

Is there a relationship between customer aesthetics, escapism and customer loyalty

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Abstract: Starting from the reaction value in Holbrooke's intrinsic value of perceived value, this paper investigates the connection between customers' perceived value and satisfaction and loyalty in terms of two dimensions: customer aesthetics and escapism. This paper selected hotels in Guangdong Province, China, as the research object, designed a questionnaire based on Holbrooke's perceived value model, and collected a total of 322 samples through online collection. And then the following five conclusions were drawn: first: tourists' aesthetics have a positive effect on satisfaction; second: escapism has a positive effect on satisfaction; third: satisfaction has a positive effect on loyalty; fourth: tourists' aesthetics have a positive effect on loyalty; fifth: escapism has a positive effect on loyalty.

Keywords: holbrook customer perceived value classification; customer aesthetics; escapism; satisfaction; loyalty

1. Introduction

According to the statistics report on the official website of the Guangdong Provincial Department of Tourism and Culture, there will be 517 star-rated hotels in Guangdong by 2022. As an important occasion for tourists' "clothing, food, accommodation and transportation", the hotel's comprehensive income occupies a large proportion of tourism revenue. Because of the epidemic, tourism and the hotel industry suffered a great blow, with the epidemic gradually normalized, the proportion of international customers accounted for a decline in the proportion of Guangdong hotels, the market in neighboring provinces and cities is extremely important. How the hotel industry can seize the future potential of the mainland market, expand new customers and prevent the loss of old customers is the current research focus of the hotel industry. Therefore research on how the hotel industry can seize the future development opportunities and improve its competitiveness has become very necessary at present. This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of the respective situations of tourists' aesthetics, escapism, satisfaction and loyalty and the connection between them, summarizes the experience of this study, and puts forward relevant suggestions for the future development of resort hotels, with the specific research objectives including the following: (1) To understand the current situation of tourists' evaluations of Guangdong hotels from the tourists' aesthetics, escapism, satisfaction, and loyalty. (2) To empirically investigate whether customer aesthetics and escapism in reaction value directly affect customer satisfaction and loyalty. (3) To verify whether customer satisfaction mediates the link between customer aesthetics and loyalty, escapism and loyalty.

2. Literature review

2.1 Customer Perceived Value

Holbrook, on the other hand, introduced a new perspective by identifying value as one of the aspects of the consumer experience (Holbrook, 1999; Morris & Elizabeth, 1982). He developed and refined this approach over a period of 20 years and ultimately proposed a typology of value comprising 3 key dimensions: extrinsic versus intrinsic value; self-centered versus other-centered value; and active versus passive value. Specifically, Holbrook's conceptualization of value includes economic, social, hedonic, and altruistic dimensions while simultaneously subdividing these probabilities into 8 value types, which are status, entertainment, efficiency, respect, excellence, tourist aesthetics, ethics, and escapism (see Table 1). Industry researchers consider this theory to be the most comprehensive approach to value construction, capturing as many potential customer source values as possible in the research process (Sánchez-Fernández, Iniesta-Bonillo, & Holbrook, 2009). By searching for "altruism" on Google Scholar, Sci-Hub, and other websites, it is found that the dimension of altruism is seldom studied directly in consumer research literature because it is abstract and difficult to study directly. Some scholars refer to altruism as a combination of ethics

and spiritual escapism (Jiménez-Castillo, Sánchez-Fernández, & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2013)

2.2 Tourist aesthetics

Tourist aesthetics belongs to the part of hedonic value that responds to value in Holbrook’s classification of customer value. In the study of this dimension, the aesthetic dimension is usually selected (El-Adly, 2019), Kang (2018) in his study of luxury hotels found that based on the need for hedonic value, there is a need to satisfy the need for sensory pleasure and aesthetics, and when you enter a hotel, you can get enjoyment through his physical environment, exterior decorations, facilities and equipment, and so on. Through the hotel’s facilities, environment, services, etc. to obtain emotional pleasure, and can relieve anxiety and release stress. Mehrabian and Russell (1974) established a model to explain the impact of the physical environment on the customer’s mood and customer behavior is divided into: the environmental stimuli (S), emotional state (O) and response to the environment (R).

2.3 Escape from reality

The dimension of altruistic value has been studied less directly and is mostly categorized in hotel studies as escapism and ethics (Sánchez-Fernández et al., 2009). The research in this paper focuses on the value of escapism. Taheri et al. (2017) investigated the impact of escapist motivation and leisure rights on consumer experience and found that escapism is a driver of consumer experience enjoyment. Taheri et al. (2017) also concluded that escapism is positively associated with customers’ recreational enjoyment. Zhao Junyong argued that escapism is an important psychological motivation in regulating the behavior of tourists, who are able to release their long-suppressed selves due to changes in time and space (Zhao Junyong, 2019).

3. Results

3.1 Evaluation of measurement model

Here, an assessment of the reliability and validity of the measurement items was conducted. The PLS reliability and validity assessment of the measures for escapism, loyalty, satisfaction, and tourist aesthetics have been presented in Table 1. The internal consistency of each measure was verified, with all construct items demonstrating cross-loading values above the cut-off range of 0.5 (Ferguson and Cox, 1993). Additionally, the Cronbach’s α (ranging from 0.823 to 0.876), composite reliability (CR) (ranging from 0.824 to 0.877) as well as the average variance extracted (AVE) (ranging from 0.665 to 0.738) provided confirmation for the reliability and convergent validity (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 1 Construct reliability and validity.

Constructs	Items	Loading	Cronbach’s α	CR	AVE
Escapism(EP)	EP1	0.861	0.823	0.824	0.738
	EP2	0.856			
	EP3	0.861			
Loyalty(LY)	LY1	0.808	0.876	0.877	0.669
	LY2	0.831			
	LY3	0.827			
	LY4	0.825			
	LY5	0.799			
Satisfaction(ST)	ST1	0.849	0.853	0.855	0.693
	ST2	0.816			
	ST3	0.831			
	ST4	0.834			

	TA1	0.817	0.874	0.875	0.665
	TA2	0.783			
Tourist Aesthetics(TA)	TA3	0.825			
	TA4	0.815			
	TA5	0.835			

The traditional criterion for assessing discriminant validity involves comparing the square root of the AVE for each variable with the correlation coefficient between the corresponding variables. If the square root of the AVE is greater than the correlation coefficient, it indicates that the variables have achieved the required discriminant validity (Fornell, and Larcke,1981). However, due to the potential overestimation of factor loadings in PLS-SEM, the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) should be used (Henseler et al,2015). HTMT compares the average variance shared between a factor and all other factors in the model to determine discriminant validity. If the computed value is below the recommended threshold of 0.85, it suggests clear discriminant validity (Henseler et al,2015).

3.2 Evaluation of structural model

Additionally, Table 2 contains a summary of the hypothesis testing results. This table includes the statistical values, coefficients, and significance levels of each hypothesis, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the empirical evidence supporting or refuting the proposed relationships.

Tourist aesthetics ($\beta=0.461$, $p<0.001$) and escapism ($\beta=0.320$, $p<0.001$) have significant effects on satisfaction, supporting H1 and H2. Tourist aesthetics ($\beta=0.346$, $p<0.001$), escapism ($\beta=0.271$, $p<0.001$), and satisfaction ($\beta=0.335$, $p<0.001$) positively impact loyalty, providing support for H3, H4, and H5. Furthermore, satisfaction not only mediates between the tourist aesthetics and loyalty, but it can also indirectly influence loyalty through escapism. As a result, H3a and H3b have been established.

Table 2 Path coefficient and significance of SEM model.

Parth	Path coefficient(β)	t-value	p-value	Support
H1:TA→ST	0.461	8.868	***	Yes
H2:EP→ST	0.320	5.594	***	Yes
H3:ST→LY	0.335	6.253	***	Yes
H3a:TA→ST→LY	0.154	5.429	***	Yes
H3b:EP→ST→LY	0.107	0.107	***	Yes
H4:TA→LY	0.346	5.748	***	Yes
H5:EP→LY	0.271	5.092	***	Yes

Notes:*** $p<0.001$, ** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$, Tourist Aesthetics=TA, Escapism=EP,Satisfaction=ST,Loyalty=LY.

4.Conclusions of the study

This study on customer aesthetics and escapism reveals that, at this stage, Macau hotels are highly rated by domestic consumers. In terms of customer aesthetics, the ratings of “the staff of this hotel are neatly groomed”, “the appearance of the hotel is attractive” and “the interior design is fascinating” are all between 4 and 5 points. Overall satisfaction was in the upper-middle range. The average rating for “The hotel has good facilities” was 3.9, with lower ratings for facilities. Consumers rated the “appearance of the hotel and its facilities as aesthetically pleasing and appropriate” with a mean score of 6, giving high ratings to the overall appearance of the hotel. In terms of escapism, “Visiting this hotel gave me a feeling of being away from the hustle and bustle for a while” and “Visiting this hotel made me feel like I was in another world” scored between 4 and 5, with an overall satisfaction rating in the upper-middle range. The score of “Once I come to this hotel, I can always immerse myself in it and forget about my other worries” is 3.9, consumers’ sense of immersion in the hotel still needs to be improved. Overall, consumers consider Guangdong hotels to be at an upper-middle level in terms of aesthetics of appearance and facilities, and are relatively satisfied. Consumers are able to reap the rewards of escapism at the hotels, but the sense of immersion in the hotels is still insufficient.

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