

"NO WORRY, HAVE A CUP OF TEA FIRST" RESEARCH ON THE DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS AND COUNTERMEASURES OF MACAO'S TEA RESTAURANTS IN THE POST-EPIDEMIC ERA

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INTRODUCTION

The importance of tea restaurants to Macao, like roast duck to Beijing, McDonald to New York, Kimchi to Korea. Macao's tea restaurants are the most numerous and affordable type of local food and beverage in the city, carrying a diverse food culture and a long historical process, a cultural memory written on the tip of the tongue. As one of the three pillars of tourism-food, accommodation and transport, tea restaurant, hidden in the streets and alleys, echoes the Michelin in the casinos. In 2020, Macao's tourism industry was hit hard by the outbreak of the Novel Coronavirus Pneumonia (NCP), a global public health epidemic. According to data from the Macao Statistics and Census Service, the number of visitors to Macao fell precipitously in January 2020, with arrivals dropping from 28,504,065 to 156,394 (DSEC,2022), causing the Macao tourism market to shrink dramatically. The overall revenue of catering fell by 28.8% year-on-year, with a loss of 940 million HKD (DSEC,2022). Under the pressure of the "cut-off" brought about by the epidemic, the annual revenue of the small catering enterprises, represented by the Macao tea restaurants, fell by 16.8% (DSEC,2022), but the change was much lower than the overall level of the industry and they could still maintain their basic daily operations. In the post-epidemic era, the recovery and innovative development of tea restaurants, unlike the asset-heavy catering enterprises, may show a trend of "alternative development", which is expected to show us a new label, a new definition and a new vitality to the recovery and development of the Macao tourism market.

This study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the development of Macao's tea restaurants in the post-epidemic era through the perspectives of both restaurant owners and consumers, and to sort out development countermeasures, so as to provide theoretical support and practical basis for the sustainable development of Macao's tea restaurants and the recovery of Macao's tourism industry.

METHOD

A combination of semi-structured interviews and questionnaires was used to understand the business status and development of tea restaurants during the post-epidemic period from two perspectives: tea restaurants owners and consumers. The interviews were recorded manually, and the word processing and frequency statistics were conducted using ROST CM6.0. The survey questionnaire on "Service quality of Macao tea restaurants during the epidemic" was designed based on five dimensions of the ServQual model.

FINDINGS

From the perspective of restaurants' owner, as shown in Figure 1, the epidemic brought irreversible effects to small and medium-sized cafes in Macao, such as pressure of disruption, reduced cash flow, increased operating costs, and changes in business models. In addition, the prompt response and precise assistance from the government and relevant departments provided some financial support or moral encouragement to the tea restaurants, which enabled the tea restaurants to survive the epidemic.

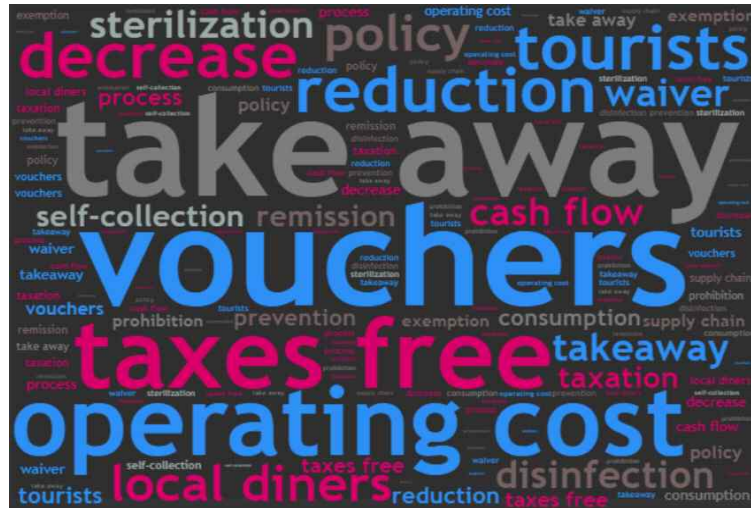


Figure 1. Word frequency statistics of interview results

At the consumer level, the 193 valid data collected showed that the quality of service provided by consumers during the epidemic was basically in line with their expectations (Figure 2), except for the difference between expectations and perceived values in terms of responsiveness, combined with

the results of the previous section of interviews, were that some tea restaurants had set up self-service windows and encouraged consumers to help themselves with drinks and paper towels, this makes it inevitable that the consumers' experience in terms of responsiveness has declined.

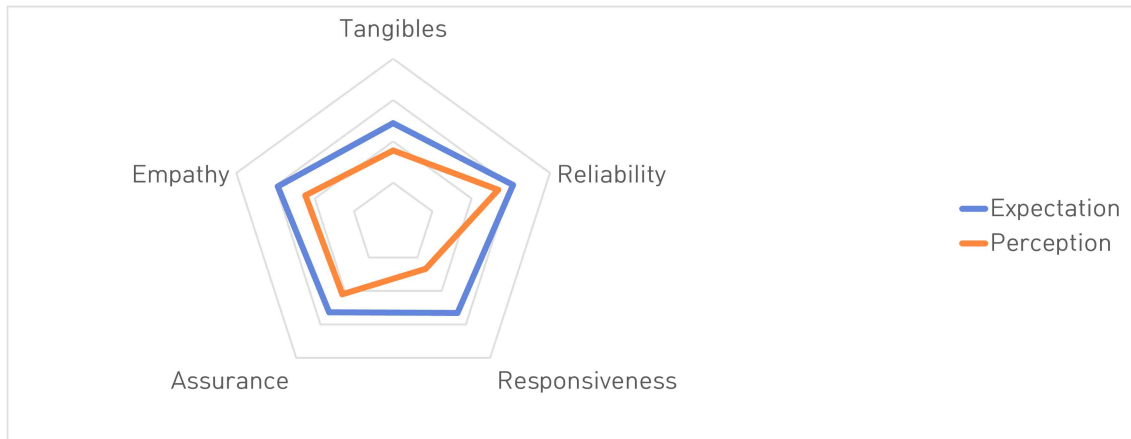


Figure. 2 Perception and expectation mean score radar of ServQual in five dimensions

Through a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods, this study examines the service quality and development of Macao's tea restaurants in the post-epidemic era from both the tea restaurants' owners and consumer perspectives. The study finds that both consumers and restaurants are concerned about responsiveness, which is mainly reflected in the timeliness of service (Parasuraman et al., 1985), and that maintaining a safe distance may become the norm in the post-epidemic era. In the post-epidemic era, how to ensure consumers' perceived opportunities in the

semi-self-service and take-away models and enhance service satisfaction is a major challenge for Macao tea restaurants to face in order to survive and develop.

CONCLUSION

Actually, the consumption of food is considered to be symbolic and a way to experience the destination's 'culture and people' (Chang et al., 2010). Macao's tea restaurants have a unique style and flavour, and are an important carrier of tourism

and cultural labels and historical and cultural significance. With the diversified development of Macao's tourism industry, the recovery and innovation of tourism in the post-epidemic era should return to the essence of "food, accommodation and transport". The impact of the Covid-19 on the global tourism industry is undoubtedly huge and irreversible, as for Macao's catering industry, represented by tea restaurants, government guidance, association stability and corporate self-help are the three major strategies to overcome the difficulties during the epidemic. In the post-epidemic era, the continuation of the existing strategies, the steady development of tea restaurants to help the recovery of Macao's tourism industry, and the Bay Area culinary culture tourism line to help build the Bay Area tourism ecosystem, may be a road to victory in stability. During the data collection process, the vast majority of respondents showed their hopes and aspirations for the future, and "confidence" is a powerful weapon to break through the crisis. The epidemic will eventually pass, and tomorrow will be bright and shining. Maintain confidence, remain optimistic, survive in stability, and develop in survival, just as the Mr. Lee, the owner of Macao Luk Kee Coffee said that: "No worry, have a cup of tea first."

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