



# A study of experiential quality, experiential value, trust, corporate reputation, experiential satisfaction and behavioral intentions for cruise tourists: The case of Hong Kong

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## HIGHLIGHTS

- This study proposed a multi-dimensional and hierarchical model of experiential quality.
- This study identified the relationships among experiential quality, experiential value, experiential satisfaction and behavioral intentions.
- A survey of a total of 677 tourists who experienced the cruise tour was conducted in this study.
- Results helped cruise management to be aware of the importance cruise tourists place on the dimensions of experiential quality.

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to identify the dimensions of experiential quality and investigate the relationships among experiential quality, experiential value (emotional value and functional value), trust, corporate reputation, experiential satisfaction and behavioral intentions perceived by cruise tourists. A multi-dimensional and hierarchical approach is used to examine the relationships between these higher order constructs. Analysis of data from 677 respondents experiencing the cruise tour organized by Bauhinia indicates that the proposed model fits the data well. The results of this analysis contribute to the services marketing theory by providing empirically-based insight into the experiential quality and experiential satisfaction constructs in the cruise industry. This study will assist cruise management in developing and implementing a market-oriented service strategy to achieve a high quality of experiences, enhance cruise tourists' experiential satisfaction and create their favorable future behavioral intentions.

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## 1. Introduction

Hong Kong is one of the most popular developing cruise destinations in Asia. The cruise ship industry in Hong Kong has become one of the fast growing sectors of the tourism industry and more and more tourists experience the service on a cruise ship (Yan, 2010). The numbers of tourists who either arrived at or departed from Hong Kong grew from 0.7 million in 2005 to over 1.8 million in 2009 and are expected to increase to 2 million in 2020, making Hong Kong the fifth most frequently visited destination in the

world (Invest Hong Kong, 2012; Tourism Commission, 2007). According to Yan (2010) and Yi, Day, and Cai (2014), Hong Kong has great potential to develop its cruise ship industry and to be a leading regional cruise hub in Asia. Young people and family groups with lower to middle levels of monthly income (e.g. below HK\$19,999) and with higher educational levels of middle school or above are increasingly becoming new markets in Hong Kong. While the cruise ship industry has become a popular topic, only a few studies on the Hong Kong cruise ship industry have been conducted (Yan, 2010; Yi et al., 2014).

The importance of service quality has been stressed in the tourism literature. However, another related and nuanced factor, service experience, has attracted little attention (Chen & Chen, 2010). Service experience can be defined as the subjective personal reactions and feelings of consumers when consuming or

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using a service. [Otto and Ritchie \(1996\)](#) contend that service experience has an important influence on the consumer evaluation of and satisfaction with a given service. Therefore, a better understanding of experiential phenomena in tourism service is particularly important, and will permit the industry to better perform ([Chen & Chen, 2010](#)). The cruise tourism industry, like other leisure and tourism activities, has been viewed to a great extent as a consumer's experience ([Qu, Wong, & Ping, 1999](#); [Yi et al., 2014](#)). According to [Lewis and Chambers \(2000\)](#), experience, or more specifically experiential consumption, refers to “the total outcome to the customer from the combination of environment, goods, and services purchased” (p. 46). The nature of these experiences is critical for the tourism industry because intangible experience is the core of the products/services offered by businesses ([Yuan & Wu, 2008](#)). The study of consumer experiences in the leisure or tourism industry is of both theoretical and practical importance ([Bigne, Andreu, & Gnoth, 2005](#)). Therefore, the quality tourists perceive is closely related to experiences during the process of tours rather than services *per se* provided by the cruise ship organization ([Chen & Chen, 2010](#); [Yi et al., 2014](#)). Unlike service quality, however, few studies focus on the experiential quality of specific tourism participation such as cruise tours. To increase cruise tourists' favorable behavioral intentions, cruise managers should set their priorities to provide high quality, satisfying experiences that tourists perceive to be of good value ([Lee, Petrick, & Crompton, 2007](#); [Yi et al., 2014](#)).

Experiential quality has been considered to be an antecedent of both experiential satisfaction (e.g. [Caruana, Money, & Berthon, 2000](#); [Kao, Huang, & Wu, 2008](#); [Wu & Li, 2015, 2017](#)) and experiential value ([Baker, Parasuraman, Grewal, & Voss, 2002](#); [Petrick, Wu, Li, & Li, 2018](#)) and a good predictor of behavioral intentions ([Baker & Crompton, 2000](#); [Wu & Li, 2017](#)). Alternatively, perceived quality, satisfaction and corporate reputation have been considered to be direct antecedents of trust, which in turn, result in behavioral intentions ([Bennett & Gabriel, 2001](#); [Jin, Park, & Kim, 2008](#)). On the other hand, corporate reputation reduces perceived risk, which has been considered to be particularly high in the tourism decision making process. This way, the reputation of a tourism provider exercises a positive influence on satisfaction through perceived quality, because reputation moulds the expectations that the individual forms before the visit, which will then compare with the actual experience ([Bigne, Sanchez, & Sanchez, 2001](#); [Chi & Qu, 2008](#); [Selnes, 1993](#)). Researchers in marketing have long debated the definition of behavioral intentions, but there is consensus regarding the strong effect of corporate reputation on behavioral intentions ([Selnes, 1993](#)). Experiential satisfaction is a construct that mediates the effect of experiential quality perceptions on behavioral intentions and other outcomes such as trust and corporate reputation (e.g. [Brady & Robertson, 2001](#); [Choi, Lee, Kim, & Lee, 2005](#); [Kao et al., 2008](#)). However, few studies examine experiential quality for the cruise ship industry, including diverse psychological and physical aspects, and the simultaneous links among experiential quality, experiential value, trust, corporate reputation, experiential satisfaction and behavioral intentions (e.g. [Brida, Garrido, & Devesa, 2012](#); [Loureiro & González, 2008](#); [Petrick, 2004](#); [Wu & Li, 2017](#); [Wu et al., 2018](#); [Yi et al., 2014](#)).

Several researchers ([Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985](#); [Reichheld & Sasser, 1990](#); [Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996](#)) identify that providing quality has been considered to be an essential strategy for success and survival in today's competitive environment. In this situation, the primary emphasis of both theoretical and managerial efforts has been on determining what dimensions of quality customers are concerned about and developing strategies to satisfy their expectations. The primary and sub dimensions of quality perceived by customers have been applied in

different industries, using multi-dimensional and hierarchical modeling as a robust and testable framework (e.g. [Brady & Cronin, 2001](#); [Clemes, Brush, & Collins, 2011a](#); [Clemes, Cohen, & Wang, 2013](#); [Clemes, Gan, & Ren, 2011b](#); [Clemes, Shu, & Gan, 2014](#); [Dabholkar, Thorpe, & Rentz, 1996](#); [Hossain, Dwivedi, & Naseem, 2015](#)). However, several researchers (e.g. [Kao et al., 2008](#); [Wu & Ko, 2013](#); [Wu, 2013, 2014](#); [Wu, Cheng, & Hsu, 2014a](#); [Wu, Wong, & Cheng, 2014b](#); [Wu et al., 2018](#)) argue that few studies focus on identifying the primary and sub dimensions of experiential quality using a multi-dimensional and hierarchical model for cruise tourists. In addition, little research focuses on identifying the least and most important dimensions of experiential quality perceived by cruise tourists ([Yi et al., 2014](#)).

In this study, there are three research objectives. First, the dimensions of experiential quality perceived by cruise tourists using a multi-dimensional and hierarchical framework are identified. Second, the study examines the relationships between the behavioral intentions of tourists and the other higher order constructs: experiential quality, experiential value, trust, corporate reputation and experiential satisfaction as perceived by cruise tourists. Third, the least and most important dimensions of experiential quality as perceived by cruise tourists are identified.

The contribution of this study is twofold. First, it contributes to the marketing literature by providing an examination of several services marketing constructs. This is an important contribution because it provides a better understanding of cruise tourists' perceptions of experiential quality, experiential value, trust, corporate reputation, experiential satisfaction and behavioral intentions. Second, the study conceptualizes and measures the cruise tourist's perception of experiential quality using a multi-dimensional and hierarchical approach. This approach helps to overcome some of the weaknesses of traditional SERVQUAL (a disconfirmation-based measure of service quality) and SERVPERF (a performance-based measure of service quality) and thus provides a more accurate approach to assessing cruise tourists' perceptions of experiential quality.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Service quality

[Kotler and Keller \(2009\)](#) define service quality as “any intangible act or performance that one party offers to another that does not result in the ownership of anything” (p. 789). Service quality in the management and marketing literature is the extent to which customers' perceptions of service satisfy and/or exceed their expectations, for example, as defined by [Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman \(1990\)](#). Therefore, service quality can be intended to be the way in which customers are served in a good or poor organization ([Agbor, 2011](#)).

SERVQUAL is designed to measure service quality as perceived by the customer ([Asubonteng, McCleary, & Swan, 1996](#)). The SERVQUAL scale represents service quality as the discrepancy between a customer's expectation of a service offered and their perception of the service received ([Parasuraman et al., 1985](#)). The SERVQUAL scale consisted of 10 dimensions of service quality when created; tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, communication, credibility, security, competence, courtesy, understanding the customer and access. Later, [Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry \(1988\)](#) reduced the original 10 dimensions to five (tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy), resulting in the widely used instrument known as SERVQUAL. However, [Cronin and Taylor \(1992, 1994\)](#) consider SERVQUAL as ‘unidimensional’ because they do not identify the scale structure.

[Cronin and Taylor \(1992\)](#) propose SERVPERF, which is a more

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