Exploring the Sustainable Strategies to Reinforce the Benefit Awareness from Festival Events Management

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Abstract

With international travel trending toward globalization, countries are increasingly focusing on preserving their unique local cultures while maintaining awareness about global tourism perspectives. Since 2017, Taiwan's Tourism Bureau proposed the Taiwanese Sustainable Tourism Development Program for further development, the Program aims to encourage local governments to promote "Time for Celebration - Taiwan Tourism Events" and create tourism event highlights by promoting developments in regional tourism and related industries. This study aims to explore the role of local residents in festivals from a sustainable development perspective using survey data. It examines local residents' attitudes and support residents toward festivals. The study details the influence of local residents on festivals, which in turn, depends on the benefits visitors gain from such participation.

Keywords: Festivals, Benefits awareness, Sustainable tourism, Festival supports

1 Introduction

In 2016, the Tourism Bureau of the Ministry of Transportation and Communications introduced the Tourism 2020 - Sustainable Tourism Development Program. The Program outlines four major governance priorities for 2017: market diversification and expansion, reinvigoration of domestic tourism, industry transformation guidance, and smart tourism development. Among these, domestic tourism reinvigoration is further divided into two components. First is the implementation of a National Travel Card system to help travel agents design in-depth, distinct, and highquality domestic itineraries and guide local governments in creating attractive travel destinations. Second is organizing "Time for Celebration - Taiwan Tourism Events" to drive the development of tourism and related industries. For several years, the Changhua County Government has been planning and promoting the Lukang Dragon Boat Festival, which has gained much prominence as an annual festival in the Lukang District. It is listed as one of 12 major national festivals in the Taiwan Tourism Events and is a key tourism event promoted

by the Taiwanese government. Relevant national policies have pushed county and city governments to organize local tourism events that can attract tourists in large numbers and generate revenue. Thus, the sustainable management and development of festivals and related events is a crucial issue motivating this research.

The sustainable development of festivals requires careful planning and creative marketing and visitor satisfaction helps build a positive reputation. Unlike tourist attractions and theme parks, which attract a range of tourists, festivals generally focus on local residents. Therefore, local support is a critical component in the sustainable management of festival events. The objectives of this study are two-fold:

- (1) Examine the correlation between local residents' support for festivals and the benefits awareness surrounding related events
- (2) Investigate the role of local residents in the continuous organization of festival events in Changhua, as the role of
- (3) This study could ultimately contribute to the local government, community and small business firms in service industry to provide sustainable strategies to survival the competitive society after pandemic era.

2 Literature Review

Across the world, festivals celebrate various local cultures and commemorate historical events. Even with the development of frontier technologies, festivals serve various functions such as religious worship and the acknowledgment of life events [1], and thus, festivals are highly valued even in present-day society. Large-scale festivals can compensate for the lack of tourist attractions and pique tourists' interest. Historical monuments and culture-related events are becoming increasingly important in promoting the development of leisure tourism in Taiwan and abroad [2].

The government generally considers festivals as a marketing strategy to promote local features, establish a unique position, and enhance the popularity of locations. Multi-functional festivals not only increase tourism-based revenue but also extend the tourist season and promote the integration of local travel and the tourism industry. In recent years, the Taiwanese government has actively promoted festivals, utilizing the distinct achievements,

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ethnicities, features, and cultures of each region to facilitate the advancement and improvement of festivals and provide tourists with a variety of options. The Dragon Boat Festival, for example, is a large-scale dragon boat race held in northern, central, and southern Taiwan. Organizers have even introduced hands-on dragon boat activities and creative dragon boat races to improve tourist participation, diversify event activities, and provide stimulating experiences. The gradual modernization of traditional festivals not only boosts tourism and related industries and bolsters folk cultures but also facilitates the emergence of new platforms to promote public participation and the cohesion of local identity [3]. From a functional perspective, festivals attract crowds of tourists within a short period, enhancing local economic prosperity and the reputation of local tourism reputation. Festivals are vessels for cultural content and economic opportunities and highlight the importance of social value. They contribute toward the gradual development of local economies and some cultural festivals are celebrated at an international scale. Therefore, the organization of festivals can facilitate the development of local economies in the long

The Dragon Boat Festival is one of four major Chinese traditional festivals. It is celebrated on the fifth day of the fifth month of the lunar calendar. In 1998, Watt describes festivals as events with a specific purpose [4]. They are planned and designed in advance and held over a specific period. The Lukang Dragon Boat Festival, for example, is celebrated annually by the Changhua County Government. Since its launch in 1978, the event has become the most prominent traditional festival in Lukang, Changhua. The festival is listed as one of the 12 major festivals in the Taiwan Tourism Events. It reflects the traditional culture and customs and drives local tourism and economic development. Therefore, this study focuses on the Lukang Dragon Boat Festival to conduct its empirical exploration.

In 2010, Li, Chen, and Li proposed the survey activities in the Lukang Dragon Boat Festival to estimate the passenger and traffic volumes of shuttle buses and compare traffic levels and environmental protection performance with and without shuttle services [5]. In the same year of 2010, Chen investigates the differences in tourism attractions as well as in motivation, satisfaction, and loyalty among tourists of different backgrounds at the Lukang Dragon Boat Festival [6]. Pao and Chuang examine if tourists' perceived service quality and satisfaction are related to their willingness to revisit the Lukang Dragon Boat Festival [7].

Benefits awareness in the context of festivals refers to the organization of events during local festivals to enhance the attractiveness of tourism destinations, thereby improving local benefits such as tourist revisit rates, stopover duration, and willingness to spend [8-9]. However, the perceived benefits of festivals vary by a participant's identity. That is, festivals strengthen identity with a region for local residents, drive economic and cultural development for local communities, create tangible benefits for organizers, and provide recreational and cultural experiences for tourists.

Among Taiwan-based research on the benefits awareness of festivals, Li examines tourists' willingness to participate in the Yilan Green Expo and the economic benefits of festivals [10]. Lee and Wu investigate tourists' motivation to visit and support the Taipei International Beef Noodle Festival [11]. Wang and Chang analyze the effects of tourist satisfaction on the development of festivals and local tourism [12]. Huang conducts a case study on a religious event in Tainan and finds that festival identity and benefits awareness marginally influence festival support [13]. Chang proposed the studies the three benefit components of festivals: local economic benefits, recognition of festival organization, and participant behaviors and intentions [14].

Residents' support toward local festivals is reflected in their behavioral intentions. Behavioral intent is an individual's tendency or willingness to perform specific actions [14-15] and is often used as an index to measure future behaviors. In consumer behavior research, behavioral intentions comprise repurchases and willingness to recommend a product or service. In tourism, these intentions determine tourists' intention to revisit and recommend a destination [16].

The willingness to revisit is derived from consumer loyalty and has been widely examined in the tourism literature. In 2000, Kozak and Rimmington defined revisits as tourists' satisfaction with and willingness to return to a specific recreational destination [17]. The willingness to revisit indicates the possibility of tourists recommending and revisiting a travel destination [18]. Lei and Chen described the concept as tourists revisiting a previously visited destination [19]. Focusing on recreational activities, Huang, Chen, and Fang explained it as tourists' willingness to revisit a satisfactory recreational activity [20].

Examining behavioral intentions, Kozak states the willingness to revisit is influenced by tourists' travel experiences, local traffic and transportation, convenience, price, local residents' hospitality, and overall perceived satisfaction [21]. Hsieh finds that the willingness to revisit is impacted by whether the activities and services, recreational opportunities, environment, and facilities of the destination meet tourists' needs [22]. Lin suggests that tourists who are satisfied with their travels exhibit increased willingness to revisit and related behaviors and that recreational areas gain popularity among tourists through recommendations and word of mouth [23]. Thus, tourists' experiences vary depending on their participation in various activities and these travel experiences influence their willingness to revisit. In other words, tourists' participatory satisfaction is a crucial factor influencing revisit rates [14, 16]. Chang explores customer satisfaction, repurchase intentions, and recommendation willingness on the basis of service quality and restaurant atmosphere and shows that all three factors positively impact repurchase intentions [24].

Applying the abovementioned approaches to participation in festivals, this study focuses on local residents' willingness to revisit or recommend the activities of the Lukang Dragon Boat Festival to reflect their support toward the festival. The research expands the theory of reasoned action [15] and social exchange theory to explore local residents' attitudes toward festivals [25]. Data are collected for locality development and festival experiences as two constructs of festival benefits awareness and the willingness to revisit and recommend a festival as behavioral intentions of festival support. The study

hypothesizes that local residents' benefits awareness about local festivals influence their post-participation behavioral intentions. That is, residents' benefits awareness of local

festivals positively influences their support for festivals. Figure 1 illustrates the research framework.

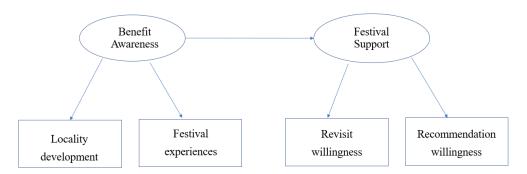


Figure 1. Research framework

3 Methodology

Given its long-standing history, the Lukang Dragon Boat Festival has become the most significant cultural festival in Changhua County. It is also one of the 12 major festivals listed under the Taiwan Tourism Events. Thus, this study focuses on the Lukang Dragon Boat Festival for its empirical exploration. The analysis includes a questionnaire survey administered to locals residing in the Changhua area. The objective of the survey is to elucidate the correlation between local residents' support for festivals and their benefits awareness. Local residents' support and benefits awareness are examined using the descriptive statistics method of Pearson's correlation coefficient. In addition, a regression analysis is performed to determine the causal relationship. Considering the topic's background, literature review, and research framework, this study hypothesizes that local residents' benefits awareness of local festivals positively influences their support for such festivals.

The quantitative analysis uses data from a structured and closed questionnaire. This study uses a five-point Likert scale, the most representative scale used to measure attitudes, to score the various items in the questionnaire. The scale is adjusted by referencing the existing research. The questionnaires are administered in several areas including Lukang Old Street, Longshan Temple, Mazu Temple, Lukang Museum, and Uni-Resort Lukang. The data collection is based on a convenience sampling method to tackle the ambiguities in the population. The administrators first introduced themselves to the tourists and then adopted a judgment sampling approach to determine if the tourist fits the sampling. To enhance the accuracy of the questionnaire, the questionnaire was conducted for a period of two months. The surveys were administered on weekdays and weekends to prevent the over-concentration of respondent sources.

This study focuses on the local residents of Lukang District, whose overall population is estimated at 86,799 calculated by Lukang Township Household Registration Office, 2017. Assuming a sampling error of less than 5%, the sample size for a confidence interval of 95% is N = 384.16. Thus, this study's sample size is 384. During questionnaire administration and recovery, it is necessary to consider the possibility of invalid samples. A total of 450 questionnaires were administered, of which 56 are invalid, producing a valid response rate of 88%. The questionnaire is divided into three sections: basic information, benefits awareness, and festival support. The benefits awareness section is modified as per Wang, Liu et al, Huang, and Chang [9, 12-14] and the festival support section is revised according to Chung and Li et al [26].

Table 1. Reliability and validity analysis

Item	Construct	Cronbach's α	Cumulative explanatory variance (%)
Overall scale		.847	
Benefits awareness	Locality development	.827	
	Festival experiences	.867	60.18
Festival support	Revisit willingness	.879	
	Recommendation willingness	.910	66.04

The data processing and analysis is conducted using SPSS for Windows 18.0. All differences are tested at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.5$. Table 1 shows the internal consistency coefficient of the scales is tested for reliability. For the benefits awareness scale, Cronbach's α for locality development and recreation experiences is 827 and .867 and that for the overall scale is .847. On the festival support scale, Cronbach's a for willingness to revisit and willingness to recommend is .879 and .910 and that for the overall scale is .847. These results suggest that the scales are highly reliable. To confirm validity, a factor analysis is conducted for the benefits awareness scale and reports a KMO value of .822, suggesting an overall explanatory variance of 60.18%. The factor analysis for the festival support scale indicates a KMO value of .718, implying an overall explanatory variance of 66.04%. These results indicate that the scales have excellent validity.

4 Results and Conclusion

Of the total sample, 170 are male (43.1%) and 224 are female (56.9%). About 167 respondents are aged 21–30 years

(42.4%) and 100 are 20 years or younger (25.4%). About 201 respondents (51%) earn less than 20,000. As for education level, 223 respondents have a university degree (56.6%) and 129 have received a senior high school education (32.7%). Further, 190 respondents travel with their family or relatives (48.2%) and 161 do so with their friends or classmates (40.9%). A majority of the respondents (75.9%) report making three visits (or more). About 60% respondents use cars as a mode of transportation.

The overall average score for festival benefits awareness is 4.44, of which locality development and festival experiences report an average value greater than 4. This suggests that local residents positively perceive the benefits of the Lukang Dragon Boat Festival and related events. More specifically, they believe that festivals have economic benefits and enhance local reputation through their lively atmosphere. Table 2 presents the results for residents' support toward festival events. The overall average value for festival support is 4.41 and revisit willingness and recommendation willingness report average values greater than 4. Thus, local residents demonstrate a high willingness revisit the festival and are eager to promote related events, indicating their positive perceptions of festivals.

Table 2. Benefits awareness and festival support

	Scale	Average value	Standard deviation
Benefits awareness		4.44	0.96
Locality development	1. The event improves the sales of local products	4.45	1.07
	2. The event promotes local economic development	4.52	1.07
	3. The event improves local reputation	4.47	0.96
Festival experiences	1. The event attracts my attention	4.19	0.85
	2. I feel festive during the event	4.58	0.92
	3. I can feel people's enthusiasm during the event	4.42	0.98
Festival support		4.41	0.98
Revisit willingness	1. I am willing to participate in the event again	4.91	0.88
	2. I am willing to participate in related promotional activities	4.13	0.85
	3. I stand by my choice to participate in the event	4.14	1.06
Recommendation willingness	1. I am willing to recommend the event to my friends and family	4.55	0.98
	2. I am willing to recommend the event to people exploring festivals	4.39	1.02
	3. I am willing to provide suggestions to the organizers	4.32	1.08

Pearson's correlation coefficient is used to determine the degree of correlation between local residents' festival benefits awareness and festival support (Table 3). The results indicate a significant positive correlation between benefits awareness and festival support. In addition, there is a significant correlation between locality development and willingness to recommend and between festival experiences and willingness to revisit.

Table 4 presents the results for the regression analysis performed to determine causal relationships. The t-value is 8.951 and the p-value is less than 0.05, thus rejecting the hypothesis. The β -value is .714 and the F-value is 80.533 with an explanatory variance of 66.3%, suggesting that the festival benefits awareness of local residents have a 66.3% influence on their support for festival events. These results indicate that local residents' benefits awareness significantly impacts their festival support and thus, can be used to predict festival support. Therefore, the hypothesis that local residents' benefits awareness of local festivals positively influences their support of festivals is supported.

Table 3. Correlation analysis between local residents' festival benefits awareness and festival support

		Benefits awareness	Locality development	Festival experiences
Festival support	Pearson's correlation Significance (two-tailed)	.710* .04		
Revisit willingness	Pearson's correlation Significance (two-tailed)		.689* 04	.761* .04
Recommendation willingness	Pearson's correlation Significance (two-tailed)		.792* .04	.529* .04

Note. *p < 0.05

Table 4. Predictive analysis of benefits awareness and festival support

Dependent variable	Festival support				
	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	<i>t</i> -value	
Independent variables	β -value	Standard deviation	eta distribution		
Benefits awareness	.238	.092	.714	8.951*	
Adjusted $R^2 = .663$	F = 80.533				

Note: *p < 0.05

In response to relevant national policies, county and city governments have been organizing local festivals that can attract crowds and generate revenue. Thus, it is important to discuss the sustainable management and development of festivals, wherein the support of local residents is vital. The tourism industry in Taiwan has been flourishing with various local, thematic festivals that are being continually organized through companies, government subsidies, and townships. The Lukang Dragon Boat Festival, for example, is an annual event that has been hosted by the Changhua County Government for several years and highlights the local features of Lukang.

The benefits awareness and festival support scales show that local residents have positive feelings and perceptions toward the 2018 Lukang Dragon Boat Festival. The items "The event improves the sales of local products," "The event promotes local economic development," and "The event improves local reputation" report average values greater than 4. In other words, local residents believe that the Lukang Dragon Boat Festival can gradually promote the overall development of Lukang. The items "The event attracts my attention," "I feel festive during the event," and "I can feel people's enthusiasm during the event" report average scores greater than 4, suggesting that local residents have positive

festival experiences. As for the willingness to revisit, "I am willing to participate in the event again," "I am willing to participate in related promotional activities," and "I stand by my choice to participate in the event" have average values higher than 4, implying that local residents are willing to revisit the Lukang Dragon Boat Festival. In terms of willingness to recommend, "I am willing to recommend the event to my friends and family," "I am willing to recommend the event to people in search of festival events," and "I am willing to provide suggestions to the organizers" show average values greater than 4, suggesting that tourists are willing to assist in the promotion of events and local residents are willing to recommend the event to others.

According to recent statistics, Taiwan holds more than 400 festivals throughout the year, ranging from folk celebrations and cultural festivals to unique local agricultural events. Following its establishment in 1983, the Council for Cultural Affairs organized a five-day festival at the Taipei Youth Park, inviting theater performers, musicians, and celebrities to redefine leisure in Taiwanese society. Subsequent promotional events such as "Culture to Countryside," "Taiwan Double," "National Arts and Cultural Season," "County/City International Art Festival," "One County One Feature, One Town One Product," and "One Festival Every Month" have further contributed to making Taiwan an island of festival and celebration.

Festivals initially target local residents and eventually attract domestic and foreign tourists. This progress not only expands the socioeconomic benefits of festivals but also enhances local visibility. Cultural tourism gradually and actively promotes local industries. A noteworthy example of industrial revitalization through local festivals is the glass industry in Hsinchu. However, festivals should not be transient in nature; rather, they should be continuously promoted to develop local reputation and create peripheral benefits. In addition, local governments must make management-related investments and gain local support to strengthen the cultural heritage of festivals and enhance attractiveness through marketing and packaging. This study shows that local residents' support toward festival events is positively influenced by their benefits awareness. However, cultural identity, political factors, local interests, and participatory behaviors have varying degrees of influence on residents' festival support and attitude. Future studies could focus on the influence of various factors and the findings can serve as a reference for various governments working toward the sustainable management of festivals.

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