



The relationships among service quality, perceived value, customer satisfaction, and post-purchase intention in mobile value-added services

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ABSTRACT

The purposes of this study are to construct an instrument to evaluate service quality of mobile value-added services and have a further discussion of the relationships among service quality, perceived value, customer satisfaction, and post-purchase intention. Structural equation modeling and multiple regression analysis were used to analyze the data collected from college and graduate students of 15 major universities in Taiwan. The main findings are as follows: (1) service quality positively influences both perceived value and customer satisfaction; (2) perceived value positively influences on both customer satisfaction and post-purchase intention; (3) customer satisfaction positively influences post-purchase intention; (4) service quality has an indirect positive influence on post-purchase intention through customer satisfaction or perceived value; (5) among the dimensions of service quality, “customer service and system reliability” is most influential on perceived value and customer satisfaction, and the influence of “content quality” ranks second; (6) the proposed model is proven with the effectiveness in explaining the relationships among service quality, perceived value, customer satisfaction, and post-purchase intention in mobile added-value services.

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1. Introduction

Thanks to the fast growth of the mobile communication market, mobile phones that used to be exclusively held by business persons have become personal equipment closely integrated into everyone's daily life (Olla & Patel, 2002) and relatively more frequently used than other mobile devices (Clarke, 2001). In Taiwan, due to the lift of ban on mobile communication and the liberalization of the communication industry, the penetration rate of mobile phone has reached 110% in 2003 (DGT, 2003). Furthermore, the release of mobile number portability (MNP) and the licensing of VoIP (voice over internet protocol) phone numbers with a prefix of 070 in 2005 have dissolved the constraints set up by telecom service providers and allowed consumers to have more options. As a result, unable to rely solely on the conventional voice services, telecom service providers have been seeking for other opportunities to increase their business revenue.

Mobile value-added services are digital services added to mobile phone networks other than voice services in which the contents included can be either self-produced by mobile telecom service providers or provided through strategic alliances with

content providers. These services include games, icons, ringtones, messages, web browsing, SMS (short message service) coupons, and electronic transaction. They can bring five values to consumers: time-critical needs and arrangement, spontaneous needs and decisions, entertainment needs, efficiency needs and ambitions, and mobility-related needs (Anckar & D'Incau, 2002). Thus, mobile value-added services will become new opportunities for telecom service providers. However, mobile value-added services provided by telecom service providers can be classified into four types, namely information, communication, transaction, and entertainment, and this classification applies to almost all the providers. Although new services are being released at all times, whether they are appealing to consumers and can induce positive post-purchase intention after consumers have used them so as to effectively increase revenue and sustainable development will be an important issue for telecom service providers.

Previous studies of marketing have pointed out that the key of corporate success and competitive advantage is the enhancement of service quality, perceived value, and customer satisfaction (Khatibi, Ismail, & Thyagarajan, 2002; Landrum & Prybutok, 2004; Patterson & Spreng, 1997; Wang, Lo, & Yang, 2004; Yang & Peterson, 2004). As the number of studies of mobile telecom service quality is still limited, and a definite set of measurement indices for the service quality of mobile value-added services is

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not available, this study attempts to design a scale for measuring the service quality of mobile value-added services and further examines the relationships among service quality, perceived value, customer satisfaction, and post-purchase intention to find out which dimensions of service quality are significantly correlated with perceived value and customer satisfaction. The result can provide valuable reference information for mobile value-added service providers to manage their services and enhance their service quality.

2. Literature review and hypothesis development

2.1. Service quality

Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985, 1988) conceived that service quality is the difference between customers' expectation and their perceived performance of a service. Based on this concept, Parasuraman et al. (1988) developed the SERVQUAL model (including five dimensions, namely tangible, responsiveness, reliability, assurance, and empathy) to measure service quality. This model has drawn attention from the academic and the practical circles. However, many scholars have questioned about the conceptual framework and measurement method of this model. For instance, Cronin and Taylor (1992) pointed out that using service quality performance (SERVPERF, i.e. the perceived service in SERVQUAL) to measure service quality produces better results of reliability, validity, and predictive power than using SERVQUAL. Some other studies (Boulding, Kalra, Richard, & Zeithaml, 1993; McAlexander, Kaldenberg, & Koenig, 1994; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1994; Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996) also maintained that SERVPERF is more accurate than SERVQUAL in the measurement of service quality, and SERVQUAL can provide better diagnostic information. In the studies of the information industry, similar findings have been proposed (Landrum & Prybutok, 2004; Pitt, Watson, & Kavan, 1997; Van Dyke, Kappelman, & Prybutok, 1997), and Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Malhotra (2002) proposed that it is not necessary to use customers' expectation to measure the service quality of a website. Therefore, this study will directly use perceived service quality to measure the service quality of mobile value-added services.

In the research of website service quality, various measurement dimensions have been proposed according to website properties. Kuo (2003) put forth a virtual community service quality scale, using advertising mail management, customer service management, online quality and information safety, webpage design and content, and extra function and service to evaluate the service quality of a website. Yang, Cai, Zhou, and Zhou (2005) used usability, usefulness of content, adequacy of information, accessibility, and interaction to measure user's perceived quality of information presenting web portals. From the perspective of transaction process, Bauer, Falk, and Hammerschmidt (2006) proposed eTransQual (including five quality aspects, namely functionality/design, enjoyment, process, reliability, and responsiveness) to measure the quality of online shopping services. As to the quality of mobile communication services, Chae, Kim, Kim, and Ryu (2002) used connection quality, content quality, interaction quality, and contextual quality to measure the information quality of mobile networking services. Kim, Park, and Jeong (2004) examined the service quality of mobile communication services in South Korea by call quality, value-added services, and customer support. Based on the aforementioned studies of website and telecom service quality, this study further categorizes service quality factors into four dimensions, including content quality, navigation and visual design, management and customer service, and system reliability and connection quality.

2.2. Perceived value

Customer's perceived value can be defined from the perspectives of money, quality, benefit, and social psychology. The Monetary perspective indicates that value is generated when less is paid (such as by using coupons or promotions) for goods (Bishop, 1984). In other words, it is the concept of consumer surplus in economics; perceived value is the difference between the highest price that consumers are willing to pay for a product or a service and the amount practically paid. According to the quality perspective, value is the difference between the money paid for a certain product and the quality of the product (Bishop, 1984). That is, when less money is paid for a high quality product, positive perceived value will be created. The benefit perspective indicates that perceived value is customers' overall evaluation of the utility of perceived benefits and perceived sacrifices (Zeithaml, 1988). In other words, consumers may cognitively integrate their perceptions of what they get and what they have to give up in order to obtaining goods. However, the sacrifice means more than the money paid for a certain goods. Non-monetary costs, such as transaction cost, search cost, negotiation cost, and time incurred during the purchase, should also be included (Cronin, Brady, Brand, Hightower, & Shemwell, 1997; Cronin, Brady, & Hult, 2000; Keeney, 1999; Zeithaml, 1988). The social psychology perspective points out that the generation of value lies in the meaning of purchasing a certain goods to the buyer's community (Sheth, Newman, & Gross, 1991). That is, goods carrying particular meanings (such as social economic status and social culture) can increase the effect of social self-concept (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001; Wang et al., 2004). In this study, perceived value is the evaluation of the benefits of a product or a service by customers based on their advance sacrifices and expect perceived performance when they use mobile value-added services.

In the research of the relationships between service quality and customer's perceived value in conventional retailing and online shopping, most of the empirical studies have pointed out that service quality will positively influence perceived value (Bauer et al., 2006; Brady, Robertson, & Cronin, 2001; Cronin et al., 1997, 2000). Among the studies of the telecom industry, Wang et al. (2004) and Turel and Serenko (2006), respectively, investigated the mobile services in China and Canada and found out that service quality is positively related to perceived value. Thus, Hypothesis 1 is proposed as follows:

H1: Service quality positively influences perceived value in mobile value-added services.

2.3. Customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction can be defined using the transaction-specific perspective or cumulative perspective. The transaction-specific perspective indicates that customer satisfaction is the evaluation based on the recent purchase experiences (Boulding et al., 1993). Compared with the transaction-specific perspective, the cumulative perspective stresses overall evaluations, indicating that evaluations of customer satisfaction should be based on all the purchase experiences of the customer, disregarding any specific purchase experience (Johnson & Fornell, 1991). Parasuraman et al. (1988) argued that the cumulative perspective is more capable of evaluating the service performance of firms and more effective in predicting consumers' post-purchase behaviors (Wang et al., 2004). Among the studies of customer satisfaction in the information industry, Lin and Wang (2006) revealed that customer satisfaction of mobile commerce is consumer's total response to the purchase experiences in a mobile commerce environment. There-

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