

Ideal positive affect among Japanese sport tourists: A case of masters games participants

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Abstract

How people want to feel, known as ideal affect, has been considered a key concept to predict tourism behaviors generally, and sport tourism behaviors specifically. Thus, this study examined similarities and differences in ideal high-arousal (e.g., excited) and low-arousal (e.g., peaceful) positive affect across international sport tourists, domestic sport tourists, and sport excursionists. A total of 449 Japanese people who participated in masters games within the past three years completed an online survey. The results of analysis of variance (ANOVA) were significant only for low-arousal positive affect. Follow-up Tukey's test results indicated that domestic sport tourists and sport excursionists exhibited a higher level of ideal low-arousal positive affect than international sport tourists. The results are discussed in light of practical implications for enhancing the success of the World Masters Games Kansai.

Keywords

Ideal affect
Japan
Masters games
Sport tourism

Introduction

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the World Masters Games Kansai has been rescheduled from 2021 to 2027. The World Masters Games is one of the largest international, competitive sport events for adults (Young et al., 2017), and the Organizing Committee of the World Masters Games 2021 Kansai (n.d.) aims to attract a total of 30,000 Japanese and 20,000 international masters athletes. Thus, the event will serve as a major tourism opportunity; for example, in the World Masters Games Auckland 2017, visitors including athletes, non-playing officials, companions, and volunteers on average spent 8.9 nights at the destination, resulting in a total of 241,480 nights of stay for the entire event (International Masters Games Association, 2017).

Some sport tourism scholars (e.g., Ito & Kono, 2019; Trauer et al., 2003) have studied participants in masters games to understand their unique sport and tourism behaviors. Ito and Hikoji (2021) investigated the relationships between involvement and interdependent happiness, which describes "a state of harmony with a certain balance being achieved between the self and significant others" (Hitokoto & Uchida, 2015, p. 214). They compared Japanese masters athletes who participated in domestic games and those who participated in international games. The attraction dimension of involvement (e.g., pleasure) was positively related to interdependent happiness for both groups, whereas the social bonding dimension of involvement (e.g., social ties) was positively related for the domestic group. Similarly, Ito and Hikoji (2018) investigated potential differences in constraints between masters athletes who participated in domestic games and those who participated in international games. The results of semi-structured interviews identified two unique constraints (i.e., travel and financial constraints) exclusively in international contexts. When examining constraints among domestic masters athletes, Ito and Kono (2019) further distinguished domestic sport tourists who stay at a destination for at least 24 hours from

sport excursionists who do not stay overnight. Their results indicated that international sport tourists experienced more constraints (e.g., psychological, interpersonal) than domestic sport tourists and excursionists. These studies highlight that sport and tourism behaviors among Japanese masters athletes appear to vary across domestic (tourists vs. excursionists) and international groups.

It has been reported that ideal affect (i.e., how people want to feel) also plays an important role in predicting sport (Hu & Ito, 2020) and tourism (Tsai, 2007) behaviors. There are two types of ideal positive affect: high-arousal positive (HAP), such as excitement, and low-arousal positive (LAP), such as calm (Tsai, 2007; Tsai et al., 2006). Individuals consciously and subconsciously engage in activities including sports and tourism to achieve their ideal affect (Tsai, 2007). For example, the more people valued ideal HAP and LAP, the more they preferred active (e.g., surfing) and passive (e.g., relaxing) tourism activities, respectively, for their ideal vacation (Tsai, 2007).

The above research on involvement and constraints among domestic (tourists vs. excursionists) and international masters games participants indicate that there may be some systematic differences in ideal positive affect across these groups, too. In terms of involvement, social ties would be less important among participants in international games than those in domestic games because the former group is likely traveling themselves or with a few others. Conversely, the latter group would be looking forward to seeing other participants they know from other parts of Japan, as one of Ito and Hikoji's (2018) interviewees mentioned: "I don't go [to international masters games] by myself. ...When I attend domestic games, I can find someone [I know] coming from other prefectures" (p. 123). Seeing them and interacting with them outside the games might be comforting and relaxing (i.e., LAP states). In terms of constraints, Ito and Kono (2019) identified that international sport tourists experienced tourism constraints (e.g., problems with transportation and language) more than

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domestic sport tourists and sport excursionists. These tourism constraints, which likely produce stress, may prohibit tourists from experiencing LAP states (e.g., relaxing). However, there is no study that compared different groups of masters games participants in terms of their ideal affect. Such research would help us better understand why distinct groups of masters game participants seek different types of events, while also better informing managers of masters games as to how to better promote their events across different segments of their potential participants. Thus, this study examines similarities and differences in ideal HAP and LAP across international sport tourists, domestic sport tourists, and sport excursionists.

Methods

An online survey was conducted from October 30th to November 5th, 2018 (i.e., a week) with Japanese people who (a) were over 30 years old (the World Masters Games' age qualification), (b) were born and raised in Japan, and (c) had participated in masters games within the past three years. Our sample was drawn from panelists registered with a major online survey company in Japan. Among 627 panelists who met the above criteria, a total of 449 completed the survey (i.e., a response rate of 71.6%). This dataset was identical to that used in Ito and Kono (2019).

Our study instruments included measures of the two types of ideal affect and demographic information (e.g., age, sex). Based on Tsai (2007) and Tsai et al. (2006), we used three HAP items (i.e., enthusiastic, excited, elated) and three LAP items (i.e., calm, relaxed, peaceful), rated on a 5-point unipolar scale. Following Tsai et al. (2006), we measured how frequently respondents wanted to feel each of these emotions (from "not at all" to "very frequently"). All items were back-translated from English to Japanese.

Our data analysis consisted of four steps. First, as with Ito and Kono (2019), based on the experiences of international and domestic masters games, participants were divided into the following three groups: (a) *international sport tourists* who participated in international masters games and possibly domestic masters games as well, (b) *domestic sport tourists* who participated only in domestic masters games and stayed at their destinations overnight, and (c) *sport excursionists* who participated only in domestic masters games and did not stay at their destinations overnight. Second, univariate outliers in each group were examined following Tabachnick and Fidell's (2007) procedure and no outliers were identified. Third, after calculating Cronbach's alphas, the subscale score for each of ideal HAP and LAP was computed by averaging the three corresponding items. The means and standard deviations were then calculated for the subscale scores. Lastly, using the three groups of sport tourists as an independent variable, analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted separately for ideal HAP

and LAP. When the ANOVA results were significant, follow-up Tukey's tests were performed.

Results and Discussion

Among the 449 participants, 196 were international sport tourists (196 males; mean age=37.9 years), 141 domestic sport tourists (134 males; mean age=40.8 years), and 112 sport excursionists (104 males; mean age=41.6 years). In terms of their annual household income, the largest group was 4,000,000 to 5,999,999 yen (22.9% of international sport tourists, 28.8% of domestic sport tourists, and 30.8% of sport excursionists), followed 6,000,000 to 7,999,999 yen (21.7% of international sport tourists, 22.4% of domestic sport tourists, and 30.8% of sport excursionists).

The results of ANOVAs and follow-up Tukey's tests are reported in Table 1. The results of ANOVAs were significant only for ideal LAP, and the follow-up Tukey's test results indicated that domestic sport tourists and sport excursionists exhibited a higher level of ideal LAP than international sport tourists. The effect size was .04 indicating a small to medium size effect (Cohen, 1988).

The null result of ideal HAP is in line with Tsai's (2007) findings that individuals who idealize HAP likely engage in HAP-eliciting activities including active tourism activities. Given that masters games are participant-based competitive sport events (Young et al., 2015), participation in such events appears to produce HAP states regardless of the sport tourist category. Therefore, the level of ideal HAP did not vary across international sport tourists, domestic sport tourists, and sport excursionists.

On the other hand, a significant result was derived for ideal LAP. As expected, participants in domestic masters games may be looking forward to seeing their friends and interacting with them at the games, and the social ties might provide them with LAP states (e.g., comforting, relaxing). Tourism constraints may provide another possible interpretation. International travels to participate in masters games tend to involve more constraints (e.g., language barriers: Ito & Hikoji, 2018) than travels for domestic games. Participants in international masters games might experience stress due to these tourism constraints, which prohibit them from experiencing LAP states (e.g., relaxing). Therefore, the level of ideal LAP was lower among international sport tourists than domestic sport tourists and sport excursionists. Taken together, a key variable to predict participant-based event sport tourism behaviors may be ideal LAP, rather than HAP.

Conclusion

Focusing on Japanese masters athletes, this study examined similarities and differences in ideal HAP and LAP across international sport tourists, domestic sport tourists, and sport

Table 1. Results of ANOVAs and Tukey's tests for ideal high-and low-arousal positive affect

	<i>International Sport Tourists</i>		<i>Domestic Sport Tourists</i>		<i>Sport Excursionists</i>		α	F	η^2
	<i>M</i>	<i>(SD)</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>(SD)</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>(SD)</i>			
Ideal high-arousal positive affect	3.60	0.83	3.78	0.65	3.64	0.65	.77	2.10	-
Ideal low-arousal positive affect	3.56 _a	0.81	3.88 _b	0.80	3.90 _b	0.76	.64	8.39*	.04

Note. Means in the same row that do not share subscripts were significantly different.
* $p < .01$

excursionists. Our results revealed similarities in ideal HAP, indicating the nature of masters games participation, that is, active sport engagement. Conversely, differences were identified in ideal LAP, indicating (a) social ties among participants in domestic masters games and (b) stressful situations accompanied by tourism constraints in international masters games.

As with any research, our study has certain limitations including the gender imbalance, the use of recollection method, and the cross-sectional study design. Despite these limitations, our research still has important practical implications. Given the higher level of ideal LAP among domestic sport tourists and sport excursionists, (a) opportunities for socializing among them and (b) LAP-eliciting tourism activities such as hot springs and massage/spa may attract and/or satisfy these Japanese sport tourists. Our research also suggests that if tourism constraints become less prominent (e.g., smartphone-based translator) and international travels become less stressful, domestic sport tourists and sport excursionists may be interested in participating in international masters games. For example, sailing competitions will be hosted at the Wakayama Sailing Center that is located beside a fish market and hot spring facility. Socializing through a seafood barbecue and experiencing a hot spring with their colleagues after the competitions may help the participants experience LAP states more. Evidence-based promotion should be employed to enhance the success of the World Masters Games Kansai by taking advantage of the extra six years due to the reschedule from 2021 to 2027.

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