

Article

The Relationships among Experiential Marketing, Service Innovation, and Customer Satisfaction—A Case Study of Tourism Factories in Taiwan

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Abstract: Tourism factories are tourist attractions with values of manufacturing, culture, history, tourism, and recreation, providing a series of activities for tourists to experience the products and the manufacturing process in the mode of experiential marketing so as to enhance their cognition for the products and the corporate image. With the establishment of numerous tourism factories in Taiwan, to be competitive it is essential for the factories to develop unique and innovative modes that are difficult to imitate. This study explores experiential marketing, service innovation, customer satisfaction, and other related issues through research on the tourists of a certain tourism factory. It notes that experiential marketing and service innovation have positive effects on customer satisfaction. Tourists' levels of consciousness of sensual and emotional experience in experiential marketing is very high. Therefore, to strengthen experiential marketing towards customers, applying electronic media to reinforce knowledge of the corporation and products will promote the corporation's image and product packaging. It will also familiarize customers with the operating philosophy of the corporation and the characteristics of the products so that their purchase intentions will increase, resulting in sustainable development of the business.

Keywords: customer satisfaction; experiential marketing; tourism factory; tourism marketing; service innovation

1. Introduction

In recent years, due to improvements in living standards, a five-day work week, a decrease of working hours, and convenient traffic and transportation, the leisure, recreation, and tourism industries in Taiwan have been emerging prosperously. The general public in Taiwan is demanding more intellectually and culturally stimulating tourism experiences. As a result, tourism within the leisure, agricultural, and fishing industries is rising. To cope with changing times and industrial structures, traditional manufacturing industries in Taiwan have gradually turned their focus to the development of tourism factories centered on services [1]. The same has been true in Europe, America, and Japan for many years. As early as the 20th century, there were manufacturing industries in cooperation with tourism, the pioneer of the contemporary tourism factory. Otgaar [2] also pointed out that the demand for industrial tourism, which is a type of special interest tourism, increased with the growing interest in unique and authentic experiences. Since the 1980s, various countries, regions, and

cities have identified industrial tourism as a relevant segment of the tourism market. The development of industrial tourism provides the regional economy with a multiplier effect, stimulating the activities of related sectors and promoting import substitution in tourism [3]. Industrial tourism can be used to improve the image of the industries and hence, the regions in which they are located [2]. In Taiwan, “industrial tourism” occurs in “tourism factories”, which have usually been transformed from small, traditional manufacturing factories.

With changing times and industrial structures, many local factories in Taiwan have, with assistance from the Ministry of Economic Affairs, been transformed into protected manufacturing businesses and have converted their facilities into “tourism factories” [4]. Each tourism factory has a unique tourism theme and facility environment that has been improved with landscaping and other beautification efforts. The factories offer tours introducing production processes, exhibitions of cultural relics, and DIY facilities [1]. Through these and other services, tourism factories present a wealth of industrial knowledge and culture in an artistic ambiance, creating new tourist destinations for both learning and recreation [5].

Since 2003, the Ministry of Economic Affairs in Taiwan has been making plans regarding the assistance for the promotion of tourism factories in order to cope with changing times and the need for industrial transformation. Traditional factories with specific industrial cultures or values in tourism and education receive assistance [4]. For the past 10 years, 134 companies have received assistance to transform factories into tourism factories. Each year, the number of visitors to the factories increases by one million visitors. It is estimated that in 2019, the number of visitors to the tourism factories will grow by 15%, with a total of 11.5 million people and annual tourism revenues of NT\$ 2.5 billion [5].

Tourism factories have three major functions: leisure quality, industrial knowledge, and industrial culture. Tourism factories meet a tourism need and create added value for traditional industries, along with improving the quality of the travel experience in terms of historical, cultural, and educational insights [6]. In comparison with ordinary tourism, for a tourism factory the key strategic resource in the process of an industry making the transition to tourism lies in the fact that it provides tourists with knowledge regarding the cultural history of the industry and corporation, a chance to perceive the manufacturing process, and a hands-on experience on-site through a guided tour [5].

Tourism factories have become an indispensable part of domestic tourism. They also energize traditional manufacturing industries because of the possibilities for sustainable development, as well as passed-down knowledge regarding the industrial cultures [1]. The greatest difference between tourism factories and ordinary tourist attractions is that tourists are able to experience personally the products and the manufacturing process so that they can know the products, the industry, and the corporate images better. Tourism is a service-intensive industry. The experience of the services determines whether the tourists feel satisfied or not. Corporations care about how to maintain their competitiveness in terms of the internal and subjective responses generated through customers’ contact with the corporation [7,8]. Pine II and Gilmore [9] suggested that to generate greater consumption, it is important to bring to the customers a personalized, customized, and unforgettable experience.

Schmitt [10] proposed the idea of experiential marketing to impress customers by experiencing diverse activities. The key to boosting customer satisfaction and loyalty depends on customers’ experience of the products or brands [11,12]. To sum up, experiential marketing is an important trend in the current age of the experiential economy. Tidd and Hull [13] indicated that manufacturers with a better product and service innovation have the potential to make double the profits than those without. Therefore, we should emphasize more the “hot issue” of service innovation [14]. It is an important issue for manufacturers seeking to meet the needs of a highly unpredictable market [15–17]. Accordingly, tourism factories would definitely make their mark in the market if they could focus on service innovation and meeting consumers’ needs.

As the main objective of a business’s sustainable development strategy, customer satisfaction is regarded as one of the factors influencing customer loyalty and corporate market share [18]. Satisfied customers are those considered to be insensitive to price, less affected by the competitors,

willing to purchase more products and services, and staying loyal for a long time [19]. Good service can enhance customer loyalty and increase the likelihood of customers buying again [20]. Kotler [21] suggested that when satisfied, customers will have the intention to make purchases again, be more willing to discuss the products of the company with others, and become loyal to the brand. Kristensen et al. [22] proposed that customer satisfaction is customers' evaluation of and response to their experience to purchase and consume the product. The response derives from the comparison between expectations and gains.

As we can see, customer satisfaction has a great influence on consumers, affecting their behavioral intentions. If tourism factories are able to control and predict tourists' future behavioral intentions, they will be able to establish long-term relationships with them. Therefore, it is a key element for sustainable development. Although tourism factories in Taiwan started late, they can take advantage of the excellent geographical location and distinguished local cultures to show their creativity and attract visitors. It is vital for tourism factories to market themselves, appeal to consumers, and create prosperity and business opportunities. This study aims to explore experiential marketing, service innovation, customer satisfaction, and other related issues in terms of the tourists of a certain tourism factory. Service innovation and customer satisfaction are important parts of a business sustainable development strategy for many enterprises. Tourism factories must also offer innovative services continually in order to achieve sustainable development.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Experiential Marketing

Pine II and Gilmore [9] suggested that experiential marketing emerges when a company builds a stage with services and uses products as props for consumers. Products are tangible, services are intangible, and experiences are unforgettable. Schmitt [10] indicated that experience is a response of the consumer to the occurrence of a certain stimulating event, usually induced by direct observation or involvement of the event rather than caused spontaneously. To reinforce customer experience is to strengthen the rights and values of the brand [23].

Schmitt [10] proposed four key characteristics of experiential marketing: (1) A focus on customer experiences; (2) a focus on consumption as a holistic experience; (3) an assumption that customers are rational and emotional beings; and (4) an understanding that methods and tools are eclectic. Experiential modules are a combination of implementation tools for creating experiential marketing used to convey experiences of sense, feel, think, act, and relate. These experiences are implemented through so-called experience providers (ExPros) such as communications, visual and verbal identity, product presence, electronic media, etc.

Targeting leisure farms, Wu and Liang [24] explored the relationships between experiential marketing, customer satisfaction, and willingness to revisit. The dimensions of measuring experiential marketing focused on Schmitt's idea of sense, feel, think, act, and relate [10]. The results showed that the experiential marketing of leisure farms had significant positive effects on customer satisfaction. Using the experiential modules suggested by Schmitt [10] as the dimensions of measurement, Chou et al. [25] scrutinized the role experiential marketing played in festive events for the Lantern Festival. The results confirmed that experiential marketing was an important antecedent affecting the images of the events and influencing the willingness of consumers to revisit during festive events.

To sum up, the five experiential modules suggested by Schmitt can measure consumers' experiential feelings. Based on Schmitt's definition of experiential marketing, this study will define experiential marketing as a process of an individual customer to sense a certain stimulation, induce his or her motivation to make a purchase, and generate identification with the thinking after he or she observes and participates in certain events.

2.2. Service Innovation

Service innovation is an important business sustainable development strategy for many enterprises [26]. Service innovation mainly refers to changes in the characteristics of the service itself [20]. Tidd et al. [27] indicated that the core procedure for a corporation's sustainable development is through innovative behaviors, that is, to create value from the corporation's assets by redesigning or improving the products, services, or methods in innovative ways. Therefore, an organization has to create and maintain its competitive advantages by integrating its resources and abilities. Service innovation drives the corporation to convert change into opportunities [28,29]. Service innovation refers to services that are different from those that consumers knew from previous occasions. In other words, the organization provides services different from consumers' previous consumption experiences [30,31]. Drejer [32] suggested that service innovation is not merely the development of new products or services, but also innovative activities that revise and improve current products, services, and delivery systems. To create new markets, firms must implement specific service innovation practices to provide managerial process innovations, develop scalar business models, and manage customer experiences [33].

Lin et al. [34] explored in a study how manufacturing industries were transformed into service-oriented corporations in the view of service sciences. By apply Hertog's [35] idea of service innovation to verify the relationships between the manufacturing industries' service innovation activities, it was noted that customer interfaces, delivery systems, and service concepts had positive and significant relationships with the corporation's transition, including the redesign of the corporation's procedures, redesign of the corporation's network, and redefinition of the corporation's scope.

Based on the idea of service innovation proposed by Hertog [35], this study suggests that service innovation requires new service ideas, new customer interfaces, new service delivery systems, and new choices of skills. In terms of new service ideas, this study suggests that service ideas need to be novel for the corporation's service providers, customers, or the market. These ideas should also include new logic or scientific knowledge. As for new customer interfaces, this study indicates that interfaces should concentrate on the interaction between service providers and customers so that the service providers can learn from the customers when they interact with the actual and potential customers. In terms of new service delivery systems, this study points out that innovative service procedures are required to serve customers, whereas with choices of skills, this study suggests that corporations take advantage of customer information and new technology to serve customers. Ostrom et al. [36] suggested that service innovation creates value for customers, employees, business owners, alliance partners, and communities through new and/or improved service offerings, service processes, and service business models.

2.3. Customer Satisfaction

In regard to customer satisfaction, Cardozo applied the concept of satisfaction to the field of marketing for the first time in 1965 [37]. Customer satisfaction was conducive to promoting customers' consumption behaviors [38]. Customer satisfaction refers to people's evaluation of their satisfaction with the products they purchase and the services they enjoy. The level of customer satisfaction depends on the relationship between their expectations of the products and their actual consumption experiences [39].

Engel et al. [40] illustrated that after using a product, customers assess the product and evaluate their expectations prior to the purchase, which influence customer satisfaction. When the opinions for both are consistent, the customers feel satisfied. Otherwise, they do not. Customer satisfaction is based on the user's comparison between the efficacy of the product or service and his or her expectations [41,42]. Kotler [43] indicated that if satisfied, the customer will usually be more willing to make the purchase again, pleasantly discuss the product of the company with others, ignore advertisement of other competitors' brands, and refuse to buy products of other companies.

Based on the definition of customer satisfaction made by Barker and Crompton [44], this study defines customer satisfaction as an individual's psychological and emotional conditions after experience, and an attitude affected by social and psychological factors or other external factors, such as the atmosphere, group interactions, etc. The measurement of customer satisfaction can be divided into the measurement of general attitude and the measurement of multiple dimensions. In the measurement of customer satisfaction, this study regards it as a holistic concept, as outlined by Henning-Thurau [45]. Accordingly, this study will measure customer satisfaction through holistic questions.

2.4. Research Hypothesis

According to Schmitt's [10] research results, customers' identification, thinking, or action for a purchase are induced through observation of or involvement in events. Better experiences bring higher customer satisfaction [46]. Using consumer experiences with clothes of famous brands as an example, Huang and Zhang [11] proposed empirical research notes that experiential marketing had positive effects on customer satisfaction. Focusing on customers making purchases at Starbucks, Wei and Hung [47] discovered that experiential marketing had positive effects on customer satisfaction. Yang [48] and Lee et al. [49] explored cases in service industries, proving that experiential marketing had positive effects on customer satisfaction. Based on previous research, Hypothesis 1 is proposed as follows:

Hypothesis 1 (H1). *The tourism factories' experiential marketing positively affects customer satisfaction.*

Yang [48] suggested that new services skills, professional knowledge, information, facilities, time, or space are provided by service providers, so that they can help customers deal with events, solve problems, or entertain them, making them happy and comfortable. Kolter [43] and Drejer [32] indicated that a corporation emphasizing service innovation can not only win outstanding competitive advantages but also further establish long-term selling relationships with customers by providing high quality products and services. Tsai et al. [50], focusing on car-rental carriers, noted that service innovation had significant effects on customer satisfaction. Focusing on bed-and-breakfast tourists in Kenting, Taiwan, Chuang and Hsu [51] noted that service innovation had significant effects on customer satisfaction and loyalty. Hossain and Kim [52] indicated that service innovation could improve service quality and customers' willingness to consume again. Based on previous research, Hypothesis 2 is proposed as follows:

Hypothesis 1 (H2). *The tourism factories' service innovation positively affects customer satisfaction.*

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Structure

Based on the goals of this research and other theoretical studies, this study proposed the following structure after inferring the relationship between experiential marketing, service innovation, customer satisfaction, and other variables, as presented in Figure 1.

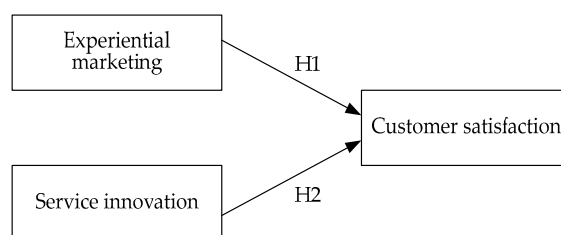


Figure 1. Research structure.

3.2. Questionnaire Design and Survey

The questionnaire was divided into four parts: Part one, experiential marketing; part two, service innovation; part three, customer satisfaction; and part four, the tourist's basic information. In experiential marketing, the study was based on the experiential modules proposed by Schmitt [10]: Sense, feel, think, act, and relate. The variables for the scales of service innovation were composed of the dimensions of service innovation developed by Hertog [35] and the scales made by Davenport and Short [53], Zeithaml et al. [54], Lawson and Samson [55], and other scholars. The dimensions included new service concepts, new customer interfaces, service delivery systems, and choices of skills. The level of customer satisfaction referred to the scale of customer satisfaction developed by Henning-Thurau [33], measuring holistic satisfaction. The measurement of the variables was based on a Likert scale: Strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree, or strongly agree, indicated by 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5, respectively. The higher the point, the better the level of agreement. The tourist's basic information included gender, marital status, age, occupation, and education.

Focusing on the Rice Museum, a tourism factory of rice in Changhua County in Taiwan, this study conducted a questionnaire survey through convenience sampling between July and October 2017. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed. By deducting 46 invalid questionnaires, there were 354 valid questionnaires; the valid recovery rate was 88.5%.

4. Research Results

4.1. Analysis of Basic Information

Most of the subjects of the study were female and most were between 31 and 40 years old. Most of the subjects graduated from college and most of them were married. Their occupations were as follows: Industry (19.8%), commerce (23.7%), housekeeping (16.4%), and others (mostly students (22.6%)). All of the respondents were Taiwanese. Table 1 shows the analysis of basic information of the respondents.

Table 1. Analysis of basic information.

	Items	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	148	41.8%
	Female	206	58.2%
Age	16–20	56	15.8%
	21–30	40	11.3%
	31–40	145	41.0%
	41–50	61	17.2%
	51–60	37	10.5%
	Above 61	15	4.2%
Education background	Below high school	58	16.4%
	High school	78	22.0%
	University	184	52.0%
	Above master's	34	9.6%
Marital status	Married	107	30.2%
	Unmarried	247	69.8%
Occupation	Agriculture industry	5	1.4%
	Industry	70	19.8%
	Commerce	84	23.7%
	Office holder	39	11.0%
	Housekeeping	58	16.4%
	Retirement	18	5.1%
	Others	80	22.6%

4.2. Factor Analysis and Reliability Analysis

In terms of the factor analysis approach, this study extracted two factors in experiential marketing. Factor one, by integrating the original experiential modules including dimensions of sense, feel, and think was renamed “sensual and emotional experience.” Factor two, combining the original experiential modules, action and relate, was renamed “action and relate Experience.” Two factors were extracted from service innovation: “Interfaces of new customer service” and “new service concepts.” The results are presented Table 2. All tests achieved significant levels.

Table 2. Factor analysis.

Variables	Index	Factor Loading	Cronbach α
Experiential marketing	Factor 1	0.579	0.863
	Factor 2	0.638	0.853
Service innovation	Factor 1	0.683	0.810
	Factor 2	0.746	0.810
Customer satisfaction	S1	0.926	0.882
	S2	0.898	
	S3	0.878	

4.3. Analysis of Correlation

Based on Pearson’s analysis of correlation for the analysis of the relationship strength between two variables, this study showed that the r-value was between -1.00 and $+1.00$. The r-values -1.00 or $+1.00$ and -0.50 or $+0.50$ indicate perfectly correlated and moderately correlated, respectively. As presented in Table 3, this study discovered that there was a positive correlation between the five dimensions, with r-values higher than 0.6.

Table 3. Correlation matrix of the five dimensions.

Dimensions	Sensual and Emotional Experience	Action and Relate Experience	Interfaces of New Customer Service	New Service Concepts	Customers’ Satisfaction
Sensual and Emotional Experience	1				
Action and Relate Experience	0.746 **	1			
Interfaces of New Customer Service	0.724 **	0.688 **	1		
New Service Concepts	0.666 **	0.632 **	0.650 **	1	
Customers’ Satisfaction	0.624 **	0.619 **	0.648 **	0.588 **	1

Note: ** $p < 0.01$.

4.4. Hypothesis Testing

4.4.1. Correlation Analysis between Experiential Marketing and Customer Satisfaction

According to the factor analysis, this study noted that experiential marketing included two dimensions: Sensual and emotional experience, and action and relate experience. Accordingly, this study examined whether experiential marketing had positive effects on customer satisfaction through multiple regression analysis; the results are presented in Table 4. According to Table 4, $R^2 = 0.443$. This means the regression model established by the two dimensions could explain 44.3% of the variance of customer satisfaction. Meanwhile, in ANOVA, with a significant level of 0.05, $F = 139.223$, $p < 0.001$, meaning the regression model was significant. On the other hand, regarding the results of the estimation of the coefficients, the coefficients of the sensual and emotional experience and action and relate experience were estimated to be 0.514 and 0.430, respectively, with a positive value of $p < 0.001$, indicating that both of the two dimensions of experiential marketing had significant positive effects on customer satisfaction. It proves that the higher the tourists’ levels of consciousness of

experiential marketing, the higher their customer satisfaction. The results support H1, that experiential marketing has a positive effect on customer satisfaction.

4.4.2. Correlation Analysis between Service Innovation and Customer Satisfaction

As shown in Table 4, $R^2 = 0.468$, meaning the regression model established by these two dimensions could explain 46.8% of the variance of customer satisfaction. In ANOVA, under a 0.05 significant level, $F = 154.576$, $p < 0.001$, indicating the regression model was significant. Furthermore, regarding the results of the estimation of the coefficients, the estimated values of the coefficients of interfaces of new customer service and new service concepts were 0.556 and 0.341, respectively, with a positive value of $p < 0.001$, meaning that both dimensions of service innovation had significant positive effects on customer satisfaction. Therefore, the higher the tourists' level of consciousness of service innovation, the higher their customer satisfaction. The results support H2, that service innovation has a positive effect on customer satisfaction.

Table 4. Regression analysis between experiential marketing and service innovation for customer satisfaction.

	Hypothesis 1		Hypothesis 2	
	β	t	β	t
Sensual and Emotional Experience	0.514	6.133 ***		
Action and Relate Experience	0.430	5.765 ***		
Interfaces of New Customer Service			0.556	9.013 ***
New Service Concepts			0.341	5.624 ***
Constant term	0.161	0.694	0.404	1.970 **
F		139.223 ***		154.576 ***
R ²		0.443		0.468

Note: ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

5.1. Discussion

With changing times and industrial structures, many factories in Taiwan have been transformed into tourism factories retaining production and manufacturing functions, as well as opening for tourism in order to make breakthroughs in operations. Each tourism factory contains unique tourism themes, not only presenting beautified spaces but also providing services for guided tours, exhibitions, experiential facilities, etc. These tourism factories are emerging tourist attractions that combine knowledge and leisure, showing abundant industrial knowledge and culture and creating leisure and a beautiful atmosphere. With the development of local tourism, many local, traditional industries are eager to be transformed into tourism factories in the hope of combining industry, economy, and culture. In addition to creativity and tourism, these factories expect to introduce to tourists the local traditional industries through experience and guided tours and bring in new opportunities and livelihoods for themselves.

As noted in the study, experiential marketing and service innovation have positive effects on customer satisfaction. Both hypotheses are supported. This study also proves the findings of Westbrook [56] and Mano and Oliver [57], that tourists' positive emotional experiences during an activity will satisfy them. Therefore, in order to promote customer satisfaction and improve the service quality of tourism factories, tourism factory owners should provide various experiential marketing activities that combine sense, feeling, action, and so on, listen to the tourists' opinions and different points of view after they participate in the activities, and re-plan and redesign experiential marketing activities accordingly.

This study notes that promoting the level of consciousness of experiential marketing and service innovation will increase customer satisfaction, whereas the increase in customer satisfaction will reinforce customers' intentions and willingness to revisit, make recommendations, and purchase products. Customer satisfaction is the intervening variable correlating experiential marketing and service innovation with the intention of paying a visit again, the intention to make recommendations, and the intention to purchase. The study finds that, in general, customers feel satisfied. However, since the customers are diverse, the services they expect are changing. Therefore, the key development includes flexible guided tours, interactive experiences, the construction of innovative and friendly spaces, etc., so that consumers' intentions and willingness to revisit, make recommendations, and make purchases will be reinforced.

5.2. Conclusions

Tourists expect tourism factories to be more than just tourist spots. Instead, they hope to receive better services to spice up their experiences. This is why service quality is so vital. It is time for tourism factories to be upgraded and transformed. Since tourists' levels of consciousness of sensual and emotional experiences in experiential marketing are the highest, to reinforce customers' experiential marketing, applying electronic media to reinforce the introduction of the corporation and products will promote the corporation's image and packaging of the products and familiarize customers with the operative philosophy of the corporation and the characteristics of the products, so that their purchase intentions will increase. For example, videos and slides can be made to familiarize tourists with the industry. Also, interactive facilities that intrigue or appeal to the tourists can be added to reinforce their sense of identification. In terms of the level of consciousness of service innovation, tourists' levels of consciousness of new service concepts are more significant. Therefore, it is more effective for the operation and implementation of the marketing strategies of modern corporations to develop the image of their brands more eagerly, display new, lively images and new concepts of the corporation, and promote the sales performance of the products. Accordingly, tourism factories can take advantage of their trademark to publicize their brands. For example, tourism factories can give more exposure to the mascot of the corporation, design more products of culture and creativity based on the mascot, and familiarize tourists with the brand so that they will have a better sense of identification with the brand and accept the products better.

This study also notes that the tourists to tourism factories are mostly those taking a trip with their families and well-educated young adults. Therefore, this study suggests that tourism factories should design more family interactive activities for these tourists so as to increase their intention and willingness to revisit. In addition, tourism factories can also establish promotion mechanisms for marketing and create more opportunities for development through cooperation with local festive and cultural events, horizontal alliances, and resource integration.

Every study has its limitations; most of the respondents in this study were parts of tourist groups and thus had limited time. In the case of time pressure, it may have affected the quality of the questionnaire, so the authenticity of the answers may be limited. Furthermore, this study was limited by factors such as human and material resources. The research was limited to a single case of a tourism factory in Taiwan. In the future, the scope of the research can be increased, and a number of tourism factories of the same nature can be compared.

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