



Faculty of Economics and Business

**Destination Image Mediated by Tourists' and Resident Visitors'
Experience Quality
-Empirical Evidence from Qingzhou, China**

Guan Liping

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Destination Image Mediated by Tourists' and Resident Visitors' Experience
Quality

-Empirical Evidence from Qingzhou, China

Guan Liping

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DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak. Except where due acknowledgements have been made, the work is that of the author alone. The thesis has not been accepted for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature of any other degree.

Signature

关丽萍
Guan Liping

Name: Guan Liping

Matric No.: 20010033

Faculty of Economics and Business

Universiti Malaysia Sarawak

Date: 3/15/2024

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ABSTRACT

The destination image is a critical aspect for destinations. Typically, destination image is considered as a combination of cognition and affection. As tourists increasingly seek the quality of experience, this study proposes experience quality as a mediator between cognition and affection in the destination image framework based on previous studies. The proposed integrated destination image model was empirically studied in Qingzhou city, China, from the perspectives of tourists as well as resident visitors since they are both the primary consumers for pleasure in the destination. Furthermore, the results on cognition, experience quality, affection, and the image of a destination of Qingzhou was juxtaposed across the two groups. Lastly, this study adopted importance performance approach to provide a practical recommendation to the areas to be improved by the tourism operators in destination of Qingzhou. Quantitative method was used in this study. A structured survey was conveniently sampled on both tourists and residents in Qingzhou, resulting in 475 tourist respondents and 542 resident respondents after data cleaning. In the first step of data analysis for tourists and residents, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to determine the dimensions and simplify the measurement. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was then employed to check the construct's unidimensionality, validity, and reliability. In the second step, a disjoint two-stage approach in PLS-SEM, which involves testing higher order constructs (HOCs), was used in each of the two groups. The first stage assessed the reliability and validity of the measurement model as for the reflective measurement and HOCs. And then in the second stage of structural model assessment, experience quality was satisfactorily found to be a mediator between cognition and affection. In the third step, multi-group analysis (MGA) was used to test if the two pre-defined data groups had any significant differences in their group-specific parameter estimates. The two groups were found to have

the same three cognition dimensions, with each covering the same attributes (by EFA and CFA), showing configuration invariance. A permutation test was conducted to confirm partial measurement invariance, and the result of MGA revealed that path coefficients/effect differences were not statistically significant. In the fourth step, importance-performance map analysis (IPMA) was used to extend the results of PLS-SEM by considering the relative importance of constructs in explaining other constructs, as well as their performance. In IPMA, we go further to analyse the indicator level to help practitioners be more precise in their practices. Overall, this empirical study in Qingzhou made theoretical contributions by providing a better understanding of well accepted cognition-affection-destination image model, by highlighting the mediating role of experience quality between cognition and affection in the destination image model and by verifying the applicability of the proposed destination image model to resident visitors apart from tourists. It also provides managerial implications to destination operators in Qingzhou by development of recommendations on where should be improved to enhance visitors' experience quality and destination image perception. Furthermore, the well-designed methodological flow can benefit the scale construction to measure the highly specific image perception of a destination. However, the study has some limitations which leave room for future research such as incorporating more stakeholders, categorizing the destination image model based on the destination's life cycle, etc.

Keywords: Qingzhou, destination image, experience quality, mediator, stakeholder

Imej Destinasi Dimediasi oleh Kualiti Pengunjung dan Pengunjung Tetangga

-Bukti Empirikal dari Qingzhou, China

ABSTRAK

Imej destinasi adalah aspek kritikal untuk sesebuah destinasi. Lazimnya, imej destinasi dianggap sebagai gabungan kognisi dan afeksi. Memandangkan pelancong semakin mencari kualiti pengalaman, kajian ini mencadangkan kualiti pengalaman sebagai pengantara antara kognisi dan afeksi dalam kerangka imej destinasi berdasarkan kajian lepas. Model imej destinasi bersepadu yang dicadangkan telah dikaji secara empirikal di bandar Qingzhou, China, dari perspektif pelancong serta penduduk kerana kedua-duanya adalah pengguna utama untuk pembolehubah keseronokan di destinasi. Selain itu, hasil kajian tentang kognisi, kualiti pengalaman, afeksi, dan imej keseluruhan di destinasi Qingzhou telah dibandingkan di antara kedua-dua kumpulan tersebut. Akhirnya, kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan prestasi penting untuk memberikan cadangan praktikal kepada kawasan-kawasan yang perlu diperbaiki oleh pengendali pelancongan di destinasi Qingzhou. Kaedah kuantitatif telah digunakan dalam kajian ini. Tinjauan berstruktur telah dijadikan sampel yang sesuai ke atas responden yang terdiri daripada pelancong dan penduduk di Qingzhou, sejumlah 475 responden pelancong dan 542 responden penduduk telah diperolehi selepas pembersihan data. Analisis faktor penerokaan (EFA) telah digunakan sebagai langkah pertama analisis data bagi pelancong dan penduduk tempatan untuk menentukan dimensi dan memudahkan pengukuran. Analisis pengesahan faktor (CFA) kemudian digunakan untuk memeriksa searah dimensi, kebolehuaman, dan kebolehpercayaan. Pada langkah kedua, pendekatan disjoint two-stage PLS-SEM, yang melibatkan pengujian komponen tingkat tinggi (HOCs), telah digunakan pada kedua-dua

kumpulan. Peringkat pertama adalah menilai kebolehpercayaan dan kesahan model pengukuran bagi pengukuran reflektif dan HOCs. Kemudian pada peringkat kedua penilaian model struktur, kualiti pengalaman didapati memuaskan sebagai mediator antara kognisi dan afeksi. Dalam langkah ketiga, analisis berbilang kumpulan (MGA) digunakan untuk menguji sama ada kedua-dua kumpulan data yang telah ditetapkan sama ada mempunyai perbezaan yang signifikan dalam anggaran parameter khususnya untuk kumpulan mereka. Kedua-dua kumpulan didapati mempunyai tiga dimensi kognisi yang sama, masing-masing meliputi atribut yang sama (oleh EFA dan CFA), menunjukkan invariansi konfigurasi. Ujian permutasi dijalankan untuk mengesahkan ketidakberubahsamaan pengukuran separa, dan keputusan MGA mendedahkan bahawa pekali laluan/perbezaan kesan tidak signifikan. Dalam langkah keempat, peta analisis kepentingan-prestasi (IPMA) digunakan untuk melanjutkan keputusan PLS-SEM dengan mempertimbangkan kepentingan relatif konstruk dalam menerangkan konstruk lain, serta prestasi mereka. Dalam IPMA, kajian ini selanjutnya menganalisis tahap penunjuk untuk membantu pengamal menjadi lebih tepat dalam amalan mereka. Secara keseluruhan, kajian empirikal di Qingzhou menyumbang kepada sumbangan teori dengan memberikan pemahaman yang lebih baik tentang model kognisi-afeksi-imej destinasi yang diterima dengan baik, dengan menonjolkan peranan pengantara kualiti pengalaman antara kognisi dan afeksi dalam model imej destinasi dan mengesahkan kebolehgunaan model imej destinasi yang diusulkan untuk pelawat penduduk selain daripada pelancong. Selain itu, kajian ini juga memberikan implikasi pengurusan kepada pengendali destinasi di Qingzhou dengan pembangunan cadangan mengenai tempat yang perlu diperbaiki, untuk meningkatkan kualiti pengalaman pelawat dan persepsi imej destinasi. Tambahan pula, aliran metodologi yang direka dengan baik boleh memberi manfaat kepada pembinaan skala

untuk mengukur persepsi imej yang sangat spesifik terhadap sesuatu destinasi. Walau bagaimanapun, kajian ini mempunyai beberapa batasan yang memberi ruang untuk penyelidikan masa depan seperti menggabungkan lebih banyak pihak berkepentingan, mengkategorikan model imej destinasi berdasarkan berdasarkan kitaran hayat destinasi, dan sebagainya.

Kata kunci: *Qingzhou, imej destinasi, kualiti pengalaman, perantara, pihak kepentingan*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
DECLARATION	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
ABSTRAK	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	viii
LIST OF TABLES	xv
LIST OF FIGURES	xvii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xviii
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Study Background	1
1.3 Tourism in China and Qingzhou	4
1.4 Problem Statement	9
1.5 Research Questions	10
1.6 Research Objectives	11

1.7	Significance of the Study	12
1.8	Scope of the Study	14
1.9	Definition of Key Terms	14
1.10	Organization of the Study	16
	CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	18
2.1	Introduction	18
2.2	Conceptualization of Destination Image	18
2.2.1	Image and Destination Image	19
2.2.2	Cognition and Affection	22
2.3	Underlying Theory	24
2.3.1	Cognitive-Affective Attitude Theory	24
2.3.2	Stakeholder Theory	27
2.4	Experience Driven Process of Destination Image	32
2.4.1	Experience	32
2.4.2	Experience Quality	34
2.5	Hypothesis Development and Proposed Conceptual Framework	37
2.5.1	Cognition as an Antecedent of Destination Image	37

2.5.2	Affection as an Antecedent of Destination Image	38
2.5.3	Cognition as an Antecedent of Affection	39
2.5.4	Experience Quality as a Mediator between Cognition and Affection	39
2.6	Literature Gap	43
	CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY	44
3.1	Introduction	44
3.2	Research Paradigm	45
3.3	Research Design	48
3.4	Study Setting	49
3.5	Sampling Design	51
3.5.1	Target Population	51
3.5.2	Sampling Method	52
3.5.3	Sample Size	53
3.6	Instrument Development	54
3.6.1	Construct Development	54
3.6.2	Instrument Validation	69
3.7	Data Collection	72

3.7.1	Respondents Delimitation	73
3.7.2	Bias Avoid Steps	73
3.7.3	Data Collecting	74
3.8	Data Analysis	76
3.8.1	Descriptive Analysis	76
3.8.2	Reliability and Validity Analysis	77
3.8.3	EFA and CFA	79
3.8.4	SEM	81
3.8.5	Summary of Data Analysis	91
3.9	Chapter Summary	92
	CHAPTER 4 RESULT AND DISCUSSION	93
4.1	Introduction	93
4.2	Result and Discussion for Tourists Group	93
4.2.1	Raw Data Processing for Tourists	94
4.2.2	Respondent's Demographic Profile	94
4.2.3	EFA of Cognition (C) for S1-t and CFA of Cognition (C) for S2-t	95
4.2.4	CFA of Cognition (C) and Experience Quality (E) for TS-t	99

4.2.5	Model Estimation for Tourists using TS-t Data	101
4.2.6	Assessment of Mediating Effect for Tourists	106
4.3	Result and Discussion for Resident Visitors Group	106
4.3.1	Preliminary Data Analysis for Resident Visitors	107
4.3.2	Respondents Demographic Profile	107
4.3.3	EFA of Cognition (C) and Experience Quality (E) for S1-r	108
4.3.4	CFA of Cognition and CFA of Experience Quality for S2-r	110
4.3.5	Model Estimation for S2-r of Resident Visitors	112
4.3.6	Assessment of the Mediating Effect for Resident Visitors	117
4.4	Multi-Group Analysis (MGA) between Tourists and Resident Visitors	118
4.4.1	CFA of Resident Visitors Based on the Dimensions and Attributes of Tourists	119
4.4.2	Assessment of Convergent Validity in PLS-SEM	122
4.4.3	Assessment of Discriminant Validity in PLS-SEM	125
4.4.4	Assessment of HOC for Three Groups	126
4.4.5	Assessment of Model Fit in PLS-SEM	127
4.4.6	Measurement Invariance Test Using MICOM	128
4.4.7	Assessment of Structural Model in Multi-Group Analysis	129

4.4.8	Assessment of Group Differences	133
4.5	IPMA Analysis for the Tourists and Resident Visitors using S1-t and S1-r	134
4.5.1	Assessment of Four Importance-Performance Quadrants	134
4.5.2	Comparison across the Two Groups of the Importance and Performance	140
4.6	Chapter Summary	142
	CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION	143
5.1	Introduction	143
5.2	Study Recapitulation	143
5.3	Discussion of Findings	145
5.3.1	Relationships between Cognition, Affection, and Destination Image are Supported as in the Literature	145
5.3.2	Mediating Role of Experience Quality between Cognition and Affection is Unquestionable	147
5.3.3	Juxtaposition of the Measurement Model and Construct Model across Tourist and Resident Visitors	148
5.3.4	Areas of Improvement that Destination Operator Should Address	149
5.4	Research Implications	152
5.4.1	Theoretical Implications	152

5.4.2	Methodology Implications	154
5.4.3	Managerial Implications	155
5.5	Limitations and Recommendations	159
5.6	Chapter Summary	161
	REFERENCES	164
	APPENDICES	200

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 3.1: Dimensions and Attributes of Cognitive Image	56
Table 3.2: Cognitive Measurement Items Used in This Study	57
Table 3.3: Measurement Items of Affection from Past Researches	61
Table 3.4: Affective Measurement Items Used in This Study	62
Table 3.5: Experience Quality Measurement Items Used in This Study	65
Table 3.6: Overall Image Measurement Items Used in This Study	68
Table 3.7: Table of Data Analysis Steps and the Method	92
Table 4.1: Sample Profile (Total Sample of Tourists)	95
Table 4.2: EFA on Cognition (C) for S1-t	96
Table 4.3: CFA on Cognition (C) for S2-t	98
Table 4.4: Discriminant Validity of Cognition (C) for S2-t	99
Table 4.5: CFAs on Cognition (C) and Experience Quality (E) for TS-t	100
Table 4.6: Discriminant Validity of C and Experience for TS-t	101
Table 4.7: Assessment of Reflective Measurement Model for TS-t	102
Table 4.8: Assessment of Discriminant Validity Using HTMT for TS-t	103
Table 4.9: Assessment of HOC for TS-t	104
Table 4.10: Assessment of Structural Model for TS-t	105
Table 4.11: Assessment of Mediating Effect for TS-t	106
Table 4.12: Sample Profile-Total Resident Visitors	107
Table 4.13: EFAs for Cognition (C) and Experience Quality (E) for S1-r	109
Table 4.14: CFAs on Cognition and Experience Quality for S2-r	111
Table 4.15: Discriminant Validity of C and E for S2-r	112
Table 4.16: Assessment of Reflective Measurement Model for S2-r	113

Table 4.17: Assessment of Discriminant Validity-HTMT for S2-r	114
Table 4.18: Assessment of HOC for S2-r	115
Table 4.19: Assessment of Structural Model (S2-r of Resident Visitors)	117
Table 4.20: Assessment of the Mediating Effect for S2-r	118
Table 4.21: Direct Effects at the Dimension Level for S2-r	118
Table 4.22: CFA of Cognition /Experience Quality for S1-r	120
Table 4.23: Discriminant Validity for S1-r	122
Table 4.24: Assessment of Reflective Measurement Model for TS-tr /S1-t/S1-r	122
Table 4.25: Assessment of Discriminant Validity for TS-tr/S1-t/S1-r	125
Table 4.26: Assessment of HOC for TS-tr/S1-t/ S1-r	127
Table 4.27: Model Fit using SRMR–Measurement Model	127
Table 4.28: Model Fit using SRMR–Construct Model	127
Table 4.29: Measurement In-variance Test using MICOM	129
Table 4.30: Result for the Hypothesis	132
Table 4.31: Multi-group Comparison Test Results	133
Table 4.32: Performance of Predecessor Constructs for Tourists and Resident Visitors	135
Table 4.33: Performance of Predecessor Constructs for Tourists and Resident Visitors	138
Table 4.34: Description of Importance and Performance-Tourists and Resident Visitors	142

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1.1: Location of Qingzhou	6
Figure 1.2: Attractions of Qingzhou	7
Figure 1.3: Tourism Arrivals and Tourism Revenue of Qingzhou, 2012-2021	8
Figure 2.1: Proposed Model of Destination Image Mediated by Experience Quality	42
Figure 3.1: Measurement Model of Destination Image	69
Figure 3.2: Bias Avoid Steps	74
Figure 3.3: Conceptual Model of Mediation Effect	89
Figure 4.1: Importance-Performance Map of Tourists at Construct Level	136
Figure 4.2: Importance-Performance Map of Resident Visitors	137
Figure 4.3: Importance-Performance Map of Tourists at Indicator Level	139
Figure 4.4: Importance-Performance Map of Resident Visitors at Indicator Level	140

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A	Affection/Affective Image
A1	Amazing
A2	Joyful
A3	Lovely
AVE	Average Variance Extracted
C	Cognition/Cognitive Image
CA	Cronbach's Alpha
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CMV	Common Method Variance
CR	Composite Reliability
CV	Convergent Validity
EQ	Experience Quality
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
FC	Facilitation Cognition
FE	Facilitation Experience Quality
HOC	Higher Order Construct
HTMT	Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio
IC	Intangible Attraction Cognition
IE	Intangible Attraction Experience Quality

IPMA	Importance Performance Analysis
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Test
LB	Lower Border
LOC	Lower Order Construct
LV	Latent Variable
MICOM	Measurement Invariance of Composite Models
MGA	Multi Group Analysis
OI	Overall Destination Image (which has the same meaning with destination image in this study)
OL	Outer Loading
OLS	Ordinary Least Square Regression
OTG	Omnibus Test of Group
OW	Outer Weight
PLS-SEM	Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Model
Rho-A	Dijkstra Henseler
SD	Standard Deviation
SB	Standard Beta
SEM	Structural Equation Model
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SPSSAU	Statistical Product and Service Software Automatically

TC	Tangible Attraction Cognition
TE	Tangible Attraction Experience Quality
UB	Upper Border
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor
WOM	Word of Mouth

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter starts with the provision of background information of the topic. Then it identified the problems followed by the main research questions and the objectives that guide the study. In addition, this chapter highlights the thesis' significance and the scope which ensures that the study is focused. The definition of the key terms and organization of the thesis comprise the last sections in this chapter. As the introduction of the thesis, this chapter sets the tone for the entire document.

1.2 Study Background

Tourism is very much an image-driven industry (Elliot et al., 2011; Stylidis, 2022). The image of a destination is crucial in shaping a person's preference, motivation, and behavior towards tourism products and destinations, leading to diversified demands (Fletcher et al., 2017). Tourists tend to seek out fantastic places that match their interests. The more successful tourism destinations in the world are those which appeal to a wide range of tourist types. Subsequently, a destination's image influences recommendation (Carballo, 2015; Carballo et al., 2021) and behavioral intentions towards revisiting (Qu et al., 2011; Lv et al., 2020). As Kock et al. (2016) and Marques et al. (2021) mentioned whatever the image is, it will turn up the satisfaction, or behavior attentions such as recommendation or to visit. Thus, in tourism literature, the destination image is acknowledged as the most effective pull factor in accelerating destination development. To offer an outstanding image is a key to

marketing strategy (Hosany et al., 2006; Kislali et al., 2016) and to compete in a globalized competitiveness (King et al., 2015; Stylidis, 2022) for destinations.

The resource guide approach and market guide approach are the two main approaches in destination image field. Some places will go a resource guide approach and want to be distinguished with the others. For example, Urry (1990) first advocated the division of global tourism, using the concept of placeality to express the geographical significance of tourists' preference for a niche market. Destination marketers must make it unique in order to attract tourists based on placeality (Wu, 2001). It is the most personalized feature of an attraction and the most essential feature distinguishing it from other similar attractions (Zou, 2019). The other is market directed given the image is a subjectively 'imagined' one. For example, Crompton (1979, p.18) made a well-accepted definition of destination image perception from the perspective of tourists; and he dictated it is 'the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that an individual has of a destination'. Accordingly, most studies orientate to the cognitive attributes analysis to examine the perception of tourists as well as the affective emotion towards the destination (Ayob & Kichin, 2016; Deng et al., 2019; Marques et al., 2021) based on the cognitive-affective attitude theory (Bagozzi & Burnkrant, 1979; 1985; Wang & Huang, 2004; Kichin et al., 2021; Marques et al., 2021).

It is argued the local resources directed approach fits to the first class and most specially dominant heritage sites in a certain market; most destinations will suit to the market directed approach (Hee, 2010). Garrod and Wanhill (2008) raised a market-imagescape mix for attractions, which can guide the application as for how to balance the market and image. In the mix, the quadrant where the grand scale projects located is image dominant in terms of the relationship between image and market; whereas, the other three quadrants are market