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Festival Recovery and Consumption Promotion Mechanism in the Post-Pandemic Period: The Case of the Qingdao International Beer Festival

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Abstract: As governments in various countries and regions issue tourism-friendly policies in the post-pandemic period, the voices for tourism consumption recovery and innovative transformation have attracted great attention. Many scholars, experts and industry professionals in the field of festivals are actively exploring efficient solutions for festival marketing and sustainability. It is worth rethinking tourists' consumption psychology and perceived image toward exiting festival products as well as the antecedents that affect festival loyalty. The Qingdao International Beer Festival, as one of the most influential festivals in China, was selected as the research case for this study. The main goal of this study was to investigate festival consumption promotion mechanism by proposing a conceptual framework in which the associations from destination familiarity and product familiarity to loyal intentions (re-patronage and recommendation) were examined, with mediators of overall festival image, perceived value and overall satisfaction. Furthermore, the moderating role of visitor involvement in the proposed framework was also adequately demonstrated. The research findings are expected to provide a significant reference for the recovery and competitiveness improvement of the entire festival industry.

Keywords: festival sustainability; destination familiarity; product familiarity; image; perceived value; satisfaction; loyalty intentions; visitor involvement

1. Introduction

With the friendly travel policies issued by various countries and regions, how to deal with the forthcoming return of potential leisure tourists and provide high-quality travel experience has become the focus of tourism scholars and practitioners during the post-pandemic era [1–4]. The numerous existing literature about hotel and tourism management pays considerable attention to customer experience and behavior, employee psychology and work performance, and the sustainable development of hospitality and tourism industry, etc. [5–9]. Especially in the field of festival tourism, tourist experience quality, perceived image and behavioral intentions towards a certain festival product as well as the sustainability of the entire festival industry have become the hot issues of concern to scholars and professionals [1,7,10–15]. It is a fact that in the past around three-year pandemic, the stagnation of festival tourism has actually brought losses in multiple aspects, involving regional economy, cultural transmission, and sustainable development of communities and society [1,14,15]. The viewpoint has been made that it is crucial to reexamine the attributes or performance, benefits, value of festival tourism, tourists' participation or willingness to consume a festival/event product as well as their experience quality even subjective wellness during a festival trip [1,16–19].

It is a fact that there has been a marked change in customers' attitudes and risk perception of consuming tourism products/services, and the perceived image also plays a significant role in affecting their behavioral intentions after the pandemic [1,16,18,19]. Previous studies indicated that

tourists tend to visit the low-risk tourism areas, and consume those tourism products and services that are more familiar to them [7,18,20–23]. Whether in before or post-pandemic period, one point needs to be noted is that tourist consumption decision-making seems to be inseparable from the antecedents of image, perceived value and satisfaction, which play the significant role in driving tourist loyalty intentions [7,23–26]. These antecedents are derived from existing classical theories in the fields of marketing and psychological behavior, including the Theory of Value Chain (TVC), the Theory of Consumption Value (TCV), the Image Theory (IT), and the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) model [1,26–29].

In addition, tourist consumption behavior also depends on their familiarity and involvement with the relevant product/service to a large extent [18,21,22,25,30,31]. Based on the eWOM and Information adoption model and the Signalling Theory, individuals rely on external information, cues, and signals to inform their decisions [32–34]. As such, differing knowledge, information and experiences may cause them to generate various degrees of familiarity, involvement, impressions and behavioral intentions towards a product/service. This is apparently evidenced by the phenomenon that tourists are less active to consume festival tourism products during the pandemic [14,15,17], and some tourists do have a negative impression or emotion of festival tourism products and avoid participating in any form of festival activities. Thus, the significance of cultivating a positive festival image seems to be the trending subjects for the festival sustainability [1,12,17,19]. Also, it makes sense to grasp the important role of tourists' familiarity and involvement towards a festival product in affecting their perceived image, perceived value, satisfaction and behavioral intentions, which would provide a basis for festival recovery and transformation.

In general, the perceived image and value of tourists are vital evaluation indicators for their satisfaction and loyalty intentions [23,26,35]. In the context of festival tourism, individuals' familiarity or involvement with festival-related products and activities, and the host place of a festival are also the factors that greatly influence their travel experience and perception image during the trip [11,30,36,37]. Historic literatures have empathized that destination familiarity and personal involvement can positively influence on tourist satisfaction and behavioral loyalty through perceived image [21,22,30,31,38]. To the best of our knowledge, no research has been carried out regarding the assessment on relations among familiarity, involvement, image, perceived value, satisfaction, and loyalty intentions for consuming the festival tourism products, especially in a new normative era spawned by the pandemic.

Given the aforementioned research significance and gaps, the Qingdao International Beer Festival, as one of the four major beer festivals worldwide and the largest festival in China [39], was nominated as the research case for this study. Meanwhile, four research objectives are formulated. The first objective is to analyze the significance of the proposed interrelations among variables of destination familiarity, product familiarity, overall festival image, perceived value, overall satisfaction, re-patronage intention, and recommendation intention. Secondly, the relative significance and mediation effect of model constructs are determined for predicting festival travelers' loyalty intentions. Thirdly, the multi-group invariance is proceeded to evaluate the moderation role of visitor involvement in the proposed relationships. Lastly, based on the empirical results of model testing, the relevant theoretic and managerial implications are further discussed to provide reference for the resurgence, marketing and competitiveness of festival products.

The structure of the rest of this study includes five sections. The hypothesis argumentation is clarified in the literature review section. The methodology section includes research background, measurement items of study variables, data collection, and sample profiles. The section of results consists of common method variance examination, confirmatory factor analysis on measurement model, structural equation modelling analysis, and moderation analysis. The section of conclusion reveals insightful theoretical, social and managerial implications. The last section points out the limitations of the study and potential research prospect.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Familiarity and Image

Familiarity is a multidimensional concept and has been categorized as experimental familiarity, informational familiarity, self-assured familiarity, educational familiarity anticipated familiarity, proximate familiarity, and self-rated familiarity [21,31]. It refers to the knowledge and/or experience that consumers have about a tourism destination or product/service, influencing individuals' travel perceptions and behavioral intentions [21,22]. Especially, the practitioners in the marketing and tourism industry have emphasized the importance of destination and product familiarity [21,31,40]. Destination familiarity refers to consumers' travel experiences and their affective connection with a certain destination [21], while product familiarity depends on multi-facets with regards to cutomers' actual consumption or use experience, information search as well as advertising exposure frequency [40]. Different degrees of familiarity may subtly produce different perceived images of an individual's visit to a certain destination or consumption evaluation of a certain product [18,21,31].

The concept of image is defined in earlier research by Crompton (1979) as the perceptions and impressions of individuals on a particular destination, event, activity, or person, which indicates their beliefs or prejudices [41]. Image is considered as one of the vital predictors for evaluating individuals' behavioral decisions [4,42,43]. The prior tourism literatures have shown that image can be hierarchized as cognitive image, emotional/affective, and conative/overall image [1,43,44]. Specifically, cognitive image can be described as travelers' objective perception and assessment for the characteristics and performance of a tourism destination or product/service, while affective image is normally considered as the pleasurable emotions and affections that travelers feel when they travel to a certain tourist destination and consume a certain tourism product/service [36,44,45]. Overall image, which is identified as the fusion of multi-interactive components, is generally evaluated from both cognitive and affective image [12,20,43,44]. A festival-related study by Dalgıç and Birdir (2020) defined overall festival image as visitors' general impressions and perceptions about a particular festival [12], which relate to cognitive and affective facets, such as the characteristics of the host place and festival/event organization, the affections toward festival activities, and the cohesion from the community and social level.

The more familiar an individual is with a place, the more likely it is to generate a favorable perceived image of the place [4,18,42,45,46], which has been verified in rural tourism, slow tourism and medical tourism. Individuals' positive image perception arises from a variety of aspects, containing their perceived familiarity with the tourist destination and local products, as well as their actual connection and familiarity with the local community or residents [20,42,47]. Additionally, Casali et al., (2021), Elliot and Papadopoulos (2016), Kuhzady et al., (2020) and Stylidis et al., (2020) have demonstrated that product familiarity and destination familiarity positively influence customers' perceived image in the various settings, including peer-to-peer accommodation and cross-national travel [18,21,22,48]. A study on literary festival by Kim et al., (2018) verified that familiarity has a positive and direct influence on perceived quality and festival brand image, which in turn can promote the formation of festival loyalty, thereby leading to a high level of attachment to festival destination [49]. A study by Chirakranont and Sakdiyakorn (2022) also demonstrated that travellers' experience quality and perceived image towards a craft beer tourism destination is closely related to their deep interest, knowledge, and familiarity with the beer product itself and the beer-making process [50]. Nonetheless, the empirical study on the association between familiarity and image in the festival context deserves to be determined more abundantly. In the present study, tourist familiarity involves two main aspects (destination familiarity and product familiarity), and thus the hypotheses are presented as below.

Hypotheses 1 (H1): Destination familiarity positively influences overall festival image.

Hypotheses 2 (H2): Product familiarity positively influences overall festival image.

2.2. Perceived Value, Satisfaction and Loyalty Intentions

A large number of studies related to consumers' perceptions and behaviors have placed great emphasis on the concepts of perceived value, satisfaction and loyalty intentions, where perceived value is theorized as an overall evaluation on the benefits from the consumption of a product or service against the inputs even scarifies of obtaining the product or service [26,51], satisfaction is illustrated as a psychological state of pleasure that customers feel from the consumption process, while the term of loyalty intentions refers to the willingness of individuals to continuously engage in a specific behavior or consume a certain product or service, and it is often used to measure customer loyalty behaviors, including revisit or re-patronage, word of mouth (WOM), and repurchase [23,26,52]. The associations among perceived value, satisfaction, and loyalty intentions have been broadly examined in the studies on hospitality and tourism within different contexts, such as rural tourism, halal tourism, island tourism, and green hotel [23–26,53], and these studies indicated that perceived value and satisfaction positively influence tourists' loyalty intentions.

In the festival context, previous studies have demonstrated that festival performance, festival quality, perceived value, and festival image play a positive role in driving festival tourist satisfaction and loyalty intentions [37,54–56]. Wong et al., (2015), Tanford and Jung (2017), Pai et al., (2021), and Yoon et al., (2010) demonstrated that perceived service quality and perceived value towards a festival product have a direct and positive impact on tourist satisfaction and loyalty [37,54,55,57]. They also consistently verified that satisfaction is a mediator in the relation between perceived value and festival loyalty. Wong et al., (2015) and Wu and Ai (2016) declared that festival image positively influences festival loyalty through the mediator of festival satisfaction [55,56]. Lban et al., (2015) examined that festival image has a direct and positive impact on tourist perceived value, which in turn increase intentions to revisit and word-of-mouth communication [58].

Although familiarity, perceived value and image are considered as the indicators that play a significant role in affecting tourist satisfaction and loyalty [12,21,22,45], few studies have combined such important concepts into a comprehensive research model to analyze the formation process of tourists' loyalty intentions. Especially, the existing festival-related research has mainly focused on the impact of festival experience quality and image on tourist loyalty [7,12,13], thus it is worth investigating how tourists' familiarity with the host place of a festival and festival-related products influence their satisfaction and loyalty intentions through the mediators of festival image and perceived value. In the present study, festival loyalty is measured by re-patronage and recommendation intentions, thus the following hypotheses are proposed.

Hypotheses 3 (H3): Overall festival image positively influences perceived value.

Hypotheses 4 (H4): Overall festival image positively influences overall satisfaction.

Hypotheses 5 (H5): Perceived value positively influences overall satisfaction.

Hypotheses 6 (H6): Perceived value positively influences re-patronage intention.

Hypotheses 7 (H7): Perceived value positively influences recommendation intention.

Hypotheses 8 (H8): Overall satisfaction positively influences re-patronage intention.

Hypotheses 9 (H9): Overall satisfaction positively influences recommendation intention.

2.3. Moderating Role of Visitor Involvement

Involvement, originally adopted from the theory of ego involvement, has been broadly used in psychological and behavioral analysis [59]. In the studies of marketing and consumer behavior, involvement is expounded as the extent where consumers have a higher engagement on a complete consumption process, which includes advertising, information browsing and processing of a certain

product or service, as well as purchase decisions [60,61]. In other words, involvement could be understood as a strong yearning or emotion to participate in something caused by one (or more) stimuli in a specific situation [62]; the Cognitive Theory of Emotion and the Broden-build Theory indicated this emotion catalyzed by certain stimulating activities and situations correspond to specific action tendencies [32,63,64]. The current literatures on involvement have majorly debated several terms of product involvement, activity involvement, cultural involvement, personal involvement and place involvement [21,25,30]. The existing tourism research indicated that involvement can be described as the tourists' perceived relevance, motivation, and interest regarding tourism destinations, activities, products or services [30,65], its role in evaluating individuals' psychology and decision-making has also received more and more attention in various tourism contexts [21,30,38,61,66].

Previous studies indicated that involvement is an important antecedent to evaluate perceived value, experience quality, destination image, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions [21,25,30,38,61,67]. Tourists who are deeply involved in a certain product/service may be less concerned with perceived value while immersing themselves in the experience [38]. Some studies have investigated the direct or indirect effects between engagement and factors of familiarity, image, perceived value, satisfaction, and loyalty behaviors [21,25,30,61,67]. Nonetheless, there are few studies have combined some of these variables to experimentally analyze individuals' decision-making. Chi et al., (2022), Choo et al., (2022) and Tsai (2011) have pointed out that involvement is a key moderating variable influencing consumer decision-making process [1,11,62]. For instance, Hwang et al., (2020) examined the moderating role of involvement in affecting the associations among cognitive and affective perceptions (i.e., normative beliefs, motivations, and attitudes) and pro-environmental intentions for using drone food delivery service [66].

In the festival tourism context, visitor involvement toward a particular festival is largely linked with various elements, such as festive activities, local communities and cultural atmosphere [1,30]. A study on festival image by Lee and Jan (2021) examined that personal involvement, cultural involvement, and place involvement have a varying degrees of impact on cognitive image, affective image, and conative image [30]. A beer festival study by Chi et al., (2022) successfully examined the moderating role of community involvement in the relation from cognitive festival image to festival loyalty intentions, with two mediators of affective and overall festival image [1]. Kim et al., (2015) declared that different levels of tourist perceived value, satisfaction and loyalty intentions towards a festival product are tightly related to festival involvement [68]. Choo et al., (2022) verified the moderation effects of involvement in the associations among perceived quality, satisfaction and loyalty in the food festival context [11]. Rivera et al., (2022) also demonstrated that in a cultural festival trip, visitor involvement is positively affected by familiarity, and satisfaction plays a mediating role in the association between visitor involvement and intention to continually consume this cultural festival product; that is, when tourists have a certain familiarity with a festival, if they are more satisfied with their involvement in the festival, they are more willing to participate in the festival [69]. In addition, the enduring involvement theory was applied in a study about craft beer and food festival, indicating that an enduring involvement is related to various factors (e.g., familiarity), it is a crucial antecedent for predicting festivalscape with four sub-dimensions (convenience, food/beverage quality, facility, and staff), festival satisfaction and loyalty [70].

In light of the previous research findings, it is obvious that the significance of festival involvement in the evaluation on the associations among festival tourist cognitions, affections and behavioral responses; it is tightly related to familiarity, festival image, perceived value, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions. However, involvement as a moderator has not been sufficiently investigated in the festival-related studies, and its moderating role in the relations among festival tourist cognitions, affections and behavioral responses deserves further exploration [1,11]. The plausibility of visitor involvement as a moderating variable to investigate the consumption decision-making process of festival tourists has been affirmed in the previous literatures [1,11,62]. In the case of the Qingdao International Beer Festival, the visitors, festival-goers and beer-goers may have a deep involvement with beer culture, entertainment activities, and local communities. Considering the

varying levels of involvement with the festival, it was expected that involvement would have a moderating impact on the relations among study variables (destination familiarity, product familiarity, overall festival image, perceived value, overall satisfaction, re-patronage intention, and recommendation intention). Thus, the following hypotheses are developed.

Hypothesis (10a): Visitor involvement moderates the relationship between destination familiarity and overall festival image.

Hypothesis (10b): Visitor involvement moderates the relationship between product familiarity and overall festival image.

Hypothesis (10c): Visitor involvement moderates the relationship between overall festival image and perceived value.

Hypothesis (10d): Visitor involvement moderates the relationship between overall festival image and overall satisfaction.

Hypothesis (10e): Visitor involvement moderates the relationship between perceived value and overall satisfaction.

Hypothesis (10f): Visitor involvement moderates the relationship between perceived value and re-patronage intention.

Hypothesis (10g): Visitor involvement moderates the relationship between perceived value and recommendation intention.

Hypothesis (10h): Visitor involvement moderates the relationship between overall satisfaction and re-patronage intention.

Hypothesis (10i): Visitor involvement moderates the relationship between overall satisfaction and recommendation intention.

All proposed hypotheses are graphically presented in Figure 1.

Hypothesized moderating impact of visitor involvement *(H10a – H10i)*
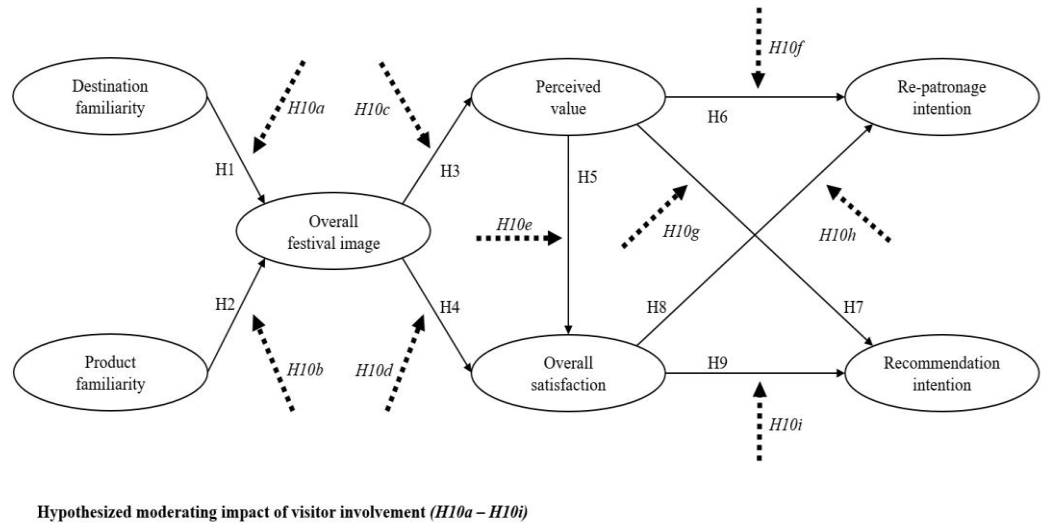
Figure 1. Proposed Research Model.

3. Methodology

3.1. Study Context: The Qingdao International Beer Festival

The Qingdao International Beer Festival, which was founded in 1991, opens on the second weekend of August every year and lasts for 16 days; it is a large-scale national festival that integrates tourism, culture, sports, and economy and trade, highlighting the unique advantages and charm of Qingdao city [71]. It is one of the four major beer festivals in the world, along with the Munich Oktoberfest in Germany, the London Oktoberfest in the UK, and the Denver Oktoberfest in the US, has grown to be one of the largest and most influential festival products in China [39,71]. Specifically, Qingdao City won the title of *Beer Capital of China* on July 16, 2021, the brand value of the Qingdao International Beer Festival has reached 36.8 billion RMB, meanwhile, the brand value of Tsingtao Beer (the most exported and famous Chinese beer brand) is 240.689 billion yuan, ranking first in China's beer industry for 20 consecutive years (see Appendix-A). Tsingtao Brewery founded in 1903 is a long-established beer manufacturer in China and the fifth largest beer manufacturer on a worldwide scope, consumers are relatively familiar with various products of Tsingtao Beer in both domestic and international markets (see Appendix-B). It is well-known that Qingdao is a coastal tourist city in China, Tsingtao Beer is also recognized by consumers for its product variety and brand reputation. The Qingdao International Beer Festival is familiar to and loved by a considerable number of festival-goers by virtue of its unique marketing operations and remarkable brand image [71]. Thus, it can be concluded that it is meaningful to take the festival as an example to examine the effectiveness of our proposed model.

3.2. Measurements

Each study construct had three measurement items that are well-established scales in the existing literature, which have been adjusted to be suitable in the context of Qingdao International Beer Festival. Specifically, the measurement instruments of destination familiarity and product familiarity were drawn from Elliot and Papadopoulos (2016) [48] and Kuhzady et al., (2020) [21]. The items that measure the variables of overall festival image, perceived value, overall satisfaction, re-patronage intention, and recommendation intention were derived from Al-Ansi and Han (2019) [23] and Chi et al., (2020) [26]. The measurement items for visitor involvement were obtained from Lee and Jan (2021) [30]. All items were scored with 7-point Likert scales. The specific measurement items of each study constructs are exhibited in Table 1.

Table 1. Measurement items**.**

Scale Items	Loading	Mean	SD	Skewness (Std. error)	Kurtosis (Std. error)
Destination familiarity (α = .818)					
DF1- My familiarity with Qingdao made me more aware of the Qingdao International Beer Festival.	.909	4.92	1.124	.164 (.135)	-.772 (.268)
DF2- My familiarity with Qingdao let me know more information about the Qingdao International Beer Festival.	.932	4.91	1.025	-.086 (.135)	-.339 (.268)
DF3- My experience with Qingdao made me feel interested in attending the Qingdao International Beer Festival.	.796	5.09	1.088	.004 (.135)	-.794 (.268)
Product familiarity (α =.786)					
PF1- My familiarity with Tsingtao Beer made me more aware of the Qingdao International Beer Festival.	.841	4.94	1.093	.263 (.135)	-.667 (.268)
PF2- My familiarity with Tsingtao Beer encouraged me to get to know the Qingdao International Beer Festival better.	.929	4.98	1.049	-.031 (.135)	-.533 (.268)

Item	Loading	Mean	SD	Skewness (SE)	Kurtosis (SE)
PF3- My recognition of Tsingtao Beer has made me more eager to attend the Qingdao International Beer Festival.	.867	5.02	1.128	.158 (.135)	-.856 (.268)
Overall festival image (α =.913)					
OI1- My overall image of the Qingdao International Beer Festival is positive.	.891	5.53	1.175	-.493 (.135)	-.149 (.268)
OI2- My overall image of the Qingdao International Beer Festival is preferable.	.910	5.52	1.222	-.527 (.135)	-.378 (.268)
OI3- The overall image I have of the Qingdao International Beer Festival is favorable.	.870	5.57	1.166	-.470 (.135)	-.350 (.268)
Perceived value (α =.883)					
PV1- Attending the Qingdao International Beer Festival is worth the price.	.831	5.14	1.116	-.147 (.135)	-.583 (.268)
PV2- Compared to other festivals, attending the Qingdao International Beer Festival is a good deal.	.904	5.27	1.098	-.078 (.135)	-.644 (.268)
PV3- Attending the Qingdao International Beer Festival offers a good value for money.	.892	5.13	1.139	-.078 (.135)	-.613 (.268)
Overall satisfaction (α = .888)					
OS1- Overall, I am satisfied with my trip experience to the Qingdao International Beer Festival.	.912	5.36	1.010	-.295 (.135)	-.317 (.268)
OS2- My decision to attend the Qingdao Beer Festival was a great choice.	.895	5.35	.972	-.268 (.135)	-.468 (.268)
OS3- As a whole, I have really enjoyed myself while attending the Qingdao International Beer Festival.	.894	5.43	1.011	-.334 (.135)	-.412 (.268)
Re-patronage intention (α =.830)					
RPI1- I will attend the Qingdao International Beer Festival again in the near future.	.979	5.53	1.043	-.277 (.135)	-.698 (.268)
RPI2- I am willing to attend the Qingdao International Beer Festival again in the near future.	.945	5.74	.931	-.187 (.135)	-.872 (.268)
RPI3- I plan to attend the Qingdao International Beer Festival again in the near future.	.885	5.84	.991	-.442 (.135)	-.607 (.268)
Recommendation intention (α =.889)					
RCI1- I will say positive experiences about the Qingdao International Beer Festival to others.	.846	5.61	1.022	-.170 (.135)	-.950 (.268)
RCI2- I will recommend the Qingdao International Beer Festival to family/friends/others.	.949	5.55	1.091	-.233 (.135)	-.836 (.268)
RCI3- I will encourage family/friends/relatives to attend the Qingdao International Beer Festival.	.916	5.45	1.119	-.162 (.135)	-.917 (.268)
Visitor involvement (α = .818)					
VI1- Attending the Qingdao International Beer Festival is somewhat of a pleasure to me.	.847	5.17	1.015	-.354 (.135)	.095 (.268)
VI2- Attending the Qingdao International Beer Festival interests me a lot.	.898	5.12	.992	-.159 (.135)	-.286 (.268)
VI3- I am deeply absorbed in the Qingdao International Beer Festival.	.812	5.24	1.037	-.009 (.135)	-.567 (.268)

Note. α stands for Cronbach's alpha coefficient; SD stands for sdanderdized deviation.

3.3. Data Collection and Sample Characteristic

First of all, considering that the questionnaire could provide a broader reference for beer festivals of different scales around the world (e.g., the Munich Oktoberfest in Germany and the Busan

Oktoberfest in South Korea), the survey questionnaire was initially finalized in English. Then, a pre-test was conducted to further refine the content validity of survey questionnaire based on feedback from festival experts and practitioners. On the other hand, since the survey sample of this study was Chinese people who have attended the Qingdao International Beer Festival, aged 18 years and above; the questionnaire was translated into Mandarin for data collection, using the blind translation-back-translation method. The survey was administrated over a three-week period in August 2023, during the time of Qingdao International Beer Festival. A total of 356 self-administered questionnaires were collected through the online survey platform (www.wjx.cn), which is open to the users of various SNS tools, involving WeChat, Weibo, and QQ, and 328 valid responses were remained for data analysis via IBM SPSS-AMOS 26.0 software.

The sample contained 59.8% (196) males and 40.2% (132) females. The average age of participants was 32.5 years old, which ranged between 18 and 60 years old. The education level of respondents was mainly centered on three areas, which included bachelor's degrees (45.6%), master's degrees (23.5%), and three-year college degrees (16.6%). The majority of festival travelers were company staff (39.9%), which was followed by civil servants or institution workers (21.7%) and students (16.3%). In regards to the monthly income, 49.6% earned 6001RMB or higher, 22.4% earned between 4001-6000RMB, 15.8% earned between 2001-4000RMB, and 12.2% earned 2000RMB or less. In terms of accommodations, the overwhelming majority (46.6%) preferred hotels, and about 39.5% favored staying at guesthouses. Most of festival travelers (38.2%) indicated they stay for 2 to 3 nights, 35.4% and 20.7% indicated that they stay 1 night and return on the same day, separately. The main purposes for tourists to participate in the beer festival is entertainment and relaxation (61.6%) and family togetherness (36.7%). The SNS platforms are the chief channels for travelers to find out about the festival information. Lastly, 65.6% of respondents reported they participated in the beer festival once, and 24.3% have participated in the festival 2 to 4 times. Although the online survey was completed during the 33rd Qingdao International Beer Festival in 2023, most respondents (51.2%) reported they attended it before the pandemic outbreak (before 2019, the 1st ~29th festival), some respondents (31.2%) attended the 33rd festival, and only 17.6% had experience in the 30th to the 32nd festival (from 2020 to 2022), affected by the pandemic prevention and control policies. This reflects that the festival recovery may take longer than expected.

The applied methodology to test measurement model and research hypothesis is a two-stage structural equation modeling approach [72]. Common method variance and the normality of univariate data were first performed before the measurement model testing. Afterwards, the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was executed to examine the quality of measurement model, and the structural model was tested through a covariance-based structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis with maximum likelihood method. The multi-group analysis, with K-means cluster method, was performed to verify the role of moderator in the proposed framework.

4. Results

4.1. Common Method Variance

Considering only a single data collection method was conducted to measure the study constructs, the following procedures were undertaken to avoid the issue of common method variance to the data, including that the survey questionnaire was carefully designed and approved by tourism academics for its content validity and face validity, the scale instruments for study variables were separately presented in a random sequence to minimize the unengaged and submissive responses, and each scale instrument was described in a concise way of avoiding double-barreled statement. Then, Harman's single factor test (1967) [73] was fulfilled to examine common method bias, and the total variance explained is 24.911%, below the criterion of 40%, signifying that the common method variance did not inflate the results and elucidation of this study, which is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Harman's single-factor test**.**

	Total Variance Explained					
	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
Component	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	13.950	24.911	24.911	13.950	24.911	24.911

Note. Extraction method with Principal Component Analysis.

4.2. Measurement Model Analysis

As suggested by Curran et al., (1996) [74], the normality of univariate data was examined before evaluating the measurement model, all normality results (see Table 1) reported acceptable values, where the skewness values were distributed between -.527 to .263 (standard error = .135) and the kurtosis values were distributed between -.950 to .095 (standard error = .268). Meanwhile, the loadings of all measurement items were above the criterion of .50 and the values of Cronbach's alpha ranging from. 786 to .913 were all greater than the threshold of .70 [75,76], which implied a well internal consistency among the items loaded in each factor.

The CFA results in Table 3 verified that the measurement model statistically fits the data (χ^2 = 539.117, df = 220, χ^2/df = 2.451, p < .001, RMSEA = .065, IFI = .964, TLI = .954, CFI = .963). Convergent validity of the measurement model was confirmed, as evidenced by composite reliability (CR) and average variance extract (AVE) values. The CR values ranged from .889 to .942, greater than the minimum threshold of .70, thus the internal consistency for each latent construct in the proposed model was established; the AVE values were all above the suggested criterion of .50 and ranged from .728 to .844, thereby the variance in each construct was amply explained by its items, and the convergent validity existed at the measurement model level [77]. Moreover, the squared correlations among study constructs were generally lower than the AVE values, with the exception between perceived value and overall satisfaction. This situation has also appeared in previous studies, indicating that a part of respondents may have similar thoughts on the evaluation of perceived value and overall satisfaction [26]. As suggested by Nunally (1978, 1994) and Rönkkö and Cho (2022), it is necessary to further compare the chi-square difference between the baseline measurement model and the generated model with combined items of these two constructs [76,78,79]. The chi-square difference was 78.16 (Δdf = 8), at the significant level of 0.001, supporting the establishment of discriminant validity.

Table 3. Results of factor correlations and associated measures.

Constructs		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.	Destination familiarity	**.912**	.570[b]	.173	.172	.177	.165	.187	.262
2.	Product familiarity	.755[a]	**.911**	.195	.207	.221	.208	.245	.187
3.	Overall festival image	.416	.442	**.920**	.719	.755	.539	.661	.513
4.	Perceived value	.415	.455	.848	**.908**	.821	.584	.663	.555
5.	Overall satisfaction	.421	.470	.869	.906	**.928**	.667	.774	.630
6.	Re-patronage intention	.406	.456	.734	.764	.817	**.942**	.750	.445
7.	Recommendation intention	.432	.495	.813	.814	.880	.866	**.931**	.534
8.	Visitor involvement	.512	.507	.716	.745	.794	.667	.731	**.889**
AVE		.776	.774	.793	.768	.811	.844	.818	.728
Mean		4.97	4.98	5.54	5.18	5.38	5.70	5.54	5.18
Standard deviation		1.118	1.090	1.188	1.118	.998	.988	1.077	1.015

Goodness-of-fit statistics:
χ^2 = 539.117, df = 220, χ^2/df = 2.451; p < .001, RMSEA = .065; CFI = .963; IFI = .964; TLI = .954.

Note. [a]Correlations among variables are below the diagonal；[b]Squared correlations among variables are above the diagonal. AVE = Average Variance Extracted, CR = Composite Reliability; CR values are shown on the main diagonal (Bolded). ***p <.001, **p <.01, *p <.05.

4.3. Structural Equation Modelling

The SEM analysis results in Table 4 and Figure 2 demonstrated that the structural model statistically fits the data (χ^2 = 296.563, df = 179, p < .001, χ^2/df = 1.657, RMSEA = .045, IFI = .979, TLI = .975, CFI = .979). Destination familiarity (β =.446, p < .05) and product familiarity (β =.432, p < .05) were significant and positive determinants of overall festival image. Therefore, H1 and H2 were established. Overall festival image positively determined perceived value (β =.827, p < .001) and overall satisfaction (β =.420, p < .001), which explained re-patronage intention (β =.702, p < .001) and recommendation intention (β =.619, p < .001). Thus, H3, H4, H8 and H9 were supported by the data. Meanwhile, perceived value also directly determined overall satisfaction (β =.537, p < .001), re-patronage intention (β =.319, p < .001), and recommendation intention (β =.341, p < .001). As a result, H5, H6, and H7 were statistically supported. The conceptual model possessed an adequate explanatory power in which about 98.2% and 87.3% of total variance in re-patronage intention and recommendation intention was explained by its predictors.

Table 4. Standard parameter estimates of the structural equation modeling.

Hypothesis	Coefficient	t-value	Supported
H1: Destination familiarity → Overall festival image	.446	3.005*	*YES*
H2: Product familiarity → Overall festival image	.432	2.870*	*YES*
H3: Overall festival image → Perceived value	.827	15.244***	*YES*
H4: Overall festival image → Overall satisfaction	.420	5.781***	*YES*
H5: Perceived value → Overall satisfaction	.537	6.996***	*YES*
H6: Perceived value → Re-patronage intention	.319	3.327***	*YES*
H7: Perceived value → Recommendation intention	.341	3.478***	*YES*
H8: Overall satisfaction → Re-patronage intention	.702	7.014***	*YES*
H9: Overall satisfaction → Recommendation intention	.619	6.157***	*YES*

Total variance explained:

R^2 for overall festival image = .730; R^2 for perceived value = .684; R^2 for overall satisfaction = .838; R^2 for re-patronization intention = .982; R^2 for recommendation intention = .873

Goodness-of-fit statistics:

χ^2 = 296.563, df = 179, χ^2/df = 1.657; p < .001, RMSEA = .045; CFI = .979; IFI = .979; TLI = .975.

Note. ***p <.001, **p <.01, *p <.05.
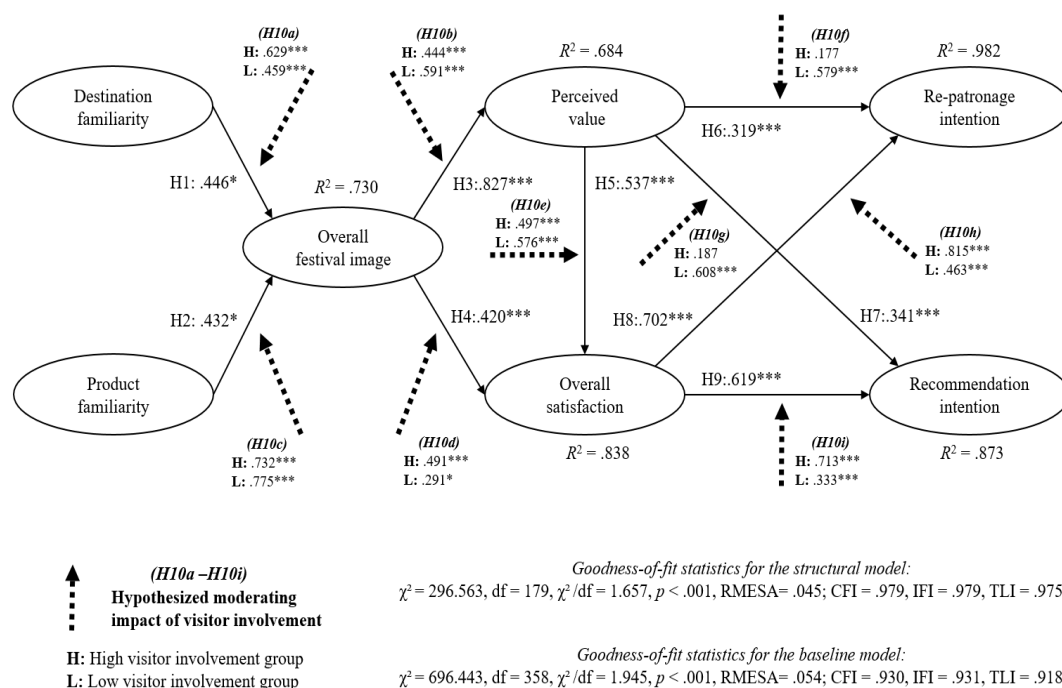
Figure 2. Results of the structural equation model.

The total effect from independent variable to outcome variable may come through various forces, including direct and indirect effects [80]. As indicated by Hayes (2009), mediation refers to the intervening influence of one variable on the relationship between other two variables, and the intervening influence may come from one or multiple variables [81]. We focus on the indirect effect in this study. Thus, the bootstrapping method was employed to conduct the mediation assessment. As presented in Table 5, the construct of destination familiarity had an indirect impact on the four study constructs (β destination familiarity $\rightarrow$ perceived value = .369, p < .01; β destination familiarity $\rightarrow$ overall satisfaction = .386, p < .01; β destination familiarity $\rightarrow$ re-patronage intention = .389, p < .01; β destination familiarity $\rightarrow$ recommendation intention = .365, and p <. 01), the construct of product familiarity also had an indirect impact on the four study constructs (β product familiarity $\rightarrow$ perceived value = .357, p < .01; β product familiarity $\rightarrow$ overall satisfaction = .373, p < .01; β product familiarity $\rightarrow$ re-patronage intention = .376, p < .01; β product familiarity $\rightarrow$ recommendation intention = .353, p <. 01). The mediation role of overall festival image was significant (β overall festival image $\rightarrow$ overall satisfaction = .444, p < .01; β overall festival image $\rightarrow$ re-patronage intention = .871, p < .01; β overall festival image $\rightarrow$ recommendation intention = .817, p < .01), and the mediation role of perceived value was also significant (β perceived value$\rightarrow$ re-patronage intention = .377, p < .01; β perceived value $\rightarrow$ recommendation intention = .332, p < .01).

Table 5. Indirect-impact assessment.

Indirect effect of	On			
	Perceived value	Overall satisfaction	Re-patronage intention	Recommendation intention
Destination familiarity	.369**	.386**	.389**	.365**
Product familiarity	.357**	.373**	.376**	.353**
Overall festival image	-	.444**	.871**	.817**
Perceived value	-	-	.377**	.332**

Note: **p <.01.

In the present study, overall festival image, perceived value, and overall satisfaction were examined as the vital mediators in the relations from destination familiarity and product familiarity to re-patronage intention and recommendation. In addition, perceive value had a partial mediation impact in the relation between overall festival image and overall satisfaction. And likewise, overall satisfaction had a partial mediation impact in the relations from perceived value to re-patronage intention and recommendation intention.

4.4. Moderation Analysis

Multi-group analysis was executed to examine the extent to which visitor involvement influence the associations among study constructs. In examining the moderating role of visitor involvement (α = .818), a K-means cluster method was utilized to divide the sample into two groups: high visitor involvement (n = 227) and low visitor involvement (n = 101). The baseline model comprising such two groups was produced and proven to fit data reasonably well (χ^2 = 696.443, df = 358, $p < .001$, χ^2/df = 1.945, RMSEA = .054, IFI = .931, TLI = .918, CFI = .930). The chi-square difference test was employed between the baseline model and nested models, where the paths among all study constructs were restricted to be equal across groups.

The results of the chi-square difference tests presented that four paths, from perceived value to re-patronage intention ($\Delta\chi^2$ (1) = 5.781, $p < .05$), from perceived value to recommendation intention ($\Delta\chi^2$ (1) = 6.748, $p < .01$), from overall satisfaction to re-patronage intention ($\Delta\chi^2$ (1) = 4.493, $p < .05$), and from overall satisfaction to recommendation intention ($\Delta\chi^2$ (1) = 4.438, $p < .05$), were statistically different, which indicated that the positive impact of perceived value on re-patronage and recommendation intentions did not significantly existed for visitors who have a high level of involvement with the Qingdao International Beer Festival, when compared to visitors who have a low level of involvement with the festival. On the other hand, overall satisfaction would have a

stronger impact on re-patronage intention and recommendation intention among visitors who have a high level of involvement with the Qingdao International Beer Festival relative to visitors who have a low level of involvement with the festival. Thus, H10f, H10g, H10h, and H10i were supported by the data. Figure 2 and Table 6 illustrate the results of multi-group invariance test.

Table 6. Results of test for metric invariance.

Paths	High group (n = 227, mean = 5.63)		Low group (n = 101, mean = 4.16)		Baseline model (freely estimated)	Nested model (equally restricted)
	β	t-values	β	t-values		
H10a: DF → OFI	.629	8.616***	.459	4.212***	χ^2 (358) = 696.443	χ^2 (359) = 697.639
H10b: PF → OFI	.444	6.191***	.591	4.997***	χ^2 (358) = 696.443	χ^2 (359) = 697.892
H10c: OFI → PV	.732	9.687***	.775	6.844***	χ^2 (358) = 696.443	χ^2 (359) = 696.510
H10d: OFI → OS	.491	5.643***	.291	2.087***	χ^2 (358) = 696.443	χ^2 (359) = 696.870
H10e: PV → OS	.497	5.427***	.576	3.906***	χ^2 (358) = 696.443	χ^2 (359) = 698.384
H10f: PV → RPI	.177	1.223	.579	3.850***	χ^2 (358) = 696.443	χ^2 (359) = 702.224
H10g: PV → RCI	.187	1.306	.608	4.020***	χ^2 (358) = 696.443	χ^2 (359) = 703.191
H10h: OS → RPI	.815	5.223***	.463	3.256***	χ^2 (358) = 696.443	χ^2 (359) = 700.936
H10i: OS → RCI	.713	4.715***	.333	2.416***	χ^2 (358) = 696.443	χ^2 (359) = 700.881

Baseline model Goodness-of-fit indices:
χ^2 = 696.443, df = 358, χ^2/df = 1.945; p < .001, RMSEA = .054; CFI = .930; IFI = .931; TLI = .918.

Chi-square difference test:
$\triangle x^2$ (1) = 1.960, p > .05   **H10a:** not supported
$\triangle x^2$ (1) = 1.449, p > .05   **H10b:** not supported
$\triangle x^2$ (1) = 0.067, p > .05   **H10c:** not supported
$\triangle x^2$ (1) = 0.427, p > .05   **H10d:** not supported
$\triangle x^2$ (1) = 1.941, p > .05   **H10e:** not supported
$\triangle x^2$ (1) = 5.781, p < .05   **H10f:** supported (Groups are different at the model level)
$\triangle x^2$ (1) = 6.748, p < .01   **H10g:** supported (Groups are different at the model level)
$\triangle x^2$ (1) = 4.493, p < .05   **H10h:** supported (Groups are different at the model level)
$\triangle x^2$ (1) = 4.438, p < .05   **H10i:** supported (Groups are different at the model level)

Note: DF = destination familiarity, PF = product familiarity, OFI = overall festival image, PV = perceived value, OS = overall satisfaction, RPI = re-patronage intention, RCI = recommendation intention. ***p <.001, **p <.01, *p <.05.

5. Conclusion

The effectiveness of our proposed model for enlightening the formation of festival loyalty has been adequately verified, based on hypothesis testing and the elaboration on the function of mediator and moderator variables. To be specific, the present study reveals the impact from destination familiarity and product familiarity on loyalty intentions (re-patronage and recommendation) towards a beer festival, with three mediators (overall festival image, perceived value, and overall satisfaction) and one moderator of visitor involvement. This not only enriches the existing festival-related literatures [37,54–56] and those authoritative theories related to consumer psychology and behavior (e.g., the ACSI model and the TCV) [26–29], but also fills the mentioned research gaps.

5.1. Theoretical Implications

The theoretical contributions of this study on product marketing and customer behavior can be interpreted from multiple perspectives. The results of festival tourism taking Qingdao Beer Festival as a case resonate with some existing research on consumers' perceptions and behaviors in the contexts of rural tourism, heritage tourism, halal tourism, peer-to-peer accommodation, e-commerce, and eco-friendly drone food deliver service. Specifically, product familiarity, destination familiarity, overall festival image, and perceived value were found as the key predictors of festival tourists' loyalty intentions. This is consistent with the previous tourism studies that have closely linked perceived value, image, and satisfaction to loyalty behaviors [20,22,23,26], and echoes the studies emphasizing the impact of individuals' familiarity with a certain product or destination on their perceived image, emotional and behavioral responses [21,48]. At present, there is a lack of quantitative research that comprehensively considers the influence of four variables (i.e., product familiarity, destination familiarity, overall image, and perceived value) on tourist satisfaction and loyalty, as such the proposed conceptual model provides deeper theoretical knowledge for research on destination image management, product advertising, and tourist psychology and approach intentions. Furthermore, despite the various kinds of festival-related products, there are limited qualitative and quantitative studies that particularly take a beer festival as the research object to deliberate on tourist loyalty formation mechanism in the contexts of beer festival tourism, craft beer tourism or beer-industrial tourism [50]. Taking into account the segmentation of tourists and consumers (e.g., festival-goers and beer lovers) or the objective existence of niche tourism markets, this study could provide wider reference for individuals' cognitions, affections and decision-making in additional niche tourism contexts (e.g., industrial tourism).

The moderating role of visitor involvement in the proposed framework has been verified, which is consistent with the assertion in a study by Hwang et al., (2020) [66] that involvement plays the significant moderating role of influencing the relations among individuals' ecological beliefs, personal norms, and intentions for taking pro-environmental actions. The significance of involvement in moderating the relations between festival tourists' cognition, affections and decision-making echoes with research findings in the studies by Chi et al., (2022), Choo et al., (2022), and Tsai (2011) [1,11,62,]. Also, the examination on moderating role of involvement has also been supported in another study, that is, customers' involvement with a certain product has the moderating effect on the relations among product design, arousal emotions, and behavioral responses (re-purchase and WOM intentions) [82]. The moderation results of our study implied that for visitors who have a high degree of involvement with the Qindao International Beer Festival, perceived value and loyalty intentions were not significantly positively related, whereas a stronger level of satisfaction with this festival can lead to more solid re-patronage and recommendation intentions. Namely, one interesting phenomenon is that for visitors who have become more involved with a festival, their loyalty intentions could remain strong even if they do not generate a high level of perceived value for this festival trip [38]. This has been admitted and illustrated by the narratives in the previous literatures that the individuals' involvement with a certain product, culture, and place might quickly activate and shape their familiarity and build a good perceived image on such a product, culture, and place, accompanied by a series of arousal emotions such as "amazement", "attachment", "thrill", "pride", "comfort", and "thankfulness" [21,30,82]. The structural-invariance models with a moderator of visitor involvement provide the insightful perspective for psychological behavioral research.

Another line of thought about the theoretical enlightenment for related interdisciplinary research, involving psychology, product design and marketing, destination management, tourist perception and behavior. The examination results of relationships between study variables provide a meaningful reference for research in psychology, business, visual design and other disciplines. Customers' psychological acceptance, emotional and behavioral responses (e.g., image, perceived value, satisfaction, willingness-to-pay premium and negative WOM) could vary based on their different levels of involvement with a certain type of product, which are related to functional, aesthetic and symbolic product design in advertising marketing and online reviews [83,84]. In addition, tourists' familiarity and involvement with a product or destination are related to their

positive beliefs (e.g., ecological worldview and ascribed responsibility), perceive image and loyalty intentions toward that product or destination [21,25,47,48,66,84].

5.2. Social Implications

Festival transformation and sustainable development have always been key issues for experts and practitioners in the field of festivals in the post-pandemic era [1,14,15]. The future development trend of festival tourism requires to incorporate social influence into its strategic considerations. For instance, the pro-social and pro-environmental festival performance has become the research hotpots in the festival tourism field [14,15]. This is because more and more consumers are increasingly paying attention to corporate social responsibility (CSR), low-carbon concepts and green brand images in the consumption process, and are even willing to pay a premium for consuming pro-social and pro-environmental products or service [5,15,66]. Similarly, in the era of experience economy, the concept of value co-creation cannot be ignored in the consumption of international festivals. It is particularly encouraged to increase inputs of environmentalism, CSR, social charity, and local community construction, etc., which could help upturn tourists' familiarity and involvement with festival activities, establish a positive festival image, and drive tourist loyalty towards the festival.

5.3. Managerial Implications

Considering that both destination familiarity and product familiarity can positively influence festival tourist' loyalty intentions, with mediators of overall festival image, perceived value, and satisfaction, the specific managerial suggestions on increasing festival familiarity need to be highlighted. As shared economy and smart technology continue to evolve in our modernized society, content marketing has become more centralized. With short-form video content such as V-loggers and social medium platforms like Instagram and Tiktok, businesses are required to adapt to utilizing macro and micro influencer campaigns such as livestreaming and engagement-based sponsorships to grasp consumers' psychology and drive their consumption. Depending on the utilization of appropriate online marketing strategies that help to spread a positive online image and reputation of such tourism destinations and products through the enhancement of customers' familiarity with them [20,22]. As such, a series of measures (e.g., the celebrity endorsement and product placements in TV columns, the promotion of specialty products, and the advertising on SNS platforms) could be applied into increasing potential customers' familiarity and goodwill with exposure of the festival and the host city.

There is no doubt that the positive overall image, perceived value, satisfaction, and loyalty intentions formed by tourists in the process of consuming tourism products or services are inseparable from the active improvement of the performance of tourism destinations and products or services [22,23,26]. In the study of festival tourism, scholars declared that festival experience, festival image, festival loyalty are influenced by various factors containing festival program, festival area and accessibility, information adequacy, infrastructures, festival staff and volunteers, local communities, visitor-visitor interaction, souvenir, security, and food [1,12,13]. As a result, it is essential for festival-related organizers and practitioners to take measures that can be conductive to tourists' engagement and experience quality, such as conducting a wide variety of activities and programs, providing opportunities to integrate into local culture and engage with local residents, offering varied cuisines and local specialties, improving amenities and staff services, using the digital technologies to increase the level of creative festival experience etc. Meanwhile, festival sustainability is also based on the practice of CSR and green brand image. Thus, the creation of a pro-social/pro-environmental festival travelling environment can further contribute to shape and present a good image of festival products [14,15]. These measures would increase festival tourists' perceived value and satisfaction, thereby promoting their attachment and loyalty behaviors towards a festival product.

Another revelation is based on the moderating role of visitor involvement in the research framework. A phenomenon that can be speculated is that visitors who have a higher involvement with the Qingdao International Beer Festival may place less emphasis on the value they actually

perceive during the festival, and even if their perceived value is at a lower level, it may not significantly affect their future re- patronage and recommendation intentions. On the contrary, visitors with lower involvement would care more about perceived value towards the festival and the higher perceived value towards the festival, the stronger their future loyalty intentions. Thus, it is worth mentioning that satisfaction is always a vital predictor of loyalty intentions, regardless of whether visitors are high or low-involved in the festival. Accordingly, a series of strategies that can help increase visitor involvement with the Qingdao International Beer Festival are worth excavating, which can be considered from both the festival itself and beer products. For instance, visitor involvement could be increased by strengthening the fun and diversity of engagement-based festive activities. Tourists are provided with opportunities to show talents, win prizes, purchase souvenirs, learn about beer culture, make craft beer, interact with locals, make friends etc. [1,11].

Lastly, consumers' involvement with a product is closely related to the functional, aesthetic, pro-environmental or pro-social, and symbolic characteristics and design of this product, and can greatly drive their willingness-to-pay a premium and both traditional and electronic WOM, such as online reviews [61,66,82,84]. The mutual cooperation among the festival organizers, Tsingtao Brewery Company, product market research department, and professional design companies is necessary to develop an adequate visual strategy of beer products. This could further suit the preference of beer-goers and potential consumers. In addition, the packaging of beer products and the holding of the beer festival also need to consider pro-social and eco-friendly strategies that could impact and further enhance the exposure, brand image, and WOM of Tsingtao Beer products and the Qingdao International Beer Festival.

6. Limitations and Future Research

The generalizability of our research findings may not be irrefutable for the entire beer festival industry, as the sample only represented Chinese travelers who had the experience of attending the Qingdao International Beer Festival. Further studies could think about validating the proposed theoretical framework in other beer festivals, adopting a more comprehensive survey sample. Judging from the demographic characteristics of the beer festival consumer groups, male consumers were the majority. The number of visits and length of festival trip could also be different based on the varying levels of visitor involvement. Several moderating variables (e.g., gender, number of visits, and length of trip) are worth investigating in future attempts, which can provide more knowledge for developing target market strategies. Lastly, marketing-related research implies that the concept of brand could have a certain impact on the consumption-driven process. Thus, it would be meaningful to develop future research proposals that combine the consumption-driven mechanism with brand-related theories, such as the Customer-Based Brand Equity model.

Appendix A. The Brand Value of the Qingdao International Beer Festival and the Tsingtao Beer

Figure A1.

Sources from: http://qingdaointernationalbeerfestival.com/qingdao_festival.php.

Figure A2.

Sources from: http://www.tsingtao.com.cn.

Appendix B. Tsingtao Beer Products

Figure A3.

Source   from:
https://shop77285301.m.youzan.com/wscshop/feature/v6BLIOpI42?sub_kdt_id=77093133.

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