

EXPERIENTIAL QUALITY, AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT, ZOO IMAGE, NOVELTY-SEEKING, EXPERIENTIAL SATISFACTION AND REVISIT INTENTIONS

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the relationships among experiential quality, affective experience, novelty-seeking, experiential satisfaction and revisit intentions. Based on an extensive literature review and empirical research, the effects of experiential quality, affective commitment, zoo image, novelty-seeking, experiential satisfaction on revisit intentions using a multi-dimensional mode as a framework are proposed to facilitate research into the dynamics of the tourism industry and offer guidelines for practitioners as they constantly strive to provide the very best experience for their visitors.

Keywords: experiential quality, experiential satisfaction, switching intention, dimensions of experiential quality.

INTRODUCTION

Morgan and Hodgkinson (1999) consider a zoo to be the most important source of contact between visitors and animals in modern society. Therefore, it is necessary to understand visitors' attitudes towards zoos because zoos that are perceived positively may receive more visitors and thus have more opportunities to satisfy their mission to promote environmental education and global conservation (Davey, 2007).

Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry (1990) have confirmed that quality is positively influenced by affective commitment under varying contexts. Oliver (1999) shows that satisfaction is an antecedent of affective commitment. Gundlach, Achrol, and Mentzer (1995) propose that affective commitment is the desire to maintain a relationship and is based on revisit intentions. Several studies (Kao, Huang, & Wu, 2008; Wu, Li, & Li, 2016) note that experiential quality plays a critical role in increasing perceived levels of experiential satisfaction. Empirical evidence from several marketing studies indicates that perceived experiential quality has a positive impact on the formation of visitors' perceptions of image, which in turn results in revisit intentions via experiential satisfaction (Wu & Li, 2014; Wu, Li, & Li, 2014).

Assaker, Vinzi, and O'Connor (2011) propose that novelty-seeking has a positive influence on satisfaction. Jang and Feng (2007) indicate that novelty-seeking has a negative influence on revisit intentions. However, few studies examine experiential quality for the tourism industry, including diverse psychological and physical aspects, and the simultaneous links among experiential quality, affective commitment, image, novelty-seeking, experiential satisfaction and revisit intentions from the perspective of zoo visitors. Therefore, the objective of this study is to examine the relationship between revisit intentions of visitors and the other higher order constructs: experiential quality, affective commitment, image, novelty-seeking and experiential satisfaction as perceived by zoo visitors.

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

Service quality

Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) define service quality as the ability of the organization to meet or exceed customer expectations. The model includes five dimensions of service quality: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and

empathy. However, many researchers have been skeptical about whether these dimensions are applicable when evaluating service quality in other service industries (Cronin & Taylor 1992). Kang and James (2004) argue that SERVQUAL focuses more on the service delivery process than on other attributes of service, such as service-encounter outcomes (i.e. technical dimensions). In other words, the SERVQUAL measurement does not adequately explain a technical attribute of service. A performance-based model of service quality (SERVPERF) is developed by Cronin and Taylor (1992). SERVPERF measures service quality based only on the customer perception of the performance of a service provider's attitude-based (Cronin & Taylor 1994). However, Nadiri and Hussain (2005) have found that SERVPERF cannot form its five assumed dimensions in the service industry.

Experiential quality

Lemke, Clark, and Wilson (2011) define experiential quality as a perceived judgment about the excellence or superiority of the visitor experience. In general, experiential quality is subjective in terms of measurement while service quality is objective. The evaluation of experiential quality tends to be holistic/gestalt rather than attribute-based, and the focus of evaluation is on self (internal) but not on service environment (external) (Otto & Ritchie, 1996). In the tourism context, service quality refers to service performance at the attribute level. In contrast, experiential quality refers to the psychological outcome resulting from visitor participation in tourism activities. The former has been defined as the quality of the attributes of a service which are under the control of a supplier, while the later involves not only the attributes provided by a supplier but also the attributes brought to the opportunity by the visitor (Chen & Chen, 2010). Lemke et al., (2011) show that experiential quality has a stronger connection between visitors and attractions than that of product quality and service quality alone.

Affective commitment

Gilliland and Bello (2002) define affective commitment as a state of attachment to a partner

expressed as a feeling of allegiance and faithfulness. In this study, visitors' affective commitment has been defined as a psychological state that relates to a visitor's intention to develop and maintain a stable and durable relationship arising from needs, wants and obligations (Bansal, Irving, & Taylor, 2004). Malhotra and Mukherjee (2003) indicate that affective commitment has been found to be a predictor of quality. Bansal and Voyer (2000) consider affective commitment as one of the positive outcomes generating from internal satisfaction. Morgan and Hunt (1994) have found that affective commitment completely mediates the relationship between consumers' evaluations of background variables and revisit intentions. However, the interrelationships among affective commitment, quality, satisfaction and revisit intentions perceived by visitors remain scarce in a zoo context.

Zoo image

Barich and Kotler (1991) and Barich and Srinivasan (1993) describe a corporate image as the impressions, beliefs, and feelings that individuals have about the organization. However, the definition of zoo image remains unexplored and unclear. In this study, zoo image is defined as the sum of beliefs, ideas, or impressions that a visitor has of a zoo (Crompton, 1979; Loureiro & González, 2008). In other words, zoo image is considered as the result of how the visitor perceives the zoo or, in other words, their vision of the zoo.

Wu and Li (2014) and Wu et al. (2014) propose that experiential quality positively influences experiential satisfaction through image. Also, those authors argue that image plays a critical role in increasing visitors' revisit intentions. Despite demonstration of the link between perceived zoo image and visitors' experiences in various other sectors, deriving logic to connect all segments is difficult. Accordingly, this study extends and adopts the concept of means-end theory through demonstrating the relationships among image, experiential quality, experiential satisfaction and revisit intentions, specifically for the zoo sector.

Novelty-seeking

Novelty-seeking theory provides a stronger theoretical foundation in explaining destination choice behavior (Bello & Etzel, 1985). Pearson (1970) refers to novelty as the degree of contrast between present perception and past experience, making it the opposite of familiarity. From one perspective of the definition, it is possible to understand that visitors want to experience something novel through their travel. Based on the aforementioned statements, novelty-seeking is the central component of travel motivation and influences visitors' decision-making process (Crompton, 1979; Petrick, 2002). Because novelty-seeking is an affective state, it is believed that visitors' perceived quality can have a significant influence on their novelty (Chua, Lee, Goh, & Han, 2015). Assaker et al. (2011) propose that novelty-seeking has a positive influence on satisfaction. If visitors seek novelty and the experience meets or exceeds their expectations, they will be satisfied.

Experiential satisfaction

According to Kao et al. (2008), experiential satisfaction derives from the concept of service satisfaction, though it extends beyond service satisfaction in that it focuses on consumers' overall evaluation of their experiences after consumption. In this study, experiential satisfaction is defined as a visitor's overall satisfaction with the visit experienced at a zoo, as proposed by Chen and Chen (2010). From an experiential perspective, experiential satisfaction reflects the satisfaction experienced from the service content associated with a specific transaction. Visitors compare their experiences with their prior expectations, which cause positive or negative disconfirmation. The emotional responses resulting from positive or negative disconfirmation form the basis for visitor satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Bigne, Andreu, & Gnoth, 2005).

Jang and Feng (2007, p. 580) propose that "to understand why visitors make repeat visits, many studies have focused on the antecedents of destination revisit intention in recent years" including satisfaction (e.g. Yuksel, 2001). One

dominant predictor of repeat business or intention to revisit is satisfaction (Kim, Goh, & Yuan, 2010; Wu & Li, 2014). According to Kim, Kim and Goh (2011), satisfaction is a defining component in determining if a customer will revisit a destination or repeat a purchase. However, the relationship between experiential satisfaction and revisit intentions remains scarce in the tourism industry (Kim, Duncan, & Chung, 2015; Wu et al., 2014).

Revisit intentions

The concept of revisit intentions derives from behavioral intentions. Oliver (1997) defines behavioral intentions (e.g., repurchase and word-of-mouth intentions) as "a stated likelihood to engage in a behavior" (p. 28). The revisit intentions of visitors to a destination may be affected by their performances at the destination, as well as by the promotional efforts and the spreading news of new attractions at the destination (Aziz, Ariffin, Omar, & Evin, 2012). Revisit intentions have been considered to be an extension of satisfaction rather than an initiator of revisit decision-making process (Um, Chon, & Ro, 2006). Tomas, Scott, and Crompton (2002) examine the relationships of quality, satisfaction, and future intention to visit among visitors to a zoo, finding that intentions to revisit or to recommend it to others are based on quality delivery, recreational benefits, and overall satisfaction.

RESEARCH MODEL AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Malhotra and Mukherjee (2003) indicate that affective commitment displays a significant positive influence on quality. Satisfaction is an antecedent to affective commitment (Oliver, 1999). In support of this view, Bansal et al. (2004) argue that the stronger the satisfaction, the stronger the commitment in consumer services. Lai (2015) argues that satisfaction positively influences affective commitment. Several studies have reported that affective commitment is a determinant of revisit intentions. Iglesias, Singh, and Batista-Foguet (2011) note that affective commitment has been considered to be a determinant of revisit intentions. The following hypotheses are therefore proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Affective commitment has a positive effect on experiential quality.

Hypothesis 2: Experiential satisfaction has a positive effect on affective commitment.

Hypothesis 3: Affective commitment has a positive effect on revisit intentions.

Customers' evaluation of quality represents another important factor in their satisfaction (Anderson, Fornell, & Lehman, 1994). Previous studies have tended to focus exclusively on the quality of products or services (Fornell, Johnson, Anderson, Cha, & Bryant, 1996), whereas this study considers experiences and proposes that experiential quality results in experiential satisfaction. According to Juaneda (1996), visitors' positive opinions about their holidays are likely to increase the probability of their intention and willingness to revisit. Likewise, when visitors have a more enjoyable experience than expected, they are more likely to revisit in the future than go to other tourism destinations (Ross, 1993). Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 4: Experiential quality has a positive effect on experiential satisfaction.

Hypothesis 5: Experiential satisfaction has a positive effect on revisit intentions.

Several researchers propose that quality has a positive effect on image (Balmer, 2001; Brodie, Whittome, & Brush, 2009; Kayaman & Arasli, 2007). Image has been considered to have a positive effect on satisfaction judgment. When customers are satisfied with the services rendered, their attitude toward the organization is improved. This attitude will then affect the customer's satisfaction with the organization (Andreassen & Lindestad, 1998). Several studies reveal that the image of a visitor attraction significantly affects revisit intentions (Choi, Tkachenko, & Sil, 2011; Lee, Scott, & Kim, 2008; Nadeau, Heslop, O'Reilly, & Luk, 2008). Namely, visitors who have high evaluations of a visitor attraction where they have desirable emotion find a match in self-congruity, or a favorable overall impression, and they would be disposed to visit or revisit the

destination (Kim & Lee, 2015). Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 6: Experiential quality has a positive effect on zoo image.

Hypothesis 7: Zoo image has a positive effect on experiential satisfaction.

Hypothesis 8: Zoo image has a positive effect on revisit intentions.

Novelty-seeking has a negative influence on satisfaction (Assaker et al., 2011). If visitors seek novelty and the experience meets or exceeds their expectations, they will be dissatisfied. On the other hand, one of major antecedents of revisit intentions is novelty-seeking (Jang & Feng, 2007). Novelty-seeking has become the powerful factor that is found to negatively affect revisit intentions of the visitors (Haque & Khan, 2013; Jang & Feng, 2007). As a consequence, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 9: Novelty-seeking has a negative effect on experiential satisfaction.

Hypothesis 10: Novelty-seeking has a negative effect on revisit intentions.

Figure 1 indicates the hypotheses to test each path based on the conceptual research model.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Questionnaire and pre-test

In this study, each construct is measured using multi-measurement items because a single item

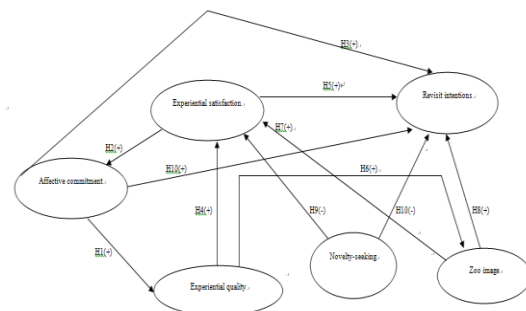


Figure 1. A conceptual research model.

may lead to a high measurement error rate (Churchill, 1979). In this study, three to five items are adopted to measure each construct (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Crompton & Love, 1995). Three questions from the study of Wu and Li (2014) are designed to measure experiential quality. Based on the study of Lai (2015), three items are developed to assess affective commitment. Three items based on the study of Wu et al. (2014) are developed to assess experiential quality. Four items are used to measure novelty-seeking based on the study of Toyama and Yamad (2012). Three questions from the studies of Tsai, Lee, and Pan (2015) and Wu and Li (2014) are developed to assess zoo image. Five items are used to measure revisit intentions based on the study of Tosun, Dedeoglu, and Fyall (2015). All of the construct items are shown in the appendix.

This study will initially develop a 44-item questionnaire. To confirm the content validity of the questionnaire, a discussion will be held with three zoo managers, four professionals, and six assistant and associate professors from China, all of whom specialized in the tourism industry. They will be asked whether the items are appropriate for the questionnaire. The items rate important (3), very important (4), or extremely important (5) by at least 90% of professionals and professors. The survey will also include some demographic questions that are consistent with previous studies on social and human behaviour. A seven-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) is used for all construct items. Seven-point Likert items have been shown to be more accurate, easier to use, and a better reflection of a respondent's true evaluation. In light of all these advantages, even when compared to higher-order items, seven-point items appear to be the best solution for questionnaires such as those used in usability evaluations. Whether usability practitioners are developing a new summative scale, a satisfaction survey, or a simple one-item post-test evaluation item it would serve them well to use a seven-point rather than a five-point scale (Finstad, 2010). The original question items are written in English; however, a bilingual expert is invited to translate them into Chinese to ensure the validity of the questionnaire.

Sample and data collection

Due to limited time and manpower, data will be collected using convenience sampling of visitors, aged over 18 years, who complete visiting the Beijing Zoo between June 2 and August 2, 2016. Cooper and Emory (1995) argue that the obvious advantages of adopting convenience sampling are low cost and save time. Convenience sampling is most commonly used technique because it is the best way of obtaining effective information fast. Although useful applications of the convenience sampling technique are somewhat limited, the sample can deliver accurate results when the population is homogeneous (Starmass, 2007).

The Beijing Zoo is the largest zoo in China and one of the most famous zoos all over the world (Asiavtour.com, 2016). It is located in the Xicheng District (2km west of Xizhimen subway station), next to the Beijing Exhibition Hall. The zoo occupies an area of 89 hectares, including 5.6 hectares of lakes and ponds. This ground includes a diverse collection of animals, a number of exhibition halls and some sites of historical interest. It is one of the oldest zoos and now the biggest zoo in China with the largest animal number of species (China Highlights, 2015).

The survey administrators will be five undergraduate student helpers who understand the purpose of the study and have been trained in the use of the questionnaire. After the respondents are willing to respond to the questionnaire, they will be given the questionnaires to fill in. The questionnaire is self-completed by the visitors, with assistance available if required. The respondents will be required to complete and return the questionnaire to the surveyors around each exit of this visitor attraction. The reason for choosing Beijing Zoo for sample collection is that the number of visitors is large and it is suitable for measuring the zoo visitors' perceptions of experiential quality, affective commitment, image, novelty-seeking, experiential satisfaction, and revisit intentions, as suggested by several researchers (China Highlights, 2015; Peng, Jiang, Liu, Huang, Zhang, & Wang, 2001). To ensure confidentiality, the names of study participants will not be required and the surveyors will ensure that

all survey respondents' responses would remain completely confidential and anonymous. The participation in this study is voluntary. In order to ensure a high response rate, souvenirs will be prepared and given to respondents upon completion.

DISCUSSIONS

This study examines the theoretical concepts of experiential quality, affective commitment, novelty-seeking, image, experiential satisfaction and revisit intentions and their interacting relationships in the zoo setting. The proposed hypothetical model is developed for the further research on the Beijing Zoo. A better understand of the relationships among experiential quality, affective commitment, novelty-seeking, image, experiential satisfaction and revisit intentions in the zoo may help zoo management to retain its success and therefore receives more contributions to the tourism industry in China. This proposed model in this study is still on the early development stage and needs to be enriched. In order to revise this model and apply it in the zoo setting, further quantitative research will be performed to evaluate validity and reliability of the model. In the proposed model, experiential satisfaction will positively influence affective commitment, which in turn, results in experiential quality. Also, experiential quality positively affects zoo image. Moreover, experiential quality and zoo image positively influence experiential satisfaction while novelty-seeking negatively influences experiential satisfaction. Besides, affective commitment, zoo image and experiential satisfaction positively influence revisit intentions while novelty-seeking negatively influences revisit intentions.

APPENDIX

Scaled items

Experiential quality

EQ1. I believe that visiting this zoo is going to provide the visitor with an interestingly educational and instructive experience.

EQ2. The quality of this zoo could be considered superior when compared to other zoos.
EQ3. Visiting this zoo is a pleasant experience.

Affective commitment

AC1. I feel a strong sense of identification with this zoo.
AC2. I feel emotionally attached to this zoo.
AC3. This zoo has a great deal of personal meaning for me.

Zoo image

ZI1. This zoo provides good service.
ZI2. This zoo is big and spacious.
ZI3. This zoo has an exciting atmosphere.

Novelty-seeking

NS1. This zoo provides me with an unusual experience.
NS2. This zoo provides me with a new experience.
NS3. This zoo provides me with a new discovery.
NS4. *This zoo* is new for me.

Experiential satisfaction

ES1. Visiting this zoo goes beyond my expectations.
ES2. I really like this trip to this zoo.
ES3. It is worthwhile to be in this zoo.

Revisit intentions

RI1. I would like to revisit this zoo in the near future.
RI2. If I had to decide again, I would choose this zoo again.
RI3. I would come back to this zoo in the future.
RI4. I would visit this zoo more frequently.
RI5. This zoo would be my first choice over other attractions.

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