


Article

Marketing Strategy and Willingness to Pay for Sport Tourism in the Kinmen Marathon Event

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Abstract: In this study, we applied an evaluation model of multiple attributes of sport-based tourism to the marketing strategy for a marathon event in Kinmen (Taiwan) based on a choice experiment methodology. We found that the participants appreciated the experience of authentic cuisine and the availability of marathon souvenirs. They also preferred engaging in ecotourism activities and supporting the establishment of a sport development fund. We applied market segmentation by dividing the participants into two groups. Those in the first group were primarily younger, had higher incomes, and had participated previously in the Kinmen Marathon. Those in the second group primarily had lower incomes, were over 40 years old, and were participating in the Kinmen Marathon for the first time. Both groups preferred entertainment, educational, and esthetic experiences, but only the first group desired an escapist experience. We propose three marketing strategies for sport tourism experiences as a reference for future practice in Kinmen sport tourism.

Keywords: economic value; experience economy; ecotourism; marathon; sport tourism



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1. Introduction

In the tourism industry, sport-related tourism has received more attention in recent years, and issues of sport demand have attracted many scholars in the fields of economics and marketing. Professional sporting events increase public interest and enable governments and decision-makers to explore the key determinants of sport demand [1]. Gibson [1] defined sport tourism as “leisure-based travel that takes individuals temporarily outside of their home communities to participate in physical activities, to watch physical activities, or to venerate attractions associated with physical activities.” That is, sport tourism involves tourists watching or attending a sporting event. Recently, sport tourism has been growing due to increasing health and fitness consciousness worldwide, resulting in a growing number of sporting events and outdoor recreation activities [2]. As a popular subject of sport tourism, marathons are large sporting events that allow tens of thousands of people to participate simultaneously and can be held at any time. In recent years, marathons have become a popular trend and have attracted increasing numbers of participants [3]. The organizers of running competitions usually develop promotions for the towns in which marathons take place, such as planning a race route with scenic points and famous landmarks, and these events are now recognized as a profitable tourism strategy for the local economy of the host city [4]. Therefore, studies of the management and economic evaluation of marathons have recently emerged.

However, the economic effects of these sport tourism events remain unclear, as both positive and negative economic effects have been reported. Investigations of the economic effects of sport tourism may be confounded by factors such as whether a short-term or long-term effect is investigated, the size of the event, overestimation for political reasons, and methods applied [5]. In addition, previous studies of sport tourism have not considered

multiple perspectives on the demands of participants when evaluating the economic value of marathon-oriented sport tourism activities. Understanding the preferences of participants who attend marathon events is helpful for evaluating their willingness to participate in sport tourism and for promoting sporting events. In this study, we took the 12th Kinmen Marathon as an example to explore the participants' preferences for multiple attributes of sport tourism to develop marketing strategies and to evaluate the economic value of the event.

As indicated by the abovementioned studies, sport tourism has recently become a popular topic. In this study, we took the Kinmen Marathon as an example to explore participants' preferences and willingness to pay (WTP) for participating in sport tourism. We used the choice experiment (CE) model to analyze the participants' choice behavior for each attribute and level of the Kinmen Marathon through a field questionnaire survey. These choice behaviors indicating the participants' preferences and WTP for sport tourism in Kinmen included authentic cuisine, souvenirs, tourism experience, and the sport development fund. Finally, we segmented the participants' socioeconomic backgrounds and previous experience of participating in the Kinmen Marathon. The interview results and the participants' preferences in different categories of sport tourism can be used as a reference for market segmentation strategies for various events in the future.

There are six parts to this study. The first part is the introduction. The second part is a literature review, mainly regarding sport tourism and CE-related studies. The third part describes the methodology and design and multiple attributes of the CE model for sport tourism. The fourth part presents the results. The fifth part is the discussion. The final part provides the conclusion and limitations. The results of this study can contribute to the strategic development of sport tourism in various countries.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Study Area and Kinmen Marathon Event

The first urban tour marathon race was held in New York City in 1976, resulting in the spread of marathons throughout the region [6]. According to a USA Track and Field 2004 marathon report, in the United States alone, an estimated 400,000 people were completing marathon races yearly [7]. Marathons are one of the most popular sporting activities in Taiwan, with the number of participants increasing from year to year. Measured by the ratio of land area to population, Taiwan has the highest density of marathon events in the world [8].

The Kinmen Marathon has become a famous marathon in Taiwan and attracts more than twenty thousand runners every year, economically benefiting the tourism industry of Kinmen. The first Kinmen Marathon was held in 2008, and the 12th Kinmen Marathon was held on 16 and 17 February 2019, at National Quemoy University. The routes were divided into full-marathon, half-marathon, 11.2 K, and 5 K distances. The Kinmen Marathon is now a major event in the Kinmen community.

Kinmen is a small island in Taiwan. It is nearly two hundred kilometers from Taiwan but only eight kilometers from Xiamen Island, China. Due to Kinmen's special geographical position and battlefield history, its economic development was strictly regulated before 1992. After Kinmen's opening, its government was eager to develop the tourism industry, and sport tourism has become one of the well-developed tourist attractions in Kinmen.

Due to the historical war events in the past, Kinmen became a highly militarized and restricted area. At one point, 100,000 soldiers were stationed on Kinmen, and up to one-third of the country's bunkers and tunnels were located there [9,10], including the famous Zhaishan Tunnel, Cyonglin Tunnels, Jiugong Tunnel, and Dadan and Erdan Islands [11]. In addition to these historical tourist attractions, strict military control has preserved Kinmen's Minnan culture and its Chinese-Western-style buildings and natural resources. Early immigrants from the Minnan culture came to Kinmen from Zhangzhou and Quanzhou, China, so the architecture and culture of Kinmen were extended to incorporate Minnan's cultural architecture [11]. Foreign-style architecture is also a feature of Kinmen.

Kinmen is the hometown of overseas Chinese in Southeast Asian countries, and many early residents built foreign-style buildings when they returned to Kinmen after achieving success in business [11,12].

Kinmen is rich in natural resources and wildlife such as horseshoe crabs, Eurasian otters, and migratory birds. It is located on a bird migration route between East Asia and Australia, so there are abundant migratory birds. The most famous example is the tens of thousands of cormorants that spend the winter in Kinmen each year, making up the largest winter colony of cormorants in East Asia [13]. Due to its abundant historical and natural resources, Kinmen is an excellent place for ecotourism development. Since the Kinmen Marathon is held in winter, cormorant watching and ecotourism activities can be integrated with the Kinmen Marathon for sport tourism planning. In summary, Kinmen is filled with diverse tourism attractions, such as history, battlefields, hometowns of overseas Chinese, and natural landscapes, and is, therefore, suitable for tourism development.

2.2. Literature Review for Economic Evaluation of Sport Tourism and Related Choice Experiment Studies

Cobb and Olberding [14] proposed that the economic effects of a marathon can be divided into three parts. The first part is the tourism consumption of marathon runners in the local area due to the event. The second part comes from friends and relatives who accompany the competitors or other tourists who come to support the events. The third part is the promotion of the marathon and sponsor. Therefore, participants' sport tourism behaviors, preferences, and demands represent good reference values for the strategic planning and economic evaluation of sport tourism.

Many previous studies have focused on people's preferences and economic value for sports and recreation [15–17], whereas less research has focused on evaluating the economic value of participants' behaviors in marathon sport tourism [18]. Wicker and Hallmann [18] examined German athletes' preferences for marathon destinations and found that athletes were willing to pay 270 euros for local activities in Germany and 568 euros for events held in other European countries; however, if marathon activities were held overseas, their WTP increased to 1429 euros. Whitehead and Wicker [19] used the example of cycling in North Carolina to explore participants' nonmarket economic value in active sport tourism, measuring sports, recreation, and sport tourism as a whole.

Tourist motivation has been discussed in many sport tourism studies [20]. Most previous studies have also assessed sport tourism as a whole. However, participants are likely to have preferences for multiple attributes of sport tourism travel; therefore, it is not realistic to evaluate the value of all attributes as a whole. Boxall, et al. [21] argued that if respondents answer a question about the possibility of trip improvement only by agreeing or disagreeing when assessing a sport tourism trip as a whole, it may lead them to ignore the possibility of substitution. Substitution is the basis of economic value; in other words, people must obtain something in exchange for something else. This relationship is based on the substitutability or complementarity of nonmarket goods [22]. However, the multiple preferences and demands of participants or tourists in sport tourism are rarely discussed. Hence, exploring participants' preferences for various attributes contributes to planning a suitable sport tourism event.

Kinghorn and Willis [23] suggested applying the CE method to identify respondents' preferences and WTP regarding multiple attributes since many activities cover different aspects of an event. The CE method is a common tool for measuring different attributes of nonmarket goods [24,25] and has been applied in various fields, including marketing, environmental economics, and policy evaluation for conservation value [26–28]. It not only reveals respondents' preferences but also identifies their WTP for multiple attributes of public issues [28,29]. Therefore, the CE method is suitable and is employed in this study to explore participants' attitudes, preferences, and WTP for attending the Kinmen Marathon.

In the literature on the economic value and nonmarket economic value of sports, Shin and Lyu [16] used the CE model to evaluate the physical environment of sport facilities,

which affects participants' willingness to participate in and revisit these facilities. Their findings indicated that for the respondents, the ability to travel to the ballpark quickly was the most important and was dependent on the location of the ballpark. The results also showed that respondents were willing to pay KR₩ 4102 for a subway line. Winter tourism in the Austrian Alps is another example of sport economics, as it is an important source of income, with skiing as one of the important features. Climate change is leading to less snowfall than expected, which causes dissatisfaction among tourists; however, relevant studies have failed to discuss the demand for tourists [17]. Unbehaun, Pröbstl and Haider [17] used the CE model to analyze tourists' destination choices and the impact of climate change on individual behavior. Their results showed that tourists preferred and were willing to pay an extra 10% or spend two hours of extra driving time to reach a place with enough snow.

Major sporting events can attract many visitors through aggressive marketing strategies. Therefore, it is important for organizers to understand the demands of visitors in order to develop a marketing strategy for sport tourism. Lyu and Han [30] used the CE model to assess how tourists participating in the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympic Games chose among various attributes. The results are consistent with the findings of Green [31] and Green and Chalip [32]: for the respondents, the most important issue was attending the events in which national teams or athletes had chances of winning gold medals. However, few studies have used the CE model to evaluate major sporting events, and the role of sport tourism has rarely been discussed. Lyu and Han [30] suggested that holding large sporting events can actively promote tourism goals, and applying the CE model to assess the relationship between multiple attributes of sport tourism and their relative importance can provide useful marketing strategies and distinguish the unique demands of the sport tourism market.

3. Methodology

3.1. *The Experiential Realms of Sport Tourism*

Funk and Bruun [33] found that international participants in the Hallmark Australian Running Event preferred to experience and learn nine activities of local cultures, including transportation, accommodation, art, language, and food. Pine, et al. [34] defined experience from the perspective of business. They argued that individuals gain experience by participating in events in different ways and proposed a four-realms theory of experience economy. In the present study, we incorporate the experiences of sport tourism into the experience economy theory of Pine, Pine and Gilmore [34] to interpret the tourism experience of participating in Kinmen Marathon sport tourism. On the horizontal axis, participation in Kinmen Marathon tourism is divided into passive and active participation. Passive participation means that tourists participate only in the Kinmen Marathon and do not actively participate in other tourism, cultural, or educational activities. In contrast, active participation represents not only participating in the Kinmen Marathon but also enjoying other tourism activities. On the vertical axis, the dimension of experience refers to the degree to which individuals are involved in the process of participation, with absorption and immersion at either end of the spectrum. According to the classification of participation involvement and the dimension of experience, experience realms can be divided into four categories, namely, entertainment, educational, esthetic, and escapist [34]. This study further incorporates these sport tourism attributes into the experience economy theory of Pine, Pine, and Gilmore [34] to construct marketing strategies for the development of Kinmen Marathon sport tourism.

The entertainment experience refers to athletes who participate only in the marathon event and are not willing to engage in other tourism-related activities. Educational experience refers to participants who take the initiative to experience the authentic cuisines of Kinmen to obtain a taste of the local traditional diet and culture. These participants also support establishing the Kinmen sport development fund to promote sport tourism development. Such participation experiences are absorbing and active. In esthetic experi-

ence, participants do not participate in other activities actively but experience the history, culture, and ecology of Kinmen by viewing cultural and creative products or souvenirs. Authentic Kinmen cultural and creative products represent the local history and cultural heritage. Exclusive souvenirs of the marathon allow participants to retain their memories of the marathon experience and recall it through the souvenirs in the future. Even when participants are not actively involved, when they obtain cultural and creative products and exclusive souvenirs, they can absorb the experience through feeling and recalling. In the escapist experience, participants actively participate in special interest tourism or ecotourism in Kinmen, immersing themselves in the natural environment, battlefield history, and Minnan and local culture in order to understand the historical background and cultural value of Kinmen. The experiential realms in combination with sport tourism are shown in Figure 1.

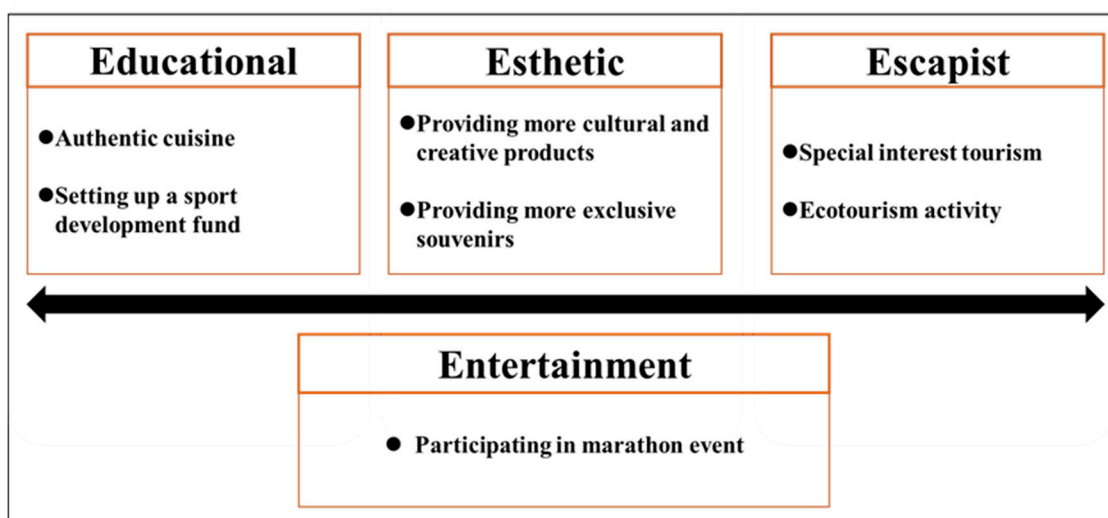


Figure 1. The four experiential realms of sport tourism based on the experience economy, adapted from Pine, Pine, and Gilmore [34].

3.2. Design of Multiple Attributes of Sport Tourism

In this section, the attributes used in this study and their related levels are introduced and discussed.

3.2.1. Authentic Cuisine

Okumus, et al. [35] compared four islands in the Caribbean Sea that use their authentic cuisines to promote tourism. Okumus, et al. [36] found that Hong Kong specifically uses cuisines for marketing activities while also providing professional, social, and cultural information. Swanson and Horridge [37] noted that enjoying cuisines is an important form of entertainment in tourism activities; for example, tourists prefer to dine at special restaurants. Fiorello and Bo [38] found that tourists prefer traditional cuisines. Additionally, Pookhao [39] noted that tea leaves (mieang) are a famous authentic food in Thailand and have become another source of income for local people. Therefore, authentic cuisine is an important attribute in the present study. One authentic cuisine and two authentic cuisines were considered in addition to porridge and vermicelli, which are the primary examples during the Kinmen Marathon.

3.2.2. Providing Souvenirs

Souvenirs are an end result of vacations and experiences and can integrate the experiences of the destination into the daily life of tourists [40]. With few exceptions, most travelers buy souvenirs to recall their experiences during their travels, and souvenirs have a value of billions of dollars each year. From a production perspective, souvenirs

should represent the culture and heritage of the destination. The more culture and heritage a souvenir represents, the higher consumers' preference for it [40,41]. Additionally, tourists have a strong preference for high-quality, imaginative, and attractive souvenirs or special gifts [37,42]. Therefore, souvenirs are an important attribute of this study. In addition to the original souvenir, Kinmen Marathon sorghum wine, this study considers two levels, namely, "providing more cultural and creative products" and "providing more exclusive souvenirs".

3.2.3. Tourism Experience

The tourism industry is different from other industries in that tourists increasingly prefer experiential activities and want to have the best possible experience within a limited time. They focus on emotional stimulation and feeling and seek atmosphere through personal experience [43]. In special interest tourism, visitors take more time to explore the specific history, art, or culture on tours provided mainly by professional guides. This is a new kind of tourism that combines the special interest tourism experience and an understanding of the destination through personal learning, thereby improving the overall value, quality, and service of tourism [43–45]. The objective of ecotourism is to achieve both nature conservation and regional development goals, meaning that in addition to conserving natural resources, it can actively provide community well-being [46,47]. Successful ecotourism can create employment and funds through community services for sustainable conservation. Thus, a complete ecotourism plan can promote local development and conservation [48–51]. In the past, the Kinmen Marathon was not combined with other travel plans. Participants had to make their own arrangements and plans if they wanted to participate in the marathon and travel around the island. Therefore, this study considers travel an important attribute with two levels, "special interest tourism" and "ecotourism activity", in addition to the status quo, independent of special interest tourism or ecotourism.

3.2.4. Sport Development Fund

The Boston Marathon is one of the most famous marathon events in the world. Every year, nonprofit organizations are invited to join the official charity program, and athletes who want to participate in the marathon on behalf of one of these nonprofit organizations must raise a minimum of US\$ 5000. These organizations and funds strengthen the local community and align with the mission of promoting a healthy lifestyle through sports [52]. Therefore, sport tourism is closely related to sport development, tourism, a healthy lifestyle, and charity. In this study, we wished to establish a sport development fund to support the development of the Kinmen Marathon as well as the local community and local culture. Hence, we chose a sport development fund as one attribute in this study in addition to the status quo (no sport development fund).

3.2.5. Extra Payment

Every year, millions of tourists travel around the world. User charges are now a widely accepted idea, and these tourists bring enormous economic benefits to scenic spots and local communities. Tourism expenses can represent tourists' WTP for visiting or participating in activities. Tourists are willing to pay more for higher-quality tourism experiences [53]. Therefore, this study includes tourism expenses as a financial attribute in the CE model to evaluate the monetary value of other attributes. After an open-ended price pretest questionnaire survey, four levels of extra payment were proposed to represent the tourism expense for each person to participate in Kinmen Marathon sport tourism in addition to the status quo (no extra payment).

In summary, multiple attributes were identified for marketing strategies for the Kinmen Marathon, including "authentic cuisine", "providing souvenirs", "tourism experience", "sport development fund", and "extra payment". Fifty pretest questionnaires and interviews were conducted with participants in the Kinmen Marathon from 10 February to 15 February 2019. Through the pretest, we further obtained the attributes of sport develop-

ment funds of TWD 1000, TWD 2000, TWD 3000, and TWD 5000. The attributes and levels are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Attributes and levels of sport tourism marketing of the Kinmen Marathon.

Attribute	Levels	Variable Name
Authentic cuisine	1. Status quo: porridge and vermicelli	$Cuis^{\pm}$
	2. One authentic cuisine	$Cuis^{+}$
	3. Two authentic cuisines	$Cuis^{++}$
Providing souvenirs	1. Status quo: marathon souvenirs	$Souven^{\pm}$
	2. Providing more cultural and creative products	$Souven^{+}$
	3. Providing more exclusive souvenirs	$Souven^{++}$
Tourism experience	1. Status quo: independent	$Travel^{\pm}$
	2. Providing a special interest tourism experience	$Travel^{+}$
	3. Providing an ecotourism activity	$Travel^{++}$
Sport development fund	1. Status quo: no sport development fund	$Fund^{\pm}$
	2. Establishing a sport development fund	$Fund^{+}$
Extra payment/person	1. No extra payment	$Price$
	2. TWD 1000	
	3. TWD 2000	
	4. TWD 3000	
	5. TWD 5000	

Based on previous literature reviews and the theoretical model structure, the hypotheses of this study are as follows:

H1. Respondents choose authentic cuisines as a substitution to increase the utility of sport tourism.

H2. Respondents choose souvenirs as a substitution to increase the utility of sport tourism.

H3. Respondents choose tourism experiences as a substitution to increase the utility of sport tourism.

H4. Respondents choose to establish a sport development fund as a substitution to increase the utility of sport tourism.

3.3. Model

This section describes the economic evaluation model of sport tourism for the Kinmen Marathon and the definitions of the model variables.

3.3.1. Individuals' Preferences for a Marathon Event

The conditional logit (CL) model used in previous studies is the basic CE model and commonly assumes that respondents' preferences are homogeneous. In reality, respondents' preferences are heterogeneous; thus, the CL model is suitable only for evaluating the average preferences of respondents [46,47,54,55]. The random parameter logit (RPL) model is therefore applied to consider unobserved random parameters and estimate respondents' preferences for various attributes and their WTP when exploring individuals' heterogeneity preferences [56,57]. The latent class model (LCM) differentiates groups of participants with different preferences for sport tourism by incorporating individuals' characteristics [51,55,58]. The LCM can help us understand the differential preferences of different groups and is suitable for use in market segmentation by organizers [59]. The empirical model used in this study is as follows:

$$V_{ij} = ASC + \beta_{11}Cuis_j^+ + \beta_{12}Cuis_j^{++} + \beta_{21}Souven_j^+ + \beta_{22}Souven_j^{++} + \beta_{31}Travel_j^+ + \beta_{32}Travel_j^{++} + \beta_4Fund_j^+ + \beta_5Price_j \quad (1)$$

where V_{ij} is the utility function of sport tourism for participants to join the Kinmen Marathon and ASC is a dummy variable used to indicate whether participants choose the current situation or alternatives. A value of 1 indicates that a participant chooses the current situation; otherwise, it is zero. β_{11} and $Cuis^+$ are the coefficients and attribute levels of providing one meal of authentic cuisine; β_{12} and $Cuis^{++}$ are the coefficients and attribute levels of providing two meals of authentic cuisines; β_{21} and $Souven^+$ are the coefficients and attribute levels of cultural and creative products in addition to original souvenirs; β_{22} and $Souven^{++}$ are the coefficients and attribute levels of exclusive souvenirs in addition to original souvenirs; β_{31} and $Travel^+$ are the coefficients and attribute levels of special interest tourism travel in addition to original travel plans; β_{32} and $Travel^{++}$ are the coefficients and attribute levels of ecotourism activities in addition to original travel plans; β_4 and $Fund^+$ are the coefficients and attribute levels of a sport development fund; and β_5 and $Price$ express the additional price for sport tourism participation.

Marginal values can be assessed by calculating the marginal substitution rate of the coefficients of each attribute and the price coefficient [55], as shown in Equation (2):

$$MWTP = - \frac{\beta_i}{\beta_5}, \quad (2)$$

where β_i is the coefficient of levels for each attribute.

3.3.2. Choice Set Design

If all attributes and levels are included in this study, 270 alternative combinations are generated ($3 \times 3 \times 3 \times 2 \times 5 = 270$). This number is beyond the operable scale and could result in covariance. To reduce the number of alternatives and minimize the influence of covariance among attributes, Louviere, et al. [60] suggested using the orthogonal design method. In this study, we applied the orthogonal design method to reduce the combinations to 14 alternatives, including one current situation. For each choice set, there were two choice alternative schemes and one current situation. Each version of the questionnaires contains three choice sets; an example is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. An example of a questionnaire for sport tourism of the Kinmen Marathon.

	Alternative A	Alternative B	Status Quo
Authentic cuisine	Porridge and vermicelli	<u>Two authentic cuisines</u>	Porridge and vermicelli
Providing souvenirs	Marathon souvenir	<u>Providing more exclusive souvenirs</u>	Marathon souvenir
Tourism experience	<u>Ecotourism activity</u>	<u>Special interest tourism</u>	Independent
Sport development fund	<u>Set up</u>	Not set up	Not set up
Extra payment/time/person	<u>TWD 1000</u>	<u>TWD 2000</u>	TWD 0
Choose one	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Note: The words with bold type and underline show hypothetical substitution choices proposed in this study.

3.3.3. Participants' Socioeconomic Data and Experience in Sport Tourism Participation

The questionnaires were designed first through a literature review and discussion with experts and scholars. Samples were collected from participants who engaged in the Kinmen Marathon on 16–17 February 2019, and a total of 1023 valid questionnaires were obtained. Juutinen, Mitani, Mäntymaa, Shoji, Siikamäki and Svento [55] extended the research of Jacobsen and Thorsen [61] by removing the questionnaires of respondents who chose only the option of the status quo in all choice sets. Juutinen, Mitani, Mäntymaa, Shoji, Siikamäki and Svento [55] believed that specific control questions would arise from these questionnaires because these respondents did not truly consider the best option in the choice set and might have lexicographic preferences or protest responses. In the case of sport tourism in marathons, for example, if respondents choose alternatives other than the status quo, they must pay additional fees. However, some respondents protest having to

pay for the alternatives, so they choose the status quo because it does not require additional payment. Therefore, we deleted all samples that chose the current status in all choice sets, as suggested by Juutinen, Mitani, Mäntymaa, Shoji, Siikamäki and Svento [55]. This involved deleting 291 questionnaires that chose the current status in all three sets.

Among the interviewees, 213 (29.1%) participants were participating in the marathon for the first time, while 519 (70.9%) were not. There were 643 (87.8%) participants who were attending the Kinmen Marathon on purpose and 89 (12.2%) who were not. Furthermore, 81 participants (11.1%) were from overseas, and 651 (88.9%) were domestic; 277 participants (37.8%) were female, and 455 (62.2%) were male; 389 participants (53.1%) were unmarried, and 343 (46.9%) were married; 92 (12.6%) participants had an education below college level, and 640 (87.4%) had a college degree or higher; and the average personal monthly income was TWD 56,510.

4. Results

4.1. Estimation of Participants' Heterogeneity Preference for the Kinmen Marathon Event

Sport tourism has become a popular tourism activity and research topic in recent years. A sport tourism trip plan should have multiple attributes, not a single one; moreover, the plan should be adjustable according to the perspectives of participants. Sport tourism is usually planned directly by host organizations, and hallmark events such as marathons may be the only activities provided. Therefore, related tourism activities must be planned by the participants themselves. In this study, with the 2019 Kinmen Marathon as the main sport tourism attraction, participants were interviewed regarding various preferences for sport tourism alternatives to enable us to understand their attribute preferences. The marketing strategies of this study were constructed based on the theory of Pine, Pine, and Gilmore [34], which includes authentic cuisine, providing souvenirs, tourism experience, sport development funds, and price (extra payment) as research attributes. The marketing strategies can be used as a reference for the development of sport tourism. We adopted the suggestion of Juutinen, Mitani, Mäntymaa, Shoji, Siikamäki, and Svento [55] and applied the RPL model to examine the preferences of individual respondents. The goodness-of-fit of this study, with a chi-square value of 538.65210 at a degree of freedom of 15 and a significance level of 1%, supports the use of the RPL model as more suitable than the CL model. The estimated coefficient of the RPL model is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Estimation results of RPL preferences for Kinmen Marathon sport tourism.

Attributes	Willingness to Pay				WTP
	Coefficient	T Value	Std. Dev.		
			Coefficient	T Value	
<i>Cuis</i> ⁺	0.33214	5.81 ***	0.53471	5.82 ***	TWD 662
<i>Cuis</i> ⁺⁺	0.15013	2.58 ***	0.40226	3.03 ***	TWD 302
<i>Souven</i> ⁺	0.23509	4.05 ***	0.36785	3.76 ***	TWD 467
<i>Souven</i> ⁺⁺	0.40826	6.24 ***	0.34308	2.40 **	TWD 820
<i>Travel</i> ⁺	0.05945	1.06	0.42799	4.84 ***	
<i>Travel</i> ⁺⁺	0.53280	8.26 ***	0.00788	0.03	TWD 1066
<i>Fund</i> ⁺	0.43889	10.51 ***	0.23668	2.24 **	TWD 874
<i>Price</i>	−0.00050	−12.86 ***			
Log-likelihood			−2143.22653 ***		
Chi-squared			χ^2 0.01(15) = 538.65210		

*** indicates significance at the 1% level; ** indicates significance at the 5% level.

Regarding the participants' preference for sport tourism in the Kinmen Marathon, the respondents preferred to have one or two authentic cuisines, have more souvenirs in addition to the marathon souvenir, have an ecotourism activity in addition to attending the marathon activity only, and establish a sport development fund at a significance level of 1%. If marketing strategies include these attributes and levels, the participants' WTP will be

increased. Among these preferences, the participants paid the most attention to increasing ecotourism activity with a marginal WTP (MWTP) of TWD 1066, followed by establishing a sport development fund with an MWTP of TWD 874, providing more exclusive souvenirs with an MWTP of TWD 820, adding one more authentic cuisine with an MWTP of TWD 662, providing more cultural and creative products with an MWTP of TWD 467, and adding two more authentic cuisines with an MWTP of TWD 302. The MWTP estimation results are shown in Table 3.

4.2. Market Segmentation of Sport Tourism in the Kinmen Marathon

Through the RPL results, we found heterogeneity in sport tourism in the Kinmen Marathon. Therefore, the LCM was further employed to assess the market segmentation of sport tourism by analyzing individuals' socioeconomic backgrounds and the levels at which they participated in the Kinmen Marathon. The respondents were then characterized into two groups, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Evaluation results of the LCM and MWTP of Kinmen Marathon sport tourism.

Attributes and Levels	Category 1			Category 2		
	Coefficient	T Value	MWTP	Coefficient	T Value	MWTP
<i>Cuis</i> ⁺	0.23573	3.74 ***	524	0.66945	2.89 ***	1339
<i>Cuis</i> ⁺⁺	0.07286	1.08	-	0.33416	1.55	-
<i>Souven</i> ⁺	0.11051	1.61	-	0.89418	2.87 ***	1788
<i>Souven</i> ⁺⁺	0.25436	2.99 ***	565	0.76256	3.15 ***	1525
<i>Travel</i> ⁺	0.06101	0.91	-	-0.01022	-0.05	-
<i>Travel</i> ⁺⁺	0.58408	7.34 ***	1298	0.05581	0.21	-
<i>Fund</i> ⁺	0.26476	5.15 ***	588	1.16309	3.96 ***	2326
<i>Price</i>	-0.00045	-10.01 ***		-0.00050	-3.55 ***	
Proportion		78.6%			21.4%	
Category parameter: Category 1				Coefficient	T value	
Constant				3.45284	4.23 ***	
Joined Kinmen Marathon for the first time				-1.64806	-3.54 ***	
More than 40 years old				-2.51939	-3.62 ***	
Men				-0.55207	-1.31	
Monthly income exceeding TWD60,000				0.81308	1.91 *	
Log-likelihood					-2137.65349	
χ^2 (22 d.f.)					549.79820	

*** indicates significance at the 1% level; * indicates significance at the 10% level.

According to Pine, Pine, and Gilmore [34], the participants were divided into two groups. Those in the first group were mainly younger (under 40 years old), had higher monthly incomes (greater than TWD 60,000), and had participated in the Kinmen Marathon before. These participants preferred entertainment, educational, esthetic, and escapist experiences. In addition to participating in the marathon events for the entertainment experience, they preferred marketing strategies that included one authentic cuisine (with an MWTP of TWD 524) and establishing the sport development fund (TWD 588) to obtain educational experience. These participants also preferred access to exclusive souvenirs (TWD 565) for esthetic experience and participating in ecotourism activity (TWD 1298) for the escapist experience. Through the combination of multiple experiences, these participants in category 1 could obtain the maximum utility of participating in a Kinmen Marathon trip.

In category 2, the participants were mainly over 40 years old, had lower incomes, were participating in the Kinmen Marathon for the first time, and had significant preferences for several sport tourism marketing strategies. In addition to participating in the marathon event for an entertainment experience, they preferred educational and esthetic experience, but they had no significant preference for the escapist experience. These tourists preferred one authentic cuisine (TWD 1339) and establishing a sport development fund (TWD 2326)

for educational experience and preferred more cultural and creative products (TWD 1788) and exclusive souvenirs (TWD 1525) for the esthetic experience.

As a result, the participants in both categories were willing to pay more to expand the levels of these attributes to increase their utility. These results can provide a planning reference for the market segmentation of sport tourism in the future.

4.3. The Economic Value of Hypothetical Marketing Strategies in Sport Tourism

To understand the potential benefits of marketing strategies, we adopted the results of the RPL analysis (Table 3) to further simulate the economic value of different marketing strategies. The results are shown in Table 5. Marketing strategy I focuses on the esthetic experience of the participants. The organizers could provide more exclusive souvenirs to strengthen participants' memories of the Kinmen Marathon. In this marketing strategy, the participants were willing to pay TWD 467 for "providing more cultural and creative products"; their WTP could be a price reference for providing cultural and creative products. These participants were satisfied with entertainment and esthetic experiences. Marketing strategy II focuses on the educational experience that involves absorption into the local lifestyle and culture, enabling the participants to enjoy "two authentic cuisines" and "establish a sport development fund" in addition to participating in the Kinmen Marathon. In this marketing strategy, the participants were willing to pay TWD 1176 for two authentic cuisines and establishing a sport development fund. These participants were satisfied with their entertainment and educational experiences. Marketing strategy III is an integrated strategy in which the participants can have "one posh authentic cuisine", "more exclusive souvenirs", "ecotourism activity", and "establishing a sport development fund"; the participants attracted by this marketing strategy can achieve the highest utility of sport tourism in the Kinmen Marathon. The participants were willing to pay TWD 3422 for the integrated marketing strategy. These participants were satisfied with entertainment, educational, esthetic, and escapist experiences.

Table 5. Welfare values under future scenarios of sport tourism marketing.

Attributes	Scenarios	Esthetic Experience Strategy	Educational Experience Strategy	Integrated Experience Strategy
Authentic cuisine		Current situation	Two authentic cuisines	One authentic cuisine
Providing souvenirs		Providing more cultural and creative products	Current situation	Providing more exclusive souvenirs
Tourism experience		Current situation	Current situation	Ecotourism activity
Sport development fund		Current situation	Establishing a sport development fund	Establishing a sport development fund
Extra payment (95% CI)		TWD 467 (TWD 449–487)	TWD 1176 (TWD 1147–1206)	TWD 3422 (TWD 3360–3482)

Note 1: CI: confidence interval. Note 2: The words with bold type and underline show substitution choices derived in this study.

5. Discussion

In this study, the RPL model was used to examine the heterogeneity of the participants' preferences for sport tourism and to further estimate their preferences and MWTP for sport tourism attributes. Our results showed that in marketing strategies for sport tourism, the respondents preferred ecotourism activities the most, indicating that they were interested in exploring Kinmen's natural resources, history, culture, or other features. The results showed that in participating in the Kinmen Marathon, the participants preferred not only the entertainment experience but also all levels of educational and esthetic experiences. However, regarding the escapist experience, only ecotourism activity was preferred. Therefore, in developing a Kinmen tourism marketing strategy combined with the marathon event, participants should be allowed to freely choose whether to take part in educational,

esthetic, and escapist experiences. This marketing strategy would include experiential activities in addition to participating in the marathon race, such as authentic cuisine, access to more cultural and creative products, exclusive souvenirs, and ecotourism activities. Tourists could liberally choose the projects in which they wanted to participate according to their own preferences to satisfy their desire for entertainment, educational, esthetic, and escapist experiences. We integrated entertainment, educational, esthetic, and escapist experiences into the economic evaluation model, as shown in Figure 2. Sport tourism managers can integrate the aspects of authentic cuisine, providing souvenirs, tourism experience, and sport development funds, with extra WTP, into marathon-related sport tourism (MRST) for sustainable sport tourism [35,40,41,47,52,59].

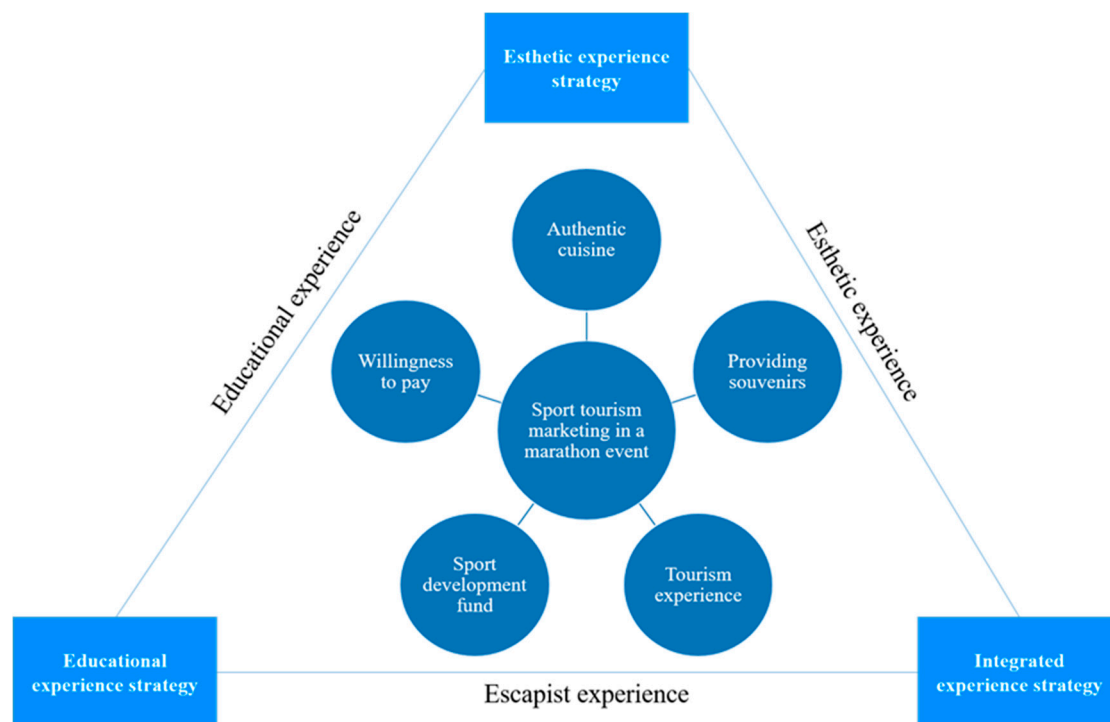


Figure 2. The economic evaluation model of sport tourism marketing of the Kinmen Marathon.

Alexandris, et al. [62] and Yoon and Uysal [63] noted that the pull factor of the tourism industry includes local culture and authentic cuisine. There are many traditional foods in Kinmen, such as rice porridge, beef noodle soup, rice dumplings in fermented rice soup, and clay-oven rolls. These traditional foods have their own historical and cultural background. Integrating traditional food sampling into tourism plans will enable tourists to participate actively and gain more cultural and historical educational experiences. Currently, porridge and vermicelli are provided for participants in the Kinmen Marathon. If one or two additional meals of authentic cuisine can be provided, sport tourism in Kinmen will be more attractive to tourists.

Hume [40] and Li and Ryan [41] noted that souvenirs allow tourists to retain their travel experience, and the more culture and heritage the souvenirs represent, the higher tourists' preference will be. Both studies showed that participants preferred to obtain more cultural and creative products in addition to original souvenirs. If participants can obtain more exclusive souvenirs, especially one-of-a-kind souvenirs for the year, they will have more memories of participating in the marathon for that particular year. Li and Ryan [64] and Li and Ryan [41] proposed that remembrance is one of the most important factors of tourism activities. They considered a case in which buying unique souvenirs in North Korea reminded Chinese tourists of their trip, indicating that the Chinese tourists were very impressed by the special services of souvenir sellers in North Korea. Our study showed

similar results in that the participants preferred obtaining more cultural and creative products as well as exclusive souvenirs each year. Therefore, we suggest that in addition to offering the original commemorative sorghum wine as a souvenir, organizers should design and offer other marathon souvenirs based on special images of the Minnan or battlefield culture of Kinmen every year. Through the possession of such souvenirs, participants can immerse themselves in their memories of their visit to Kinmen. The sensory and perceptual stimulation of these memories can help participants obtain esthetic experiences.

Similar to Zong, Cheng, Lee, and Hsu [46] and Chaminuka, Groeneveld, Selomane, and Van Ierland [47], our results show that tourists attached the greatest interest to ecotourism when participating in Kinmen Marathon sport tourism. One of the key principles of ecotourism is an active contribution to cultural and natural heritage [47]. Kinmen has a special geographic location: it belongs to Taiwan but is far from Taiwan and very close to China. It is located on an outlying island of Taiwan and can be accessed only by air and sea transportation. It may be more difficult for tourists to participate in Kinmen Marathon events than in other marathon events. However, it is also because of the difficult means of transportation that Kinmen can maintain special conditions for developing ecotourism. The marathon competition is held in Kinmen, and Kinmen National Park is commonly included in the course, which makes the marathon a unique experience. Kinmen has retained much of its particular background of battlefield culture and history, making it a famous tourism attraction with many opportunities for ecotourism, battlefield and Minnan culture, and natural resources. The local history, battlefield preservation, aspect as a hometown for overseas Chinese, sorghum wine production, food, and geographical environment are attractive to tourists. Therefore, tourism managers may apply market segmentation strategies to the MRST program based on the systematic analysis of this study and arrange for marathon participants to participate in battlefield culture tours, such as visits to Zaishan Tunnel or Jiugong Tunnel. In addition, arrangements can be made for participants to stay in B&Bs in traditional Minnan buildings with authentic cuisines. Attractions and experiential activities, such as making spring rolls or the red turtle-print cake (An-Ku-Kueh) or visiting Chen Jinglan's Western-style house, can also be included in tourism activity planning.

In terms of sport development funds, the Boston Athletic Association [52] proposed that nonprofit organizations participate in the Boston Marathon. The funds obtained by nonprofit organizations can be used to promote sports and health in the local community. The current organizers of the Kinmen Marathon focus mainly on promoting marathon activity. Therefore, although there is a charge for the marathon, it cannot make a profit. According to the results of this study, participants have a preference for establishing a sport development fund. Based on the results of this study, establishing a sport development fund could be included in the planning of the Kinmen Marathon, and part of the package fee of tourism for the Kinmen Marathon could be set aside to establish this fund. In addition to promoting the welfare of participants, the funds could be used to develop community sport activities or improve the exercise and health habits of local residents to achieve mutually beneficial development.

6. Conclusion and Limitations

6.1. Conclusions

The results of the CE analysis in this study indicate that the participants had a preference for multiple attributes of sport tourism, which has not been examined in previous studies of sport tourism. As mentioned by Boxall, Adamowicz, Swait, Williams, and Louviere [21], past studies have not considered substitutability when evaluating the economic value of sport tourism trips. This study contributes to setting aside the practices of previous studies and instead providing alternative attributes of sport tourism trips to make substitution an option. The authorities should consider including these options in MRST to further expand its economic and tourism value. According to the results of our study, if authentic cuisine, exclusive souvenirs, ecotourism, and sport development funds can be extended to the marketing strategies of sport tourism, this strategy could increase not only

the preference and motivation of participants to participate in sporting events but also the considered substitutability of marketing strategies for sport tourism. This study further proposes three marketing strategies as well as the estimated WTP for sport tourism, which can contribute to a practical reference for the future practice of sport tourism events and resource allocation. Finally, this study divides the respondents into two categories with differentiated preferences and WTP according to their socioeconomic backgrounds. In this way, tourism organizers can target certain types of participants to plan marketing strategies and market segmentation.

6.2. Research Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research and Practice

The samples in this study were collected only during the Kinmen Marathon. Whether this source of samples is applicable to other regions may need to be tested in future studies. Therefore, we suggest that in future research, different destinations for different events and samples from different sources can be used to test whether the results of this study can be applied to sport tourism of marathon events or other related events in other regions. In future research and empirical practice, scholars and marketers can refer to the esthetic, educational and integrated experience strategies proposed in this study.

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Informed Consent Statement: Verbal informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study. This research used an anonymous questionnaire survey in public places. No personal data that could directly or indirectly identify the participants were obtained during the research process. All the respondents verbally agreed to accept the investigation of this study, and the interview could be terminated at any time without any reason at the interviewee's request.

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