

# A Study on Tourists Perceived Authenticity towards Experience Quality and Behavior Intention of Cultural Heritage in Macao

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Received: July 11, 2016      Accepted: July 25, 2016      Online Published: July 27, 2016

doi:10.5539/ijms.v8n4p117      URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ijms.v8n4p117>

## Abstract

This study is basically an explorative and explanatory research, with the overall purpose to identify, explore and analyze the tourists' perceived authenticity of culture heritage. This study proposes to identify and evaluate the impact of authenticity by tourists' perceptions of culture heritage on their experience quality and behavioral intention, from which implications for the sustainable development of culture heritage tourism can be derived. The results showed that perceived authenticity has a positive effect on experience quality. Furthermore, experience quality performed a significance function in behavioral intention, while the effect of perceived authenticity on behavioral intention is insignificant. These results imply that the importance of perceived authenticity on behavioral intentions is recognized via the mediating effects of experience quality.

**Keywords:** culture heritage, perceived authenticity, experience quality, behavioral intention

## 1. Introduction

The critical role of authenticity has long been recognized and still described as slippery (Wall & Xie, 2005) and problematic. Based on Boorstin (1971) and MacCannell (1973) incongruent viewpoints, the debate of authenticity definition provoked many scholars searching the concept of authenticity. While, Alberts and Hazen (2010) acknowledged that the concept of authenticity is not easy to define. The reason why authenticity has been regarded at the global level is The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) has published several significant documents and charters on different aspects of culture and heritage (Australia, ICOMOS, 1999; Council of Europe, 1975). Authenticity plays a central role in different aspects of conservation such as cultural tourism and interpretation and presentation of heritage sites.

The Historic Centre of Macao provides a unique testimony to the meeting of aesthetic, cultural, religious, architectural and technological influences from East and West with its historic streets, residential, religious and public Portuguese and Chinese buildings. The major monuments in terms of form, design, materials and use have retained their original functions, with associated living traditions such as worship and processions still being practiced. Those were supported by local and overseas archive documents, drawings, maps, sketches, photographs. By the fact that this kind of authenticity of the setting of the property as a historic trading port is vulnerable to development encroaching on important visual links.

In the existing literature, only a few studies could be identified which examined perceived authenticity in a tourism context, but these studies have focused on arts and crafts (Chang, Wall, & Chang, 2008; Revilla & Dodd, 2003), historic parks (Chronis & Hampton, 2006; Chronis & Hampton, 2008), heritage sites (Kolar & Zabkar, 2007; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010) and festival events (Chhabra, Healy, & Sills, 2003). The importance of authenticity has been demonstrated. The tourists perceived authenticity towards experience quality and behavior intention of cultural heritage in Macao, is particularly important; however, this area has been neglected and is not well addressed in the existing literature.

This study is basically an explorative and explanatory research, with the overall purpose to identify, explore and analyze the tourists' perceived authenticity of culture heritage. Taking cognizance of the current paucity in this area, this study proposes to identify and evaluate the impact of authenticity by tourists perceptions of culture heritage on their experience quality and behavioral intention, from which implications for the sustainable

development of culture heritage tourism can be derived. The specific research objectives of are as follows:

- (1) To explore the impact of tourists' perceived authenticity of culture heritage on their experience quality as well as behavioral intention
- (2) To examine the interrelationship among tourists' perceived authenticity, experience quality and behavioral intention
- (3) To provide practical measures to enhance the sustainable development of culture heritage tourism in Macau

## 2. Literature Review

The concept of authenticity has been widely discussed as crucial in the academic literature (Cohen, 1988; MacCannell, 1973). Authenticity may convey its definition from different disciplines, for example, anthropological (Handler, 1986; Bruner, 1994; Chambers, 2010), sociological (Schudson, 1979; Bagnall, 1979; Cohen, 1988), geographical (Waitt, 2000; Xie, 2003); tourism (McIntosh & Prentice, 1999; Medlik, 2003), etc. However, a consensus regarding the definition of authenticity is still missing. A trend is observed that scholars have noticed that and have developed different forms or degrees of authenticity. There are three main existing categories of authenticity—objective, constructed, and existential. There are a detailed explanation and considerable discussion for each type of authenticity. Bruner (1994) suggested four types of authentic reproduction which include: verisimilitude (means credible and convincing), complete simulation, original, and certified. Meanwhile, Jokilehto (1994) explained four aspects of authenticity which are related to design, materials, workmanship, and setting.

Table 1. Measurement items for authenticity

Author (Year)	Dimensions
Bruner (1994)	Verisimilitude (means credible and convincing), complete simulation, original, and certified.
Jokilehto (1994)	Design, materials, workmanship, and setting.

Source: Organize by author.

Fick & Ritchie (1991) pointed out that SERVQUAL scale does not adequately address to the overall quality of “service experience” in both affective and holistic factors. Then in Otto and Ritchie's (1996) study, the debate of differences between service quality and experience quality are raise. For example, the tendency of evaluation of experience quality is to be holistic rather that attribute-based, and the focus of evaluation is on self instead of service environment. In addition, experience quality refers to the psychological outcome resulting from customer participation in tourism activities in the tourism context. It also involves not only the attributes provided by a supplier but also the attributes brought to the opportunity by the visitor (Chan & Baum, 2007). Otto and Ritchie (1996) develop an experience quality scale with four factors—hedonics, peace of mind, involvement, and recognition. Kao, Huang, & Wu (2008) conceptualized experiential quality by four factors—immersion, surprise, participation and fun.

Table 2. Measurement items for experience quality

Author (Year)	Dimensions
Otto and Ritchie (1996)	Hedonics, peace of mind, involvement, and recognition.
Kao, Huang, and Wu (2008)	Immersion, surprise, participation and fun.

Source: Organize by author.

The consequent construct of behavior intention mainly include loyalty, favorable word-of-mouth and willing to recommend, “lifetime value”, increase in profits, and reduced marketing cost (Zeithaml et al., 1996; Shoemaker & Lewis, 1999). Among in these variables, customer loyalty plays an important role in the consumer marketing community due to it is a critical component for a company's long-term viability or sustainability. In fact, the direct way to gain a better understanding of customer retentions is measuring consumer loyalty for an existing customer. To our best knowledge, retaining an existing customer has much lower cost than winning a new one. Furthermore, loyal customers are treated as free word-of-mouth advertising agents that will recommend friends, relatives or other potential customers to a product/service (Shoemaker & Lewis, 1999). Otherwise, Gallarza & Saura (2006) point out that “same choice, given the same situation” as one of the variables for behavioral

intention. Both attitudinal and behavior measures are used to be defined and assessed when consumer loyalty is gauged (Bowen & Chen, 2001). While the former refers to a specific desire to continue a relationship with a service provider and the latter emphasis the concept of repeat patronage (Bowen & Chen, 2001). Based on Oliver's (1999) study, customer loyalty can be set into four stages: cognitive loyalty, affective loyalty, conative loyalty, and action loyalty. In fact, most researchers make conative loyalty to take the place of action loyalty because action loyalty is difficult to measure (Yang & Peterson, 2004).

Table 3. Measurement item for behavioral intention

Author (Year)	Dimensions
Oliver (1999)	cognitive loyalty, affective loyalty, conative loyalty, and action loyalty
Bowen and Chen (2001)	Attitudinal and behavioral meaures

Source: Organized by author.

Based upon the extensive literature review conducted, a theoretical framework was constructed and proposed accordingly (figure 1) and three hypotheses are made as follow:

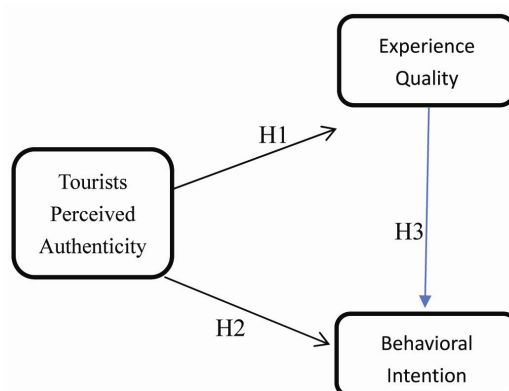


Figure 1. Theoretical framework

H1: The higher the authenticity of heritage that tourist perceive, the higher the experience quality they have.

H2: The higher the authenticity of heritage that tourist perceive, the more positive the behavior intention they have.

H3: The higher the experience quality of heritage that tourist perceive, the more positive the behavior intention they have.

### 3. Methodology

This study went through two stages: scale development and main survey. Both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies were used. In the first stage, a thorough review of relevant literature was conducted to develop items for each construct. Then, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews among tourists for the purpose of identifying and exploring their perceived authenticity of culture heritage sites in Macao. The goal was to derive additional input for designing measurement scales and to be incorporated into survey questionnaire. The modified questionnaire was translated into traditional Chinese by adopting a back-to-back translation technique. A pilot test was conducted before the survey to assess the reliability and validity of all the constructs. In the second stage, surveys were conducted among tourists for further validating the measurement scale and to examine the inter-relationships among the three constructs—tourists perceived authenticity, experience quality and behavior intentions. Data analysis was conducted using the SPSS and AMOS programs. An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed to reduce items and to determine the dimensions. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was then conducted to test the goodness of fit of each measurement model and consolidate the theorized relationships between the latent variable and observed variables. This was followed by the application of Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to hypothesized relationships between the constructs and the overall

validity of the proposed conceptual model.

A self-administrated questionnaire survey was conducted to collect empirical data at four major cultural heritage sites in Macao. The questions in the questionnaire are designed based on a review of the literature and the interview. The questionnaire consists of four parts which measure tourist authenticity, experience quality, behavioral intentions and respondent information. Apart from respondent information measured by a categorical scale, all items of the first three parts are measured by a 5-point Likert-type scale from “strongly disagree (=1)” to “strongly agree (=5)”. Because of limited time and manpower, a convenience sampling method was adopted. A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed and 489 usable responses were obtained after removing incomplete samples.

#### 4. Empirical Results

In the respondents' profile, 67% are female tourists and about 79% are aged between 18 and 30, while 69% respondents are single and around 87% hold a university degree and over. Most of the respondents had a higher education degree. Around 53.8% of respondents had a college degree or above, among whom the greater proportion (35.6%) had university-level education. Only a small proportion had middle secondary school education (39.4%) or primary education or below (7.0%). This indicates that, in general, the respondents interviewed were quite well educated.

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is used to confirm the factors loadings of these three constructs (i.e. perceived authenticity, experience quality and behavioral intention) and to assess the model fit. The model fit indices were as follows:  $\chi^2=900.311$ ,  $df=451$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , CFI=0.936, GFI=0.93, and RMSEA=0.07. It indicates that the model fits the data fairly well. As shown in the table below, all the factor loadings estimates exceeded 0.7. The Composite Reliability values were all above 0.7, and all AVEs were greater than 0.5 which shows satisfactory convergent and discriminant validity. Therefore, the hypothesized measurement model is reliable and meaningful to test the structural relationships among the constructs.

Table 4. Results of confirmatory factor analysis

constructs	Items	Factor Loading	Composite Reliability	AVE
Perceived Authenticity	PA1	0.82	0.821	0.84
	PA2	0.77		
	PA3	0.83		
	PA4	0.84		
	PA5	0.86		
	PA6	0.79		
	PA7	0.85		
	PA8	0.84		
	PA9	0.78		
	PA10	0.74		
	PA11	0.82		
	PA12	0.85		
	PA13	0.88		
	PA14	0.86		
Experience Quality	EQ1	0.90	0.774	0.64
	EQ2	0.78		
	EQ3	0.77		
	EQ4	0.89		
	EQ5	0.85		
	EQ6	0.84		
	EQ7	0.83		
	EQ8	0.82		
	EQ9	0.81		
Behavioral Intention	B11	0.86	0.862	0.61
	B12	0.87		
	B13	0.86		
	B14	0.89		

The initial proposed model was tested using AMOS 22.0. The model fit indices ( $\chi^2=900.311$ ,  $df=451$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , CFI=0.936, GFI=0.93, and RMSEA=0.07) indicated that it fitted the data to a satisfactory extent. Figure

illuminates the hypothesized relationships among the variables and their corresponding standardized path coefficients. The initial model included 3 paths, and all of them were statistically supported at the 0.05 level.

2 out of the 3 revealed paths were found to be statistically significant. Experience quality was significantly predicted by perceived authenticity. In turn, tourists' experience quality had a significant positive impact on behavioral intention while perceived authenticity does not impact behavioral intention. Next, the relationships hypothesized in the theoretical model were evaluated through the utilization of the standardized coefficients and t-values. The standardized coefficient indicates the change in an exogenous variable in relation to a unit change in an endogenous variable, where all other exogenous variables remain unchanged. The sign of the coefficient represents the positive or negative relationship between two variables. On the other hand, the t-value indicates whether the coefficient is significantly different from zero. T-values that fall outside the range from -1.96 to +1.96 are statistically significant. The standardized path coefficients and t-values of all of the proposed relationships in the model are presented in Table 5.

As shown in Table 5, all three hypotheses are supported. Perceived authenticity has a significant positive effect on both experience quality and behavioral intention. The experience quality, as hypothesized, impacts behavioral intention positively.

Table 5. Hypotheses tests

Path	Standardized Coefficient	T-value	Result
H1 Perceived Authenticity → Experience Quality	0.32	8.63*	supported
H2 Perceived Authenticity → Behavioral Intention	0.27	1.94	Reject
H3 Experience → Behavioral Intention	0.44	6.52*	supported

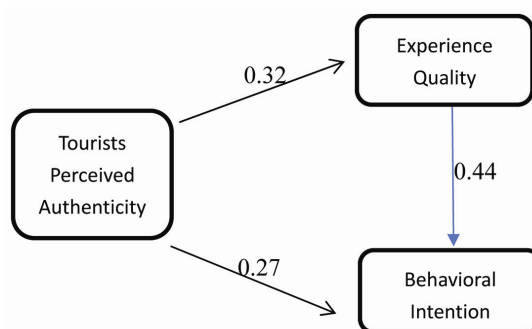


Figure 2. The final model

## 5. Discussion and Conclusions

This study aims to understand the impact of tourists' perceived authenticity on their experience quality as well as behavioral intention. The results showed that perceived authenticity has a positive effect on experience quality. Furthermore, experience quality performed a significant function in behavioral intention, while the effect of perceived authenticity on behavioral intention is insignificant. These results imply that the importance of perceived authenticity on behavioral intentions is recognized via the mediating effects of experience quality.

Research conclusions from this study can shed light on the better management of culture heritage sites in Macau, to such an extent that the sustainability of culture heritage tourism can be enhanced as a special tourism resource. In addition, better planning and development and marketing strategies with regard to product innovation, culture heritage protection as well as image building can be initiated so as to attract more tourists. More specifically, a well-designed way of presenting the cultural product, including location, internal distribution, walkways, lighting, or informative panels, could stimulate and increase visitors' interest and involvement (De Rojas & Camarero (2008). In addition, the interpretation and the intangibles surrounding the cultural product could facilitate the visitor to understand, feel, and relive the heritage.

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