

Wang, Junfeng; Butkouskaya, Vera

Article

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Journal of Economics, Finance and Administrative Science

Provided in Cooperation with:

Universidad ESAN, Lima

Suggested Citation: Wang, Junfeng; Butkouskaya, Vera (2023) : Sustainable marketing activities, event image, perceived value and tourists' behavioral intentions in the sports tourism, Journal of Economics, Finance and Administrative Science, ISSN 2218-0648, Emerald Publishing Limited, Bingley, Vol. 28, Iss. 55, pp. 60-78, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEFAS-09-2022-0219>

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/289678>

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Sustainable marketing activities, event image, perceived value and tourists' behavioral intentions in the sports tourism

Junfeng Wang

School of Tourism and Hotel Management, Autonomous University of Barcelona, Bellaterra, Spain, and

Vera Butkouskaya

Marketing Department, HSE Graduate School of Business, Moscow, Russia and School of Tourism and Hotel Management, Autonomous University of Barcelona, Bellaterra, Spain

Abstract

Purpose – This study constructs the influence mechanism model of sustainable marketing activities (SMAs), event image, commemorative product perceived value and tourists' behavioral intentions (TBIs) in the sports tourism context of the Beijing Winter Olympic Games. Additionally, the article discusses the role of event image and product perceived value in enhancing the SMAs' effect on TBIs.

Design/methodology/approach – The research analyzed 315 valid questionnaires from tourists in the Chinese market by structural equation modeling.

Findings – The results indicate that SMAs positively impact sports tourism event image, tourists' perceived commemorative product value and TBIs. Meanwhile, event image and product perceived value mediate the SMAs and TBIs relationship.

Research limitations/implications – Considering SMAs as essential for sustainable development, this paper contributes to the strategic management discipline. Additionally, the research expands the analysis of event image and product perceived value in the brand theory and customer behavior research.

Practical implications – The article outlines the principal value of SMAs implementation in enhancing behavioral intentions. It also reveals that a favorable event image and good perceived value can enhance SMAs' effectiveness toward positively influencing TBIs, especially purchase intentions. It provides a new vision for nonprofit organizations to prioritize SMAs' implementation in marketing strategies.

Originality/value – It is pioneering work with a complex research framework for SMAs implementation in the sports tourism context.

Keywords Sustainable marketing activities, Sports tourism, Event image, Perceived value, Behavioural intentions

Paper type Research paper

JEL Classification — M3, L83, Z30

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This research has been conducted within the fundamental research project “Transformation of Marketing Strategies for Customer-Oriented Business in the Global Digital Economy” as a part of the HSE Graduate School of Business Research Program in 2021-2023 (Protocol No.23 dd 22.06.2021 of the HSE GSB Research Committee).



1. Introduction

Sustainability considerations are becoming a given in discussions of organizational development and commercial conduct (Jung *et al.*, 2020; Sheth and Parvatiyar, 2021). Implementing social responsibility activities can maximize the organization's long-term benefits and enhance the benign interaction between organizations and society (Cone Inc, 2004). Moreover, United Nations organization underlines the importance of incorporating sustainable goals into companies' objectives (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2021). Economic, social, environmental and cultural organizational sustainability factors significantly impact closely associated interest groups (such as customers, shareholders, geographical communities and cultural circles, among others) (Stylianou-Lambert *et al.*, 2014). The company's sustainable practices, including corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs, have laid a foundation for the organization's long-term development. Formulation and implementation of sustainable marketing activities (SMAs) are critical to organizations' long-term success due to their driving force in forming customers' trust through multidimensional and systematic approaches (Jung *et al.*, 2020). They significantly affect both customer-related and organizational performance. Specifically, SMAs can help bridge customer trust, enhance customer loyalty, strengthen behavioral intentions and reinforce purchase or consumption decisions (Lii *et al.*, 2013; Sharma *et al.*, 2018; Sun and Ko, 2016). They, in turn, can help the company to grow and improve market performance and, as a result, financial outcomes (Omondi-Ochieng, 2019). Important to mention that, within the CSR strategy, SMAs foster brand loyalty among consumers rather than solely focusing on immediate financial gains (Abbas *et al.*, 2018). Previous studies have confirmed the significant impact of sustainable activities, especially their environmental dimension, on brand and tourism destination image (Jung *et al.*, 2020; Kaplanidou, 2006; Kumar *et al.*, 2018).

However, the connection between SMAs and event image has received scant attention. It is a significant gap as, in recent decades, the sustainability issue has been closely concerned in sports tourism. According to World Travel Organization, sports tourism is one of the fast-growing sectors in tourism (UNWTO, 2022). Most sports organizations are making efforts to promote the realization of their sustainable development goals through their CSR-related programs (Mathew *et al.*, 2016). Successfully incorporated with destination branding, infrastructure development and other economic and social benefits, such mega sports events as World Cups or Olympics can be a tourism development catalyst (Kaplanidou, 2006). Although event image shares similar attributes and a strong endogenous relationship with destination image and brand image, it is a distinctive concept (Kaplanidou and Vogt, 2007). Also, SMAs can create business value without compromising customers' demands (Trivedi *et al.*, 2018). The effect of SMAs on customer equity has been explored by Sun and Ko (2016). Nevertheless, no previous research focused on the impact of SMAs on tourists' perceived value.

Also, the current CSR literature is mainly based on the organizational perspective. Still, the impact of SMAs on customer behavioral intentions (including purchase and visit intentions) has not been studied in an event or sports tourism context. SMAs and traditional marketing practices can promote more value creation and organizational innovation, which will further impact customers' expectations and lead to sustainable consumption (Trivedi *et al.*, 2018). Several researchers have demonstrated the role of brand image in enhancing the positive impact of marketing activities on customer behavior (Kim *et al.*, 2017).

Moreover, some evidence from prior literature suggests that destination image may mediate the relationship between SMAs and behavioral intentions (e.g. Kim *et al.*, 2016). A company's sustainability efforts toward enhancing customer purchase behavior succeed when consumers receive perceived value during the purchase decision process (Trivedi *et al.*, 2018). Investigations from Hanaysha (2018) and Chang (2017) demonstrated the mediating effect of perceived value between CSR activities and customer intentions. However, no previous research investigated the enhancing role of brand image and perceived value in sports tourism.

Following mentioned above, the research aims to estimate the role of SMAs implementation in impacting event image, commemorative product perceived value and tourists' behavioral intentions (TBIs) in the context of sports tourism events. Additionally, this study analyzes the effects of perceived value and event image on TBIs. This article focuses on the following research questions: (1) What is the SMAs' influence on TBIs? (2) What is the impact of SMAs on event image and commemorative product perceived value? (3) What is the role of event image and product perceived value in the relationships between SMAs and TBIs in the sports tourism context? The data collection was done during the Beijing Winter Olympic Games to address the research goals. The study examines the data from 315 valid questionnaires from tourists in the Chinese market by structural equation modeling (SEM).

This research contributes toward extending the SMAs as a critical component of the sustainability concept and its implementation in the marketing and management disciplines in the tourism event field. Specifically, the study adds to customer behavior research by investigating the relationships between SMAs and TBIs. Analysis of the sports tourism event image and commemorative product perceived value further contributes to brand management theory. Additionally, the research investigates the mediating roles of event image and perceived value in the relationship between the SMAs and TBIs. From the managerial perspective, the article outlines the importance of SMAs implementation in enhancing behavioral intentions. It also reveals that sports tourism event image and perceived value can translate SMAs' effectiveness toward positively influencing TBIs, especially purchase intentions. It provides a new vision for non-profit organizations to prioritize SMAs' implementation in marketing behaviors.

The study starts with a literature review and hypothesis development. Then, it explains a specific research context of the Beijing Winter Olympic Games and the developing economy of China. Further, the study demonstrates the information on data collection and analysis. Afterward, the article explains the results of testing direct relationships among SMAs, event image, perceived value and TBIs in the sports tourism context. Further, the study examines the mediating effects of event image and perceived value on the relationships between SMAs and TBIs. This study ends up with conclusions and discusses managerial contributions and research limitations.

2. Literature review

2.1 Sustainable marketing activities

The topic of sustainable development of the organization has gained significant attention in the literature (Sheth and Parvatiyar, 2021; Sun *et al.*, 2014). Sustainable development includes four dimensions: environmental, social, economic and cultural (Stylianou-Lambert *et al.*, 2014). Montiel and Delgado-Ceballos (2014) explain that the corporate sustainability concept is closely associated with the definition of sustainable development. It is defined as "the ability of a firm to nurture and support growth over time by effectively meeting the expectations of diverse stakeholders" (Neubaum and Zahra, 2006, p. 121). Sustainable activities implementation in the company positively impacts the firm's sustainable development and long-term survival (Sheth and Parvatiyar, 2021). CSR programs are essential to the companies' sustainable activities. CSR is a fundamental sustainable marketing source (Lii *et al.*, 2013). Based on the compatibility of their concepts and anticipated goals, a large body of prior work confirmed the significant association between CSR and SMAs (Jung *et al.*, 2020). Environmental, economic and social aspects of CSR also intersect with practices in sustainable marketing (Lii *et al.*, 2013). Moreover, with "social contribution," CSR can affect consumers' attitudes and drive reputation-building (Abbas *et al.*, 2018).

Jung *et al.* (2020) describe sustainable marketing as a process in which an enterprise needs to meet consumers' demands, work hard in sustainable development (including ecology, economy and society in the entire production and operation) and build a long-term relationship with

consumers. According to Sun *et al.* (2014), businesses can execute SMAs to keep appeal to prospective customers, gain long-term growth and make contentious societal contributions. Following the sustainable development goals, SMAs involve four main aspects: economic, social, environmental and cultural activities (Jung *et al.*, 2020). Specifically, economic marketing activities share benefits with customers, stakeholders, employees and partners in the community (Jung *et al.*, 2020). Social marketing activities include implementing an organization's purpose other than commercial profit-making behavior (Sun *et al.*, 2014). Environmental marketing activities represent all activities designed to generate and facilitate exchanges to satisfy human needs or wants. Meeting these needs and wants occurs with minimal detrimental impact on the natural environment (United Nations of Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2021). Cultural marketing activities are "the consideration, preservation, and presentation of tangible and intangible heritage, artistic production, as well as the knowledge and skills of various social groups, communities, and nations" (Stylianou-Lambert *et al.*, 2014, p. 570).

Sun and Ko (2016) find that SMAs will affect customer equity. Jung *et al.* (2020) confirm that the four aspects of SMAs can improve customer satisfaction and trust by changing the brand's image. Trivedi *et al.* (2018) report that SMAs can help companies generate a competitive advantage. Sheth and Parvatiyar (2021) present that sustainable marketing drives sustainable consumption. Murphy (2005) clarifies that sustainable marketing promotes customer behavior by offering suitable products.

2.2 Sports tourism event image

Gwinner (1997, p. 148) proposes that event image is "the cumulative interpretation of consumers' meanings or associations attributed to events." In other words, the event image is associated with a function of the type of event, event characteristics and individual factors. Kaplanidou (2006) defines sport event image from the perspective of the event participants based on Keller's (1993) theoretical framework on brand image. The sports event image is conceptualized as attitudinal elements from the perspective of active sports tourists (Kaplanidou and Vogt, 2007). These elements are subdivided into six aspects: emotional, historical, organizational, physical, environmental and social (Kaplanidou, 2010). Many academics have discussed the similarity between event and destination image. The event can be viewed as an attraction to a tourist destination (Aguado *et al.*, 2017). Event image could have similar components to the destination image, including affective and cognitive elements (Kaplanidou and Vogt, 2007). In 2012, Kaplanidou and Gibson pointed out that "event image can have a parallel structure to the concept of destination image and can be processed holistically."

The CSR programs of a tourism organization can positively influence event image (The World Tourism Organization, 2017). Jung *et al.* (2020) uncovered that perceived SMAs (economic, social, environmental and cultural) positively impact brand image. Girish and Lee (2019) prove that brand experience or brand image indicates a positive effect on positively affecting sport event image. Also, Drengner *et al.*'s (2008) findings reveal a positive relationship between participants' perceived event image and brand image on the connotative image dimension. Moreover, Deng *et al.* (2015) emphasize that event image is generally regarded to share the same theoretical foundation as brand image. In addition, according to the similarity between the attributes of sports tourism event image and related image (e.g. brand image and destination image) mentioned above, the following hypothesis can be reasonably given:

H1. SMAs positively impact sports tourism event image.

2.3 Tourists' perceived value

Jiang *et al.* (2018) define perceived value as the outcome or advantage consumers experience about their efforts. Zeithmal (1988) believes that perceived value is a comprehensive evaluation

of products or services by consumers based on their perceived views of what they get and provide. Consumers will buy the goods with the most significant perceived value. Quality, price, the status of the good or service, and emotional response (how the good or service makes you feel) are suggested as the four elements of perceived value in Zeithaml's (1988) study. Perceived benefits and costs are the two categories into which Morrison and Vancouver (2000) separate perceived value. Kunkel *et al.* (2017) suggest a multidimensional tourists' perceived value of sports games scale consisting of economic, social, emotional, functional and epistemic values.

Currás-Pérez *et al.* (2018) analyze the impact of CSR from a sustainable development approach (i.e. social, environmental and economic aspects) on consumers' perceived value (i.e. utilitarian, emotional and social value). Their results demonstrate that the functional significance of consumers' perceived value depends on CSR's social and economic dimensions, and the three CSR dimensions can enhance emotional importance. Also, Abdulalem and Abdullah (2019) explore the influence of CSR on the environment, society and stakeholders on customers' perceived value. Their findings indicate that CSR related to the environment and stakeholders positively affects customers' perceived value, and CSR related to society is not positively associated with customers' perceived value. Thus, according to the endogenous connection between CSR and SMAs mentioned above, the following hypothesis can be reasonably given:

H2. SMAs positively impact tourists' perceived value.

2.4 Tourists' behavioral intentions

According to Oliver (1997), behavioral intentions are the assured likelihood of engaging in a particular behavior. According to Triantafyllidou and Siomkos (2014), there are two different types of intentions: those with short-term behavioral effects (e.g. word-of-mouth, criticism or praise, and recommendations) and those with long-term behavioral values (e.g. loyalty). Following Yang *et al.* (2011), behavioral intention is a group of behaviors that predict whether consumers will purchase the same product or service in the future. TBIs also have considerable research (Wang *et al.*, 2012; Lam *et al.*, 2007; Kaplanidou and Vogt, 2007). Lam *et al.* (2007) report that TBIs can be assessed using a cognitive-affective-conative framework. In other words, the three measuring categories for TBIs are cognitive, emotional and conative.

The influence of environmental CSR activities on the development of behavioral intentions is confirmed by Su *et al.* (2014). González-Rodríguez *et al.* (2019) investigate the impact of customers' awareness of CSR related to environmental practices on behavior intentions, and the result shows that the effect is positive. Kim *et al.* (2017) probe the impact of four CSR dimensions (economic CSR, legal CSR, ethical CSR and philanthropic CSR) on customers' behavioral intentions, especially revisit intentions. In addition, the relationship between CSR activities and purchase intentions has been confirmed by multiple studies (e.g. Sharma *et al.*, 2018). Neumann *et al.*'s (2020) case tests the relationship between sustainability and purchase intentions in the fashion industry and depicts that sustainable activities can directly predict purchase intentions. Thus, according to the endogenous connection between CSR and SMAs to customer purchase intentions mentioned above, the following hypothesis can be reasonably given:

H3. SMAs positively impact TBIs.

2.5 The mediating role of sports tourism event image and tourist's perceived value

Previous research supports that destination perception influences behavioral intentions favorably (Kaplanidou, 2006). For example, Kaplanidou (2006) shows that affective perception directly impacts TBIs. In the study by Sharma and Nayak (2020), they find that a tourist's destination image significantly affects intentions for visiting and recommending to others. Zhang *et al.* (2020) demonstrated the impact of event image on behavioral intentions in the Nanjing Youth Olympic Games context. Kaplanidou (2006) shows that affective event and

destination images positively connect with Olympic travelers' behavioral intentions. In 2009, Kaplanidou further testified the relationships among cognitive event and destination images and behavioral intentions in different geographic regions of Olympic Games spectators.

Further research concerns the brand image mediation role in marketing practices. For instance, an international sporting event context investigation by Kim *et al.* (2016) indicates that destination image fully mediates the effect of tourists' satisfaction on word of mouth (WOM) and revisit intentions. Moon *et al.* (2013) confirm that destination image mediates the relationship between event quality and behavioral intentions. Also, Vafaei *et al.* (2019) demonstrated the connection between sustainable marketing strategies on customer satisfaction. Fatimah and Tyas (2022) revealed the connection between sustainable marketing and service quality in meeting customers' demands. Thus, considering an inclusive interaction between event image and destination event and the previous findings mentioned above, the following hypothesis can be proposed:

H4. Sports tourism event image positively impacts tourists' behavior intentions.

H4a. Sports tourism event image mediates the relationships between SMAs and tourists' behavior intentions.

Several studies propose an association between tourists' perceived value and behavioral intentions (Chen and Chen, 2010; Yang *et al.*, 2011). For example, Chen and Chen's (2010) findings demonstrate that perceived value directly affects behavioral intentions. Wang *et al.* (2012) explore the impact of tourists' perceived value on behavioral intentions from a mega-events perspective. Koenigstorfer and Preuss (2018) conclude that tourists will perceive distinct Olympic values based on their discrepancy in perception of events. The national and urban differences will also influence tourists' perceived values about the Olympic Games (Koenigstorfer and Preuss, 2018).

Also, previous researchers have demonstrated the mediating role of perceived value in sustainable marketing practices. The direct evidence from Chang (2017) supports that perceived value significantly mediates between CSR activities and sustainable consumption. Hanaysha (2018) finds that perceived value mediates the relationship between social media marketing and customer retention and the CSR and customer retention relationship. Chen and Lin (2019) propose the effect of social media marketing activities on purchase intentions via the mediation of perceived value. Minton *et al.* (2012) refer that social media involvement plays a crucial role in sustainable marketing. Thus, perceived value may mediate the relationship between sustainable marketing and purchase intentions. Thus, the following hypothesis can be given:

H5. Tourists' perceived value positively impacts tourists' behavior intentions.

H5a. Tourists' perceived value mediates the relationships between SMAs and tourists' behavior intentions.

3. Method

3.1 Context

This study collected data during the Beijing Winter Olympic Games. According to Mathew *et al.* (2016), the context is suitable as the Beijing Organizing Committee of the Olympic Games (BOCOG) (and its Olympic Movement) has a CSR-related aim in line with its inherent characteristics as a member-driven non-governmental organization. Four practices (promotion of women in sports, protection of athletes, human development assistance and sustainable development) constitute the BOCOG SMAs (The Chinese Olympic Committee, 2022). The objective of the Beijing Olympic Games Organizing Committee is in line with similar sports events. It includes spreading the Olympic spirit to all levels of society and building a better world through sport (Bayle, 2016).

The article investigates the TBIs regarding the Olympic mascot Bing Dwen Dwen. The high ratings in media (TV, social media and mobile video) and the advent of short-form video-sharing apps (like TikTok) have made the Bing Dwen Dwen widely known and set off an upsurge in buying Olympic commemorative goods ([International Olympic Committee, 2022](#)).

3.2 Research design, data collection and sample

This research adopts the form of an online questionnaire through the WeChat platform. The items of the original questionnaire are extracted from English literature and then translated into Chinese. No wording issues occur through back-translation. To ensure the respondents can fill in each item accurately, the beginning of the questionnaire described the definitions and some professional terms (e.g. carbon neutrality and multichannel advertising). The respondents could also ask questions about the items they need help understanding with the message function of the electronic questionnaire. The questionnaire components comprise the measurement scales of the above four independent variables in the Beijing Winter Olympics settings. This investigation adds some preset conditions for the respondents to ensure the validity and accuracy of the questionnaire ([Fowler and Fowler, 1995](#)). First, the respondents should not be limited to where the Olympic Games are held, namely Beijing and Zhangjiakou, because geographical convenience will strengthen the behavioral intentions of local tourists. Second, the respondents have access to short video platforms, TV terminals, PC terminals and social networking platforms because such channels will increase the exposure of events in the audience. Third, the survey object of this study is only for local Chinese tourists because the peripheral products of the Olympic mascot are mainly oriented to the Chinese market, and its sustainable market behavior is also designed for the characteristics of customers within that market. The questionnaire survey was conducted from February 1, 2022 to April 30, 2022. A total of 320 questionnaires were distributed, and finally, 315 valid questionnaires were recovered (98.44% response rate). A high response rate appears as all respondents receive a monetary reward through the Alipay application software after completing the questionnaire. [Table 1](#) presents the respondents' profiles with information on age, marital status, education, gender, household income, time spent on shopping and geographic origin. More specifically, the age category includes mainly respondents of 31 years and older to get the responses from the population of potential buyers with paying ability. Thus, most of the respondents are expected to be married and have high education, which is typical for individuals in China. Also, most of the respondents are of middle to high income, which is consistent with China's economic development. To avoid a significant gender gap, the proportion of male and female respondents is almost equal. The geographical distribution of respondents is also relatively dispersed, covering major regions of China. Finally, most individuals spend little time shopping. The above sample parameters are proportional to the population statistics of China and are representative.

3.3 Instrument and measurements

The questionnaire was designed using a 5-point Likert scale with four latent variables containing 20 items. This paper adjusts some measurements from the existing literature to fit the research context and achieve a more targeted questionnaire ([Hair et al., 2021](#)). This study adapts the measure of SMAs from [Jung et al. \(2020\)](#). It retains the main content of the original items but redesigned them in the context of the Beijing Winter Olympics. For example, the original item "Return some of the products to society" is adjusted to "Part of the revenue from Olympic tourism products will be returned to society." The designed items cover all four components of SMAs (economic, social, environmental and cultural). This research extends the measurement of sports event image from [Kaplanidou and Vogt \(2007\)](#), [Kaplanidou \(2010\)](#) and [Deng et al. \(2015\)](#). The previous items, which only offered some keywords such as "Valuable-Worthless," were embodied as "Do you think it is valuable to participate in the

	Items	Percentage	Respondents	Items	Percentage	Respondents	
Age	18–25 years	0.63%	2	Annual household income	Less than \$30,000	13.97%	44
	26–30 years	7.62%	24		\$30,000–\$80,000	22.54%	71
	31–40 years	28.89%	91		\$80,000–\$150,000	25.71%	81
	41–50 years	24.44%	77		\$150,000–\$300,000	20.95%	66
	51–60 years	14.60%	46		\$300,000 or more	16.83%	53
	60 years and above	23.81%	75		Total	100%	315
Marital Status	Total	100%	315	The time you spend shopping online or looking up product information every day	0–1 h	55.24%	174
	Unmarried	17.46%	55		1–3 h	32.38%	102
	Married	82.54%	260		3–5 h	8.25%	26
	Total	100%	315		5–7 h	1.59%	5
Education	Elementary School	1.27%	4	Geographic origin	Over 7 h	2.54%	8
	Middle School	13.02%	41		Total	100%	315
	High School	6.67%	21		East China	31.43%	99
	College	9.52%	30		West China	21.59%	68
	Bachelor's degree	49.52%	156		South China	20.95%	66
	Master's degree	20.00%	63		North China	26.03%	82
	Total	100%	315		China		
	Male	51.75%	163		Total	100%	315
	Female	48.25%	152				
	Total	100%	315				

Source(s): Authors' elaboration

Table 1. Sample information

Beijing Winter Olympics” for respondents’ better understanding. Tourists’ perceived value scale refers to [Chen and Lin \(2019\)](#) and [Currás-Pérez et al. \(2018\)](#), who measure it from three aspects, including “Utilitarian value,” “Emotional value” and “Social value.” The determination of the measurement indexes of TBIs refers to the behavioral intentions measurement scale of [Oliver \(1997\)](#) and [Yang et al., \(2011\)](#).

3.4 Analytical procedure

The study employs exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), recommended by [Kyriazos \(2018\)](#), to test the consistency of the adjusted scales. The application of EFA to characterize the construct’s fundamental structure is reasonable and verified by literature ([Kautish et al., 2021](#); [Lee et al., 2020](#)). In this study, EFA was applied using SPSS 26.0 software. This article selected Eigen roots greater than 1 and performed the principal component analysis method. Amos 23.0 statistical software was used to conduct CFA on the measurement model ([Shek and Yu, 2014](#)). Five thousand samples were set for bootstrap performing, and the model was run at a 95% bias-corrected confidence level. To test the mediating effect between sports tourism event image and perceived value, this study uses the bootstrap method of AMOS 23 software proposed by [Collier \(2020\)](#). The sample size

is chosen to be 2000, and the mediating effect is judged to be significant based on whether the indirect effect included 0 at the 95% confidence interval.

4. Results

4.1 Model validation

The EFA results show that the sample is suitable for factor analysis (KMO test value of 0.928, approximate chi-square value of Bartlett’s spherical test (Hair *et al.*, 2021) of 5,763.819 and significance level of 0.000). Using Kaiser normalized maximum variance method (Shrestha, 2021) for factor rotation (Table 2), the item factor loading in each dimension is higher than 0.7 and lower than 0.3 in other dimensions, the common factor variance is greater than 0.6 and Cronbach’s α is all above 0.9. These four factors explained 80.813% of the total information.

Table 3 shows the CFA results. Among the four constructs, the standardized factor loading of 20 observed variables ranges from 0.806 to 0.922 (Table 3), which meets the standard that the factor loading is more significant than 0.5, indicating that each observed variable has a robust explanatory ability for latent variables.

Also, Table 3 reports the reliability and validity of the measurement model. Firstly, Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability (C.R.) are used to test the measurement indicators’ internal consistency. The results show that Cronbach’s alpha coefficient ranges from 0.915 to 0.966, higher than the minimum standard of 0.6; the lowest C.R. is 0.916, higher than the reference standard of 0.5. Therefore, the observed variables in the measurement model have good internal consistency. Secondly, the measurement model’s convergence validity is tested using the average variance extraction (AVE). The results range from 0.684 to 0.828, indicating that the observed variables can better measure the latent variables they belong to.

Table 4 presents the significantly close correlations between the latent variables. The discriminant validity of the scale is shown in Table 5. The average extraction variance of each

Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Commonality	Cronbach’s α
SMA _s 1	0.130	0.005	0.854	0.153	0.770	0.914
SMA _s 2	0.139	0.113	0.846	0.185	0.782	
SMA _s 3	0.106	0.141	0.825	0.182	0.745	
SMA _s 4	0.194	0.147	0.811	0.130	0.734	
SMA _s 5	0.109	0.104	0.823	0.161	0.726	
STE _I 1	0.146	0.131	0.197	0.875	0.843	0.939
STE _I 2	0.144	0.180	0.213	0.863	0.844	
STE _I 3	0.103	0.163	0.187	0.879	0.845	
STE _I 4	0.168	0.121	0.197	0.882	0.860	
TPV ₁	0.149	0.848	0.102	0.115	0.765	0.927
TPV ₂	0.107	0.859	0.086	0.143	0.778	
TPV ₃	0.091	0.864	0.079	0.110	0.774	
TPV ₄	0.174	0.853	0.085	0.128	0.781	
TPV ₅	0.130	0.849	0.145	0.109	0.771	
TBI _s 1	0.896	0.125	0.166	0.091	0.853	0.967
TBI _s 2	0.909	0.123	0.145	0.080	0.869	
TBI _s 3	0.903	0.110	0.118	0.133	0.859	
TBI _s 4	0.898	0.162	0.148	0.135	0.873	
TBI _s 5	0.901	0.111	0.113	0.092	0.845	
TBI _s 6	0.892	0.137	0.098	0.155	0.848	

Table 2. Results of exploratory factor analysis of measured variables

Note(s): SMA_s = Sustainable marketing activities; STE_I = Sports tourism event image; TPV = Tourists’ perceived value; TBI_s = Tourists’ behavioral intentions

Source(s): Authors’ elaboration

Variables	Items	Loadings
Sustainable marketing activities (SMAs) of BOCOG (Jung <i>et al.</i> , 2020) $\alpha = 0.915$; C.R. = 0.916; AVE = 0.684		
SMAs1	Beijing Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games has made diversified efforts for the promotion of Olympic tourism products (e.g. multichannel advertising, star endorsement, etc.), and this organization has made efforts in technological innovation (e.g. the application of big data technology and computer algorithms)	0.825
SMAs2	Part of the revenue from Olympic tourism products will be returned to society (e.g. construction of community sports facilities, training of sports talents, etc.)	0.861
SMAs3	Beijing Winter Olympics is the first Olympic Games to achieve carbon neutrality	0.825
SMAs4	Bing Dwen Dwen's Olympic commemorative products reflect environmental protection concepts, such as the utilization of environmentally friendly materials	0.816
SMAs5	The Beijing Olympic Games has well transmitted Chinese traditional culture and the Olympic spirit (e.g. the opening and closing ceremony performance, the design elements of athletes' competition clothing, the design of Olympic commemorative products, the design of venues, etc.)	0.806
Sports tourism event image (STEI) of Beijing Winter Olympic Games (based on Kaplanidou and Vogt, 2007; Kaplanidou, 2010; Deng <i>et al.</i> , 2015) $\alpha = 0.940$; C.R. = 0.940; AVE = 0.796		
STEI1	Do you think it is valuable to participate in the Beijing Winter Olympics (Valuable-Worthless)	0.887
STEI2	Do you feel excited about the hosting of the Beijing Winter Olympics and watching relevant competitions (Boring-Exciting)	0.892
STEI3	Do you think the message delivered by Beijing Winter Olympics is healthy (Healthy-Unhealthy)	0.885
STEI4	Are you happy to participate in the Beijing Winter Olympics (Sad-Joyful)	0.904
Tourists' perceived value (TPV) of Olympic commemorative products (based on Chen and Lin, 2019; Currás-Pérez <i>et al.</i> , 2018) $\alpha = 0.926$; C.R. = 0.926; AVE = 0.716		
TPV1	The design of Bing Dwen Dwen is lovely	0.838
TPV2	The price of Bing Dwen Dwen products is reasonable	0.848
TPV3	The scarcity and limitation of Olympic commemorative products make them have investment value and collection value	0.842
TPV4	As a popular product in the Olympic cycle, buying Bing Dwen Dwen products will make you feel great joy and satisfaction	0.855
TPV5	Because of the scarcity and limitation of Olympic commemorative products, buying them will enable you to obtain the recognition of the surrounding people and improve your perceived social status	0.846
Tourists' behavioral intentions (TBIs) (Oliver, 1997; Yang <i>et al.</i> , 2011) $\alpha = 0.966$; C.R. = 0.966; AVE = 0.828		
TBIs1	You have a strong desire to buy Bing Dwen Dwen products, whether online or offline	0.904
TBIs2	Bing Dwen Dwen is still in short supply, but you still prefer to spend more time (e.g. booking) waiting to get it	0.917
TBIs3	You will share with other people positive information about products	0.911
TBIs4	You will encourage or recommend others to buy the products	0.922
TBIs5	After the Olympic Games, you will also buy the Bing Dwen Dwen peripheral products	0.897
TBIs6	Compared with the Olympic Games, your willingness to buy commemorative products decreased significantly after the Olympic Games	0.901

Note(s): BOCOG = Beijing Organizing Committee of the Olympic Games; α = Cronbach's alpha; C.R. = Composite reliability; AVE = Average variance extracted
Source(s): Authors' elaboration

SMAs, event image, perceived value & TBIs

Table 3. Reliability and convergent validity tests of variables

variable is greater than the correlation coefficient between this and other variables, indicating that the scale's discriminant validity is also acceptable.

To verify the impact of SMAs of the BOCOG on sports tourism event image, tourists' perceived value and TBIs, this study uses covariance-based SEM to analyze. The results of the fit analysis show that CMIN/DF = 1.175, less than 2; GFI = 0.942, AGFI = 0.926, NFI = 0.967, RFL = 0.962, IFI = 0.995, CFI = 0.995, all above 0.900; RMSEA = 0.015, less than 0.050, all within the critical standard range, indicating that the structural model has a good fit and can be used for path analysis (Mulaik *et al.*, 1989).

4.2 Testing of the theoretical model

The results of the theoretical model analysis (Table 6) show that SMAs have a significant positive effect on sports tourism event image and on tourists' perceived value (SMAs → STEI:0.520 and SMAs → TPV:0.318, $p < 0.001$). Thus, H1 and H2 are supported. Also, SMAs positively impact TBIs (STEI → TBIs:0.222, $p < 0.01$). Thus, H3 is supported. Additionally, the impacts of sports tourism event image and tourists' perceived value on TBIs are significantly positive (STEI → TBIs:0.222 and TPV → TBIs:0.156, $p < 0.01$). So, H4 and H5 are supported.

4.3 Testing mediating effects

Table 7 reveals that sports tourism event image and tourists' perceived value play an overall mediating role in the impact of SMAs on TBIs with 95% confidence intervals of (0.014; 0.160)

Table 4.
Results of correlation analysis

	SMAs	STEI	TPV	TBIs
SMAs	1.000			
STEI	0.469***	1.000		
TPV	0.307***	0.144	1.000	
TBIs	0.355**	0.296**	0.300***	1.000

Note(s): SMAs = Sustainable marketing activities; STEI=Sports tourism event image; TPV = Tourists' perceived value; TBIs = Tourists' behavioral intentions. ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$
Source(s): Authors' elaboration

Table 5.
Results of discriminant validity tests of the variables

	SMAs	STEI	TPV	TBIs
Sustainable marketing activities (SMAs)	0.827			
Sports tourism event image (STEI)	0.469	0.892		
Tourists' perceived value (TPV)	0.307	0.144	0.846	
Tourists' behavioral intentions (TBIs)	0.355	0.296	0.300	0.910

Source(s): Authors' elaboration

Table 6.
Results of the structural equation modeling test

Path	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	p	Conclusion
SMAs → STEI	0.520***	0.066	7.909	0.000	H1 Supported
SMAs → TPV	0.318***	0.063	5.035	0.000	H2 Supported
SMAs → TBIs	0.222**	0.069	3.193	0.001	H3 Supported
STEI → TBIs	0.156**	0.059	2.648	0.008	H4 Supported
TPV → TBIs	0.213***	0.059	3.633	0.000	H5 Supported

Note(s): SMAs = Sustainable marketing activities; STEI=Sports tourism event image; TPV = Tourists' perceived value; TBIs = Tourists' behavioral intentions. ** = $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Source(s): Authors' elaboration

and (0.029; 0.132), respectively, excluding 0. The mediating effect of sports tourism event image is 0.081 ($p < 0.05$). The mediating impact of tourists' perceived value is 0.068 ($p < 0.01$). Therefore, hypotheses H4b and H5b are both supported. Even though the results suggest that individual-specific indirect effects are low, the total indirect effect is 0.148 ($p < 0.01$).

Figure 1 presents the analysis results of the supposed model and the mediating effects of STEI and TPV.

5. Discussion

5.1 Theoretical implications

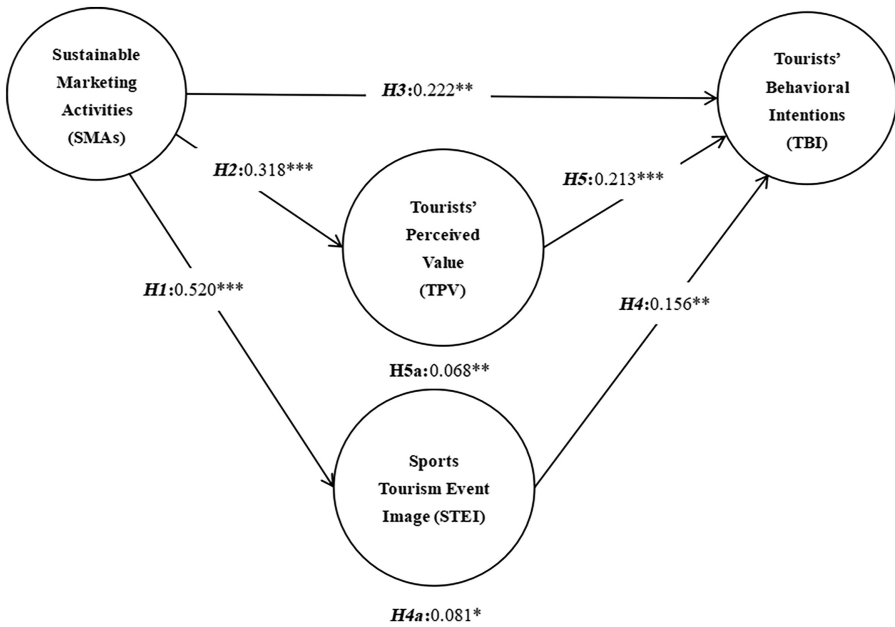
This study contributes to a ground-breaking investigation into the relationship between SMAs, sports tourism event image, tourists' perceived commemorative product value and tourists' behavior intentions (TBIs). The research focuses on the novelty of sports tourism events in the Beijing Winter Olympic Games context.

	Effect	p-value	95% confidence interval		Conclusion
			Lower bound	Upper bound	
SMA _s → STEI → TBIs	0.081*	0.017	0.014	0.160	H4a Supported
SMA _s → TPV → TBIs	0.068**	0.001	0.029	0.132	H5a Supported
Total indirect effect	0.148**	0.001	0.074	0.247	-

Note(s): SMA_s = Sustainable marketing activities; STEI=Sports tourism event image; TPV = Tourists' perceived value; TBIs = Tourists' behavioral intentions, * = $p < 0.05$, ** = $p < 0.01$

Source(s): Authors' elaboration

Table 7. Bootstrapping effects and 95% confidence intervals (CI) for the mediation model



Note(s): * = $p < 0.05$, ** = $p < 0.01$, *** = $p < 0.001$

Source(s): Authors' elaboration

Figure 1. Hypothesis testing

Specifically, the results demonstrate that SMAs positively impact sports tourism event image. It confirms past findings on the positive effect of CSR activities on brand images (Girish and Lee, 2019). Also, the data proves that SMAs positively impact tourists' perceived commemorative product value, which remains consistent with the previous findings of Currás-Pérez *et al.* (2018). This article also shows the positive influence of SMAs on TBIs, which extends the research findings of Kim *et al.* (2017), who only focus on the CSR effect on TBIs.

Moreover, this study clarifies that sports tourism event image can positively impact TBIs. It indicates that the promotion of event image helps organizations enhance consumers' trust in their products and services, increasing consumers' propensity to purchase. This analysis expands on Kaplanidou's (2009) results, revealing a direct and significant correlation between destination image and behavioral intentions. Also, tourists' perceived commemorative product value significantly affects their behavioral intentions, which verifies the conclusion of Chen and Chen (2010). The higher the perceived value, the stronger their purchase intentions.

Furthermore, the analysis confirms the mediating roles of sports tourism event image and tourists' perceived value in the relationship between the SMAs and TBIs. Specifically, sports tourism event image mediates the relationship between SMAs and TBIs. The research shows that SMAs, in addition to the direct positive impact on TBIs described above, can also have an indirect impact on TBIs through sport event image, which is a supplement to the conclusions of Mohamad *et al.* (2012). Also, there is a mediating effect of tourists' perceived value in the paths between SMAs and TBIs, which suggests a similar relationship mentioned above. The individual-specific mediating effects are not high, but the total indirect effect is high. The reason may be that brand image and perceived value always go together in the intentions study (Moon *et al.*, 2013). Also, a similar situation has occurred in other literature. For example, the research of Kim *et al.* (2016) proves that destination image mediates the relationship between spectator satisfaction and behavioral intentions, but their mediating effect is also very low. The synergetic effect of event image and perceived value can translate SMAs' effectiveness toward positively influencing TBIs, especially purchase intentions.

5.2 Managerial implications

This research also provides some valuable knowledge for practitioners. Specifically, it shows that the company can realize the effectiveness of SMAs by proceeding from its environmental, economic, social and cultural objectives (Junget *et al.*, 2020). The results suggest that the managers could actively implement SMAs to establish a favorable event image through the publicity of environmental protection ideas and the display of social responsibility. A good event image among customers may further positively affect their decision-making process, stimulate their behavioral intentions and help improve organizations' performance.

Additionally, implementing SMAs may significantly expand the events' commemorative products' popularity and make their value more deeply rooted in people's hearts. SMAs implementation in multichannel communications may motivate consumers to perceive more about the intrinsic and extrinsic value of event-related products. For example, through diversified social media communication, organizations can trans pass the specific sports spirit represented by the commemorative products, their traditional cultural symbolic significance and aesthetic design. These values may become the purchase attractions and enhance the customers' desire to buy.

Moreover, the research implies that when implementing sustainable marketing practices, managers should consider the supporting role of favorable event image and good perceived value. Managers should focus on brand management practices to reach additional impact on tourists' intention to buy or share about the commemorative products. Also, the more substantial total indirect effect suggests that managers can have a more significant impact on TBIs due to the synergy of sports tourism event image and product perceived value.

5.3 Limitations and future research agenda

As with any other research, this study has limitations that may stimulate future research lines. The article focuses on the supposed framework in the context of the sports tourism Olympics event. Its applicability in other event types needs further demonstration. The research only tests the mediation effects of sports event image and perceived product value. Further research may consider other mediators, such as customer engagement (Abbas and Shah, 2018). Also, this study does not intensely discuss the impact of each specific aspect of SMAs on its outcomes separately. Future studies can test the effect of environmental, social, economic and cultural strategies, respectively, (Manrai *et al.*, 2020). Finally, the method design included only the survey conducted in the Chinese market. To generalize the results, future studies may consider testing the model in an inter-country context (Butkouskaya *et al.*, 2021; Salcedo, 2021). For example, the Latin America region may be a good market for data collection due to its various demographic, geographic, economic and institutional characteristics related to the promotion of sports tourism (Aguinis *et al.*, 2020).

6. Conclusions

This study constructs the influence mechanism model of SMAs, sports tourism event image, tourists' perceived commemorative product value and TBIs. The research verifies each hypothesis through path analysis. Data support all hypotheses. The results uncover that SMAs positively impact sports tourism event image and tourists' perceived commemorative product value. Sports tourism event image and tourists' perceived value directly positively affect TBIs. Meanwhile, sports tourism event image and tourists' perceived value are two mediators in the SMAs and TBIs relationships.

The findings of this study have both theoretical and practical contributions. From the theoretical perspective, this article enriches strategic management research by closing the gap between the effects of SMAs implementation on event image, perceived product value and TBIs. Also, prior studies on the image in tourism have concentrated more on destination image, and limited literature views event image as the significant research variable. So, this study investigates event image in sports tourism and its connection with TBIs, which expands the current brand theory. The current analysis's findings about the association between perceived product value and behavioral intentions contribute to further extending the customer behavior theory. Moreover, event image and perceived value mediate the relationship between SMAs and TBIs, indicating that these two constructs can build a bridge between organizations and customers. This paper greatly expands the topicality of sports tourism sustainability by creating a theoretical framework around SMAs implementation and its consequences.

This research also provides some practical knowledge of SMAs. SMAs can be implemented from their four aspects (economic, environmental, social and cultural) to maximize organizational performance. Effective SMAs practices will improve customers' recognition of an event or an organization, help them generate a good image and further stimulate behavioral intentions. As one of the critical driving forces of TBIs, the perceived value of commemorative products has naturally become an important factor for enterprises to gain competitive advantages. Multichannel SMAs ensure that consumers can perceive more product or service values. The results apply to the BOCOG and other similar nonprofit organizations (e.g. the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) and the Olympic Council of Asia). Similar in their operation mode and organizational structure (Ferrand and McCarthy, 2008), these organizations may use SMAs in their marketing strategy due to their significant influence on performance. For instance, FIFA can apply SMAs to sustainably promote its event attraction and sales of its franchising products in the next World Cup. The findings also enlighten the Hangzhou Asian Games, which will be held in China next year. China's hosting organizations can give play to the efficiency of SMAs to actively promote the image and influence of the event.

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Further reading

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About the authors

Junfeng Wang is a PhD student in the School of Tourism and Hotel Management of Autonomous University of Barcelona. His research interests include customer behavior, event tourism, knowledge management and organizational sustainability. Junfeng Wang is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: 1554127@uab.cat

Vera Butkouskaya holds an international PhD in Entrepreneurship and Management and MSc in Economy and Marketing. She is an author and co-author of various national and international academic journal papers. Her areas of specialization are strategic management, integrated marketing communications, cross-cultural marketing and customer behavior. She is an author and co-author of different journals, such as *Journal of Marketing Communications*, *Journal of International Consumer Behavior*, *Journal of Economics, Finance and Administrative Science* and *Sustainability* about marketing communications, entrepreneurship and international marketing Springer and Emerald editorials.