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Does Gender Moderate the Relationship among Festival Attendees' Motivation, Perceived Value, Visitor Satisfaction, and Electronic Word-of-Mouth?

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Abstract: Festivals are experiential products heavily depending on the recommendations of previous visitors. With the power of social media growing, understanding the antecedents of positive electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) intentions of festival attendees is immensely beneficial for festival organizers to better promote their festivals and control negative publicity. However, there is still limited research regarding eWOM intentions in the festival context. Thus, this study aims to fill such a gap by investigating the relationships among festival attendees' enjoyment seeking motivation, perceived value, visitor satisfaction, and eWOM intention in a local festival setting. Additionally, the moderating role of gender was tested as it is one of the most important demographic variables to show individual differences in behavioral intentions. The results of structural equation modeling showed a positive effect of enjoyment seeking motivation on perceived value, visitor satisfaction, and eWOM intention. Moreover, gender differences in eWOM intention and a full mediating effect of visitor satisfaction between perceived value and eWOM intention for female respondents were revealed. The findings of this study extend the existing festival literature and provide insights for strategically organizing and promoting festivals to generate more positive eWOM which can be utilized as an effective marketing tool and a feedback channel.

Keywords: festivals; enjoyment seeking motivation; perceived value; visitor satisfaction; electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) intention; gender difference; structural equation modeling (SEM)

1. Introduction

Festivals are an important part of the tourism and hospitality industry as they bring numerous benefits to their destinations in various ways [1,2]. They promote a positive destination image for the host communities [3,4], bring economic benefits by generating profits and stimulating local tourism [5,6], and provide cultural and entertainment experiences and activities for locals and visitors alike [7–9].

Festivals are experiential products that heavily rely on recommendations of those who have already experienced it [10]. Moreover, they are intangible products of which the quality is difficult to assess until the actual consumption has been made [11]. Thus, understanding the influence of positive word-of-mouth (WOM) on festivals is imperative. WOM refers to interpersonal communications among consumers about their purchase experience [12]. With the advent of the Internet and social media, eWOM has now become one of the most popular ways to share opinions and experiences among consumers [13]. As eWOM can potentially reach far more than just families and acquaintances, it is more influential than traditional WOM; thus, understanding the antecedents of eWOM intention is essential for festival organizers to prevent negative publicity as well as to better promote their products [14,15]. However, despite such significance, there is still room for further investigation in the festival research regarding eWOM intention.

Another variable largely overlooked in the festival literature is gender. Gender has been recognized as one of the most commonly investigated variables showing differences in individuals [16–18]. In previous studies, gender differences regarding eWOM intention have been confirmed in various contexts such as hotels, restaurants, marketing, and retail [19–22]. However, no such investigations have been made so far in the context of festivals to our knowledge. To address these gaps, the current study aims to (1) investigate how enjoyment seeking motivation of festival attendees affects their perceived value, visitor satisfaction, and eWOM intention in a local festival setting; and (2) identify if there are any gender differences in the structural relationships among the aforementioned variables.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Enjoyment Seeking Motivation

Previous studies have been emphasizing the role of motivation in festivals as one of the most important subjects in the field [23,24] as investigating festival attendees' motivations is crucial for designing offerings of the festival, monitoring visitor satisfaction, and understanding the decision-making processes of festival attendees such as future travel patterns and future attendance [25–27]. In addition, Park et al. [28] suggested that understanding motivations allows festival organizers to appropriately allocate resources, target their prospective attendees, and make effective promotional decisions.

According to Ross and Iso-Ahola [29], seeking motivation was found to be the most dominant force of the two basic motivational forces—seeking and escape motivations—for tourists. Seeking motivation refers to the individual tendency to seek intrinsic rewards such as self-determination, social interaction, learning, exploration, relaxation, sense of competence, and challenge from participation in leisure activities—in this case, festivals [29]. Moreover, motivations related to seeking enjoyment (e.g., unique experience, entertainment, variety/quality of events offered, enjoying leisure time, stimulating and exciting, enjoying special events, and enjoying festival crowds) were identified as strong forces that drive people to attend festivals [30,31].

2.2. Perceived Value

According to Zeithaml [32], perceived value is defined as an overall assessment of the utility of a product or service made by a consumer based on the perceptions of benefits and sacrifices. In other words, it is a trade-off between benefits and sacrifices/costs of a purchased product or service [33,34]. Specifically, a customer evaluates the fairness of perceived costs including monetary costs and non-monetary costs (e.g., energy consumption, time consumption, and stress) to determine the value of an offering [35].

Perceived value has been identified as one of the crucial antecedents of behavioral intentions of customers in various fields including retail, marketing, and hospitality. For example, previous research indicated that perceived value has a positive impact on customer satisfaction [35–38] as well as behavioral intentions such as repurchase/revisit intention [38,39] and WOM intention [40–42].

Likewise, perceived value is also an essential antecedent of visitor satisfaction and behavioral intentions including revisit intention and WOM intention in the festival context [43,44]. For example, Yoon, Lee, and Lee [45] asserted that the perceived value of a festival is positively associated with visitor satisfaction as festival quality positively influenced the perceived value, which also positively contributed to visitor satisfaction.

2.3. Visitor Satisfaction

In the tourism perspective, visitor satisfaction is defined as the comparison of prior expectations and post-travel experiences [39]. It is a measure of a visitor's emotional state affected by the experience of services and activities provided throughout the visitor's stay at a destination [46]. Previous literature confirmed that visitor satisfaction has a positive influence on behavioral intentions, especially WOM

intention [22,45–48]. Customers are more likely to give positive recommendations for products or services they have purchased when the satisfaction is high [49].

Eggert and Ulaga [50] suggested another important finding that visitor satisfaction not only affects WOM intention directly but also plays a mediating role in the relationship between perceived value and WOM intention suggesting that satisfaction plays a vital role in increasing positive WOM intention. Yoon et al. [45] also demonstrated that visitor satisfaction mediates the effect of perceived value on WOM intention, highlighting the importance of festival attendees' satisfaction and its role.

2.4. Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) Intention

As consumers usually perceive WOM as being non-commercial, it plays a significant role in shaping consumers' behavior and changing their attitudes toward products and services because it is considered unbiased and sincere [11,51]. For example, perceived value [39,44,52] and visitor satisfaction [45,48,49] positively affect WOM intention, and WOM intention has a positive influence on purchase intentions [20,53,54]. In the festival setting, recommendations of previous festival attendees are central to festivals' success as festivals are intangible and cannot be assessed until the actual experience has happened [10,11]. Moreover, positive WOM is a strong predictor of increased purchases and other consumer behaviors that can determine future sales [55–57].

With the spread of the Internet and social media in the modern era, a new form of online WOM has emerged known as eWOM [22]. Instead of only communicating with their friends, family, and acquaintances face-to-face, eWOM involves consumers actively engaging in online discussions to share their experiences with others [58]. Being online, eWOM reaches audiences faster and farther than traditional WOM, making it one of the most influential information sources on the Internet [59,60]. Moreover, eWOM can be utilized to increase the online presence and brand awareness of products or services [15] as it is an interactive communication tool among users [61] and a lead-generating tool that boosts product and service sales [62]. Therefore, investigating how eWOM intention is triggered will help festival organizers better understand their festival attendees in their decision-making process as well as create an exceptional festival experience and manage good publicity [14].

2.5. Hypotheses Development

Based on the literature review, the current study developed 10 hypotheses to test the relationships among enjoyment seeking motivation, perceived value, visitor satisfaction, and eWOM intention as well as the moderating role of gender on these relationships. First, previous studies suggested that motivation is an important antecedent of perceived value [63,64] and visitor satisfaction [65–67]. Among the different types of motivations, enjoyment seeking motivations have been identified as strong motivations for attending festivals [30,31,64]. Therefore, the current study proposes the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1 (H1). *Respondents' enjoyment seeking motivation has a positive impact on the perceived value of the festival.*

Hypothesis 2 (H2). *Respondents' enjoyment seeking motivation has a positive impact on visitor satisfaction.*

The existing literature has reported various relationships regarding perceived value, visitor satisfaction, and eWOM intention [34,41,50]. Previous studies indicated the perceived value of a festival is positively associated with visitor satisfaction [22,45,68]. Others have identified perceived value and visitor satisfaction as positively affecting WOM intention [48–50]. With the increased popularity of social media, customers are increasingly posting eWOM to share their purchase experiences and get information about new or unfamiliar products and services [15]. Based on these findings, the current study postulates the following hypotheses to depict the relationships among perceived value, visitor satisfaction, and eWOM intention:

Hypothesis 3 (H3). Respondents' perceived value of the festival has a positive impact on visitor satisfaction.

Hypothesis 4 (H4). Respondents' perceived value of the festival has a positive impact on the willingness to post eWOM on social media.

Hypothesis 5 (H5). Respondents' visitor satisfaction with their festival experience has a positive impact on the willingness to post eWOM on social media.

Gender has been identified as one of the most significant variables to display individual differences in various fields [18,69–71]. However, in the hospitality context, researchers have explored gender differences mainly in relation to consumption behaviors with inconclusive findings [17,72–75]. For example, Oh et al. [75] suggested that female hotel guests exhibit higher levels of expectations and perceptions of hotel services compared to male hotel guests. Kwon and Kwon [76] also revealed that males and females differ significantly in their purchasing behavior and preferred promotion types. Another study by Melnyk and van Osselaer [77] found that females were more heavily influenced by shopping enjoyment and promotions than males. On the other hand, Han and Ryu [73] argued that there is no difference in gender in the relationship between customer satisfaction and WOM intention in a restaurant setting. Similarly, Mattila [78] (2000) also suggested that customers' evaluation of service encounters in hotel and restaurant settings did not significantly differ according to gender. Despite such discrepancies in the existing literature, these findings indicate that males and females may demonstrate different consumption behaviors [69] (Jin et al., 2013), highlighting the need to further investigate the moderating role of gender.

Another speculation from previous research was that there are some inconsistencies regarding the relationships among perceived value, visitor satisfaction, and WOM intention. Eggert and Ulaga [50] revealed an indirect impact of perceived value on WOM intention via visitor satisfaction as well as a direct impact, whereas Yoon et al. [45] only reported the mediating role of visitor satisfaction between perceived value and WOM intention. However, no previous study so far has explored such relationships in relation to gender differences to the authors' knowledge. Based on these notions, the current study suggests the following hypotheses:

Hypotheses 6a–e (H6a–e). Gender has a moderated mediation effect on the relationships among enjoyment seeking motivation, perceived value, visitor satisfaction, and eWOM intention.

Figure 1 depicts the hypothesized model of the current study.

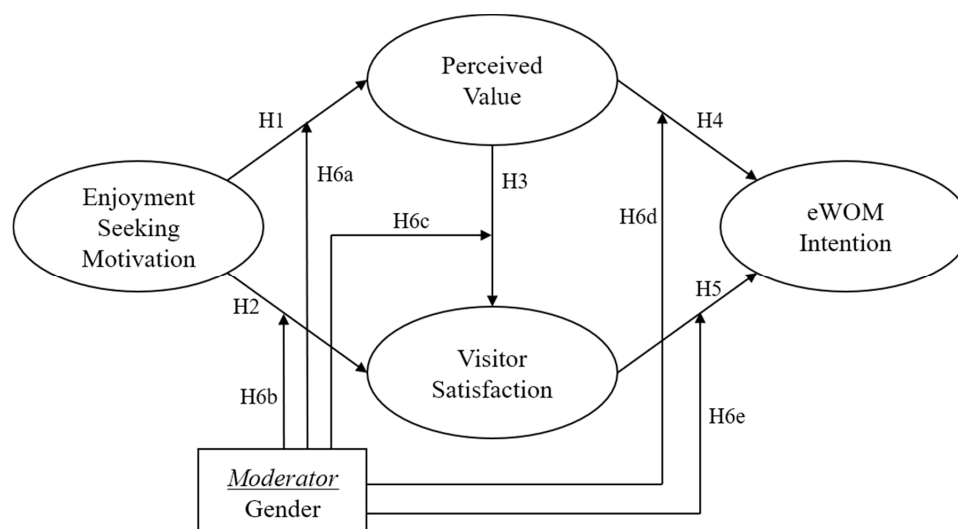


Figure 1. Proposed structural model.

3. Methodology

3.1. Data Collection

The current study targeted visitors of an annual art, music, and food festival held for two days in a town located in the southeastern part of the US which attracts more than 60,000 attendees every year. Given the nature of the festival (e.g., no tickets sold, no specific entrance existed), it was not possible to utilize probability sampling method; therefore, convenient sampling method was employed in the current study. To collect data, trained field researchers were located at the north, south, east, and west corners of the festival and intercepted attendees to recruit them to participate in the patron survey during the entire two-day period of the festival. In order to avoid non-response bias during the data collection, procedural errors were minimized during the survey development and through a pilot study. Furthermore, the confidentiality of respondents was ensured, and incentives (e.g., drawing) were offered to motivate people to participate in the study. During the data collection period, a total of 390 responses were collected, compiled, and analyzed using IBM SPSS v25 and Amos v25. Data screening was first conducted to ensure the quality of the data. There were no univariate outliers and influential cases detected; however, 8 straight-lining responses were found and deleted. As a result, a total of 382 responses were used for data analysis.

3.2. Measures

To test the hypotheses and the proposed structural model, a self-administered questionnaire was developed based on a comprehensive review of literature, and the measurement items for each construct were adopted and modified to fit the purpose of this study. The questionnaire was reviewed by two academics and two festival organizers to ensure content validity. The instrument was pre-tested with 30 undergraduate students who had previously attended the festival. Based on the feedback from the respondents, the instrument was refined in terms of formatting and clarity. The final patron survey consisted of items measuring festival attendees' enjoyment seeking motivation, perceived value, visitor satisfaction, and eWOM intention using a seven-point Likert scale (1 being strongly disagree and 7 being strongly agree). Three items were developed for measuring enjoyment seeking motivation from Crompton and McKay [79] and Uysal et al. [80]. For perceived value, three items were adapted from previous studies [32,81,82]. Lastly, visitor satisfaction [83] and eWOM intention [84] were each measured with three items adapted from prior research.

4. Results

4.1. Sample Profile

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the respondents. Out of 382 respondents, 33.5% ($n = 124$) of them were male, and 66.5% ($n = 246$) were female. The average age of the respondents was 29.50 ($SD = 14.79$) and the majority age group was between 20–29 years of age ($n = 222$, 64.0%). The major ethnic group was Caucasian (76.9%), followed by Asian (12.6%), African American (6.2%), Hispanic (2.9%), and Native American (1.3%). Regarding the education level, the majority of the respondents were either college graduates and higher ($n = 160$, 43.4%) or current college students ($n = 155$, 42.0%). The marital status of the respondents indicated that more than half of the respondents ($n = 271$, 74.0%) were single, followed by married respondents ($n = 90$, 24.6%). Lastly, the respondents' annual income was almost equally spread over the ranges given.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of respondents ($n = 382$).

| Demographics | n^a | % |
|-----------------------------|-------|------|
| Gender | | |
| Male | 124 | 33.5 |
| Female | 246 | 66.5 |
| Age | | |
| 19 years and under | 35 | 10.1 |
| 20–29 years | 222 | 64.0 |
| 30–39 years | 23 | 6.6 |
| 40–49 years | 16 | 4.6 |
| 50–59 years | 28 | 8.1 |
| 60–69 years | 13 | 3.7 |
| 70 years and over | 10 | 2.9 |
| Education Level | | |
| Less than high school | 6 | 1.6 |
| High school graduate | 48 | 13.0 |
| Some college | 155 | 42.0 |
| College graduate and higher | 160 | 43.4 |
| Marital Status | | |
| Single | 271 | 74.0 |
| Married | 90 | 24.6 |
| Other | 5 | 1.4 |
| Income Level | | |
| Under \$10,000 | 83 | 27.6 |
| \$10,000–\$29,999 | 35 | 11.6 |
| \$30,000–\$59,999 | 51 | 16.9 |
| \$60,000–\$89,999 | 31 | 10.3 |
| \$90,000–\$109,999 | 29 | 9.6 |
| Over \$110,000 | 72 | 23.9 |

^a Total responses may not equal to 382 due to missing responses.

4.2. Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

To test the proposed model in Figure 1, the study applied Anderson and Gerbing's two-step approach [85]. First, CFA was conducted to evaluate the overall measurement model fit. Each of the overall goodness-of-fit indices in this study suggested that the proposed four-factor model fits the data well, $\chi^2_{(48)} = 134.34$, $p < 0.001$, $\chi^2/df = 2.80$, CFI = 0.97, TLI = 0.96, RMSEA = 0.07 (90% CI: 0.06–0.08), and SRMR = 0.03. The internal consistency of the constructs was ensured using composite reliability coefficients ranging from 0.77 to 0.94 [86]. Construct validity was examined by assessing convergent and discriminant validity (see Table 2). Both factor loadings, ranging from 0.62 to 0.95, and average variance extracted (AVE), exceeding the cut-off level of 0.50, were satisfied within the acceptable range [85]. Comparing AVEs with the squared multiple correlation coefficients between any paired constructs indicated the ensured discriminant validity as well [86]. Table 3 describes the descriptive statistics of measurement items and standardized factor loadings of CFA.

Table 2. Convergent and discriminant validity.

| Constructs | ESM | PV | SAT | eWOM |
|-----------------|-------------------|------|------|------|
| ESM | 0.59 ^a | | | |
| PV | 0.25 ^b | 0.53 | | |
| SAT | 0.56 | 0.47 | 0.78 | |
| eWOM | 0.17 | 0.15 | 0.18 | 0.84 |
| CR ^c | 0.81 | 0.77 | 0.91 | 0.94 |

ESM (Enjoyment seeking motivation), PV (Perceived value), SAT (Visitor satisfaction), eWOM (eWOM intention). ^a Average variance extracted (values on the diagonal),

^b Squared multiple correlation, ^c Composite reliability.

Table 3. Results of CFA.

| Construct/Items (Cronbach's α) | M | SD | Loadings |
|--|------|------|----------|
| Enjoyment Seeking Motivation ($\alpha = 0.80$) | | | |
| I attended the festival because I enjoy special events | 6.05 | 1.17 | 0.80 |
| I attended the festival for the festive atmosphere | 6.02 | 1.16 | 0.80 |
| I attended the festival to enjoy the entertainment | 5.90 | 1.36 | 0.70 |
| Perceived Value ($\alpha = 0.77$) | | | |
| The festival quality exceeded travel expense | 5.05 | 1.62 | 0.62 |
| The festival offered better value for the money than did other festivals | 5.07 | 1.40 | 0.78 |
| Visiting the festival was affordable | 5.41 | 1.43 | 0.78 |
| Visitor Satisfaction ($\alpha = 0.91$) | | | |
| Visiting the festival was pleasurable | 6.03 | 1.14 | 0.90 |
| Visiting the festival made me feel better | 5.85 | 1.23 | 0.87 |
| The festival was a wonderful tourist attraction that I enjoyed | 6.01 | 1.16 | 0.88 |
| eWOM Intention ($\alpha = 0.94$) | | | |
| Post your festival experience on an SNS such as Facebook | 5.13 | 1.89 | 0.89 |
| Let other SNS users know that you attended the festival | 5.25 | 1.79 | 0.95 |
| Share positive information about this festival on an SNS | 5.38 | 1.77 | 0.91 |

$\chi^2_{(48)} = 134.34$, $p < 0.001$, $\chi^2/df = 2.80$, CFI = 0.97, TLI = 0.96, RMSEA = 0.07 (90% CI: 0.06–0.08), and SRMR = 0.03.
SNS = Social Networking Sites.

4.3. Results of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

4.3.1. Overall Model

After validating the measurement model, the proposed structural model was tested using SEM. Each of the overall goodness-of-fit indices indicated the structural model fits the data well, $\chi^2_{(49)} = 104.34$, $p < 0.001$, $\chi^2/df = 2.86$, CFI = 0.97, TLI = 0.96, RMSEA = 0.07 (90% CI: 0.06–0.08), and SRMR = 0.04. Figure 2 depicts the overall results of the proposed model with the standardized path coefficients. According to the results, the positive impacts of enjoyment seeking motivation on perceived value ($\beta = 0.51$, $p < 0.001$), enjoyment seeking motivation on visitor satisfaction ($\beta = 0.55$, $p < 0.001$), perceived value on visitor satisfaction ($\beta = 0.41$, $p < 0.001$), perceived value on eWOM intention ($\beta = 0.17$, $p < 0.05$), and visitor satisfaction on eWOM intention ($\beta = 0.32$, $p < 0.001$) were all significant, indicating H1, H2, H3, H4, and H5 were supported.

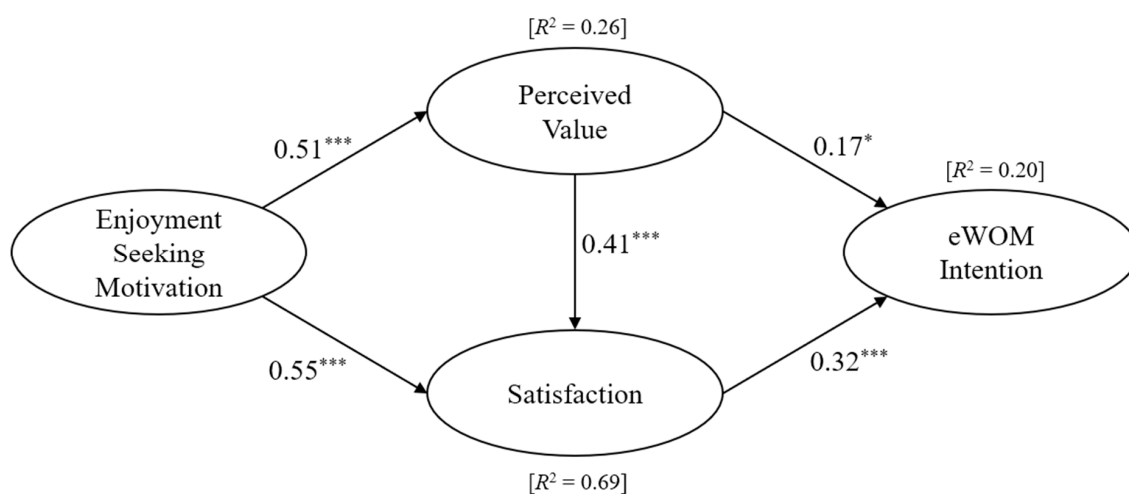


Figure 2. Overall results of the structural equation model. $\chi^2_{(49)} = 104.34$, $p < 0.001$, $\chi^2/df = 2.86$, CFI = 0.97, TLI = 0.96, RMSEA = 0.07 (90% CI: 0.06–0.08), SRMR = 0.04. * $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.001$.

4.3.2. Moderating Role of Gender

The moderating effect of gender on the structural relationships among enjoyment seeking motivation, perceived value, visitor satisfaction, and eWOM intention was tested to find out if there were any significant differences between male and female respondents. Prior to testing the moderating effect of gender, a multi-group CFA was conducted to evaluate the measurement invariance (Table 4). The fully-constrained model did not significantly degrade the fit relative to the unconstrained model, $\Delta\chi^2 = 13.62$, $df = 8$, $p = 0.092$. The results concluded that the indicators showed comparable relationships to the corresponding latent variables in male and female groups. Chi-square differences with 1 df were used to compare the constrained model with the unconstrained model for each of the five path coefficients. The results showed that there is a significant gender difference in the relationship between perceived value and eWOM intention ($\Delta\chi^2_{(1)} = 4.51$, $p < 0.05$) and the relationship between visitor satisfaction and eWOM intention ($\Delta\chi^2_{(1)} = 5.51$, $p < 0.05$), supporting H6d and H6e. H6a-c were not supported (see Figure 3). More specifically, for male respondents, the relationships between enjoyment seeking motivation and perceived value ($\beta = 0.67$, $p < 0.001$), enjoyment seeking motivation and visitor satisfaction ($\beta = 0.41$, $p < 0.001$), perceived value and visitor satisfaction ($\beta = 0.50$, $p < 0.001$), and perceived value and eWOM intention ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.05$) were significant except for the relationship between visitor satisfaction and eWOM intention ($\beta = -0.01$, $p = 0.963$). On the other hand, the results for female respondents showed that the relationships between enjoyment seeking motivation and perceived value ($\beta = 0.40$, $p < 0.001$), enjoyment seeking motivation and visitor satisfaction ($\beta = 0.57$, $p < 0.001$), perceived value and visitor satisfaction ($\beta = 0.39$, $p < 0.001$), and visitor satisfaction and eWOM intention ($\beta = 0.41$, $p < 0.001$) were significant save for the relationship between perceived value and eWOM intention ($\beta = 0.07$, $p = 0.428$). Figure 3 shows the gender moderation model for males and females.

Table 4. Test of measurement invariance in male and female groups.

| | χ^2 | df | $\Delta\chi^2$ | Δdf | RMSEA (90% CI) | SRMR | CFI | TLI |
|---------------|----------|------|----------------|-------------|------------------|------|------|------|
| Unconstrained | 202.94 | 60 | | | 0.06 (0.04–0.07) | 0.05 | 0.96 | 0.95 |
| Constrained | 216.56 | 52 | 13.62 | 8 | 0.05 (0.04–0.06) | 0.06 | 0.96 | 0.95 |

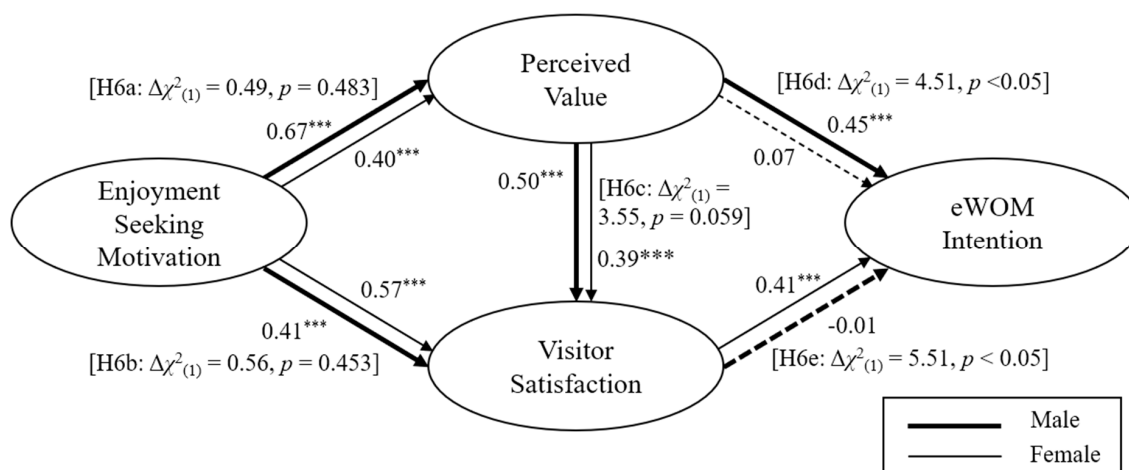


Figure 3. Results of the moderation effects of gender. $\chi^2_{(98)} = 104.343$, $p < 0.001$, $\chi^2/df = 2.113$, CFI = 0.963, TLI = 0.950, RMSEA = 0.055 (90% CI: 0.045–0.065), SRMR = 0.053. *** $p < 0.001$.

Finally, the study tested if gender moderates the mediation effect of visitor satisfaction between perceived value and eWOM intention. First, the significance of the indirect effect in the overall model was tested using bootstrapping procedures. The standardized indirect effect was computed for each

of 2000 bootstrapped samples, and the 95% confidence interval was computed. The bootstrapped standardized indirect effect was statistically significant with the effect of 0.16 and BCa 95% CI [0.08, 0.30], $p < 0.001$. Furthermore, to test the significance of the moderated-mediation paths, the difference in mediation effects in males and females was calculated. In the male group, there was no significant mediation effect of visitor satisfaction with the effect of -0.004 and BCa 95% CI $[-0.29, 0.20]$, $p = 0.964$; however, a significant mediation effect was found in the female group with the effect of 0.16 and BCa 95% CI [0.08, 0.29], $p < 0.01$. Hence, the findings show that the role of visitor satisfaction is different in each gender group.

5. Discussion

5.1. Discussion of Findings

The objectives of this study were to investigate how festival attendees' enjoyment seeking motivation affects perceived value, visitor satisfaction, and eWOM intention as well as to determine any gender differences in these relationships. Overall, the findings are in line with the existing literature and revealed important implications for the hospitality and tourism industry, especially benefitting festivals.

First of all, the results of the current study indicated that enjoyment seeking motivation is an important predictor of perceived value and visitor satisfaction which was consistent with the previous studies [31,63,87,88]. This suggests that developing appropriate entertainment activities and events that can drive festival attendees with such motivations is vital in increasing perceived value and visitor satisfaction. Furthermore, perceived value was found to have a positive impact on visitor satisfaction and eWOM intention, also aligned with the findings of existing studies [41,50,89]. Having higher perceived value leads to higher visitor satisfaction as well as higher eWOM intention of festival attendees, eventually contributing to stronger loyalty and revisit intention [90,91].

Moreover, the results of this study suggest that visitor satisfaction significantly contributes to eWOM intention as is confirmed by Eggert and Ulaga [50] and Lee et al. [49]. This indicates that the more satisfied festival attendees are, the higher their intention to post positive eWOM is likely to be. Positive eWOM is a powerful tool that can build the online presence of a festival and generate leads [15,62]. As eWOM is an information source that people generally accept as being non-commercial and trustworthy compared to the messages and advertisements generated by the organizers themselves [51,92], having positive eWOM can be extremely beneficial for the organizers in influencing future visitors to attend their festivals [93]. Therefore, it is imperative that festival organizers maximize the satisfaction of the attendees and urge them to post positive eWOM.

As existing literature indicated that there are often significant differences between males and females in consumer behaviors [17,69,73,75–78,94], the current study also tested the moderating role of gender on the relationships of the proposed model. The results confirmed that there is indeed a gender difference in how eWOM intention is triggered. Considering there is no direct impact of visitor satisfaction on eWOM intention for male respondents, they were more likely to be motivated to post positive eWOM if they perceived the value of the festival to be high. On the other hand, female respondents were more concerned with the actual satisfaction level in order for them to be triggered to post positive eWOM online.

Finally, the moderated-mediation test revealed that there is a significant gender difference in the mediating relationship of visitor satisfaction between perceived value and eWOM intention. First, a significant mediation effect of visitor satisfaction was detected among female respondents, whereas male respondents did not show any such sign. This was partly in line with the previous findings that suggested an indirect impact of perceived value on WOM intention via satisfaction [45,49,50]. Based on this finding, it is suggested that female attendees are inclined to post positive eWOM only if they are actually satisfied with the festival experience, whereas male attendees may be more lenient as they are not significantly influenced by the satisfaction level itself. Rather, male respondents are more likely to be influenced to post eWOM as long as they perceive the festival's value to be high.

5.2. Theoretical Implications

The current study makes important theoretical contributions as it extends the existing festival literature. While there have been previous studies about eWOM in tourism and hospitality research, mostly focused on restaurants and hotels, not much attention has been brought into the festival context considering the importance of eWOM in festivals. With the importance of recommendations in festival studies and the rise of eWOM in the modern era, the findings of the current study shed light on the topic and provide critical implications. In this study, the findings add value to the existing literature by identifying the antecedents of eWOM intention and further establishing their relationships among each other in the festival context, providing important insights to both academics and practitioners.

In addition, the current research tested the moderating role of gender revealing how male and female festival attendees are influenced to post positive eWOM differently. Although many studies have explored the moderating role of gender, this study, to our knowledge, is the first to incorporate it with eWOM intention in the festival context. Identifying the moderating effect of gender on the relationships among enjoyment seeking motivation, perceived value, visitor satisfaction, and eWOM intention contributes to the existing festival literature and helps academics and festival organizers better understand how gender can affect the eWOM intention of festival attendees differently.

5.3. Practical Implications

The findings of the study provide several practical implications for festival organizers in similar festival settings with useful insights for understanding the relationships among motivation, perceived value, satisfaction, and eWOM intention. Festival organizers can better understand festival attendees' needs and predict their future intentions, thereby utilizing the predictions to enhance the quality of their festivals and improving visitor satisfaction, eventually leading to increased profitability of the festivals. Especially, as the study incorporates eWOM intention as one of the constructs in the structural model, it provides the organizers with significant insight for utilizing social media as a promotion and communication channel.

As enjoyment seeking motivation has been confirmed to have a strong positive impact on perceived value and visitor satisfaction, the current study recommends festival organizers develop and offer fun-inducing and entertaining activities and events that can appeal to those who are interested in seeking enjoyment and enhance their perceived value of the festival as well as their satisfaction level.

Festival organizers need to focus on providing quality offerings in order to increase the perceived value and visitor satisfaction of their festivals as these positively affect eWOM intention. Festivals are heavily reliant on the recommendations of previous visitors [10]; therefore, managing and facilitating positive eWOM is central to a festival's success. Moreover, as eWOM can be utilized to create a strong online presence and brand awareness of festivals at a relatively low cost [15], festival organizers should employ eWOM as a useful marketing tool and communication channel in order to promote their festivals as well as understand festival attendees' needs and enhance the quality of the festivals. For example, festival organizers may prepare events that facilitate social media postings and online reviews about their festivals to increase the eWOM intention. Also, managing official social media accounts for festivals can be advantageous because they serve as platforms where previous attendees share their experience and communicate with potential future visitors seeking information about the festivals.

Another important implication of this study is that eWOM intention is triggered differently for male and female attendees. The findings revealed that male attendees are inclined to leave positive messages about the perceived value of the festival on the Internet, while female attendees are likely to share positive reviews regarding their satisfaction with the festival. For example, a male attendee may want to emphasize what a good value the festival was or how much he gained out of the festival experience when sharing a positive review online. On the other hand, a female attendee may comment more on the overall satisfaction of the festival experience. As such, male and female attendees focus on different aspects of their festival experiences when they post eWOM. Therefore, different strategies

for evoking positive eWOM intention should be employed depending on the gender of the target audience. Say, for festivals that usually attract a specific gender (e.g., motor shows, monster truck shows, baby fairs, etc.), festival organizers may be able to expand their customer base by approaching the opposite gender as well. They can obtain a larger customer base by focusing on providing value-for-money type activities, events, and prizes to increase the perceived value of the festival for attracting males. Conversely, to appeal to female attendees better, placing an emphasis on the quality of fun activities and events to increase the actual satisfaction level is extremely important.

5.4. Limitations and Future Suggestions

Despite the aforementioned implications, there are some limitations to this study that can provide directions for future research. One of the limitations is that the structural model does not cover a comprehensive set of variables related to behavioral intentions of festival attendees. It may be beneficial to consider other aspects in the model, such as various contents of the festival and different types of visitor motivations, for a more holistic approach.

Another limitation is that the findings may not be applicable for every occasion as the study was based on a specific festival. As the festival's attendees were primarily single and highly educated, the study may not be replicable in different settings. Thus, investigating other locations and cultures for future studies could yield different results that can be comparable to the findings of this study. Likewise, the sample of the study was chosen using the convenience sampling method and from a small location in the southeastern part of the US. As the collected sample was predominantly white in the current study, it would be beneficial to conduct future research in a different setting to address a larger population with more diversity in terms of ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

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