

The Effect of Recreational Awareness on Attitude Towards Sport Tourism

Rekreasyonel Farkındalığın Spor Turizmine Yönelik Tutuma Etkisi

Serkan AK¹



¹Kütahya Dumlupınar University,
Çavdarhisar Vocational School,
Department of Travel-Tourism and
Entertainment Services, Kütahya, Türkiye

Yeşim ARABOĞA²



²Kütahya Dumlupınar University,
Çavdarhisar Vocational School,
Department of Travel-Tourism and
Entertainment Services, Kütahya, Türkiye



ABSTRACT

This research examined the impact of recreational awareness levels among undergraduate students in the recreation department on attitudes towards sports tourism. The research involved constructing a model to evaluate the influence of recreational awareness sub-dimensions on the sub-dimensions of attitude towards sports tourism. A total of 209 undergraduate students enrolled in the Recreation Department of Kütahya Dumlupınar University, who were selected through a convenience sampling method, participated in the research. The participants completed the personal information form, the Recreational Awareness Scale and the Scale of Attitude Towards Sports Tourism Scale. The research data were analyzed using SPSS 22 and Smart PLS 4 software. "Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling" (PLS-SEM) was the preferred analysis method. In this context, the measurement and structural models were evaluated. According to the research findings, students in the recreation department demonstrate high recreational awareness and hold positive attitudes towards sports tourism. Examining the results obtained from testing the hypotheses indicates that all sub-dimensions of recreational awareness have had a significantly positive effect on the economic contribution sub-dimension of the attitude towards sports tourism. Conversely, it was determined that the social/success and personal development sub-dimensions of recreational awareness positively affected the job opportunities sub-dimensions of attitude towards sports tourism. Furthermore, the personal contribution sub-dimension of attitude towards sports tourism was significantly affected by the personal contribution sub-dimension of recreational awareness, and the organization sub-dimension of attitude towards sports tourism was significantly affected by the social/success sub-dimension of recreational awareness.

Keywords: Recreation, recreational awareness, sport tourism

ÖZ

Bu araştırmada rekreasyon bölümü lisans öğrencilerinin rekreasyonel farkındalık düzeylerinin spor turizmine yönelik tutumları üzerindeki etkisi incelenmiştir. Araştırmada rekreasyonel farkındalık alt boyutlarının, spor turizmine yönelik tutumun alt boyutları üzerindeki etkisini değerlendirmek için bir model oluşturulmuştur. Araştırmaya kolayda örnekleme yöntemiyle belirlenen Kütahya Dumlupınar Üniversitesi Rekreasyon bölümünde öğrenim gören toplam 209 lisans öğrencisi katılmıştır. Katılımcılar kişisel bilgi formunu, Rekreasyonel Farkındalık Ölçeğini ve Spor Turizmine Yönelik Tutum Ölçeğini doldurmuştur. Araştırma verileri, SPSS 22 ve Smart PLS 4 yazılımları kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. "Kısmi En Küçük Kareler Yapısal Eşitlik Modellemesi" (KEKK-YEM), araştırmada tercih edilen analiz yöntemi olmuştur. Bu kapsamda ölçüm modeli ve yapısal model değerlendirilmiştir. Araştırmanın bulgularına göre, rekreasyon bölümü öğrencileri, yüksek rekreasyonel farkındalığa ve spor turizmine yönelik olumlu tutumlara sahiptir. Hipotezlerin test edilmesine yönelik sonuçlara bakıldığında, rekreasyonel farkındalığın tüm alt boyutları, spor turizmine yönelik tutumun ekonomik katkı alt boyutunu anlamlı ve pozitif olarak etkilemiştir. Öte yandan, rekreasyonel farkındalığın sosyal/başarı ve kişisel gelişim alt boyutlarının, spor turizmine yönelik tutumun iş fırsatları alt boyutunu olumlu yönde etkilediği, spor turizmine yönelik tutumun kişisel katkı alt boyutunun, rekreasyonel farkındalığın kişisel katkı boyutundan anlamlı bir şekilde etkilendiği ve spor turizmine yönelik tutumun ise organizasyon alt boyutunun, rekreasyonel farkındalığın sosyal/başarı alt boyutundan etkilendiği tespit edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Rekreasyon, rekreasyonel farkındalık, spor turizmi

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Sorumlu Yazar/Corresponding author:

Serkan AK

E-mail: serkan.ak@dpu.edu.tr

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Introduction

Recreation can be defined as activities in which people engage freely and derive satisfaction outside of the period during which they fulfil their compulsory needs in human life (Hazar, 2009). In recent years, the confluence of advancing technology, population growth, an increased standard of living, enhanced transportation options, urbanization and a growing emphasis on a healthy lifestyle has compelled individuals to alter their priorities, leading to a greater demand for recreational activities (Torkildsen, 1992). Moreover, it has been demonstrated that participation in recreational activities leads to beneficial changes in individuals' lives across various psychological, sociological and physical domains (Deneau et al., 2019). Furthermore, it has been proposed that the changes brought about by these activities can improve the quality of life of individuals and facilitate the fulfilment of their diverse aspirations and needs (Brajša-Žganec et al., 2011).

Recreational activities include events in which individuals of all ages and genders can freely participate. It can include actions that allow women, children, young people, the elderly, the disabled and sick individuals to participate (Çakır, 2017). Participation in recreational activities for children and young people is important, especially for their individual development. These activities can affect young people's physical, social, cultural and psychological development. As Tütüncü et al. (2011) posit, the period of university education is not an optimal time for young individuals to develop themselves through exclusive engagement with academic pursuits. Ensuring social, cultural, and academic development during the university years is essential for many individuals. The recreational habits that young individuals will acquire during their university education will impact their future lives. Therefore, organizing various events to encourage university students to participate in recreational activities is essential. University students need to have recreational awareness to benefit from the advantages of recreational activities and to participate in these activities.

The concept of "awareness", which relates to consciousness, is typically associated with human beings (Hisli Şahin & Yeniçeri, 2015). Awareness is a cognitive process that enables learning and individual mental perception (Koç et al., 2022). Consequently, mindfulness is an effective tool in planning and implementing recreational activities, as it facilitates the identification of individuals' recreational needs (Barnett, 2005). Recreational awareness can be defined as individuals' awareness of activities that facilitate physical and spiritual renewal, enabling them to relieve fatigue arising from their efforts to overcome the difficulties they face in daily life (Robinson, 1992). Recreational awareness can be defined as the individual's recognition of recreational activities' benefits, even without direct participation (Ayyıldız Durhan et al., 2022). It is thought that individuals' awareness of the benefits that recreational activities will bring to them may positively affect their participation in these activities. In addition, being aware that they can participate in these activities can positively affect the individual's pleasure and satisfaction from life (Geven & Yaşartürk, 2024). Recreational awareness can be examined through three sub-dimensions: pleasure/fun, social/success and self-improvement. In defining these dimensions, Dumazeider's "entertainment" and "self-improvement", which are the three primary functions of leisure time, and Bammel and Bammel's personal community theory sub-dimensions of "social success" were utilized (Ekinçi & Özdilek, 2019).

The concept of recreation is broad, encompassing many activities individuals engage in to fulfil their needs. These needs may include self-realization, satisfaction, relaxation and self-improvement (Özdemir Akgül & Güneş, 2019). All activities undertaken during periods of leisure are classified as recreational activities. Therefore, tourism can be considered a recreational activity, just like everything individuals do in their free time (Tütüncü et al., 2019). Moreover, sporting activities, such as tourism, can also be regarded as recreational activities. Consequently, enhancing the collaboration between tourism, which occupies a significant position in industrial activities, and sports, a social phenomenon, will facilitate the advancement of both industries (Kurtzman & Zauhar, 2003).

The term "sports tourism" refers to leisure activities involving travel to various destinations. Individuals leave their hometowns to participate in or observe sports events and explore sports-related attractions (Chang et al., 2020). Activities classified as sports tourism include paragliding, tennis, surfing, mountaineering, rafting, basketball, volleyball, and football (Taştan & Kızılırmak, 2019). Major international sporting events, such as the Olympics, World Cups, car races, and national leagues and competitions, significantly encourage travel (Turgut, 2023). More than just a leisure activity, sports play a crucial role in promoting a healthy lifestyle, inspiring individuals to engage in activities like tennis, golf, sailing, and swimming, which are also recognized as viable sources of revenue for the hospitality industry (Usta, 2014).

Sports consist of the actions of individuals acting through their motives. The role of large sports organizations in motivating individuals is a significant factor (Hacıcaferoğlu et al., 2022). Motives represent a fundamental aspect of motivation, constituting a crucial area of knowledge. Motivation, which enables individuals to act, is an important source that shapes attitudes (Güleç, 2006). Evaluating individual and social benefits demonstrates the significance of attitudes towards sports tourism for individuals, institutions and societies (Hacıcaferoğlu et al., 2022). Furthermore, sports tourism, a form of alternative tourism with beneficial effects on human health, also allows individuals to gain insight into diverse cultures and countries. Sports tourism allows individuals to engage in sporting activities, either actively or passively, and travel to other countries. Moreover, sports tourism has the potential to generate employment opportunities for its participants, thereby positively impacting the lives of individuals in numerous ways. From this perspective, the attitudes of individuals towards sports tourism are also a crucial consideration. Consequently, the sub-dimensions of “job opportunities”, “personal contribution”, “economic contribution”, and “organization” are assessed in the examination of attitudes towards sports tourism (Tezcan Kardaş & Sadık, 2018).

Most university students are young people who engage extensively in tourism activities, both as tourists and as employees, due to the dynamic nature of their age group. Furthermore, students pursuing a degree in sports sciences focusing on recreation are also engaged in numerous sporting organizations. These individuals, actively engaged in sports tourism, may have developed a specific attitude towards it. Moreover, the evidence indicates that these individuals are active participants in recreational activities, which may have influenced their recreational awareness. It is, therefore, essential to examine the attitudes of students in the recreation department who have developed recreational awareness and are receiving education in sports sciences towards sports tourism. A literature review reveals that although studies examining recreational awareness and attitudes towards sports tourism exist, these variables have been discussed separately. Thus, no study has been identified that considers these variables in conjunction. This research aims to contribute to the existing literature and the practice of those working in this field by analyzing the relationship between the levels of recreational awareness and the attitudes towards sports tourism of students enrolled in a recreation department course. Furthermore, by analyzing the sub-dimensions of the variables separately in determining the relationship between recreational awareness and attitudes towards sports tourism of recreation department students, this research will make an essential contribution to the existing literature on this topic.

Methods

Ethics committee approval for this research was obtained from Kütahya Dumlupınar University (Date: April 02, 2024, Number: E-67750228-050.04-285590). Verbal consent was obtained from all the participants.

Research Model and Hypotheses

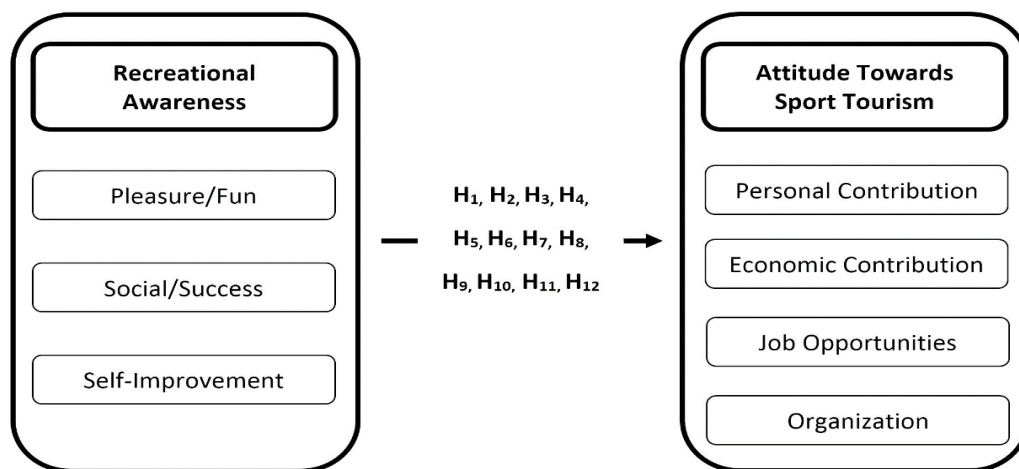


Figure 1.
Research Model

The model created to determine the effects of recreational awareness sub-dimensions on attitudes towards sports tourism is presented in Figure 1. As seen in Figure 1, 12 hypotheses were determined by the model established in the research. The

determined research hypotheses are presented below:

- **Hypothesis H₁:** The pleasure/fun sub-dimension of recreational awareness positively affects the personal contribution sub-dimension of attitude towards sports tourism.
- **Hypothesis H₂:** The pleasure/fun sub-dimension of recreational awareness positively affects the economic contribution sub-dimension of attitude towards sports tourism.
- **Hypothesis H₃:** The pleasure/fun sub-dimension of recreational awareness positively affects the job opportunities sub-dimension of attitude towards sports tourism.
- **Hypothesis H₄:** The pleasure/fun sub-dimension of recreational awareness positively affects the organization sub-dimension of attitude towards sports tourism.
- **Hypothesis H₅:** The social/success sub-dimension of recreational awareness positively affects the personal contribution sub-dimension of attitude towards sports tourism.
- **Hypothesis H₆:** The social/success sub-dimension of recreational awareness positively affects the economic contribution sub-dimension of attitude towards sports tourism.
- **Hypothesis H₇:** The social/success sub-dimension of recreational awareness positively affects the job opportunities sub-dimension of attitude towards sports tourism.
- **Hypothesis H₈:** The social/success of recreational awareness positively affects the organization sub-dimension of attitude towards sports tourism.
- **Hypothesis H₉:** The self-improvement sub-dimension of recreational awareness positively affects the personal contribution sub-dimension of attitude towards sports tourism.
- **Hypothesis H₁₀:** The self-improvement sub-dimension of recreational awareness positively affects the economic contribution sub-dimension of attitude towards sports tourism.
- **Hypothesis H₁₁:** The self-improvement sub-dimension of recreational awareness positively affects the job opportunities sub-dimension of attitude towards sports tourism.
- **Hypothesis H₁₂:** The self-improvement of recreational awareness positively affects the organization sub-dimension of attitude towards sports tourism.

Research Instrument

Per the research objective and hypotheses, a questionnaire was constructed to evaluate recreational awareness and attitudes towards sports tourism. The 41-item scale with three factors from Ekinçi and Özdilek (2019) was used to measure participants' levels of recreational awareness. The pleasure/fun sub-dimension comprised ten items, the social/success sub-dimension 18 items, and the self-improvement sub-dimension 13 items. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the scale was calculated as 0.973 for this research. The 14-item scale with four factors (Tezcan Kardaş & Sadık, 2018) assessed the participants' attitudes towards sports tourism. The personal contribution sub-dimension comprised five items, the economic sub-dimension four items, the job opportunities sub-dimension three items, and the organization sub-dimension two items. For this research, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the scale was calculated as 0.936. Participants rated their agreement with each item on a five-point Likert scale, from 1 "strongly disagree" to 5 "strongly agree". They also completed a personal information form on gender, age, and grade, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the participant demographics.

Sampling and Data Collection

The research population consisted of 394 undergraduate students enrolled in the Faculty of Sport Sciences, Department of Recreation at Kütahya Dumlupınar University. Due to time constraints and limited accessibility, a sampling method was utilized in this research. The sample was drawn using the convenience sampling method, a non-probability sampling technique designed to ensure the inclusion of all relevant participants. The identification of participants continued until the desired sample size was achieved. Accordingly, the minimum required sample size for a population of 394 individuals was calculated to be 195, using a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error (Ural & Kılıç, 2018). In this context, 209 individuals were surveyed between April 20 and May 31, 2024. Table 1 provides a detailed overview of the participant profile, offering insights into the individual characteristics of those involved in the research.

Data Analysis

The research model was tested using “Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling” (PLS-SEM). The selection of PLS-SEM was predicated on its capacity to examine intricate models. Furthermore, PLS-SEM is optimally suited to addressing measurement models and single-item structures, thereby circumventing the challenges associated with identification. Additionally, PLS-SEM is recognized as a suitable technique for analyses involving small sample sizes (Hair et al., 2017; 2022).

The research data were initially coded using the SPSS 22 (IBM SPSS Corp., Armonk, NY, USA) software and subsequently evaluated as a research measurement and structural model using the Smart PLS 4 software. In the analysis phase, internal consistency and reliability, convergent validity, discriminant validity, structural model assessment and structural equation model results using the derived sampling are presented in tabular forms in the findings section.

Results

A consideration of the participant’s demographic information indicates that 70.3% of the subjects were male, 46.4% were between the ages of 21 and 23, and 29.7% were in their senior year.

Table 1.
Respondent profile

	Variables	n	%
Gender	Male	147	70.3
	Female	62	29.7
Age	18-20 age	67	32.1
	21-23 age	97	46.4
	24 age and above	45	21.5
Grade	Freshman year	60	28.7
	Sophomore year	47	22.5
	Junior year	40	19.1
	Senior year	62	29.7
TOTAL		209	100,0

Assessment of the Validity and Reliability of the Scales

A measurement model was constructed to determine the scales’ construct validity and reliability. Furthermore, the scales were assessed regarding their internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. The composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach’s Alpha coefficients were calculated to assess the internal consistency and reliability. Average variance extracted (AVE) values and factor loadings were employed to investigate convergent validity. To ascertain the discriminant validity of the scales employed, both the criterion put forth by Fornell and Larcker (1981) and the Heterotrait Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) criterion were subjected to evaluation. Furthermore, the cross-loadings of the indicators on the scales were subjected to a detailed examination.

Table 2.
Results of the measurement model

Variables and Items			Mean	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Recreational Awareness	Pleasure/Fun	ra1	4.488	0.940	0.963	0.962	0.720
		ra2	4.392	0.784			
		ra3	4.325	0.819			
		ra4	4.344	0.739			
		ra5	4.378	0.782			
		ra6	4.344	0.878			
		ra7	4.234	0.831			
		ra8	4.249	0.931			
		ra9	4.230	0.949			
		ra10	4.445	0.802			
	Social/Success	ra11	4.239	0.694	0.972	0.971	0.653
		ra12	4.234	0.857			
		ra13	4.225	0.747			
		ra14	4.407	0.807			
		ra15	4.378	0.656			
		ra16	4.349	0.660			
		ra17	4.282	0.821			
		ra18	4.273	0.826			
		ra19	4.249	0.986			
		ra20	4.301	0.786			
		ra21	4.273	0.757			
		ra22	4.306	0.885			
		ra23	4.282	0.744			
		ra24	4.368	0.714			
		ra25	4.297	0.905			
		ra26	4.258	0.886			
		ra27	4.244	0.978			
		ra28	4.215	0.731			
	Self-Improvement	ra29	4.321	0.895	0.963	0.962	0.662
		ra30	4.311	0.843			
		ra31	4.340	0.845			
		ra32	4.306	0.735			
		ra33	4.354	0.769			
		ra34	4.325	0.726			
		ra35	4.392	0.784			
		ra36	4.349	0.845			
		ra37	4.306	0.628			
		ra38	4.349	0.881			
		ra39	4.335	0.766			
		ra40	4.364	0.928			
		ra41	4.301	0.879			
Attitude Towards Sport Tourism	Personal Contribution	st2	4.120	0.871	0.945	0.944	0.771
		st3	4.292	0.938			
		st5	4.172	0.791			
		st8	4.206	0.973			
		st11	4.234	0.804			
	Economic Contribution	st9	4.263	0.928	0.939	0.940	0.797
		st10	4.225	0.941			
		st12	4.230	0.896			
		st13	4.225	0.798			
	Job Opportunities	st6	4.263	0.832	0.925	0.928	0.811
		st7	4.230	0.942			
		st14	4.258	0.924			
	Organization	st1	4.187	0.969	0.971	0.971	0.943
		st4	4.148	0.973			

An examination of Cronbach's Alpha coefficients calculated for the factors in Table 2 reveals that these coefficients range from 0.925 to 0.972, with the CR values ranging from 0.928 to 0.971. The factor loadings demonstrated a range of 0.653 to 0.943. It is expected that Cronbach's Alpha, factor loadings, and CR values should be ≥ 0.70 , and AVE values should be ≥ 0.50 (Hair et al., 2017; 2022). Even though the factor loadings for items 11, 15, and 16 from the social/success sub-dimension and item 37 from the self-improvement sub-dimension in the recreational awareness scale fell below the 0.70 threshold, these items were not excluded from the scale. This resulted from the calculated CR and AVE values exceeding the threshold values. It was, therefore, concluded that the alignment between the factor loadings and AVE values was sufficient for convergent validity.

Table 3.
Discriminant validity assessment (Fornell ve Larcker criterion)

	EC	JO	O	PC	PF	SI	SS
Economic Contribution (EC)	0.893						
Job Opportunities (JO)	0.559	0.901					
Organization (O)	0.568	0.506	0.971				
Personal Contribution (PC)	0.552	0.463	0.577	0.878			
Pleasure/Fun (PF)	0.373	0.257	0.192	0.237	0.848		
Self-Improvement (SI)	0.422	0.436	0.245	0.320	0.482	0.814	
Social/Success (SS)	0.421	0.420	0.291	0.265	0.469	0.627	0.808

By the methodology proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981), the square root of the AVE values should exceed the correlations between the constructs under examination. The values presented in parentheses in Table 3 represent the square root values of the AVE. As evidenced by the table, the square root values of the AVE exceed the correlation coefficients.

Table 4.
Discriminant validity assessment (HTMT criterion)

	EC	JO	O	PC	PF	SI	SS
Economic Contribution (EC)							
Job Opportunities (JO)	0.564						
Organization (O)	0.568	0.510					
Personal Contribution (PC)	0.557	0.464	0.576				
Pleasure/Fun (PF)	0.370	0.255	0.190	0.233			
Self-Improvement (SI)	0.420	0.435	0.242	0.316	0.481		
Social/Success (SS)	0.417	0.418	0.287	0.258	0.467	0.625	

The HTMT proposed by Henseler et al. (2015) should be less than 0.90 for theoretically similar constructs and less than 0.85 for theoretically different constructs. As the HTMT coefficients presented in Table 4 fall below the specified threshold values, it can be concluded that the requisite discriminant validity has been achieved.

Finally, upon examining the cross-loadings of the scale indicators, it was determined that the factor loadings of the construct must exceed those of all other constructs (Hair et al., 2022). In this research, all values were found to satisfy the criteria above.

Test of Hypotheses

To test the research hypotheses, the Consistent PLS-SEM algorithm was initially applied to calculate the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and the R^2 . Subsequently, PLSpredict analysis was conducted to assess the predictive power (Q^2). After that, Consistent PLS-SEM Bootstrapping was performed, and through derivative resampling, 10,000 subsamples were drawn from the sample to calculate β , Sd, t value and p-value.

As previously stated by Hair et al. (2022), the variance inflation factor (VIF) coefficients should remain below the threshold of 5 to mitigate issues related to multicollinearity among variables. As shown in Table 5, all VIF coefficients are below 5, indicating no linearity problem exists between the variables. The R^2 values demonstrate that personal contribution is explained by 12%, economic contribution by 24%, job opportunities by 23% and organization by 9%. It was observed that all attitudes exhibited low levels of determination. Conversely, the Q^2 predictive values exceeded 0, indicating that the model demonstrates considerable predictive power (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 5.
Research model coefficients

Predictor(s)	Outcome(s)	VIF	R ²	Q ²
Pleasure/Fun	Personal Contribution	1.386	0.115	0.072
Social/Success		1.752		
Self-Improvement		1.779		
Pleasure/Fun	Economic Contribution	1.386	0.241	0.190
Social/Success		1.752		
Self-Improvement		1.779		
Pleasure/Fun	Job Opportunities	1.386	0.226	0.177
Social/Success		1.752		
Self-Improvement		1.779		
Pleasure/Fun	Organization	1.386	0.093	0.055
Social/Success		1.752		
Self-Improvement		1.779		

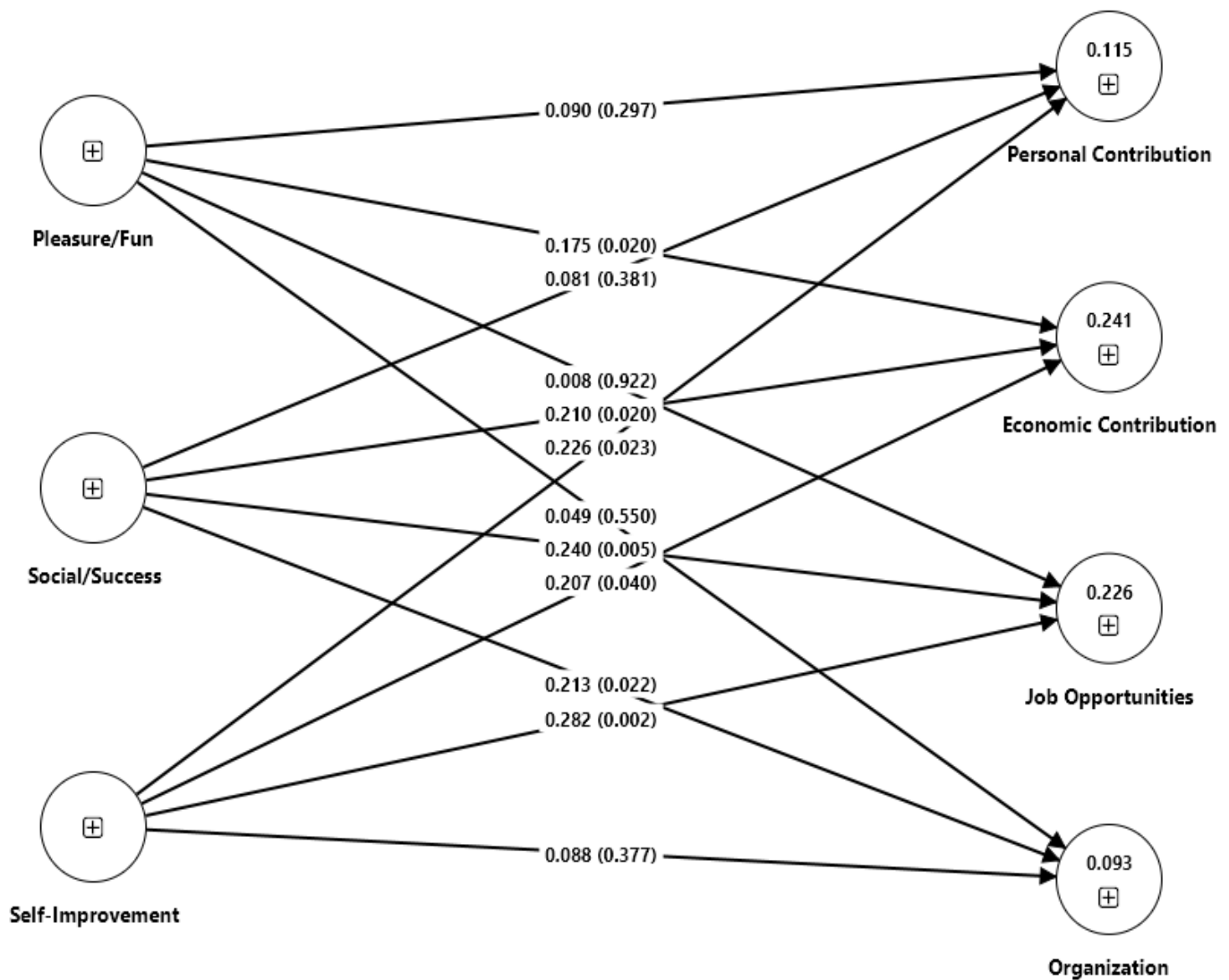


Figure 2.
Research Model Result

Table 6.
Results of structural equation model analysis

	Hypotheses	β	Sd	t value	p-value	Results
H ₁	Pleasure/Fun -> Personal Contribution	0.090	0.091	0.086	1.042	Not supported
H ₂	Pleasure/Fun -> Economic Contribution	0.175	0.075	2.328	0.020*	Supported
H ₃	Pleasure/Fun -> Job Opportunities	0.008	0.083	0.098	0.922	Not supported
H ₄	Pleasure/Fun -> Organization	0.049	0.083	0.598	0.550	Not supported
H ₅	Social/Success -> Personal Contribution	0.081	0.093	0.875	0.381	Not supported
H ₆	Social/Success -> Economic Contribution	0.210	0.090	2.331	0.020*	Supported
H ₇	Social/Success -> Job Opportunities	0.240	0.085	2.831	0.005**	Supported
H ₈	Social/Success -> Organization	0.213	0.093	2.285	0.022*	Supported
H ₉	Self-Improvement -> Personal Contribution	0.226	0.100	2.267	0.023*	Supported
H ₁₀	Self-Improvement -> Economic Contribution	0.207	0.101	2.053	0.040*	Supported
H ₁₁	Self-Improvement -> Job Opportunities	0.282	0.092	3.084	0.002**	Supported
H ₁₂	Self-Improvement -> Organization	0.088	0.100	0.883	0.377	Not supported

*: $p < .05$; **: $p < .01$

As a result of the structural equation model analysis, it was determined that pleasure/fun sub-dimension had a significant positive effect on the economic contribution ($\beta=0.175$, $p=.020$) but did not have a significant effect on the personal contribution ($\beta=0.090$, $p=1.042$), job opportunities ($\beta=0.008$, $p=.922$) and organization ($\beta=0.049$, $p=.550$) sub-dimensions. Therefore, hypothesis H₂ is supported, while hypotheses H₁, H₃ and H₄ are not supported. The social/success sub-dimension has a significant positive effect on the economic contribution ($\beta=0.210$, $p=.020$), job opportunities ($\beta=0.240$, $p=.005$) and organization ($\beta=0.213$, $p=.022$). However, no significant effect is observed on the personal contribution ($\beta=0.081$, $p=.381$). Therefore, hypotheses H₆, H₇ and H₈ are supported, while hypothesis H₅ is not supported. The self-improvement sub-dimension has a significant positive effect on the personal contribution ($\beta=0.226$, $p=.023$), economic contribution ($\beta=0.207$, $p=.040$) and job opportunities ($\beta=0.282$, $p=.002$), but no significant effect on the organization ($\beta=0.088$, $p=.377$). Therefore, hypotheses H₉, H₁₀ and H₁₁ are supported, while hypothesis H₁₂ is not supported.

Discussion

The findings of this research demonstrate that students enrolled in the recreation department exhibit a high level of recreational awareness. These findings are consistent with those reported in other studies conducted on university students by Üstün and Aktaş Üstün (2020), Ayyıldız Durhan et al. (2022), Güzel Gürbüz et al. (2022), Satılmış et al. (2022), and İnan et al. (2024). Furthermore, the findings of Geven and Yaşartürk (2024) indicate that students enrolled in recreation departments within sport sciences faculties demonstrate heightened levels of recreational awareness compared to students in other academic disciplines. This finding supports the elevated levels of awareness observed in the present research. Conversely, examining recreational awareness regarding its constituent sub-dimensions reveals that pleasure/fun is the most prominent sub-dimension. This finding is consistent with the conclusions of several previous studies (Koç et al., 2022; Akçakese & Demirel, 2024). Moreover, the finding that the social/success sub-dimension is rated lower than other sub-dimensions is to the conclusions of numerous studies in the literature (Üstün & Aktaş Üstün, 2020; Ayyıldız Durhan et al., 2022; Koç et al., 2022; Akçakese & Demirel, 2024).

The results of the research indicate that the attitudes of undergraduate students in the Recreation Department towards sports tourism are predominantly favorable. Following a thorough review of the extant literature, it has been determined that the present result is parallel to the findings of various studies conducted on university students (Özdemir & Yücel, 2021; Hacicaferoğlu et al., 2022; Turgut, 2023). Moreover, an analysis of the attitude towards sports tourism regarding its constituent sub-dimensions reveals that the job opportunities sub-dimension is the most highly rated. This finding is consistent with the results of other studies in the literature (Özdemir & Yücel, 2021; Karaoğlu, 2023; Turgut, 2023). Conversely, the findings concur with those of other studies in the literature, indicating that the lowest sub-dimension is the organization (Özdemir & Yücel, 2021; Hacicaferoğlu et al., 2022; Karaoğlu, 2023; Turgut, 2023).

This research aims to ascertain the influence of recreational awareness levels among undergraduate students of the recreation department on their attitudes towards sports tourism. To this end, a model has been devised to evaluate the impact of recreational awareness on attitudes towards sports tourism, considering the various sub-dimensions. As no study has previously analyzed the relationship between recreational awareness and attitudes towards sports tourism, some

evaluations can be made regarding hypothesis tests, considering the limitations in studies with which the findings obtained regarding hypothesis tests can be compared.

Recreational awareness positively affects the economic contribution sub-dimension of attitude towards sports tourism in all sub-dimensions. As recreational awareness increases, so does awareness of the economic benefits of sports tourism. Individuals with a high level of recreational awareness are more inclined to support initiatives such as increased investment in sports tourism, marketing studies, and providing a greater diversity of products. This finding is partially consistent with research conducted by Ayyıldız Durhan et al. (2022), which indicates that recreational awareness influences the purchasing behaviors related to recreational products within the context of the relationship between recreation, sports, and tourism.

Except for the pleasure/fun sub-dimension, all sub-dimensions of recreational awareness (the social/success and self-improvement sub-dimensions) positively influence the job opportunities sub-dimension of the attitude towards sports tourism. These effects represent the most significant effects within the model. This situation may have been shaped by the notion that undergraduate students of the recreation department may be directly or indirectly involved in the employment opportunities created by the growth of sports tourism activities.

The personal contribution sub-dimension of attitude towards sports tourism is significantly affected only by the personal development sub-dimension of recreational awareness. This phenomenon can be attributed to the potential of sport tourism and recreational activities to enhance self-confidence and improve time management skills. When the related concepts are evaluated from a personal perspective, it can be assumed that the observed outcomes are consistent with the expected results in the context of the results.

The organization sub-dimension of the attitude towards sports tourism is significantly influenced by the social/success sub-dimension of recreational awareness. This outcome may be associated with social/success awareness, which prioritizes social benefit and social satisfaction to encourage the development of activities and organizations for sports tourism at national and international levels.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This research indicated that students in the recreation department demonstrated high recreational awareness and positive attitudes towards sports tourism. The results of the hypothesis tests indicated a correlation between the recreational awareness levels of undergraduate students in the recreation department and their attitudes towards sports tourism, as measured by the sub-dimensions. These findings contribute significantly to the existing literature on this topic. This research is valuable because it is the first to analyze the relationship between recreational awareness and attitudes towards sports tourism.

It is also essential to consider the limitations of this research when evaluating the results. Firstly, the data obtained through questionnaires may not fully reflect the behaviors of individuals. Conversely, this research was conducted on students in the Recreation Department at Kütahya Dumlupınar University, Faculty of Sport Sciences. Further studies on this subject at different universities and with different demographic groups may facilitate the conveyance of results from a broader perspective. Additionally, an avenue for further research could be to examine the differences between undergraduate students of recreation departments and those of recreation management departments in the relationship between recreational awareness and sports tourism. Furthermore, investigating the attitude towards sports tourism, particularly e-sports tourism, which has gained popularity recently, could yield insightful findings.

For undergraduate students in the field of recreation to cultivate more constructive attitudes towards sports tourism while acquiring recreational awareness throughout their academic careers, the theoretical and practical integration of sports tourism courses into the curricula of recreation departments in an effective and contemporary manner can facilitate positive strides towards sports tourism on a macro level.

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