

AN EXAMINATION OF CONSTRUCTS IN DETERMINING BEHAVIORAL INTENTION TO VISIT A FESTIVAL AMONG VISITORS WITH DIFFERENT DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Gender and age are traditional variables used to segment travel markets. The study reported here evaluated where there were different perceptions between males and females, and between younger and older visitors, of quality and related constructs, and if such differences influenced their intention to revisit a festival. A conceptual model was developed and the study investigated how it was operationalized differently by different gender and age cohorts. Walmsley and Jenkins (1993) found that place images of Australian resorts differed accordingly to visitors' age and gender. Baloglu (1997) reported a relationship between perceived image and tourists' age, marital status, and occupation, and a subsequent study similarly reported the relationship between tourists' ages and their perceived image of various tourist destinations (Baloglu & McCleary 1999). A relationship between gender and perceptions of image of a rural tourist destination was reported by Chen and Kerstetter (1999).

Tourism research has tended to incorporate female behavior into that of male travelers. Wearing and Wearing (1996) observed that tourism marketers tend to assume similar behavior among all tourists regardless of their gender, race, sexuality, or ethnicity. Pearce (1989) suggested that women often play the lead role in choice of family vacations, yet many tourism providers continue to appeal to the male norm (Pritchard 1993). It has been observed that researchers have neglected the gender differences among tourists (Kinnard & Hall 1996, Richter 1995).

Gender differences have been reported in many facets of tourism. Vacation motivations among male and female have been found to be different (Ford 1991, Gibson

1996). It has been suggested that male travelers are likely to engage in more passive pursuits such as relaxing, sunbathing, and visiting purpose-built tourist facilities, while female travelers are more likely to engage in active behavior such as historical and cultural visits, walking and rambling, and going on shopping trips (Laing 1987).

Despite the intuitive sense that it is likely there will be differences between younger and older tourists, there has been relatively little research regarding the older population (Clarke 1992). In the developed world, many visitors aged 55 and older are likely to possess relatively large amounts of discretionary income since their children are grown and their house mortgage has been paid off (Anderson & Langmeyer 1982, Chon & Singh 1995). Older visitors are considered as an important market because of their frequency of trips and magnitude of expenditures. For example, Rosenfeld (1986) found that older travelers are likely to travel more frequently, have more money to spend, and rely more on travel agents than do younger travelers. Many of them are retired, which means they have a flexible schedule and can travel at off-peak seasons (Capella & Greco 1987).

1.1 The Relationship of Perceived Service Quality, Service Value, and Satisfaction to Behavioral Intention

The model which was developed conceptualized the relationships among perceived service quality, service value, and satisfaction and their relative influence on behavioral intention. Perceived service quality and satisfaction have been shown to be good predictors of visitors' future behavioral intentions (Baker & Crompton 2000, Tian-Cole et al. 2002). It has been suggested that perceived service quality and perceived service value are cognitive responses to a service offering, while overall satisfaction is an emotional response based on a holistic view of a phenomenon (Cronin et al. 2000). Bolton and Drew (1991) provided empirical support for the linkage between perceived quality and perceived value. Their findings suggested that perceived service quality explains a major portion of variance in service value, and that

perceived value was a better measure of visitors' overall evaluation of a service than perceived service quality. For practitioners and researchers, perceived service value has become an increasing interest (Parasuraman 1997). Parasuraman and Grewal (2000) supported the claim that perceived service quality enhances perceived service value which, in return, contributes to visitors' loyalty. They also noted that perceived service value plays the key role as a determinant of customer loyalty. The relationship between visitors' perceptions of price, quality and value was tested by Zeithaml (1988), who reported that perceived service quality led to perceived service value, which led to purchase intentions.

Visitor satisfaction is not achieved exclusively through quality of service. Service quality does not directly measure satisfaction, but it is likely to be the key medium determining the level of satisfaction. MacKay and Crompton (1990, p. 49) stated that "service quality relates to opportunities, that is, to the gestalt of the tangible and intangible attributes of the service, while level of satisfaction relates to the psychological outcome which emerges from experiencing the service." Thus, visitor satisfaction reflects the quality of visitors' experiences, and these may be enhanced by improving the quality of facilities and services.

The purpose of the study was to examine how well a conceptual model explained the relationship between the three evaluation constructs and behavioral intention, while identifying the differences and similarities in responses of female and male visitors, and of younger and older visitors. For female and male visitors (a), and then for younger and older visitors (b), the following hypotheses were tested:

Hypothesis 1 (a): Satisfaction, perceived service value, and perceived service quality will be related to behavioral intention.

Hypothesis 2 (b): Perceived service quality will be the best predictor of behavioral intention.

2.0 METHODS

Data were collected from the Conroe Cajun Catfish Festival in Conroe, Texas. The Festival has live music, craft booths and exhibits, and a variety of Cajun-style food.

Every fifth visitor who entered the gate was approached and asked to participate in the survey. After agreeing to participate, participants were given a questionnaire with a pre-paid envelope and a cover letter explaining the purpose and the importance of the study. In the first week after distributing the questionnaire, a reminder postcard was sent to all respondents. Two weeks after they were handed the initial questionnaire, a replacement questionnaire with a cover letter was sent to those who had not replied. The total response rate of the 427 visitors who agreed to participate in the study was 54.8 percent. Of the 241 visitors who responded, seven questionnaires were incomplete, which resulted in 234 usable surveys.

3.0 RESULTS

The median age of the respondents was 50. Of the 234 respondents, 48 percent were younger visitors (born after 1954) and 52 percent were older visitors. Of the respondents, almost two-thirds (64%) were female visitors. Respondents tended to be relatively highly educated with 64 percent having at least some college education. Almost all respondents (98%) resided in Texas. Forty-five percent (n=106) of respondents said they were visiting the Cajun Catfish Festival for the first time, while 55 percent (n=128) had visited other festivals previously.

The hypotheses were tested using structural equation modeling (SEM). The fit indices showed that the structural models for both female and male visitors, and younger and older visitors, were a reasonably good fit with the data (indices > .90) (Tables 1 and 2). All parameter estimates in both the female and male visitor models were significant at $\alpha = .05$ and were positive, except for the paths between perceived service quality and satisfaction and satisfaction, and behavioral intention. For both the younger and older visitor models, all parameter estimates were positive, except for the paths between perceived service quality and satisfaction, and satisfaction and behavioral intention. In addition, for the younger visitor model, a path between perceived service value and behavioral price was not significant.

In the structural models for female and male visitors, 70 percent and 68 percent of the variance in satisfaction and 68 percent and 66 percent, respectively, of the variance in behavioral intention were explained by their

Table 1.—Goodness of fit indices: female vs. male visitors

Model	N	Chi-square	df	p	CFI	TLI	IFI	RMR
Female Visitors	234	436.79	394	< .001	.96	.95	.95	.05
Male Visitors	234	422.95	391	< .001	.98	.91	.90	.05

Table 2.—Goodness of fit indices: younger vs. older visitors

Model	N	Chi-square	df	p	CFI	TLI	IFI	RMR
Younger Visitors	234	446.92	394	< .001	.92	.91	.92	.05
Older Visitors	234	442.88	394	< .001	.93	.92	.93	.05

corresponding indicators. Thus, both models exhibited a reasonable level of explained variance. In the structural model for the younger and older visitors, 53 percent and 60 percent of the variance in satisfaction and 63 percent and 68 percent, respectively, of the variance in behavioral intention were explained by their corresponding indicators. Again, both models exhibited a reasonable level of explained variance.

Hypotheses 1a and 1b stated that satisfaction, perceived service value and perceived service quality were related to female and male visitors' and older and younger visitors' behavioral intention. The standardized path coefficients and the *t*-tests for each path coefficient were significant at $\alpha = .001$. Results in all four models were similar in that perceived service value and perceived service quality showed a significant relationship to behavioral intentions, but satisfaction showed a non-significant relationship to behavioral intentions. Thus, hypotheses 1a and 1b were only partially supported. Hypotheses 2a and 2b stated that perceived service quality would be the best predictor of visitors' behavioral intention. Tables 3, 4, 5 and 6 indicate that in all four models, the best predictor of behavioral intention was perceived service value with a total effect of .88, .79, .55 and .85, respectively. Therefore, hypotheses 2a and 2b were not supported.

4.0 DISCUSSION

Conceptual models for female and male visitors, and younger and older visitors, indicated a significant relationship between perceived service quality and perceived service value and behavioral intentions. However, satisfaction did not have a significant

relationship with visitors' behavioral intentions. This supported the observation that visitors' satisfaction does not always lead to positive behavioral intentions (Jones & Sasser 1995, Mittal & Lasser 1998). The study confirmed the predictive power of perceived service quality and perceived service value on visitors' future behavioral intentions that has been reported by others (Cronin et al. 2000, Petrick 2004). However, in all four models the influence of perceived service quality on behavioral intentions was found to be weaker than that of perceived service value.

The study's results showed that all five dimensions were positively related to overall perceived service value. In the structural model for female visitors, among the five dimensions those of perceived service quality (.54), emotional response (.68), and behavioral price (.41) showed strong relationships, while the monetary price (.29) and reputation (.34) dimensions showed weak relationships with overall perceived service value. Among male visitors, the dimensions of perceived service quality (.40), emotional response (.53) and reputation (.45) showed strong relationships, while monetary price (.33) and behavioral price (.35) dimensions showed weak relationships with overall perceived service value.

Among the five dimensions the younger visitors' model indicated that perceived service quality (.40), emotional response (.39), monetary price (.46) and reputation (.50) showed significant relationships, while behavioral price showed a non-significant relationship with overall perceived service value. In the older visitors' model all five dimensions were positively related to perceived

service value with those of perceived service quality (.43), emotional response (.87), and reputation (.55) showing strong relationships, while monetary price (.40) and behavioral price (.36) showed weak relationships with perceived service value.

In previous studies, perceived service value was conceptualized as being a function of the interaction between perceived sacrifice and perceived service quality (Bojanic 1996, Chang & Wildt 1994, Jayanti & Ghosh 1996, Monroe 1990, Woodruff & Gardial 1996, Zeithaml 1988). However, the empirical results of the current study indicate that perceived service value was largely defined by perceptions of service quality. The perception of sacrifice was minimal for many visitors at this festival because older respondents were admitted free and over 90 percent of respondents were local residents with minimal travel and time costs. Further, the profile indicated that most visitors were from higher socio-economic groups, suggesting that among those who paid an admission price, most would consider it nominal. The study's results supported previous findings (Baker & Crompton 2000, Cronin et al. 2000) that perceptions of service quality had a stronger effect on behavioral intentions than satisfaction. Perhaps those who were most likely to visit again were more aware of service quality attributes and perceptions of service value, because these features were more pertinent to them.

Cronin et al. (2000) suggested that perceived service quality and service value were cognitive responses, while satisfaction was an emotional response to a service experience. A cognitive response is the first stage in Bagozzi's (1992) model, suggesting that the initial service evaluation (first impression) precedes an emotional reaction, which in turn, generates behavior. It suggests that the more cognitively-oriented service quality and value evaluations lead to satisfaction. Once visitors received a good first impression through service quality and service value, these two constructs may have a stronger effect on their behavioral intentions than satisfaction. This suggests that having a satisfying experience is desirable but it is more important to develop strong perceptions of service quality and service value for visitors. It emphasizes the importance of visual appeal of the festival atmosphere to make a good first

and lasting impression on visitors. Providers/suppliers have the opportunity to elicit good perceptions of service quality from visitors since they can control or manipulate the attributes of a service. However, although visitors might have positive perceptions of the service quality, they may not be satisfied with their visit because of uncontrollable variables such as bad weather (too hot or raining) or dissonance among the people with whom they came. These results appear to support the conclusion that perceptions of good service quality do not always result in visitors having a satisfying experience.

Among the four service quality dimensions, the female and male visitors' models indicated that those of generic features (.62 and .52) and comfort amenities (.52 and .48) showed strong relationships, while specific entertainment features (.48 and .40) and information sources (.40 and .42) showed weaker relationships with overall quality. The structural model for younger visitors indicated that the service quality domains of generic features (.70) and specific entertainment features (.74) had stronger relationships with overall quality than information sources (.42) and comfort amenities (.52). However, the test results of older visitors indicated that the service quality domains of generic features (.50) and comfort amenities (.60) had stronger relationships with overall quality than specific entertainment features (.45) and information sources (.47).

Identifying the relatively strong effect of perceived service quality and perceived service value on behavioral intentions confirmed the findings of others that improving perceptions of these constructs could lead to enhanced repeat visitation and positive word-of-mouth. The current study examined the relationship among perceived service quality, perceived service value and satisfaction, and found that perceived service quality and perceived service value both had a direct and indirect effect on visitors' future behavioral intentions (Tables 3, 4, 5, and 6). The study's analyses indicated that the relative influence of dimensions on each construct (i.e., perceived service quality, perceived service value, and satisfaction) differed slightly for each group of visitors (i.e., female and male visitors, and younger and older visitors). However, the study revealed that the relative influence of three constructs (i.e., perceived service

Table 3.—Direct, indirect, and total effects of latent variables for the female visitors

	PSV			SAT			BI		
	Direct	Indirect	Total	Direct	Indirect	Total	Direct	Indirect	Total
PSQ	.54	--	.54	n.s		n.s	.40	.36	.76
PSV				.78		.78	.66	.22	.88
SAT		n.s						n.s	

Table 4.—Direct, indirect, and total effects of latent variables for the male visitors

	PSV			SAT			BI		
	Direct	Indirect	Total	Direct	Indirect	Total	Direct	Indirect	Total
PSQ	.40	--	.40	n.s	--	n.s	.38	.26	.64
PSV				.75		.75	.64	.15	.79
SAT		n.s						n.s	

Table 5.—Direct, indirect, and total effects of latent variables for the younger visitors

	PSV			SAT			BI		
	Direct	Indirect	Total	Direct	Indirect	Total	Direct	Indirect	Total
PSQ	.40	--	.40	n.s		n.s	.34	.16	.50
PSV				.64		.64	.41	.14	.55
SAT		n.s					n.s		n.s

Table 6.—Direct, indirect and total effects of latent variables for the older visitors

	PSV			SAT			BI		
	Direct	Indirect	Total	Direct	Indirect	Total	Direct	Indirect	Total
PSQ	.43	--	.43	n.s		n.s	.40	.29	.69
PSV				.79		.79	.68	.17	.85
SAT							n.s		n.s

quality, perceived service value, and satisfaction) on behavioral intention was consistent for each group of visitors.

From a managerial perspective, perceived service quality should be viewed as the most important construct of a service since quality attributes can be more easily controlled and manipulated by providers. To positively influence female and male visitors' future visitation, these results suggest that managers should focus on generic features such as visual appearance, live entertainment and a feeling of safety, and on providing clean and plentiful comfort amenities. For younger visitors managers should focus on the generic features and specific entertainment features rather than the comfort amenities. For older visitors, these results suggest providers should put more emphasis on comfort amenities, information sources, and

generic features. If these are of poor quality, the overall perception of service quality is likely to be relatively low. The current study findings support the theoretical conceptualization that enhanced performance of quality attributes leads to stronger positive behavioral intentions (Baker & Crompton 2000).

Since perceived service quality and service value appear to be influential in predicting future behavioral intentions of the festival's visitors, they should be a central focus of the festival's marketing strategy. In order to improve perceived service quality and service value, festival managers should focus their attention on the perceived service quality dimensions and those dimensions that have a strong relationship with perceived service value since these are the significant reasons explaining visitors' intention to return to the festival.

5.0 CITATIONS

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