

# Mainland Chinese Tourists' Expectations, Perceived Performance of and Satisfaction towards Shopping Malls in Hong Kong

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**Abstract** — Tourists from mainland China constitute one of the world's biggest and fastest-growing travel markets. The Hong Kong Tourism Board expects the frequency of the mainland Chinese tourists to grow steadily. One of the beneficiaries of this phenomenon is Hong Kong's shopping malls. However, understanding of tourists from mainland China's expectations from, perceived performance of and satisfaction with the shopping malls' attributes in Hong Kong is inadequate. This study intends to fill this important gap. A survey questionnaire was employed for data collection. The main results reveal the mainland Chinese tourists' levels of satisfaction, indifference and dissatisfaction as well as the relationship between shopping malls' attributes and customer satisfaction.

**Index Terms** — Shopping mall attributes; mainland Chinese tourists; expectations; perceived performance; customer satisfaction

## I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism has always been a major industry and source of income for the economy of Hong Kong. Employing around 218,100 persons, tourism contributed as much as 4.4 per cent of Hong Kong's GDP and accounted for 6.2 per cent of total employment in 2010. Tourists from mainland China continued to constitute the largest proportion of inflows of tourists: 15.6 million tourists arrived from mainland China in the first half of 2012, representing a 22.7 per cent increase over the same period of 2011 and accounting for 69.8 per cent of total arrivals. The Hong Kong Tourism Board expects the frequency of visits by tourists from mainland China to grow steadily in the near future [1].

Hong Kong has been one of the top destinations for shopping in the world. Like United Arab Emirates, Hong Kong too is a duty-free port with few taxed on imported goods. Thus tourists can buy products at a cheaper price compared with prices in other countries [2]. The rapid increase of mainland Chinese tourists has been a boon of sorts for most large shopping malls in Hong Kong. Because of the rapid economic development and changed shopping habits, Shopping malls in Hong Kong have entirely replaced the street retail outlets and traditional department stores [3] and have now become the major venues for shoppers in

Hong Kong [4].

Though the number of mainland Chinese tourists traveling to Hong Kong is increasing, understanding of their expectations and perceptions of performance of shopping malls is inadequate. The purpose of the study is to assess mainland Chinese tourists' expectations and perceived performance of shopping mall attributes as well as the relationship between shopping mall attributes and overall customer satisfaction. Specifically the present study aims to:

- i. assess expectations and perceived performance of tourists from mainland China towards shopping mall attributes;
- ii. identify the underlying dimensions (factors) of shopping mall attributes; and
- iii. examine the relative impact of each underlying dimension on the overall customer satisfaction towards shopping malls.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction has always been regarded as the key determinant of long-term customer behaviour [5, 6], the assumption being that the more satisfied the customers are, the greater is the retention [7, 8], the higher is the positive word-of-mouth generated through them [9, 10] and greater are the financial benefits to firms who serve the customers [8]. Katja (2011) said a fundamental aim of firms is to manage and enhance customer satisfaction to the maximum possible extent [11].

### B. Expectation-Confirmation Theory

Extant literature has reported wide use of the expectation-confirmation theory for study of consumer satisfaction, post-purchase behavior (e.g., repurchase intention, complaining behavior) and service marketing in general [5, 7, 12, 13, 14, 15]. Figure 1 illustrates the key constructs and relationships in expectation-confirmation theory.

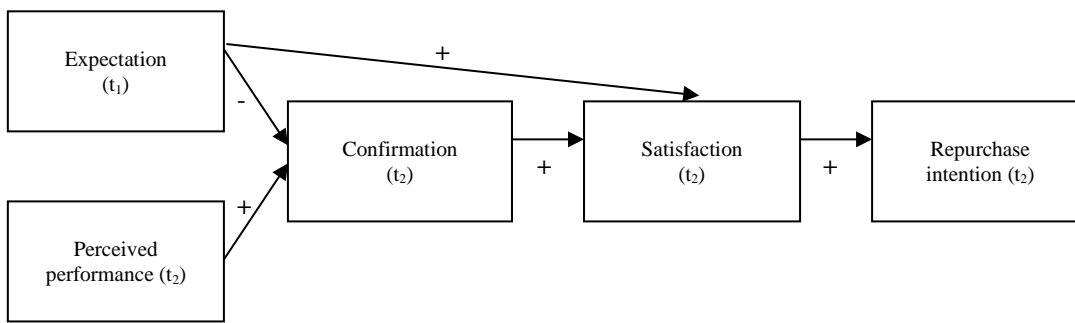


Fig. 1. Expectation-Confirmation Theory

Note:  $t_1$  = pre-consumption variable;  $t_2$  = post-consumption variables

Customers formulate repurchase intentions, according to the expectation-confirmation theory, as follows [5].

- i. First, customers form an initial expectation of the product or service prior to purchase.
- ii. Second, they accept and use that product or service and after a period of initial consumption, they form perceptions about its performance.
- iii. Third, they assess its performance vis-à-vis the original expectation and determine the extent to which the expectation is fulfilled.
- iv. Fourth, they determine whether the level of their satisfaction with the product or service is in accordance with the expectation.
- v. Finally, if satisfied, customers form a repurchase intention, while dissatisfied customers discontinue its subsequent use.

### C. Shopping Mall Attributes

Lin and Chang (2003) found that customer service is a dominant factor affecting consumer behavior in China [16]. Evidence was provided by Tsui et al. (2007) to the effect that customers in China favour shopping at convenient locations [17]. Zhang and Chow (2004) confirmed that shopping environment affects customers' intention to purchase in China [18]. Wong et al. (2007) indicated a trend that customers in China have high preference for shopping at reputable retailers [19]. Wong et al. (2011) found that the customer's mind set in China is in favor of obtaining rewards when purchasing goods or services [20]. However, research on the right combination(s) of shopping mall attributes that attract Chinese customers has been inadequate. No research study seems to have reported a standard combination of shopping mall attributes that address general mall shoppers' demands and expectations. It is evident that shoppers in different countries prioritize their desired shopping mall attributes differently.

## III. METHODOLOGY

### A. Instrument

A structured questionnaire was developed and its structure and adequacy was tested by a pilot study. Fifty randomly chosen mainland Chinese tourists were contacted

at the entrance of a large shopping mall in Hong Kong and were invited to complete the questionnaire and to comment on wordings of questionnaire items. Some problems related to comprehension and completion of survey questions were observed and recommendations were obtained to solve the problems identified by the pilot test. Finally, fifteen items were retained for measurement of shopping mall attributes, three items were retained for the measure of overall customer satisfaction with mall shopping and three items were retained for demographics.

### B. Sample

The main survey was conducted from 1 to 14 February 2013 when mainland Chinese tourists were interviewed at the entrance of four popular large shopping malls in Hong Kong. Mainland Chinese tourists leaving the malls were identified by asking some screening questions such as whether a tourist was 18 years old or above and was from mainland China. Then they were asked whether they would voluntarily participate in the survey. A total of 100 valid responses were collected successfully at each of the four malls, i.e. a total of 400 valid responses were collected. A sample size of 200 to 1,000 is generally considered adequate for populations of 10,000 or more [21].

### C. Measures

Relevant previous studies [22, 23, 24] were reviewed. Measures of shopping mall attributes and customer satisfaction used were then selected and modified to suit the local situation. Shopping mall attributes were measured by three items, on a seven point Likert-type scale with anchors "1 = very low" and "7 = very high". Respondents' overall customer satisfaction was measured by three items, on seven point Likert-type scale with anchors "1 = strongly disagree" and "7 = strongly agree". In addition, three respondents' demographic characteristics, gender, age and income, were also collected. Table 1 summarizes the 15 items used for measuring the shopping mall attributes and 3 items for measuring the customer satisfaction.

### D. Data Analysis

SPSS software was used for analysis of data. Mean scores of expectation and perceived performance on the 15 shopping mall attributes were compared by using paired t-tests while the underlying dimensions (factors) of 15 shopping mall attributes were identified by factor analysis. Relative impacts of factors in affecting tourists' overall satisfaction were examined by multiple regression analyses.

TABLE 1  
MEASURES OF ITEMS

Items	
<u>Fifteen Items of Shopping Mall Attributes</u>	
1.	Easy to reach
2.	Long opening hour
3.	One-stop shopping
4.	Retailers' quality products
5.	Retailers' sales services
6.	Retailers' reputation
7.	Customer services
8.	Information services
9.	Responsiveness and friendliness of customer service assistants
10.	Attractive environment
11.	Trendy design
12.	Tidiness and cleanliness
13.	Provision of discounts
14.	Provision of gift vouchers
15.	Provision of cash coupons
<u>Three items of Overall Customer Satisfaction</u>	
1.	I am satisfied with my decision to shop in this shopping mall.
2.	I feel very satisfied after shopping in this shopping mall.
3.	I am 100% satisfied with shopping in this shopping mall.

#### IV. FINDINGS

##### A. Non-response Bias

To ensure that there was no non-response bias in the data, 50 additional mainland Chinese tourists were interviewed at the entrance of a large shopping mall in Hong Kong on 18 February 2013. Differences between the two samples (i.e. the 400 respondents for data analysis and the 50 extra respondents) in terms of demographic characteristics and perceptions were examined by chi-square test and independent-sample T-tests covering 15 shopping mall attributes. The results revealed that demographic characteristics, as well as perceptions of the 15 shopping mall attributes of the two samples were not significantly different ( $p < 0.01$ ), implying that non-response bias did not exist.

##### B. Demographic Profiles of the Respondents

Female respondents (56.75%) outnumbered male respondents (43.25%). Most of the respondents (60.25%) were aged 26-59 years. About 54.50% of respondents had monthly income of over RMB 5,000 (Table 2).

##### C. Satisfaction Attributes, Indifferent Attributes and Unsatisfactory Attributes

Mean scores of expectations and perceived performance in terms of the 15 shopping mall attributes were examined by pair sample t-tests. The results showed that the respondents were satisfied in terms of nine attributes, found performance indifferent for three and were dissatisfied with three shopping mall attributes (Table 3).

##### Satisfied Attributes

Satisfied attributes are attributes that are positively confirmed by shoppers. According to the expectation-confirmation theory, these are defined as attributes with perceived performance scores greater than expectation scores (i.e. positive mean difference) and with a significant t-value ( $p < 0.01$ ). The mainland Chinese tourists were satisfied with the following nine shopping mall attributes: easy to reach, long opening hours, one-stop shopping, retailers' product quality, retailers' sales services, retailers' reputation, attractive environment, trendy design and tidiness and cleanliness.

TABLE 2  
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES OF THE RESPONDENTS

Variables	Percentage
<u>Gender</u>	
Male	43.25
Female	56.75
<u>Age</u>	
18-25	20.50
26-39	36.25
40-59	24.00
60-64	12.50
65 or above	6.75
<u>Income per month</u>	
Below RMB 2,000	9.00
Between RMB 2,001 and 4,999	16.50
Between RMB 5,001 and 9,999	38.00
RMB 10,000 or above	36.50

##### Indifferent attributes

Indifferent attributes are those with non-significant t-values ( $p > 0.01$ ); according to the survey results, customer services, information services and responsiveness and friendliness of customer service assistants are the indifferent attributes.

##### Dissatisfied attributes

Dissatisfied attributes are attributes that the respondents are not satisfied with. These have a negative mean difference and expectation scores exceed perception scores and have significant t-values ( $p > 0.01$ ). Mainland Chinese tourists are dissatisfied with provisions of discounts, provisions of gift vouchers and provisions of cash coupons.

##### D. Underlying Dimensions of Tourists' Perceptions

The underlying dimensions (factors) of the 15 shopping mall attributes were identified by an exploratory factor analysis, using principal component with varimax rotation. Factors were interpreted by setting a loading cut-off of 0.50 and six factors with eigenvalues equal to or greater than one were extracted. These six factors were named as quality of retailers, convenience, mall environment, rewards, customer services, and overall customer satisfaction. Table 4 shows the results of this process.

Factor 1: quality of retailers. Containing three items, this factor explained 11.608 per cent of the variance with an eigenvalue of 3.257. It covered the quality of retailers in shopping malls, including retailers' product quality, retailers' sales services and retailers' reputation.

Factor 2: convenience. Containing three items, this factor explained 11.352 per cent of the variance, with an eigenvalue of 2.114. Attributes covered were convenience-related issues, such as easy to reach, long opening hours and one-stop shopping.

Factor 3: mall environment. Three items included in this factor were related to the mall environment. This factor had an eigenvalue of 1.955 and represented 11.188 per cent of variance. Attributes included in this factor were: attractive environment, trendy design and tidiness and cleanliness.

TABLE 3  
RESULTS ON PAIRED T-TEST BETWEEN TOURISTS' EXPECTATION AND PERCEIVED PERFORMANCE OF SHOPPING MALL ATTRIBUTES

Shopping Attributes	Perception mean	SD	Expectation mean	SD	Mean Difference	T-value	Sig. (two-tailed)
<u>Satisfied Attributes</u>							
1. Easy to reach	6.23	0.67	5.98	0.65	+0.25	-3.25	0.001**
2. Long opening hours	6.03	0.65	5.66	0.75	+0.37	-3.46	0.001**
3. One-stop shopping	6.46	0.71	6.11	0.75	+0.35	-3.57	0.000**
4. Retailers' product quality	6.45	0.85	6.02	0.64	+0.43	-3.85	0.001**
5. Retailers' sales services	6.45	0.71	6.15	0.56	+0.30	-3.13	0.005**
6. Retailers' reputation	6.34	0.79	6.01	0.68	+0.33	-3.59	0.004**
7. Attractive environment	6.23	0.76	5.98	0.61	+0.25	-3.48	0.009**
8. Trendy design	6.11	0.74	5.86	0.69	+0.25	-3.15	0.003**
9. Tidiness and cleanliness	6.21	0.72	5.77	0.76	+0.44	-2.95	0.004**
<u>Indifferent Attributes</u>							
1. Customer services	5.88	0.85	5.85	0.75	0.03	1.652	0.204
2. Information services	5.98	0.84	5.89	0.66	0.09	1.842	0.254
3. Responsiveness and friendliness of customer service assistants	5.46	0.86	5.45	0.74	0.01	1.468	0.285
<u>Dissatisfied Attributes</u>							
1. Provision of discounts	5.45	0.75	5.79	0.65	-0.34	3.633	0.009**
2. Provision of gift vouchers	5.55	0.86	5.85	0.74	-0.30	3.452	0.001**
3. Provision of cash coupons	5.46	0.76	5.79	0.76	-0.33	3.189	0.001**

\* Significance at 0.01 level

Factor 4: rewards. Containing three items, this factor explained 10.897 per cent variance with an eigenvalue of 1.723. The three items covered the rewards in shopping malls, including provision of discounts, provision of gift vouchers and provision of cash coupons.

Factor 5: customer service. Items related to the quality of customer services, information services and responsiveness and friendliness of customer service assistants were covered. This factor had an eigenvalue of 1.624 and accounted for 10.859 per cent of variance.

Factor 6: overall customer satisfaction. This factor included three items: "I am satisfied with my decision to shop in this shopping mall", "I feel very satisfied after shopping in this shopping mall" and "I am 100% satisfied with shopping in this shopping mall". It had an eigenvalue of 1.260 and explained 10.392 per cent of variance.

Reliability of the six scales of quality of retailers, convenience, mall environment, rewards, customer services and overall customer satisfaction was evaluated by Cronbach's alpha. Since the Cronbach's alpha of each scale was found to be above the acceptable value of 0.700 [25], all six scales were considered to be reliable (Table IV).

#### E. Descriptive Statistics of Factors

The extent of the actual departure from normality of each construct was examined by computing values of skewness and kurtosis of the six constructs. Skewness and kurtosis of the six factors were found to be within acceptable limits of  $\pm 1$  (Table 4); data obtained from the six constructs did not show deviations from normality [26].

The three-item customer satisfaction factor had a mean score of 3.39 whereas the mean score is 4 in a seven-point Likert-type scale. This implies that satisfaction of respondents is generally below their expectations. The overall satisfaction level score was then regressed against factors, derived from the factor analysis.

#### F. Relative Impact of the Perception Dimensions on Overall Satisfaction

The beta coefficient explains the relative importance of factors in terms of contribution to the variance of overall satisfaction. All five factors of shopping mall attributes have a significant positive impact on customer satisfaction ( $p < 0.01$ ), as shown in Table 5. Customer services and convenience, with Beta coefficient of 0.189 and 0.184, respectively, are stronger drivers of tourists' overall satisfaction. The other factors, mall environment, quality of retailers and rewards obviously have less impact on the overall satisfaction, as is evident from Beta coefficients of 0.153, 0.151 and 0.148, respectively.

TABLE 4  
UNDERLYING DIMENSIONS OF SHOPPING MALL ATTRIBUTES

	Factor Loading					
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
<u>Factor 1: Quality of Retailers</u>						
Retailers' product quality	0.884					
Retailers' sales services	0.825					
Retailers' reputation	0.745					
<u>Factor 2: Convenience</u>						
Easy to reach		0.873				
Long opening hours		0.806				
One-stop shopping		0.760				
<u>Factor 3: Mall Environment</u>						
Attractive environment			0.844			
Trendy design			0.759			
Tidiness and cleanliness			0.743			
<u>Factor 4: Rewards</u>						
Provision of discounts				0.856		
Provision of gift vouchers				0.750		
Provision of cash coupons				0.737		
<u>Factor 5: Customer Services</u>						
Customer services					0.862	
Information services					0.825	
Responsiveness and friendliness of customer service assistants					0.697	
<u>Factor 6: Overall Customer Satisfaction</u>						
I am satisfied with my decision to shop in this shopping mall.						0.864
I feel very satisfied after shopping in this shopping mall.						0.758
I am 100% satisfied with shopping in this shopping mall.						0.687
Eigenvalues	3.257	2.114	1.955	1.723	1.624	1.260
Percentage of variance (%)	11.608	11.352	11.188	10.897	10.859	10.392
Cumulative variance	11.608	22.960	34.148	45.045	55.904	66.296
Cronbach's alpha	0.768	0.760	0.721	0.714	0.764	0.734
Mean	3.310	3.425	3.480	3.336	3.447	3.390
Standard deviation	1.189	1.189	1.162	1.193	1.097	1.308
Skewness	0.424	0.432	0.367	0.844	0.284	0.532
Kurtosis	0.108	-0.011	-0.161	0.576	0.118	0.051

TABLE 5  
RESULTS OF REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Independent Factors	Beta	Sig
Convenience	0.184	0.000
Quality of Retailers	0.151	0.001
Customer Services	0.189	0.000
Mall Environment	0.153	0.001
Rewards	0.148	0.002
$R^2$	=	0.143
Adjusted $R^2$	=	0.163
$F$	=	16.551 (Sig F = 0.000)

Dependent factor: Customer satisfaction

## V. CONCLUSIONS

### A. Contributions

There are three main contributions of this study. First, though the influence of different shopping mall attributes on customer satisfaction has been studied extensively in the past [23, 27, 24], satisfaction of the mainland Chinese tourists with shopping mall attributes has not been studied specifically, though they now constitute one of the largest groups of cross-border tourists. This study is among the earliest attempts to identify factors of shopping mall attributes that contribute to customer satisfaction with attributes of shopping malls in Hong Kong. Second, by using the paired t-test, shopping mall operators can evaluate

the attributes of their malls in terms of satisfied, indifferent and dissatisfied attributes. Third, by understanding the relationship between perceived performance of mall attributes and customer satisfaction, shopping mall operators can structure their strategies to increase the perceived levels of shopping mall attributes in order to improve their customer satisfaction.

### B. Limitations and Future Research

Results of this study need to be interpreted with some degree of caution since only a cross-sectional survey, i.e. a snapshot in time, was conducted and the data represent only the attitudes and perceptions of the respondents at the particular time when the survey was conducted. Though cross-sectional survey is useful for identifying patterns of relationships among relevant factors, longitudinal research is essential to confirm the causal linkages among the study factors [28]. Therefore, future research should be longitudinal, conducted at different time intervals, to understand the changing customers' attitudes towards customer satisfaction.

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