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## INTERACTION QUALITY AND SATISFACTION: An Empirical Study of International Tourists when Buying Shanghai Tourist Attraction Services.

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### **Abstract:**

The main purpose of this paper is to examine the relationship between the quality of interaction with tourist attraction services and satisfaction. The model proposes that interaction quality affects both satisfaction with tourism services and the overall tourist satisfaction with the destination. In addition, the link between the overall tourist satisfaction and the intention to revisit the destination is assessed. Data were collected from 165 international tourists visiting Shanghai tourist attractions and analyzed through PLS-SEM using second-order hierarchical modeling. Interaction quality is seen as a multidimensional construct, including aspects such as language, nonverbal behavior, attitude and expertise. The results confirm the direct effect of interaction quality on service satisfaction and the overall tourist satisfaction as well as its indirect effect on revisit intention. The overall tourist's satisfaction does directly impact the intention to revisit the destination. For international tourists visiting Shanghai, interaction quality constitutes an essential part of their experience not only with services rendered but also with the destination itself.

**Keywords:** interaction quality; service satisfaction; overall tourist satisfaction; revisit intention; Shanghai tourism services; PLS-SEM.

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## 1. Introduction

Shanghai is seen as a cosmopolitan metropolis, a big city where modernism and traditionalism converge. It is seen as one of the safest cities in Asia and internationally recognized for having one of the best public transportation systems in the world. It is also a city where it is easy for tourists to speak English and find the exotic and mystical culture they are looking for. However, while all this is true, there is still a lot of work to be done to make it tourist friendly. This is especially true during intercultural service encounters where the employee is Chinese and the customer is foreign.

According to the China Institute of City Competitiveness<sup>1</sup>, Shanghai was the most competitive city of China in 2017, followed by Hong Kong, Shenzhen, and Beijing. In another study from the Center for China & Globalization (CCG) and Ctrip<sup>2</sup>, Shanghai has also been selected as the most popular city for overseas tourists to visit, ahead of Beijing. This may be, probably, because if well it is true that Beijing is the political center of the Asian giant, the city suffers from heavy pollution which may detract tourists. Indeed, the number of tourists visiting Beijing decreased by 5.8% last year. When visiting Shanghai, tourists find that not only the air is cleaner, the subway is less crowded, it has the highest skyscrapers of China and it also many foreign tourists view it as the New York of Asia. In addition, the Shanghai Tourism Bureau<sup>3</sup> shows that by the end of 2017 the city received 8.730.111 of foreign tourists, which is more than 4 millions international tourists who visited Beijing<sup>4</sup>, increasing by 2.18%. At the same time, the statistics demonstrate that the inbound tourist market is changing. The rate of tourists coming from countries like South Korea has decreased in a 19.13% while countries like Australia, Thailand, Canada, United States has considerably increased on 14.41%, 16.30%, 15.73%, 5.94% respectively.

Additionally, the report of the CCG and Ctrip points out that overseas tourists coming to China are mainly for business, although, potential new tourists showed more interest in leisure and sightseeing. The research also confirms that foreign tourists are highly satisfied with service transportation, however, aspects such as exorbitant prices of some services, food hygiene and other tourism experiences are still a problem. Overseas tourists still complain about employees' attitude, nonverbal behaviors and/or satisfaction with some tourism services when visiting the city. Hence, it is important to conducted research and develop strategies to tackle these problems and keep increasing the number of international tourists visiting the city.

Since tourism is an amalgam of service industries (Fuchs & Weiermair, 2003, p. 7), tourists will typically purchase and consume a whole range of services, which together make up the holiday or vacation experience (Weiermair, 2000, p. 398). Furthermore, it is essential to pay attention to what tourists (customers) value during service encounters. This will help service providers to attract more customers and deliver a service that exceeds expectations, enabling tourists to think about taking another trip to Shanghai and recommend the city as a tourism destination.

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<sup>1</sup> China Institute of City Competitiveness: <http://www.china-citynet.com/yjh/en/fyphb.asp>

<sup>2</sup> Center for China & Globalization: <http://en.ccg.org.cn/who-is-travelling-to-china-ccg-new-research-gives-insights/>

<sup>3</sup> Shanghai Municipal Bureau: [http://lyw.sh.gov.cn/lyj\\_website/HTML/DefaultSite/lyj\\_xxgk\\_lytj\\_2017/2018-02-01/Detail\\_139443.htm](http://lyw.sh.gov.cn/lyj_website/HTML/DefaultSite/lyj_xxgk_lytj_2017/2018-02-01/Detail_139443.htm)

<sup>4</sup> Beijing Municipal Bureau of Statistics: [http://tjj.beijing.gov.cn/tjsj/yjdsj/ly/2017/201801/t20180116\\_390970.html](http://tjj.beijing.gov.cn/tjsj/yjdsj/ly/2017/201801/t20180116_390970.html)

Thus, this paper considers interaction quality, service satisfaction and the overall tourism satisfaction with the destination as important sources of a city competitive advantage. Past literature assert that aspects such as visitor satisfaction, service quality, employees' attitude and skills, prices, level of visitor safety, visual appeal as well as others resources determine a destinations' competitiveness. In addition, the service encounter is seen as the face-to-face interactions between the customer and service provider in a service setting (Lloyd & Luk, 2011, p. 177). The overall tourism satisfaction with the destination is seen as the sum of small episodes of positive experiences during the trip, which includes not only the attributes of the destination such as nature, people, city life, but also the whole amalgam of services (transportation, accommodation, dinning, visitor attractions), products and interactions during the trip. In contrast, satisfaction with a tourism service is seen as an episode of the overall tourist satisfaction with the destination, where customers evaluate all the service attributes and provide an enjoyable level of consumption-related fulfilment (Oliver 1997, p. 13).

Our aim is to examine the relationship between the quality of interaction with tourism services and satisfaction. The model proposes that interaction quality affects both satisfaction with tourism services and the overall tourist satisfaction with the destination. In addition, the link between the overall tourist satisfaction and the intention to revisit the destination will be assessed. By doing so, we expect to help managers to improve their service, paying special attention to interaction quality as a key driver of satisfaction.

## **1. Literature Review**

### **1.1 Interaction in the literature**

To live is to live in constant interaction. Hence, nothing in this world operates in isolation. Many authors have studied the interaction as a process (e.g. Abrahamsen, 2016; Blumer, 2012; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Jensen, 1998; Rafaeli, 1988; Spencer-Oatey, 2000; Wagner, 1994; West & Turner, 2010) from different angles such as human-computer connection, sociolinguistics, communication, physics, human information behavior, branding, firm performance, and consumer culture theory (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Fyrberg & Jürjado, 2009; Homburg, Wieseke, & Bornemann, 2009; cited in Grönroos & Voima, 2013, p. 140). Thus, offering a wide spectrum to services marketing where services have been defined as "a series of interactions between participants, processes and physical elements" (Tax & Stuart, 1997, p. 107), or to relational marketing (Grönroos, 1982; 1984; Grönroos & Voima, 2013; Gummesson, 2002), interactive marketing (e.g. Echeverri & Skalen, 2011; Grönroos, 1982; 2011) or experiential marketing, where interactions have been studied mostly in the context of buyer-seller relationships (Snehota & Hakansson, 1995), and experiences have been said that come from interactions (Ramaswamy, 2011, p. 195), and therefore, interactions become the locus of value creation (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004, p. 12).

However, it is hard to portray what an interaction episode looks like, when it starts or finishes, since a moment of interaction is part of a continuum of facts and therefore, what we see is the continuation of things from the past (Abrahamsen, 2016, p. 467; Håkansson et al., 2009, p. 36). Abrahamsen (2016) states that these interaction episodes are all interconnected. For this reason, what occurs in one relationship cannot be seen as an isolated element but quite the opposite. The author argues that it is the interpretation of interactions rather than reality itself that forms the basis for interaction (p. 468). In a service context, Echeverri & Salomonson (2017) state that during a service encounter, both the employee and the customer participate actively in a dialogue process, and it is here where creation and destruction of value can take place.

Within the marketing literature, several studies have been done on interactions, whether through brand communities (Schau, Muñiz, & Arnould, 2009), technology applications (Racherla, Babb, & Keith, 2011) or face-to-face (Echeverri & Skalen, 2011; Lloyd & Luk, 2011; Solomon et al., 1985). For example, Sheth makes a relevant distinction between two interaction dimensions: the content versus the style of communication (Solomon et al., 1985, p. 101); the content of communication entails suggesting, offering, promoting or negotiating a set of product-

specific utilities and their expectations (Sheth, 1976, p. 382); the latter dimension recognizes the centrality of ritualistic behavior patterns in shaping the outcome of the buyer/seller interaction (Solomon et al., 1985, p. 101) which includes task-oriented, tradition-oriented, and people-oriented style (for more see Sheth 1983). Bailey et al. (2001) recognize the emotional elements of the interaction through fourteen prepositions and posit that understanding the emotional aspects of an ongoing interaction is related to the concept of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995; Salovey & Mayer, 1990), especially the dimensions of empathy and self-regulation (p. 9), and Albrecht et al. (2016) assert that employees' emotions may influence customers' behaviors during the customer service interaction through the conscious or unconscious induction of behavioral attitudes (Schoenewolf, 1990) (p. 705). Thus, interaction can be seen as the mutual relation where actors have an effect upon each other, whether positive or negative and can be carried out through different channels.

## **1.2 Interaction Quality (IQ) and its dimensions**

Face-to-face or direct interaction plays an important role in any service setting. It is through interaction that customers and employees get to know each other for a short period of time, and are able to leave a certain impression on both sides. Therefore, customer-employee direct interaction is no more than the relationship where actors can have an effect upon each other, whether positive or negative. Brady & Cronin (2001) express that because services are inherently intangible and characterized by inseparability, the interpersonal interactions that take place during service delivery often have the greatest effect on service quality perceptions (p. 38) and therefore, on the perceived experience value of the service and the overall tourist satisfaction.

Grönroos (1982, 1984) together with Parasuraman et al. (1988) are some of the first authors to suggest the term interaction quality. Grönroos (1982) asserts that when designing a customer-employee interaction, it is imperative to acknowledge all the quality components (p. 33). In the same article, Grönroos posits that within a service encounter, the manner in which the employee behaves and communicates with the customer is crucial for the perception the customer gets of service (p. 38). Chahal (2010) finds that dimensions like attitude, friendliness, helpfulness, and responsiveness influence the patient-physician interaction (Hau et al., 2017, p. 255). In the same line, Choi & Kim (2013) assert that certain aspects of interaction quality such as politeness, friendliness, sensitivity, and empathy, are considered critical in driving customer satisfaction (p. 191). Gaur et al. (2011) examine how patients' loyalty, and confidence in their doctors are influenced by doctors' interaction behavior, specifically exploring dimensions such as listening, explaining and perceived competence. Their study supports the findings of other authors who claim that listening and explaining (e.g. Ramsey & Sohi, 1997; Chandon, Leo, & Philippe, 1997), together with competence (e.g. Parasuraman et al., 1985, 1988; John, 1991; Chandon, Leo, & Philippe, 1997) are important aspects of any interaction, and therefore affect customers' level of satisfaction. In addition, Wu et al. (2015) explore the relationship between service competencies of frontline employees and service quality. The findings show that frontline employees' service competences positively impact customer perceptions of service quality.

On the other hand, some aspects have also been analyzed by referring to IQ dimension. For example, Lloyd & Luk (2011) consider facial expressions, body language, tone of voice and language as a manifestation of service manner. The authors argue that both facial expressions and body language should communicate qualities such as patience, helpfulness, politeness, passion for the job and cheerfulness (p. 188). In a qualitative study, Echeverri & Salomonson (2017) find six general behavior practices present in a customer-employee direct interaction, such as mood expressing, caring, connecting, responding, substantializing and embedding. Each of them include some reciprocal activities (explaining, adjusting, small talk, paying attention, knowledge gaining, and so on). The research findings guide services' managers on how to assess their interactions with customers.

Holmqvist (2011) discovered that most consumers are prepared to pay more in all service encounters to interact with a service provider who uses the customer's first language, rather than one who does not (p. 188). Balaji et al (2017) demonstrate that language divergence has a negative impact on customer assessment of service interactions and

strength of relationship with the service provider (p. 213); whereas Kraak and Holmqvist (2016) propose that service providers could benefit from language convergence no matter what language the customer speaks (p. 3). Racherla et al. (2011) posit that interaction face-to-face allows simultaneous observations of multiple informative cues including body language, facial expressions, and the tone of voice (p.143). Puccinelli et al. (2013) find out that an employee capability to read dissimilar types of nonverbal behaviors impact service' quality impressions (p. 369).

Hence, aspects such as nonverbal behavior (Ekinici & Riley, 2003; Gabbott & Hogg, 2000; Puccinelli et al., 2013; Lloyd & Luk, 2011), employee's attitude (Brady & Cronin, 2001; Chahal, 2010; Ma & Dubé, 2011; Ranjan, Sugathan, & Rossmann, 2015), perceived employee's expertise or knowledge (Crosby et al., 1990; Brady & Cronin, 2001; Spake & Megehee, 2010; Wu et al., 2015) are some of the important factors enabling interaction in past studies. These are dimensions that we are going to use in our study.

### **1.3 Service Satisfaction and Overall Tourist Satisfaction**

For more than four decades, satisfaction has been the center of attention in marketing or services literature, countless researchers have tried to assess and define customer satisfaction (Hunt, 1977; Babin & Griffin, 1998; Westbrook & Oliver, 1981; Woodruff & Gardial, 1996; Spreng, Mackenzie, & Olshavsky, 1996; Yi, 1991; Neal, Sirgy, & Uysal, 1999; Oliver, 1980, 1996, 1999; Armario, 2008; Hansemark & Albinsson, 2004; Pawitra & Tan, 2003; Prebensen & Rosengren, 2016). For example, Oliver (1980) asserts that satisfaction is "a function of an initial standard and some perceived discrepancy from the initial reference point" (p. 460). Pawitra & Tan (2003) affirm that tourist satisfaction can be accomplished by measuring the difference between predicted and perceived service (p. 400). According to Armario (2008), tourist satisfaction with a destination includes not only the tourist' expectations before and during the trip but also the customer's perception of the services. Prebensen & Rosengren (2016) state that "satisfaction is the result of the consumer's evaluation of the experience value derived from the experiences at various service providers through the experience process" (p. 118). Other authors argue that overall satisfaction and attribute satisfaction are not the same (Oliver, 1993). The former can be defined as the evaluation of the consumer's subjective satisfaction coming from an examination of attribute performance (Oliver, 1993, p. 421), the latter constitutes an aspect of satisfaction with single elements of a product or service that compose the experience, such as accommodation, weather, natural environment, social environment, and so on (Lounsbury & Hoopes, 1985; Pizam & Ellis, 1999; cited in Chi & Qu, 2008, p. 626).

When studying service satisfaction at different stages of a trip and the overall tourist satisfaction, Neal, Sirgy, & Uysal (1999) assert that the tourism service satisfaction and its determinants must be a priority when determining satisfaction with travel or tourism trip experiences. These services are seen not only within the destination, but also during the other phases of a travel such as pretrip, enroute and return trip. The authors confirm that satisfaction with tourism trip services together with trip reflections, which include perceived freedom from control, perceived freedom from work, involvement arousal, mastery, and spontaneity, play a significant role in determining overall satisfaction with tourism experiences. In a similar line, Chen, Huang, & Petrick (2016) hypothesize tourism satisfaction as a mediator between tourism recovery experience and overall life satisfaction. The authors argue that individuals who experience something new during the trip are more likely to be satisfied with their vacation. In another study regarding to satisfaction with services, Lu et al. (2015) find out that for guests, satisfaction emerges when: (1) the value of service received is equal to or greater than the price they paid, and (2) when the services meet customers' expectations, thereby, interaction quality would impact the customer level of satisfaction with the service. In addition, Su, Swanson, & Chen (2016) examine customer satisfaction as a construct of relationship quality, and test the full mediating role of satisfaction between service quality and subjective well-being. The investigators state that greater personalized services mean a greater level of satisfaction, and lower probability of switching to competitors.



Despite the difficulty to conceptualize and operationalize satisfaction (Dmitrović et al., 2009, p. 120), the literature reveals that the level of tourist satisfaction with a particular trip is the result of different factors (Peter & Olson, 1996; cited in Armario, 1996, p. 367). Therefore, we can assert that within a tourism destination service satisfaction is an episode of satisfaction where the customer (tourist) subjectively evaluates his/her expectations with what s/he receives. However, overall tourist satisfaction is the sum of all small episodes of positive experiences and hence, small episodes of satisfaction that include not only services at various stages of a trip, but also the subjective evaluation of the individual destination's attributes. As the literature shows, the overall tourist satisfaction with the destination is associated with individual components of the destination (e.g. Danaher & Arweiler, 1996; Hsu, 2003; Mayer, Johnson, Hu, & Chen, 1998; Ross & Iso-Ahola, 1991; cited in Chi & Qu, 2008).

#### **1.4 Revisit Intentions**

Authors have linked revisit intention not only with satisfaction (Baker & Crompton, 2000; C. Chen & Chen, 2010; C. F. Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Cronin, Brady, & Hult, 2000; Kozak & Rimmington, 2000; Oh, 1999; Petrick, Morais, & Norman, 2001; Ryu, Han, & Jang, 2010; Su, Swanson, & Chen, 2016; Williams & Soutar, 2009), but also with a memorable tourism experience (Agapito, Pinto, & Mendes, 2017; Barnes, Mattsson, & Sørensen, 2016; Zhang, Wu, & Buhalis, 2017;), emotions (Han, Back, & Barret, 2009), novelty seeking (Shawn & Feng, 2007), quality of tourist shuttles (Loi et al., 2017), perceived attractiveness (Um, Chon, & Ro, 2006) and destination image (Tosun, Bora, & Fyall, 2015; De Nisco et al., 2015; Kim & Lee, 2015; Stylos et al., 2016). Thus, for many tourism destinations, repeat visitors constitute a desired market segment, because they tend to stay longer at a destination, tend to be more satisfied as they experience and realize expectations (Zhang, Wu, & Buhalis, 2017, p. 4).

Intention to revisit refers to tourists' plans to visit the same site or destination again (Cole & Scott, 2004; cited in Loi et al., 2017, p. 117), providing the most precise prediction of a decision to revisit (Stylos et al., 2016, p. 42). Um, Chon, & Ro (2006) posit that tourists who intent to revisit the city for first time may be motivated by the performance of the destination as a whole due to their initial stay. The authors determine that overall tourist satisfaction mediates the relationship among aspects such as perceived value for money, perceived quality of service, perceived attractiveness, and revisit intention. In another study, Shawn & Feng (2007) measure revisit intentions on short-, mid- and long-term bases, the study shows satisfaction as the direct predictor of the short-term revisit intention. The authors claim that travel destinations can stimulate tourists' revisit intention by maximizing traveler satisfaction (p. 587). In addition, Han, Back, & Barrett (2009) discover a strong relation between satisfaction and revisit intention of customer regarding to restaurants. The researchers state that revisit intention can be conceptualized as an asserted likelihood to revisit in the absence or presence of a positive attitude toward the provider (p. 564).

However, to our knowledge, despite the existence of countless studies linking satisfaction and revisit intention, acknowledging that the more satisfied a tourist is with the tourism destination, the higher the probability that this tourist return to the destination, just few of them assess the indirect effect of interaction quality on revisit intentions through the mediating role of overall tourism satisfaction.

## **2. Hypotheses:**

- H<sub>1</sub>: Interaction quality during a service encounter has a direct effect on the satisfaction with the service.
- H<sub>2</sub>: Interaction quality during a service encounter has a direct effect on the overall satisfaction with the destination.
- H<sub>3</sub>: Service satisfaction directly affects the overall tourist satisfaction with the destination.
- H<sub>4</sub>: The overall tourist satisfaction with the destination directly affects the revisit intentions.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design

A second-order reflective-formative hierarchical model of SEM, following a two-stage approach was used. Interaction quality (IQ) is seen as a higher order formative construct formed by four reflective first-order constructs (language, nonverbal behavior, attitude and expertise), while service satisfaction (SS), overall tourist satisfaction (OTS) and revisit intention (RI) are reflective constructs. A reflective indicator is an observed variable implying that the construct causes the measurement of the indicator variables (Hair et al., 2016, p. 13), whereas formative indicator is a variable measuring an assumed cause of or a component of a latent construct (Lowry & Gaskin, 2014; cited in Rahman et al., 2017, p. 5).

Data analysis for this study has been done using SPSS 21 and SmartPLS 3.2. 7 (Ringle, Wende, & Becker, 2015). For this, the procedures given by Hair et al. (2016) are followed. The authors oriented that there are different ways to treat formative and reflective measurement. When evaluating the extended or measurement model, internal consistency, convergent and discriminant validity need to be assessed for reflective constructs whereas convergent validity, collinearity between indicators, significance and relevance of outer weights need to be evaluated. Finally, coefficients of determination ( $R^2$ ), predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ), size and significance of path coefficients,  $f^2$  effect size and  $q^2$  effect size (Hair et al., 2016) are computed when evaluating the structural model.

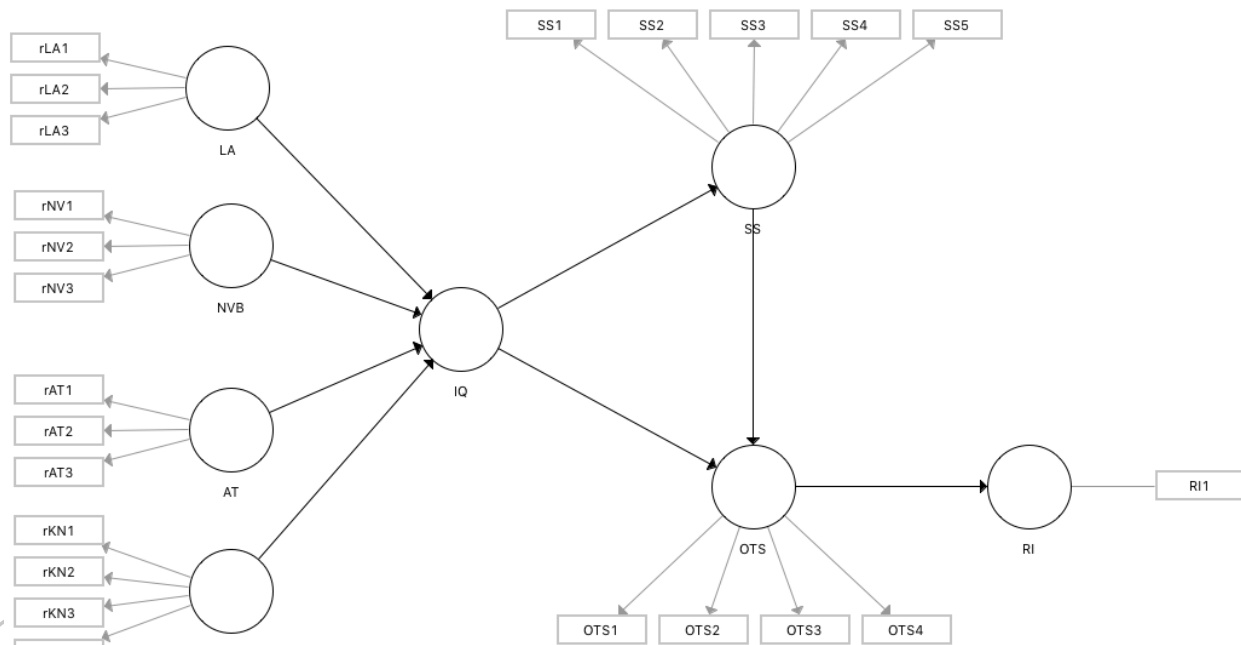


Figure 1: Proposed Extended Model

#### 3.2 Survey instrument

The survey questionnaire used for this study consists of four sections: 1. Demographic information, 2. Aspects related to interaction quality (13 items), 3. Satisfaction with visitor attraction services (5 items), and 4. Overall tourist satisfaction with the destination (4 items) and revisit intention (1 item). For sections two and three,



respondents were asked to answer on a five point Likert scale, from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree), for each of the statements given. In section four (5 items), items 1, 2, and 3 were also measured on a five point Likert scale, from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree); item four was also assessed on a five point Likert scale, from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied), and item five being from 1 (far below expectations) to 5 (greatly exceeded expectations). Revisit intention was measured with one item, also with a 5 point Likert scale, from 1 (definitely not) to 5 (definitely). Table 1 shows the measurement items of each section were adapted from different authors.

Table 1: Constructs and items used in the model

Construct	Indicator	Question	Adapted from
Language (LA)	rLA1	The service employee accommodates my language preference	Kraak & Holmqvist, 2016, interview Holmqvist, Van Vaerenbergh, & Grönroos, 2014
	rLA2	The service employee has good language skills	
	rLA3	The service employee uses positive language	
Nonverbal Behavior (NVB)	rNV1	Voice is not boisterous	Lloyd & Luk, 2011 Jung & Yoon, 2011
	rNV2	Listens carefully to what I have to say	
	rNV3	Converses at a proper speed	
Attitude (AT)	rAT1	Is friendly and respectful	Brady & Cronin, 2001 Lloyd & Luk, 2011
	rAT2	Is willing to help me	
	rAT3	Behaves gracefully	
Expertise (KN)	rKN1	S/he knows the job very well	Brady & Cronin, 2001 Lloyd & Luk, 2011
	rKN2	S/he is able to answer my questions quickly	
	rKN3	S/he understands that I rely on his/her knowledge to meet my needs	
	rKN4	S/he possesses the expertise to analyze customers' problems	
Service Satisfaction (SS)	SS1	The cost of this tourist service is reasonable and well worth it	Neal, Uysal, & Sirgy, 1999, 2007 Dagger et al., 2007
	SS2	The service experience is well organized and therefore problem-free	
	SS3	This service made the trip a richer experience for me	
	SS4	The quality of this tourism service has been	
	SS5	My feelings towards this tourist service are very positive	
Overall Tourist Satisfaction (OTS)	OTS1	In general, I was pleased with the experience quality of this tourism destination	Neal, Uysal, & Sirgy, 1999, 2007 Prebensen, Kim, & Uysal, 2015 Um, Chon, & Ro, 2006 Um, Chon, & Ro, 2006
	OTS2	In general, this trip helped me to rest and feel fully relaxed	
	OTS3	Overall, based on the experiences you had in Shanghai, how satisfied are you with this tourism destination?	
	OTS4	To what extent Shanghai meet your expectations as a tourism destination?	
Revisit Intention (RI)	RI1	How likely would you return to Shanghai in the next five years for pleasure travel?	

### 3.3 Sampling and data collection

This study was carried out in Shanghai, known as the economic and financial center of China. The target population consists of international tourists visiting Shanghai from August to October. Specifically, 251 questionnaires were sent via Survey Monkey and others were distributed face-to-face, some of the questionnaires were dropped at different tourist places around Shanghai in order and collected one week later. From 251 questionnaires distributed, only 189 were received back, 24 of the 189 questionnaires were rejected for being incomplete, so that 165 questionnaires were finally used for the analysis, which yielded an overall response rate of 65.74%.

## 4. Results

#### 4.1 Demographic findings

Table 2 summarizes the demographic profile of the respondents. Females represent 55.8% of the population studied, of which 21.8% and 15.2% are between 18-25 and 26-35 years old respectively, whereas the higher percentage of males coming to Shanghai (15.2%) are between 26-35 years. Within education level, women portray a higher level of education with 28.5% having a bachelor degree and 16.4% master's degree. However, when it comes to occupational level, males have a higher employment level in positions like Director/Manager (9.7%) and self-employed (7.9%), while 16.4% of women are employee. The percentage of females (26.7%) visiting Shanghai for first time is higher than males (18.2%), same as with repeat visits. It is remarkable to note that these differences might be result of a higher number of females (92) visiting the city comparing with males (73). Regarding with nationality, the data shows most of the visitors came from North America ( $f = 54$ ;  $\% = 32.7$ ) and Europe ( $f = 52$ ;  $\% = 31.5$ ) followed by Asia ( $f = 27$ ;  $\% = 16.4$ ), Africa ( $f = 23$ ;  $\% = 13.9$ ), South America ( $f = 6$ ;  $\% = 3.6$ ) and Australia and Oceania ( $f = 3$ ;  $\% = 1.8$ ). The three main native languages were English (32.1%), Spanish (13.9%) and French (10.3%).

Among the respondents, bilinguals' native speakers were present, especially from Singapore, Germany, Canada, England, Colombia, France, Ukraine and United States. Some of the respondents also asserted their double nationality, for example Cuban-American.

Table 2: Demographic data

Demographic profile	Groups	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	92	55.8
	Male	73	44.2
Age	18-25	55	33.3
	26-35	55	33.3
	36-45	31	18.8
	46-55	6	3.6
	56-65	9	5.5
	Below 17	9	5.5
	Occupational Position	Student	63
Employee		47	28.5
Director/Manager		23	13.9
Self-employed		21	12.7
Homemaker		9	5.5
Retired		1	0.6
Unemployed		1	0.6
Trip Reasons	Sightseeing/Leisure	61	37.0
	Visit friends/relatives	33	20.0
	Study	22	13.3
	Conference/Business	17	10.3
	Work	14	8.5
	Other	13	7.9
	Study   Sightseeing	5	3.0
Educational Level	Bachelor degree	77	46.7
	Master degree	52	31.5
	Doctorate degree	13	7.9

	College	12	7.3
	High school	11	6.7
Number of visits	First time	74	44.8
	Repeat visit	91	55.2
Travel Party	Alone	66	40.0
	Family/Relatives	41	24.8
	Friend(s)	26	15.8
	Spouse	20	12.1
	Tour group	8	4.8
	Business associate(s)	4	2.4

#### 4.2 Measurement model

Firstly, the first-order reflective constructs were analyzed following the steps given by Hair et al. (2016). Table 3 shows the individual reliability of each indicator as well as the average variance extracted (AVE), Cronbach's alpha (CA) and composite reliability (CR) of the constructs. In order to assess the discriminant validity Fornell-Larcker criterion (Table 4) and the Heterotrait-monotrait criterion (HTMT) were evaluated. When assessing the HTMT (Table 5), the higher value was .87, although the more conservative threshold value is 0.85, however, the value is still below 0.90, as Hair et al (2016) express, a HTMT value above 0.90 suggests a lack of discriminant validity (p. 119). Thus, we can conclude that all the values obtained comply with the rule of thumbs.

Table 3 Results Summary for Reflective Measurement Models

Latent Variable	Indicators	Convergent Validity		Internal Consistency Reliability		Discriminant Validity		
		Loadings	AVE	CA	CR	t Value	p Value	
		> 0.70	> 0.50	0.60 - 0.90	0.60 - 0.90			
						HTMT confidence interval does not include 1	> 1.65 (10%) > 1.96 (5%) > 2.57 (1%)	
LA	rLA1	0.805	0.696	0.781	0.873	Yes	24.400	0.000
	rLA2	0.883					52.143	0.000
	rLA3	0.813					15.233	0.000
NVB	rNV1	0.853	0.736	0.820	0.893	Yes	35.797	0.000
	rNV2	0.874					33.488	0.000
	rNV3	0.846					30.406	0.000
AT	rAT1	0.900	0.822	0.892	0.933	Yes	47.690	0.000
	rAT2	0.919					66.006	0.000
	rAT3	0.902					59.224	0.000
KN	rKN1	0.826	0.711	0.864	0.908	Yes	23.431	0.000
	rKN2	0.850					34.369	0.000
	rKN3	0.838					27.133	0.000
	rKN4	0.858					30.169	0.000
SS	SS1	0.733	0.658	0.870	0.906	Yes	15.089	0.000
	SS2	0.838					29.884	0.000
	SS3	0.794					22.624	0.000
	SS4	0.857					34.801	0.000
	SS5	0.829					25.409	0.000
OTS	OTS1	0.790	0.678	0.842	0.894	Yes	21.484	0.000
	OTS2	0.824					25.196	0.000
	OTS3	0.879					43.044	0.000
	OTS4	0.798					26.747	0.000

Table 4: Fornell-Larcker criterion

	AT	KN	LA	NVB	OTS	RI	SS
AT	<b>0.907</b>						
KN	0.735	<b>0.843</b>					
LA	0.598	0.679	<b>0.835</b>				
NVB	0.722	0.716	0.701	<b>0.858</b>			
OTS	0.457	0.474	0.417	0.407	<b>0.824</b>		
RI	0.216	0.215	0.240	0.216	0.519	<b>1.000</b>	
SS	0.659	0.709	0.602	0.579	0.522	0.263	<b>0.811</b>

Table 5: HTMT

	AT	KN	LA	NVB	OTS	RI
AT	.83					
KN	[0.733, 0.907]	.71				
LA	[0.541, 0.846]	[0.708, 0.910]	.82			
NVB	[0.752, 0.908]	[0.718, 0.937]	[0.712, 0.984]	.84		
OTS	[0.348, 0.660]	[0.352, 0.715]	[0.323, 0.672]	[0.304, 0.633]	.87	
RI	[0.078, 0.395]	[0.078, 0.393]	[0.111, 0.432]	[0.083, 0.401]	[0.433, 0.676]	.56
SS	[0.613, 0.832]	[0.687, 0.895]	[0.567, 0.845]	[0.524, 0.803]	[0.429, 0.736]	[0.125, 0.442]

Secondly, the formative measurement model (IQ) was assessed by observing collinearity, outer weights and significance of the indicators. As can be seen on Table 6, although the higher value of the variance inflation factor (VIF) is of 3.521, collinearity does not reach critical levels in any of the formative constructs (Hair et al., 2016, p. 146) being all the values below the threshold value of 5, hence, we determined that collinearity is not a problem in our model. Since some of the indicator's outer weights values are too small (0.092, 0.093, 0.098 and 0.099), the recommendations given by Hair et al. (2016) who assert that "when an outer weight is nonsignificant but its outer loading is high (i.e., above 0.50), the indicator should be interpreted as absolutely important but not as relatively important. In this situation, the indicator would generally be retained" (Hair et al., 2016, p. 148).

Table 6: Results Summary for Formative Measurement Models

Formative Constructs	Formative Indicators	Construct Validity			Collinearity	t Value	Significance
		Outer Weights ( $w$ )	Outer loadings	95%BCa Confidence Interval	Outer VIF		
		Values different from zero	> 0.50	Cannot contain the value zero	< 5		
IQ	LA1	0.093	0.677	[0.569, 0.758]	1.866	17.045	Yes
	LA2	0.098	0.725	[0.620, 0.800]	2.328	19.168	Yes
	LA3	0.092	0.675	[0.506, 0.796]	1.870	9.651	Yes
	NV1	0.103	0.769	[0.696, 0.827]	2.327	19.315	Yes
	NV2	0.102	0.766	[0.673, 0.831]	2.416	15.770	Yes
	NV3	0.099	0.745	[0.654, 0.810]	2.173	19.539	Yes
	AT1	0.106	0.783	[0.703, 0.840]	3.246	18.003	Yes
	AT2	0.107	0.797	[0.720, 0.848]	3.521	19.676	Yes
	AT3	0.109	0.809	[0.747, 0.857]	3.355	20.895	Yes

KN1	0.101	0.736	[0.623, 0.820]	2.186	19.901	Yes
KN2	0.100	0.738	[0.638, 0.808]	2.235	21.208	Yes
KN3	0.101	0.767	[0.676, 0.827]	2.610	18.300	Yes
KN4	0.110	0.822	[0.754, 0.873]	2.859	21.191	Yes

### 4.3 Structural model

To test the proposed hypotheses, the structural model was evaluated following the criteria given by Hair et al. (2016), hence, collinearity, path coefficients, level of determination coefficient, predictive relevance and the size effect of each construct incident on each endogenous construct (Gallarza et al., 2015, p. 145) was calculated by bootstrapping 5000 samples. Bias-Corrected and Accelerated bootstrap, two-tailed testing, and significance level of 0.05 were also used. Figure 2 illustrates the structural model results.

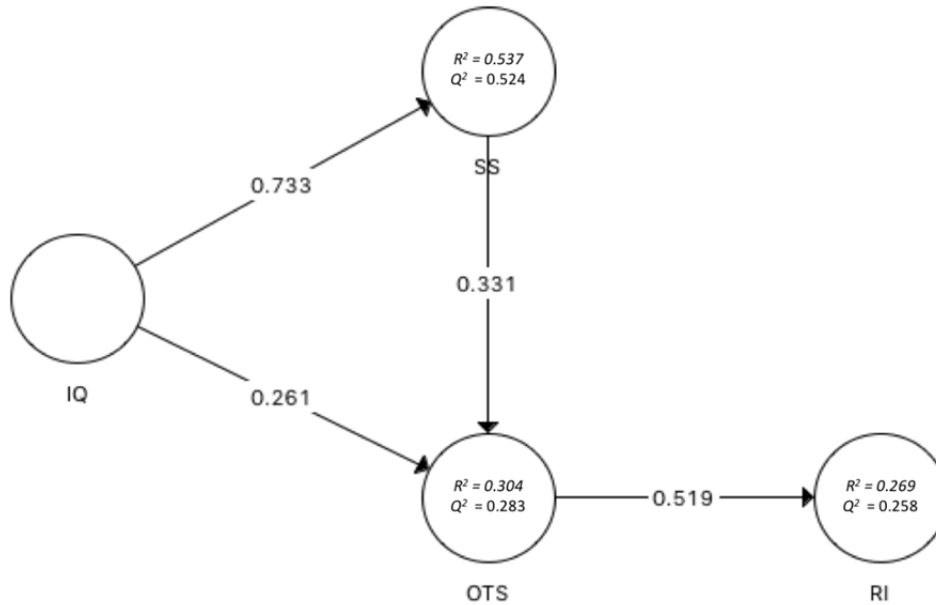


Figure 2 PLS analysis result

Collinearity was assessed following the variance inflation factor. The higher value was 2.159, still under the threshold value. The coefficient of determination for the three endogenous constructs is high and moderate, with values of 0.537 (53.7%), 0.304 (30.4%) and 0.269 (26.9%) for service satisfaction, the overall tourist satisfaction and revisit intention respectively. The Stone-Geisser criterion or the predictive relevance was also determined by using the blindfolding procedure (Hair et al., 2016, p. 202). All the calculated values are above zero, suggesting that the model has predictive relevance for a certain endogenous construct (Hair et al., 2016, p. 207), namely, interaction quality is relevant when predicting service satisfaction (52.4%), the overall tourist satisfaction (28.3%) and revisit intentions (25.8%).

The effect sizes ( $f^2$ ) area measure of the impact of each incident construct for the explanation of each endogenous construct (Gallarza et al., 2015, p. 146). Table 7 shows that IQ makes a large contribution to SS as well as OTS on RI with values of 1.159 and 0.369 respectively, in contrast, the contribution of constructs like IQ → OTS and SS → OTS is rather small. In addition, path coefficients were assessed. The results show IQ → SS path coefficients is high

comparing with the other paths of the model. Nevertheless, for a 5% significance level, we found that all the relationships are significant and therefore, all the hypotheses ( $H_1$ ,  $H_2$ ,  $H_3$ ,  $H_4$ ) are supported.

Finally, since we are not only interested in the direct relationships, the indirect relationships of the model were estimated. As Table 8 shows, all the relationships are significant at a 5% level.

Table 7: Results of the structural model

Path	Path Coefficients ( $\beta$ )	Effect size ( $f^2$ )	95% BCa Confidence intervals	t Value	p Value	Hypothesis
Threshold values	values between -1 and +1	lower than 0.02 = no effect, 0.02 = small, 0.15 = medium, 0.35 = large	Cannot contain the value zero	> 1.65 (10%) > 1.96 (5%) > 2.57 (1%)	< 0.05	
IQ → SS	0.733	1.159	[0.657, 0.794]	17.389	0.000	Accepted
IQ → OTS	0.261	0.045	[0.088, 0.423]	2.574	0.010	Accepted
SS → OTS	0.331	0.073	[0.173, 0.489]	3.413	0.001	Accepted
OTS → RI	0.519	0.369	[0.415, 0.610]	8.853	0.000	Accepted

Table 8: Indirect effects of the structural model

Path	Path Coefficients ( $\beta$ )	95% BCa Confidence intervals	t Value	p Value	Significance
Threshold values	values between -1 and +1	Cannot contain the value zero	> 1.65 (10%) > 1.96 (5%) > 2.57 (1%)	< 0.05	
IQ → OTS	0.243	[0.129, 0.373]	3.285	0.001	Yes
IQ → RI	0.261	[0.180, 0.358]	4.830	0.000	Yes
SS → RI	0.172	[0.089, 0.271]	3.106	0.002	Yes

## 5. Discussion

The study has examined to what extent interaction quality during a service encounter impact service satisfaction and the overall tourist satisfaction as well as some of the indirect effect, taking into consideration the services provided to international tourists when visiting Shanghai visitor attractions.

Firstly, the results of this study show how important is the knowledge of the service personnel for a customer during a service encounter, having expertise making the strongest link with interaction quality ( $t = 30.986$ ), followed by attitude ( $t = 23.038$ ), nonverbal behavior ( $t = 22.078$ ) and language ( $t = 18.157$ ). However, when it comes to indirect effects of interaction quality dimensions on the endogenous constructs, attitude and nonverbal behavior are the key drivers of service satisfaction ( $t_{AT} = 18.644$ ,  $t_{NV} = 17.934$ ), the overall tourist satisfaction ( $t_A = 6.655$ ,  $t_{NV} = 6.560$ ) and revisit intentions ( $t_A = 5.007$ ,  $t_{NV} = 4.905$ ). These findings are in line with Czepiel, Solomon, & Surprenant (1985, p. 9), who posited that the attitude, behavior and skill of service employees affect what a customer evaluates as a satisfactory encounter (cited in Brady & Cronin, 2001, p. 38), as well as with the research of Ranjan, Sugathan, & Rossmann (2015), where attitude was found to positively affect customer satisfaction. The results also support the work of Wu et al. (2015) where both interpersonal and professional competences, which include aspects such as attitude, communication skills, expertise, and understanding of customers' needs impact the relationship between the customer and the employee.



Secondly, the results showed that interaction quality has a direct effect not only on the satisfaction with the service, but also on the overall satisfaction with the destination ( $H_1, H_2$ ). Although interaction quality had a higher impact on service satisfaction ( $t = 17.389$ ) than on the overall tourist satisfaction ( $t = 2.574$ ), service provider should pay attention to all the interaction quality dimensions affecting satisfaction, especially if the customers are from different cultures which is the case in our study. Being aware of what exactly international tourists want and perceived a service encounter will help service employees to provide a better service and make the customer wanting to return. The study reaffirms past research where interaction quality is seen as a good predictor of satisfaction (Brady & Cronin, 2001; Joon Choi & Sik Kim, 2013; Ranjan, Sugathan, & Rossmann, 2015), and ended up seeing the importance of measuring satisfaction by both service satisfaction and the overall tourist satisfaction.

Thirdly, being in line with previous research (Neal, Uysal, & Sirgy, 2007; Neal, Sirgy, & Uysal, 1999), our research found that satisfaction with services is an antecedent of the overall tourist satisfaction ( $H_3$ ), although it presented a small effect size (0.073). However, we consider this relationship significant since  $p$ -values (0.001) and  $t$  values (3.413) are both significant.

Finally, it was confirmed that the overall tourist satisfaction with a destination is a key driver of revisit intentions ( $H_4$ ) being in line with past studies (Han, Back, & Barrett, 2009; Shawn & Feng, 2007; Um, Chon, & Ro, 2006), facilitating not only revisit to the destination but also a visit to a neighboring destination (Shawn & Feng, 2007, p. 588). Indirectly, revisit intention can be also determined by interaction quality and service satisfaction.

Thus, the findings of this study pointed out the importance of interaction quality in tourism to explain service satisfaction, the overall tourist satisfaction and revisit intention whether direct or indirectly. Tourists not only care about their solo experience on the destination they visit, but also to what and how tourism services providers can offer them, to what extent employees are willing to help them, listen attentively to what the customer is asking for, language skills and behavior.

## **6. Managerial implications**

The results of this study offer several managerial implications. First, the study suggest that service managers should provide a high level of interaction quality in order to increase satisfaction with the service, especially aspects such as attitude, nonverbal behavior, language and expertise of the employee. Satisfaction with services may not only influence the overall satisfaction with the destination but also the motivations of tourists to revisit a destination.

In particular, visitor attraction managers should create training programs, whether online or in-person, to educate their employees on how to resolve a conflict during a service encounter, discuss how international tourists communicate using nonverbal cues and how to read those as well as encourage them to improve their attitude toward the customer, motivate their employees to learn a second language (English, Spanish or French), and teach them effective communication skills. Good interpersonal communication skills can help service providers' employees to better grasp what a customer wants and deliver the right information/message at the right moment. Cross-cultural understanding will allow employees to avoid conflicts during a service encounter. For example, nonverbal cues in China highly differ from the West, thus, using hand gestures to express numbers during a service encounter may cause misunderstandings if the employee is not aware of these cultural differences. Besides, hiring employees with an enthusiastic, cheerful, caring and polite attitude toward the customer will allow customers to have a good impression of the company. Through training programs as well as e-learning courses, companies can improve employees' satisfaction and engagement, which in turn, increase the productivity.

Second, we advise the local government to partner with local tourism business and tourism operators to develop destination management plans to ensure both satisfaction with tourism services and the overall tourism satisfaction

with the destination as well as joint marketing strategies to improve the image of the city and stimulate revisit intentions. Since the local government is by default the one who is in charge of regional marketing activities as well as all the regulations and policies regarding to the tourism industry, small pamphlets can be written and distributed among the different touristic sites, providing tourists with relevant information about some basis of Chinese language, essential nonverbal cues, information about the prices of the visitor attractions, recommendations on cultural, recreational and scenic amenities to visit, information on what visitor attractions are accessible to people with physical disabilities and essential telephone numbers. These pamphlets are to be distributed in places like hotels, airports and tourism information centers. This strategy would increase the overall tourism satisfaction and a positive destination image.

Third, both local government and tourism companies could share information about foreign tourists needs, wants and complaints, which can be used to improve tourism policies and regulations linked to tourism services. At the same time, the tourism bureau can conduct an annual survey to explore the quality of the interaction during service encounters, service satisfaction, overall tourism satisfaction and revisit intentions in order to enhance the services in the tourism and hospitality industry. Additionally, the ministerial council for tourism can establish partnerships not only with local governments but also academicians to conduct research on how to approach inbound tourists from different regions around the globe. This will help to know much better the tourist market visiting China and how service employees should treat each of these groups in order to guarantee greater levels of satisfaction and revisit intentions.

Lastly, we encourage frontline employees to pay attention to their attitude toward customers, stay patient, attentive and always willing to help them. They should observe the language customers use to describe their needs or wants, the tone of voice, body language and facial expressions. Creating a comfortable atmosphere for good face-to-face interactions in the tourism industry in Shanghai, is not difficult but it does require managers to prepare their personnel for offering good service experience as well as to keep them motivated. Making every service encounter authentic and unique should be a priority for tourism agencies to increase tourists' level of satisfaction and behavioral intentions, which in turn, would attract more foreign tourists and increase the profitability of the company.

## **7. Theoretical implication**

By understanding how interaction quality not only affects service satisfaction, but also the overall satisfaction with the destination, might help tourists decide whether to visit again Shanghai or not. Destination tourism managers would better know how to improve their marketing strategies and training of their employees as well as deliver a service that makes tourists not just satisfied but loyal. Moreover, from a theoretical perspective, the present work validated past studies by examining interaction quality as a multidimensional construct, and included not only dimensions such as attitude and expertise, which have been measured before, but language and nonverbal behavior. In this way, the study offered a more complete analysis of the quality of the interaction during an intercultural service encounter. Thereby, interaction quality was assessed as a reflective-formative higher-order construct through PLS-SEM.

Additionally, the current work built on previous research that showed the link between satisfaction with the general experience of the trip, and satisfaction with tourism services. Accordingly, the research demonstrated that the overall tourism satisfaction with the destination is influenced, either directly or indirectly, by the satisfaction tourists may have with tourism services and the quality of their interaction with employees during a service encounter, which confirms the importance to measure satisfaction as a specific construct, especially in the tourism industry, in order to provide better experiences.

Further, the study validated that revisit intentions are not only affected by the overall tourism satisfaction with the destination but also by service satisfaction. It also showed that tourists' revisit intentions can be indirectly influenced by the quality of the interactions with tourism services employees.

Thereby, the research confirms the importance of the interaction quality as an essential part of a tourism experience that allows tourists to be satisfied or dissatisfied, not only with the tourism services they encounter but also with the destination itself. Thus, the study promoted a better understanding of what international tourists in Shanghai think about the quality of their interactions with tourism services employees, helping managers to develop more accurate services' strategies and attract not only first-timer visitors but also tourists who are coming to Shanghai for second, third time or more.

## 8. Future research direction

Future researchers can study specifically, how each of these interaction quality dimensions during a trip affects not only service satisfaction and the overall satisfaction, but also life satisfaction. In addition, the direct relationship between interaction quality and revisit intentions could be examined. Other works might explore how demographic factors like nationality, language proficiency and occupation shape customers' perceptions of a service encounter.

Further, since it is well-known that customers with western cultural background rely more on tangible cues than do Asian customers (Mattila, 1999; Zhao & Lin, 2014), the role of language and nonverbal behavior in intercultural service encounters could be assessed. Future studies could also examine to what extent interaction quality impacts tourists' destination image and the perceived experience value. Lastly, further research projects may explore the elements or attributes forming the overall tourist satisfaction and create a practical instrument to help destination managers to measure the level of the overall tourist satisfaction.

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#### PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT:

During the last three decades, Shanghai has experienced a rapid rise as a tourist destination in Asia. However, while the city has much to commend it, there is still a lot of work to be done to make it tourist friendly in its services. This article analyses how interaction quality during a service encounter impacts customers' service satisfaction, the overall tourist satisfaction with the destination, and the revisit intentions. The findings show that interaction quality during a service encounter at Shanghai tourist attraction services is crucial when determining international tourists' level of satisfaction with both services and destination in general. Thus, destination managers should create employees' training programs to share how to deliver an excellent interaction with a foreign tourist, and together with the local government develop integrated marketing strategies to improve the image of the city, and motivate overseas tourists to revisit Shanghai. Aspects such as language accommodation, employees' attitude, and nonverbal cues are vital aspects of a tourism service interaction.