**Master of Business Administration**

# The Impact of Perceived Destination Service Quality on Destination Brand Loyalty: The Mediating Role of Relationship Quality
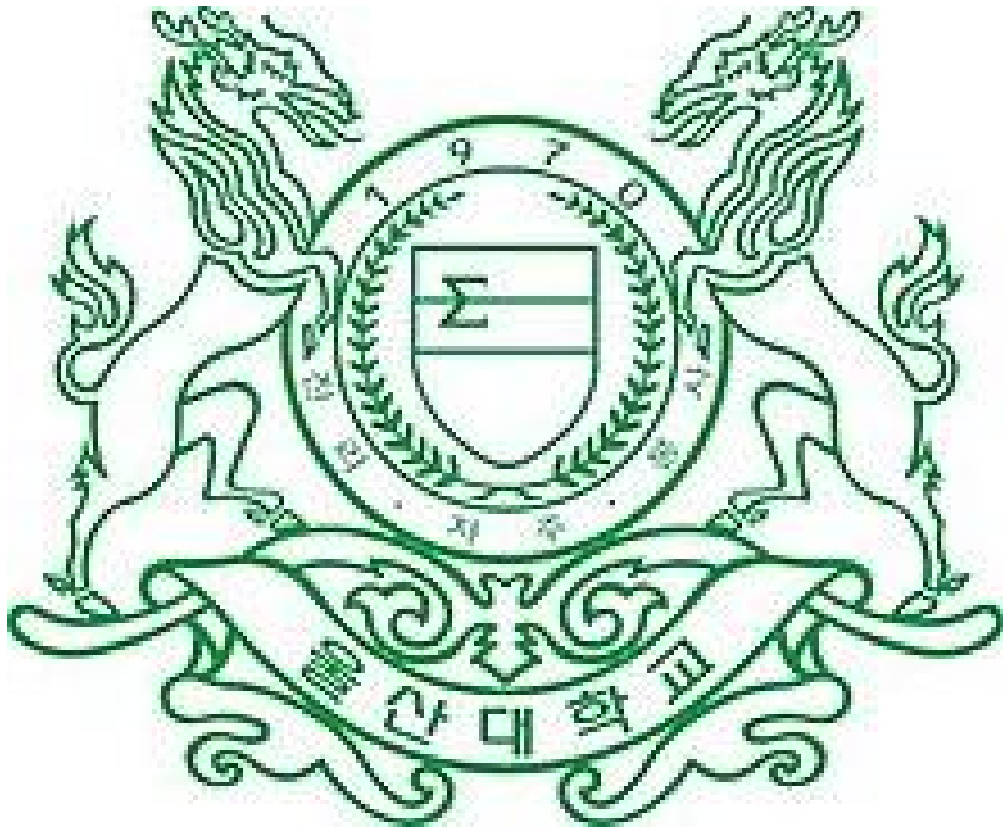


**The Graduate School**
**of the University of Ulsan**

**Department of Business Administration**
**Yuan Hong**

# The Impact of Perceived Destination Service Quality on Destination Brand Loyalty: The Mediating Role of Relationship Quality

Supervisor: Professor Doyle Kim

A Dissertation

Submitted to
the Graduate School of University of Ulsan
In partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Business Administration

by

Yuan Hong

Department of Business Administration
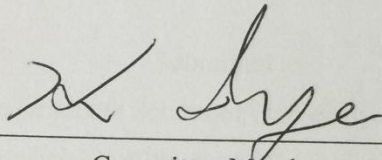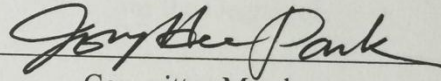Ulsan, Korea
February 2019

# The Impact of Perceived Destination Service Quality on Customer-based Brand Equity for Tourism Destination: The Mediating Role of Relationship Quality
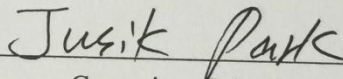
This certifies that the master thesis
of Yuan Hong is approved.

_____
Committee Member

_____
Committee Member

_____
Committee Member

Department of Business Administration

Ulsan, Korea

December, 2018

# Abstract

Currently, Destination Marketing Organizations face increasing and intensive competitions as more destinations open their doors to the worldwide. To handle the competition, Destination Marketing Organizations have turned to branding the destinations as their most powerful marketing weapon.

A number of Chinese outbound tourists have been increasing at an average annual rate of about 20% in the past 10 years (China Tourism Academy [CTA], 2017) and it reached 83 million in 2015 (United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2017). Therefore, many countries are trying to entice Chinese tourists to travel to their destinations (Shankman & Ali, 2013). This research tried to help the destination marketing organizations to attract more loyal Chinese outbound tourists.

Brand loyalty has been extensively investigated but has rarely been the focus of destination studies, for example, Customer-based brand equity for tourism destination (CBBETD) (Pike, 2007). CBBETD is used to measure the effectiveness of destination brand campaigns by destination marketing organizers (Pike, 2007), the conceptual model of CBBETD consists of four dimensions: awareness, image, perceived quality and loyalty, and the *destination brand loyalty* (DBL) have adopted as the dependent variable. The *destination brand loyalty* represented by repeat visits (Pike, 2007), and is a good predictor of future tourism choice (Knecnik & Gartner, 2007).

Many factors contribute to the competitiveness of destinations (Richie & Crouch, 2003), destination service quality (DSQ) is increasingly being viewed as important for the attainment of competitive advantage. Tourists perceptions of service quality are important to successful destination marketing because of their influence on destination selection (Ahmed, 1991), and the decision to return to a destination (Stevens, 1992), some prior researches tested the direct relationship of destination service quality with destination loyalty, however, there is a lack of exploring the mediating effects between destination service quality (DSQ) and destination brand loyalty (DBL).

From a customer's perspective, high relationship quality can be achieved when the provider reduces perceived uncertainty (i.e., potential for service failure or negative outcomes) (Crosby et al., 1990; Roloff and Miller, 1987). Therefore, it is meaningful to exploring the relationship quality in the service/tourism context. Relationship quality is a constructs includes multiple factors, Whereas Kumar et al. (1995) conceptualized

relationship quality as encompassing conflict, trust, commitment, willingness to invest in a relationship, and expectation of continuity. Relationship quality has been defined as "the degree to which buyers are satisfied over time" (Huntley, 2006, p. 706). In tourist context, Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) suggest that resilient relationships frequently are the consequence of tourists' satisfying one (or several) essential self-definitional needs through the identification phenomenon. This study specifically investigates tourist satisfaction and identification with a destination as relationship quality variables.

The purpose of this study is try to offer value to destination management organizations(DMO) who have been increasing investment in destination development by providing and testing a model that examines two relationship quality constructs (tourist satisfaction, tourist-destination identification) as mediating variables between Chinese tourists' destination service quality (DSQ) perceptions and destination brand loyalty (DBL).

A research model was proposed in which six hypotheses were developed. The research model investigates the relationships among the constructs by using a structural equation modeling approach (SEM). The results of this study with Chinese outbound tourists (n=311) provide support for the proposed model. Previous research on relationship quality has tended to ignore the role of tourist-destination identification even though it represents deep, committed, and meaningful relationships (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003) and a close bonding (Keh & Xie, 2009) between a destination and its tourists. The result of this study indicated the tourist-destination identification fully mediates the relationship between perceived destination service quality (DSQ) and destination brand loyalty (DBL). Some of prior studies have tested the relationships between destination service quality perceptions, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty. However, the results of these studies have not been consistent. Some studies indicate that tourist satisfaction has a full mediating role, but the result of this study indicated that tourist satisfaction not mediates the relationship between perceived destination service quality (DSQ) and destination brand loyalty (DBL) that the result different from prior researches.

Tourists with greater identification with a destination are more likely to exhibit actions that reduce negative effects on and/or benefit the natural environment, according to the research result, I suggest that tourism managers and marketers should consider the level of resources required to incorporate into their strategy decisions the elements that drive tourist-destination identification. Considering the role of tourist-destination identification

occurs when a tourist perceives a sense of belongingness with a destination, and the findings suggest that tourists have a greater likelihood of identifying with a destination that they having a positive destination service quality perception, therefore, investing to improve a destination's service quality can increase identification with that.

This study also has some limitations. First, there exist some limitations in the sampling methods. The data were collected after respondents had left the tourism sites, not at the actual tourism sites. Second, the sample of this study was collected from the tourists of travel to destinations that 13 famous in the world, it could gather enough sample data for one destination or a few destinations. Third, the current study tests its hypothesis with domestic Chinese tourists as the samples. Evidence of model stability and generalizability can only come from performing the analysis on additional samples in other contexts. Fourth, relationship quality is a higher order construct that consisting of several distinct but related components or dimensions. This study examined two distinct constructs (satisfaction & identification) of the relationship quality. Fifth, this research model is not an integrated model, it was not tested all of the variables in the model, especially, I did not tested the direct relationship that between perceived DSQ and DBL. This gap may have to be filled in the future research. Sixth, this study does not consider the moderating effects which might influence the relationship quality and/or destination brand loyalty.

# CONTENTS

# Chapter 1. Introduction

International travel is a competitive marketplace, and studies are increasingly addressing destination competitiveness through analyses of marketing strategies and segmentation activities required to attract visitors by individual country destinations (e.g., Henderson, 2009; Mestre et al., 2008; Proença and Soukiazis, 2015). For most tourism destinations, becoming and remaining competitive in the market place is a major challenge (ADITR, 2001). The modern tourists can choose from an almost limitless range of destinations, offering similar attractions and facilities, and subsequently, destination substitutability and destination decision sets have become important. Thus, enhancing destination loyalty, through increased intent to visit, has become a key goal for DMOs worldwide (Pike, 2004; Pike, 2008). Destination marketing organization (DMO) is a destination organization, often referred to as a destination marketing or management organization, convention and tourism board, is responsible for promoting a community as an attractive travel destination and enhancing its public image as a dynamic place to live and work. Through the impact of travel, they strengthen the economic position and provide opportunity for people in their community. Currently, destination marketing organizations (DMOs) face increasing and intensive competition as more destinations open their doors to the worldwide market. To handle the competition, DMOs have turned to branding as their most powerful marketing weapon (Morgan, Pritchard, & Pride 2002). Tourism marketers are quickly adopting branding strategies uses in an attempt to emphasize the uniqueness of the destinations they represent (CaiLiping, 2002; Usakli & Baloglu, 2011).

Brand personalization and customer-brand identification are crucial in brand choice, purchase likelihood, and ultimately brand success (Aaker, 1997; Fournier, 1998). A broad consensus exists in the management and marketing literature on three statements: (1)retaining customers is good business; (2) positive word-of-mouth is the most effective means of promoting; and (3) customer satisfaction is a prime driver for future consumer behavior, especially in tourism, whose intangible offerings are difficult to evaluate before consumption (Chi & Qu, 2008; Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008; Qu et al., 2011). Recent destination branding research (e.g., Ekinci, Sirakaya-Turk, & Preciado, 2013; Murphy,

Moscardo, & Benckendorff, 2017; Qu et al., 2011; Usakli & Baloglu, 2011) builds on traditional branding literature (e.g., Aaker, 1997; Aaker & Fournier, 1995), which suggests that people tend to personalize and identify themselves with brands. The Customer-based brand equity for tourism destination (CBBETD) (Pike, 2007) is used to measure the effectiveness of destination brand campaigns by destination marketing organizers (Pike, 2007), the conceptual model of CBBETD consists of four dimensions: awareness, image, perceived quality and loyalty, and the *destination brand loyalty* (DBL) have adopted as the dependent variable. Repeat purchases or recommendations to other people are most usually referred to as consumer loyalty in the marketing literature. Similarly, travel destinations can be considered as products, and tourists may revisit or recommend travel destinations to other potential tourists such as friends or relatives. Konecnik & Gartner, 2007, indicated that *destination brand loyalty* (DBL) is represented by repeat visits (Pike, 2007), and is a good predictor of future tourism choice. This study chose the dependent variable – Destination brand loyalty (DBL) from the CBBETD concept as an outcome of this research model.

For many years, tourism managers have striven to improve service quality in the belief that this would create loyal tourists who will be pleased with the destination they selected and will therefore return to it and recommend it to others (Tian and Cromption, 2003, P.65). Tourists perceptions of service quality are important to successful destination marketing because of their influence on destination selection (Ahmed, 1991), and the decision to return to a destination (Stevens, 1992), some prior researches tested the direct relationship of destination service quality with destination loyalty, however, there is a lack of exploring the mediating effects between destination service quality (DSQ) with destination brand loyalty (DBL).

Relationship marketing aims to build long-term, trusting, mutually beneficial relationships with valued customers (Kim & Cha, 2002). It is believed that a key driver of long-term customer behaviors (e.g., loyalty and retention) is relationship quality. Relationship quality is a constructs includes trust, commitment, willingness to invest in a relationship, and expectation of continuity (Huntley, 2006, p. 706). Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) suggest that resilient relationships frequently are the consequence of tourists' satisfying one (or several) essential self-definitional needs through the identification phenomenon. In this research, the important relationship quality variables (satisfaction and identification with a destination) are investigated as mediating variables.

A social identity perspective can be useful to help establish the relationship between destinations and tourists (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). As such, tourist-destination identification is a potentially useful construct for better understanding destination-tourist relationships, yet there have been a few studies that examine it in this way (Ahearne, Bhattacharya, & Gruen, 2005). In addition, a few studies pay attention to social identification antecedents (e.g., identification) to customer behaviors and have not yet incorporated them into established frameworks (He, Li, & Harris, 2012; Martínez & Rodriguez del Bosque, 2013). Ahearne et al. (2015) point out that identification may have a greater effect when the offering is intangible, as in the case of services. Thus, it may be worthwhile to examine identification in a tourism services context. To the best of knowledge, previous empirical research in tourism has not or just have a few studies examined the mediating role of tourist-destination identification as a relational construct.

With Asia predicted to be the world's largest tourist destination and tourist-generating region by 2020, it is surprising that there has been a general lack of empirical studies with Asian tourists. With China's population of over 1.3 billion, tourism authorities have been focusing more attention on developing China's domestic tourism market (Wang & Qu, 2004). The domestic market now makes up more than 90% of the country's tourist traffic and has exhibited continuous growth of around 10% each year in the most recent decade (China Travel Guide, 2014). A number of Chinese outbound tourists have been increasing at an average annual rate of about 20% in the past 10 years (China Tourism Academy [CTA], 2017) and it reached 83 million in 2015 (United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2017) Many countries are trying to entice Chinese tourists to travel to their destinations (Shankman & Ali, 2013). More importantly, concept of "relationship" in Chinese society is evolved under a specific term Guanxi – which plays a significant role in shaping and influencing the social behaviors of the Chinese and is perceived to be one of the most controversial research topics (Luo, Hsu, & Liu, 2008; Y. Wong & Chan, 1999). This study attempts to examine the relationship quality in the context of the Chinese travel industry. This study aim to provide and test a model that examines two relationship quality constructs (overall tourist satisfaction, tourist-destination identification) as mediating variables between Chinese outbound tourists' destination service quality (DSQ) perceptions and destination brand loyalty (DBL).

# Chapter 2. Literature review

## 2.1 Destination Service Quality

*Service quality*, as a generic concept of marketing and consumer behavior studies has been variously defined and explained by different scholars to achieve the aims of their research. For example, *service quality* can be defined as comparing the expectations of customers related to services and performance of services after they have been utilized (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985). That is to say, *service quality* is seen as 'the outcome of an evaluation process, where the consumer compares his expectations with the service he perceives he has received' (Grönroos, 1984). Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) define *service quality* as the difference between customer expectations of the service to be received and perceptions of the actual service received.

The notion of *destination service quality (DSQ)* is a part of the 'parental' concept of *service quality* in marketing studies. In general, it is considered 'perceptions of the quality of services experienced during a stay measured by use of services remain in the minds of tourists' (Kayat & Hai, 2014, p. 3). In other words, it is all about the tourist's valuation of the performance of services consumed in a given tourist destination. It may be useful to note that in the relevant studies the concepts of DSQ and destination natural quality are used interchangeably. Buhalis (2000) examines destination components under six categories. These are 'attractions', 'accessibility', 'amenities', 'available packages', 'activities' and 'ancillary services'. Kozak and Rimmington (1998), meanwhile, stated that the components of a tourism destination can be analyzed under five categories: 'attractions', 'facilities and services', 'infrastructure', 'hospitality' and 'cost'. Before this, Echtner and Ritchie (1993) stated that a destination can be assessed in terms of 'transportation', 'price level' and 'accommodation types' while the destination can also be evaluated according to psychological properties, such as 'sincerity level', 'security', 'reputation' and 'expected level of service quality'. Kozak (2001) described the properties of a destination as accommodation services, local transport services, hygiene and cleanliness, hospitality and customer care, availability of facilities and activities, level of prices, language communication and airport services. Kozak found that while hospitality and customer care factors were considered important to British visitors, this was not the case for German visitors, who viewed accommodation services as most important to their

stay in Turkey (Kozak, 2001). Additionally, in the study by Tosun, Temizkan, Timothy, and Fyall (2007), the physical properties of a destination's shopping areas and personnel-related service quality were evaluated using ten variables. The study found that the language ability of personnel ranked third in order of importance, while attitudes ranked ninth. Moutinho, Albayrak, and Caber (2012), meanwhile, measured a destination's quality of services using five dimensions, defined as health, shopping, information, transportation and accommodation. Moutinho et al. (2012) found that all factors apart from health significantly affected customers' value perceptions. The items measuring the destination service quality was adapted from these previous researches.

Based on the discussed service quality literature, SERVQUAL instrument (Parasuraman et al., 1988) was adapted to measure tourism service quality in this study, since it is well-established as well as has been used in tourism studies (Choi and Chu, 1998; Armstrong et al., 1997; Atilgan et al., 2003; Berry et al., 2006; Chen and Tsai, 2007).

## 2.2 Relationship quality

*Relationship marketing* seeks to create sustained trust-based bonds with the appropriate target market(s) that will jointly benefit both parties (Kim & Cha, 2002). The consumer–company relationship can bring many advantages to an organization such as decreased investment needed to acquire new customers, better customer retention, improved brand equity, and greater profits (Smit, Bronner, & Tolboom, 2007). From a customer's perspective, high relationship quality can be achieved when the provider reduces perceived uncertainty (i.e., potential for service failure or negative outcomes) (Crosby et al., 1990; Roloff and Miller, 1987).

*Relationship quality* is a constructs includes multiple factors, although there is a lack of understanding on what elements comprise relationship quality (Athanasopoulou, 2009; Huntley, 2006; Woo & Ennew, 2004). As such previous studies have revealed various conceptualizations of the construct. Lages et al. (2005) represented relationship quality as the amount of information sharing, communication quality, long-term orientation, and satisfaction with a relationship. Whereas Kumar et al. (1995) conceptualized *relationship quality* as encompassing conflict, trust, commitment, willingness to invest in a relationship, and expectation of continuity. *Relationship quality* has been defined as "the degree to which buyers are satisfied over time" (Huntley, 2006, p. 706). In a

service/tourism context, Kim and Cha (2002) defined *relationship quality* as "customer perceptions and evaluations of individual service employees' communication and behavior, such as respect, courtesy, warmth, empathy, and helpfulness" (p. 322). Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) suggest that resilient relationships frequently are the consequence of tourists' satisfying one (or several) essential self-definitional needs through the identification phenomenon. This study specifically investigates tourist satisfaction and identification with a destination as relationship quality variables.

So far, most empirical studies on relationship quality have been conducted within a western context (Crosby, Evans, & Cowles, 1990; Roberts, Varki, & Brodie, 2003). Further examination is warranted to find out whether existing conclusions derived from western settings would be applicable in an oriental context. China, in particular, being a high context culture, needs to be understood within its own context. The concept of "relationship" in Chinese society is evolved under a specific term Guanxi – which plays a significant role in shaping and influencing the social behaviors of the Chinese and is perceived to be one of the most controversial research topics (Luo, Hsu, & Liu, 2008; Wong & Chan, 1999). This study attempts to examine the relationship quality in the context of the Chinese travel industry.

**2.2.1 Tourist satisfaction**

*Customer satisfaction* was defined by Oliver (1997) as the customer's assessment that a good or service delivers a pleasurable amount of contentment relative to a consumption experience. Bitner and Zeithaml (2003) suggest that satisfaction is a customer assessment of a product relative to expectations. Thus, satisfaction is best understood as the result of what is sensed when expectations are compared with actual performance.

In the tourism literature, prior studies have confirmed that *tourist satisfaction* is an important antecedent of key post-purchase loyalty intentions and behaviors (Chen &Chen, 2010; Chi & Qu, 2008; Hutchinson et al., 2009; Kozak & Rimmington, 2000; Su & Hsu, 2013; Su, Hsu, & Swanson, 2014). Undoubtedly, satisfaction has been playing an important role in planning marketable tourism products and services. One of the key elements of successful destination marketing is tourist satisfaction, which influences the choice of destination and the decision to return (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). *Tourist satisfaction* has been defined as a subjective feeling based on site experiences (Otto &

Ritchie, 1996). Rather than looking at the result of a specific encounter during a visit to a destination, satisfaction is considered here as a holistic evaluation of the total consumption experience (Loureiro, Miranda, & Breazeale, 2014). In the context of the current study, tourist satisfaction is the overall level of contentment resulting from the comparison of expectations with actual experiences at a travel destination.

**2.2.2 Tourist-destination identification**

Two of the most important relationship marketing concepts are customer satisfaction and identification (Haumann, Quaiser, Wieseke, & Rese, 2014). Huang, Chen, and Chen (2017) note that customer identification with an entity is critical to relationship marketing strategies, as enhancing identification "has become an important route to building deep, meaningful, long-term relationships" (p. 69). Specifically, a customer who strongly identifies with an entity has a greater likelihood of engaging in behaviors that help that entity achieve its goals (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003).

*Identity theory* posits that the self is a structure of multiple identities that reflect roles in differentiated networks of interaction (Arnett, German, & Hunt, 2003). Self-concept comprises (1) a personal identity, which involves idiosyncratic characteristics (e.g., abilities and interests), and (2) a social identity, which consists of salient group classifications that enable people to locate themselves and others within the social environment (Turner, Oakes, Haslam & McGarty, 1994*). Social identification* refers to a sense of oneness or connectedness with a group, together with the emotional significance of that belongingness (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Individuals tend to identify themselves with different social groups, ranging from features such as gender and ethnicity to brand communities and organizations (Fournier, 1998; Turner et al., 1994). Interestingly, a place may become a part of self-concept by evoking strong cognitive and psychological attachments.

Since the relationship between a company and its customers is built primarily by the experience of consuming a branded product or service, understanding brand identification is crucial in building successful relationships between customers and the brands they use. Customers are attracted to a branded product or service that is connected to their social identity (Forehand, Deshpande, & Reed, 2002; Stayman & Deshpandé, 1989), a linkage which may come about because a branded product or service is a symbol

of the customer's own personality traits (Aaker, 1997), reflects a desirable self-image, or embodies the type of person that the customer aspires to think, feel and be like (Belk, Bahn, & Mayer 1982). Since people feel a sense of self-definition by using a brand and communicate it with others, they are more likely to identify themselves with a brand whose image is congruent with their self-concepts and use the brand. Brand identification is the extent to which the consumer sees one's own self-image as overlapping with the brand's image (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006). Brand identification has three components: cognitive, affective and evaluative aspects, which motivate behaviors to maintain identity (Bagozzi & Dakolakia, 2006; Bagozzi & Lee, 2002, Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; Ellemers, Kortekaas, & Ouwerkerk, 1999). In the context of tourism, tourists would identify themselves with the place they live in by considering oneself as a member of the place, feeling of belonging to the place, and/or liking the influence of the place on her/his sense of value. Research shows that touristic destinations can evoke strong symbolic values that usually describe humans (e.g., outgoing, fun, friendly, or boring) (Ekinci et al., 2013; Sirgy & Su, 2000). *Tourist-destination identification* with a destination refers to the extent to which a tourist perceives a sense of connectedness to a destination and defines him or herself in terms of that feeling (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Su & Scott &Chen (2017) define tourist-destination identification as a tourist's perceived sense of belongingness with a destination.

**2.3 Customer-based Brand Equity for Tourism Destination & Destination Brand Loyalty**

A *branding* concept incorporating visitor experience into the process of branding is supported within a tourism context (Blain et al., 2005). Cai (2002) stated that 'destination branding is a strategic combination of a consistent mix of brand elements to identify and distinguish a destination through positive image building and unlike typical goods and services, the name of a destination brand is relatively fixed by the actual geographical name of the place'. And *destination branding* is defined as the set of marketing activities that: (1) support the creation of a name, logo, word, mark or other graphics that readily identifies and differentiates a destination, (2) consistently convey the expectation of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination, (3) serve to consolidate and reinforce the emotional connection between the visitor and the destination, and (4) reduce the consumer search costs and perceived risk (Blain, Levy, & Ritchie, 2005).

The challenges in branding a tourism destination are mainly due to the 'complexity of the decision making process' of tourists because the tourist destination product is often considered to be intangible and risky (Cai, 2002 p.721). A service product such as a tour package is considered intangible and risky because, unlike tangible goods the customer is not able to sample the product before he purchased it and his purchase decision is mainly dependent on the image he possessed of the destination.

The concept of brand equity has been a popular and important marketing concept since 1980. However, the concept of brand equity has been defined by various researchers for different purposes resulting in a number of definitions (Keller, 1998). Aaker(1991) defined 'brand equity as a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or that firm's customers'. On the other hand, Keller (1998), who approached the concept of brand equity from the perspective of the consumer, defined 'customer-based brand equity as the differential effect that brand knowledge has on the consumer or how customers respond to the marketing of that brand'.

Research on the *brand equity* concept and its *dimensions* has been mostly investigated within the goods and services context; the brand equity concept within a tourists destination context is in its infancy (Konecnik and Gartner, 2013; Pike, 2013 Boo et al., 2012). They found destination loyalty is a core dimension of destination brand equity, which explains the highest proportion of variance among the dimensions.

The concept of *customer-based brand equity* (CBBE) *for a destination* is used to measure the effectiveness of destination brand campaigns by destination marketing organizers (Pike, 2007). Pike (2007) conceptualized CBBE for a destination as a hierarchy of brand salience, brand associations, brand resonance and brand loyalty. Konecnik and Gartner (2007) applied the customer-based brand equity concept to a destination and presented the concept from a tourist's perspective. Their conceptual model consists of four dimensions: awareness, image, perceived quality and loyalty, and the destination brand loyalty have adopted as the dependent variable, this study chose the dependent variable – destination brand loyalty (DBL) as an outcome of this research model.

*Brand loyalty* is the core of BE and is defined as the attachment a customer has to a brand (Aaker, 1991). *Brand loyalty* has been extensively investigated but has rarely been

the focus of destination studies (Pike, 2007). Repeat purchases or recommendations to other people are most usually referred to as consumer loyalty in the marketing literature. The concept and degree of loyalty is one of the critical indicators used to measure the success of marketing strategy (Flavian, Martinez, & Polo, 2001). Previous research suggests two-dimensions of loyalty construct; behavioral loyalty and attitudinal loyalty (Jones and Taylor, 2007; Li and Petrick, 2008). Similarly, travel destinations can be considered as products, and tourists may revisit or recommend travel destinations to other potential tourists such as friends or relatives. It has been suggested that repeat visitation (Fakeye and Crompton 1991; Gitelson and Crompton 1984) and intention to return (Ostrowski, O'Brien and Gordon 1993) are indicators of place loyalty. And Konecnik & Gartner, 2007, indicated that *destination brand loyalty* is represented by repeat visits (Pike, 2007), and is a good predictor of future tourism choice.

# Chapter 3. Research  Hypotheses & Research Model

**3.1 The relationship between DSQ and tourist satisfaction**

Service quality has been considered to be one of the critical antecedents of both satisfaction (Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Baker and Crompton, 2000; Caruana et al., 2000) and perceived value (Fornell et al., 1996; Baker and Crompton, 2002; Petrick and Backman, 2002), as well as to be a good predictor of repurchase intentions (Getty and Thompson, 1994; Baker and Crompton, 2000).

Tourist satisfaction is important to successful destination marketing because it influences the choice of destination, the consumption of products and services, and the decision to return (Kozak & Rimmington, 2000). Some researchers have also looked at comparison of standards used in service quality and satisfaction and provided different measures of service quality and satisfaction (Ekinci, Riley, & Chen, 2001; Liljander, 1994). An understanding of satisfaction must be a basic parameter used to evaluate the performance of destination products and services (Noe & Uysal, 1997; Schofield, 2000). Among the tourism literature, an assessment of tourist satisfaction has been attempted using various perspectives and theories.

Tourist satisfaction is a prime driver for future tourist behavior in tourism, whose intangible offerings are difficult to evaluate before consumption (Chi & Qu, 2008; Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008; Qu et al., 2011) A number of prior studies suggest that destination service quality is a key determinant tourist satisfaction (e.g., Chi & Qu, 2008;Cronin, Brady, & Hult, 2000; Fornell, Johnson, Anderson, Cha, & Bryant, 1996; Hutchinson et al., 2009; Kozak & Rimmington, 2000; Orel & Kara, 2014). In view of these prior results, it is hypothesized that

*H1a: Perceived destination service quality has a positive influence on tourist satisfaction.*

**3.2 The relationship between DSQ and tourist-destination identification**

Destination service quality perceptions have been tied to a number of positive tourist behaviors, yet this relationship is not necessarily straightforward. Using a value

profit chain perspective suggest that both tourist satisfaction and tourist-destination identification would be largely influenced by the perceived value that obtaining quality service provides to the tourist. Though the impact of destination service quality on satisfaction has been widely examined in previous literature, the potential effect of service quality on tourist-destination identification has not been empirically explored fully. Since identity attractiveness can further enhance brand identification (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003; Dutton et al., 1994), service quality can enhance brand identification. From tourists' perspective, tourists are motivated by self-consist enhancement to identify with a destination. Identifying with a destination that more favorable image of service quality can better enable consumers to fulfill their needs for self-consistence and enhancement. He and Li (2011) indicate that the more favorable the perception of a service, the greater the level of identification with a destination. Ahearne et al. (2005) posit that "identification is likely to be stronger when customers have favorable perceptions of the boundary-spanning agent with whom they interact (e.g., the company's salesperson, customer service, technical representatives, etc.)" (p. 575). Underwood, Klein, and Burke (2001) indicate that characteristics of the servicescape may assist consumers in developing social identification. Similarly, Ahearne et al. (2005) suggest that tourist perceptions of service provider characteristics can also contribute to the development of tourist-identification. Based on these previous findings, the current study posits the following hypothesis:

***H1b****: Perceived destination service quality has a positive influence on tourist-destination identification.*

### 3.3 The relationship between tourist satisfaction and DBL

Relationship quality have been found to act as antecedents to a variety of important customer loyalty behaviors such as repeat purchase, positive word-of-mouth, and the propensity to pay more (e.g., Cronin et al., 2000; Fornell et al., 1996; Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, & Gremler, 2002; Palmatier, Dant, Grewal, & Evans, 2006; Wulf, Odekerken-Schroder, & Iacobucci, 2001; Zei-thaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996). It is generally believed that satisfaction leads to repeat purchase and positive recommendation, which are the main indicators of loyalty. Marketing literature has paid much attention to the relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty, and a number of studies have

confirmed a significant positive relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty/retention (Anderson & Sullivan, 1993; Cronin et al., 2000; Taylor & Baker, 1994). Understanding how tourism service evaluations affect economic outcomes is important. Indeed, service evaluation is confirmed as an important antecedent of behavioral intentions (e.g., Chen & Chen, 2010; Chen & Tsai, 2008;& & He Song, 2009; Hutchinson et al., 2009; Zabkar, Brencic, Dmitrovic, 2010), which are the important predictors of economic performance. In tourism industry, there are empirical evidences that tourists' satisfaction is a strong indicator of their intentions to revisit and recommend the destination to other people (Beeho & Prentice, 1997; Bramwell, 1998; Juaneda, 1996; Kozak, 2001; Kozak & Rimmington, 2000; Ross, 1993; Yau & Chan, 1990; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Satisfied tourists are more likely to return to the same destination, and are more willing to share their positive traveling experience with their friends and relatives. WOM recommendations are especially critical in tourism marketing because they are considered to be the most reliable, and thus are one of the most sought-after information sources for potential tourists (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Based on the previous findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H2a: Tourist satisfaction has a positive influence on DBL.*

**3.4 The relationship between tourist-destination identification and DBL**

Similar to tourist satisfaction, tourist-destination identification can also impact tourist loyalty (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; He & Li, 2011; He et al., 2012; Marin, Ruiz, & Rubio, 2009; Martínez & Rodriguez del Bosque, 2013; Perez & Rodriguez del Bosque, 2013). Organizational identification research indicates that when customers identify with a company, they have a tendency to purchase more and recommend the company's products more. Findings by Ahearne et al. (2005) point out that "from a social identity standpoint, once a customer identifies with a company, purchasing that company's products becomes an act of self-expression." According to Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and Self-Categorization Theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherel, 1987), identification orientates the tourist to become psychologically attached to and care about a destination (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003), which in turn positively stimulates their loyalty (Marin et al., 2009; Martínez & Rodriguez del Bosque; 2013; Perez & Rodriguez del Bosque, 2013). Identification is proposed to be a major predictor

of tourist loyalty (He and Mukherjee, 2009 Marin et al. 2009). Individuals are likely to behave accordingly to a salient identity because identities require self-expression (Arnett et al., 2003). Thus, tourists that foster strong relational bonds and identify with a destination present higher tendencies to return and promote the destination to friends and acquaintances in the future (Ekinci et al., 2013).These prior findings lead to propose the following hypothesis:

*H2b*: *Tourist-destination identification has a positive influence on BDL.*

### 3.5 The relationship between DSQ and DBL

Many researchers in various studies have studied the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty. Rousan and Mohamed (2010) in their study on 322 hotel guests of hotel industry in Jordon, they found that empathy, reliability, responsiveness, tangible and assurance significantly predict customer loyalty. The similar result also found in Chen and Lee (2008) study when the revealed that service quality has strong and significant relationship with customer loyalty in their International Logistic provider industry. In the tourism industry, customer perception of service quality are important to successful destination marketing because of their influence on destination selection (Ahmed, 1991), the consumption of goods and service at destinations and the decision to return to a destination (Stevens, 1992). Service quality has been considered to be a good predictor of revisit intentions (Getty and Thompson, 1994; Baker and Crompton, 2000, Boulding, Kalra, Staelin, & Zeithaml, 1993; Parasuraman et al., 1988, 1991; Taylor & Baker; Zeithaml et al., 1996).

*H3*: *Tourist-destination identification has a positive influence on BDL.*

### 3.6 Mediating effects hypotheses

### 3.6.1. The mediating role of tourist satisfaction

Many studies examined the indirect relationship between the service quality and loyalty via the satisfaction (Woodside et al.1989; Gremler and Brown 1997; Shemwell et al.1998; Oh1999; Caruana et al. 2000; Bouet a.2011). Customer satisfaction has previously been found to mediate the effect of service quality on a range of customer loyalty and behavioral intention constructs in a variety of contexts, including supermarkets (Orel & Kara, 2014), health services (Dagger & Sweeney, 2006), IT

services (Akter, D'Ambra, Ray, & Hani, 2013), and retail (Walsh & Bartikowski, 2013). A recent tourism study that sampled Chinese tourists found that destination satisfaction fully mediated the effect of service quality on both revisit intentions and positive word-of-mouth referrals (Su et al., 2014). Therefore, this present study puts forth the following hypothesis:

*H4a: Tourist satisfaction mediates the influence of perceived service quality on DBL.*

### 3.6.2 The mediating role of tourist-destination identification

Based on prior findings that have identified a mediating function for identification between a number of different constructs in varying contexts, I propose that tourist identification with a destination will also play a mediating role in this proposed model(Figure.1). A few studies have identified customer-company identification as a mediator for a variety of post-purchase consumer behaviors. Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) suggest that identification may mediate the effect of identity attractiveness on company loyalty, company promotion, customer recruitment, and resilience to negative information. Hong and Yang (2009) report a critical mediating effect of identification between organizational reputation and customers' positive word-of-mouth referrals. In a business-to-business context, Keh and Xie (2009) confirmed identification mediates the effect of corporate reputation on purchase intention. Marin et al. (2009) has examined the mediating role of brand identification on the effect of brand service quality on brand loyalty. Based on these previous findings, the present study puts forward the following hypothesis:

*H4b: Tourist-destination identification mediates the influence of perceived service quality on DBL.*

## 3.7 Research Model

The research model portraying the network of relationships between **mediator** --- tourist satisfaction and tourist-destination identification, its **independent variable** --- perceived service quality and **dependent variable** ---destination brand loyalty.
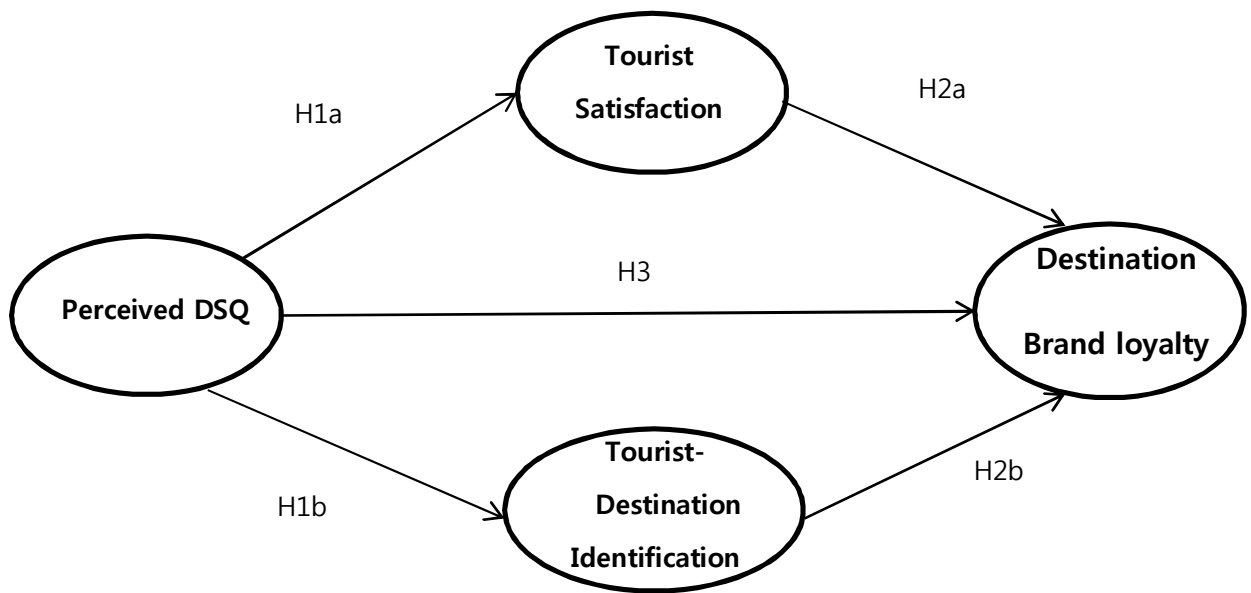


**Figure 1 Research Model**

# Chapter 4. Methodology

**4.1 Data Collection**

A survey was used as the data collection tool for this research. The survey is conducted online. I launched the questionnaire online to collect responses at Sina Weibo (Chinese micro-blogging website and is one of the biggest social media platforms in China) and Wechat.

SERVQUAL instrument (Parasuraman et al., 1988) was adapted to measure destination service quality in this study. In the SERVQUAL scale, five determinants of tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy were specified as part of the 24-item SERVQUAL scale for measuring service quality (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

The measurement of tourist satisfaction was relied on a four-item scale. For tourist-destination identification, relied on three-item scale to respondents. Respondents were ranked their perceptions on 5-point Likert scales where 1 signified "strongly disagree" and 5 signified "strongly agree". To establish translation equivalence the questionnaire was first prepared in English, and then to established the questionnaire translated into Chinese language by me.

Respondents were selected with convenience sampling. Five-hundred questionnaires were delivered in total and 311 questionnaires were finally used for purpose of analysis. The data was collected from Chinese tourist of travel to destinations that famous in the world (Hawaii, Saipan, Phuket Island, Jeju Island, Maldives, Egypt, Provence etc.)

Respondents were all domestic Chinese and slightly more likely to be female (50.3%). Age categories represented included 25 to 34 (41.5%), 35 to 44 (39.1%), and 19-24(11.4%). Complete sample characteristics are provided in **Table 1.**

**Table 1: Sample characteristics**

| Gender | n | % |
|---|---|---|
| Female | 159 | 50.3 |
| Male | 152 | 48.9 |
| **Level of Education** | **n** | **%** |
| Bachelor's degree | 229 | 74 |
| Master's degree | 71 | 23 |
| Under High School | 7 | 0.2 |
| Doctorate degree | 4 | 0.1 |
| **Age in Years** | **n** | **%** |
| 25-34 | 129 | 41.5 |
| 35-44 | 121 | 39.1 |
| 19-24 | 31 | 0.99 |
| 45-54 | 20 | 0.64 |
| **Employment Status** | **n** | **%** |
| Employee | 20 | 64.6 |
| Self-employed | 53 | 17.6 |
| Student | 45 | 14.5 |
| Retired | 10 | 0.32 |
| Homework | 2 | 0.01 |
| **Outbound travel experience** | **n** | **%** |
| Have a outbound travel before | 458 | 92% |
| Have a outbound travel in the past year | 311 | 62% |

## 4.2. Measurement Model

The validity of the research instrument was assessed through convergent and discriminant validity. And the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is used to assess construct validity.

### 4.2.1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) results

According to the model evaluation criteria suggested in the prior discussion, the overall fit of the proposed model to data was acceptable. Specifically, RMSEA=.58, RMR=.25, GFI=.837, AGFI=.801, RFI=.943, IFI=.965, TLI=.961, CFI=.966, NFI=.961.

**CFA Model Goodness of Fit Indices**

| Model Goodness of Fit Indices | Model Indices Results |
| --- | --- |
| Normed fit index(NFI) | .961 |
| Non-normed fit index(NNFI) | .974 |
| Comparative fit index(CFI) | .996 |
| Goodness-of-fit index(GFI) | .837 |
| Adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI) | .801 |
| Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) | .058 |

### 4.2.2. Convergent validity test

According to Anderson and Gerbing (1988),convergent validity is satisfied if the standardized factor loading exceeds .400, is significant at .001 and average variance extracted(AVE) is greater than .500. As provided in Table 2, the standardized factor loading of items ranged from .708 to .797, and all were statistically significant ($p < .001$). Average variance extracted of the latent constructs ranged from .708 to .797. The findings suggest that a large portion of the variance was explained by the items, and convergent validity is satisfied.

### 4.2.3. Discriminant validity test

According to Chin (1998), discriminant validity is satisfied if the AVE is greater than .500, and the correction coefficient among latent constructs is lower than squared root of AVE. Construct AVE ranged from .708 to .797, all exceeding .500 (see Table 3). The square root of AVE of the latent constructs ranged from.893 to .841, while the correlation coefficients among latent constructs fell between .48 and .70 (see Table 3). The findings indicate adequate discriminant validity.

**Table 2** CFA Fit Indices, Factor Loadings, CR and AVEs

| Constructs and Items | Factors Loadings | CR | AVE | Cronbach's alpha |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Destination service quality** | | | | |
| *Assurance* | | | | |
| I was served by a well-trained, customer oriented personnel. | .79 | | | |
| The level of service quality reinforces my confidence in the service provided. | .86 | .879 | .708 | .814 |
| Staff communicated with the fluency and in an understandable manner. | .87 | | | |
| *Responsiveness* | | | | |
| Staff showed sincere interest in problem-solving. | .83 | | | |
| Staff provided adequate and clear information about the service they deliver. | .89 | | | |
| Staffs were able to fulfill my requests promptly in a timely manner. | .85 | .943 | .769 | .849 |
| Staff provided me with full information regarding the entertainment offered. | .92 | | | |
| Staff showed sincere willingness and interest in helping and assisting me. | .88 | | | |
| *Reliability* | | | | |
| Directions and signs were available properly. | .86 | | | |
| Services delivered were correct from the first time. | .90 | | | |
| Services were delivered as promised to tourists. | .90 | .951 | .797 | .852 |
| Scheduled tours were met on a timely manner. | .92 | | | |
| No troubles occurred with the service provided during my stay in the destination. | 0.9 | | | |
| *Tangible Facilities* | | | | |
| Modern and technologically relevant vehicles were available. | .86 | | | |
| The infrastructure is designed well and in high quality standards. | .88 | | | |
| The meals that were served are of high quality. | .87 | .948 | .784 | .846 |
| The accommodation and facilities were | 0.9 | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| appealing and in good design. | | | | |
| Physical appearance of the hotel I stayed in and tours escort were tidy and clean. | .91 | | | |
| *Empathy* | | .887 | .732 | .886 |
| Services offered were provided by pleasant and friendly personnel. | .85 | | | |
| My expectation and special needs were met as expected. | .86 | | | |
| Personal safety was considered a major aspect in every service provided. | .85 | | | |
| **Tourist Satisfaction** | | | | |
| The destination was a great destination to visit | .90 | | | |
| All things considered (e.g., time, effort, money), I am satisfied with my visit to the destination. | .91 | .94 | .797 | .855 |
| I have pleasant memories from my visit to the destination. | .91 | | | |
| My visit to the destination met my expectations. | .84 | | | |
| **Tourist -destination Identification** | | | | |
| I strongly identify myself with the destination. | .9 | | | |
| The destination fits well to me. | .85 | .924 | .754 | .824 |
| I feel attached to the destination. | .88 | | | |
| I am very interested in what others think about the destination. | .86 | | | |
| **Destination Brand Loyalty** | | | | |
| I intend to visit the destination in the future. | .89 | | | |
| It is the preferred destination I want to visit. | .85 | .906 | .762 | .806 |
| I would recommend other people to visit this destination. | .87 | | | |

**Table 3** Correlation matrix and average variance extracted

| | Identific ation | Assurance | Responsibility | Reliability | Tangible | Empathy | Satisfaction | BDL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Identification** | **0.868** | | | | | | | |
| **Assurance** | 0.51 | **0.841** | | | | | | |
| **Responsibility** | 0.62 | 0.55 | **0.877** | | | | | |
| **Reliability** | 0.54 | 0.7 | 0.67 | **0.893** | | | | |
| **Tangible** | 0.70 | 0.62 | 0.59 | 0.65 | **0.886** | | | |
| **Empathy** | 0.67 | 0.5 | 0.64 | 0.54 | 0.48 | **0.851** | | |
| **Satisfaction** | 0.55 | 0.48 | 57 | 0.53 | 0.49 | 0.57 | **0.893** | |
| **BDL** | 0.49 | 0.61 | 0.48 | 0.54 | 0.53 | 0.51 | 0.56 | **0.873** |

Note: Values below diagonal are correlations and values on diagonal are square roots of AVE.

# Chapter 5. Research results

Once the measurement model was validated, subsequent structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis was conducted to support the theoretical model and to test the hypotheses.

## 5.1. Structural equation modeling (SEM) results

The fitting indices of the structural path model results are as follows: Chi-square/df = 2.055, RMSEA=.063, RMR=.026, GFI=.833, AGFI=.803, NFI=.932, RFI=.925, IFI=.966, TLI=.957, CFI=.961. In comparison with values suggested in the prior discussion, findings demonstrate that the model's fit is satisfactory. Thus, it was deemed appropriate to next test the hypothesized paths.

**SEM Model Goodness of Fit Indices**

| Model Goodness of Fit Indices | Model Indices Results |
|---|---|
| Normed fit index(NFI) | .932 |
| Non-normed fit index(NNFI) | .974 |
| Comparative fit index(CFI) | .961 |
| Goodness-of-fit index(GFI) | .833 |
| Adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGI) | .803 |
| Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) | .063 |

The hypothesized positive relationship between perceived destination service quality and customer satisfaction (H1a) and a positive relationship between destination service quality and tourist destination identification (H1b) were supported (p<.001). The hypothesized positive relationship between perceived destination service quality and DBL (H3) was also supported. As predicted by hypotheses H2a, the tourist satisfaction has a positive influence on BDL was rejected. And H2b, tourist destination identification was found to have a statistically significant positive influence on destination brand loyalty (p<.001) (see table 4).

**Table 4** Structural model evaluation indices and hypotheses test outcomes.

| Hypothesis | Predicted relationships | Standard Path loadings | S.E | P | outcome |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| H1a | Destination service quality →Tourism satisfaction | .89 | .057 | .000 | Supported |
| H1b | Destination service quality →Tourism-destination identification | .97 | .057 | .000 | Supported |
| H2a | Tourist satisfaction→ DBL | .6 | .124 | .746 | Rejected |
| H2b | Tourist-destination identification→ DBL | .93 | .142 | .000 | Supported |
| H3 | DSQ → DBL | .606 | .106 | .000 | Supported |

## 5.2 Mediating effects

To test for mediating effects, Baron and Kenny (1986) suggest regressing the (1) mediators on the independent variables, (2) dependent variables on the independent variables, and (3) dependent variables on both the independent variables and mediators. Based on the Baron and Kenny (1986) method, Hopwood (2007) pointed out that a structural equation model method has advantages over multiple regressions in testing mediating effects. It is not necessary that mediator models specify observed (measured) variables, and in many cases there are advantages to specifying latent variables. Latent variables are commonly used in applications such as structural equation modeling (SEM). One advantage of using latent, as opposed to observed, variables is that the former tends to estimate the desired effect more reliably because any variables associated with measurement error in a particular observed variable are unlikely to be shared across other observed variable and, thus, will not contribute to the score on a shared latent variable (Hopwood, 2007). Thus, unreliability and method effects on models of mediation can be ameliorated through the use of SEM (Hopwood, 2007). In this study, all variables are latent. So, following Baron and Kenny (1986) method and Hopwood's (2007) procedures, I test the mediating roles of customer satisfaction and tourist-destination identification.

To test the mediating effect of customer satisfaction, I first construct a structural equation model with destination service quality and customer satisfaction on destination brand loyalty.

The model fits, (RMSEA= .066, RMR=.027, GFI=.844, AGFI=.810, NFI=.938, RFI=.930, IFI =.963, TLI =.958, CFI=.963), and the standardized path coefficients are all statistically significant. Thus, Baron and Kenny's first criterion is met. Destination service quality has a significant effect on tourist satisfaction but tourist satisfaction not has a significant effect on destination brand loyalty. The results indicate that tourist satisfaction do not have a mediating effect of destination service quality on destination brand loyalty (See table 5 & table 6).

**Table 5** Standardized path coefficients between DSQ and tourist satisfaction on DBL.

| Predicted relationships | Standard Path loadings | S.E | P |
|---|---|---|---|
| DSQ → Tourist satisfaction | .86 | 0.041 | .000 |
| Tourist satisfaction → DBL | .99 | 0.141 | .417 |
| DSQ → DBL | .83 | .137 | .000 |

**Table 6** Direct, indirect, and total effects of DSQ and tourist satisfaction on DBL.

| Predicted relationships | Direct effects | Indirect effects | Total effects |
|---|---|---|---|
| DSQ→ Satisfaction | .926 | — | .926 |
| DSQ → DBL | — | .095 | |
| Satisfaction → DBL | .01 | — | |

(p<.0.05)

Secondly, the constructed structural equation model between destination service quality and tourist-destination identification to destination brand loyalty was found to have a good fit (RMSEA=.062, RMR=.062, GFI =.833, AGFI=.801, NFI=.932, RFI=.921, IFI=.962, TLI=.574, CFI=.962). The standardized path coefficients are all statistically significant. Thus, Baron and Kenny's second criterion is met. Destination service quality has a significant effect on tourist-destination identification, but not on BDL. Tourist-destination identification significantly impacts destination brand loyalty. According to the judgment criterion of the mediating role suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986), the results indicate that tourist-destination identification fully mediates the effect of destination service quality on DBL (See table 7 & table 8).

**Table 7** Standardized path coefficients between DSQ and tourist-destination identification on DBL.

| Predicted relationships | Standard Path loadings | S.E | P |
|---|---|---|---|
| DSQ → Tourist-destination identification | .9 | .057 | .000 |
| Tourist-destination identification → DBL | .591 | .339 | .000 |
| DSQ → DBL | -.46 | .337 | .153 |

Goodness-of-fit: RMSEA=.062, RMR=.062, GFI =.833, AGFI=.801, NFI=.932, RFI=.921, IFI=.962, TLI=.574, CFI=.962.

(p<.05)

**Table 8** Direct, indirect, and total effects of DSQ and tourist-destination identification on DBL.

| Predicted relationships | Direct effects | Indirect effects | Total effects |
|---|---|---|---|
| DSQ → Identification | .72 | — | .945 |
| DSQ→DBL | — | 0.568 | |
| Identification → DBL | .145 | — | |

**Table 9** Mediating role of relationship quality summary.

| Hypothesis | Mediator | Relationship | Full mediation | Partial mediation | not supported |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| H4a | tourist satisfaction | DSQ→ BDL | | | √ |
| H4b | tourist-destination identification | DSQ→ BDL | √ | | |

# Chapter 6. Discussion

## 6.1 Discussion

The aim of this study was to provide and test a model that examined two relationship quality constructs (tourist satisfaction, tourist-destination identification) as mediating variables between the service quality perceptions of Chinese tourists and destination brand loyalty. And testing such measures will offer value to destination management organizations who have been increasing investment in destination development. And I found that identification has a greater effect when the offering is intangible as in the case of tourism context, but in my knowledge, previous research one tourism context has tended to ignore the mediating role of identification, and it has showed at the current research.

The data of this research was gathered from the biggest social media Weibo and Wechat. Chinese tourist of travel to destinations that famous in the world (Hawaii, Saipan, Phuket Island, Jeju Island, Maldives, Egypt, Provence etc.) was collected. Five-hundred questionnaires were delivered in total and 311 questionnaires were finally used for purpose of analysis.

Some of prior studies have tested the relationships between destination service quality perceptions, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty. However, the results of these studies have not been consistent. Some studies indicate that tourist satisfaction has a full mediating role. But it is interesting to note that tourist satisfaction has a no significant impact on destination brand loyalty, and also has a no mediating effects between DSQ and DBL which is not consistent with the majority of existing findings that sampled tourists in a Chinese tourism context. One explanation of the differing result may be that the outbound travel always is expensive, so satisfaction is not enough to let tourist make a revisit decision.

Extant literature has focused on the direct effects of destination service quality and tourist-destination identification on destination brand loyalty, but has largely ignored the mediating role that tourist-destination identification could play on destination loyalty constructs. This study helps to address these noted gaps in the literature. This study demonstrates that tourist-destination identification has a full mediating effect between perceived destination service quality and destination brand loyalty. This finding suggests that it is more meaningful that the destinations to satisfy an individuals' self-needs to Chinese tourists in the destination service part.

Perceived high levels of destination service quality help to cultivate a satisfactory relationship with tourists and greater tourist-destination identification, in turn promoting tourist revisit behavior. Not surprisingly a key take-a-way from this study is that destinations need to provide a high level of destination service quality. Satisfaction with the destination is also important as unhappy tourists will be more likely to take their business elsewhere. As such,

destination managers need to gather and track customer satisfaction. The findings suggest that tracking visitor satisfaction is also important from a destination service quality perspective.

Tourists with greater identification with a destination are more likely to exhibit actions that reduce negative effects on and/or benefit the natural environment. Given the positive consequences of tourist-destination identification, I suggest that tourism managers and marketers should consider the level of resources required to incorporate into their strategy decisions the elements that drive tourist-destination identification. Considering the role of tourist-destination identification occurs when a tourist perceives a sense of belongingness with a destination and the findings suggest that tourists have a greater likelihood of identifying with a destination that they having a positive destination service quality perception, therefore, investing to improve a destination's service quality can increase identification with that. As part of an identification-building strategy, managers and marketers should clearly convey signals that potential visitors are apt to interpret as distinct and should address divergences both quickly and persuasively (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003).

## 6.2 Research limitations and future research directions

This study also has some limitations. First, there exist some limitations in the sampling methods. The data were collected after respondents had left the tourism sites, not at the actual tourism sites. The quality of the data will depend on the respondents' memory, which may cause some bias. It is better to collect data at the tourism site. Second, the sample of this study was collected from the tourists of travel to destinations that 13 famous in the world. An approach allows a general understanding of Chinese and differs from the majority of previous studies on CBBETD that focus on only one destination. A test regarding the difference between the overall model and the model for a lot of destinations could be conducted if researchers could gather enough sample data for one destination or a few destinations. This could be a future research direction. Third, the current study tests its hypothesis with domestic Chinese tourists as the samples. Evidence of model stability and generalizability can only come from performing the analysis on additional samples in other contexts. Future researchers should consider examining the investigated relationships utilizing more generalizable random sampling techniques as well as more geographically and ethnically diverse populations. Fourth, relationship quality is a higher order construct that consisting of several distinct but related components or dimensions. This study examined two distinct constructs (satisfaction & identification) of the relationship quality. Future researchers should, therefore, consider integrating additional relationship quality constructs (e.g., trust, commitment, communication quality, conflict) or bonding these constructs with a relationship quality as a second order construct to test the mediating effect in this model. Moreover, future researchers may have to consider the relationship ordering between perceived

service quality and any investigated proposed relationship quality constructs. Fifth, this research model is not an integrated model, it was not tested all of the variables in the model, especially, I did not test the direct relationship that between perceived DSQ and DBL. This gap may have to be filled in the future research. Sixth, this study does not consider the moderating effects which might influence the relationship quality and/or destination brand loyalty. Future research could include important moderators such as relationship age (Ranaweera and Menon, 2013; Wang and Wu, 2012), customer proneness (De Wulf *et al.,*), and customer inertia (Ranaweera and Needly, 2003).

# References

Akter, S., D'Ambra, J., Ray, P., & Hani, U. (2013). Modelling the impact of health service quality on satisfaction, continuance and quality of life. Behavior and Information Technology, 32(12), 1225-1241.

Akroush, M. (2008), "Exploring the mediation effect of service quality implementation on the relationship between service quality and performance in the banking industry in Jordan", Global Business and Economics Review (GBER): An International Journal, Vol. 10 No.1, pp. 98 – 122.

Anderson, E. W., & Sullivan, M. W. (1993). The antecedents and consequences of customer satisfaction for firms. Marketing Science, 12(2), 125-143.

Balakrishnan, M., Nekhili, R. and Lewis, C. (2011), "Destination brand components", International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality research, Vol. 5 No. 1, pp. 4-25.

Chen, C. F., & Chen, F. S. (2010). Experience quality, perceived value, satisfaction and behavioral intentions for heritage tourists. Tourism Management, 31(1), 2935.

Chen, C. F. and Tsai, D. (2007), "How destination image and evaluative factors affect behavioral intentions?", Tourism Management, Vol. 28 No. 4, pp. 1115-1122.

Evangelista, F., & Dioko, L. (2011). Interpersonal influence and destination brand equity perceptions. International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research, 5(3), 316–328.

Filep, S. (2014). Moving beyond subjective well-being: a tourism critique. Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research, 38(2), 266-274.

Gallarza, M. G., Saura, I. G., & Garca, H. C. (2002). Destination image: Towards a conceptual framework. Annals of Tourism Research, 29(1), 56–78.

He, H., Li, Y., & Harris, L. (2012). Social identity perspective on brand loyalty. Journal of Business Research, 65(5), 648-657.

He, Y., & Song, H. (2009). A mediation model of tourists' repurchase intentions for packaged tour services. Journal of Travel Research, 47(3), 317-331.

Hughes, K. (1991). Tourist satisfaction: A guided cultural tour in north Queensland. Australian Psychologist, 26(3), 166–171.

Kozak, M., & Rimmington, M. (2000). Tourist satisfaction with Mallorca, Spain, as an off-season holiday destination. Journal of Travel Research, 38(3), 260–269.

Pike, S., Bianchi, C., Kerr, G., & Patti, C. (2010). Consumer-based brand equity for Australia as a long haul tourism destination in an emerging market. International Marketing Review, 27(4), 434–449.

Ryu, K., & Han, H. (2011). New or repeat customers: How does physical environ-ment influence their restaurant experience? International Journal of Hospitality Management, 30(3), 599–611.

Stepchenkova, S., & Mills, J. E. (2010). Destination image: A meta-analysis of 2000– 2007 Research. Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management, 19(6), 575–609.

Sonmez, S. F., & Graefe, A. R. (1998). Determining future travel behavior from past travel experience and perceptions of risk and safety. Journal of Travel Research, 37(2), 171–178.

Topsümer, F., Koker, N. and Maden, D. (2012), "The image of Istanbul as a destination center: an empirical research", Global Media Journal, Vol. 3 No. 5, pp.105-128. Managing Service Quality, 13(3), 233–246.

Venetis, K.A. and Ghauri, P.N. (2004), "Service quality and customer retention: building long-term relationships", European Journal of Marketing, Vol. 38 No.11/12, pp.1577-1598.

Vinh, N. and Long, N. (2013), "The relationship among expectation, satisfaction and loyalty of international visitor to Hanoi, Vietnam", Journal of global management, Vol. 5 No. 1, pp.30-43.

Wu, H. C., & Ko, Y. J. (2013). Assessment of service quality in the hotel industry.Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism, 14(3), 218–244.

Yoon, Y., & Uysal, M. (2005). An examination of the effects of motivation and satisfaction on destination loyalty: A structural model. Tourism Management, 26(1), 45–56.

Yang, C., Chen, P. and Chien, Y. (2014), "Customer expertise, affective commitment, customer participation, and loyalty in B and B services", The International Journal of Organizational Innovation, Vol. 6 No. 4, pp. 174-183.

Yusof, N, Abd-Rahman, F. and Daud, M. (2012), "Investigating first timers and frequenters' perceived service quality of a lake-based tourism area", International Journal of Academic Research, Vol.4 No. 2, pp. 137-141.

ZanfardinI, M., Tamagni, L. and Gutauskas, A. (2011), "Costumer-based brand equity for tourism destinations in Patagonia", Catalan Journal of Communication and Cultural Studies, Vol. 3 No. 2 pp. 253–271.

Zabkar, V., Brencic, M. M., & Dmitrovic, T. (2010). Modelling perceived quality, visitor satisfaction and behavioural intentions at the destination level. Tourism Management, 31(4), 537–546.

# Questionnaire

**Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.**

---

1. 请问您出国旅行过吗？
   Did you have an outbound trip before?
□ Yes    □No
2. 如果是，您的最近一次出国旅行是什么时候？
   If you have, when was your last outbound trip?
□ In the past year（一年内）    □ More than one year（一年前）
3. 请写出您最近一次出国旅行的国家
  Please write down the destination's name. (your last outbound trip)
**(                       )**

---

**Please rate from 1 to 5.**

*1=Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly Agree*

Strongly Disagree ⟷ Strongly Agree

|   |   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | I was served by a well-trained, customer oriented personnel.<br>我曾被培训有素，以游客为导向的服务人员服务 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2 | The level of service quality reinforces my confidence in the service provided.<br>服务质量增强了我对旅游地服务水平的信心 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3 | A detailed, experienced and competent tour and hotel escorts was provided to facilitate my stay in the destination.<br>以便我在此旅行，我被提供了经验丰富护送人员的服务 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4 | Staff communicated with the fluency and in an understandable manner.<br>旅行地的工作人员能以流利的和可理解的方式进行沟通 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Strongly Disagree ⟷ Strongly Agree

|   |   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Staff showed sincere interest in problem-solving.<br>工作人员对解决问题表现的真诚 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2 | Staff provided adequate and clear information about the service they deliver.<br>旅行地工作人员明确的表明了他们所提供服务的明确信息 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3 | Staffs were able to fulfill my requests promptly in a timely manner.<br>旅行地工作人员能够及时满足我的要求 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4 | Staff provided me with full information regarding the entertainment offered.<br>旅行地工作人员向我提供了有关娱乐的完整信息 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5 | Staff showed sincere willingness and interest in helping and assisting me.<br>旅行地工作人员表现出乐于帮助我 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6 | Staff provided me with advice on how to best utilize my free time.<br>旅行里工作人员想我提供了如何最好的利用我的空闲时间的建议 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Strongly Disagree ⟷ Strongly Agree

|   |   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Directions and signs were available properly.<br>我可以正确使用旅行地的方向和标志 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2 | Directions and signs easily guided me in finding the needed locations e.g.,hotel.<br>方向和标志很容易引导我到所找的位置，例如:酒店 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| 3 | Services delivered were correct from the first time.<br>从开始就被提供了正确的服务 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | Services were delivered as promised to tourists.<br>我所接受的服务按照承诺被提供了 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5 | Scheduled tours were met on a timely manner.<br>安排的旅行得到了及时的满足 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6 | No troubles occurred with the service provided during my stay in the destination.<br>在我逗留期间，被提供的服务没有发生任何问题 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

<div align="right">Strongly Disagree ⟷ Strongly Agree</div>

| 1 | Modern and technologically relevant vehicles were available.<br>被提供的现代技术设施和车辆 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | The infrastructure is designed well and in high quality standards.<br>基础设施设计良好，质量标准高 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3 | The meals that were served are of high quality.<br>用餐服务质量高 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4 | The accommodation and facilities were appealing and in good design.<br>住宿和实施的设计好 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5 | Physical appearance of the hotel I stayed in and tours escort were tidy and clean.<br>我住的酒店外观和酒店人员整洁干净 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

<div align="right">Strongly Disagree ⟷ Strongly Agree</div>

| 1 | Services offered were provided by pleasant and friendly personnel.<br>有愉快友好的服务人员提供服务 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | My expectation and special needs were met as expected.<br>我的期待和需求符合了预期 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3 | Personal safety was considered a major aspect in every service provided.<br>人身安全被认为是所提供每项服务的主要方面 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

<div align="right">Strongly Disagree ⟷ Strongly Agree</div>

| 1 | The destination was a great destination to visit<br>这是一个很棒的旅行地 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | During my visit to the destination, I accomplished the purpose of my vacation.<br>这段旅行达到了我的度假目的 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3 | All things considered (e.g., time, effort, money), I am satisfied with my visit to the destination.<br>考虑所有方面，例如（时间，精力，金钱），我对观光这个旅行地感到满意 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4 | I have pleasant memories from my visit to the destination.<br>我对这次旅行记忆犹新 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5 | My visit to the destination met my expectations.<br>这次旅行符合了我的期待 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6 | On the whole, my choice to visit the destination has been a wise one.<br>总的来说，我选择去这个旅行地是一个明智的选择 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

<div align="right">Strongly Disagree ⟷ Strongly Agree</div>

| 1 | I strongly identify myself with the destination.<br>我强烈的觉得这个旅行地和我是同一的（有一体感） | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| 2 | The destination fits well to me.<br>这个旅行地和适合我 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | I feel attached to the destination.<br>我感觉我对这个旅行地依依不舍 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4 | I am very interested in what others think about the destination.<br>我对其他人如何看待这个旅行地很有兴趣 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**Strongly Disagree ⟷ Strongly Agree**

| 1 | I intend to visit the destination in the future.<br>未来我打算再去这个旅行地 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | The destination would be my first choice for a vacation in the region among many alternatives.<br>这个旅行地会是我度假的第一选择 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3 | It is the preferred destination I want to visit.<br>相比其他旅行地，我更想去这里 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4 | I would recommend other people to visit this destination.<br>我会推荐其他人去这个旅行地 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

## Demographic information

**1. What is your age?**
□Under 18     □18-24    □25-34    □35-44    □45-54    □55-64 □above 64

**2. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? If currently enrolled, highest degree received.**
□Under high school graduate
□High school graduate
□Trade/technical/vocational training
□Bachelor's degree
□Master's degree
□Professional degree
□Doctorate degree

**3. Gender:**     □Male                □ Female

**4. Employment Status: Are you currently…?**
□ Employed for wages
□ Self-employed
□ Out of work and looking for work
□ Out of work but not currently looking for work
□ A homemaker
□ A student
□ Retired

**5. What is your marital status?**
□Single (never married)
□Married
□Divorced