggesting that well-being perception plays an important role in customer satisfaction when evaluating products or services. In addition, Lee, Sirgy, and Su (1998) suggested the marketer's orientation model, explaining that consumer well-being perception is formed by marketers' orientation toward enhancing the well-being of their consumers. Lee, Sirgy, Larsen and Wright (2002), Sirgy and Lee (2003), and Grzeskowiak, Sirgy, Lee and Claiborne (2006) presented the consumer/product life-cycle model, suggesting that well-being perception serves as customer satisfaction following the consumption of high-quality products or services. Sirgy et al. (2007) developed the quality model, explaining that well-being perception is a consumer's positive feelings toward high-quality products or services. Hwang and Hyun (2012) found that well-being perception helped to enhance perceived price fairness and customer satisfaction in a luxury restaurant. Kim, Jeon, and Hyun (2012) proposed a theoretical model to explain the important role of well-being perception in the chain restaurant industry. They tested the relationships using empirical data collected from 433 restaurant patrons and showed that customers had a high level of behavioral intentions when they perceived well-being. Hwang and Han (2014) investigated the role of well-being perception in the luxury cruise industry. Based on a series of data-analysis processes, they found that well-being perception is an important predictor of brand loyalty. Hwang and Hyun (2014) also showed that well-being perception plays a critical role in the formation of loyalty in the airline industry. In summary, well-being perception plays an important role in consumer behavior. In particular, well-being perception is deemed to be a key factor when making decisions about purchasing products and services.

2.2. The experience economy

Consumers look for unique and memorable experiences rather than merely consuming products and services (Oh et al., 2007). That is, high-quality products and services can no longer be enough to provide differentiated choices for consumers (Oh et al., 2007). This phenomenon pushes firms to focus more on the

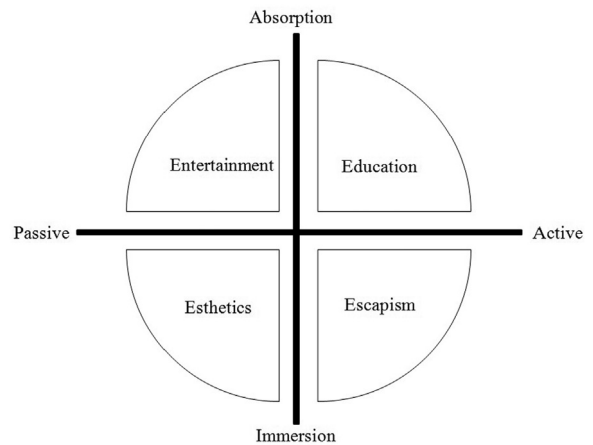


Fig. 1. The 4Es of the experience economy. Source: Pine and Gilmore (1999).

consumption of experiences by incorporating particular value into their products or services that can arouse unforgettable satisfactory experiences (Berry et al., 2002; Oh et al., 2007). Although many previous studies have tried to empirically conceptualize consumers' experience, the 'experience economy' (also known 4Es) theory developed by Pine and Gilmore (1999) is well known and has been widely used. More specifically, Pine and Gilmore (1999) suggested two dimensions of consumers' experience based on: (1) the level of their involvement (i.e. passive versus active participation) and (2) the connection that unites them with particular events or performances (i.e. absorption and immersion). This in turn delineates four dimensions of consumer experience, consisting of education (active and absorption), entertainment (passive versus absorption), esthetics (passive and immersion), and escapism (active and immersion) (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). The following diagrams illustrates this (see Fig. 1).

The four dimensions of consumers' experience have already been validated and widely adopted from many previous studies. For instance, Oh et al. (2007) collected data from B&B (bed-and-breakfast) facilities ($n=419$) in order to test the uni-dimensionality of these four sub-dimensions. The results indicated that the four dimensions showed convergent validity, discriminant validity, and internal consistency were statistically supported. In addition, Hosany and Witham (2010) tested the uni-dimensionality of the four dimensions using data collected from 169 cruise passengers. They suggested that the four dimensions achieved strong levels of convergent validity, discriminant validity, and internal consistency. The following section explains each dimension in more detail.

2.2.1. Education

An educational experience is considered as the desire to learn something new (Pine & Gilmore, 1999) and is classified as active participation because participants need enthusiastic attitudes toward events or performances in order to enhance their knowledge, skills and abilities. The output level of the educational experience thus depends on the participant's attitudes (Oh et al., 2007). In addition, the educational experience is viewed as having absorptive characteristics as the participant's attention is attracted by implanting experiences into their minds (Pine & Gilmore 1999). Many sporting events provide educational experiences. For instance, tourists attending Wimbledon's championship match, the most prestigious tennis tournament, can learn tennis techniques while being close to professional tennis players. In addition, they can acquire knowledge about the rules of tennis and tennis etiquette.

Previous studies have also emphasized the importance of the educational experience. For example, Chen and Chen (2012)

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