

Experiential Consumption and Customer Satisfaction: Moderating Effects of Perceived Values

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Abstract

Perceived value has also been studied to investigate what consumers really want and how to reach their mind over the past decade. Marketers recently had made efforts to integrate the concept of perceived value into experiential marketing strategy. The key of perceived value is to understand not only how they satisfied with the product they purchased, but also how they felt the service they were involved in. The current study aimed to investigate the relationship between experiential consumption and customer satisfaction toward consumers in the resort hotel industry. Applying perceived value as a moderator, the study further examine the level of effect on the relationship between experiential consumption and customer satisfaction. Using purposive sampling method, data was collected from 378 subjects through the self-administrated questionnaire. The result indicated that all dimensions of experiential consumption had positive effect on customer satisfaction. Both dimensions of perceived value, in addition, showed positive effects on customer satisfaction. Perceived value was proven to have partially moderating effects on the relationship between experiential consumption and customer satisfaction. Suggestions and managerial implications were discussed in the study, and would provide contribution both to the body of knowledge in the filed of marketing management.

Keywords: hierarchical regression, resort hotel, experiential consumption, perceived value

1. Introduction

1.1 Problem Statement

With the raise of experiencing economy, traditional marketing strategies would no more be the mainstream in consideration of fulfilling consumer's requirements and improving their perceived value. Since "experience economy" was introduced by Schmitt (1999), marketers seemingly have paid more attention to rethink their marketing mix. Today, what consumers really wants would not only be satisfaction of product function, design, store decoration and service quality, but also the values added gained from during the process, interaction, or feeling of the consumption (Maghnati, Ling, & Nasermoadeli, 2012). External attributes such as function, shape, appearance, color, decoration, as well as internal attributes such as preference, interaction, or service quality during consumption might become critical issues consumers really concerned (Guo & Yanan, 2010). Creating valuable experience to reach the need of consumers and raise customer satisfaction is the key concept of managing experiential marketing. A better experience from services consumed would be more useful to promote consumer's perceptions of value (Williams, 2006). With growing interests towards experiential marketing, both academia and practitioners have made efforts to further comprehend the strategic benefits generated from the so called experiential consumption. An increasing number of studies addressing customer satisfaction had compared his or her expectation with perception before and after consumption. Disappointed consumers with dissatisfied experiences resulted from the discrepancies between expectation and performance. A review of marketing literature suggested that motivation could be vital determinant in affecting decision making toward consumers experiential consumption (Guo & Yanan, 2010). Particularly, it was also necessary to figure out factors that would potentially influence consumer's perceived values during the experiential consumption (Conway & Leighton, 2011; Joy & Sherry, 2003).

The resort hotel industry in Taiwan has had a significant growth over the past decade. In spite of prices, quality

or services, the effect of experiential marketing trend has been brought to the industry of a mixed concept of accommodation and leisure oriented resort center over the years. However, a lack of efforts been made on the studies related to consumer's perception of experiential value and investigate what factors impact the outcomes with the consumption. Thus, it should be important to examine cause association towards consumer's experiential consumption and the relationships among experiential consumption and perceived values of resort hotel visitors. A review of service related literature indicated that there is a direct relation between service quality and behavioral intention (Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996). Varki & Colgate (2001) also suggested that service quality has a significant effect on behavioral intention. Research by Park, Robertson, & Wu (2004) also indicated consumer satisfaction would be influenced by service quality as well. Usually, the cognition of consumers toward service quality is derived from their experiential consumption and perceived values (Yuan & Wu, 2008). Sanchez, Callarisa, Rodriguez, & Moliner (2006) clarified perceived value as an antecedent variable to affect consumer's purchase experience. For dissatisfied consumers, understanding their perceived value as accompanying factors is significant to advance in improving quality of service performance in resort hotel (Tsiros, Mittal, & Ross, 2004). The research by Sweeney, Hausknecht, & Soutar (2000) indicated that consumers dissatisfied with consumption experiences were unable to perceive the value. Consequently, the relationship between satisfaction and consumption experience was significant and would be accompanied with the perceived value. Thus, adopting the perspective of experiential marketing, the purpose of this study was proposed to build definite relationships between experiential consumption, perceived value, and customer satisfaction. The research findings could provide insights for resort hotel marketers and managers to successfully examine implications into improvement of consumer relationship quality as well as perceived value with respect to issues of experiential marketing in the industry.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Experiential Consumption

Experiential marketing has been studied in varies industries, such as bookstore, food and restaurant, hotel, furniture, and theme park. The perspective of experiential economy was first introduced by Schmitt (1999). Originally, the framework of experiential marketing consisted of feel, sense, think, relate, and act dimensions. The concept of experiential consumption emphasized not only the functional and practical value, but also on the consumer's experiential value. Functional value referred to more quality or usage orientation, while experiential value would be more concerned about the perception of service itself. Comparing with the physical appearance of product, experience emphasized the internal feeling, impression and unforgettable memory from individuals' minds, and the key was his or her experience during process, the interaction of service delivery. Consumers always feel specific stimulation, induce the motive, bring the cognition or purchasing behavior, and then increase value by observing or involvement. Providing consumers with the most valuable experiential consumption has been seen as more important than traditional brand image and preference (Bigne, Anna, & Luisa, 1998). The related research of experience marketing found that there were significant relevant between experiential consumption and customer satisfaction. Positive evaluation of experiential consumption was usually resulted from the positive interaction with the service provided. Moreover, the quality of experiential consumption would directly affect the behavioral intentions of consumers, as well as recommendations to others and the re-purchasing behaviors (Walter, Thomas, & Grandy, 2013). In addition, several studies have indicated that providing better experiential consumption service would contribute to increase consumer's perceived values (Yuan & Wu, 2008; Petrick & Backman, 2002; Bigne et al., 1998).

2.2 Perceived Value

Perceived value can be considered as the evaluation of comparing perceived quality and actual outcome of experiential consumption. If perceived quality is greater than perceived sacrifice, consumers will have more positive perceived value to the product or service, as well as further consumer's purchase intention. Research in perceived value has indicated that perceived value play a significant role in determining consumer's decision making process during the behavior of consumption (Eggert & Ulaga, 2002; Reid, Pullins, & Plank, 2002). Higher perceived value would increase higher possibility of consumer's purchase intention (Molinari, Abratt, & Dion, 2008; Olsen, 2002). Besides, research into experiential marketing stressed experiential value as a different standpoint from traditional perceived value. Several studies have suggested that excitement, feeling, emotion, interaction, and aesthetics should be included in perceived value (Guo & Yanan, 2010; Tsiros et al., 2004; Chaudhuri & Morris, 2001). Babin, Darden, & Griffin (1994) and Babin & Attaway, (2000) elucidated hedonic value and utilitarian value as two elements of perceived value. Hedonic values refer to more experiential orientation, emotional reaction on product attributes or usages, while utilitarian values come from functional benefits with the product. Recent studies of service industry support that perceived value have positive effect on

satisfaction (Park, Robertson, & Wu, 2004; Chaudhuri & Morris, 2001). Raising consumer's perceived value would positively affect customer satisfaction (Tsiros et al., 2004), as well as word of mouth (Molinari et al., 2008). Furthermore, positive hedonic and utilitarian values have been proven to have significant effects on consumer's shopping satisfaction (Olsen & Johnson, 2003; Gordon & Terrence, 2000).

2.3 Effect of Perceived Value

Satisfaction is the degree of happiness or disappointment; it comes from the result of perception of product function, and expectation of product. Spreng & Olshavsky (1996) conclude the satisfying feeling comes from the comparison of perceived performance with consumer's internal desire and expectation to the service or product. Several studies indicated that customer satisfaction is not only the evaluation of post purchasing, but also accompanying consumer's behavioral intentions, such as customer loyalty, word of mouth communication (Hart & Rosenberger III, 2004; Kumar, Kalwani, & Dada, 1997). The satisfaction used in current study was adopted the concept that consumers would evaluate the expectation of product or service according to their consumption experiences. The degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction would affect the post-purchase behavior intention of consumers (Cronin & Taylor, 1992). Theoretically, values were perceived at any time related to experiences, such as objective, subjective, qualitative, or quantitative attributes. The essence of perceived value relied neither on products itself, nor on specific brands or ownership of someone; but the key factor was the process of consuming, namely, experiential consumption (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Several studies have demonstrated that perceived value plays an important role on one's formation of satisfaction (Molinari et al., 2008; Hellier, Geursen, Carr, & Rickard, 2003). Positive emotional experiences could be resulted from positive evaluation during consumption, interaction, or involvement with environments, humans, or events. Perceived values have been proven to have positive effects on shopping satisfaction (Olsen & Johnson, 2003; Varki & Colgate, 2001; Patterson & Spreng, 1997). Thus, the study hypothesized that perceived value as a moderator that potentially has an impact on the relationship between experiential consumption and customer satisfaction.

2.4 Proposed Research Model and Hypotheses

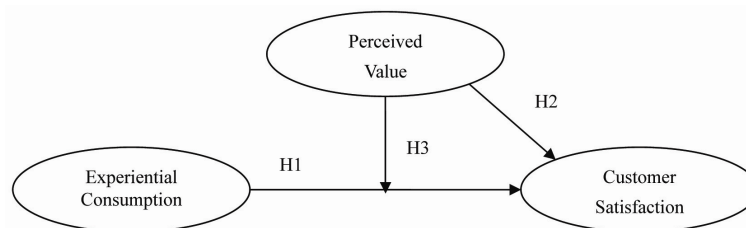


Figure 1. The proposed research model

On the basis of theoretical background, Figure 1 presents the research model and hypotheses are proposed as following:

H1: Customer's experiential consumption has a direct effect on customer satisfaction.

H2: Customer's perceived value has a direct effect on customer satisfaction.

H3: The relationship between customer's experiential consumption and customer satisfaction will be moderated by customer's perceived value.

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample

Subjects were purposively selected from customers at a resort hotel in Taiwan. Subjects above 18 years old and at least having experience one time over the past year were eligible for the study. 452 survey questionnaires were distributed and a total of 378 questionnaires were considered effective for further analysis. For the subject characteristics, 58.5% of the respondents were male (n=221), while 41.5% were female (n=157). The figures of marriage status indicated 57.1% of respondents were married (n=216), and 42.9% remained single (n=162). In terms of age distribution, 68.5% showed the age ranged from 18 to 45 years old (n=223). The majority of occupation rated was government employees and teachers, accounted for 32.5%, following by students (20.4%) and businessmen (18.8%). With regard to level of education, about 78.6% (n=297) of the respondents held college degrees or above, and 221 of the respondents indicated their income levels distributed from 20~50 thousand dollars (58.5%). Over 66% of respondents (n=250) reported they were 3-5 times repeated visitors.

3.2 Questionnaire Design and Measurement

A quantitative research survey was administrated with multi-item scales. The survey was developed from reviewed literature, consisted of 7 demographic questions, 24 items of experiential consumption, 8 items of perceived value, and 3 items of customer satisfaction. Demographic questions used nominal scale to measure respondent's background, socioeconomic characteristics and consumption characteristics. Secondly, experiential consumption scale was modified from Schmitt's (1999) study, containing five facets of "sense", "feel", "think", "act" and "relate", accounted for 24 items for measurement. The customer satisfaction scale was modified from Shiv & Huber (2000)'s work, including "satisfying", "well-feeling", and "doing the right thing" three items. Perceived value was modified from study of Babin & Attaway, (2000) and Babin et al. (1994). A total of eight items were included in two facets, namely "hedonic value" and "utilitarian value". For variable measurement, a seven-point Likert-type scale was used to obtain a score that reflected respondent's level of agreement. A higher score indicated more positive attitude towards agreements, with 7= strongly agree, 4= neutral, and 1= strongly disagree.

4. Results

4.1 Reliability and Validity

To test validity, the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with principal component analysis, eigenvalue greater than 1, varimax rotation procedure, an extraction of greater than 0.50, and all variables without double loading cross factors was employed to identify the underlying dimensions of experiential consumption and perceived value constructs. The KMO for the experiential consumption construct was 0.868, while the approximate chi-square in the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was $\chi^2 = 14290.74$, $df = 276$, $sig. = .000$. Both indicated they reached the level of significance, and were adequate for the factor analysis. Five principal factors were extracted for experiential consumption construct, which explained 83.88% of total variance, with 41.59% of variance for "feel", 18.86% of variance for "sense", 9.70% of variance for "think", 7.55% of variance for "relate", and 6.18% of variance for "act", respectively. Overall, the values of each factor were above the suggested value of 0.5, which met the least requirement and had convergent validity. The KMO for the perceived value construct was 0.835, while the approximate chi-square in the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was $\chi^2 = 14290.74$, $df = 276$, $sig. = .000$. Both indicated they reached the level of significance, and were adequate for the factor analysis. Finally, two principal factors were extracted for perceived value, which explained 81.65% of total variance, with 60.94% of variance for "hedonic value" and 20.71% of variance for "utilitarian value", respectively. Overall, the values of each factor were above the suggested value of 0.5, which met the least requirement and had convergent validity.

Cronbach's alpha estimates were then calculated to ensure the consistency of the dimensions identified. In this study, Cronbach's alpha estimates for the five dimensions of experiential consumption construct were "feel" .899, "sense" .900, "think" .908, "relate" .863, and "act" .888. In addition, cronbach's alpha estimates for the hedonic value was .890, while Cronbach's alpha was .928 for utilitarian value, respectively. For customer satisfaction, the Cronbach's alpha estimate of overall three items was .839. All of the scores were well above 0.70, which met the minimum acceptable level (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

In terms of dimensions in experiential consumption construct, twenty-four items were used to evaluate individual's level of agreement. Overall, individuals fairly agreed that they highly possessed the experiential consumption. Results from respondents showed that the scores of "the temperature is suitable" rated the highest ($M = 5.93$; $SD = .670$) in "feel" experience, "the overall atmosphere is comfortable" in "sense" ($M = 5.72$; $SD = .771$), "felt interested in culture related hospitality" ($M = 5.81$; $SD = .744$) in "think" experience, "improve friendship" ($M = 5.59$; $SD = .873$) in "relate" experience, "would share consumption experience with friends" in "act" experience ($M = 5.93$; $SD = .625$). In terms of dimensions in perceived value construct, eight items were used to evaluate individual's level of agreement. Overall, individuals fairly agreed that they highly perceived experiential value. Results from respondents showed that the scores of "agree with consumption experience" rated the highest ($M = 5.74$; $SD = .845$) in "hedonic value", while "felt valuable with consumption experience" in "utilitarian value" ($M = 5.80$; $SD = .891$). On the other hand, the highest score related to customer satisfaction item was "very satisfied with consumption" ($M = 5.76$; $SD = .903$).

4.3 Correlations among the Variables

To ensure the measures of the latent variable were different from other latent variables, the discriminant validity was tested. To assess discriminant validity, the correlation matrix was used. The correlations among the variables

in the constructs are presented in Table 1. Hedonic value was positively correlated with feel ($r = .160, p < .01$), sense ($r = .549, p < .01$), think ($r = .308, p < .01$), relate ($r = .640, p < .01$), and act ($r = .544, p < .05$). Utilitarian value was positively correlated with feel ($r = .113, p < .05$), sense ($r = .568, p < .05$), think ($r = .281, p < .05$), relate ($r = .414, p < .05$), and act ($r = .632, p < .05$). Satisfaction was positively correlated with feel ($r = .297, p < .01$), sense ($r = .316, p < .01$), think ($r = .162, p < .01$), relate ($r = .324, p < .01$), and act ($r = .331, p < .05$). Utilitarian value was positively correlated with hedonic value ($r = .524, p < .05$). Satisfaction was positively correlated with hedonic value ($r = .353, p < .01$) and utilitarian value ($r = .333, p < .01$). However, no significant correlations were found between dimensions of feel and think.

Table 1. Correlations among the variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Feel	1							
2. Sense	.291**	1						
3. Think	.034	.582**	1					
4. Relate	.302**	.685**	.605**	1				
5. Act	.312**	.641**	.352**	.634**	1			
6. Hedonic Value	.160**	.549**	.308**	.640**	.544**	1		
7. Utilitarian Value	.113*	.568**	.281**	.414**	.632**	.524**	1	
8. Satisfaction	.297**	.316**	.162**	.324**	.331**	.353**	.333**	1

Note. * $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$.

4.4 Regression Analysis

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between variables related to experiential consumption, perceived value, and customer satisfaction constructs. In the first model, taking dimensions of “feel”, “sense”, “think”, “relate”, and “act” as independent variables, and “customer satisfaction” as dependent variable, the study were trying to figure out the linear relationship between each of the variables. As shown in Table 2, the regression function was figured out between experiential consumption and customer satisfaction constructs with $R^2 = .170$ and $\Delta R^2 = .159$, which mean the model was appropriate and statistically significant for regression analysis. The results indicated that experiential consumption had a direct effect on customer satisfaction ($F = 15.233, p < .000$), while dimensions of feel ($B = .121*$), think ($B = -.038*$), relate ($B = .118**$), and act ($B = .146*$) had significant effects on customer satisfaction. Therefore, hypothesis 1 was supported. It is concluded individuals who had higher level of agreement with feel, think, relate and act experiences would perceive higher satisfaction than those with low level of agreement.

Table 2. Regressions of the experiential consumption, perceived value, and customer satisfaction

Variables	Model 1 Coefficients	Model 2 Coefficients	Model 3 Coefficients
(Constant)	2.356***	1.498**	1.157
Experiential Consumption			
Feel (E1)	.121*	.315***	.376*
Sense (E2)	.256	-.004	.089
Think (E3)	-.038*	.017	.185
Relate (E4)	.118**	.057	-.367
Act (E5)	.146*	.009	.145
Perceived Value			
Hedonic Value (V1)		.184**	.163
Utilitarian Value (V2)		.167**	.201**
E1 × V1			.173
E2 × V1			-.351*
E3 × V1			.765***
E4 × V1			-.524***
E5 × V1			.128
E1 × V2			-.140
E2 × V2			.176
E3 × V2			-.655***
E4 × V2			-.326*
E5 × V2			.299*

R ²	.170	.214	.364
ΔR ²	.159	.199	.334
F	15.223***	14.369***	12.102***

Note. * $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$.

In the second model, using dimensions of “hedonic value” and “utilitarian value” as independent variables, and “customer satisfaction” as dependent variable, the study were trying to figure out the linear relationship between each of the variables. The regression function was figured out between perceived value and customer satisfaction constructs with $R^2 = .214$ and $\Delta R^2 = .199$, which mean the model was appropriate and statistically significant for regression analysis. The results indicated that perceived value had a direct effect on customer satisfaction ($F = 14.369$, $p < .000$), while both dimensions had significant effects on customer satisfaction ($B = .184^{**}$ for hedonic value and $B = .167^{**}$ for utilitarian value). Therefore, hypothesis 2 was supported. It is concluded individuals who had higher level of agreement with perceive value would perceive higher satisfaction than those with low level of agreement.

To examine the moderating effect of perceived value, the study use hierarchical regression analysis to test the interaction among variables in related constructs. The results showed no multicollinearity problems of the model 3, thus the data was suitable for hierarchical regression. The regression function was figured out between perceived value and customer satisfaction constructs with $R^2 = .364$ and $\Delta R^2 = .334$, which mean the model was appropriate and statistically significant for regression analysis. The results indicated that perceived value moderated the effect of experiential consumption on customer satisfaction ($F = 12.102$, $p < .000$), while $B = -.351^*$ for $E2 \times V1$, $B = .765^{***}$ for $E3 \times V1$, $B = -.524^{***}$ for $E4 \times V1$, $B = -.655^{***}$ for $E3 \times V2$, $B = -.326^*$ for $E4 \times V2$, and $B = .299^*$ for $E5 \times V2$. Therefore, hypothesis 3 was partially supported. It is concluded individuals who had higher level of agreement with hedonic value would positively moderate the effect of “think” on customer satisfaction than those with low level of agreement. However, individuals who perceived higher hedonic value would negatively moderate the effects of “sense” and “relate” on customer satisfaction than those perceived lower hedonic value. For utilitarian value, individuals perceived higher value would had a negative moderating effect on the relationship between “think” and customer satisfaction, while positive moderating effects on the relationship between “relate”, “act”, and customer satisfaction would be caused.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The model of hierarchical regression analysis was illustrated in Figure 2. In terms of moderator for hedonic value, the standardized regression coefficients between experiential consumption and customer satisfaction constructs were sense = $-.351$, think = $.765$, and relate = $-.524$ ($F = 15.233^{***}$), while correlation loadings were $.549$, $.308$, $.640$, respectively. It was concluded hedonic value significantly moderated the effect of experiential consumption on customer satisfaction. In particular, the results of regression coefficient $-.351$ indicated that there was an interfering interaction for sense dimension. That is to say, a compensatory effect existed between the predictor (experiential consumption) and the moderator (perceived value). The regression coefficient of $.765$ for think meant that there was an enhancing interaction for think dimension. That is, a synergistic effect could be resulted from combination of predictor and the moderator. However, the interaction of $E4 \times V1$ ($-.524$) showed that there was a buffering interaction for relate dimension. That is, a contrary effect would arise from the moderator to weaken the effect of the predictor on outcome variable (customer satisfaction).

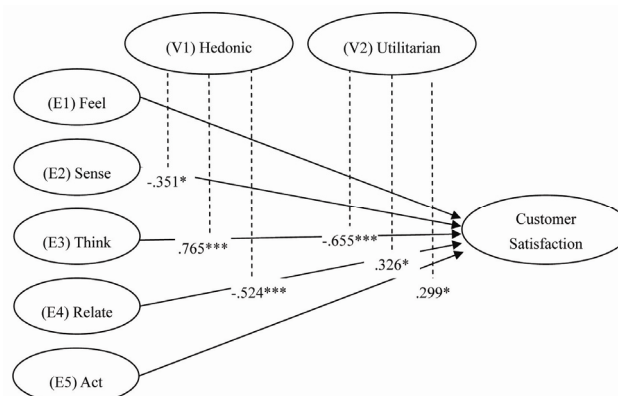


Figure 2. Hierarchical regression analysis model

In terms of moderator for utilitarian value, accordingly, the standardized regression coefficients between experiential consumption and customer satisfaction constructs were think = -.655, relate = .326, and act = .299 ($F = 14.369^{***}$), while correlation loadings were .281, .414, .632, respectively). It was concluded that utilitarian value significantly moderated the effect of experiential consumption on customer satisfaction. As a result, the regression coefficient -.655 indicated that there was an interfering interaction for think dimension. That is, a compensatory effect existed between the predictor (experiential consumption) and the moderator (perceived value). The regression coefficient of -.326 for relate meant that there was a buffering interaction for relate dimension. That is, a contrary effect would arise from the moderator to weaken the effect of the predictor on outcome variable. Finally, results of the interaction of $E5 \times V2$ (.299) showed that there was an enhancing interaction for act dimension. That is, a synergistic effect could be resulted from combination of predictor and the moderator.

In conclusion, the test of regression model 1 presented dimension “feel”, “think”, ‘relate’, and ‘act’ in experiential consumption construct had significant impact on customer satisfaction. When planning marketing strategies to fulfill various requirements of customers and reach their satisfaction, those dimensions should be taken into account. Customers are making experiential decisions all the time when involving in the process of services. The result of regression model 2 indicated that customer satisfaction would be affected by the degree of perceived value, in terms of hedonic value and utilitarian value. Understanding how consumers evaluate their perceived values should attempt to measure multidimensional views of values, and providing quality solutions for recovering customer relationship effectively. One of the objectives of current study was to examine the moderating effect of perceived value. Thus, a third model was conducted through hierarchical regression analysis to testing the hypothesis. The results revealed a significantly moderating effect for perceived value, and supported the findings. It was suggested that marketers of resort hotels should take hedonic value, especially for sense, think, and relate dimensions, as well as think, related, and act dimensions for utilitarian value, into considerations when in the process of making marketing strategies. In order to reinforce experiential consumption and to promote customer satisfaction, those should be critical considerations for strategies.

6. Managerial Implication

The results provide a rationale for resort hotel administrators or marketers to make comprehensive plans for a variety of competitive environments. With the influences of globalization and technology, information development continues to influence individual’s daily life. It is therefore crucial to promote service quality for the advancement of personal attributes, and to provide renewal knowledge for the benefit of individuals and society as a whole. Due to the discrepancy in service industries, it is suggested that other behavioral variables such as, intention, loyalty, and word of mouth communication could be examined to figure out potential relationships of the model. The development of service and relationship quality must incorporate experiential consumption and perceived value. At the meantime, personnel training or education should be conducted continuously in order to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of services; as well as the quality of physical and software environments should be improved. If customers are satisfied with faultless experiences, they may be more motivated to share the value they perceived. Finally, constructing a flexible experiencing environment can address customer’s concerns regarding new technology experiential consumption, such as Web communities, live messengers, or online reference groups.

7. Suggestion and Future Direction

Future studies could replicate this study using a different population from other services. Perceptions of experiential value may apply to customers at any groups, segmentations of non-resort-related hotels and first time-repeat customers. Rather than investigating general customers alone, member or club customers in other roles should have the opportunity to contact with issues related to experiential consumption. Furthermore, research methods such as qualitative research or in-depth interview could be employed for a more holistic understanding regarding the issue of perceived experiential values. Issues related to dissatisfaction will lessen over time as customers develop a more positive attitude toward the experiential consumption. It seems clear that perceived experiential value is getting more attentions and becoming an optimal method of marketing in the modern experience economy and society.

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