

Influences of Macau Visitor Expectations on Purchase and Behavioural Intention: Perspectives of Low-cost Carrier Passengers

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Abstract

In today's highly competitive environment, air transport is crucial to tourism development. A destination marketer must understand the reasons that affect visitors' purchase behaviour to facilitate service quality. This study aimed to provide specific clues to understanding the low-cost airline (LCA) business in a broad context and to present a holistic perspective of the buying behaviour of low-cost carrier (LCC) passengers. Through its investigation of the motivations of LCC passengers, it found that the main determinants of passengers' behavioural intentions rested on the values of these passengers and their satisfaction with the destination. This study adopted a qualitative approach in which 30 individuals who travelled to Macau within the last 6 months were interviewed. According to the results, the destination of Macau had a significantly positive effect on the visitors' purchase intentions. Recommendations for destination marketers are identified in this study.

Keywords: visitors, Macau, expectation, purchase and behavioural intention, low-cost carriers

1. Introduction

Over the last two decades, the tourism industry has become one of the largest industries and introduced economic, environmental and social advantages. The tourism industry in Macau mainly focuses on the gaming, hotel, leisure and event markets. Macau's background can be traced back to the 16th century, when it first opened its harbour to visitors. The rapid development of casino gaming in a growing industry has become a crucial area in tourism research. Studies have particularly focused on industry development and regulations (Siu, 2006), measurement of casino businesses and ownership patterns (Moseley, Schewer & Thompson, 2003) and resident perspectives on the economic and social effects of the industry (Vong & McCartney, 2005) in addition to the viewpoints of casino owners and residents. A review of the literature indicates a lack of investigation into the purchase and behavioural intentions of visitors (Chen & Hsu, 2001; Hsu, 2000; Vong & McCartney, 2005). Visitor arrivals in Macau increased by 4.9% year-on-year to 2.35 million in June 2016. Large numbers of those tourists arrived from Hong Kong, Taiwan and China (Macau Statistic and Census Services, 2016).

Table 1. Passenger Figures (2009-2014)

Passengers Figures (2009-2014)						
	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009
Jan	422,434	374,917	362,379	301,503	358,902	342,323
Feb	420,229	393,152	312,405	301,259	351,654	297,755
Mar	447,012	408,935	334,000	318,908	360,365	387,879
Apr	451,243	408,858	358,198	339,060	352,976	400,553
May	435,387	374,560	329,218	321,060	330,407	335,967
Jun	438,873	401,917	356,679	343,006	326,724	296,748
Jul	492,885	445,250	423,081	378,993	356,580	351,110
Aug	528,920	496,662	453,391	395,883	364,011	404,076
Sep	441,955	435,889	384,887	325,124	308,940	317,226
Oct	463,371	414,094	383,889	333,102	317,040	355,935
Nov	458,672	418,838	379,065	327,803	303,186	372,104
Dec	480,461	453,987	413,873	359,313	348,051	388,573
Total	5,481,442	5,027,059	4,491,065	4,045,014	4,078,836	4,250,249

Source: Macau International Airport, 2016

Table 2. Passenger Figures (2015 to 2016 January-June)

	2015	2016
Jan	435,805	539,024
Feb	479,738	589,917
Mar	448,661	516,586
Apr	480,254	535,828
May	486,527	528,461
Jun	456,002	542,051
Jul	510,793	
Aug	575,849	
Sep	441,342	
Oct	479,036	
Nov	488,724	
Dec	548,728	
Total	5,831,459	3,251,867

Source: Macau International Airport, 2016

Table 1 and 2 show the findings of Macau International Airport (MIA), indicating a stable growth in the usage of MIA from 2009 to 2016 (Macau International Airport, 2016). Although a large number of passengers travelled by ferry, MIA determined that June 2016 was its busiest month, exceeding the 600,000-passenger movement mark for the first time in the airport's 21-year history. This mark is a new record for the passenger traffic in a single month, with an average daily passenger volume of over 19,000 that increased by 20% compared with the record from the previous year. Over 4,900 aircraft movements were recorded in July, an increase of 2% over the same period last year. Southeast Asia routes continued to perform well in July, covering 43% of the overall market. The Southeast Asia routes were followed by the mainland China and China Taiwan routes, accounting for 30% and 27%, respectively. The three major markets recorded 36%, 3% and 18% increases over the records from the same period last year (Macau International Airport, 2016). These findings provided solid evidence that MIA can handle a large number of flights coming from Southeast Asia and that the number of air travel passengers is expected to exhibit stable growth. At MIA, 72% of short-haul flights are operated by different low-cost carriers (LCCs) (Macau International Airport, 2016). Thus far, the passenger traffic volume, such as that in the Chinese Taipei market, has increased significantly to 34%, and that in the mainland China market has recorded a slight reduction. Moreover, the Southeast and North Asia markets have remained stable. Transfer passenger traffic has maintained a rising trend. Therefore, LCC visitor arrivals from Macau, in addition to their expectations of purchase intention and perception of the service quality of Macau as a destination, should be investigated to improve the service quality of LCCs and provide insights into the management level.

1.1 Background of Macau

In 2002 and 2003, the central government relaxed the 'Hong Kong and Macau Tour' and the 'Free Individual Traveler Scheme' regulations, respectively. This scenario restructured the visitor profile such that mainland China visitors replaced Hong Kong visitors as the largest tourism market in Macau (Pao, 2004).

The liberalisation of the gaming license in 2002 opened the golden gate for foreign investors. The monopolised gaming era ended, and the tourism industry began. Numerous brand new casinos, hotel complexes and resorts with different themes and atmospheres were constructed (The Cultural Affairs Bureau, 2005). Domestic hotels were refurbished and reconstructed. Different facilities and entertainment were combined into packages to add value to service experience, thereby improving overall service quality in the tourism sector.

On July 15, 2005, The Historic Centre of Macau was successfully inscribed as a World Heritage Site, becoming the 31st in China. Its 25 sites encompass historical and cultural architecture and landscapes that fully demonstrate Macau as a unique city blending Eastern and Western cultures. This event highly popularised the city and attracted culture lovers to visit Macau (The Cultural Affairs Bureau, 2005). Thus, Macau was successfully transformed from a small colony of Portugal into a well-known world-class tourism destination.

1.2 Rationale of the Study

However, Macau is now experiencing an economic downturn because of China's economic slowdown, and the Macau government aims to reposition the region as a leisure center instead of a gambling destination. Macau has

shifted away from relying on gambling revenue, and it will soon drive towards sustaining the cultural tourism hub through growths in the hotel, catering, retailing and wholesale sectors (South China Morning Post, 2016). Macau visitors and their perception of service quality in Macau should be investigated; however, minimal attention has been devoted to the purchase intentions of passengers taking LCCs to Macau. This study aims to provide specific clues to understand the low-cost airline (LCA) business in a broad context and present a holistic perspective of the buying behaviour of LCC passengers. The rationale of the study is to investigate the motivation of LCC passengers. The main determinants of passengers' behavioural intentions rest on the values and satisfaction of these passengers towards the destination. The motivation, values, satisfaction and behavioural intentions of LCC passengers in addition to service quality are proposed based on a comprehensive literature review. Most previous studies have focused on creating a conceptual model of service quality (Parasuraman et al., 1985) or identified the critical attributes for the SERVQUAL dimensions (Carman, 1990; Parasuraman et al., 1991). This study develops and empirically examines an integrated model that uniquely depicts the expectation of values, satisfaction and behavioural intentions of LCA passengers in relation to Macau. Therefore, this study aims to fill the gap in the literature. It attempts to achieve Macau's strategic goal of understanding tourist behaviour (Chui, 2005) through the following objectives:

1. To identify visitors' perceptions of Macau as a destination;
2. To examine visitors' purchase intentions and expectations;
3. To provide managerial recommendations for several approaches to enhancing service quality.

1.3 Strategies of Low-cost Carriers

LCCs boast no-frill travel provisions among their features. In economically difficult times, the demand for slightly less expensive travel increases, which is advantageous for LCCs (Bel, 2009; Euromonitor, 2008, Mintel, 2007). The LCC pioneers, in which the Southwest's disruptive business model serves as a benchmark, have been successfully popularised and proliferated across the airline sector globally (e.g., Europe: Ryanair, Germanwings, EasyJet and Snowflakes; Middle East: Jazeera Airways; Asia: Air Asia and Tiger Airways; Oceania: Jetstar Airways, Freedom Air and Air Australia Airways; America: Webjet Linhas Aereas, REDjet and Spirit Airlines; Africa: 1Time, Kulula, Air Arabia Egypt, Aero Contractors, Fly540 and Asky Airlines). These LCCs have common core denominators, such as disruptive and adoption innovation in addition to efficiency, productivity and cost leadership, which lead to inexpensive fares (Lawton, 2003; O'Connell & Williams, 2005; Ryan & Birks, 2005; Wong & Musa, 2011). These airlines respond to low-cost competition by lowering their overhead costs (e.g., cutting employee costs and selling tickets over the Internet). Furthermore, many new LCC firms enter the mass low-fare market. In particular, the trends in Hong Kong and Macau indicate sustainable growth (Centre of Aviation, 2016). The rivalry may erode the market share of some LCC firms and intensify competition (Doganis, 2006; Wong & Musa, 2011). The LCCs in Asia have expanded to serve both Macau and Hong Kong in the booming Pearl River Delta region over the last few decades. A large number of LCCs have expanded in Macau. Although Macau may be geographically close, the division of the South China Sea dictates different catchment areas on the mainland, with Hong Kong serving Shenzhen and Macau serving Zhuhai, whose airport serves only domestic flights. However, as Asia's population and economy continue to grow, the airports in the Pearl River Delta region have become Asia's equivalent of the London, New York City or Sao Paulo airport networks. LCCs provide passenger visits to Macau, thereby benefiting it as a tourism destination (CAPA Center for Aviation, 2016).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Tourist Motivation from Low-cost Carriers

Previous scholars (Johnson & Devonish, 2008) have indicated that tourist motivations, attitudes and perceptions are important for establishing a clear understanding of the destination choice process. Understanding travel motivation and the factors affecting destination choice can benefit tourism planning and marketing (Lam & Hsu, 2006). Travel motivations cover a broad range of human behaviour and experiences; they may include relaxation, excitement, social interactions with friends, adventures, family interactions, statuses, physical challenges and escape from routine or stress (Esichaikul, 2012). Yoon and Uysal (2005) identified push factors among the internal factors that motivate visitors to travel, although they are also pulled by external forces behind the attributes of a destination, such as promotion from marketers. The most common push factors in previous studies have included escape from routine everyday life, relaxation, exploration, social interaction, relationships and prestige (Jensen, 2011).

Saha and Theingi (2009) examined the quality and satisfaction derived from LCC service that influence the

behavioural intentions of passengers, including the repurchasing of airline tickets. Limited studies have discussed the motivations derived from a destination. The spread of LCCs has helped to boost tourism products and regional attractiveness for tourism (Donzelli, 2010). The packages or products provided by a destination influence customers' perceptions of service quality, value and satisfaction. Therefore, the rationale behind consumer motivation and involvement should be understood.

2.2 Motivation and Traveller Involvement

Involvement is a motivational state caused by the perception of travellers that a product, destination image or promotion is relevant or interesting. Need plays a strong role in determining what is relevant or interesting to travellers (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2010). In a number of situations, travellers may influence involvement. For example, some travellers have an on-going on-line involvement, and others may be involved in a particular situation only, such as an upcoming purchase; this determination is crucial for marketers to understand the buying behaviour of travellers. Tourist behaviour includes consumer involvement, increased attention, analytical processing, information searches and word of mouth. High involvement purchasers of tourism products tend to be product experts and are persuaded by advertisements and detailed product information. In contrast, low involvement purchasers tend to lack product expertise and are persuaded by images, emotions and message sources. Users of LCCs are high involvement purchasers. Therefore, destination marketers should understand the link between tourists' buying behaviour and their freely admitted motives.

According to the service marketing perspective, customer value is a critical element in consumer consumption and decision making (Zeithaml, 1998; Bolton & Drew, 1991; Sweeney et al., 1999). Scholars have determined that a utilitarian perspective of customer value is acceptable because value is measured as a trade-off between benefits and sacrifices (Zeithaml, 1998; Dodds et al., 1991). The following literature review recognised the importance of customer value from a marketing perspective and examined the construct in customer value satisfaction and behavioural intention.

2.3 Customer Values

Traditional value research has taken a utilitarian perspective with the value construct measured as the net ratio of benefits to costs (Cravens et al., 1998; Dodds et al., 1991; Sinha & DeSarbo, 1998; Sweeney et al. 1999). The meaning of 'value' indicates that a buyer and a seller infer value if the benefits received are greater than what is given up. Both parties feel they are at an advantage because each receives something more useful than what was relinquished (Sinha & DeSarbo, 1998).

Several dimensional value perspectives are often considered appropriate in service contexts (Zeithaml, 1998, Sheth et al., 1991; Wetzel & Bloemer, 1997). Scholars have reported that value perceptions differ from those made for goods because of increased risk and uncertainty (Murray & Schlacter, 1990). Many researchers have begun to address the need for service value and to investigate the relationship with other post-consumption factors, such as satisfaction and behavioural intentions (Murphy, Pritchard & Smith, 2000; Petrick, 2002). Gallarza and Saura (2006) adopted a value framework with eight dimensions including efficiency, excellence, status, esteem, lay, aesthetics, ethics and spirituality. They also defined a weak or insignificant relationship and acknowledged some operationalisation difficulties affecting the categories. Sweeney and Soutar (2001) adopted the PERVAL framework to measure customer value. This framework has been used in various tourism contexts and included functional value, value for money and other value dimensions such as social, epistemic and emotional value.

2.4 Functional Value

Functional value is 'the perceived utility acquired from an alternative's capacities for functional, utilitarian or physical performance' (Sheth et al., 1996); it is considered a major driver of consumer choice. Furthermore, it indicates the common conceptualisation and exchange value of the price paid or value for money (Zeithaml, 1998; Dodds et al., 1991). The common aspects of functional value include quality, reliability, durability and price. In the tourism context, for instance, a destination is considered to have a comfortable and reasonable price, with safety issues influencing functional value perceptions (William & Soutar, 2005).

2.5 Emotional Value

Emotional value indicates that a product's social psychological dimension depends on its ability to arouse feelings or affective states (Sheth et al., 1991). Emotional responses are common in various tourism sectors. Otto and Ritchie (1996) identified this often-ignored factor that accounts for a portion of the explained variance in satisfaction evaluations. The emotions that precede and lead to the emotional highs of exhilaration and excitement in a destination are often fear, hesitation and apprehension. Thus, emotional value tends to be a major factor in the consumption of tourism products.

2.6 Social Value

Many scholars have defined social value as the perceived utility acquired from an association with one or more specific social groups (Sheth et al., 1991). Social value often drives one's choice of goods or services shared with others. In tourism, elements such as interactions between people on a tour, relationships between passengers and service staff and individual recognition or prestige obtained from undertaking the trip may create social value. Social value may be strong in a small group, similar to the 'communitas' and the bonding of river rafting participants highlighted by Arnould and Price (1993).

2.7 Epistemic Value

Epistemic value is created when a product arouses curiosity, provides novelty and/or satisfies a desire for knowledge (Sheth et al., 1991). In the tourism and hospitality industry, novelty and the search for new knowledge are significant motives for adventure travels (Weber, 2001; Walle, 1997; Crompton, 1979; Bello & Etzel, 1985). Epistemic value is a key factor in many tourism products due to tourists' desire for exploratory, novelty-seeking and variety-seeking behaviour (Zuckerman, 1994). A destination should change and adapt its product to ensure that an epistemic value is obtained by creating new and special experiences for travellers.

2.8 Customer Values, Perceived Quality, Satisfaction and Behavioural Intentions

2.8.1 Customer Values

Previous studies have explored customer value attention in relation to the retailing sector, pre-purchase value perceptions and their links with purchase decisions or willingness to buy (Dodds et al., 1991; Zeithaml, 1988; Sweeney et al., 1999). Woodruff (1997) argued that value concepts differ according to the situations in which customers consider value (e.g., customer-perceived value varies before and after purchase). This experience is crucial if a repeat purchase is sought. Post-purchase behaviour creates a value perception that should be in line with pre-purchase expectations. Patterson and Spreng (1997) indicated the unclear effect of values on repurchase intention due to the lack of experience and familiarity that affects their repurchase intentions. Customer satisfaction is apparently positively influenced by value, and this value is negatively affected by perceived price (Chang & Wildt, 1994; Zeithaml, 1988; Sweeney et al., 1999).

2.8.2 Perceived Quality

Tourism product and service quality evaluations are predominantly based on cognitive processing mechanisms (Vida & Reardon, 2008). Service quality is defined as customers' expectations of the service provided and their perceptions of the service processes they experience (Carman, 1990; Gronroos, 2007; Parasuraman et al., 1985). Satisfaction is a psychological outcome derived from experience (Lee et al., 2007). Therefore, the underlying processing mechanism used to evaluate quality and satisfaction is important. Many studies have arrived at findings related to customer satisfaction through destination attributes (Kozak, 2001; Troung & Foster 2006) that pose some difficulties on conceptual and empirical grounds. Satisfaction measurement should be aligned with the quality consistent with the mainstream marketing conceptualisations (Oliver, 1997). A direction has been suggested to show that the conceptual order of service quality-satisfaction-behavioural intention supports the temporal setting (Parasuraman et al., 1994; Brady et al., 2005). A destination should improve services to gain a competitive advantage by attracting the attention of visitors and by maintaining loyalty and a positive image. Such a desirable result can create customer satisfaction when achieved. Brady et al. (2005) identified multi-industry and multi-country settings and determined that service quality, satisfaction and service value directly affect behavioural intentions when followed by service quality and value. Of the three constructs, satisfaction exerts the strongest effect on behaviour, followed by service quality and value. Customer value and satisfaction also mediate the relationship between service quality and behavioural intention (Zabkar et al., 2010).

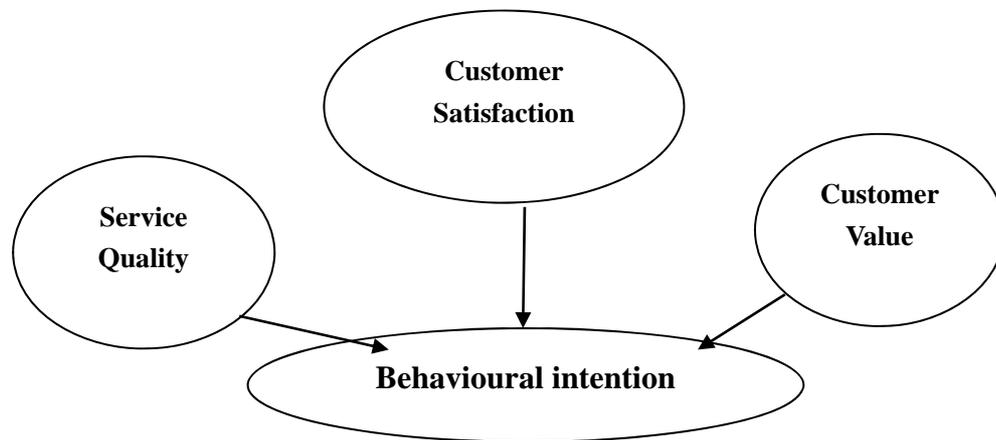


Figure 1. A customer-perceived service offering in relation to the customer's behavioural intentions

Source: adopted by Brady et al. (2005).

2.8.3 Customer Satisfaction

Questions about satisfaction and its relationship with other constructs are often raised when satisfaction is considered as a cognitive process (through disconfirmed expectations) (Gronin & Taylor, 1992; Bolton & Drew, 1991; Staelin & Zeithaml, 1993) or an emotional state associated with post-purchase feeling. In a previous study, Woodruff et al. (1983) argued that customer satisfaction should be defined to reflect and align with cognitive and emotional processes, as customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction is an emotional feeling developed in response to confirm or disconfirm. The cognitive and affective models may be appropriate to describe satisfaction that justifies different approaches (Pfaff, 1977). The cognitively oriented service quality and value constructs precede the emotionally oriented appraisal of satisfaction (Bagozzi 1992; Oliver 1997). Value is apparently a more complete antecedent to satisfaction than quality (Woodruff, 1997; McDougall & Levesque, 2000; Gallarza & Saura, 2006).

Numerous studies have been undertaken in tourism sectors (Ryan, 1995; Crompton & Love, 1995; Chadee & Mattson, 1996; Baker, Crompton & Love, 1995; Crompton, 2000), and the majority have focused on measuring the quality of tourist experience and the effect of various quality performance factors on tourist satisfaction. In tourism, satisfaction is the emotional state of mind of a tourist after an experience. This is not attribute-based, as it is 'experiential' (Baker & Crompton, 2000), and emotion may intervene or act as a mediator between performance and satisfaction. Bojanic (1996) identified a strong positive correlation between perceived value and satisfaction in a tourism context.

2.8.4 Behavioural Intentions

Numerous scholars have examined the direct and indirect relationships between value, quality, satisfaction and post-purchase consequences, such as customer loyalty, positive word of mouth, price premiums and repurchase intentions (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Bolton, 1998; Chang & Wildt, 1994). Brady and Hult (2000) claimed there is a significant divergence of opinion about the relationships, direct and indirect quality, value, satisfaction and behavioural intentions. The strong link between satisfaction (e.g., perceived quality and value) and repurchase intention is widely recognised (Bitner, 1990). Consumer value perceptions apparently drive future purchase intentions (Brady & Cronin, 2001). Satisfaction has also been determined as a predictor of post-purchase behavioural intentions (Zeithaml, 1998; Patterson & Spreng, 1997). In the pre-purchase context, Chang and Wildt (1994) determined that value is mediated by quality and that price is related to repurchase intentions. They also identified that price has a direct effect on purchase behaviour and that quality has a direct effect on purchase intention. Furthermore, satisfaction is positively influenced by value (Bolton & Drew, 1991; Woodruff, 1997), and value is negatively affected by price (Zeithaml, 1998; Chang & Wildt, 1994). Anderson and Sullivan (1990) reported that service satisfaction is strongly related to repurchase intention. Thus, a consensus has been established, indicating that satisfaction is an antecedent to future intentions in the service environment (Gronin & Taylor, 1994; Patterson & Spreng, 1997). Satisfaction significantly influences future intentions. Its relationship with value should be closely monitored because there are structural links between the two concepts (Murray & Howat, 2002).

In the tourism industry, word of mouth communication is crucial because it is trustworthy and reliable.

Consumers gather their information about the service and offer insights into some of these relationships in the tourism context. Scholars have determined the linkage of value, satisfaction and loyalty (Bolton & Drew, 1991; Gronroos, 1990; Zeithaml et al., 1993). Therefore, consumer value of perception, satisfaction and behavioural intentions should be examined from the perspective of LCC passengers. This investigation could benefit Macau as a successful destination in the long run.

3. Methodologies

A descriptive qualitative research design was adopted in this study, with LCC passengers who visited Macau in the past six months serving as the target respondents. The data were collected through in-depth interviews with the various visitors from different countries. The interviews started at the end of May 2016 and ended in July 2016. The descriptive research designs collected evidence that helped the researcher to determine the 'who', 'what' and 'where' of single or multiple cases (Yin, 2003). These designs were usually the best method to collect information that could demonstrate the relationships and describe the world as it exists. The interviews used open-ended questions, and the data were analysed using a grounded theory framework. Thirty visitors who used LCCs were selected through purposive sampling, as this sample size was considered sufficient to reach information saturation (Webber & Huxley, 2007). The interviews took 45 minutes to 1 hour. The scripts were fully translated from Chinese to English. The interview questions were offered in English and traditional Chinese using a back-translation method. The questions (based on the study objectives) were open-ended. The interviews took place in the departure hall at MIA on Taipa. The data were summarised and organised according to the themes generated by the documentary review. The summaries of the interviews were also prepared to highlight the main concepts that emerged and to set the context for the quotes to be selected and used as examples in the research report (Table 3).

Table 3. Summary of Visitor Expectations of the Purchase and Behavioural Intention Themes in This Study

Dimension	Themes	
Customer satisfaction	● Overcrowding	(-)Functional value
	● Quality of life	(+)Epistemic value
	● Friendly people	(+)Social value
	● Sophisticated cuisines	(-)Functional value
	● Eastern culture meets Western culture	(+)Epistemic value
	● Gaming facilities	(+)Emotional value
	● Variety of accommodation choice (Las Vegas-style hotel and resort)	(+)Functional value
	● Clean	(+)Functional value
	● High security	(+)Functional value
	● Expensive	(-)Functional value
	● Warm hospitality service	(+)Emotional value
	● Beautiful scenery	(+)Emotional value
	● Limited of attraction facilities	(-)Functional value
Service quality	● Service differentiation	
	● Insufficient services	
	● Effective hotel services	
	● Language barriers	
	● Lack of standardisation	
Behavioural intentions	● Family	
	● Unique aspect	
	● Catchment area in the Pearl River Delta region	
	● Variety of casino and hotel choice	
	● Gambling	
	● Short-haul journey	
	● Time factor distance decay	

Data analysis and coding were conducted in several stages. The generated codes were categorised and displayed in themed charts. Domain analysis was used to describe and analyse each theme separately. The coding results at different levels were compared to explore differences in opinions and suggestions. The findings at different levels were synthesised afterwards, and the coding results at different levels were compared to explore differences in opinions and suggestions. The resulting explanations and discussions were compared with the results of the previous research. In the present study, in-depth interviews and various secondary data sources (i.e., company websites, journals and industry reports) were used. The secondary data sources used in this study included articles from universities, government and nongovernmental organisations, reports obtained from company websites, on-line information and promotional materials. The in-depth interviews provided a rich, first-hand data source, and the secondary materials allowed the researcher to retest the contributions of the respondents.

The primary and secondary data and the supporting literature provided a comprehensive, longitudinal and highly reliable information source that others could easily recheck.

4. Results and Discussion

Following a study by Strauss and Corbin (1998), 30 participants were interviewed following the theoretical saturation concept. Overall, 13 male and 17 female visitors aged between 18 and 42 years were included in this study. Of the 56% of visitors who stayed in Macau from 1 to 2 days, 34% stayed in Macau for 5 days to a week and 10% stayed in Macau for 3-4 days only. The interviewees mainly came from China (63.3%), and the other visitors came from Hong Kong (13.3%), Taiwan (20%) and other Asian countries (3.4%). The total expenditures of the visitors during their stay in Macau ranged from less than USD200.00 to more than USD1,000.00

4.1 Customer Satisfaction in Macau

The majority of the interviewees identified Macau as a lovely destination. Of the 30 interviewees, 3 were dissatisfied with the city environment due to problems such as overcrowding and limited facilities (e.g., shortage of public facilities such as toilets and tourism attractions); however, the rest provided positive comments. Numerous visitors believed that the destination was good value for money. Macau itself as a destination created social value; in particular, visitors thought that the people in Macau were friendly and presented a positive image. Other interviewees identified Macau with warm hospitality services in the tourism industry, thereby creating emotional value for those who may revisit Macau in the future. Macau is where Eastern culture meets Western culture, and the impression of quality of life creates epistemic value. Some of the interviewees expressed a desire to explore and the importance of their quality of lifestyle. Epistemic value is created when a product arouses curiosity, provides novelty and/or satisfies a desire for knowledge (Sheth et al., 1991).

Functional value includes quality, reliability, durability and price. In Macau, comfort, good food, safety and security issues influence perceptions of the destination's functional value. However, others believe that Macau lacks good attractions and that the area is overcrowded in the service environment for tourists, thereby harming the functional value of the destination. The comments from the interviewees indicated that the hotels and expenditures in Macau were expensive, thereby creating a negative impression of its functional value. The interviewees thought that gambling and the beautiful scenery provided emotional value to visitors. Emotional value tends to be a major factor in the consumption of a destination's tourism product. These reasons mainly motivate tourists to revisit Macau.

4.2 Service Quality to Satisfaction

Visitors generally reported a positive service impression of Macau. According to the findings, some visitors believed they were provided with services different from those of the other cities in the Pearl River Delta region in China. A number of visitors mentioned that the services met their high quality standards, and others said that they lacked standardisation. Three of the interviewees mentioned that Macau provided poor services; however, the rest appreciated the service quality. Nearly 90% of the interviewees claimed that their services needed enhancement such as product knowledge and language training to be delivered effectively. Some of the interviewees claimed they were amazed that large hotel groups in Macau provided free shuttle buses, high quality ambience and services from large casino resorts.

4.3 Purchase and Behavioural Intention

Four of the interviewees mentioned they would not revisit Macau because their perceptions of it were limited to gambling. The rest of the interviewees provided positive comments and stated they would return to Macau in the future. Their motivation to revisit and their purchase intentions resulted from their satisfaction with the attractions and accommodations provided in the city. The diverse attractions in Macau include heritage sites, unique cuisines and ease of accessibility due to the popularity of the English language. The interviewees mentioned various resorts and hotels that provided perfect family vacation plans. Macau's gambling facilities differentiate it from other cities in China. In Macau, those interested in gambling have a wide range of options. Other interviewees thought they could spend a weekend in Macau, which they viewed as one of the catchment areas in the Pearl River Delta region for those who aimed to break away from home. Other interviewees from Southeast Asia believed that Macau provided a unique destination for short-haul travel. The total travel time budgets and value that tourists place on travel exert a moderating effect on the rate of decay. Some tourists' considered travel times result in a decreased amount of time that can be spent in a destination (Walsh, Sanders & McKean, 1990). Therefore, time value is important to visitors and destinations (McKercher, 2008). Short-haul visitors still consider revisiting the area.

5. Implications and Conclusion

This study examined LCC visitors' expectations and perceptions of the services in Macau. These expectations and perceptions can influence the future buying intentions of visitors. Understanding visitor expectations of customer satisfaction can offer a competitive advantage to Macau as a leisure destination. The perceptions of Macau by the majority of visitors are built on uniqueness, ease of accessibility, various hotel choices and diverse tourism products that can motivate their intentions to revisit.

The quality and reliability of these services can enhance positive word of the mouth and influence visitors' future behavioural intentions. Customers apparently perceive reliability (e.g., error-free records and security) and convenience-related services (e.g., free shuttle bus services and ease of accessibility in attractions) in Macau.

Price orientation and particularly hotel room rates were the only concerns voiced by the visitors interviewed in this study. This suggests that LCC visitors expect all of the services to be organised and offered in Macau. These LCC visitors also preferred the right service with the right price.

These findings suggest that the hospitality of human resources is a crucial element to delivering service satisfaction to visitors. However, service training and education should be conducted and enhanced in Macau. Transportation and its facilities require additional improvement. Visitors expect to obtain customer value for good experience, which is relevant to service factors and visitor expectations of hospitality services and diversity and not limited to gambling. The cognitive approach of some visitors lead them to believe that Macau provides gambling activities only, and its marketers must promote Macau as a diversified destination in many other areas. Several important strategic implications emerged in this study for destination marketers. A number of the visitors interviewed perceived Macau solely as a gambling destination. Therefore, marketers should be aware of the great variability in customers' expectations, their views related to service offerings and related opportunities to grow their customer base and destination image through service strategies that meet visitor expectations.

Practitioners should be aware that service quality is a focused evaluation reflecting visitors' perceptions of reliability, assurance, responsiveness, empathy and tangible satisfaction. Furthermore, service quality is inclusive and influenced by perceptions of service quality, prices and functional factors. Visitor satisfaction with a destination is a broad concept that can certainly be influenced by perceptions of service quality; perceptions of product quality such as human resource support, price and personal factors (e.g., experiences from the last visit); or whether the product itself meets visitors' needs (e.g., diversity of attractions or family-oriented products). Overall loyalty to a destination can be predicted by understanding the perceptions of visitors based on their experiences and service encounters.

The overall resulting expectations serve as a baseline for the formation of visitors' service quality satisfaction and intentions to be loyal to a destination. Perceptions are primary drivers of satisfaction that motivate visitors to revisit Macau. Thus, it can be concluded that visitors' expectations of services and service quality are key to determining the salient indicators of satisfaction and intentions to revisit a destination. Unpleasant perceptions of the quality of a destination can lead to a negative image and evaluation of that destination. Thus, the purchase intentions of customers can be discouraged.

In conclusion, destinations enable an accurate prediction of satisfaction and behavioural intentions. Quality perceptions stem from the attributes of destinations that affect behavioural intention. Therefore, marketers should exert effort to improve the service quality of destinations and establish added value for customers. This effort should be directed toward creating visitor satisfaction and loyalty in the long run.

6. Limitations and Future Research

This study evolved from the observation that much of the related literature, including its use of secondary data analysis and in-depth interviews, is apparently constrained. However, the findings of this study were limited due to the size of the sample (30 participants) and the form of approach used by visitors. Therefore, any conclusions about the findings should be drawn within the framework of these constraints.

Future studies could use a different approach, such as a quantitative approach, to investigate the perceptions of visitors in Macau and their purchase intentions. They could conduct more in-depth investigations of the post-purchase expectations of customers and their levels of dissatisfaction with service failure to improve the services in Macau. They could also investigate the purchase intentions of visitors in different countries.

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