

Article

Understanding Active Sport Tourist Behaviors in Small-Scale Sports Events: Stimulus-Organism-Response Approach

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Abstract: With the growth in opportunities for amateur athletes to participate in competitive events, a major challenge for policy-makers of a sporting destination is to understand the role of small-scale recurring sporting events in attracting tourists and the variables that influence active sport tourist behavior. Thus, the purpose of this study was to investigate structural relationships between emotional experiences, perceived value, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty within the context of small-scale recurring sporting events by adopting stimulus–organism–response theory. Construct validity of the measurement scale was verified by confirmatory factor analysis, factor loadings, average variance extracted, and construct reliability. Reliability of the measurement scale was verified by Cronbach’s alpha analysis. A structural equation modeling test with maximum likelihood estimation was used to examine structural relationships between variables in the proposed model by analyzing responses of 301 survey participants. Results showed positive impacts of (a) emotional experiences on functional value and emotional value, (b) functional value on tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty, and (c) tourist satisfaction on destination loyalty. The results of this study: (1) show it is meaningful to include emotional experiences in examining active sport tourist behaviors; (2) confirm that both small- and large-scale sporting events should be considered as effective marketing strategies aimed at improving tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty; and (3) provide the effectiveness of applying an extended stimulus–organism–response framework in investigating sports-tourist behavior.

Keywords: emotional experiences; perceived value; tourist satisfaction; and destination loyalty; small-scale sporting events; stimulus–organism–response theory

1. Introduction

Since tour and vacation destinations have become increasingly substitutable, destination loyalty has been widely recognized as a critical consideration when devising marketing strategies to secure competitive edge [1,2]. It is generally believed that an increased number of loyal tourists to a particular destination are beneficial in that they are willing to recommend destinations to family members, relatives, friends, as well as to anonymous social media users via posting their experiences [3,4]. According to Assael [5], repurchase is a more critical component for the success of an organization than bringing in new customers; the likelihood of survival becomes at stake without loyal consumers. Accordingly, it is pivotal that destination marketers understand the antecedents of destination loyalty of tourists.

A large number of studies conducted in this context have sought to understand what builds destination loyalty. Until recently, the main focus was made to uncover the relationship between

destination loyalty and destination image (cognitive–affective) or loyalty and perceived quality of tourists' experiences. In recent years, however, scholars in the tourism field have become interested in the development and test of “global” or “ubiquitous” model that aims to evaluate satisfaction, intention, and loyalty by incorporating tourists' emotional experiences and perceived value as antecedents of the outcome variables to attract tourists [6–8]. Emotional arousal in the tourism context is suggested as a primary motive for destination selection and the purchase of tourism-related goods and services [9]. Furthermore, emotions that were aroused at a tourist destination significantly affect post-visit experiences, such as satisfaction, place attachment, and destination loyalty [6]. It can be inferred from these findings that emotion is a crucial factor that involves tourist behavior from pre- to post-visit stages of a trip. Considering the importance of emotions among tourists, destination marketers and organizations try to produce and promote hedonic consumption experiences such as enjoyable, exciting, challenging, surprising, as well as pleasurable hedonic experiences and engagements [10]. Such positive feelings and emotions play essential roles in shaping unique, extraordinary, and memorable tourist experiences [8].

Sport tourism has been considered one of most effective means of boosting the competitiveness of tourist destinations [11]. Gibson [12] (p. 49) described sport tourism as “leisure-based travel that takes individuals temporarily outside of their home environments to participate in physical activities, to watch physical activities, or venerate attractions associated with physical activities” and categorized it into three groups: event, active, and nostalgia sport tourism. Over the years, one of the most noticeable phenomena in tourism industry has been an increased number of travelers who were willing to take part in competitive sport events as amateur participants, which has gained significant attention from researchers [13]. Likewise, the current study seeks to understand behaviors of active sport tourists, who can be referred to as those travelers who are seeking sport-related event participation opportunities at a destination. As they do for general tourists, several authors have suggested that emotions are closely related with before, during, and after trips of active sport tourists [14,15]. In other words, sporting events such as marathon, cycling, badminton, table tennis, climbing, hiking, skiing, windsurfing, and canoeing events evoke emotional responses (e.g., exciting, enjoyment, happy, self-fulfillment, accomplishment, challenge, and pride) of active sport tourists. According to Kaplanidou et al. [15] (p. 550), most active sport tourists who participated in a focus group interview mentioned that “It was exciting”, “It [the event] was an accomplishment”, “I prepare more for cycling events, but it was still a challenge to get through some of the day”, “It was a lot of fun”, and “There is a certain amount of pride doing it”. It can be inferred from these statements that active sport tourists are likely to attach special meanings to and develop a deeper emotional connection with sporting events and destinations to which they have traveled and/or participated [14,16,17]. Therefore, promotion of recurring participatory sports events would be a good strategy for a destination in bringing a steady stream of visitors, considering previous findings on the positive relationship between emotions and behavioral intention [13].

Understanding the role of perceived value from tourist experiences on outcome variables such as destination loyalty has also gained attention among destination marketers because it reflects and shapes tourists' perspectives of tourism products and activities at destinations [18], which applies to sport tourism as well. Specifically, whether it is passive or active sport tourism, the perceived value of sport tourists' spectating or participating experiences in sports events significantly affects their post-visit evaluations. Jin, Lee, and Lee [19] claimed that the perceived value of sport event spectators' experiences plays a key role in building destination loyalty, which has often resulted in securing a steady stream of sport tourists. Similar findings were reported among sporting event participants (e.g., [16,20]). Hence, it would be beneficial to identify the role of perceived value in building satisfaction and destination loyalty among tourists in diverse sporting event settings such as small to large sporting events.

An increasing number of studies in tourism including sport tourism have recently examined the effects of emotional experiences on outcome variables such as intention. In investigating tourist

behaviors, the stimulus–organism–response (SOR) theory has become one of the most widely used theories by incorporating input (S), processes (O), and outputs (R) for decades [21]. In sport tourism contexts, a few studies have employed SOR theory to elucidate sport tourists' behaviors [22,23]. These studies considered emotions (nostalgia) to be stimuli, and their influence on attitudinal components (organism) and consequence behavioral intention (response) were examined. Although findings of these studies provide useful insights in investigating sport tourists' behavior, emotions from the experience of past sporting events were the main factor, not for the current experiences. Therefore, these findings may not be suitable to predict behaviors of sporting event participants. Based on the SOR theory, the present study explored relationships between emotional experiences (S), functional and emotional values (O), and tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty (R) to predict behaviors of active sport tourists.

The mainstream of previous literature on sport tourism has been on sporting events and event spectators, specifically focused on large to mega sporting events such as the Olympic Games and the World Cup. On the other hand, relatively little attention has been paid to small-scale recurring sporting events such as local marathons and their participants [24]. Unlike large-scale to mega sporting events that require heavy financial investment to host one [25], recent studies show that hosting small-scale sporting events is a viable option for small- and medium-sized cities, while these small events have the potential to attract significant number of participatory tourists, thereby being beneficial in fostering development of a region as an attractive tourist destination [14,24]. Given the effectiveness and attractiveness of small-scale sporting events that potentially bring in an increased number of visitors, the present study was conducted to investigate behaviors of active sport tourists in a local marathon in South Korea, which was also requested by several scholars in the sport tourism field [13,16].

2. Review of Literature, Research Hypotheses, and Model

2.1. The Stimulus–Organism–Response Theory

Initially proposed by Mehrabian and Russell [26], the stimulus–organism–response (SOR) theory has attracted considerable attention over the past several decades in various fields of study because of its intuitive and powerful exploratory nature in investigating human behaviors [21]. The theory posits that behavioral responses (R) such as avoidance or approach are influenced by aroused emotions (O), which is initially influenced by environmental stimuli (S) [26]. Due to its wide applicability, researchers have modified the SOR approach in their own research contexts and incorporated diverse factors such as cognitive and affective elements into the framework [21]. For instance, Kim and Lennon [27] examined a comprehensive model to examine purchase intention that is based on the SOR approach, by incorporating the website quality and reputation of sources of information as stimuli, and cognition and emotion as organisms.

Among tourism researchers, Chang et al. [28] claimed that the SOR model is one of the most suitable frameworks to elucidate the behaviors of tourists; considering the intangible nature of tourism, the emphasis of the SOR theory on the emotion-eliciting or emotional qualities of surroundings provides insights in exploring tourist experiences. In support of this claim, there are a few studies that incorporate emotion as either stimulus or organism to explore tourist behaviors. For instance, Qihang et al. [29] proposed and confirmed a positive link between value cognition (S), emotional attitude (O), and tourism intention (R) among cultural heritage tourists. Chang et al. [28] employed new physical surroundings (S), utilitarian value (cognitive organism), hedonic value (affective organism), and re-visitation (R); the main contribution of their study was to incorporate a functional value in their SOR-based conceptual model. In the sport tourism context, Cho and his colleagues incorporated nostalgia (emotions) as key stimuli that affect tourist behavioral intentions [22,23]. Considering these findings, the present study aimed to explore the relationships between emotional experience (S), functional value (cognitive organism), emotional value (affective organism), tourist satisfaction

(R), and destination loyalty (R) to better understand behaviors of participatory tourists to a small marathon event.

2.2. Emotional Experiences

As many consumers were found to show a tendency to make decisions on product choice and post-consumption behaviors based on emotion rather than reason, increasing numbers of researchers have concluded that emotion is probably one of the most salient constructs that influences future success [8,30,31]. However, previous studies on emotion present a major definitional problem that must be addressed. In the psychology and marketing literature, the term emotion is often interchangeably used with affect and mood, although they are conceptually different [32]. Curiously, despite the increase in academic studies on emotion, few have attempted to address this problem. Based on a study by Cohen and Areni [33], Hosany et al. [32] (p. 515) offered the fullest account of distinctions among affect, moods, and emotion; affect is “an umbrella term (or vector), and moods and emotions are examples of this feeling state”; moods are “mild affective states that are easily induced and not attributable to a specific stimuli or object”. On the other hand, emotion can be depicted as episodes of intense feelings pertaining to a specific person, object, advertisement, or event [33]. Furthermore, emotions are elicited when individuals confront a certain situation and behave in a particular manner [9]. In other words, emotions are associated with one’s action.

Emotions, both positive and negative, are one of the core elements that significantly affect consumers’ experiences and reactions on products and services purchased [34,35]. Similarly, previous studies on tourist have also suggested that emotional experiences are a critical component that affects decisions and behaviors of tourists in diverse stages [6,8,9,36]. During the pre-trip stage, the emotions of tourists were found to be significant determinants of destination choices or tour products [36]. As cognition does, emotions—an affective element—can be an important source of information to consumers that affect evaluation processes and alternative option choices [34]. It is also suggested that emotions are a strong source of travel motivations [9]. For instance, potential tourists would choose a destination based on pleasant emotion aroused by an interesting advertisement of the destination. While tourists are at a destination, their emotions frequently change over time as they explore and experience different spots during their trip [37]. In a post-visit phase, outcome variables such as satisfaction, place attachment, word-of-mouth, and destination loyalty are claimed to be affected heavily by tourist emotions and affect [8,38,39]. All these findings propose the importance of incorporating emotions in studying tourist behaviors. Due to the influential role of emotional experiences in every stage of a tourist’s visit, attention has been paid to investigating emotions from diverse angles among scholars in tourism, including the sport tourism sector.

The measurement of psychological emotion has long constituted an important domain of research. One of the most frequently used measurement scales in the tourism context is the destination emotion scale (DES), which was developed by Hosany et al. [32]. The scale consists of three emotional dimensions: love, joy, and positive surprise. Tourists could feel love toward a destination if, for example, natural environments and traditional architecture are beautifully preserved. Joy includes emotion items such as cheerfulness, delight, enthusiasm, and pleasure, and thus constitutes an intrinsic component of peak experiences [32,40]. In the sport tourism context, tourists may feel joy when they cheer for a favorite team, meet personal goals, or revel in a sense of competition with others. The last dimension, positive surprise, contains emotion items such as amazement, astonishment, and inspiration and arises from unexpected situations [32,41]. For example, tourists could feel positive surprise when they experience unexpected kindness from event volunteers or confront unscheduled special events. Accordingly, based on the DES of Hosany et al. [32], tourist emotional experience is assessed in this study to promote a holistic understanding of tourist experiences.

2.3. Perceived Value

A considerable number of approaches to perceived value have been devised to understand consumer attitude toward product attributes, which is viewed as a cornerstone of marketing strategy and customer retention [42,43]. The most cited definition of perceived value is “overall consumer assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given” [44] (p.14). In the tourism context, studies in diverse tourist settings have suggested the crucial role of perceived value on outcome variables, such as satisfaction among bicycle tourists [45], destination loyalty among Muslim religious site visitors [46], and historic site tourists [20].

Despite widespread citation of Zeithaml’s definition of perceived value, it primarily focuses on the functional (utilitarian) aspect of value [47]. Based on the theory of utility, it is suggested that functional value captured by individual consumers refers to the difference between the utility of a product (e.g., functionality, attributes) and appropriateness of the price paid for the product [48]; in other words, tradeoff of economic value between product and price is the main attribute of functional value [47]. However, when it comes to purchase of a tour product, the functional value could not capture the salient characteristics of travel experiences that would generate feelings or emotions. Because perceived value is subjective and dynamic in nature and varies among tourists, incorporating subjective or emotional responses in measuring the construct should be included [48,49]. The affective element constitutes an essential portion in the consumption of experiential products, such as leisure, esthetic, and creative activities [50]. Therefore, a large number of studies have adopted a multidimensional view of perceived value in exploring tourist behaviors, which implies better predictability of employing multiple items of perceived value [46]. For instance, Sheth, Newman, and Gross [51] offered five dimensions of perceived value: functional, conditional, social, emotional, and epistemic value. More recently, scholars in tourism and hospitality industry have been inclined to consider perceived value as a construct that is composed of two dimensions: functional and emotional value [52–54]. Emotional value, in this context, can be defined as benefits derived from the feelings or affective states (i.e., enjoyment or pleasure) that a product generates [55]. This two-dimensional approach to perceived value is well adopted by a number of researchers. For example, Lee et al. [47] dichotomized perceived value into functional value and emotional value to investigate festival visitors and found that both values significantly influence satisfaction and behavioral intention, while only emotional value was a significant predictor of behavioral intention. This study also accepts this view and identifies two dimensions to gauge a wide range of perceived values about a marathon race.

Despite the importance of emotions and perceived values in consumer behavior, relatively little attention has been paid to the relationship between these two variables, presumably because scholars continue to debate the nature of the relationship. Emotion is conceptualized as either an important antecedent [56,57] or a key outcome variable [58] of perceived value. Our view on these relationships is the former. While ‘assessment’ of one’s experience with a product or service constitutes perceived value, emotions would be elicited simultaneously as an individual faces a situation and takes a selected action, as mentioned previously. Thus, it can be inferred that emotions would be one of the factors that influence the overall “assessment” of one’s experiences (perceived value). Exhaustive observation of these contentions can be found in research by Yüksel [59] and Yang, Gu, and Cen [60]. Yüksel [59] examined possible links between the environment, pleasure, arousal, hedonic value, utilitarian value, and approach behaviors in tourist shopping habitats and found that pleasure and arousal are determinants of hedonic (emotional) and utilitarian (functional) value. Likewise, Yang et al. [60] empirically tested the relationships between festival visitors’ emotion, perceived value, and behavioral intentions and demonstrated that emotion acts as an antecedent of perceived value. These findings led us to hypothesize:

Hypothesis 1 (H1). *Emotional experiences positively influence functional value.*

Hypothesis 2 (H2). *Emotional experiences positively influence emotional value.*

2.4. Tourist Satisfaction

In the past decade, tourist satisfaction has been widely recognized as one of the most influential outcome variables that affect future behaviors in tourism research, thereby attracting considerable attention from destination marketers, who gather information on tourists' appraisals of consumption experiences [61–64]. Despite the importance of satisfaction, no single accepted definition of it exists in the tourism literature [8,65]. In marketing studies, based on the “expectancy disconfirmation model”, which compares expectation and perceived performance after consumption, most researchers conceptualize consumer satisfaction as a post-consumption evaluation of whether expectations were met [66]. More recently, there has been greater awareness in tourism literature based on cognitive-affective perspectives that tourist satisfaction arises spontaneously from destination experiences [8,67]. Accordingly, we adopted multiple items that include tourist cognitive–affective state.

In the context of hospitality and tourism literature, analyzing the effect of perceived value on satisfaction has attracted the attention of scholars for several decades. Yoon, Lee, and Lee [68] claimed that tourists are likely to be satisfied when they feel tourism products/services are worth the money spent. By examining structural relationships between quality, value, satisfaction, and loyalty in the context of a festival, they confirmed that perceived value plays a key role in forming satisfaction. Kim and Park [69] tested relationships between perceived value, satisfaction, and destination loyalty in community-based ecotourism and demonstrated the positive impact of perceived value on satisfaction. In addition, Song, et al. [52] examined the influence of functional and emotional value on tourist satisfaction, both of which were found to strongly predict tourist satisfaction among participants in temple stays. Considering previous studies, it seems reasonable to assume that perceived value positively influences tourist satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3 (H3). *Functional value positively influences tourist satisfaction.*

Hypothesis 4 (H4). *Emotional value positively influences tourist satisfaction.*

2.5. Destination Loyalty

Once in a while, customer satisfaction was viewed as the most critical component in the success of a business; it was believed that satisfied customers would come back for the product or service [70]. Unfortunately, that myth found not to be true; Stewart [71] (p.112) claimed that “satisfaction and loyalty move in tandem” is simply incorrect. Loyalty refers to “a deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future” [70] (p. 34). Unquestionably, loyalty is a salient element of market destination success as well; for this reason, a vast amount of tourism literature is dedicated to understanding how destination loyalty is formed [1,72,73]. There is explicit consensus among tourism researchers that destination loyalty may be dichotomized into the attitudinal and behavioral components. Behavioral loyalty is described as the action of repurchasing or “an intended behavior related to the service or provider” [74] (p. 84). On the other hand, attitudinal loyalty describes a positive (preferential) attitude by consumers toward a product or service; for example, attitudinal loyalty is demonstrated when a tourist recommends a place visited to others [2].

The relationship between perceived value and destination loyalty has gradually gained currency in tourism research and a large number of studies have investigated the proposed relationship. Evidence of this link is provided by the highly readable and compact study conducted by Sato et al. [20]. They examined structural relationships between perceived value (e.g., quality, emotional response, monetary cost, behavioral cost, and destination reputation) and destination loyalty, who concluded that destination loyalty is uniquely enhanced by perceived value. Likewise, Kim, Holland, and Han [75] proposed a theoretical model describing relations between destination image, service quality, perceived value, satisfaction, and destination loyalty; among their findings, perceived value was found to be a strong predictor of destination loyalty. Accordingly, it seems reasonable to suggest that perceived value affects destination loyalty.

Hypothesis 5 (H5). *Functional value positively influences destination loyalty.*

Hypothesis 6 (H6). *Emotional value positively influences destination loyalty.*

A vast number of marketing, hospitality, and tourism studies have been devoted to exploring the path between satisfaction and loyalty; the most common findings are that tourist satisfaction leads to destination loyalty [63]. According to Chi and Qu [76], when tourists are satisfied with a tourism product or service, they are eager to share their travelling experiences with others. Many tourism researchers support this notion; for example, Coban [77] investigated relations between destination image (cognitive and emotional), tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty and disclosed that tourist satisfaction importantly elicits destination loyalty. Likewise, Do Valle, Silva, Mendes, and Guerreiro [78] examined the effect of tourist satisfaction on destination loyalty among 486 tourists and confirmed tourist satisfaction acts as a determinant of destination loyalty. These are only a small fraction of examples that support the positive link between the two constructs. Therefore, we adopted the following hypothesis regarding the impact of tourist satisfaction on destination loyalty.

Hypothesis 7 (H7). *Tourist satisfaction positively influences destination loyalty.*

Based on thorough review of prior studies, the present study proposes the following conceptual model (Figure 1).

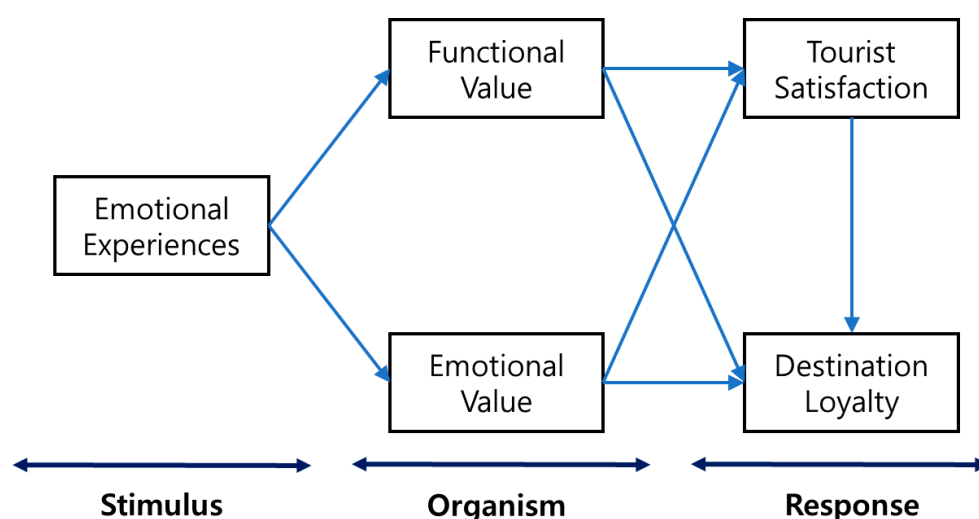


Figure 1. The proposed conceptual model.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Data Collection

Data for the current study were collected among tourists who attended the Dong-A ilbo Gyeongju international marathon and Gyeongju Cherry Marathon that were held in the city of Gyeongju, which is located on the southeastern coast of mainland South Korea. Gyeongju was chosen as the site of this study primarily for two reasons. First, the Dong-A ilbo Gyeongju international marathon or Gyeongju Cherry Marathon race is reportedly one of the most famous small-scale sporting events in South Korea [79]. The events are hosted annually, both of which attract around 10,000 to 15,000 participants, spectators from 13 Asia-Pacific countries, and are regarded as important events that promote the cultural and historical city of Gyeongju [80,81]. Second, Gyeongju has a high level of repeated visitation among tourists [82]. Due to its rich cultural and historical heritages, Gyeongju is known as “The museum without walls” and as such is one of the most famous tourist destinations in

Korea for both international and domestic visitors [24]. These factors offer a valuable case study for understanding tourist loyalty and its antecedents.

To collect a sample, one of the authors and five trained research assistants administered a face-to-face questionnaire near the facilities on 21–22 October 2018 and 6–7 April 2019 by employing a convenient sampling procedure. The place near the facilities, main train station, and bus terminal were the most cost-effective locations to obtain a sample. Surveyors approached tourists who had finished the marathon race or were waiting for the train or bus and politely asked them to participate in the survey without reward (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Data collection. Source: author's compilation.

Only tourists were invited to participate in the survey; when potential participants replied that they were local residents, surveyors expressed appreciation for their willingness to participate and left the site. Of 325 surveys collected, 24 were incomplete and subsequently eliminated; the remaining 301 responses were analyzed.

The sample was almost equally split between males (54.2%) and females (45.8%), and international tourists (51.2%) and domestic tourists (48.8%). Respondents' ages were as follows: 20–29 years old (15.6%), 30–39 years old (22.6%), 40–49 years old (27.6%), and more than 50 years old (34.2%). In terms of marathon participation (including the Gyeongju event), respondents had participated in a marathon race once (27.6%), twice (18.3%), 3–4 times (16.6%), 5–9 times (12.6%), or 10 or more times (24.9%). A more complete demographic profile of the respondents is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of respondents.

Demographics	Categories	<i>n</i>	%
Gender	Male	163	54.2
	Female	138	45.8
Type	International	154	51.2
	Domestic	147	48.8
Age	20–29	47	15.6
	30–39	68	22.6
	40–49	83	27.6
	More than 50	103	34.2
	1 time including this event	83	27.6
How many times have you participated in a marathon race?	2 times	55	18.3
	3–4 times	50	16.6
	5–9 times	38	12.6
	More than 10 times	75	24.9

3.2. Measurements

The initial questionnaire was developed in English and then translated into Korean by two bilingual individuals. The Korean version of the questionnaire was then back-translated into English by three other scholars who have been educated in both Korea and the US. No issues regarding the accuracy or clarity between the two versions were reported.

A five-point Likert scale anchored on strongly disagree (1) and strongly agree (5) was used in the survey instrument. In line with previous studies [6,8,32], the main focus was on tourists' feelings. Emotional experiences were assessed using 9 items (3 items for joy, love, and positive surprise each). Perceived value was assessed by employing 6 items (3 items for functional and emotional value each) [47,48,52,55]. A total of 3 items were used to assess tourist satisfaction, which were derived from the studies of Lee et al. [48], and Yoon and Uysal [83]. Destination loyalty was assessed by 3 items adapted from Grappi and Montanari [84]. The questionnaire was administered in either English or Korean (see Table 2).

Table 2. The questionnaire items.

Constructs	Items	Mean	S/D
Emotional Experience	Joy		
	I feel a sense of joy toward Gyeongju	3.81	0.921
	I feel a sense of delight toward Gyeongju	3.94	0.911
	I feel a sense of enthusiasm toward Gyeongju	3.77	0.926
	Love		
	I feel a sense of affection toward Gyeongju	3.56	0.868
	I feel a sense of caring toward Gyeongju	3.83	0.934
	I feel a sense of love toward Gyeongju	3.81	0.880
	Positive surprise		
Perceived value	I feel a sense of surprise toward Gyeongju	3.72	0.788
	I feel a sense of astonishment toward Gyeongju	3.88	0.842
	I feel a sense of inspiration toward Gyeongju	3.84	0.791
	Functional value		
	Participation in the event was reasonably priced	3.72	0.987
	Participation in the event was economical	4.00	0.911
	Compared to travel expenses, I got reasonable quality from participating in the event	3.69	0.841
	Emotional value		
	Participating in the event gave me pleasure	3.83	0.880
Tourist satisfaction	Participating in the event made me feel better	3.83	0.927
	The event is a wonderful tourist attraction that I enjoy	3.87	0.914
	The event was more satisfactory than expected	3.74	0.824
	It was worth participating the event	3.67	0.924
	Comparison with other events, the event was more satisfactory	3.91	0.848
Destination loyalty	Participate in this event next time	3.91	0.852
	Recommend to other people	3.94	0.840
	Say positive things to other people	3.87	0.898

3.3. Validity and Reliability

In terms of data distribution, skewness and kurtosis values for the scale items are provided in Table 3. According to the guidelines of severe non-normality (e.g., skewness >3; kurtosis >8) proposed by Kline [85], the normality assumption of all the scale items was well met. The seven-factor (joy, love, surprise, functional value, emotional value, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty) confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) model used had a total of 84 degrees of freedom. Model fit results revealed an acceptable fit to data ($\chi^2/df = 1.987$, Standardized Root Mean-square Residual (SRMR) = 0.045, Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) = 0.910, Normed Fit Index (NFI) = 0.917, Incremental Fit Index (IFI) = 0.957, Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) = 0.946, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = 0.957, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = 0.057, and RMSEA 90% (CI) = (0.057, 0.067)). All model fit indices were considered acceptable based on the criteria recommended by Hair et al. [86]. Cronbach's alpha values of joy, love, surprise, functional value, emotional value, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty scales were 0.839, 0.787, 0.712, 0.806, 0.911, 0.846, and 0.887, respectively (see Table 4), indicating measures were reliable [87].

Table 3. Skewness and kurtosis values.

Items	Skewness	Kurtosis
Joy1	−0.135	−0.540
Joy2	−0.108	−0.608
Joy3	−0.242	−0.035
Love1	−0.016	−0.382
Love2	−0.253	−0.164
Love3	−0.171	−0.575
Surprise1	−0.111	−0.128
Surprise2	−0.171	−0.530
Surprise3	−0.125	−0.272
Functional value 1	−0.255	−0.087
Functional value 2	−0.219	−0.193
Functional value 3	0.060	−0.563
Emotional value1	−0.076	−0.663
Emotional value2	−0.173	−0.023
Emotional value3	−0.151	0.041
Tourist satisfaction 1	−0.062	−0.482
Tourist satisfaction 2	−0.176	−0.474
Tourist satisfaction 3	−0.196	−0.325
Destination loyalty1	−0.187	−0.361
Destination loyalty2	−0.223	−0.267
Destination loyalty3	−0.209	−0.349

Table 4. The results of convergent validities, reliabilities, and common method variance.

Items	β	β -CMV	CR	AVE	Alpha
Joy1	0.824	−0.086	0.862	0.676	0.839
Joy2	0.791	−0.065			
Joy3	0.779	−0.118			
Love1	0.664	−0.094	0.826	0.614	0.787
Love2	0.807	−0.119			
Love3	0.760	−0.089			
Surprise1	0.681	−0.080	0.793	0.561	0.712
Surprise2	0.678	−0.153			
Surprise3	0.661	−0.137			
Functional value 1	0.844	0.019	0.846	0.651	0.806
Functional value 2	0.824	−0.030			
Functional value 3	0.637	−0.054			
Emotional value 1	0.862	−0.024	0.927	0.810	0.911
Emotional value 2	0.861	−0.015			
Emotional value 3	0.920	−0.012			
Tourist satisfaction 1	0.842	−0.013	0.889	0.729	0.846
Tourist satisfaction 2	0.895	−0.029			
Tourist satisfaction 3	0.693	−0.045			
Destination loyalty 1	0.831	−0.093	0.914	0.781	0.887
Destination loyalty 2	0.831	−0.054			
Destination loyalty 3	0.890	−0.061			

To establish convergent validity, we calculated factor loadings, construct reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE). Factor loadings values all exceeded the recommended value of 0.6 (range 0.637 to 0.920), CR values exceeded the recommended value of 0.7 (range 0.793 to 0.927), and AVE values exceeded the minimum requirement of 0.5 (range 0.561 to 0.810) (see Table 4). To examine discriminant validity, it was verified whether or not AVE of the latent variable was greater than the square of the correlation between latent variables. Although all variables were examined, it is difficult to elaborate all the results; therefore, the pair with the highest correlation was selected and presented. As shown in Table 5, the highest correlation obtained was 0.694 (functional value—emotional value),

and the square of 0.694 was 0.482. The AVE of the functional value was 0.651 and that of emotional value was 0.810. Since AVE values were all greater than the square of the highest correlation (0.651 and 0.810 > 0.482), discriminant validity was satisfactory (see Table 5).

Table 5. Correlation among constructs.

Variable	1	2	3	4
Emotional experiences	1			
Functional value	0.558 **	1		
Emotional value	0.532 **	0.694 **	1	
Tourist satisfaction	0.554 **	0.567 **	0.512 **	1
Destination loyalty	0.488 **	0.551 **	0.486 **	0.501 **

Note: ** $p < 0.01$.

In addition, the current study tested a common method bias test that influences the results of the measurement model [88,89]. In recent years, the issue of common method variance (CMV) has received much attention in business literature [90]. Richardson, Simmering, and Sturman [91] (p. 763) define CMV as “systematic error variance shared among variables measured with and introduced as a function of the same method and/or source.” To capture the common variance among all observed variables in the measurement model, the present study tested a common latent factor (CLF). The test was the “unmeasured latent factor” method recommended by Podsakoff et al. [89]. As shown in Table 4, the differences between standardized regression weights before and after adding the CLF were all less than 0.200, indicating that all observed variables avoid common method bias [88].

When a structural equation model contains many items, the number of items could be adjusted by item parceling [92], which is a method that involves the use of averages when analysis is difficult to employ a structural equation model due to the large number of latent variables [93], as described by Jin et al. [19]. These authors incorporated 7 constructs (e.g., game quality, interaction quality, outcome quality, physical environment quality, perceived value, destination image, and behavioral intentions) in the CFA model, and 4 constructs (e.g., event quality, perceived value, destination image, and behavioral intentions) in the structural equation model. To utilize item parceling, convergent validities regarding constructs of joy, love, and positive surprise should be satisfactory. We already confirmed that factor loadings, CR, and AVE for the constructs were reliable (see Table 4). Since the convergent validities of all constructs were satisfactory, these latent variables (e.g., joy, love, and positive surprise) in each construct were parceled on average. In other words, three subfactors of emotional experiences were converted into three latent variables.

4. Results

4.1. Model Fit

The hypothesized relationships were tested by structural equation modeling (SEM). Overall, the structural model achieved acceptable fit [86]. More specifically, the absolute fit measures ($\chi^2/df = 2.387$, $p < 0.001$, SRMR = 0.043, RMSEA = 0.069, and RMSEA 90% (CI) = (0.069, 0.079)), and incremental fit index (IFI = 0.907 and CFI = 0.906) were satisfactory (See Table 6) [77].

Table 6. Structural parameter estimates.

Hypothesis	Path	Standardized Coefficient	C.R.	Supported?
1	Emotional experiences → Functional value	0.982	11.755 ***	Yes
2	Emotional experiences → Emotional value	0.888	11.809 ***	Yes
3	Functional value → Tourist satisfaction	0.892	5.385 ***	Yes
4	Emotional value → Tourist satisfaction	0.220	1.425	No
5	Functional value → Destination loyalty	0.825	4.114 ***	Yes
6	Emotional value → Destination loyalty	0.266	1.686	No
7	Tourist satisfaction → Destination loyalty	0.437	2.131 *	Yes

Note: * $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.001$.

4.2. Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

Estimates of structural coefficients (paths) provided the basis for testing the proposed hypotheses. As shown in Table 5, emotional experiences had a significant positive effect on functional value (0.982, $p < 0.001$) and emotional value (0.888, $p < 0.001$), both of which offered supportive evidence for Hypotheses H1 and H2. The paths from functional value to tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty were also positive and statistically significant (0.892 and 0.825, $p < 0.001$), thereby supporting Hypotheses H3 and H5. Nonsignificant paths emerged for emotional value → tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty, thus rejecting Hypotheses H4 and H6. Hypothesis 7 was supported, as tourist satisfaction significantly and positively influenced destination loyalty (0.437, $p < 0.05$).

5. Discussion and Conclusions

5.1. Theoretical Implication

In response to calls for tourism researchers to develop integrative models [8], we investigated relationships between emotional experiences, functional value, emotional value, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty in the context of active sport tourism by employing the SOR theory. By exploring structural relationships, the authors identified positive relationships between: (1) emotional experiences and functional value; (2) emotional experiences and emotional value; (3) functional value and tourist satisfaction; (4) functional value and destination loyalty; and (5) tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty.

The findings of this study contribute to the advancement of marketing and sport tourism literature in several ways. First, the results shed new light on the relationship between emotional experiences and perceived value, which remains the subject of ongoing debate. Some researchers consider emotion to be an important antecedent of perceived value, whereas others view emotion as a key outcome variable of perceived value. In accord with the previous findings [59,60], the findings of the current study provide empirical supporting evidence for the positive effect of emotional experiences on perceived value. For example, when tourists experience joy, pleasure, love, and surprise during a trip, they are more likely to perceive the trip as enjoyable and worth spending the time and money. The authors extend this proposition by showing that tourist attractions that could evoke true and positive emotions promote perceived value of a trip among tourists. Several studies in diverse leisure and tourism contexts such as performing arts spectators [57], ski resort tourists [56], and Taiwanese town tourists [94] have reported the influential predictive power of emotional experiences (e.g., excitement, joy, and positive emotions) on the perceived value of their experiences at a destination/event.

Second, in response to the constructive argument posed by Gallarza and Saura [95] and Pandža Bajs [96], the results of this study provide that perceived value is an important construct that should be included in tourist behavioral models. The results of this study also concur with prior research in adventure tourism [54], cruise tourists [97], and casino visitors [98]. While the results support the predictability of functional value on tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty, emotional value was

not found to have a significant influence. These findings may infer that emotional value itself does not amplify satisfaction and destination loyalty sufficiently enough to make significant changes in tourist behaviors, which is consistent with prior research that examined the relationship between hedonic value (akin emotional value) and its consequences [58].

Third, to capture dynamic stimulus–organism–response process, the current study incorporated emotional experiences as a stimulus, perceived value as an organism, and tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty as responses within the active sport tourism setting. In the course of applying the SOR approach, many studies in a sport context consider the physical environment (e.g., scenery, stadium) as a stimulus that elicited internal processes (O). Based on the review of literature, this study employed affective construct as a stimulus, which expanded the applicability of the already widely employed SOR model in sport tourist research.

5.2. Practical Implication

The major findings of this study provide destination marketers with practical hints regarding how to improve the competitiveness of sporting destinations in an effective and efficient manner. Our findings show that emotional experiences among active sport tourists offer a fundamental strategic metric to improve satisfaction and destination loyalty. This implies that destination marketers are encouraged to make strenuous efforts to enhance the three latent dimensions of emotional experiences (i.e., love, joy, and positive surprise) to meet the needs and desires of sport tourists. More specifically, to enhance the emotion of love, destination managers should manage natural views and beautify cityscapes because urban environments are a unique characteristic of active sport tourism. For example, while marathon participants run distances of 5, 10 or 21 km, they are exposed to unique architectures and the natural environment; in the course of running for hours, these cityscapes may evoke a feeling of love toward the city. To promote joy, event organizers should provide participants with a variety of events and performances such as prize and ticket giveaway events, music performances, autograph sessions, and charity campaigns. To better develop positive surprise, event volunteers and staff should be trained and educated well, because unexpected kindness or hospitality provided by volunteers or staff create such positive surprises, whereas displays of a negative demeanor feed negative emotion toward the event and destination. Tireless efforts to evoke tourist emotional experiences would undoubtedly contribute to the development of sporting event destinations by enhancing perceived value, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty.

5.3. Limitation and Future Study Direction

Despite the importance of the substantive findings of the present study, it has its limitations. First, although the sporting event presented in this study is domestically renowned as an active sport tourist venue and the hosting community is a famous tourist destination for Koreans and foreigners from Asia, it is difficult to generalize our findings to other events settings and locations. Future research is required to examine the reproducibility of the devised model at other events and locations to explore the applicability of findings in this study. Second, the proposed model includes a limited number of constructs, which may make it difficult to understand active sport tourist behaviors holistically. Hence, in future research studies, the inclusion of additional variables (e.g., event quality, destination personality, and tourist motivations) might fruitfully expand the model. Third, since emotional experiences are dynamic in nature [8], our findings may vary among different demographics such as gender, age, and ethnicity. To improve the accuracy of the proposed model, it would be beneficial for future research to examine moderating effects of demographic variables.

Lastly, the influence of emotional value on satisfaction should be examined in a diverse sport tourist context. Although the results of the current study did not support the relationship, the findings of Lee et al. [47] differ from those of this study: Both emotional and functional value predicts satisfaction and behavioral intention, whereas only emotional value affects behavioral intention. Although the study aimed to investigate festival participants, potential influence of emotional value may exist among

active sport tourists. Hence, significant contributions could be made if more studies were done to examine the proposed relationship among diverse participants in diverse sport events.

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