AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF EXTERNALITY AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

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ABSTRACT

In general, customer satisfaction is derived from the quality of product. Hundreds of studies examine the relationship between the performance of product attributes and customer satisfaction. Instead of conducting an analysis on the influence of attribute performances on customer satisfaction, this study pays close attention to the influences of externality on customer satisfaction in the case of the tourism industry. We examine the externality coming from companion's behavior on tourist satisfaction in tour groups. The regression results show that companion's behavior significantly influence tourist satisfaction, no matter the satisfaction is measured from the aspect of tour schedule or tour escort. By encouraging or discouraging some companions customer can enhance tourist satisfaction. In addition, gender and companions will cause different regression results. This reminds us to take consideration of the individual difference when taking actions to enhance satisfaction. These results imply customer satisfaction is not only determined by the performance of product attributes, but also depends on externality. Controlling the influence of externality is an alternative to enhance satisfaction.

Keywords: customer satisfaction, tourism, externality, companion's behavior, quality management.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Customer satisfaction is the driver to maintain competitive advantage for business (Tsai, Chen, Chan, and Lin, 2011). It is also the most efficient and least expensive source of market communication which plays the key role in achieving business excellence (Dubrovski, 2001). Lots of empirical work show that customer satisfaction contributes to repurchase, cross selling, reduced price sensitivity, and positive word-of-mouth (Matzler and Stahl, 2000; Matzler et al., 2004). And the positive relationship between customer satisfaction and

profitability/shareholder value have been proven by many researchers (Anderson et al., 1994; Oliver, 2014; Stahl et al., 2003; Matzler et al., 2004; Eklof et al, 2018). Though, lots researchers have studied customer satisfaction, we cannot stress its importance too much. In this area, some researchers propose customer satisfaction is determined by the performance of product attribute (Wall and Berry, 2007; Zhang, Jiang and Li, 2013). Instead, this study examines the influences of externality, non-product attribute, on customer satisfaction in the case of tourism industry.

Just like heaps of research on customer satisfaction which propose customer satisfaction depends on the performance of product attributes (Bitner, 1990; Chang, 2000; Andaleeb and Conway, 2006; Wall and Berry, 2007; Zhang, Jiang and Li, 2013), tourist satisfaction is also determined by the product quality. Basically, the research on measuring the overall levels of tourist satisfaction can be classified into two streams. The first one focuses on measuring the levels of tourists' satisfaction with their experiences in particular destination and satisfaction with specific attributes at service encounter level, such as in a hotel or at an attraction (Foster, 2000; Haber and Lerner, 1999; Maddox, 1985; Oh, 1999; Ryan, 1994; Yu and Goulden, 2006). The other stream of studies on tourist's satisfaction proposes tourism satisfaction is determined by a series of service encounters as experienced in a hotel, in a travel agency or in a tourist attraction (Macintosh, 2002; LeBlanc, 1992). Both of these two streams advocate tourist satisfaction depends on the performance of product attributes.

An externality is cost or benefit that affects someone other than the consumers or the suppliers of a good (Bade and Parkin, 2015). Previous works focus on the impacts of externality on allocative efficiency. The discussion about externality and customer satisfaction is very rare. Nowadays, group-tour is the most common way of traveling, tourists travel with companions. They visit the scenic spots together, watch shows at the same time, enjoying a buffet/delicious food in the same dining saloon, etc. In traveling, no one will expect the one next you comment the show without a stop in the opera or enjoy buffet with the one wrest lots of foods like a wolf. Hence, it's very possible that companion's behavior become an externality for others. In order to fill this gap between externality and customer satisfaction, this paper examines the impacts of companion's behavior on satisfaction.

The results show that companion's behavior significantly influence customer satisfaction, no matter the satisfaction is measured from the aspect of tour schedule or tour escort. The results indicate that egocentric/discontent behavior is negative with satisfaction, and well social intercourse, unhurried manner and some crude behavior, for example blue joke, will reinforce satisfactions. In addition, we classify the sample by gender, companion and age and find that gender and companion make regression results a minor difference. This point reminds us to take consideration of the individual difference when taking actions to enhance satisfaction.

The contributions of this paper are multi-folded. In most cases, researchers investigate tourist's satisfaction from individual experience about hotels, restaurants, scenic spots, and so on, without taking account of externality such as companion's behavior. We highlight the importance of externality on customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction can be improved by controlling/taking advantage of externality, without enhancing the performance of product attributes. In addition, the results can be applied to other service industries which they serve customers in the same place or at the same time, for example, cinema, restaurants, and hotels and so on.

Except this introduction section, Section 2 is about literature review and hypothesis development, section 3 makes statements about questionnaire design and data descriptions. And section 4 introduces the empirical analysis and results include further investigation. And the final section proposes the managerial implication and conclusion.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Customer satisfaction has been studied by many researchers as well as marketing professorial. Howard and Sheth (1969) and Cardozo (1965) are pioneering works which discuss customer satisfaction. Hunt (1977) conceptualizes customer satisfaction as an evaluation of emotion. It reflects the degree of positive feelings when having or using a service. Hartman (1973) proposed a customer satisfaction concept which consists of three dimensions: the cognitive dimension, the affective dimension and systemic dimension. The cognitive dimension discusses the service experience, the affective dimension refers to the customer's psychological reaction to the service performance, and the systemic dimension describes the difference between the expected and the received services. Dofrman (1979) suggest that satisfaction is correlated with a customer's preference, expectations, perceptions, and motives.

The argument that customer satisfaction is determined by the performance of the product attribute is widely accepted (Bitner, 1990; Chang, 2000; Andaleeb and Conway, 2006; Wall and Berry, 2007; Zhang, Jiang and Li, 2013). For example, Zhang, Jiang and Li (2013) concludes earlier research and propose food taste, physical environment, and employee service is vital attributes for explaining diner's satisfaction. Basing on this argument, customer satisfaction is affected by customer's post-purchase assessment of the service delivered and comparison of customer's expectations and the actual service experience (Hunt, 1997). If a customer's expectation is met or exceeded by the perceived performances, the customer will be satisfied (Oliver, 1980). Therefore, the quality of service that matches or exceeds customer's expectation drives satisfactorily. Moutinho (1987), Pizam, Neumann, and Reichel (1978) and Schofield (1999) studied the gap between pre-travel expectations and post-travel experience. They believed tourists will be satisfied if tourism products and services match tourist' expectation.

In tourism, early scholars conducted heaps of researches on customer satisfaction from the perspectives of repurchase intention, quality management (Cardozo, 1965; Hartman, 1973; Hunt, 1977). Some research focused on the product and service which studies of the influencing factors on the satisfaction serving to improve the service quality of the hotels, and tourist sites (LeBlanc, 1992; Ryan, 1994; Foster, 2000; Macintosh, 2002). Tourists of diverse cultural background may value the same service delivery and service quality quite differently, some scholars studied tourism satisfaction from the perspective of cross-cultural (Bowen and Clarke, 2002; Crotts and Erdmann, 2000; Rittichainuwat et al., 2002).

In recent years, increasingly scholars discuss the levels of tourists' satisfaction with their experiences destinations or at an attraction (Foster, 2000; Haber and Lerner, 1999; Maddox, 1985; Oh, 1999; Ryan, 1994; Yu and Goulden, 2006). Pearce (1989) defined destination as an amalgam of products and services in one location that can draw visitors from beyond its spatial confines. And Hu and Ritchie (1993) suggested the tourism destination as a package of tourism facilities and services, which like any other consumer product. Kotler et al. (1996, 2003) proposed six factors that affect the environment of the destination: demography, economy, nature, technology, politics, and culture. Bowen (2001) suggested six attributes of the influencing factors of tourist satisfaction: expectation, performance, disconfirmation, attribution, emotion, and equity.

Some studies indicated that consumer's interaction will affect consumer's satisfaction (McGrath and Otnes, 1995; Martin, 1996) even the intention of repurchase (Harris et al, 1997; Parker and Ward, 2000) . Harris, Baron and Ratcliffe (1995) reported that the quality of consumers' interaction is positively related to perception of service satisfaction. Hoffman and Bateson (1997), Katz and Larson (1991) and Grove and Fisk (1997) also report the similar conclusions about the consumers' interaction and their satisfaction. Inappropriate public behavior and speech will hamper others enjoying consumption. Ha and Jang (2010) examine

the moderating effect of atmospherics on the relationship between employee service quality and customer satisfaction. They found good employee service quality can be more effective in enhancing customer satisfaction with a low perception of the atmospherics compared with a higher perception. Companions' behavior may influence the atmospherics in the process of tourism. Hence, we can predict that tourist's satisfaction will be affected by companions, especially in the process of group-touring.

Therefore, this article proposes the following hypothesis:

H : The tourists' satisfaction is related with companion's behavior.

3. QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN AND DATA DESCRIPTIONS

This paper takes advantage of questionnaire to collect data for empirical research. The survey consisted of four sections. The first section comprised ten demographic and trips related questions. These questions collect interviewee's age, income, education, and experiences about tourism. The second section was made up of 7 attributes of groups. For example, these questions ask the tourism attraction, the length of tourism. The third section comprised 31 questions about the externality, i.e. companion's behavior. Martin (1996) listed seven categories of public speech and behavior which may cause the public displeased or pleasant. There are about social intercourse, apparel, egocentric, crudeness, violence, discontent and unhurried manner. Following Martin (1996)'s framework, these 31 items are the proxies of externality.

Finally, the questionnaires investigate customer satisfaction. This part of questionnaires consists of eight questions about customer satisfaction. Two dimensions of satisfaction are measured here. First, we investigate the satisfaction from the aspect of the tour schedule (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974). That is measuring the satisfaction in the service quality of the hotels/restaurants and tourist sites. Second, we investigate the satisfaction about tour escort (Conger et al., 2000). This part measures the satisfaction about tour escort's capability, guiding style, and so on.

These attributes were measured on a five-point scale, ranging from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied). The questionnaires are distributed to 548 tourists, who belonging to 30 tour groups. And the number of valid questionnaires is 505; the rate of effective questionnaires is 92.1%. In our sample, the number of male and female are 235 (46.5% of interviewees) and 270 (53.5% of interviewees) respectively, more than 66% of interviewees are married (332) and more than 72% of interviewees graduated from college. Most of interviewees traveled with their family (about 45.3% of interviewees), friends (about 26.9% of interviewees) and colleague (21.8% of interviewees). Besides, we find that most of the interviewees have traveling aboard experience (about 88.7% of interviewees) and 93.6% of interviewees, on the average, travel aboard not more than twice in a year. The customer satisfaction consists of eight questions in questionnaires, each question can get 1 to 5 points.

In addition, when investigating the companion's public speech and behavior, we investigate the frequency as well as perceived affections. Both of frequency and perceived affections of specific behavior will influence customer satisfaction. We weight the frequency with perceived affections in regression analysis. As mentioned early, the attributes were measured on a five-point scale, hence the value about behaviors distributes from 1 to 25 (frequency * perceived affections). We denote BHVR1 to BHVR31 as the praxis of companion's public speech and behaviors. Table 1 shows the basic statistics for companion's behavior. Four behaviors whose mean is higher than 10, they are BHVR 2, BHVR3, BHVR30 and BHVR31 (their mean is followed: 17.55, 12.57, 12.74, and 13.27). These four behaviors are frequently observed and perceived more influences of satisfaction.

Table 1 Basic descriptive statistics of independent variables

	Number	Min	Max	Mean	STD
BHVR1	506	3.00	25.00	9.2589	5.20645
BHVR2	506	3.00	25.00	17.5494	5.53249
BHVR3	504	3.00	25.00	12.5734	5.55029
BHVR10	505	1.00	12.00	3.6733	1.80887
BHVR11	505	1.00	15.00	2.4515	1.65655
BHVR12	504	1.00	20.00	4.4167	2.33160
BHVR13	504	1.00	15.00	4.8988	2.46560
BHVR14	504	1.00	16.00	3.8234	2.97948
BHVR15	504	1.00	15.00	2.8274	1.90530
BHVR16	504	1.00	15.00	3.6984	2.28756
BHVR17	504	1.00	9.00	2.9226	1.47611
BHVR18	504	1.00	15.00	2.0079	1.27989
BHVR19	504	1.00	20.00	4.2877	2.91404
BHVR20	504	1.00	10.00	2.4425	1.70039
BHVR21	504	1.00	25.00	5.8770	3.62353
BHVR22	504	1.00	20.00	2.2440	1.57577
BHVR23	504	1.00	9.00	1.9583	1.18315
BHVR24	504	1.00	15.00	2.9167	1.79158
BHVR25	504	1.00	9.00	1.7183	.90722
BHVR26	504	1.00	12.00	1.5139	.91149
BHVR27	504	1.00	16.00	4.8036	2.53702
BHVR28	504	1.00	10.00	2.2222	1.33250
BHVR29	504	1.00	16.00	4.7698	2.52986
BHVR30	504	3.00	25.00	12.7361	5.49207
BHVR31	504	3.00	25.00	13.2698	5.77017
Valid number	503				

4. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The empirical analysis is composed of factor analysis and regression analysis. The data for empirical research came from questionnaires, 31 items investigate in tourist's public speech and behaviors as well as 8 items in customer satisfaction. Due to these observed items have similar patterns of responses because they may all associate with a latent (i.e. not directly measured) feature (called factor). Factor analysis searches for such joint variations in response to unobserved latent variables. The observed variables are modelled as linear combinations of the potential factors, plus "error" terms. Here, we first precede factor analysis to reduce data and summarize data, then get the unobserved factors.

There are several methods to extract factors, principal component method, principle axes method, least square method, and maximum-likelihood method. A principal component method can be used to find the initial factor solution, in which case a reasonable choice for the number of factors to use is the number of eigenvalue greater than one. This paper employs the principal component method in factor analysis. We extract out 9 factors from 31 items about tourist's public speech and behaviors. One factor is extracted separately from the aspect of social intercourse, apparel, violence, discontent and unhurried manner which denoted as SOC, APP, VIO, DIS and UNH respectively. Two factors are extracted from the aspects of egocentric and crudeness which denoted as EGO1, EGO2, CRU1 and CRU2 respectively. In addition, the satisfactions about tour schedule and about tour escort are reduced as one factor, respectively (denoted as SAT_SCH and SAT_EXC). Table 2 summarizes the results of KMO and Bartlett's Test. All the three- principal component analysis passes the KMO and Bartlett's test.

Table 2 Measures of KMO and Bartlett's Test in factor analysis

Factor	KMO Measure	Bartlett's Test Chi-Square:	Degree of Freedom:	Significance
SOC	0.823	811.036	10	0.000
APP	0.742	421.827	10	0.000
EGO	0.811	759.439	28	0.000
CRU	0.778	736.455	15	0.000
VIO	0.500	131.816	1	0.000
DIS	0.500	34.592	1	0.000
UNH	0.615	150.801	3	0.000
SAT_SCH	0.711	450.716	6	0.000
SAT_EXC	0.803	770.889	6	0.000

Next, we precede regression analysis, regress customer satisfactions on companion's public speech and behaviors. Regression analysis helps one understand how the value of the dependent variable changes when any one of the independent variables is varied, while the other independent variables are held fixed. The regression models are followed:

$$SAT_SCH_i = \alpha_0 + \beta_1 SOC_i + \beta_2 APP_i + \beta_3 EGO_i + \beta_4 CRU_i + \beta_5 VIO_i + \beta_6 DIS_i + \beta_7 UNH_i + \varepsilon_i$$

$$SAT_EXC_i = a_0 + B_1 SOC_i + B_2 APP_i + B_3 EGO_i + B_4 CRU_i + B_5 VIO_i + B_6 DIS_i + B_7 UNH_i + e_i$$

Where α_0 and a_0 are constants, β_1 to β_7 and B_1 to B_7 are the coefficients of dependent variables, and ε_i as well as e_i are the error terms in regression models.

Table 3 summarizes the results of regression analysis. In model 1, we can find the coefficients of SOC, EGO1, CRU1, DIS and UNH are 0.282(t-value: 6.032), -0.233(t-value: -3.890), 0.204(t-value: 3.385), -0.167(t-value: -3.577), and 0.155(t-value: 3.416), and significantly different from zero. These figures show that the satisfactions about tour schedule is highly related with social intercourse, egocentricity and crudeness, discontent and unhurried manner. The coefficients of EGO1 and DIS are significantly negative, which mean egocentric/discontent behavior will diminish other tourists' satisfactions about tour schedule. And the coefficients of SOC, CRU1 and UNH are positive significantly which means well social intercourse, crude behavior and unhurried manner will reinforce other tourists' satisfactions about tour schedule.

Here, we present a very interesting phenomenon that consumer satisfactions are positively related with crude behavior, different from our prediction. Crude behaviors involve blue joke, dirty words, profanity, and so on. Usually, we think these behaviors are impolite and unwelcome. But some reports claim that telling blue jokes, swearing may release pressure. These are good for shaping the easy or lively atmosphere, as well as enhance the satisfaction.

The coefficients of APP and VIO are -0.004 (t-value: -0.086) and 0.021 (t-value: 0.444). Both these coefficients are not different from zero significant. We can infer that tourists' perceived satisfaction is not high related to others' apparel and violent behavior. The coefficient of VIO is not significantly different from zero does not mean people are willing to tolerate violent behavior. Instead, rare violence is observed may contribute this phenomenon. On the average, only one violent behavior is observed from the reply of the questionnaire.

In model 2, the results are similar to the results in model 1. The coefficients of SOC, EGO1, CRU1, DIS and UNH are significantly different from zero. The coefficients of SOC, CRU1, and UNH are positive and the coefficients of EGO1 and DIS are negative. Again, well social intercourse, crude behavior and unhurried manner will reinforce other tourists' satisfactions about tour escort, at the meanwhile, egocentric/discontent behavior will diminish other tourists' satisfactions about tour schedule. In summary, these results support the hypothesis which suggests tourists' satisfaction is related with companion's behavior.

Table 3 The regression results		
	Model 1 SAT SCH	Model 2 SAT EXC
SOC	0.282 (6.032)***	0.320 (6.802)***
APP	-0.004 (-0.086)	0.063 (1.340)
EGO1	-0.233 (-3.890)***	-0.181 (-3.004)***
EGO2	-0.012 (-0.271)	0.129 (2.849)***
CRU1	0.204 (3.385)***	0.147 (2.417)***
CRU2	-0.027 (-0.595)	0.009 (0.203)
VIO	0.021 (0.444)	0.008 (0.165)
DIS	-0.167 (-3.577)***	-0.163 (-3.469)***
UNH	0.155 (3.416)***	0.088 (1.917)*
Constant	-0.005 (-0.133)	-0.006 (-0.144)
Adj R-Square	0.211	0.203
No. of obs	501	501

5. FUTURE INVESTIGATION

In order to get more insight and test the robustness of empirical results listed in last section, we classify the sample into groups by tourists' characters. Table 4 and 5 summaries the simplified results, table 4 shows the results of robust test on satisfactions about tour schedule as well as table 5 presents the results on tourists' satisfactions about tour escort. The sample is classified by gender, companion and age. So, the sample is classified into male (denoted as M) or female (denoted as F), traveling with family (denoted as WF) or traveling not with family (denoted as NWF), and age above 50 or not (denoted as YNG and ELD respectively).

From table 4, we can find that the regression results from various subsamples are quite similar and consistent with the figures in table 4. Gender and companion make regression results different. For males, the coefficient of CRU1 is also positive, but not significantly different from zero. But the coefficient of CRU2 is negative and significantly different from zero. This point is different from the results for female. Besides, the coefficient of VIO is significantly positive, again different from the results for female. Hence, we can infer that gender has some influences on the relation between satisfactions about tour schedule and tourist's public speech or behaviors. The coefficient of CRU1 is significantly positive for the NWF, but significantly positive for the WF. It also shows the influences of crude behavior on satisfaction depend on the companion.

Table 4 Robust test on satisfactions about tour schedule							
Dependent variable: SAT_SCH							
	All	M	F	NWF	WF	YNG	ELD
SOC	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	***	***	***	***	***	***	**
APP	-	-	-	-	+	-	+
EGO1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	***	***	**	**	**	***	**

EGO2	-	-	+	-	+	-	+
CRU1	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	***		**	***		**	**
CRU2	-	-	+	-	-	-	+
		**					
VIO	+	+	-	-	+	+	-
		**					
DIS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	***	***	**	*	**	**	**
UNH	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	***	**	**	***		***	
Adj R ²	0.211	0.197	0.245	0.171	0.263	0.183	0.313
No. of obs	501	234	261	226	275	440	61

Table 5 presents the robust test on tourists' satisfactions about tour escort. Several discordant results emerge within subgroups. For males, there are four variables are significantly different from zero; they are SOC, APP, EGO1 and DIS. But for female, five variables own significant influence on satisfactions. They are SOC, EGO1, EGO2, DIS and UNH. The influences of apparel, egocentric behavior and unhurried manner on satisfactions about tour escort depend on gender. When classify samples by companion, the inconsistencies occur with respect to apparel, egocentric behavior, crudeness, discontent and unhurried manner. Similar inconsistencies also emerge between the subgroup of YNG and ELD.

In summary, these two tables not only provide the evidences that customer satisfaction is related with companion's behavior, the source of externality, but also highlight individual attributes may contribute some difference on the relationship between satisfaction and other behavior.

Table 5 Robust test on satisfactions about tour escort							
Dependent variable: SAT_EXC							
	All	M	F	NWF	WF	YNG	ELD
SOC	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	***	***	***	***	***	***	*
APP	+	+	+	+	-	+	+
		**		**			
EGO1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	***	**	*	***		**	
EGO2	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
			***		*	**	
CRU1	+	+	+	+	-	+	+
	***			**		*	
CRU2	+	-	+	-	+	-	+
VIO	+	-	+	-	+	+	-
DIS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	***	*	**		***	**	*
UNH	+	-	+	+	+	+	-
	*		**	**		*	
Adj R ²	0.203	0.183	0.243	0.208	0.230	0.193	0.377
No. of obs	501	234	261	226	275	440	61

6. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATION AND CONCLUSION

Early scholars conducted numerous researches on tourist satisfaction from the perspectives of repurchase intention, quality management, service quality of the hotels, and tourist sites, the impact of cross-cultural, and so on. Instead, this paper discusses tourist satisfaction from the

aspect of externality, a new view to check this old but hot issue. The empirical results demonstrate that customer satisfaction is related to externality, no matter the satisfaction is measured from the aspect of tour schedule or tour escort. In addition, the empirical results also indicate that some relationship between satisfaction and externality depends on the tourist's characters.

For travel agency, promoting customer satisfaction is always a task with high priority. So, they strive to improve the service quality of hotels, restaurant, and transportation as well as find some new scenic spots, design new tour schedule, and so on. All of these will incur costs, no matter the travel agency bears it by himself or transfer it to tourists. This paper indicates an alternative to improve customer satisfaction by encouraging or discouraging some tourist's behavior. In practical, travel agency can educate/inform their customers in advance or proceed some group activity of peace to enhance tourist's interactions. These are effective but cheap ways to improve satisfaction.

In our analysis, crude behavior such as blue joke, dirty words, profanity are positively related with satisfaction. We can infer that shaping the easy or lively atmosphere is a good way to enhance the satisfaction. The crude behavior is not always positive related to satisfaction, the influence of crudeness on the satisfaction will depend on gender and companion. It reminds us to pay attention to the tourist's characters when providing services.

This paper is a pioneer work on the relation between customer satisfaction and externality. It deserves more attention and effort on this issue. Building up a complete model to describe this relation and estimate the impacts of tourist's behavior on satisfaction are the next task to conquer.

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