
A Study on the Effect of Brand Image on Perceived Value and Repurchase Intention in Ecotourism Industry

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Abstract

People are increasing the needs for travel in past years to drive the development of tourism. Such a result causes the damage of natural environment and has tourist attractions lose the attraction to tourists to result in destruction on both environment and managers. To cope with above needs, ecotourism naturally becomes an alternative choice for many people. Aiming at ecotourism, the tourists are distributed 360 copies of questionnaire. Total 267 valid copies are retrieved, with the retrieval rate 74%. The research results summarize significantly positive effects of 1. brand image on perceived value, 2. perceived value on repurchase intention, and 3. brand image on repurchase intention. According to the results, suggestions are proposed, expecting to effectively promote the competitiveness of domestic ecotourism in the tourism market and achieve the objective of sustained-yield management.

Keywords: ecotourism, brand image, perceived value, repurchase intention

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INTRODUCTION

With constant enhancement of quality of life, people increase the emphasis on travel to drive the boom of tourism. Tourism therefore becomes an international economic activity. To cope with above needs, ecotourism naturally becomes an alternative choice for many people. Ecotourism refers to preceding special purposes in undisturbed or unpolluted natural areas, appreciating and experiencing the wild animals and plants, and being concerned with the cultural contents in the areas. It tends to natural conservation and environmental protection with the least impact on the environment and culture. Tourists could learn the conservation of local resources, feedback to community development, and eventual achievement sustained-yield management when enjoying natural activity. Under the management of sustainable tourism, more ecotourism related issues are discussed. Nevertheless, the high competition in the entire tourism environment causes the damage of natural environment and has tourist attraction lose the attractions to tourists to result in the destruction of both environment and managers. It is full of challenges and risks for ecotourism managers. Some ecotourism businesses therefore appear low-price competition, in order to achieve the performance, to result in low tourism quality and increasing customer complaints, relatively affect the

profits and image of ecotourism industry, and possibly cause losses of some groups. In this case, it becomes an urgent task for ecotourism businesses acquire the advantages in the market. Aiming at the effect brand image on perceived value and repurchase intention in ecotourism industry, an empirical research is preceded in this study, expecting to effectively promote the competitiveness of domestic ecotourism in the competitive tourism market and achieve the goal of sustained-yield management.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Brand Image

Lien et al. (2015) proposed that a brand did not simply offer ownership for consumers, but also provided message of market meanings; a brand was no longer a name or mark, but the relationship with consumers. Nisar and Whitehead (2016) considered that brand image was consumers' total image of received brand, including the identification or differentiation of other brands, brand personality, and commitment profits. Adoración et al. (2016) regarded brand image as the sum of perceived core brand of an enterprise presented on the relationship between consumers' brand cognition and the brand association in the memory to reflect the product characteristics or unique ideas of products.

Jeng (2016) pointed out consumer needs as the key factor in the selection of specific products as well as the major reference for product design of a business. Accordingly, the three dimensions are proposed for brand image in this study.

(1) Functional: The actual benefits of products or services, stressing on assisting consumers in solving consumption related problems. Such types of products are designed for solving consumers' basic needs.

(2) Symbolic: The added-value of products or services, focusing on satisfying consumers' required product brand.

(3) Experiential: The perception after using products or services, emphasizing to satisfy consumer needs for pleasure, diversity, and cognition provided by products.

Perceived Value

Chua and Banerjee (2015) defined customers' perceived value as the overall evaluation of products or services based on the trade-off between perceived acquisition and payment. For this reason, customers' consumption intention normally depended on the perceived value acquired, i.e. customers' trade-off between perceived benefits and perceived costs. Platania et al. (2016) proposed customer perceived value theory from the aspect of customers and defined customer perceived value as the overall evaluation of product or service effectiveness with the trade-off between the perceived benefits and the paid costs for the product or service. Kotler and Keller (2015) regarded value as customer evaluation of the overall effectiveness of certain services.

Referring to Peng et al. (2017), perceived value is discussed from utilitarianism and hedonism in this study.

(1) Utilitarian value: Acquired after individual objective being satisfied in the consumption process that it is the task-oriented relationship and tends to rational decision making.

(2) Hedonic value: Referring to personal affection and irrationality, which often appear in the consumption process, i.e. individual inner affection of perceived comfort, motivation, sense of achievement, and escape in the consumption process.

Repurchase Intention

Chiang (2016) regarded repurchase intention as customer willingness to repurchase products of a

company after the use. Erkan and Evans (2016) considered repurchase intention as customer intention to repurchase products or services from the original businesses, i.e. customers' psychological commitment to services. Customer loyalty would be performed on the repurchase intention, the willingness to purchase other products of the company, and the willingness to recommend to others to further become the loyal customers and accept the prices (Kumar et al. 2016).

Chiang (2016) proposed the repurchase intention scale an three dimensions of "repeated purchase", "willingness to recommend", and "loyal customer" to measure repurchase intention. They are applied to this study.

(1) Repeated purchase: To measure customer intention to repurchase products or services of the company in the future. It is an important indicator of customers' future behavior intention.

(2) Willingness to recommend: Referring to customers being willing to introduce, recommend, and build word-of-mouth of the company. Such behaviors are primary for a company.

(3) Loyal customer: Including times, frequency, amount, and quality of purchase. Although major behaviors are the key factor in the measurement of actual behaviors, they would change with time and customers might give wrong data.

Research Hypothesis

Lien et al. (2015) indicated that customers acquired added value from a brand, which might be functional, affective, or symbolic, presented close correlations with core value and organizational value, and was an important connection between internal and external brand procedures. Mabkhot et al. (2017) considered that brand image was customers' interaction with stores or the acquired experiences in the past forming the attitudes and belief in the stores or enterprises to reflect on the later behaviors. Jeng (2016) pointed out successful brand image as the creation of value for customers which was further agreed by target consumer groups. The management of successful brand image therefore could show obvious discrimination from competitive brands. Accordingly, domestic and international researchers regarded brand image as the key success factor in products. The following hypothesis is then proposed in this study.

H1: Brand image shows significantly positive effects on perceived value.

Table 1. Overall linear structural model analysis result

evaluation item	parameter/evaluation standard	result	t	
preliminary fit	brand image	functional	0.651	8.15**
		symbolic	0.642	7.66**
	perceived value	experiential	0.667	8.93**
		utilitarian value	0.673	9.46**
		hedonic value	0.691	11.22**
	repurchase intention	repeated purchase	0.696	11.89**
		willingness to recommend	0.702	12.45**
loyal customer		0.684	10.13**	

Note: * stands for $p < 0.05$, ** for $p < 0.01$, and *** for $p < 0.001$

Micheal et al. (2016) stated that customers' repurchase intention was affected by the perceived value, which was determined by the ratio between perceived benefits and perceived sacrifice when purchasing products. Chua and Banerjee (2015) discovered that consumers' repurchase intention depended on the perceived benefits and acquired value. Peng et al. (2017) pointed out the effects of objective price, perceived quality, perceived value, and product attribute on consumers' repurchase intention that consumers would show repurchase intention after the generation of perceived value. The following hypothesis is therefore proposed in this study.

H2: Perceived value reveals remarkably positive effects on repurchase intention.

Erkan and Evans (2016) indicated that an enterprise actively promoting the brand image would enhance consumers' perceived product quality and repurchase behavior. Nick Hajli et al. (2017) revealed that brand image played a critical role in purchase decision-making and exposed brand image would become the major choice of certain products in the repurchase intention; accordingly, brand image would positively affect repurchase intention. Chiang (2016) considered that consumers' perceived product brand image would affect the product evaluation and choice and further influence the repurchase intention. In this case, the following hypothesis is proposed in this study.

H3: Brand image appears notably positive effects on repurchase intention.

SAMPLE AND MEASUREMENT INDICATOR

Research Sample and Object

Aiming at ecotourism, the tourists are distributed 360 copies of questionnaire, and 267 valid copies are retrieved, with the retrieval rate 74%.

Test of Reliability and Validity

The questionnaire items in this study are referred to domestic and international researchers that the questionnaire presents certain content validity. The

dimensions of brand image, perceived value, and repurchase intention are tested the overall structural causal relations. The analysis result with linear structural relationship model shows the overall model fit achieving the rational range that it presents favorable convergent validity and predictive validity.

To further understand the reliability of the questionnaire, reliability analysis is further preceded. According to the standard to develop the formal questionnaire, the measured Cronbach's α appears in 0.70~0.90, apparently conforming to the reliability range.

EMPIRICAL RESULT ANALYSIS

LISREL Model Evaluation Index

The research data are organized as below. The preliminary fit of criteria, internal fit, and overall fit of the model are explained as followings.

The complete model analysis results, **Table 1**, reveal good preliminary fit of criteria.

In regard to internal fit, **Table 2**, brand image shows positive and significant correlations with perceived value (0.874, $p < 0.01$), perceived value reveals positive and remarkable correlations with repurchase intention (0.882, $p < 0.01$), and brand image appears positive and notably correlations with repurchase intention (0.853, $p < 0.01$) that H1, H2, and H3 are supported.

Table 2. Overall linear structural model analysis result

evaluation item	parameter/evaluation standard	result	t
internal fit	brand image→perceived value	0.874	31.46**
	perceived value→repurchase intention	0.882	42.37**
	brand image→repurchase intention	0.853	25.71**

Note: * stands for p<0.05, ** for p<0.01, and *** for p<0.001

Table 3. Overall linear structural model analysis result

overall fit	X2/Df	1.531
	GFI	0.975
	AGFI	0.916
	RMR	0.005

Note: * stands for p<0.05, ** for p<0.01, and *** for p<0.001

Regarding overall model fit, **Table 3**, the overall model fit standards $\chi^2/Df=1.531$, smaller than the standard 3, and RMR=0.005 as well as the overall model fit standards GFI=0.975 and AGFI=0.916 are higher than the standard 0.9 (the closer GFI and AGFI to 1 showing the better model fit) that this model presents better fit indices.

CONCLUSION

The research results reveal positive correlations and significant effects among brand image, perceived value, and repurchase intention. The brand image of ecotourism products being able to reflect personal styles, allowing tourists perceiving the social status, showing the popularity, presenting good fame, and being the leading brand are emphasized by participants. Reasonable pricing of ecotourism products, pleasant itinerary, good memory, satisfactory quality, feeling of rewarding journey, good image of the itinerary, agreeable by others, emphasis tourists' rights, better itinerary quality than other businesses, itinerary with more than the money's worth, experience in local tradition, feeling pleasant and satisfied, good food, culture, special landscapes, and broadening of horizon also reveal the higher effects on repurchase intention. Besides, perceived value also remarkably and positive affects repurchase intention.

SUGGESTION

According to the research results and findings, the following practical suggestions are proposed in this study.

1. Online booking or searching for tourism information is advanced for consumers, unlike traditional travel agents, which require recommendation. In the Internet era, everything relies on network; even newspaper can be read on the Internet. Network marketing therefore become more important. It is suggested that ecotourism businesses could make marketing design for online customers.

2. Ecotourism businesses should stress on tourists' rights to stabilize the market share. Consumers are smart. Whether an ecotourism business emphasizes tourists rights might not be known at the first moment. However, the successive word-of-mouth among customers or the spread through Facebook and websites is fast; either positive or negative information would be immediately exaggerated.

3. The rich contents of ecotourism would please tourists. With rich itinerary, tourists could know the enrichment of the vacation before departure. When receiving the itinerary, consumers could immediately realize the experience in the ecotourism being rich or empty. The clearer itinerary contents of tourist attraction visits, time, meals, and even prices for meals, level of hotels, location, and hotel facilities would have consumers feel ease in mind to enjoy the tour. Tourists with good memory in the tour would enhance the repurchase intention.

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