# Conceptualisation of Hotel Guest Experience Assessment Process and Electronic Words of Mouth

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**Abstract**

The success of a hotel depends on the guests' interpretation and reviews of their visit experience. Guests who perceived their visit experience as worthiness and satisfactory would circulate their experience to their acquaintances. In today's information based era, their visit experience can be widely circulated through electronic word of mouth (e-wom) such as the social media. This paper aims to construct a research framework to study hotel guests experience responses as the result from their encounters with the hotel's products and services during their stay. Unforgettable encounters would influence the guests' future behaviour, starting with their commitment and eventually translated into reaction in the forms of electronic word of mouth responses. Methodically, an exhaustive review of the literature was carried out to establish a theoretical underpinning of hotel guests experience assessment process and their future responses. Perceived value and satisfaction are deemed as important measurements in the initial stage of the hotel guest visit experience outcomes. In line with the current information technology trends, the guests are expected to use electronic word of mouth to disseminate their visit outcomes. Academically, the study framework reduces the gaps related to the formulation of research constructs for hotel visit experience assessment. It is assertive that this paper would be practically beneficial to hotel operators or relevant stakeholders in order to gain a comprehensive understanding about hotel guests' visit experience responses and their future behaviour, including the electronic word-of-mouth response.

**Keywords:** Commitment, electric word-of-mouth, hotel, perceived value, post visit responses, satisfaction.

## INTRODUCTION

When hotel guests visit a hotel, they are exposed to the various products and services at the hotel. The hotel guests' experience then is determined whether these products and services can meet their needs and wants. Ideally, the overall experience is noted as the performance of the hotel staff, products, services, and hotel facilities, as well as the benefit gained by the guests from the performance. The outcome of this experience shall then influence their future responses.

Past research indicated that the customer experience assessment is a very complex process, and it is difficult to measure directly. However, the literature points out that perceived value would be a realistic component to initially measure customer responses. In this paper, it is asserted that perceived value can help the hotel analyse the overall experience of the hotel's guests and understand their behavior. Therefore, by understanding the guests' perceived value, hotels can provide a better experience to their guests by offering products, facilities, and services that meet their requirements.

Another important result of the visit experience is satisfaction. Past studies pointed out that perceived value is the antecedent of satisfaction. Thus in this paper, it is postulated that perceived value will influence satisfaction. In addition, customers frequently disseminate their experience to others through various mediums, and with the advancement of communication technology, social media is a common and convenient method of disseminating information. Those who are committed to this type of media would update their information regularly. Hence, the whole picture of guest experience process can be depicted through the relationship among perceived value, satisfaction, commitment, and electronic word-of-mouth. In other words it is foreseen that perceived value influences satisfaction and commitment in which ultimately affect hotel guests' electric word-of-mouth.

## HOTEL GUEST'S EXPERIENCE

This segment reviews past studies that are related to customer post-consumption experience and relate them to the hotel guests' experience responses. Discussions are focused on the relevant constructs that lead to the formation of a research framework. Specifically, this section reviews related variables namely;

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perceived value, satisfaction, commitment and electronic word-of-mouth, and the relationship among all these variables.

### A. Perceived Value

A hotel can provide customers with acceptable products or services only if the needs and wants of the customers are fulfilled. The emphasis should be on the value delivery during the interaction between the customer and the operator [1]. As a result, the customers would feel they have received the value from what they have spent on. Past studies pointed out that perceived value plays an essential role to reflect the hotel guest's comprehensive experience and hotel guest behavior.

Perceived value is defined as the consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given [2]. It translates perception as a whole unit, rather than just an emotion. This Perceived value definition extended as the customer's overall assessment of the net worth, which is derived from the customer's assessment of benefit they gained in relation to their participation with the services, products, and activities that also consume time, money, and energy [3]. Similarly, perceived value is a comparison of benefits, costs, and usually occur during the purchase of related products or services [4]. In addition, perceived value can be seen as the difference between the total benefits and the total costs experienced by hotel guests [5]. The total benefits are a combination of the corresponding attributes, for example, physical attributes and service attributes [6]. The total costs include monetary provisions [7] and non-monetary provisions [8].

However, researchers have disputes about the concepts of one-dimensional and multi-dimensional of perceived value. The first proposed the concept of price-perceived value one-dimensional, which is based on the monetary value dimension [2]. The one-dimensional is also used to measure the customer's overall value [9]. However, this measurement cannot reflect the viewpoint, which many researchers asserted *perceived value is the trade-off between benefits and sacrifices,* and it caused the one dimensional evaluation to receive less attention in the research community. Since every person has its own personality and characteristics, which results in various perceptions of customers towards the hospitality of each hotel, it is not adequate to explain the

perceived value using a one-dimensional (monetary value) approach [10].

Numerous other researchers are devoted towards the study of multi-dimensional aspects of perceived value. For example, four dimensions of perceived value: emotional value; social value; functional value (monetary); functional value (quality), as a more comprehensive measurement of perceived value [11]. On the other hand, perceived value is divided into five dimensions: quality, emotional response, monetary price, behavioral price, and reputation [12]. The four dimensions of perceived value represent the views of PERVAL and the five dimensions of perceived value represent the views of SER-PERVAL, the difference between them is that four dimensions of perceived value divided monetary value into two dimensions: monetary price and behavioral price, and suggested reputation take the place of social value. Overall, the validity and reliability of multi-dimensional perceived value have been confirmed [9], thus the multiple dimensional evaluation method is considered better than the single-dimensional evaluation method to explain the perceived value.

In order to attract new hotel guest or maintain the relationship with customers, hotel operators need to predict the guests' future behavior based on perceived value [1]. In this case, the guest's perceived value is based on the consumption of relevant products and facilities of the hotel that may influence guests' visit outcomes, namely satisfaction, commitment, and E-WOM. This statement is reasonable because many researchers have proved that customer perceived value can affect customer satisfaction and commitment [13,14,15]. Furthermore, customer experience and satisfaction can be used as a precedent for their future intentions [16,17,18].

### B. Satisfaction

The main difference between perceived value and satisfaction is their occurrence time [19]. Perceived value can occur at a different stage of a purchase. However, satisfaction occurs at the post-stage of purchase. Hence based on past studies, it is asserted that satisfaction can be an outcome of perceived value [20,21,22].

Researchers have applied customer satisfaction theory to various service industries to investigate the applicability of customer satisfaction, including the hotel industry [23], the foodservice industry [24], and the tourism

industry [25]. Customer satisfaction defined as a result of high expectation towards the service provided [26]. This classical definition is based on the expectancy-disconfirmation theory (EDT), which has attracted the attention of many scholars and dubbed as the most widely used theory of customer satisfaction [26,27].

However, this theory has been challenged in various studies. Some researchers pointed out that there are some deficiencies in both the theoretical and operational aspects of the EDT. For example, excessive information might increase customers' expectations towards the service, compared to the expectation they had before [28]. When the hotel operator overstated advertising claims, the customer's expectations will be high. As a result, the customer will feel dissatisfied even with a high-quality service or product.

The measurements of satisfaction by expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm may only materialize if the consumers have expectations for related products and services before consumption [29]. In fact, it would be inappropriate to evaluate the hotel guest's satisfaction because whenever the customer is relatively unknown or unfamiliar with relative products and services of the hotel, they would have no pre-expectation of any such services.

Six alternative models were used to compare and examine the relative validity of these models to measure customers' satisfaction [19]. The models are performance only, important-performance, importance minus performance, direct confirmation-disconfirmation, confirmation-disconfirmation weighted by importance, and performance minus predictive expectation. It was concluded that the performance model offers a better framework for measuring customer satisfaction. Various other studies confirmed the advantages of using a performance-only model to study satisfaction. Therefore, perceived performance is the best predictor of satisfaction when it is difficult to measure the expected value [19,30-33]. In addition, satisfaction can be regarded as the customer's attitude towards service providers and conceptualized as an overall outcome of judgment [15].

Numerous researchers pointed out that satisfaction has a direct positive impact on commitment [34,35,36]. The influence of satisfaction on commitments has created a tendency that the customer will recommend the service provider to other consumers or create a preference for the service provider on the next purchase.

**C. Commitment**

The importance of the relationship in the service marketing field has been confirmed by many scholars, and this is often based on the mutual commitments of buyers and sellers [37]. The key to maintaining this relationship is when the customer has achieved a valuable experience, and the seller has made every effort to maintain and develop this relationship between them and the customer [6]. The widely accepted definition of customer commitment by academics is that trading partners who are willing to maintain a lasting and important relationship [38,39]. Therefore, commitments are a kind of psychological emotion, which forms between two or more business partners. It also reflects the continuity of the business.

There is no unified recognition of the structural model of commitment. Some researchers pointed out that commitment is a multidimensional structure that includes affective and calculative or continuance commitment [40,41]. Affective commitment is a combination of emotions that reflects the consumer's sense of participation and belonging to the service [40,42]. When continuance commitment occurs, consumers are forced to commit to the sales of organization because the termination of this bond may result in loss and sacrifice in business (economic or social sacrifice) [43].

In the marketing relationship, when the conversion cost is low, the consumers are given the freedom to choose many types of samples and items from the sales. However, when consumers are unfamiliar or neither purchased the product nor service, continuance commitment may not occur. Therefore, when commitment is primarily defined as affective commitment, it resolves as a better understanding of premises and thus a good analysis of emotional commitment [38]. Hence, many researchers suggest using a one-dimensional structure to measure commitment in a social-business bond.

In the vast majority of commitment-related marketing research, affective commitment is the one-dimensional structure measurement of commitment [44]. Affective commitment occurs when there is a consumption relationship between consumers and organizations [45]. Customer commitment aims to maintain a good

and reputable relationship with the organization, while affective commitment can represent the customer's commitment [46]. Affective commitment is rooted in identity, which represents the nature of the customer's assurance [47].

There is a positive relationship between the commitment of the organization and the future intention of consumers [38]. The positive effect of commitment on word-of-mouth was recognized by scholars [48,49,50]. The positive E-WOM will only arise when satisfaction translates into a commitment because the commitment leads to the willingness of the marketer and the buyer to maintain the behavior of partnerships [23].

### D. Electronic Word-Of-Mouth

In recent years, due to the advancement in communication technology, numerous social media are freely available. This electronic communication platform has resulted in the widespread of information. The user-generated related content is the basis of social media, resulting in the creation of the term "electronic word-of-mouth" (E-WOM) [51].

Generally, word-of-mouth (WOM) defined as an informal communication of consumers about specific products or services [52], which is regarded as one of the most important sources of information by customers. Electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM) can be defined as all informal communications to consumers through web-based technologies. Nowadays, customers can post their thoughts, ideas, and feelings about products and services online by sending emails or writing articles on blogs [53]. The impact of E-WOM towards decisions made by customers may be greater than the impact of traditional word-of-mouth. The E-WOM expands the customer's choice of collecting information about products and services from other customers. In other words, the electronic environment is an innovative and convenient place to collect the required information. Therefore, E-WOM plays an important role in purchasing today's consumption.

In the tourism industry, travelers are increasingly turning to E-WOM for support towards their traveling plans and traveling-related decisions [54]. E-WOM influences tourists' visit intention and points out that E-WOM provides travelers with more travel-related information and has a convincing influence on travelers' tour choices and behavior [55].

In the hotel industry, the relationship between E-WOM and consumers' online purchases seemed to be stronger than the tourism industry [56]. Positive online reviews improve the perception of hotels among potential consumers [57]. Moreover, the intangible nature of the experience intensifies the uncertainty of consumers, which motivates them to search for relevant information and increases their dependence on electronic word-of-mouth. The hotel guests showed significant interest in E-WOM [58]. Therefore, electronic word-of-mouth may greatly influence the hotel guest behaviour.

### RELATIONSHIP AMONG THE VARIABLES

As deliberated in the preceding sections, this paper asserts that perceived value can be used in the overall assessment of the effectiveness of a product (or service) after the consumer experiences the process of related products and services. Satisfaction is presumed to be affected directly by perceived value. Nonetheless, perceived value is also one of the important factors affecting guests' commitment [59,60]. However, the literature also established the relationship between satisfaction and commitment, thus making satisfaction a mediator variable between perceived value and commitment [38,44,61]. Therefore, this paper proposes a research framework for the hotel guest experience assessment process, as depicted in Figure 1.
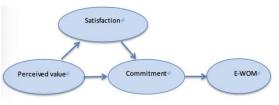


**Figure 1.** Research Framework

The framework shows that the variables under study are perceived value, satisfaction, commitment, and E-WOM. It examines the impact of hotel guests' perceived value on satisfaction and commitment. Commitment, in return, affects guests' E-WOM. In terms of classification, perceived value is an independent variable, while satisfaction can be seen as a moderator between perceived value and commitment. The effect of E-WOM can be measured directly and indirectly through the three variables; perceived value, satisfaction, and commitment.

## CONCLUSION

This paper suggests that customer experience is a result of a comprehensive post-consumption assessment of perceived value responses. This assessment method is deemed applicable to the hotel industry. At the initial stage, the guest experience evaluation, perceived value, and satisfaction that play a very important role to generate guests' commitment. Ultimately, the guests are expected to use electronic word of mouth to disseminate their visit outcomes. Theoretically, the framework reduces the gaps related to the formulation of research constructs for hotel visit experience assessment. Practically, the framework is beneficial to hotel operators or relevant stakeholders to gain a comprehensive understanding of hotel guests' visit experience responses and their future behavior, including the electronic word-of-mouth response. Nonetheless, the framework should be tested to confirm its robustness.

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