



The influence of tourists' expectations on purchase intention: Linking marketing strategy for low-cost airlines



Su-Chin Chiu ^a, Chih-Hsing Liu ^{b,*}, Jin-Hua Tu ^c

^a Department of International Business Administration, Chienkuo Technology University, No.1, Chiehshou North Road, Changhua City 500, Taiwan

^b Ming Chuan University, Leisure & Recreation Administration Department/Research Center of Tourism School, 5 De Ming Rd., Gui Shan District, Taoyuan County 333, Taiwan

^c Department of Marketing and Tourism Management, National Chiayi University, No.580 Sinmin Rd., Chiayi City 60054, Taiwan

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 23 December 2015

Received in revised form

11 March 2016

Accepted 11 March 2016

Available online 24 March 2016

Keywords:

Corporate reputation

Word of mouth

Empathy

Service quality

Purchase intention

ABSTRACT

Drawing on an integrated framework of marketing strategy, this study develops and tests a novel perspective for low-cost airline tourists that explicates the critical attributes of service quality through which Corporate Reputation (CR) and Word of Mouth (WOM) are associated with purchase intention. The study also examines the buffering role of empathy in tourists' purchase decision making processes. In a sample of 535 international and domestic tourists, this study found service quality to be related to increased purchase intention by boosting tourists' positive evaluations for airlines' corporate reputations and word of mouth received from other tourists. Additionally, the results demonstrated a positive correlation quality of service and WOM, depending on tourists' levels of empathy. Specifically, they suggested that WOM was positively related to purchase intention when high levels of empathy from tourists were perceived for the low-cost airline.

© 2016 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

In response to the rapidly increasing tourism demand and to attract backpacking tourists, many airline companies have built a new strategy using low-cost airlines to increase their market share (Francis et al., 2004) and improve the service quality to fit tourist's expectations (Nagar, 2013; Wittman, 2014). The critical attributes for low-cost airlines to create a market competitive advantage are not only dependent on operating effectively but also on market reputation and marketing strategy (Akamavi et al., 2015). By developing tourists' loyalty, low-cost airlines can significantly improve service reliability, service quality, and brand reputation to enhance trust and satisfaction (Akamavi et al., 2015; O'Connell and Williams, 2005). To manage these complexities and the competitive global environment, airlines have developed and perfected dynamic capacities to adjust their strategies in response to dynamic environments and changing demand in new generations (Bilotkach et al., 2015; Morandi et al., 2015). Thus, there is a growing need to examine the extent to which service dimensions (e.g., service quality) are actually associated with an understanding of tourists'

behaviors and feelings, and why these dimensions might also increase in that regard (Hutchinson et al., 2009).

Recently, some tourism and hospitality scholars have argued that service quality can positively or negatively impact a tourist's consequential consumption behavior (Ye et al., 2014). For example, Ye et al. (2014) found that individual perceptions of service or products provide a good opportunity for researchers to investigate the relationship between the value evaluation of a product or service, recommendations and satisfaction. It would seem that airlines' service value and corporate image being consistent with passengers' needs and expectations may influence their behavioral intentions, such as their willingness to recommend to others or repurchase (Park et al., 2004). To deliver better service to passengers, airlines need to understand the context of passengers' service demands and expectations (Aksoy et al., 2003). This is highly challenging for low-cost airlines because service quality is significantly connected with tourists' behavioral intentions, such as satisfaction and feedback (Saha and Theingi, 2009). However, few scholars have investigated whether and how service quality can influence tourists' expectations from a low-cost airline and the consequential behaviors, such as word-of-mouth recommendation, corporate reputation and purchase intention, of individual tourists.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: phd20110909@gmail.com (C.-H. Liu).

The majority of past research has been focused on creating a conceptual model for service quality (Parasuraman et al., 1985) or has focused on identifying critical attributes for SERVQUAL dimensions (Carman, 1990; Parasuraman et al., 1991). However, researchers have indicated that service quality may be the key influence of perception, feeling, and the formation of consumers' purchase intentions (e.g., Taylor and Baker, 1994). These perceptions and feelings, in turn, influence the evaluation of service providers' reputations and the customer's word-of-mouth recommendations about the service providers. As such, corporate reputation or WOM may constitute a key mediating mechanism between service quality and consumer behavior. This study develops and empirically examines an integrated model that uniquely depicts low-cost airline tourists' expectation as a central mechanism through which service quality is related to important marketing strategy. This model looks at word-of-mouth recommendations and corporate reputation as various outcomes of service quality which simultaneously promote tourists' purchase intentions. In addition, this study identifies a potentially important attribute that reflects customers' affective characteristic, empathy, and explores its role in the service process and experience. Defined as a customer's "specific expectations/requests regarding service needs with the performance after use of that service" (Dedeoglu and Demirer, 2015: 132), empathy is predicted to increase purchase intention by helping a customer to detect, experience, feel, understand, and regulate pleasant interactions stemming from service quality.

By integrating findings from the literature regarding corporate reputation, word of mouth, empathy, service quality, and purchase intention into an overarching framework of marketing strategy, this study extends previous research on service quality in several ways. First, by identifying tourists' expectations as a central mechanism through which perceived service quality is linked to individual behavior intention, this paper offers an effective explanation of a customer's purchase decision making processes as an alternative, yet corresponding, approach to the major expectation and experience explanation. Second, based on tourists' emotional understanding of service quality processes, this study offers a more balanced perspective on the developmental customer consumption experience. To achieve this, the study explains not only how to identify the service quality dimension and how it is related to its behavior intention of developing advancement potential but also why it may be comprehensively used in explaining the different industry's phenomena and may even produce an intended outcome of purchase intention. Third, the study advances the literature of developmental service and experience by identifying empathy as an important individual affective characteristic in the consumption process that may attenuate the relationship between service quality and its WOM via purchase intention. Fourth and finally, this study extends the marketing perspective by considering the moderating-mediating role simultaneously, a method that has not yet been examined in the service industry. Previous service-related research has only considered a moderating or mediating role of affective attributes when consumers measure their consumption experience. As far as we know, the literature to date that identifies customers' service quality perception and explains how it influences behavior intention through WOM and corporate reputation evaluation has been pursued using a rather narrow conceptual lens that has not been empirically, broadly, or intensively examined. Fig. 1 depicts the conceptual model of this study, which explains how service is related to both WOM and corporate reputation in low-cost airline tourists, which are associated with their purchase intention. In addition, we hypothesize how empathy moderates the mediated relationships between service quality and behavior intention.

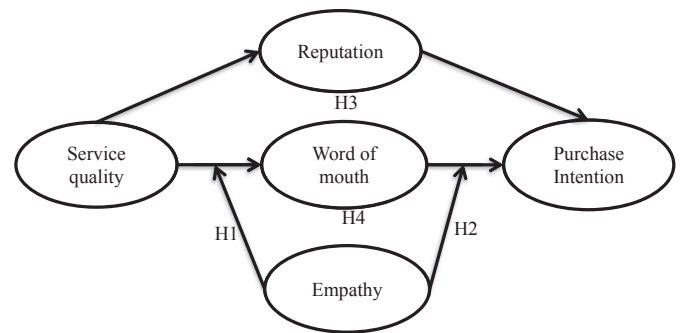


Fig. 1. Hypothesized model.

2. Theory and hypotheses

2.1. Service quality and purchase intention

Service quality is defined as customers' expectations about the service provided and their perception of the service process that they have experienced (Carman, 1990; Caruana, 2002; Grönroos, 2007; Parasuraman et al., 1985, 1988). Recent tourism and marketing research indicates that different dimensions of service quality are related to customer purchase intention (e.g., Bai et al., 2008; Shao et al., 2004; Wu et al., 2011). For instance, in the field of tourism studies, Fick and Ritchie (1991) found that service quality is a critical factor to the success of firms in the travel and tourism industry, a finding supported by recent research (e.g., Tsang et al., 2015). Studies have also provided evidence for measuring service quality and the validity of constructs to be applied to different tourism destinations in the wine tourism industry (O'Neill and Charters, 2000), cross-cultural impacts of tourists' expectations and perceptions (Weiermair, 2000), national parks (Rodger et al., 2015) and festivalscape (Bruwer, 2014). Considering broader service quality approaches, some studies have shown support for a positive impact of satisfaction and loyalty (Han and Hyun, 2015; Rodger et al., 2015), but others have raised concerns that other attributes should be evaluated to achieve desirable results (Li et al., 2014).

A surprising lack of attention exists concerning system and integrated approaches with a considerable expectation on influencing purchase intention and perceived service quality. In light of evidence that service organizations provide service categories and processes that can affect customer image and behavior intention, several marketing scholars have argued for a closer look at the service quality that organizations provide that may fundamentally influence the emotions of consumption (Lo et al., 2014). Such emotions tend to reflect the overall service impression, and influence tourist's thoughts, feeling and future judgment (Lee et al., 2014). As a result, service organizations cannot rely on predefined structures that spell out means or even precise ends. Instead, they must improve service to attract tourists' attention, positive image and loyalty to gain a competitive advantage. Therefore, this study proposes that a fundamental and critical attribute is service quality, especially in the high competition density of the low-cost airline industry.

2.2. The moderating role of empathy

The concept of Word-of-mouth (WOM) has been widely used as the most effective form of communication and explanation of consumers' behavior (Buttle, 1998; Charlett et al., 1995; Yang et al., 2012). Confente (2014) asserted that tourism is a good example for

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1030691>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1030691>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)