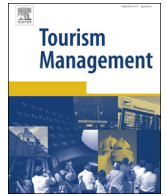




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Research note

Impact of government policy and environment quality on visitor loyalty to Taiwan music festivals: Moderating effects of revisit reason and occupation type



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HIGHLIGHTS

- Model the effects of government policy and environment quality on visitor loyalty.
- Government policy affects environment quality, visitor satisfaction, and loyalty.
- Revisit reason moderates the relationship between policy and visitor loyalty.
- Revisit reason moderates the relationship between policy and environment.
- Occupation type moderates the relationship between policy and environment.

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ABSTRACT

Tourists' repeat patronage is a prerequisite for sustainable festivals. Past studies have examined tourist cognition, affection, and conation to festivals. Government involvement in festivals has increased during the past decade; however, few studies have examined how government policy and environment quality influence visitor loyalty to festivals. Using sample data collected from 931 visitors during spring music festivals held in Southern Taiwan, this study used a structural equation model (SEM) with latent variables to examine these influences. The results suggest that government policy positively influences perceived environment quality, visitor satisfaction, and loyalty to festivals. Furthermore, the results from a multigroup SEM approach reveal that tourists' revisit reason (revisit festival versus other) and occupation type (student versus nonstudent) moderate the relationships between government policy and festival loyalty. Implications on festival planning and government policymaking are discussed.

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1. Introduction

Research on festivals and event tourism has increased since 2008 (Getz & Page, 2015). Studies have been conducted on tourism from various perspectives: marketing targeted place (Boo & Busser, 2005; Felsenstein & Fleisvher, 2003), generating economic benefits (Litvin & Fetter, 2006; Mckercher, Mei, & Tse, 2006), and preserving local culture (Xie, 2004). Festivals have been identified as having two well-distinguished performative forces, namely hosts and guests (Giovanardi, Lucarelli, & Decosta, 2014), and have been regarded as a mixed industry in which the public, nonprofit, and private sectors compete and collaborate in attracting and satisfying visitors (Andersson & Getz, 2009). Government interventions have

been deemed necessary because festivals and tourism are related to public goods, merit goods, and social equity. The extent to which government is involved in festivals depends on stakeholder relationships. For example, local authorities may be regarded as the most important stakeholder for public festivals, whereas spectators are likely to be considered the most critical stakeholder for nonprofit and private festivals (Andersson & Getz, 2009). All festival types depend on venues, facilities, public space, and streets that must be maintained, more or less, by public authorities; i.e., festivals require tangible resources and political support to implement. Therefore, public–private partnerships are common. Generally, government policy refers to the government's input into or support of the planning and staging of festivals; such intervention is reflected in the design of the servicescapes and the management policies and procedures of festivals. Justifying government interventions has become the most crucial public policy issue

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facing event tourism (Getz & Page, 2015). In addition, through participation and involvement, the stakeholders experience various types of values (Prebensen, 2010). The sponsors (e.g., local authorities) may receive amplified value with more spectators' participation, which aids public organizations in retaining legitimacy. Recent research has suggested that government policy indirectly affects hosts' loyalty to festivals (Lee, Liu, Chung, & Ho, 2015). Generally, guests (attendees) have been the study focus in festival and event tourism, which is primarily driven by the goal of economic benefits determined by their direct expenditures at festivals (Lee, Lee, Lee, & Babin, 2008; Mason & Paggiaro, 2012). Despite the importance of government's role, little research has addressed the relationship between government policy and personal perceptions, attitude, and loyalty intention in event tourism. Government intervention is likely to have been justified when festival attendees are satisfied and willing to revisit.

Spring music festivals are held annually in Southern Taiwan during spring break. Spring Scream at Kenting National Park and Spring Wave near Hengchun Airport are two of the most famous festivals. Since 2007, approximately 150,000 to 500,000 person trips have been made annually (Spring Scream, 2015). Both the aforementioned festivals are outdoor events and each lasts from 2 to 11 days. In addition to music, the festivals feature film festivals, art exhibits, stalls, food vendors, and camp sites. Various other annual music and entertainment events are held in nearby areas. Kenting National Park is a popular site among international tourists. The number of tourist visits (both international and domestic) reached 8.37 million in 2014 (Kenting National Park, 2015). The spring music festivals are held in or near the park and provide access to multiple attractions including the beach, maritime activities, and ecotourism. Such activities attract large numbers of young people. By understanding the factors and relationships affecting loyalty to festivals, government administrators and festival planners can attract more festivalgoers, thus generating more economic benefits, increasing the sustainability of festivals, and justifying government involvement in festivals. Festival patrons are the primary driver of sustainability, on which total festival impact is measured by incorporating economic, sociocultural, and environmental impact (Andersson & Lundberg, 2013).

Furthermore, moderators between government policy and attendees' festival loyalty were examined. Because the number of tourists visiting Kenting National Park far exceeds that attending the music festivals, attracting those tourists to the festivals would increase the festivals' economic impact (direct expenditure) on the local community. In this study, the respondents' reason for possibly revisiting the Kenting area was classified as "revisit festival" or "other" (e.g., beautiful ocean scenery and natural ecological environment), and the respondents were grouped according to occupation type as either student or nonstudent (e.g., service industry, self-employed, and other). Past behavior diminishes perceived risk (Oquelllette & Wood, 1998), which can also be reduced through government involvement in festivals. Lower perceived risk may require less government intervention to reduce perceived risk; thus, government policy plays a less influential role for attendees reporting intention to return for festivals compared with those intending to return for other reason. Similarly, students habitually expect protection and guidance from public authorities such as schools and governments; thus, government policy likely has a stronger influence on the festival loyalty of students compared with nonstudents. Therefore, the aims of this study were to investigate the loyalty of attendees to festivals by incorporating government policy and the two aforementioned moderators. The following overarching questions guided the course of this study:

- (1) What are the underlying factors and causal relationships that determine attendee loyalty to music festivals?
- (2) How do revisit reason and occupation type moderate the relationships between government policy and attendee loyalty to music festival?

2. Literature review and hypotheses

2.1. Government policy

Government interventions in festivals and tourism are multifaceted. Festivals and tourism are strongly associated with the terms *public goods*, *merit goods*, and *social equity* (Andersson & Getz, 2009), all of that require government involvement. For example, the public goods argument states that public authorities, because they typically own tourist attractions, natural resources, and cultural resources, should manage and make these sites available to everyone. Unless public goods (e.g. concert venues and funding) can be justified, the government role in event tourism is likely to face opposition and problems (Getz & Page, 2015). A growing interest in the government policy dimension reflects both the magnitude of the event sector and related controversies. Event policy has been related to sustainability and social responsibility, governance, stakeholders participation, sociocultural impacts, and resident perceptions and attitudes (Getz & Page, 2015). Considering that festivals and tourism consume public resources, generate waste, and impose negative effects (e.g., traffic and noise) that must be managed or prevented by public authorities, government involvement is almost inevitable. Government intervention becomes politically acceptable when it generates economic, social, or cultural benefits (Hall, 2005; Pearce, 1992). The balance between attracting high visitor numbers and maintaining a safe, clean, and smoothly running festival environment entails efforts by the government. Furthermore, if the tasks that the government performs for festivals and tourism are legitimate in the minds of those served, these achievements could satisfy locals and tourists, and have a determining impact on political trust and the industry (Nunkoo, 2015), thereby making government policy justifiable (Getz & Page, 2015) and politically acceptable (Hall, 2005; Pearce, 1992).

Empirical evidence from previous research suggested that government policy positively influences the value perception of locals, according to an evaluation of the obtained social benefits after considering social costs (exchange theory); this increased value perception by locals further influences their spreading positive word of mouth (Lee et al., 2015). A desirable environment, in and out of festival venues, necessitates the government's active support to provide tourists with a satisfactory experience. Reactive measures by the government are required to monitor and control negative effects such as traffic, environmental problems, waste, and noise. For example, the increased traffic and waste problems incurred during music festivals cannot be solved by the private sector alone. In this study, we use the definition by Lee et al. (2015) of *government policy* referring to tourists' expectations of support from the government in overseeing all safety and quality measures, controlling illegal music activities, ensuring security, and creating a drug-free environment.

Attendee perception of government support is based on how favorably the government facilitates their consumption experience of environment quality. Effective government support leads to the smooth flow of festivals, which results in consumer satisfaction and repeat patronage of the festival. If government incompetence results in a festival that is disorderly or difficult to travel to, attendees may consider not attending the festival and spread negative word

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