A Study on Physical Environment and Consumers' Repatronage Intention

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ABSTRACT

Chinese hotel industry needs to continue consummation. Especially the physical environment direct or the indirect influence to the consumers has not caused the hotel managers enough attention. Chinese hotel industry also lacks to the physical environment whole perception and the understanding. This paper research purposes are: how through that improve the hotel physical hotels. And what's disparities between the Chinese hotel industry in the physical environment and the Western developed country, how needs to improve and so on. Therefore, this paper has mainly studied and analysis the hotel atmosphere, the hotel facility, the hotel cleanliness, the hotel position, customers' overall satisfaction, the repatronage which independent effect, relations and the importance of them in Chinese hotel industry. This paper have made 5 hypotheses to relations of the hotel atmosphere, the hotel facility, the hotel cleanliness, the hotel position and customer's overall satisfaction, the repatronage. We have carried on the questionnaire survey to four hotels, altogether send out to the 250 questionnaires, and have received 202 questionnaires. Through after these analyses, the 1 hypothesis cannot have the data support. Therefore, the conclusions are: the first, the good hotel atmosphere has the positive influence to the consumer overall perception; the second, the higher hotel cleanliness has the positive influence to the consumer overall perception; the third, the convenience hotel position has the positive influence to consumer's perception; the fourth, the consumers' higher overall satisfaction has the positive influence to consumer's repatronage. But the influence of the higher hotel facility to consumers' perception cannot have the enough support from the data.

Keywords: Physical Environment, Consumer Behavior, Perception, Repatronage Intention

1. INTRODUCTION

The physical environment influent behaviors and create an image which ability is particularly apparent for service businesses such as hotels, shopping malls, banks and restaurants. The servicescapes include many factors and all of these factors could have the same influence to consumers, so in the management, manager should reasonable utilization the entire factor which get a best results.

Bitner's(1992) study advanced several hypotheses related to the nature of human responses to the physical environment (servicescape), in commercial settings. Subsequent studies have empirically tested some of Bitner's theories in the area of leisure services, including hotel. The study presented here attempts to discover the determinants of servicescape satisfaction in a specific service encounter. Bitner (1992) also discusses how the physical environment can be used to position a company. This notion correctly implies that the physical environment can also be controlled and managed. Because the servicescape can be managed, its effect on consumers are capable of spending long periods of time in the hotel environment, the servicescape may assume an even greater role in the determination of their satisfaction.

This article final purpose is study in the more and more brutal competition of hotel industry, how does the effective use physical environment have the maximized influence to consumer's psychology and the behavior, thus causes the hotel the profit and the image obtains the much promotion. At the same time, although many domestic hotels already started using the physical environment to affect customer's overall perception level, but because China also lacks the system in this part the theory basis. Therefore, in the utilization technique is not very mature. As a result of quite few study overseas advanced theory knowledge, therefore Chinese this yeast always bogs down. This article first has through the influence of process and the result the understanding physical environment to the consumer, analyzes the general hotel industry to be possible systematically the effective factors, simultaneously unifies the Chinese hotel industry existing characteristic, discovers may for the Chinese hotel industry enhancement service level essential factor.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The ability of the physical environment to influence behaviors and to create an image is particularly apparent for service business such as hotels, restaurants, professional offices, banks, retail stores, and hospitals [3,5,8,13,18,20,22]. Because the service generally is produced and consumed simultaneously, the consumer is "in the factory," often experiencing the total service within the firm's physical facility. The factory (or the place where the service is produced) cannot be hidden and may in fact have a strong impact on customers' perceptions of the service experience. Even before purchase, consumers commonly look for cues about the firm's capabilities and quality [4,17]. The physical environment is rich in such cues [17] and may be very influential in communicating the firm's image and purpose to its customers. Research suggests that the physical setting may also influence the customer's ultimate satisfaction with the service [6,23].

Other servicescapes are very complicated, with many elements and many forms. They are termed "elaborate" environments. An example is a hospital with its many floors, rooms, sophisticated equipment, and complex variability in functions performed within the physical facility. In such an elaborate environment, the full range of marketing and organizational objectives theoretically can be approached through careful management of the servicescape. For example, a patient's hospital room can be design to enhance patient comfort and satisfaction while simultaneously facilitating employee productivity. So in this paper, we should to do it which positioned in the elaborate interpersonal service cell face the most complex servicescape decisions.

2.1 Atmosphere Cue

As an underline service's hotel, the atmosphere construction is extremely important! As general rule, atmosphere affects the five senses but may be not perceived directly by the consumer or the service provider. Generally, the atmosphere include such as scent, music, color, noise and lighting. This thesis is mainly research the scent, music and colors these three aspects. Because these aspects affect the consumer's attitude and emotions, it may be could raise the competition advantage of the hotel.

2.2 Facility Cue

As a hotel, the facility is directly notice by consumers. Every consumer first into the hotel, they must notice the facility in the corner. If consumer could contact the soft and comfort facility, it could be attracting them visit again.

Usually, the facility includes aspects such as comprehensive, comfortableness, luxury and convenience. In the hotel, the consumer should be obtaining the most comprehensive service. Therefore, it requests the hotel's facility to have to consider the different consumer's request. The hotel should study the different type consumer's different demand.

We could through the casino seats comfort [24] studies research the importance of facility for consumers in hotel. The studies mainly research the seats affect of the consumer

attention. The length of time a consumer spends in the service environment while playing a slot machine often exceed the length of time spent in the servicescape during the consumption of most services.

The fast food restaurants are somewhat notorious for hard seats, absent of padding. This seat design is intended to control duration [7]. Research has shown that a specific amount of padding on a seat can relieve the pressure and discomfort associated with extend periods of sitting [9].

2.3 Cleanliness Cue

The hotel cleanliness includes variety of items, such as air quality, floor cleanliness, guest room cleanliness and whole cleanliness. Because of the atmosphere quality is mainly affect of healthy of the consumers.

Cleanliness may be of secondary importance when compared to its opposite condition. However, it is reasonable to theorize that a clean hotel environment would be a desirable condition and produce a positive effect on many approach behaviors. Alternatively, the business consequences of a dirty or unclean hotel environment may be easier to imagine.

Cleanliness was also featured in the quality construct of a study designed to measure the effects of stadium servicescapes on consumer experience ratings [21]. This study featured two outdoor stadiums, one in poor condition and one in good condition. The perceived quality of the stadium environment was found to have a positive effect on overall satisfaction with the servicescape and an excitement construct. Further research in this stream incorporated cleanliness rating into a tangibles construct which proved to have a positive effect on the excitement level experienced by patrons of various leisure [25].

Gardner and Siomkos (1985) operational zed low image and high store setting by providing verbal descriptions of both store environments. In the low image passage, language such as "dirty and dingy white floors," messy" and "sloppily dressed employees" was used. The physical environment, as perceived from the descriptions, was found to produce a significant effect on the physical sensations associated with the test product. The cleanliness feature of the store environment description was central to the distinction of high and low image stores. . Dabholka, Thorpe and Rentz (1996) conducted qualitative research to determine the dimensions of retail service quality in department stores. The results of three separate qualitative studies indicated that the subjects were most concerned with the physical qualities of the servicescape. Participants mentioned cleanliness and overall store appearance as salient attributes related to the retail shopping experience.

Each of the studies previously mentioned in the discussion of cleanliness included the appearance of the employees as a component of a clean appearing environment. Additionally, [14] found employee appearance to produce a positives effect on consumer satisfaction, in the retail banking sector.

The hotel cleanliness situation is customers' nicest element frequently. It compared to hotel whether the luxurious room and elevator have more importance. Because of customer's health is most important. Therefore the customer generally could specially pay attention to the guest room's cleanliness and service provider attire cleanliness. The customers may

appraise the scale and service level of hotel from the health angle.

Moreover, this standard also could affect of repatronage intention and confidence of consumer which to have positive or the negative influence again.

2.4 Position Cue

This position includes the hotel position, traffic convenience, peripheral environment and hotel internal layout. A hotel's position is the most importance. It directly affects the hotel the image and the visitor quantity. Stronger hotel often be situated in the transportation convenience's region. The transportation convenience has also proven the hotel grade. The actual size of the firm's facility and departments conveys different meanings to different markets. In general, the larger the size of the firm and its corresponding physical evidence, the more consumers associates the firm with importance, power, success, security, and stability. For many consumers, the larger the firm, the lower the perceived risk associated with the service purchase. Such consumers believe that larger firms are more competent and more likely to engage in service recovery efforts when problems do arise. Still other customers enjoy the prestige often associate with conducting business with a larger, well-known firm.

And hotel internal layout could give the consumer a direct feeling which accessibility and convenience. The degree of ease associated with navigating a hotel environment is related to what Bitner (1992) refers to as the spatial layout of the servicescape. The salient issues associated with the store layout, or in this case, the hotel floor layout, are related to the effects of crowding. Obviously the layout and its degree of functionality could spatially constrain the consumer. As noted in the crowing literature, the number of people in a not the sole component of the crowding experience. The architecture, interior design and spatial layout of the environment can all evoke the sensation of crowding [11,19].

The qualitative research conducted by Dabholkar et al. (1996) indicated store layout to be of primary importance to department store shoppers. Participants commented on the degree of convenience afforded to them by the servicescape. The results of these studies indicated that store layout was the most important feature of the shopping experience.

Wakefield and Blodgett (1999) surveyed patrons of leisure services to find that tangible aspects of the physical environment were related to an excitement scale which, in turn, was related to repatronage intentions and willingness to recommend.

2.5 Overall Perceived and Repatronage

The positive effect of consumer satisfaction on loyalty behavior is empirically supported by several by studies [1,2,12]. These studies analyzed data from Sweden's customer satisfaction barometer. The CSB is a composite index employed to measure the customer satisfaction of dominant Swedish companies, across a wide variety of industries and institutional entities. [12] discovered that companies in less competitive environments, with fewer substitute goods or

services, demonstrated weaker relationships between customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Both Oliver and Swan (1989) and Anderson and Sullivan (1993) found a strong relationship between customer satisfaction and repatronage intentions. Oliver and Swan conducted their study by interviewing subjects who had recently purchased an automobile. The notion of fairness in the negotiations was found to have s strong influence on customer satisfaction, which product a significant effect on repatronage intentions. It was theorized that fairness would produce an indirect effect on repatronage intentions through customer satisfaction. This theory is similar to the idea of time on device producing an indirect effects on represents the guest's perception of perceived. Desire to stay in an environment has been theorized to be manifestation of an approach behavior, in a business setting. For a hotel operation, desire to stay in the hotel environment, could be made profitability. Hotel management would prefer the guest to be in its most profit center. The positive relationship between customer satisfaction and profitability has also been empirically supported by some of the same studies. Results directly related to the measurement of desire to stay in a hotel environment found satisfaction with the servicescape to be antecedent.

3. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

3.1 Model

On the basis of the theory overview, we could found each variables relationship, so we found this model and hypothesis:
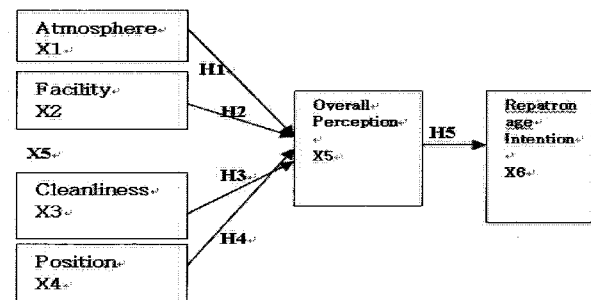
3.2 Hypotheses

Psychologists suggest that individuals react to places with two general, and opposite, forms of behavior: approach and avoidance. Approach behaviors include all positive behaviors that might be directed at a particular place, such as desire to stay, explore, work, and affiliate.

In hotel industry, the Chinese hotel is mainly imitation the developed country's experience. Lacks own characteristic and it is not fit for Chinese consumers because of every country's situation is different. So we hypothesize these and develop the model, Base on the literature review, we could get these hypotheses:

H1: Atmosphere will produce a positive effect on overall perception of customers.
H2: Facility will produce a positive effect on overall

perception of customers.

H3: Cleanliness will produce a positive effect on overall perception of customers.

H4: Position will produce a positive effect on overall perception of customers.

H5: Overall perception of customers will produce a positive effect on customer intention.

3.3 Sample Characteristics

This paper is mainly choice the Chinese consumers which expends in the hotel carries on the investigation and study, the paper discovered the consequence which produces regarding the above factor has the obvious difference in the Chinese consumer. Some 80% above customer thought the scale higher hotel physical environment is also better, has 20% consumer to think the physical environment and the hotel scale has the relation but is not inevitable. At the same time, because the commercial reason enters the consumer holds majority of in the overall consumer, different reason consumers' request and perception is also different. Some customers have a higher request on the hotel luxurious class; some customers take the crowding in hotel, but also have some customers to have the high request regarding the hotel's cleanliness. Because of this kind of situation, this article decided chooses consumer have much experience which lived the hotel to take the investigation and study. After the synthesis consideration, decides to choose the 4 hotels which approximate rank to investigation and study.

After determined the target of consume which investigate and study, we carried on the preliminary examination which living situation and the hotel existing physical environment situation in hotels in Beijing, understands it is because of in the traveling busy season now, the Beijing more than 200 hotels living situation to be extremely optimistic, equally living rate has achieved 74.3%. Especially, the larger hotel's living rate is above 80%. After carried on consumer visits and investigate, according to the existing hotels quantity, scale, living persons' principal constituent and the expense average level, we preliminary design questionnaires.

The investigation starts from July 15, 2006, lasted two months finished, period altogether sends out questionnaire are 250, to the Beijing friendship hotel, the Beijing meteorology hotel, Beijing Tuo Yuelou hotel, the Beijing Longtan hotel which 4 hotels to send out has adjusted the questionnaire, altogether took back the integrity answer papers are 202, except not honestly filled and does not conform to the logic or has other problems invalid questionnaire, finally obtained 195 effectively questionnaire to used in the data analysis.

Through the SPSS test the reliability of the variables. And then through the EFA to analyze the validity of the variables, check the value. In last, use the AMOS program to test the hypothesis and result.

3.4 Evaluation of the Measures

In the reliability test, we through the SPSS program to test the Cronbach's Alpha values of the variables. Most of the Cronbach's Alpha values are greater than the 70%, except atmosphere variables (65.9%), facility variables (67.8%). The

other Cronbach's Alpha are: cleanliness=71.2%; position=71.7%; overall perception=78.8%; repatronage intention=78.6%; word of mouth=82.9%. since all the Cronbach's Alpha values are more than 0.6, all the results are reliable. The factor analysis is to check the variables. The results are summarized in Table 6. The measure fit in Table 1 is acceptable, since most of the figures are greater than 0.5 except atmosphere 3 and 5; facility 1 and 3; cleanliness 2; and the position 3. The eigen values should be greater than 1, since all the results are greater than 1, they are all valid. The cumulative is greater than 61, which means 61% of the results can be support, while the error is 39%.

Table 1 Results of Factor Analysis

Units	Items	Factor1	Factor2	Factor3	Factor4
Position	Post1				0.847
	Post2				0.751
	Post4				0.538
	Post5				0.737
Cleanliness	Clean1			0.801	
	Clean3			0.795	
	Clean4			0.822	
Facility	Fac2		0.650		
	Fac4		0.851		
Atmosphere	Atmos1	0.684			
	Atmos2	0.738			
	Atmos4	0.641			
Eigen Values		3.932	1.851	1.345	1.112
Explanation (%)		30.234	12.162	10.349	8.557
Cumulative (%)		30.234	42.405	52.754	61.311

Then we could through the AMOS program CFA to check the variables validity. Table 2 is listing the CR values and Estimate values of the variables. The Table 7 is the whole model and data index. CMIN=273.916 (df=155 p=0.000; CMIN/df=1.767), GFI=0.916, AGFI=0.834, RMR= 0.045, CFI=0.916, NFI=0.829, they are achieve a better level.

Table 2 Variables' Validity Values

Variables	Items	Estimate	T values
Atmosphere	Atmos1	0.477	3.975
	Atmos2	0.523	4.607
	Atmos4	1.00	—
Facility	Fac2	1.792	4.250
	Fac4	1.00	—
Cleanliness	Clean1	1.00	—
	Clean3	0.833	8.748
	Clean4	0.993	9.335
Position	Post1	1.00	—
	Post2	0.755	8.434
	Post4	0.489	5.659
	Post5	0.748	8.074
Overall Perception	OP1	0.846	8.567
	OP2	1.00	—
	OP3	1.053	8.288
Repatronage Intention	RI1	1.113	9.868
	RI2	1.00	—
	RI3	0.834	8.889

3.5 Hypothesis Testing

Table 3 Hypothesis Testing Results

Path Relation	Path Name	Directio n	Esti mate	S.E.	C.R.	Results
H1 Atmos→OP	H1	Positive	0.280	0.097	2.882	Support
H2 Fac→OP	H2	Positive	0.247	0.140	1.767	No Support
H3 Clean→OP	H3	Positive	0.249	0.087	2.846	Support
H4 Pos→OP	H4	Positive	0.200	0.072	2.767	Support
H5 OP→RI	H5	Positive	0.852	0.119	7.171	Support

As clearly indicated in Table 3, one hypothesis (H2) of them were no support, the other four hypotheses were support. To H2, the same level scale hotel facility difference is not very big; therefore the visitor regarding the hotel facility attention degree is not high. At the same time, the different visitor regarding the hotel facility request also is dissimilar. Some visitors are attention to the comfortable of the hotel's facility, but the other consumers' attention on the luxury of the facility. So it's very difficult to cause it consistently.

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Theoretical Implications and Contributions

The finding of this study should advance our knowledge of this area in both a theoretical and a practical sense. In the past research, it lacked to the physical environment overall effect understanding. And the physical environment the research which affects to the consumer's repatronage and overall perception is also insufficiently. So, this study is basis on the Bitner's many studies which conduct more thorough and comprehensive research to the influence of physical environment. The strong positive effects of servicescape satisfaction on the behavioral intention variables provided additional support for Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) theory regarding human responses to physical environments. The results of this study indicated that an increase in servicescape satisfaction resulted in an increase in all three, approach behavior intentions. Wakefield and Blodgett (1996) produced similar results, as they found a significant relationship between servicescape satisfaction and approach behaviors such as desire to stay in the casino environment and repatronage intentions.

The results of this study also lend support to Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) theory related to the emotional nature of responses to physical environments. Other researchers have described satisfaction as an emotional response derived from a transaction or service encounter.

4.2 Managerial Implications and Contributions

We may draw the conclusion through the model; the physical environment regarding consumer's repatronage and overall perception influence is remarkable. Between them has the remarkable relationship, but effective use this kind of relation may bring the unexpected harvest to the service provider.

First, several variables of the atmosphere degrees of correlation are extremely high. Therefore, the different scale hotel or the different style hotel all needs to defer to own actual need to have custom-made oneself unique atmosphere characteristic.

Second, because China is a country when in the fast development time, although people's consumption level grows fast, but the expense idea is not very perfect. The people have the high expectation regarding the hotel facility luxurious degree, but the different level service providers should carry on the difference competition. Doesn't have the construction luxurious facility service providers to be supposed make much ado about in facility comfortableness and completely.

Third, the consumer regard to the hotel cognition is impossible only to pause in the superficial level forever. Can attract the consumer repatronage important basis which the hotel cleanliness. But the cleanliness standard has already along with the unceasingly grow expense consciousness which unceasing enhancement. Only through the effective comparison could give the consumer the direct-viewing feeling, therefore the hotel should carry on the conversion ponder, stands in consumer's angle considered the hotel needs to improve aspect.

Fourth, Modern hotel industry competition is intensity. As a result of each kind of information channel unceasing consummation, cannot the effective self-propaganda service provider will certainly to be eliminated.

At last, as the hotel superintendent, should take the key object to first time arrive the hotel visitor. Because could get the results through the research clearly, the consumer is not high attention to others expense feeling, also very difficult to change own choice. Therefore, only then attract the first group of visitors, can strengthen the hotel vitality.

4.3 Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

The limitations of this study are mainly in three aspects. First, although physical environment to hotel industry influence is effectiveness, regarding some specific visitors and the environment, the effect is not remarkable.

Second, most subjects used in this study are Chinese citizens, living in or passing by Beijing, the results may be influenced by localized conditions at the time of study, also limiting the findings of the study to other cultures.

Third, this study is mainly the large-scale comprehensive hotel, although this kind of hotel's facility more consummation, luxurious. But it lacks prominent characteristic. The consumer regarding this kind of hotel cognition has already formed a fixed pattern. In the future research, will be supposed to aim has the more characteristic service providers. Studies their physical environment regarding the consumer whether has the different influence.

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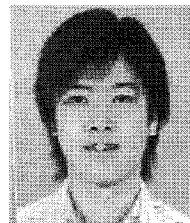
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