

The Impact of Participate Cognition on Participate Motivation in MICE Industries: Previous Experiences and Urban Competitiveness as Moderators

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ABSTRACT:The fast-growing meetings, incentives, conventions, and exhibitions (MICE) industry has attracted investment from a number of cities. To understand the views of MICE participants on participant cognition and motivation, and the impact of previous experiences and urban competitiveness on the behavioral decision making of MICE visitors, the present study conducted a questionnaire survey on visitors to the Kaohsiung Exhibition Center. A total of 350 questionnaires were distributed, and 316 valid questionnaires were returned. The study found that visitor participation cognition had a significant positive impact on participant motivation. In addition, both previous experiences and urban competitiveness had a moderation effect on the relationship between participant cognition and participant motivation. The study found that visitors' image of MICE and their perception of urban competitiveness are key factors influencing visitors' participation in MICE events.

KEY WORD: Cognition, Motivation, Previous Experiences, Urban Competitiveness, Urban destination Image, Exhibitions

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I. INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, the meetings, incentives, conventions, and exhibitions (MICE) has been a rapidly growing industry (Jung, Kim, Malek & Lee, 2016). As MICE industries involve investment in multiple service industries, many countries have begun to emphasize the commercial role of MICE industries to achieve national economic development (Buathong & Lai, 2017). MICE industries not only benefit the economic development of the host country, they also serve as a platform for communication and learning between industries and the public, and play a major role in driving-related industries, with a major impact on industries such as hospitality, tourism, technology, and the media in host destinations (Lee, 2016). The high level of economic benefits had led many advanced countries to actively promote the MICE industry, categorizing it as an important emerging service industry (Mistilis & Dwyer, 1999) and adopting various strategies to improve their chances of hosting MICE events (Crouch, Del Chiappa & Perdue, 2019). Under the influence of global MICE industries, and given the proximity of Kaohsiung City to Taiwan's largest international commercial port, in order to combine the international commercial ports with MICE industries, the Kaohsiung City Government established the Kaohsiung Exhibition Center in 2014 (Kaohsiung Exhibition Center, 2019), with the Kaohsiung City Government leading the development of MICE industries. It is expected that the competitiveness of Kaohsiung City will be enhanced by the development of MICE industries.

Most early research on MICE focused on how to predict the number of visitors, how much economic benefit can be delivered, or the choice of destination (Fesenmaier, 1990). In recent years, consumer behavior has gradually been used to explain the development of MICE (Jeng & Fesenmaier, 2002). However, past studies have shown that behavioral science or consumer behavior in decision making cannot fully explain the reasons influencing participation in MICE events (Hyde, Decrop, Dunne, Flanagan & Buckley, 2011). In addition, attendees' perspectives have often been overlooked in past research on MICE (Ahn, Hyun & Kim, 2016; Lee, Choi & Breiter, 2016), or focused on how to attract exhibitors (Huang, 2016), meaning that the research results for MICE lack in breadth. With the upgrading of Kaohsiung City's environment for MICE industries, the city has gradually developed into a good destination in Asia for MICE events. In addition, with the rapid development of MICE industries, a growing number of scholars are becoming interested in factors that influence participant motivation in MICE events. Therefore, the purpose of the present study is to understand in the context of the development of MICE industries in Kaohsiung, whether the participant cognition of visitors to MICE industries affects participation motivation and whether the previous experiences and urban competitiveness of visitors has a moderation effect on the relationship between participant cognition and

participant motivation, understanding the current development of MICE industries from the perspective of visitors as a reference for future MICE industries policy formulation.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

MICE is promoted through comprehensive initiatives, sales promotions, and assistance from public and private organizations, and is known as an outreach event of an organization. (Jin & Weber, 2013). Due to the large economic benefits brought by MICE industries, in addition to target customers, MICE organizers also actively seek tourists and potential customers to meet the needs of different individuals (Crouch et al., 2019; Fouracre, 2015). In addition to the total number of exhibitors and the number of visitors (Fesenmaier, 1990), the views of visitors cannot be ignored when determining the success of a MICE event (Lee et al., 2016). Therefore, the following sections will explore the participant cognition, participant motivation, previous experiences, and urban competitiveness of MICE visitors to explore the behavioral responses of visitors to MICE events.

2.1 Participate Cognition

Sirgy (1982) argued that consumers' cognition results from comparing information received from the outside world with their views. In particular, product image is an important determinant of consumer decision making. Consumers' purchasing decisions tend to favor products that are consistent with their brand image (Malhotra, 1988), gradually developing a positive attitude towards the brand (Graeff, 1996; Hong & Zinkhan, 1995). Ekinci, Dawes and Massey (2008) further argued that consumers' existing self-congruence and desires congruence have a positive impact on consumer satisfaction. This also shows that for consumers, existing cognition impacts subsequent consumption.

The concept of participant cognition is that when people think about participating in an event, individuals base their assessments on their inherent needs, value judgment, or interest towards the thing or event (Zaichkowsky, 1985). In recent years, the literature has shown that attachment or emotion are important factors affecting people's cognition (Bushnell, Āeko & Low, 2013; Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982), and the combined effect of past positive/negative experiences is an important factor in the decision-making model for people's participation in events (Chen, Lehto & Choi, 2010; Dedeođlu, Balıkcıođlu & Kūcūkerđin, 2016; Rodriguez Molina, Frías-Jamilena & Castañeda-García, 2013). Consistent with the findings of Pansari and Kumar (2017), customers may continue to participate in events due to emotions and satisfaction.

Before deciding whether to participate in the event, if participants in MICE activities, including both firms and general visitors, have an existing emotional attachment to MICE or had a feeling of satisfaction after an event, this will have an impact on subsequent participation. Therefore, in addition to expanding marketing activities, if MICE organizers understand visitors' past experience in MICE events and their requirements for events, this will certainly benefit the organization of MICE events.

2.2 Participate Motivation

Human behavior usually has a motivation that encourages people to participate in a certain activity. Therefore, Kotler (2003) believes that motivation is a driving force from within the individual. Motivation is the individual's quest for satisfaction, reducing anxiety and tension. Although scholars have different views about types of motivations (Locke & Schattke, 2019), the distinction between intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation is still widely accepted (Rheinberg & Engeser, 2018). Intrinsic motivation comes from within the individual (Putra, Cho & Liu, 2017), producing behavioral processes and objectives (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Extrinsic motivation comes from factors external to the individual that produce certain results, adopting certain behaviors in order to attain objectives (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In addition, the "push and pull motivation theory" proposed by Dann (1981) also has effects similar to intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation (Caber & Albayrak, 2016) and is more suitable for understanding participation in events. The "push" factors reflect psychological drivers of behavior (Wu & Pearce, 2014), while the "pull" factors are considered to be external motivation (Devesa, Laguna & Palacios, 2010). For travel, the realization of a desire to travel is a "push motivation," but the choice or attraction of a travel destination is a "pull motivation" (Crompton, 1979). Even though the motivations of event participants may be due to different reasons, Hung & Petrick (2011) argued that the motivation of event participants can be categorized as relaxation, exploration, and evaluation of self, social recognition, social bonding, novelty, and leaning or to discover.

Regardless of whether the perspective of intrinsic/extrinsic motivation or push/pull motivation is applied, in the behavioral process, different sources of motivation may have an effect at the same time, but with different intensity. The motivation is typically a series of events. Behind any type of behavior, there may be motives of varying degrees and incentives. For the source of the motivation for initiating behavior, cognition is one of the most important influencing factors (Lu, 2017). This is mainly because cognition is considered as a desire to learn and resolve problems (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982). The realization of desire requires generating motivation to induce actual behavior (Nowlin, Walker, Deeter-Schmelz & Haas, 2018). In addition, from the

perspective of visitors, Needham & Little (2013) argued that visitors' motivation to visit a particular location arises mainly from their own cognition. Therefore, in terms of exploring the behavior of MICE visitors in the present study, visitors first need to have the desire to be satisfied by the event in order to initiate participant motivation and thus generate actual visits. The origin of this desire comes from visitors' cognition. Therefore, the present study proposed the following hypotheses:

H1. The participant cognition of MICE visitors has a significant positive impact on participant motivation.

2.3 Previous Experiences

As a part of the broader tourism industry (Yin, 2018), the tourism experience of visitors in MICE industries is the essence of the industry (Zhang, Wu & Buhalis, 2018). This means that destination providers must provide visitors with unforgettable experiences in order to increase their competitiveness (Neuhofer, Buhalis & Ladkin, 2015). As a result, in recent years many studies have begun to focus on the unforgettable experiences of visitors in their tourism marketing (Zhang et al., 2018), arguing that unforgettable experiences are the best indicator and new benchmark for predicting visitors' future behavior (Chandralal, Rindfleish & Valenzuela, 2015; Neuhofer, Buhalis & Ladkin, 2014).

According to Tung and Ritchie (2011), when an individual is emotionally, physically, spiritually, and intellectually engaged in an activity, the individual can be subjectively determined to be forming an unforgettable experience. This view implies that the formation of experience is generated through the interaction of cognition and emotion (Kim & Perdue, 2013). Rivera, Fa and Villar (2019) also showed that cognitive factors are antecedents of affective factors in the formation of delightful experiences. In other words, cognitive factors trigger emotional responses, which in turn, evoke delightful experiences.

Chang (2006) pointed out when a visitor's trip leaves a good experience, willingness to visit again will increase. This illustrates the important role of previous experiences. As long as visitors remember their past travel experiences, this will influence their future decision making (Kim, Ritchie & Tung, 2010). In other words, when making decisions, visitors typically rely on their past experiences and memories to plan future trips (Lehto, O'Leary & Morrison, 2004). This means that the factor of good previous experiences can strengthen the relationship between participant cognition and participant motivation. Therefore, the present study proposed the following hypotheses:

H2. The previous experiences of visitors have a positive moderation effect on the relationship between participant cognition and participant motivation.

2.4 Urban Competitiveness

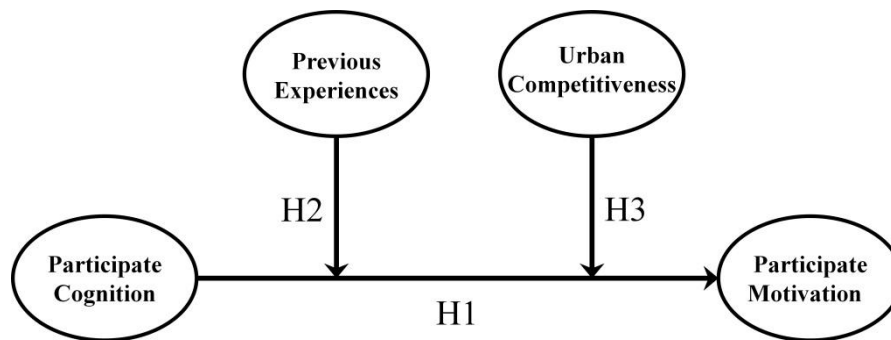
Globalization, urbanization, and industrialization are rapidly changing today's economy. Cities around the world are adopting new technologies and strategies to increase their competitiveness in the global market (Lee, Hancock & Hu, 2014). MICE industries are a way for many cities to improve their competitiveness (Yin, 2018). According to Dou, Li, Gan, Wang and Yang (2000), urban competitiveness reflects a city's productive capacity, residents' quality of life, its innovation environment, and its position in the innovation network. This has also led many cities to invest in the economic environment, quality of life, and other physical and social infrastructure in recent years (Esmailpoorarabi, Yigitcanlar & Guaralda, 2016; Florea & Florea, 2017) in order to improve the overall level of wellbeing in the city (Morais, Miguéis & Camanho, 2013). The improvement of urban competitiveness strengthens the brand development of a city's MICE industries. In addition, the economic benefits of a city's MICE industries and the benefits of improved physical and social infrastructure, also produce a further increase in urban competitiveness (Gan, 2019).

As emphasized by Chen and Chen (2019), the number of MICE events, the exhibition area, and income from visitors have a significant impact on the competitiveness of cities hosting MICE events. Because the improvement in urban competitiveness is accompanied by visitors' perception of quality of life in the city (Shen & Yang, 2014), from the perspective of visitors, if the perception of urban competitiveness comes from participation in a MICE event, this will strengthen commitment to MICE events. The increase in commitment is the result of the change in the psychological level of the relationship between participant cognition and participant motivation. This concept shows that increased urban competitiveness will impact the participant cognition and participant motivation of visitors. Therefore, the present study proposed the following hypotheses:

H3. MICE visitors' perception of urban competitiveness has a positive moderation effect on the relationship between participant cognition and participant motivation.

Based on the above literature review and research hypotheses, the research framework for the present study is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Research model



III. METHOD

3.1 Survey Instrument

Due to the fact that most of the research in MICE industries both inside and outside Taiwan focuses on the physical facilities of exhibition halls and the content of MICE events, and few studies explore MICE events from the perspective of visitors (Ahn et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2016), the present study adopts an exploratory research approach, hoping to gain a preliminary understanding of visitors to MICE events, understanding whether participant cognition influences participant motivation when visitors are deciding whether to participate in MICE events, and also identifying other moderation factors affect visitors' participation in MICE events.

Due to the lack of existing questionnaires on MICE industries, the present study adopted a two-stage questionnaireformation. The first stage combined the existing literature on MICE industries together with 10 MICE researchers and 7 senior executives in MICE industries, developing initial questionnaire items on four dimensions. In the second stage, a focus group meeting was conducted with 17 experts and scholars to confirm the final items on the questionnaire. The final questionnaire included 47 items on four dimensions, including 13 items on participant cognition, 14 items on participant motivation, 11 items on previous experiences, and 9 items on urban competitiveness. Measurements were carried out on a 5-point Likert scale based on respondents' level of agreement for each item, with scores from one to five indicating "strongly disagree," "disagree," "neither agree nor disagree," "agree," and "strongly agree." A higher score indicated a higher level of agreement with the item.

The present study used SPSS 18 for statistical software for analysis. Statistical methods such as reliability analysis, Pearson correlation analysis, and simple and hierarchical regression analysis were used to analyze the data obtained by the present study. In hierarchical regression analysis, whether the interaction term between the independent variable and the moderator is significant can be used to determine whether there is a moderation effect and is an effective method to predict the moderation effect between different variables (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Therefore, the present study used hierarchical regression to test whether the variables' previous experiences and urban competitiveness have a moderation effect.

3.2 Data Collection

Given that the purpose of the present study was to explore the behavioral trends of visitors participating in MICE events, we selected motivation factors for visiting MICE events. Therefore, visitors who had participated or not participated in MICE events at the Kaohsiung Exhibition during three event periods were chosen as the survey subjects. A total of 350 questionnaires were distributed, and 332 questionnaires were returned, including 316 valid questionnaires, giving an effective response rate of 90.1%. There were slightly more female respondents than male respondents, accounting for 52.5% of the total. The age group 21-30 made up a majority of respondents, accounting for 55.4% of respondents, followed by the 31-40 age group (17.10%) and the under 20 age group (16.1%). A majority of respondents (68.7%) had a university or college education, followed by senior high school or vocational (21.2%). The service industry accounted for a majority of respondents (65.8%). Monthly leisure spending of NT\$4,001-10,000 accounted for a majority (60.1%) of respondents.

IV. RESULTS

Following the suggestion of Anderson and Gerbing (1988), the present study adopted a two-step design to analyze the measurement model and structural model and obtain the correct analytical results.

4.1 Measurement Model

According to the test of normal distribution proposed by Mardia (1985), skewness and kurtosis coefficients in the range of ± 2 indicate univariate normal distribution. The distribution of each of the observed variables in the present study were in the range of ± 2 , indicating that the univariate normal distribution of the observed variables. In addition, Hair, Black, Babinand Anderson (2017) pointed out that each of the dimensions must be greater than .5. The items on each of the four dimensions in the present study met the criteria proposed by Hair et al. (2017). Next, the present study carried out reliability tests. The Cronbach's alpha for each of the dimensions was in the range .800-.898 (Table 1), meeting the requirements for the internal consistency of the questionnaire. In addition, following the suggestion of Fornell and Larcker (1981), the average variance extracted (AVE) for each of the dimensions must be larger than .6 to show convergence validity. From the questionnaire results in Table 1, we find that the AVE for each dimension was in the range of .602-.649, satisfying the criteria suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981). Therefore, the present study had good convergence validity.

Table 1: Reliability, convergence validity and discriminant Validity of different factors

Variables	α	Convergent validity	Mean	SD	Discriminant validity			
		AVE			(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
(1) Participate cognition	.800	.602	3.739	.474	.776			
(2) Participate motivation	.898	.640	3.971	.494	.395	.800		
(3) Previous experiences	.857	.619	3.726	.561	.330	.550	.787	
(4) Urban competitiveness	.845	.649	3.949	.555	.399	.599	.501	.806

Note: AVE refers to average variance extracted. The discriminant validity diagonal bold is the root value of AVE, and the lower triangle is Pearson correlation.

In terms of discriminant validity, according to Kline's (2015) suggestion, a correlation coefficient between each of the dimensions of less than .850 indicates discriminant validity between the dimensions. Table 1 shows that the correlation coefficients between the dimensions were in the range .330-.599, satisfying Kline's (2015) requirements for discriminant validity. In addition, according to Hair et al. (2017), if the correlation coefficient for each dimension is less than the root value of the AVE, this indicates good discriminant validity between the dimensions. Table 1 shows that the correlation coefficients for each dimension were less than the root value of the AVE, demonstrating that the dimensions have good discriminant validity.

4.2 Structural Model

The results of regression analysis in Table 2 show when the dependent variable was participant motivation, the unstandardized coefficient B was participant cognition is .412, showing positive statistical significance ($t=7.619, p<.001$). This result shows that visitors' participant cognition influenced participant motivation. Therefore, H1 was supported.

Table 2: The impact of participate cognition on participate motivation in MICE activities

Independent variable	Nonstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	t	p
	B	SE	β		
Constant	2.430	.204		11.917	<.001
Participate cognition	.412	.054	.395	7.619	<.001

Note: Dependent variable is participate motivation.

For analysis of moderation effects, the present study used the method of hierarchical regression suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986) for analysis. First, in terms of the moderation role of previous experiences, we found that, after the moderator previous experiences was included in Model 2, the unstandardized B for the interaction term was .106, $\Delta R^2=.015$ ($t=2.713, p<.01$). This shows that, when including the context factor previous experiences, there was a significant positive effect on the relationship between participant cognition and participant motivation. Therefore, H2 was supported. Next, for the moderating role of urban competitiveness, we found that when including the moderator urban competitiveness into Model 4, the unstandardized B for the interaction term was .098, $\Delta R^2=.014$ ($t=2.709, p<.01$), showing that including the context factor urban competitiveness there was a significant positive effect on the relationship between participant cognition and participant motivation. Therefore, H3 was supported.

Table 3: The moderation effect of previous experiences and urban competitiveness on the relationship between participate cognition, participate motivation

Variables	Participate motivation			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Constant	.000	-.035	.000	-.039
Participate cognition	.240***	.241***	.186***	.186***
Previous experiences	.471***	.479***		
Urban competitiveness			.525***	.540***
Participate cognition * Previous experiences		.106**		
Participate cognition * Urban competitiveness				.098**
R ²	.354	.369	.387	.401
ΔR ²		.015		.014
F	85.692	60.841	98.922	69.731

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The present study explored the relationship between participant cognition and participant motive of MICE visitors, and examined whether previous experiences and urban competitiveness have a moderating effect on this relationship.

First, Table 2 shows that, in the regression analysis, there was a significant positive relationship between participant cognition and participant motivation ($B=.412$, $t=7.619$, $p<.001$), showing that visitors' participant cognition had a significant impact on participant motivation. This finding was consistent with the view of Needham and Little (2013). Indeed, past research has shown that cognition is an important factor in generating motivation (Lu, 2017). If combined with the view of Cacioppo and Petty (1982) of cognition as a form of desire, we can find that visitors' cognition to participate in MICE is mainly driven by the desire that MICE themes evoke in visitors' minds, leading to psychological participant motivation. This type of participant motivation is similar to intrinsic motivation or push motivation, and also has a direct impact on strengthening the actual participation behavior of visitors (Caber & Albayrak, 2016; Rheinberg & Engeser, 2018). This finding has positive implications for organizers of MICE industries. Motivation is an antecedent of actual behavior (Pansari & Kumar, 2017), motivation is influenced by cognition, and cognition is driven by desire. Therefore, in the process of holding MICE events, the focus should be stimulating the willingness of potential visitors to participate, rather than thinking from the perspective of organizers MICE events. Jin and Weber's (2016) research on exhibition activities found that from the visitors' perspective, the exhibition location, transportation, business services, and leisure and entertainment services are the more important dimensions. In addition, these conditions are important factors in triggering visitors' desire to participate and forming participant cognition. Therefore, this is a future direction that MICE organizers should pay attention to.

Next, from the results of Model 1 and Model 2 in Table 3, we can find that, in the hierarchical regression analysis with previous experiences as a moderator in the relationship between participant cognition and participant motivation, previous experiences had a moderating effect ($B=.106$, $\Delta R^2=.015$, $t=2.713$, $p<.01$). This shows that previous experiences strengthen the relationship between participating cognition and participating motivation. In fact, past research has shown that past experiences have a significant impact on behavioral decision making, and this is especially true for tourism-related activities (Chandralal et al., 2015; Chang, 2006). In particular, positive and unforgettable experiences are key factors in determining whether visitors will participate again (Neuhofer et al., 2015). The results of the present study once again confirm the important role of previous experiences in participation decision-making. Since the formation of previous experiences involves both cognitive and emotional issues (Rivera et al., 2019), in practice, for first-time visitors, how to build a cognitive and emotional image of the MICE destination through the visit (Mody, Gordon, Lehto, So & Li, 2016) creating an unforgettable memory of the MICE event will be an important factor driving visitors to participate again.

Finally, from the results of Model 3 and Model 4, we find that when we analyze the moderating effect of urban competitiveness in the relationship between participant cognition and participant motivation, $B=.098$, $\Delta R^2=.014$, $t=2.709$, $p<.01$, showing that urban competitiveness strengthens the relationship between participating cognition and participant motivation. For visitors, the image of urban competitiveness implies the concept of the city brand (Gan, 2019). When visitors have an improved image of the city brand, this will promote their perception of the city (Shen & Yang, 2014) and trust in the city, increasing their willingness to participate again (Endah, Umar, Suharyono & Andriani, 2017). However, a city's competitiveness involves issues at multiple levels (Esmailpoorabi et al., 2016), and requires public-private partnerships to achieve (Popescu, Corboș & Bunea, 2018). This means that the government and the private sector must work together to promote the industrial upgrading of MICE.

The present study surveyed visitors to the recently-established Kaohsiung Exhibition Center. This choice may be a sampling limitation in the present study. However, because this research is exploratory, in

addition to the relationship between participating cognition and participant motivation, it is also hoped to make an academic contribution to the topic of the moderating role of two factors: previous experiences and urban competitiveness. In addition, as the Kaohsiung Exhibition Center is close to a well-known international commercial port in Asia, the degree of internationalization is sufficient for the results of this research to serve as a reference for the development of MICE industries.

We suggest two starting points for future research. The first is to study the perspectives of first-time visitors to MICE events. The results of the present study showed that previous experiences were an important moderator. However, there is a lack of previous research on how visitors form their impressions and experiences of MICE. Second, the present study showed the importance of urban competitiveness in the development of MICE industries. However, its key role and function is also lacking in previous studies and is an area that deserves further discussion in the future.

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