Perceived Quality of Service and Structure of Customer Satisfaction in Travel Retail Channels:

Strategic perspective on marketing strategies that target overseas tourists

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Abstract

For tourism, shopping is considered to be among the oldest and important element. However, there has not been much research on the cross-linkages between shopping and marketing strategies in the travel retail channel. The purpose of this study is to provide suggestions for marketing strategies for the travel-retail channel. In this regard, the shopping behavior of Japanese tourists at duty-free shops in international airports and toward in-flight sales services is considered, with particular emphasis on the causal relationship between satisfaction and perceived quality.

1. Introduction

Shopping is considered to be among the oldest and most important elements for tourism. For many travelers, a sightseeing tour is unlikely to not include spending time in a store, commercial accumulation, and a local market (cf. Hudman & Hawkins 1989, Keown 1989).

Studies on tourists' shopping behavior can be roughly classified into three: shopping behavior at airport commercial spaces (cf. Crawford & Melewar 2003, Geuens, Vantomme & Brengman 2004), shopping behavior toward in-flight sales services (cf. Doong, Wang & Law 2012, Huang & Kuai 2006), and shopping behavior at the travel destination (cf. Lundberg 1976, Hudman & Hawkins 1989, Keowin 1989, Heung & Qu, 1998, Freathy & O'Connel 1999, Mak, and Tsang, Cheung 1999; Rosenbaum 2007, Rosenbaum & Spears 2005, 2006a, 2006b, Kim & Agrusa 2008).

However, research on tourists' shopping behavior in airport commercial spaces is limited (Freathy & O'Connel 1999, Geuensa, Vantomme, & Brengman 2004). Moreover, research on tourists' shopping behavior toward in-flight-sales services is limited in spite of its major effect on the travel retail market (Doong, Wang, & Law 2012). In addition, there is still a lack of

research on marketing strategies in a travel retail channel.

Accordingly, this study contributes to extant literature by focusing on marketing strategy in a distribution channel with overseas tourists as the target. In this regard, the shopping behavior of Japanese overseas travelers in duty-free shops in international airports and toward in-flight-sales services, which are the main distribution channels in travel retail, is considered. In particular, the causal relationship between the perceived quality of service and customer satisfaction is discussed.

This study has strategic implications for international airport management and airline management, where competition is severe. Airport management must pay serious consideration to commerce for travelers, that is, non-air transportation businesses, given that there exists severe competition among international airports (cf. Graham 2013) and airline-business managements are grappling with further deregulation (cf. Halpern and Graham 2013).

2. Literature review

2-1. Perceived quality and customer satisfaction from service

The causal relationship between perceived quality and customer satisfaction from service has been the subject of much debate. The following are the peculiar features of service transactions: intangible nature of goods, indivisibility of production and consumption, heterogeneity, and simultaneous disappearance (Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry 1985).

With regard to quality of service, unlike in manufacturing transactions where the quality of goods can be evaluated based on an objective attribute, service transactions are unique in that the customer's participation defines the service itself, and hence evaluating the quality of service involves assessing perception of service.

As for customer satisfaction, there exists an "expectation-disconfirmation" paradigm (Oliver 1980): satisfaction is formed if there is prior expectation of service experience, and if this expectation is not met, quality is poor, and is fine otherwise. Thus, perceived quality is regarded as an antecedent factor of customer satisfaction.

Bitner (1990) used a causal model to verify that prior expectation from a service encounter affects customer satisfaction. Further, the research on the influence of customer satisfaction on service encounters has yielded customer satisfaction affects the perceived quality of service.

Thus, views on the relation between perceived quality of service and customer satisfaction can be classified into two: one view presupposes that perceived quality affects customer satisfaction, and another that customer satisfaction affects perceived quality.

2-2. Measurement of perceived quality of service

SERVQUAL, a measure evaluating the quality of service, was developed in the 1980s. (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry 1985, 1988). This measurement technique was developed to measure subjective quality from consumers' viewpoint on the premise that it is difficult to objectively evaluate quality of service. Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry (1985) present reliability, access, safety, credibility, customer understanding, reactivity, capability, care, material elements, and communication as the bases of valuation at the beginning. These valuation bases are not necessarily mutually independent, and some are overlapping. Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry (1988) compile five dimensions: reliability, reactivity, a material element, consensuality, and certainty. As for the questions, the 97 items were aligned to a 5-dimensional space of 22 queries.

In contrast, SERVPERF by Cronin & Taylor (1992) uses only perception without taking an expected value, unlike SERVQUAL.

SERVPERF proposed by Cronin & Taylor (1992) served as the conceptual base for SERVQUAL, given that the latter was difficult to implement in practice. There have been many researches that adopt this measure using only consumers' perception (cf. Babakus & Boller 1992, Andaleeb & Basu 1994, Cronin et al. 2000, Brady et al. 2002).

Since previous works on quality-of-service evaluation focused solely on quality of service, Kondo (2000), assuming that other information needed at the scene of considering purchase is not included, extracted the following four classifications of quality-of-service evaluation from the three dimensions of "quality of core service," "marketing mix," and "customer value" : result quality, process quality, equipment-quality and expense.

In addition, regarding the framework of quality-of-service evaluation, this study refers Kondo (2000) and consider the marketing mix element assuming that the other information needed for considering purchase is included.

3. Proposed model

In this study, the following conceptual structure models were set up regarding the causal relationship between perceived quality of service and customer satisfaction with reference to the previously mentioned works and frameworks of analysis.

Using the above model, at first the causal relationship between the four components comprising perceived quality (while shopping at duty-free shops in international airports and availing in-flight sales services) and customer satisfaction are revealed. Then, strategic improvements and implications for marketing strategies are examined.
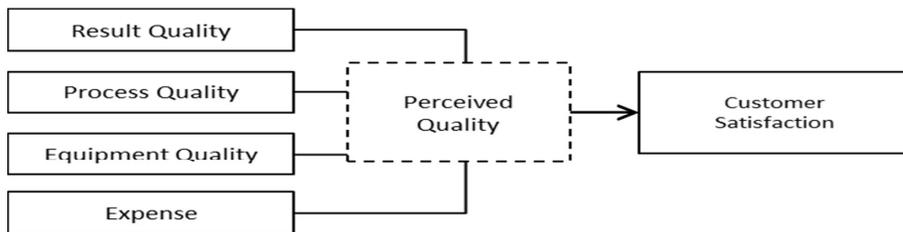
Figure 1: The Proposed Conceptual Structure Model concerning Perceived Quality of
Service and Customer Satisfaction

4. Quantitative research overview

4-1. Objectives

This research seeks to reveal the causal relationship between the four components comprising perceived quality (while shopping at duty-free shops in international airports and while availing in-flight sales services) and customer satisfaction, and to derive implications from a marketing perspective.

4-2. Sample and data collection

This survey—a two-stage online research—was conducted between June 5 and June 9, 2014. As a preliminary survey, 6,925 individuals with international boarding experience within the past three years were considered. Of these, 442 samples were extracted based on shopping experience at airport duty-free shops and exposure to in-flight sales serviced.

In the final sample, 57.7% were males and 42.3% were females; 0.2% were in their 20s, 8.4% were in their 30s, 19.7%, were in their 40s, 25.3% were in their 50s, and 23.3% were more than 60 years old; 23.1% were transiting (but not for leisure or business), 18% were on a business trip, 77% were tourists, and 5% were travelling for personal matters (visiting relatives/ acquaintances, etc.). In addition, with regard to the destination to which they were travelling (if travelling to multiple locations, the last destination was used): 49.8% were travelling to Asia, 21.5% were travelling to Europe, 21.5% were travelling to North America, 16.7% were travelling to Central and South America, 2% were travelling to the Middle East Africa, and 1.8% were travelling to other regions.

4-3. Variables

The variables for this survey are as shown below, and are based on the framework of Kondo (2000). Items that measure the variables in this research were presented in Table 1. All the variables were rated on a 7-point scale (1=not at all, and 7=extremely).

Table 1: Variables related to perceived quality-of-service

Duty-free shops in international airports		In-flight sales services	
Result Quality	number of goods, merchandising	Result Quality	number of goods, merchandising
	original and limited editions		original and limited editions
	tenants	Process Quality	knowledge of the salesperson
Process Quality	knowledge of the salesperson		kindness of salesperson
	kindness of salesperson		personality of salesperson
	personality of salesperson		latest trend
	latest trend	Equipment Quality	readability of the catalog
Equipment Quality	feel of the shopping area		enjoyment of the catalog
	feel of the store	Expense	expense
Expense	expense	Satisfaction	satisfaction
Satisfaction	satisfaction		

4-4. Methods of analysis

To examine the causal relationship between satisfaction and perceived quality-of-service, multiple regression analysis was conducted using overall satisfaction from shopping as the objective variable, and using quality (3 items), process (4 items), equipment (2 items), and expenses (1 item; shopping at duty-free shops in international airports: 10 questions; availing in-flight sales services: 9 questions) as the explanatory variables.

To examine the satisfaction structure, standard partial regression coefficient was used for each explanatory variable item and CS portfolio analysis was performed.

5. Results and discussion

5-1. Multiple regression analysis: causal relationship between customer satisfaction and perceived quality for shopping at duty-free shops in international airports

Table 2 reports the results of multiple regression analysis for shopping at duty-free shops in international airports that explore the effects of explanatory variables upon customer satisfaction.

Several of the proposed variables are significant predictors of customer satisfaction .The effect of result quality ("abundance of number of goods, merchandising") on customer satisfaction was significant (β =0.2832, $p < 0.01$), equipment quality" ("feel of the store"; (β =0.1824, $p < 0.05$), expense ("charged selling price"; β =0.1653, $p <0.01$) were found to be significant. See Table 2 for details.

Further, note that descriptive statistics for each index are shown in Table 3.

Table 2: Multiple regression analys is for shopping at duty-free shops
in international airports

variables	B	SE	β	F	t	p
number of goods, merchandising	0.2323**	0.0438	0.2832**	28.1069	5.3016	0.0000
original and limited editions	0.0009	0.0509	0.0009	0.0003	0.0174	0.9861
tenants	0.1118	0.0583	0.1128	3.6755	1.9172	0.0559
knowledge of the salesperson	0.0708	0.0665	0.0769	1.1356	1.0656	0.2872
Kindness of salesperson	0.0589	0.0694	0.0637	0.7204	0.8488	0.3965
personality of salesperson	-0.0355	0.0603	-0.0363	0.3469	-0.5890	0.5562
latest trend	-0.0312	0.0597	-0.0314	0.2722	-0.5217	0.6022
feel of the shopping area	0.0198	0.0759	0.0200	0.0681	0.2610	0.7942
feel of the store	0.1847*	0.0789	0.1824*	5.4836	2.3417	0.0197
expense	0.1450**	0.0379	0.1653**	14.6224	3.8239	0.0002

$(R^2: 0.4307; \ * \ p < 0.05; \ ** \ p < 0.01)$

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for shopping at duty-free shops in international airports

variables	n	M	s^2	SD	Range	
number of goods, merchandising	442	4.471	1.651	1.285	1.000	7.000
original and limited editions	442	4.534	1.256	1.121	1.000	7.000
tenants	442	4.441	1.131	1.064	1.000	7.000
knowledge of the salesperson	442	4.319	1.311	1.145	1.000	7.000
Kindness of salesperson	442	4.367	1.298	1.140	1.000	7.000
personality of salesperson	442	4.258	1.162	1.078	1.000	7.000
latest trend	442	4.484	1.130	1.063	1.000	7.000
feel of the shopping area	442	4.665	1.135	1.065	1.000	7.000
feel of the store	442	4.640	1.083	1.041	1.000	7.000
expense	442	4.500	1.443	1.201	1.000	7.000
customer satisfaction	442	4.706	1.111	1.054	1.000	7.000

5-2. Multiple regression analysis: causal relationship between satisfaction and perceived quality for in-flight sales services

Table 4 reports the results of multiple regression analysis for shopping toward in-flight sales services that explore the effects of explanatory variables upon customer satisfaction.

Several of the proposed variables are significant predictors of customer satisfaction .The effect of result quality ("abundance of number of goods, merchandising"; β =0.2347, p < 0.01, "original products and limited editions"; β =0.1451, p < 0.01) on customer satisfaction was significant.

In addition, process quality ("personality of salesperson"; β = 0.2204, p < 0.01), equipment quality ("enjoyment of product catalog booklet"; β = 0.1559, p < 0.01), expense ("charged selling price"; β =0.3203, p < 0.01) were also found to be significant. See Table 4 for details. Further, note that descriptive statistics for each index are shown in Table 5.

Table 4: Multiple regression analysis for in-flight sales services

variables	B	SE	β	F	t	p
number of goods, merchandising	0.2164**	0.0420	0.2347**	26.5014	5.1480	0.0000
original and limited editions	0.1483**	0.0488	0.1451**	9.2263	3.0375	0.0025
knowledge of the salesperson	0.0149	0.0626	0.0145	0.0565	0.2377	0.8122
Kindness of salesperson	0.0382	0.0621	0.0369	0.3799	0.6164	0.5380
personality of salesperson	0.2455**	0.0592	0.2204**	17.2154	4.1491	0.0000
latest trend	-0.0798	0.0621	-0.0715	1.6522	-1.2854	0.1993
readability of the catalog	-0.0765	0.0665	-0.0677	1.3231	-1.1503	0.2507
enjoyment of the catalog	0.1714**	0.0643	0.1559**	7.1159	2.6676	0.0079
expense	0.3188**	0.0399	0.3203**	63.8096	7.9881	0.0000

$(R^2: 0.5688;$ ** $p < 0.01)$

Table 5: Descriptive statistics for in-flight sales services

variables	n	M	s^2	SD	Range	
number of goods, merchandising	442	3.464	1.542	1.242	1.000	7.000
original and limited editions	442	4.439	1.254	1.120	1.000	7.000
knowledge of the salesperson	442	3.848	1.235	1.112	1.000	7.000
Kindness of salesperson	442	4.081	1.218	1.104	1.000	7.000
personality of salesperson	442	4.219	1.056	1.028	1.000	7.000
latest trend	442	4.032	1.051	1.025	1.000	7.000
readability of the catalog	442	4.398	1.025	1.012	1.000	7.000
enjoyment of the catalog	442	4.346	1.084	1.041	1.000	7.000
expense	442	4.066	1.322	1.150	1.000	7.000
customer satisfaction	442	4.023	1.310	1.145	1.000	7.000

5-3. CS portfolio analysis: satisfaction from shopping at duty-free shops in international airports

CS portfolio analysis is conducted based on the customer satisfaction and importance of each explanatory variable. The results are shown in Figure 2. The vertical axis represents satisfaction, the horizontal axis represents severity, and the intersection denotes the mean value.

The four quadrants are as follows: priority improvement items (satisfaction: low; importance: high), non-priority improvement items (satisfaction: low; importance: low), priority maintenance items (satisfaction: high; importance: high), and non-priority maintenance items (satisfaction: high; importance: low).

"Satisfaction" represents the average value of satisfaction for each explanatory variable. Then "importance", each standard regression coefficient by the sum of each of the standard regression coefficient, represents the value obtained by dividing. It should be noted that, for the evaluation, explanatory variables with the negative of the partial regression coefficient was excluded.
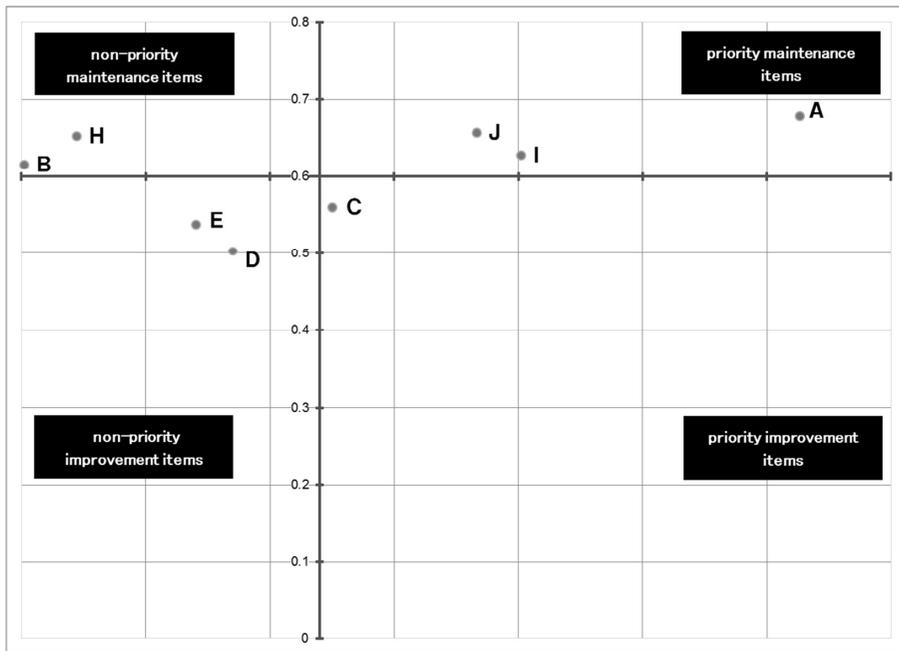
Figure 2: CS portfolio for shopping at duty-free shops in international airports

Table 6: Priority of each variabl e for shopping at duty-free shops
in international airports

	variables	β	importance	satisfaction
A	number of goods, merchandising	0.2832	0.313	0.679
B	original and limited editions	0.0009	0.001	0.439
C	tenants	0.1128	0.125	0.653
D	knowledge of the salesperson	0.0769	0.085	0.503
E	Kindness of salesperson	0.0637	0.07	0.539
H	feel of the shopping area	0.0200	0.022	0.616
I	feel of the store	0.1824	0.201	0.658
J	expense	0.1653	0.183	0.565

　　Priority maintenance items are "abundance of number of goods, merchandising," "feel of the store," and "charged selling price." The only priority improvement item is "variety of stores," indicating that duty-free zones at airports should house a large variety of store selling different kinds of merchandise.

5-4. CS portfolio analysis: satisfaction for in-flight sales services

　　CS portfolio analysis is conducted based on the customer satisfaction and importance of each explanatory variable. The results are shown in Figure 3. The vertical axis represents satisfaction, the horizontal axis represents severity, and the intersection denotes the mean value.
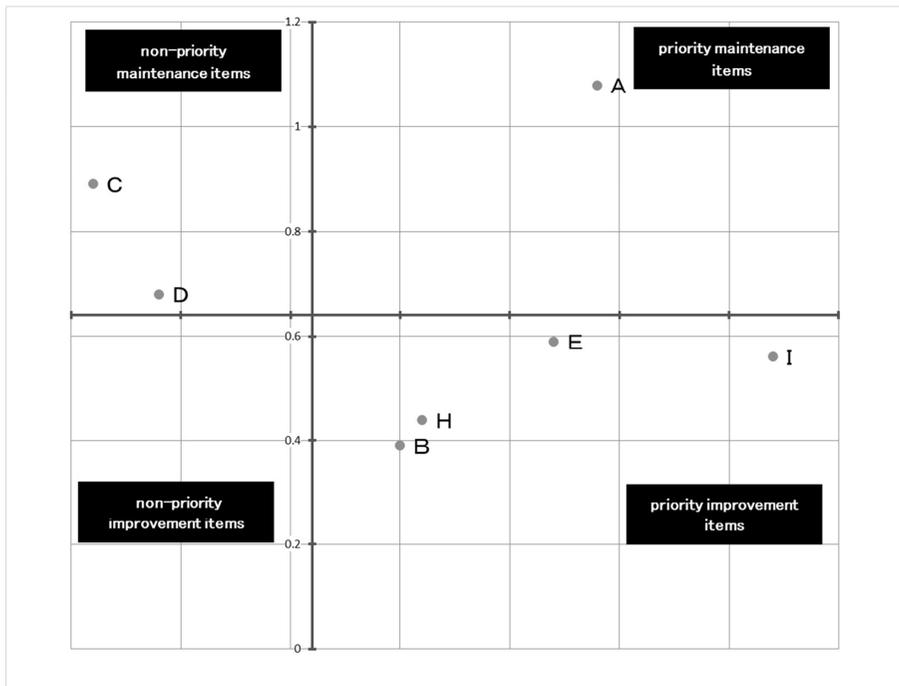
Figure 3: CS portfolio for availing in-flight sales services

Table 7: Priority of each variable for availing in-flight sales services

	variables	β	importance	satisfaction
A	number of goods, merchandising	0.2347	0.24	1.08
B	original and limited editions	0.1451	0.15	0.39
C	knowledge of the salesperson	0.0145	0.01	0.89
D	Kindness of salesperson	0.0369	0.04	0.68
E	personality of salesperson	0.2204	0.22	0.59
H	enjoyment of the catalog	0.1559	0.16	0.44
I	expense	0.3203	0.32	0.56

The four quadrants are as follows: priority improvement items (satisfaction: low; importance: high), non-priority improvement items (satisfaction: low; importance: low), priority maintenance items (satisfaction: high; importance: high), and non-priority maintenance items (satisfaction: high; importance: low).

"Satisfaction" represents the average value of satisfaction for each explanatory variable. Then "importance", each standard regression coefficient by the sum of each of the standard regression coefficient, represents the value obtained by dividing. It should be noted that, for the evaluation, explanatory variables with the negative of the partial regression coefficient was excluded.

Priority maintenance items are "abundance of number of goods, merchandising," "feel of the store," and "charged selling price." The only priority improvement item is "variety of

stores," indicating that duty-free zones at airports should house a large variety of store selling different kinds of merchandise.

The only priority maintenance item is "abundance of number of goods, merchandising." However, "charged selling price," "personality of salesperson," "product catalog booklet," and "original products and limited editions" emerged as priority improvement items. Thus, in-flight sales services should charge fair prices, employ immaculate sales personnel, have detailed product catalogs, and stock original/limited editions or products.

6. Limitations and future research

This study analyzes the causal relationship between perceived quality of service and customer satisfaction for Japanese tourists while shopping at duty-free shops in international airports and availing in-flight sales services. It thus discusses the cross-linkages between shopping and marketing strategies in the travel retail channel.

A limitation of this approach is that consumption needs, context of consumption, meaning of consumption, and value of consumption do not be considered. In other words, considering the attitudes (utilitarian, hedonic, luxury-oriented) towards shopping at duty-free shops in international airports and availing in-flight sales services, as revealed by Saito (2015a, b, c), may yield a more strategic adaptive model that may yield more concrete and focused implications. This is left for the future.

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