

## Article

# Dajia Mazu Pilgrimage Show: Exploring the Sustainable Development of Taiwan's Religious Tourism from the Perspectives of Attraction, Happiness, and Revisit Intention

Chih-Yu Liu <sup>1</sup>, Cheng-Ping Li <sup>2,\*</sup> , Chao-Chief Chen <sup>3</sup>, Chin-Hsien Hsu <sup>4,\*</sup>  and Cheng-Hsien Lin <sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Tourism Management, Wuyi University, Jiangmen 529020, China

<sup>2</sup> Department of Sports Management, Minghsin University of Science and Technology, Hsinchu 30401, Taiwan

<sup>3</sup> Department of Leisure and Recreation Management, Asia University, Taichung 41354, Taiwan

<sup>4</sup> Department of Leisure Industry Management, National Chin-Yi University of Technology, Taichung 41170, Taiwan

\* Correspondence: sm2015@must.edu.tw (C.-P.L.); hsu6292000@yahoo.com.tw (C.-H.H.)

**Abstract:** The Dajia Mazu pilgrimage is one of the most well-known events in the world. It not only satisfies tourists' spiritual desires for religious beliefs but also drives the development of destination tourism. In recent years, the tourism industry has been severely impacted by COVID-19. However, tourists participating in the Dajia Mazu pilgrimage continue to do so without fear of the pandemic. Therefore, understanding the relationship between tourists' attraction to religious tourism, perception of happiness, and willingness to revisit can contribute to the sustainable development of religious tourism, especially in the context of COVID-19. Accordingly, this study explored the sustainable development of Taiwan's religious tourism from the perspectives of tourism attraction, experiential value, happiness, and revisit intention. The study conducted quantitative research to address the research issue. Three hundred and fifty valid questionnaires were collected through on-site questionnaire distribution, and the data were analyzed by descriptive statistics and the structural equation partial least squares method. According to the results, the tourism attraction of the Dajia Mazu pilgrimage and the experiential value of tourists significantly impact happiness and revisit intention. Happiness is part of the intermediary variables of tourism attraction, experiential value, and revisit intention. Notably, the attraction of the Dajia Mazu pilgrimage and the experiential value pursued by tourists have not diminished despite the pandemic. Instead, the attraction has become an opportunity for tourists to seek spiritual comfort and support sustainable religious tourism development. Accordingly, spiritual comfort and maintaining their health and safety can be considered strategies to promote the sustainability of religious tourism in Taiwan.

**Keywords:** Dajia Mazu pilgrimage; religious tourism; attraction; happiness; pandemic



check for updates

**Citation:** Liu, C.-Y.; Li, C.-P.; Chen, C.-C.; Hsu, C.-H.; Lin, C.-H. Dajia Mazu Pilgrimage Show: Exploring the Sustainable Development of Taiwan's Religious Tourism from the Perspectives of Attraction, Happiness, and Revisit Intention. *Sustainability* **2023**, *15*, 8744. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15118744>

Academic Editors: Rubén C. Lois-González, Lucrezia Lopez and Rossella Moscarelli

Received: 1 April 2023  
Revised: 24 May 2023  
Accepted: 24 May 2023  
Published: 29 May 2023



**Copyright:** © 2023 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

## 1. Introduction

Attraction and revisitation are crucial factors in the success of religious tourism. Religious sites and events often hold great cultural and historical significance and can draw visitors seeking spiritual fulfillment or a connection to their faith. Positive experiences during the initial visit can lead to repeat visits and increased tourism revenue for the host destination [1]. The Mazu pilgrimage, one of the world's three major religious activities, was still held in 2020 and 2021 in Taiwan, attracting more than one million tourists to participate. Due to the uniqueness of religious activities and tourists' beliefs, thousands and thousands of tourists participate in the Mazu pilgrimage every year [2]. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, while all other tourism activities have come to a halt, the Dajia Mazu pilgrimage continues to attract thousands of tourists. Therefore, examining the relationship between the attraction of the Dajia Mazu pilgrimage and tourists' willingness to revisit can contribute to the sustainable development of religious tourism.

Tourism attraction is the core element of tourism activities and one of the main reasons for tourists to visit and revisit [3]. It is also a medium for tourists to seek and meet their experiential values, such as authenticity and learning experience, to achieve their tourism needs [4]. Urry [5] advocated that tourists look for unforgettable and meaningful experiences in traveling rather than snatching a glance at the scenery. For instance, Son, Xu [4] verified that novelty pursuit, sensory pleasure, supreme tourism experience, authenticity, prestige, and cultural exploration are the main factors that attract them to religious tourism. This addresses how people's daily lives are deeply affected by their religious beliefs, including the arrangement of holidays and tourism destinations to meet their cognitive choice values [5]. Therefore, the experiential value for religious tourists determines their willingness to continue participating in the event, and it is one of the important predictive variables in this study.

Happiness is a deep emotion that can be further generated when tourists are satisfied with their tourism experience. Not only does it significantly impact tourists' revisit intention, but it also relates to tourism attraction and the tourists' experiential value [6–8]. Tourists' happiness comes from the attraction characteristics of tourist destinations that meet their needs, which then sublimate satisfaction into happiness [9]. In addition, happiness can make tourists feel that their tourism experience is valuable [6], which boosts their revisit intentions. In religion, people's happiness comes from their faith, devotion, and sense of belonging [10]. The happiness of religious tourists can be considered to come from their participation in religious activities, through which they practice their religious beliefs and regard religious activities as the main body of tourism. Especially during the COVID-19 period, the happiness brought by religious tourism may generate hope and alleviate negative emotions. Therefore, the perception of happiness can be seen as a key factor in promoting the sustainable development of religious tourism. However, there has been little research conducted in this area.

Religious tourism has been a hot topic in the past two years, with most topics focusing on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic [11,12], coping strategies [13], risk management [14], and the development trend after the pandemic [15]. These topics aimed to understand the problems and potential solutions of religious tourism development during the pandemic. However, few studies on tourists' behavior in the context of the pandemic attempted to understand religious tourism's sustainable development. Sustainable development is an essential issue for tourists, destinations, and religious activities. The loss of sustainability is equivalent to the loss of faith in religion. Tourists' satisfaction, experiential value, perception of happiness, and revisit intention are the conditions that constitute the sustainable development of religious tourism. Particularly, religious tourism faced serious impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic. It is necessary to explore how to promote the sustainability of religions. Therefore, this study focused on exploring the relationship between tourism attractions, experiential value, happiness, and revisiting intention in the Dajia Mazu pilgrimage in the context of sustainable development. In particular, this study used empirical research to understand tourists' sustainable behaviors in the post-COVID-19 era.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Tourism Attraction

Attraction has been widely regarded as the core of the tourism process, which prompts tourists to visit tourist destinations, participate in activities, and travel [3]. Tourism attraction refers to tourism resources used to meet tourists' needs for entertainment and education [16]. It can also be regarded as the pull factor for tourists [17]. In other words, the attraction of religious tourism encompasses the related resources to meet people's needs to participate in religious activities. Nolan and Nolan [18] stated that the attraction of religious tourism could be divided into pilgrimage shrines, religious tourist attractions, and festivals with religious associations. However, the attraction of religious tourism is not only related to religious activities. According to the study by Liro [17], a tourist attraction to the Divine Mercy Sanctuary, Kraków, includes business meetings, buying religious items,

attending cultural events, sightseeing, cultural heritage, and objects of worship. On the other hand, the research on tourist motivation for the Dajia Mazu pilgrimage by Chen and Lee [19] concluded that complex seeking, experience exploration, linking with gods, social relationships and blessings, and being lively are the main reasons that attract tourists to participate in the grand event.

Attraction is an essential factor for tourists to generate positive emotions. For tourists, attraction is a factor that makes people feel happy and enjoy activities, which plays a vital role in leisure activities [20]. According to the study by Ito and Hikoji [21], the attraction of master games in sports has a significantly positive impact on the happiness of Taiwanese and foreign tourists. However, the relationship between tourism attraction and happiness seems to have differences due to different tourism and leisure activities. Matsumoto et al. [22] found in a study on the happiness of heavy-diving tourists that although attraction does not have a direct and significant impact on happiness, it satisfies tourists before happiness can be generated. Therefore, it is necessary to explore whether there is still a significant relationship between the tourism attraction of the Dajia Mazu pilgrimage and tourists' happiness in the context of sustainable development. Hence, this study puts forward the following assumption:

**H1:** *The tourism attraction of the Dajia Mazu pilgrimage significantly impacts tourists' happiness in a sustainable development context.*

Tourism attraction is an essential factor that determines whether tourists will revisit their tourist destinations and continue to participate in activities [20]. Attraction has a significant relationship with tourists' intrinsic motivation; when perceiving tourist attractions, tourists are encouraged to participate in tourism [23]. There is substantial research evidence confirming that tourist attractions significantly influence tourists' revisit intentions [24–26]. For example, Sinambela [23] verified that tourist attractions significantly affect revisit intention. From the viewpoint of attraction, tourists will be more involved in tourism and leisure activities when they feel happiness in such activities [22]. In other words, happiness serves as an important mediator in inducing tourists' sustained participation in activities. Numerous studies have also confirmed that happiness can serve as an effective mediating variable for revisit intention [27,28]. Hence, this study puts forward the following assumptions:

**H2:** *The tourism attraction of the Dajia Mazu pilgrimage significantly impacts tourists' revisit intention in a sustainable development context.*

**H3:** *The tourism attraction of the Dajia Mazu pilgrimage significantly impacts revisit intention through tourists' happiness in a sustainable development context.*

## 2.2. Experiential Value

Experiential value refers to consumers' perceptions of the value of products and services through direct use and indirect observation [29]. Tourists' experiential value is the value perception generated by their direct and indirect experience of tourism products and services [30]. It can be divided into emotional value and functional value. Emotional value is the experience generated by tourists' feelings and emotional interaction during or after traveling, while functional value is the value generated by comparing the perceived utility benefits and tourism cost investment [31]. In other words, emotional value comes from perceived experience, while functional value comes from rational experience. Experiential value has a significant impact on tourists' psychology and behavior. Many studies have confirmed that experiential value has an impact on tourists' satisfaction [1,30], happiness [32], experiential quality [30], trust [30], corporate reputation [30], and revisit intention [1,32]. Fu and Wang [32] found in their study on tourists' behavioral intention at the Taipei International Travel Fair that tourists' experiential value significantly impacts happiness and behavioral intention and significantly indirectly impacts behavioral intention through happiness. Therefore, based on the literature reviewed above, there are

significant direct and indirect effects between tourists' experiential value, happiness, and revisit intention [1,32]. Accordingly, this study put forward the following hypotheses:

**H4:** *The tourists' experiential value in the Dajia Mazu pilgrimage significantly impacts their happiness in a sustainable development context.*

**H5:** *The tourists' experiential value in the Dajia Mazu pilgrimage significantly impacts their revisit intention in a sustainable development context.*

**H6:** *The tourists' experiential value in the Dajia Mazu pilgrimage significantly impacts their revisit intention through happiness in a sustainable development context.*

### 2.3. Happiness

Happiness is a psychological feeling of quality of life and hedonic happiness [33]. According to positive psychology, the sources of happiness can be divided into subjective and psychological well-being. Subjective well-being refers to various phenomena of human happiness, including emotional expression and judgment of satisfaction. Its main components include satisfaction and positive and negative emotions, which usually relate to personal characteristics [34,35]. On the contrary, psychological well-being relates to personal potential, in which happiness is generated by pursuing personal goals. This kind of happiness usually includes two critical aspects: self-realization and self-growth [34,36]. The source of happiness in the tourism context usually refers to the subjective well-being generated by tourists' emotional display (i.e., satisfaction and experiential value) of tourism products and services in pursuing pleasurable experiences. Happiness varies according to tourists' characteristics and the types of tourist destinations and activities [37]. The happiness of religious tourists comes from the interaction between ritual activities and their own beliefs and values [38]. Kim et al. [39] argued that the pilgrimage and ritual participation of religious tourism are conducive to satisfying the happiness pursued by tourists. Many studies have confirmed that tourists' happiness relates to their revisit intention [28,33,40], but only a few empirical studies have focused on the relationship between the happiness of religious tourists and their revisit intention based on sustainability. Therefore, based on the review of the above literature, this study puts forward the following assumption:

**H7:** *Tourists' happiness during the Dajia Mazu pilgrimage significantly impacts their revisit intention in a sustainable development context.*

### 2.4. Revisit Intention

Revisit intention is an essential factor for the success of tourism development [41]. Tourists revisiting destinations can reduce the cost of marketing and promotion and make substantial contributions to the profitability and sustainable development of tourism destinations [42]. Hence, studies on tourists' revisit intentions are prevalent in literature. Many factors affect religious tourists' revisit intention, including electronic word-of-mouth [43], destination consumption [44], attitude [43,44], religious input [44], satisfaction [44], subjective norms [43], perceived behavior control [43], and experiential attributes [45]. These influencing factors significantly impact religious tourists' revisit intentions. However, this premise begs the question of whether there would be different results in a sustainable development context. Although related literature has shown that tourism attraction, experiential value, and happiness significantly impact tourists' revisit intention, there is no discussion of these four variables in the context of religious tourism. Based on the above literature review, this study set up the framework of tourism attraction, experiential value, happiness, and revisit intention in the Dajia Mazu pilgrimage in the context of the pandemic, as shown in Figure 1.

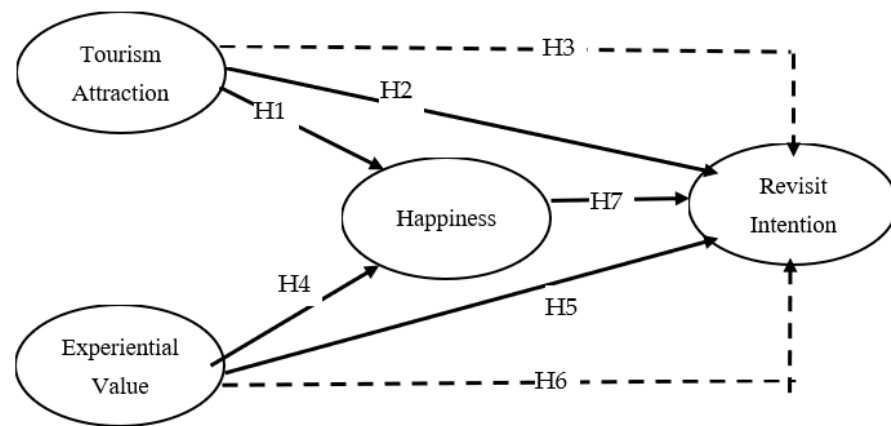


Figure 1. Research framework.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Research Design

This study investigated the impacts of tourism attraction, experiential value, and happiness derived from the Dajia Mazu pilgrimage on tourists' revisit intention, as well as any differences among believers and tourists based on demographic variables. To achieve the research objectives, a quantitative research approach was selected, and a questionnaire survey was conducted to collect data. The research questionnaire was compiled by referring to relevant literature, and a pre-test was conducted to ensure its face validity. The study enrolled adult participants over the age of 20. The data were collected through the distribution of physical questionnaires. Subsequently, the collected data were analyzed using statistical software, and the results were presented.

#### 3.2. Data Collection

This study selected tourists who were at least 20 years old and participated in the Dajia Mazu pilgrimage as the respondents through convenient sampling. In addition, tourists must have left their residential places and partially or entirely participated in the Dajia Mazu pilgrimage activities. Therefore, people under the age of 20 were not within the scope of this study. In this study, a physical paper questionnaire was used for data collection. The places where the questionnaire was distributed were based on the driving and starting places of the Dajia Mazu pilgrimage announced by the Dajia Jenn Lann Temple [46], including the Changhua City Nanyao Temple, Siluo Township Fuhsing Temple, Hsingang Township Fengtien Temple, Hsingang Township Fuhsing Temple, Beidou Township Dien-an Temple, Changhua City Tienhou Temple, Chingshui Chaohsing Temple, and the Dajia Jenn Lann Temple. The distribution date of the questionnaire was 12–20 June 2020. Before the questionnaire was distributed, the age and residential places were confirmed with the respondents, and the questionnaire respondents had to divulge whether they were residents or tourists, so this study could filter out those who were not included. During this period, four hundred questionnaires were distributed, and three hundred and ninety were returned. After excluding invalid questionnaires, the response is extremely incomplete; there were three hundred and fifty valid questionnaires with an effective recovery rate of 94.5%.

#### 3.3. Measures

The research questionnaire employed in this study consisted of three parts. The first part was the scale for measuring tourism attraction, experiential value, happiness, and revisit intention, as shown in Table 1. The scale for tourism attractions comprised six items based on the definition by Hu and Wall [16]. The scale for experiential value consisted of five items based on the definition of tourists' experiential value proposed by Wu et al. [30]. The happiness scale comprised 14 items based on the definition of tourists' happiness proposed by Liu [34]. Finally, the scale for revisit intention comprised seven items based



on the definition by Abbasi et al. [42]. All the scales utilized a 5-point Likert scale, with “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” indicating 5 to 1 points, respectively. The second part of the questionnaire comprised the demographic background variables, including gender, age, occupation, residential place, educational level, and monthly income.

**Table 1.** Scales of tourism attraction, experiential value, happiness, and revisit intention.

| Variables          | Item   |
|--------------------|--|
| Tourism Attraction | 1. Mazu pilgrimage has a unique religious background and cultural meaning (TA1)  |
|                    | 2. Mazu pilgrimage’s sacred sedan-chair circumnavigation activities are innovative in design and retain history and culture (TA2)              |
|                    | 3. Mazu pilgrimage’s temple festival exchange activities have inheritance significance (TA3)   |
|                    | 4. Mazu pilgrimage and stationed temples have rich history and culture (TA4)   |
|                    | 5. Mazu pilgrimage and stationed cities have perfect economic and people’s livelihood facilities (TA5)   |
|                    | 6. Mazu Pilgrimage and stationed cities have well-developed urban folkway culture (TA6)  |
| Experiential Value | 7. Participating in the Mazu pilgrimage makes me feel fresh and special (EV7)  |
|                    | 8. Participating in the Mazu pilgrimage can satisfy my curiosity (EV8)   |
|                    | 9. Participating in the Mazu pilgrimage can help me integrate into the group (EV9)   |
|                    | 10. Participating in the Mazu pilgrimage can promote friendship between myself and my relatives and friends (EV10)                             |
|                    | 11. Mazu pilgrimage’s folk customs and sacrificial activities are rich in content (EV11)   |
| Happiness          | 12. I feel very happy after participation (H12)  |
|                    | 13. Life after participation is full of rewards (H13)  |
|                    | 14. Life after participation is happy (H14)  |
|                    | 15. I feel full of infinite energy after participation (H15)   |
|                    | 16. Life after participation is full of hope (H16)   |
|                    | 17. I feel a sense of accomplishment after participation (H17)   |
|                    | 18. I enhance self-affirmation after participation (H18)   |
|                    | 19. I’m smiling after participation (H19)  |
|                    | 20. I’m full of charm after participation (H20)  |
|                    | 21. I understand the meaning of life after participation (H21)   |
| Revisit Intention  | 22. Future goals are affirmed after participation (H22)  |
|                    | 23. Life after participation is close to ideal (H23)   |
|                    | 24. Quality of life is improved after participation (H24)  |
|                    | 25. I feel safe in life after participation (H25)  |
|                    | 26. I’m willing to participate in the Mazu pilgrimage even if there are other overseas activities with low costs (RI26)                        |
|                    | 27. I’m willing to participate in the Mazu pilgrimage even if it is inconvenient due to the development status of the stationed temples (RI27) |
|                    | 28. I’m willing to participate in the Mazu pilgrimage even if it is inconvenient due to the development status of the stationed cities (RI28)  |
|                    | 29. I’m willing to share the participation experience with relatives and friends (RI29)  |
|                    | 30. I’m willing to share the participation experience with unknown friends (RI30)  |
|                    | 31. The participation experience becomes a topic of chat and discussion (RI31)   |
|                    | 32. I’m willing to participate in the Mazu pilgrimage again (RI32)   |

### 3.4. Ethical Consideration

In adherence to the standards of research ethics, this study employed an anonymous questionnaire survey to ensure that the respondents' data remained confidential and unidentifiable. Only respondents aged 20 or above were eligible to participate in the study, while those below this age limit were excluded. The questionnaire included a front-page section containing the content of informed consent. The respondents were required to read and comprehend the purpose of the research and the corresponding rights of the researchers, including the freedom to participate in the questionnaire survey and withdraw from it at any stage. Upon understanding and agreement, respondents could voluntarily participate in the survey. In the event of unwillingness or withdrawal midway, the researchers ensured that the respondents' rights and interests were duly respected without any unfavorable consequences. The collected data were reviewed and analyzed solely by the researchers and used exclusively for academic research purposes. Upon publication of the study, the researchers committed to destroying the data personally.

### 3.5. Data Analysis

This study used descriptive statistics to analyze the demographic background data of the sample as well as the average, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis of the items of tourism attraction, experiential value, happiness, and revisit intention. In addition, Smart-PLS 3.0 was employed to test the research scale's reliability and validity and verify the relationship between tourism attraction, experiential value, happiness, and revisit intention.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Demographic

The analysis results of the demographic background data of this sample (Table 2) indicated that female tourists were slightly more (54.6%) than male tourists (45.4%). In addition, most tourists were 20–30 years old (39.4%). Tourists were mainly engaged in the service industry (22.6%), and nearly two-thirds of the tourists lived in central Taiwan (74.3%). Most tourists had a university education (39.4%) and an average monthly income of NT\$20,001–40,000.

**Table 2.** Tourists' demographic.

| Variables                 | Quantity | Percentage % | Variable                     | Quantity | Percentage % |
|---------------------------|----------|--------------|------------------------------|----------|--------------|
| <b>Gender</b>             |          |              | <b>Age</b>                   |          |              |
| Male                      | 159      | 45.4         | 20–30 years old              | 138      | 39.4         |
| Female                    | 191      | 54.6         | 31–40 years old              | 57       | 16.3         |
| <b>Occupation</b>         |          |              | 41–50 years old              | 63       | 18.0         |
| Student                   | 77       | 22           | 51–60 years old              | 64       | 18.3         |
| Teacher                   | 24       | 6.9          | More than 60 years old       | 28       | 8.0          |
| Soldier                   | 9        | 2.6          | <b>Residence</b>             |          |              |
| Policemen                 | 7        | 2            | Northern                     | 51       | 14.6         |
| Business                  | 43       | 12.3         | Central                      | 260      | 74.3         |
| Service industry          | 79       | 22.6         | Southern                     | 32       | 9.1          |
| Labor                     | 39       | 11.1         | Eastern                      | 4        | 1.1          |
| Literary creation and art | 3        | 0.9          | Offshore                     | 3        | 0.9          |
| Others                    | 69       | 19.7         | <b>Monthly income (NT\$)</b> |          |              |
| <b>Educational level</b>  |          |              | Less than 20,000             | 125      | 35.7         |
| Below junior high school  | 69       | 19.7         | 20,001–40,000                | 159      | 45.4         |
| Senior high school        | 135      | 38.6         | 40,001–60,000                | 47       | 13.4         |
| University                | 138      | 39.4         | More than 60,001             | 19       | 5.4          |
| Institute above           | 8        | 2.3          |                              |          |              |

### 4.2. Reliability and Validity

To avoid affecting the estimation and test results of the structural equation model, the researchers of this study ensured that the sample data were verified before analysis—that is,

the absolute values of kurtosis and skew of the observed variables should be less than ten and three, respectively. When the observed variables meet the above conditions, the data meet the standard of a normal distribution [47]. The absolute values of tourism attraction (skew:  $-0.80$  to  $-0.24$ ; kurtosis:  $-0.20$  to  $1.05$ ), experiential value (skew:  $-0.56$  to  $-0.31$ ; kurtosis:  $-0.64$  to  $0.18$ ), Happiness (skew:  $-0.36$  to  $-0.01$ ; kurtosis:  $-0.57$  to  $0.16$ ), and revisit intention (skew:  $-0.61$  to  $-0.23$ ; kurtosis:  $-0.21$  to  $0.56$ ) for skew and kurtosis were all less than 3 and 10, respectively. Thus, the structural equation in this study was suitable for analysis by structural equation.

In terms of measuring the reliability and validity of the scale (Tables 3 and 4), Cronbach's  $\alpha$ , construct reliability, average extraction variance, convergent validity, and discriminant validity were utilized as the evaluation criteria [47]. All potential variables showed Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficients greater than 0.90, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. The construct reliability coefficients were higher than 0.90, indicating a strong correlation between the observed variables. Moreover, the average extraction variance exceeded 0.60, indicating that more than half of the explanatory variances had good explanatory power for potential variables originating from the observed variables. The factor loads of the observed variables were all higher than 0.70, demonstrating that the observed variables effectively reflected potential variables. Discriminant validity analysis indicated that the root coefficient of the average extraction variance of all potential variables was higher than the correlation coefficient between any two variables, affirming the ability to distinguish the potential variables effectively [47]. Consequently, the research scale exhibited sound reliability and validity.

**Table 3.** Reliability and validity analysis of scale.

| Variable           | Item | Factor Load | Cronbach's $\alpha$ | Construct Reliability | Average Extraction Variance |
|--------------------|------|-------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Tourism Attraction | TA1  | 0.84        | 0.90                | 0.92                  | 0.66                        |
|                    | TA2  | 0.88        |                     |                       |                             |
|                    | TA3  | 0.85        |                     |                       |                             |
|                    | TA4  | 0.80        |                     |                       |                             |
|                    | TA5  | 0.75        |                     |                       |                             |
|                    | TA6  | 0.76        |                     |                       |                             |
| Experiential Value | EV7  | 0.85        | 0.90                | 0.93                  | 0.72                        |
|                    | EV8  | 0.87        |                     |                       |                             |
|                    | EV9  | 0.86        |                     |                       |                             |
|                    | EV10 | 0.81        |                     |                       |                             |
|                    | EV11 | 0.85        |                     |                       |                             |
| Happiness          | H12  | 0.77        | 0.96                | 0.96                  | 0.63                        |
|                    | H13  | 0.81        |                     |                       |                             |
|                    | H14  | 0.77        |                     |                       |                             |
|                    | H15  | 0.84        |                     |                       |                             |
|                    | H16  | 0.83        |                     |                       |                             |
|                    | H17  | 0.79        |                     |                       |                             |
|                    | H18  | 0.80        |                     |                       |                             |
|                    | H19  | 0.81        |                     |                       |                             |
|                    | H20  | 0.80        |                     |                       |                             |
|                    | H21  | 0.82        |                     |                       |                             |
|                    | H22  | 0.79        |                     |                       |                             |
|                    | H23  | 0.77        |                     |                       |                             |
| Revisit Intention  | RI26 | 0.77        | 0.90                | 0.92                  | 0.62                        |
|                    | RI27 | 0.83        |                     |                       |                             |
|                    | RI28 | 0.79        |                     |                       |                             |
|                    | RI29 | 0.83        |                     |                       |                             |
|                    | RI30 | 0.76        |                     |                       |                             |
|                    | RI31 | 0.71        |                     |                       |                             |
|                    | RI32 | 0.82        |                     |                       |                             |



**Table 4.** Discriminant validity.

|    | H           | EV          | RI          | TA          |
|----|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| H  | <b>0.79</b> |             |             |             |
| EV | 0.55        | <b>0.85</b> |             |             |
| RI | 0.68        | 0.59        | <b>0.79</b> |             |
| TA | 0.45        | 0.61        | 0.53        | <b>0.81</b> |

Note: H = happiness; EV = experiential value; RI = revisit intention; TA = tourism attraction; The diagonal cells in bold indicate the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct, while the off-diagonal cells represent the correlation coefficients between two constructs.

#### 4.3. Model Fit

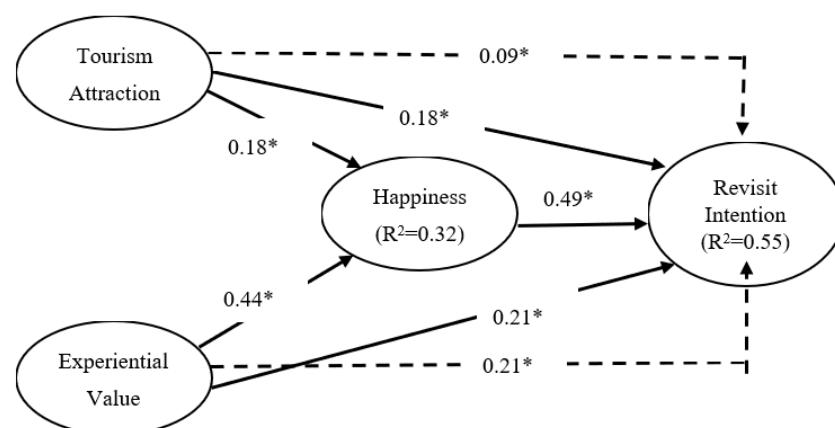
Goodness-of-fit (GoF) is the essential model assessment index of the structural equation partial least squares method, and its numerical value represents the explanatory capability of observed values. Akter et al. suggested that a GoF greater than 0.36 represents that the model has high fitness; a GoF between 0.25 and 0.35 represents that the model has moderate fitness; and a GoF between 0.10 and 0.24 represents that the mode has acceptable fitness [48]. The formula for GoF is as follows:

$$\text{GoF} = \sqrt{\text{Average extraction variance} \times \text{average explanatory variance}}$$

This research model's GoF was 0.54 after calculation. Therefore, the model of tourism attraction, experiential value, happiness, and revisit intention of the Dajia Mazu pilgrimage in this study had good fitness.

#### 4.4. Structural Model Analysis

According to the results of the structural model analysis (Figure 2), the tourist attraction of the Dajia Mazu pilgrimage in the context of the pandemic had a significant direct impact on tourists' happiness ( $\beta = 0.18^*$ ;  $* p < 0.05$ ) and revisit intention ( $\beta = 0.18^*$ ;  $* p < 0.05$ ). Similarly, tourists' experiential value had a significant direct impact on their happiness ( $\beta = 0.44^*$ ;  $* p < 0.05$ ) and revisit intention ( $\beta = 0.21^*$ ;  $* p < 0.05$ ). Judging from the regression coefficient, the impact of experiential value on happiness and revisit intention was higher than that of tourism attraction. Furthermore, tourists' happiness significantly affected their revisit intention ( $\beta = 0.49^*$ ;  $* p < 0.05$ ).



**Figure 2.** The model of tourism attraction, experiential value, happiness, and revisit intention of the Dajia Mazu pilgrimage in the COVID-19 context. Note:  $* = p < 0.05$ .

In terms of indirect impact, tourism attraction ( $\beta = 0.09^*$ ;  $* p < 0.05$ ) and experiential value ( $\beta = 0.21^*$ ;  $* p < 0.05$ ) had a significant indirect impact on tourists' revisit intention through their happiness. Happiness played a part in the mediating variables among tourism attraction, experiential value, and revisit intention. The explanatory power of the overall model for tourists' happiness was 32%, and that of revisit intention was 55%.

## 5. Discussion

This study explored the Dajia Mazu pilgrimage in a sustainable development context from the perspectives of tourism attraction, experiential value, happiness, and revisit intention. Overall, this research model had good explanatory power for tourists' revisit intention. According to the results of this study, the tourism attraction of the pilgrimage had a positive impact on tourists' happiness and revisit intentions. This finding is consistent with previous research results on tourism attraction, happiness, and revisit intention [21–23]. Thus, religious tourism, like other forms of tourism, can generate positive emotions in tourists, which in turn can lead to sustained participation in the activity. As Son and Xu [4] noted, the main factors affecting religious tourists are the attributes provided by religious activities, such as novelty pursuit, authenticity, and cultural exploration, thereby meeting their psychological needs (i.e., beliefs) and improving their revisit intention. Particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic has presented an authoritarian state for society, the Dajia Mazu pilgrimage still had great attraction for many tourists, who were not afraid of the risks brought by the pandemic, continued to participate in activities, and also gained the happiness they pursued. Moreover, the tourist attraction of the Dajia Mazu pilgrimage was higher than the risk perception of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, keeping religious tourism attractive can be considered one of the determinants of sustainable development.

According to this study, the tourists' experiential value in the Dajia Mazu pilgrimage also had a noticeable positive impact on their happiness and revisit intention. When tourists' experiences in the landscape more closely conformed to their values, their happiness and revisit intention were higher. This research finding is similar to the results of previous studies on the relationship between experiential tourism value, happiness, and revisit intention [1,32]. Tourists' experiential value in tourism comes from unforgettable and meaningful experiences, especially for religious tourists, whose religious beliefs affect their daily lives and tourism decisions [5], thereby obtaining a self-considered valuable experience and producing positive emotion and continuous participation. Therefore, the decisions of tourists who participated in the Dajia Mazu pilgrimage could also be regarded as a result of religious beliefs, which led to happiness in pursuit of experiential value. They continued to throw themselves into the environment and support sustainable religious development.

Happiness was critical in encouraging tourists to continue participating in the Dajia Mazu pilgrimage. However, happiness varies with different characteristics of tourists, types of tourism destinations, activities, and situations [37]. In the sustainable development context of religious tourists' participation in the Dajia Mazu pilgrimage, the relationship between tourists' happiness and their revisit intention is consistent with previous research findings [33,40]. Happiness also played an intermediary role [32]. From the perspective of sustainable development, religious tourists' happiness affected their revisit intention, probably due to the sense of pleasure and happiness it brought them [33]. Especially after people have experienced COVID-19, they feel scared and uneasy about life, and religious belief brings light to people's negative emotions. Therefore, people must perhaps participate in religious activities to balance their negative psychological state during the pandemic. The sustainability of religious tourism hinges on happiness.

## 6. Theoretical Contributions and Managerial Implications

This study verified a significant causal relationship between Dajia A-Ma tourists' tourism attractiveness, experiential value, happiness, and revisit intention for sustainable development. Happiness is the mediating variable in the model. Several academic and managerial implications are mentioned following the findings.

In the theoretical contributions, the case of Dajia A-Ma confirms the relationship between tourism attractiveness, experiential value, happiness, and revisit intention. These variables are essential to understanding tourists' behaviors when religious tourism is restarted after the pandemic. This study makes significant contributions by providing empirical evidence to substantiate the substantial impact of this model on the sustained behavior and sustainable development of religious tourism visitors within the context of

COVID-19. In particular, for the sustainability of religious tourism, happiness generated by religious activities can attract tourists to revisit destinations. This finding represents a pivotal contribution of this study, particularly in the post-pandemic period, where individuals aspire to return to a state of normalcy in their lives. The study highlights the significant benefits that religious tourism engenders in terms of generating a sense of happiness and well-being among tourists. Which is worth further study in the context of different countries and religious activities. Moreover, further exploring the mechanisms and processes underlying the generation of happiness among religious tourists can contribute to encouraging their continued participation in activities and further enhancing the sustainability of religious tourism.

In terms of managerial implications, happiness is the mediating variable that motivates visitors to revisit religious tourism activities. In other words, the tourist attraction and experience must make visitors feel happy. Marketing and events can be designed based on happiness to increase visitors' revisit intentions and promote sustainable development. Therefore, the organizers can incorporate the theme of happiness into the promotion of religious tourism and highlight the importance of happiness as an image and value of religious tourism. This can further stimulate the inner desire of tourists for religious activities.

Although this study had a rigorous design, there are still several limitations that could be improved in future research. First, this study only covered the Dajia Mazu pilgrimage in Taiwan. This study did not cover other countries that also held religious tourism activities; thus, whether other countries that also held religious tourism activities had similar findings to this study still needs to be verified by future research. Furthermore, the questionnaire survey was only done on tourists from Taiwan in this study. Considering international tourists have been unable to enter Taiwan due to the government's pandemic prevention measures, their views are unknown. A further survey can be conducted for future research after the restrictions are lifted. Second, the explanatory variance of tourists' revisit intention in the Dajia Mazu pilgrimage in the overall model of this study was 55%, denoting that there is still room for improvement in the explanatory power of religious tourists' revisit intention. It is suggested that different variables, such as authenticity and perceived risk, can be added to future research to comprehensively understand the revisit intention of the Dajia Mazu pilgrimage. Third, this study was done quantitatively. Qualitative research can be integrated into the research design in the future to strengthen the understanding of tourists' revisit intentions during the Dajia Mazu pilgrimage.

## 7. Conclusions

Tourism attraction and tourists' experiential value of the Dajia Mazu pilgrimage significantly affected tourists' happiness and revisit intention. The present model reveals that both tourism attraction and Dajia A-Ma tourists' experiential value significantly influence revisit intention in the context of the post-pandemic era. Moreover, happiness mediates the relationship within this research model. In a sustainable development context, happiness was found to be the intermediary variable between tourism attraction, happiness, and revisit intention. Based on the religious beliefs of tourists, their participation in religious tourism activities would not diminish the risk of the pandemic if they supported the activity. The spiritual comfort they feel from participating in religious tourism activities might lead to their continued participation in religious tourism activities. In other words, participating in religious activities is spiritual food for people. Therefore, religious tourism activities should not be stopped due to the pandemic, as tourists are unwilling to suspend their participation. That is the tourists' performance for the sustainable development of religious tourism.

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization, C.-Y.L., C.-P.L. and C.-H.H.; Methodology, C.-Y.L. and C.-P.L.; Validation, C.-H.L.; Formal analysis, C.-C.C.; Investigation, C.-C.C.; Resources, C.-H.L.; Data curation, C.-C.C.; Writing—original draft, C.-Y.L.; Writing—review & editing, C.-P.L. and C.-H.H.; Supervision, C.-H.H.; Project administration, C.-H.L. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** This article does not contain any studies involving human participants performed by any of the authors.

**Informed Consent Statement:** In light of anonymous questionnaire survey in this study, the content of informed consent has been informed to respondents before starting data collection.

**Data Availability Statement:** Data are not accessible. According to the informed consent of the study, only the researchers can access the data. Therefore, data cannot be made publicly available.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## References

1. Yuliviona, R.; Abdullah, M.; Alias, Z.; Azliyanti, E. The Relationship Of Halal Tourism, Islamic Attributes, Experiential Value, Satisfaction And Muslim Revisit Intention In Framework: A Systematic Literature Review. *Int. J. Tour. Hosp. Rev.* **2019**, *6*, 50–58.
2. Tourism Bureau. Annual Report on Tourism Statistics. Available online: <https://eng.taiwan.net.tw/> (accessed on 1 March 2023).
3. Richards, G. Tourism attraction systems: Exploring cultural behavior. *Ann. Tour. Res.* **2002**, *29*, 1048–1064. [[CrossRef](#)]
4. Son, A.; Xu, H. Religious food as a tourism attraction: The roles of Buddhist temple food in the Western tourist experience. *J. Herit. Tour.* **2013**, *8*, 248–258. [[CrossRef](#)]
5. Urry, J. *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*; Stage: London, UK, 2002.
6. Kruger, S.; Saayman, M.; Ellis, S. The influence of travel motives on visitor happiness attending a wedding expo. *J. Travel Tour. Mark.* **2014**, *31*, 649–665. [[CrossRef](#)]
7. Lin, J.; Hsiao, C.T.; Glen, R.; Pai, J.Y.; Zeng, S.H. Perceived service quality, perceived value, overall satisfaction and happiness of outlook for long-term care institution residents. *Health Expect.* **2014**, *17*, 311–320. [[CrossRef](#)]
8. Ma, E.; Hsiao, A.; Gao, J. Destination attractiveness and travel intention: The case of Chinese and Indian students in Queensland, Australia. *Asia Pac. J. Tour. Res.* **2018**, *23*, 200–215. [[CrossRef](#)]
9. Huang, A. A network model of happiness at destinations. *Tour. Anal.* **2022**, *27*, 133–147. [[CrossRef](#)]
10. Sanagustin-Fons, M.; Tobar-Pesántez, L.B.; Ravina-Ripoll, R. Happiness and cultural tourism: The perspective of civil participation. *Sustainability* **2020**, *12*, 3465. [[CrossRef](#)]
11. Raj, R.; Griffin, K.A. Reflecting on the impact of COVID-19 on religious tourism and pilgrimage. *Int. J. Relig. Tour. Pilgr.* **2020**, *8*, 1–8.
12. Séraphin, H.; Jarraud, N. COVID-19: Impacts and perspectives for religious tourism events. The case of Lourdes Pilgrimages. *J. Conv. Event Tour.* **2021**, *23*, 15–40. [[CrossRef](#)]
13. Yasin, R.; Jauhar, J.; Rahim, N.F.A.; Namoco, S.; Bataineh, M.S.E. COVID-19 and Religious Tourism: An overview of impacts and implications. *Int. J. Relig. Tour. Pilgr.* **2020**, *8*, 155–162.
14. Mosier, W.; Elhadary, T.; Elhaty, I.; Safaei, M. Crisis Management and The Impact of Pandemics on Religious Tourism. *Int. J. Relig. Tour. Pilgr.* **2020**, *8*, 9–22.
15. Kusumaningrum, D.A.; Wachyuni, S.S. The shifting trends in travelling after the COVID 19 pandemic. *Int. J. Tour. Hosp. Rev.* **2020**, *7*, 31–40. [[CrossRef](#)]
16. Hu, W.; Wall, G. Environmental management, environmental image and the competitive tourist attraction. *J. Sustain. Tour.* **2005**, *13*, 617–635. [[CrossRef](#)]
17. Liro, J. Visitors' motivations and behaviours at pilgrimage centres: Push and pull perspectives. *J. Herit. Tour.* **2021**, *16*, 79–99. [[CrossRef](#)]
18. Nolan, M.L.; Nolan, S. Religious sites as tourism attractions in Europe. *Ann. Tour. Res.* **1992**, *19*, 68–78. [[CrossRef](#)]
19. Chen, Y.C.; Lee, H. Motivations and Types of Participators of Da Jia Mazu's Patrol and Pilgrimage. *J. Leis. Recreat. Ind. Manag.* **2017**, *10*, 72–86.
20. Jun, J.; Kyle, G.; Graefe, A.; Manning, R. An identity-based conceptualization of recreation specialization. *J. Leis. Res.* **2015**, *47*, 425–443. [[CrossRef](#)]
21. Ito, E.; Hikoji, K. Relationships of involvement and interdependent happiness between domestic and international Japanese masters games tourists. *Ann. Leis. Res.* **2021**, *24*, 262–268. [[CrossRef](#)]
22. Matsumoto, H.; Sato, S.; Asada, A.; Chiashi, K. Exploring the relationship among leisure engagement, affective and cognitive leisure involvement, and subjective happiness: A mediating role of leisure satisfaction. *World Leis. J.* **2018**, *60*, 111–126. [[CrossRef](#)]
23. Ryan, R.M.; Deci, E.L. Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *Am. Psychol.* **2000**, *55*, 68–78. [[CrossRef](#)]
24. Sinambela, E.A. Examining the Relationship between Tourist Motivation, Touristic Attractiveness, and Revisit Intention. *J. Soc. Sci. Stud. (JOS3)* **2021**, *1*, 25–30. [[CrossRef](#)]
25. Khairi, M.; Darmawan, D. The Relationship Between Destination Attractiveness, Location, Tourism Facilities, And Revisit Intentions. *J. Mark. Bus. Res. (MARK)* **2021**, *1*, 39–50.
26. Chien, M. An empirical study on the effect of attractiveness of ecotourism destination on experiential value and revisit intention. *Appl. Ecol. Environ. Res.* **2016**, *15*, 43–53. [[CrossRef](#)]

27. Sheldon, K.M.; Lyubomirsky, S. Revisiting the sustainable happiness model and pie chart: Can happiness be successfully pursued? *J. Posit. Psychol.* **2021**, *16*, 145–154. [CrossRef]
28. Peng, J.; Yang, X.; Fu, S.; Huan, T.-C.T. Exploring the influence of tourists' happiness on revisit intention in the context of Traditional Chinese Medicine cultural tourism. *Tour. Manag.* **2023**, *94*, 104647. [CrossRef]
29. Mathwick, C.; Malhotra, N.; Rigdon, E. Experiential value: Conceptualization, measurement and application in the catalog and Internet shopping environment☆. *J. Retail.* **2001**, *77*, 39–56. [CrossRef]
30. Wu, H.C.; Cheng, C.C.; Ai, C.H. A study of experiential quality, experiential value, trust, corporate reputation, experiential satisfaction and behavioral intentions for cruise tourists: The case of Hong Kong. *Tour. Manag.* **2018**, *66*, 200–220. [CrossRef]
31. Choi, Y.; Kim, J.; Lee, C.-K.; Hickerson, B. The role of functional and wellness values in visitors' evaluation of spa experiences. *Asia Pac. J. Tour. Res.* **2015**, *20*, 263–279. [CrossRef]
32. Fu, Y.-K.; Wang, Y.-J. Experiential value influences authentic happiness and behavioural intention: Lessons from Taiwan's tourism accommodation sector. *Tour. Rev.* **2020**, *76*, 289–303. [CrossRef]
33. Pai, C.K.; Liu, Y.; Kang, S.; Dai, A. The role of perceived smart tourism technology experience for tourist satisfaction, happiness and revisit intention. *Sustainability* **2020**, *12*, 6592. [CrossRef]
34. Liu, K. Happiness and tourism. *Int. J. Bus. Soc. Sci.* **2013**, *4*, 67–70.
35. Steel, P.; Schmidt, J.; Shultz, J. Refining the relationship between personality and subjective well-being. *Psychol. Bull.* **2008**, *134*–161, 138. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
36. Ryff, C.D. Happiness is everything, or is it? Explorations on the meaning of psychological well-being. *J. Personal. Soc. Psychol.* **1989**, *57*, 1069–1081. [CrossRef]
37. Bimonte, S.; Faralla, V. Happiness and nature-based vacations. *Ann. Tour. Res.* **2014**, *26*, 176–178. [CrossRef]
38. Huang, K.; Pearce, P.L.; Wu, M.-Y.; Wang, X.-Z. Tourists and Buddhist heritage sites: An integrative analysis of visitors' experience and happiness through positive psychology constructs. *Tour. Stud.* **2019**, *19*, 549–568. [CrossRef]
39. Kim, B.; Kim, S.; King, B. Religious tourism studies: Evolution, progress, and future prospects. *Tour. Recreat. Res.* **2020**, *45*, 185–203. [CrossRef]
40. Wu, H.C.; Cheng, C.C.; Ai, C.H. A study of experiential quality, equity, happiness, rural image, experiential satisfaction, and behavioral intentions for the rural tourism industry in China. *Int. J. Hosp. Tour. Adm.* **2017**, *18*, 393–428. [CrossRef]
41. Mai, K.N.; Nguyen, P.N.D.; Nguyen, P.T.M. International tourists' loyalty to Ho Chi Minh City destination—A mediation analysis of perceived service quality and perceived value. *Sustainability* **2019**, *11*, 5447. [CrossRef]
42. Abbasi, G.A.; Kumaravelu, J.; Goh, Y.-N.; Singh, K.S.D. Understanding the intention to revisit a destination by expanding the theory of planned behaviour (TPB). *Span. J. Mark.-ESIC* **2021**, *25*, 282–311. [CrossRef]
43. Iriobe, O.; Abiola-Oke, E. Moderating effect of the use of eWOM on subjective norms, behavioural control and religious tourist revisit intention. *Int. J. Relig. Tour. Pilgr.* **2019**, *7*, 38–47. [CrossRef]
44. Liao, Y.K.; Wu, W.Y.; Truong, G.N.T.; Binh, P.N.M.; Van Vu, V. A model of destination consumption, attitude, religious involvement, satisfaction, and revisit intention. *J. Vacat. Mark.* **2021**, *27*, 330–345. [CrossRef]
45. Abdul Gani, A.; Mahdzar, M.; MAnuar, N.A. Visitor's experiential attributes and revisit intention to Islamic tourism attractions in Malaysia. *J. Tour. Hosp. Culin. Arts* **2019**, *11*, 1–12.
46. Dajia Jenn Lann Temple. Introduction. Available online: <https://eng.taiwan.net.tw/m1.aspx?sNo=0002112&id=R18> (accessed on 1 March 2023).
47. Hwang, F.M. *Structural Equation Modeling*; Wu-Nan Book Inc.: Taipei, Taiwan, 2009.
48. Akter, S.; D'Ambra, J.; Ray, P. An evaluation of PLS based complex models: The roles of power analysis, predictive relevance, and GoF index. In Proceedings of the 17th Americas Conference on Information Systems, Detroit, MI, USA, 4–8 August 2011; Association for Information Systems. pp. 1–7.

**Disclaimer/Publisher's Note:** The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.