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## Building customer satisfaction with tour leaders: the roles of customer trust, justice perception, and cooperation in group package tours

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### ABSTRACT

This research developed a theoretical model to explain the relationship between customer trust, justice perception, cooperation, and satisfaction in the tourism context. Survey data were collected from 309 customers of outbound group package tours in Taiwan. Empirical results indicated that both customer trust and justice perception have direct and positive influences on customer satisfaction. Compared with justice perception, customer trust has a more crucial role in the tour leader–customer satisfaction relationship. Furthermore, customer cooperation partially mediates the effects of customer trust and justice perception on customer satisfaction. Therefore, cooperation is the mechanism that explains how customer trust and justice perception are associated with satisfaction. These results demonstrate the importance of customer cooperation and imply that travel managers should strengthen customer trust and justice perception to enhance customers' cooperative behaviors and strengthen their satisfaction.

### KEYWORDS

Customer trust; justice perception; cooperation; customer satisfaction

### Introduction

Package tours are a complex and comprehensive service product consisting of multiple components (Bowie & Chang, 2005). Although there are many types of package tours available in Taiwan, the most common ones are basic package tours and group package tours (GPTs). Basic package tours organize only flight tickets and accommodation, and all other remaining matters are arranged by tourists themselves at the destination. By contrast, GPTs, or all-inclusive packages, organize not only flight tickets and accommodation but also meals, tourist attractions, sightseeing, and entertainment for a fixed price; a tour leader is also assigned for the duration of the tour (Jin, Lin, & Hung, 2014; Wong & McKercher, 2012).

GPTs are a primary mode of outbound travel in East Asian countries (Luoh & Tsaur, 2014; Tsaur & Lin, 2014). In terms of outbound travel, numerous tourists from Taiwan prefer GPTs (Chang & Chung, 2012). In 2015, 34.3% of outbound Taiwanese tourists chose GPTs.

GPTs simplify the preparation for outbound travel and provide multiple benefits for customers such as convenience, cost reduction, and one-stop shopping (Cook, Yale, & Marqua, 2005). The most prominent feature of GPTs is the existence of a tour leader (Bowie & Chang, 2005). Wong and Wang (2009) indicated that tour leaders in GPTs are front-line employees who substantially influence the customers' satisfaction with the tour service. A tour leader's presentation can be critical to the success (Chiang & Chen, 2014; Wong & Lee, 2012); consequently, the service performance of tour leaders can affect customer satisfaction.

The tour leader is the primary contact person for the customer from the beginning to the end of a journey. As tour leaders have knowledge about the tourist destination, customers depend upon them and seek their advice and recommendation. Such a relationship entails mutual confidence and trust (Heung, 2008). The two constructs of customer trust and justice perception are critical in the tourism

context. Customers trust in the tour leader reflects customer confidence in the reliability and quality of the services provided by the tour leader (Sun & Lin, 2010). Trust is an essential key to maintain continuity in the customer–provider relationship, which significantly affects customer satisfaction (Chang, 2014). Furthermore, customer justice perception can be defined as the customer's assessment of the justice in the delivery of services (Yi & Gong, 2008). Justice perception seems to shape customers' attitudes toward interactions with the tour leader and may play a critical role in their attitudes pertaining to the whole journey. However, few studies on tourism have explored the influences of trust and justice perception on customer satisfaction with tour leaders.

Past studies have suggested the significance of customer cooperation in service delivery and production processes (Limpanitgul, Robson, Gould-Williams, & Lertthaitrakul, 2013). Customer cooperation is defined as discretionary actions by customer in their relations with service employees, which reflect respect for the provision of quality service delivery (Bettencourt, 1997). A customer's cooperative behavior is driven by his or her internal motivation (Mills & Morris, 1986). These behaviors entail voluntary or non-explicit actions that help the service company and extend beyond customer role expectations.

Customer trust is considered essential in building relationships within the tourism industry. Trust leads to higher levels of cooperative behaviors (Lancastre & Lages, 2006). Furthermore, Shou, Guo, Zhang, and Su (2011) indicated that trust enhances the trustee's subjective intention to engage in a cooperative relationship. If customers trust a tour leader to act in their own interests, they may exhibit cooperative behaviors in the service process. Therefore, the more customers trust the tour leader, the more likely they are to adopt cooperative behaviors.

Furthermore, customers tend to rely on their perceptions of justice when inferring overall organizational fairness. Fairness theory suggests that customers expect a certain level of justice in an exchange relationship (Ndubisi, Natarajan, & Lai, 2014). Perceived justice influences a customer's willingness to keep a relationship. Previous studies have provided considerable support that a customer's perception of justice toward himself or herself is as a driver of customer cooperation (Yi & Gong, 2006). If customers value fair treatment by the tour leader, they would feel obligated to reciprocate by displaying customer cooperative behaviors. In addition, customer

cooperation has been demonstrated as a key contributor to the customer's own and other customers' quality perceptions and satisfaction in the service process (Kelley, Donnelly, & Skinner, 1990). Customer cooperative behaviors can assist successful interactions with service employees (Kim, Yoo, & Lee, 2012), and contribute toward creating superior service quality perceptions (Yi & Gong, 2006). Therefore, customer cooperation can be inferred to have positively associated with customer satisfaction.

Accordingly, both customer trust and justice perception may enhance customer cooperation, which in turn may affect satisfaction. That is to say, customer cooperation may be the key mediator linking the influences of trust and justice perception on customer satisfaction. This study examines the relationships in the GPT context. However, what are the relationships among customer trust, justice perception, and satisfaction? What is the role of customer cooperation in the influences of trust and justice perception on customer satisfaction? Answers to these research questions cannot be found in the previous literature. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to investigate the effects of trust and justice perception on customer satisfaction, as well as to elaborate the mediating effect of customer cooperation.

## Literature review

### *Customer trust to tour leaders*

Scholars in social psychology have reached a consensus that trust is essential to an exchange relationship, indicating that trust is a critical variable in an exchange relationship (Ball, Coelho, & Machás, 2004). Numerous studies have found that customer trust positively affects customer commitment (Keh & Xie, 2009), repurchase intention (Han & Hyun, 2015; Kim, Kim, & Kim, 2009), and loyalty (Martínez & del Bosque, 2013). According to relationship marketing theory, multiple scholars have determined that customer trust is a crucial mediator between corporate activities and customer loyalty (Ball et al., 2004). Therefore, customer trust is a vital strategic tool for businesses to establish relationship marketing orientation and relational exchange (Keh & Xie, 2009; Xie & Peng, 2011).

In tourism, customer trust serves as a catalyst for building service exchange relationships. Previous literature has suggested trust as a vital element in creating and maintaining the amicable relationships

between the customers and service provider (Luo & Zhang, 2016; Wang, Law, Hung, & Guillet, 2014). Customer trust is crucial because the customer experiences a high level of perceived risk (Tsaur & Wang, 2009). The lack of transparency and intangibility of travel services tend to bring about information asymmetry problem (Zillifro & Morais, 2004). Previous studies have determined that customer trust is conducive to reducing perceived risk (Wang et al., 2014) and enhancing customer commitment. Thus, trust is crucial for a travel manager in the establishment of customer relationships.

Tour leaders who build customers' trust during the process of leading a tour group can reduce customers' perceived risk (Choi, Law, & Heo, 2016). The knowledge and ability that tour leader have to perform their roles can be translated into observable behaviors (e.g. solving problems efficiency during the journey). Thus, it is likely to be processed as an indicator of customer trust in the tour leader (Heung, 2008). As the interaction between the customer and tour leader occurs during an entire trip, trust is both a critical and dynamic process that is built over time. It can also contribute to customer satisfaction and exceed the influences of the economic outcomes in service relationships (Fam, Foscht, & Collins, 2004). The aforementioned studies have revealed the importance of customer trust in the process of tour leaders providing tour-leading services. However, in contrast to other industries and general management studies, few scholars have investigated the importance of customer trust in tourism (Czernek & Czakon, 2016). Therefore, customer trust is incorporated into the research model of this study.

### *Customer justice perception toward tour leaders*

Customer justice perception is viewed as the assessment of whether the company has performed its duty in providing the promised benefits and results (Bowen, Gilliland, & Folger, 2000). According to equity theory (Adams, 1963), customers feel satisfied with the service when inputs and outcomes during service delivery are perceived to be fairly balanced (Sparks & McColl-Kennedy, 2001). Past studies have indicated that customers' perceived justice is a crucial antecedent for their cognitive evaluations (Karatepe, 2006; Kim et al., 2009). During service delivery, customers' justice perception determines their positive or negative affect (Yi & Gong, 2008), satisfaction,

and loyalty (Nikbin, Marimuthu, Hyun, & Ismail, 2015). Until now, most research on customer justice perception has concentrated on how customers perceive justice in the event of postcomplaint and recovery processes (Yi & Gong, 2008). However, perceived justice could influence different kinds of social exchange, instead of just service recovery (Bowen et al., 2000). Because service encounter has been described as the dyadic interaction between customers and employees, customers can perceive justice during service process (Yoo, Arnold, & Frankwick, 2012).

A customer's justice perception in a tour leader's behavior may be based on the utilization of organizational justice theory (Greenwell, Brownlee, Jordan, & Popp, 2008). Customer justice perception is a multifaceted construct consisting of three dimensions: distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice (Tax, Brown, & Chandrashekar, 1998; Yi & Gong, 2008). In GPT service delivery, the tour participants have a constant interaction and intense contact with the tour leader. The service content of a tour leader emphasizes interactional elements toward tour members. In the high customer interaction context, Karatepe (2006) showed that interactional justice has the strongest relationship with customer satisfaction, followed by procedural and distributive justice. Accordingly, this study concentrates on the customer perception of interactional justice.

Customer interactional justice can be defined as the perception a customer feels he or she has been treated fairly while interacting with contact employees (Voorhees & Brady, 2005). Interactional justice is linked directly to contemporary social exchange theories. Current thinking on social exchange considers interactional justice to be particularly relevant, emphasizing the role of relationships in social exchange. During the process of leading a tour group, multiple services provided by the tour leader may influence customers' perception of interactional justice, including the leader's communication manners, coping with problems encountered by customers, and display of empathy, politeness, and willingness to listen to customers. All of these components exert great influence on customer satisfaction. However, customer interactional justice within the tourism context is still relatively underexplored compared with other industries. Therefore, this crucial variable is incorporated into the model of this study.

### **Customer satisfaction**

Customer satisfaction was viewed as a consequence of comparing service performance with expectation (Huang, Hsu, & Chan, 2010). Previous studies have used various perspectives and theories to assess tourist satisfaction (Chang, 2014). According to expectancy-disconfirmation theory (Oliver, 1981), customers' satisfaction evaluations are the outcomes of comparing service performance with expectation. If the service performance falls short of the expectation, the customer is dissatisfied. By contrast, if the service performance exceeds the expectation, the customer is satisfied (Liu & Jang, 2009). Customer satisfaction with travel services is a complicated phenomenon that can be examined at different levels (Huang et al., 2010). In our study, customer satisfaction was investigated from a tourist's judgement of the difference between his or her expectation and the perceived performance of tour leader after travel experience.

### **Customer trust to tour leaders and customer satisfaction**

Customer trust has been acknowledged as a crucial factor in many service relationships (Hansen, 2012). According to social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), customers prefer interacting with service providers they trust. Customers and the service provider develop a relationship through a common understanding of the implied and nonspecific obligations between them. In addition, according to the cognitive-emotive causal order (Oliver, 1997), when the focal party trusts the source, it will feel secure by way of an implicit belief that the actions of the source will result in positive outcomes, which further increases satisfaction (Andaleeb, 1996). Thus, numerous researchers have suggested that trust exerts a direct effect on customer satisfaction (Singh & Sirdeshmukh, 2000). Customer satisfaction is an overall evaluation of a tour leader's services. Customer trust can relieve perceived risk and customer uncertainty (Swanson, Davis, & Zhao, 2007), thus creating a positive attitude toward the tour leader and enhancing perceived value (Sirdeshmukh, Singh, & Sabol, 2002), which exerts a positive effect on customer satisfaction (Chang, 2014; Zhu & Chen, 2012). Therefore, a higher degree of trust by a customer in a tour leader implies that the customer has a higher degree of satisfaction with the travel services. Although previous studies have explored the

trust-satisfaction linkage in various settings, such as business-to-business (Bauer, Grether, & Leach, 2002), online purchasing (Harris & Goode, 2004), and luxury product market (Chiou & Droge, 2006), research linking customer trust to customer satisfaction in tourism is limited. Therefore, this study addressed this knowledge gap by investigating if customer trust to tour leaders is favorable to increased customer satisfaction. Accordingly, the present study posits the hypothesis:

H1: Customer trust is positively related to customer satisfaction.

### **Customer justice perception toward tour leaders and customer satisfaction**

Customer justice perception has been recognized as a crucial factor leading to satisfaction in tourism settings (Nikbin et al., 2015). Customer perception of justice in a tourism context is a multidimensional construct that includes procedural, distributive, and interactional components (Nikbin, Marimuthu, & Hyun, 2016). Although customer justice perceptions may encompass other dimensions, prior studies have indicated that positive perceptions of interactional justice are the most influential dimension of justice on customers' attitudes and behavioral intentions (Karatepe, 2006; Tax et al., 1998).

Interactional justice results from the interpersonal interactions between customers and service employees. Although previous study has investigated the effect of perceived justice on recovery satisfaction in upscale hotels (Kim et al., 2009), this relationship cannot be assumed to exist in the general service context. Karatepe (2006) has highlighted the influence of service provider-customer interactions on customer satisfaction. Based on the affect control theory (Heise, 1979), individuals control social interactions by striving to maintain culturally shared feelings about the situation. When customers feel that they receive fair interpersonal treatment with service employees and have a pleasant experience when interacting with service employees, they may experience positive affect (Yi & Gong, 2008). Thus, interactional justice perception positively affects customer satisfaction. By contrast, customers who are treated unfairly by tour leaders are apt to become dissatisfied, and they might express emotions such as resentment and anger (Nikbin et al., 2016), which can negatively affect customer satisfaction. According to this

deduction, customers who experience interactional justice with tour leaders are more apt to exhibit a higher degree of satisfaction with the travel services. Therefore, the hypothesis is posited:

H2: Customer justice perception is positively related to customer satisfaction.

### *The role of customer cooperation behavior*

Cooperation plays a fundamental role in achieving service quality both in the outcome and in delivering a service, as perceived by the customer (Limpanitgul et al., 2013). Cooperation can be defined as situations in which parties work together to accomplish a common goal, including a customer's willingness to assist the service employee (Baloglu, 2002). During a GPT, the tour leader must serve dozens of customers, and therefore customers' full cooperation is essential to a smooth and successful tour. For example, customers may treat the tour leader with respect and kindness or carefully obey the policies and rules of the package tour. Many of these cooperative behaviors facilitate successful customer-service provider interactions, and may even have implications for service firms and other customers (Limpanitgul et al., 2013). However, previous studies on tourism have rarely explored the importance of customer cooperative behaviors on the GPT experience. Therefore, the role of customer cooperative behaviors in this model must be further examined.

Customer trust is a critical antecedent of identification toward tour leaders (Keh & Xie, 2009). Based on reciprocal action theory (Gouldner, 1960), actions taken by one party will be reciprocated in kind in an exchange relationship. Exchange partners match behaviors experienced from others with actions performed for others, giving in proportion to what they obtain (Lee, Jeong, Lee, & Sung, 2008). Previous study on service marketing has highlighted the role of trust in building customer commitment and inducing cooperative behaviors (Lancastre & Lages, 2006). Therefore, the beliefs of customer trust influences the extent to which they reciprocate with cooperative behaviors.

Smooth customer cooperation is vital and valued as a fundamental component of a service (Limpanitgul et al., 2013). Customers' evaluation of their own input affects their overall satisfaction (Bendapudi & Leone, 2003). Customer cooperation in the service delivery process can increase service efficiency and reduce

perceived risk (Grissemann & Stokburger-Sauer, 2012), thus increasing the value customers attach to the travel product and service. This value increment is considered to reflect on customers' satisfaction with the tour leader. Thus, the hypothesis is presented:

H3-1: Customer cooperation mediates the relationship between customer trust and customer satisfaction.

Customer justice impressions shape customers' attitudes toward future interactions with service providers (Bolton, Warlop, & Alba, 2003). In an interpersonal relationship, perceptions of interactional justice can influence attitudes and behaviors toward the person (i.e. tour leader) who provides the service (Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, & Taylor, 2000). According to social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), people not only emphasize the economic outcomes of services provided, but also care about the socioemotional value they obtain. Socioemotional value accentuates the quality of interpersonal relationships, including the status and dignity people perceive. The extent to which customers perceive their treatment as fair influences the extent to which they reciprocate with cooperative behaviors. In psychological terms, customer cooperative behaviors are reciprocal acts displayed in return for positive, satisfactory treatment obtained from a service provider (Lee, Choi, Kim, & Hyun, 2014). In other words, customer justice perceptions increase the level of customer cooperation. Furthermore, customer justice perception is also a critical antecedent of customer citizenship behavior (Yi & Gong, 2008). Therefore, customer justice perception is positively related to customer cooperative behaviors.

Scholars have suggested that positive customer behaviors (e.g. cooperation and participation) can co-create pleasant service experiences (Grissemann & Stokburger-Sauer, 2012). In arranging travel, customers help tailor the service to their needs and thus assist in creating a special experience. The cooperation and efforts made in the process of co-creation are perceived to constitute an enjoyable experience that affects the evaluation of product value (Franke & Schreier, 2010). Therefore, pleasant service encounters created by positive customer behaviors result in positive emotional outcomes, and enhance customer satisfaction. Accordingly, this research posits the hypothesis:

H3-2: Customer cooperation mediates the relationship between customer justice perception and customer satisfaction.



## Research methods

### Sample and data collection

The target population is customers who had joined in an outbound GPT. According to statistics from the Taiwan Tourism Bureau, 114 consolidated travel agencies existed in Taiwan (Taiwan Tourism Bureau, 2015). To produce a sample, all managers of these travel agencies were contacted by telephone and requested for assistance in the research process. General managers from 25 travel agencies consented to join in this research. According to tourism statistics (Taiwan Tourism Bureau, 2015), the demographics of the 25 samples (e.g. regional distribution, major GPTs available, and number of employees) were consistent with the population attributes of the consolidated travel agencies in Taiwan, which indicated that the samples were representative. The managers who consented to take part in the study were given with written descriptions of the nature of the study. This information was distributed to their customers.

Questionnaire packets were mailed to each general manager. Each packet included 20 customer surveys. The questionnaires were distributed by general managers. Customers who accepted to participate received a set of questionnaires with a postage-paid return envelope. The questionnaires were administered to the tourists who had finished their tour. The completed questionnaires were mailed directly to the researchers. Of the total sample, 19 travel agencies returned a minimum of 10 questionnaires. Survey data were collected from August 2015 to October 2015. In total, 309 questionnaires were determined to be usable in the study.

As shown in Table 1, 32.4% of the participants were men and 67.6% of the participants were women; additionally, 27.2% of the participants were aged between 31 and 40 years, 66% of the participants had college-level higher education, 51.8% of the participants were married, and 27.2% of the participants had personal monthly incomes in the range of US\$ 641–960. The demographic profile of respondents reflected the general demographic information reported in previous studies, and similar results were obtained (Wang, Hsieh, Chou, & Lin, 2007; Yen, Liu, Chen, & Lee, 2015).

### Measures

According to Wilson (2010), we conducted a pretest with 30 GPT tourists to ensure that the wording and

**Table 1.** Demographic characteristic profile of respondents ( $N = 309$ ).

Variable		<i>n</i>	%
Gender	Male	100	32.4
	Female	209	67.6
Age	20 and below	39	12.6
	21–30	77	24.9
	31–40	84	27.2
	41–50	67	21.7
	51 and over	42	13.6
Marital status	Single	149	48.2
	Married	160	51.8
Education	Junior high school	25	8.1
	High school	80	25.9
	College	53	17.2
	University	107	34.6
Personal monthly income	Graduate school	44	14.2
	US\$ 320 and below	50	16.2
	US\$ 321–640	53	17.2
	US\$ 641–960	84	27.2
	US\$ 961–1280	59	19.0
	US\$ 1281–1600	26	8.4
	US\$ 1601–1920	13	4.2
	US\$ 1921 and above	24	7.8

language of the questionnaire was accurate. After the pretest, certain wording in the questionnaire was modified.

Customer trust to tour leaders was measured using four statements from Sun and Lin (2010). The scale used to measure customer trust was based on Sirdeshmukh et al. (2002) and adapted to measure customer trust in the tour leader. Customer justice perception toward tour leaders was measured using four items developed by Smith, Bolton, and Wagner (1999). This scale is reliable and has been used to measure interactional justice to service employees in previous study (Yoo et al., 2012). Customer cooperation behavior was measured using four items from Lee et al. (2014). The scale used to measure cooperation was based on Bettencourt (1997). The respondents indicated their agreement with each item on a five-point Likert scale, which ranged from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Furthermore, we measured customer satisfaction using the three questions developed by Huang et al. (2010). Many studies have adopted these three questionnaire items (Chang, 2014; Tan, Aziz, Khairil, & Zaiton, 2015). A five-point semantic differential scale was used for the satisfaction measurement.

## Results

### Psychometric properties of the measures

This study adopted skewness and kurtosis values to test normality assumption before conducting the

reliability and validity test. The data meet the normality standard when the values of absolute skewness and kurtosis were smaller than 2 (Kim, 2013). Table 2 reports that both absolute values of skewness (from  $-0.52$  to  $0.01$ ) and kurtosis (from  $-0.43$  to  $1.26$ ) were less than 2. Thus, our data were not against the assumption of normality.

The reliability values ( $\alpha$ ) shown in Table 2 were between 0.70 and 0.90, which exceeded the accepted standard of 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was also adopted to validate the constructs. After deleting one item from customer justice perception (standardized loading lower than .5) (Karatepe & Uludag, 2008), the model fitted the data well:  $\chi^2 = 111.65$ ,  $df = 71$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 1.57$ , goodness-of-fit index (GFI) = 0.95, adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI) = 0.93, root mean square residual (RMR) = 0.02, standardized root-mean-square residual (SRMR) = 0.03, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.04, comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.99, incremental fit index (IFI) = 0.99. Furthermore, the researchers employed many procedures to test the scales' convergent and discriminant validity. The factor loadings of their respective latent variables were all highly significant. The average variance extracted (AVE) of all constructs ranged from 0.51 to 0.74, which was greater than 0.5 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Thus, the convergent validity of all constructs was supported. The correlations among all variables were less than the square root

of the AVE in each variable, and this supported for discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Hence, the questionnaires used in the current study were reliable and valid.

Collecting data using self-report questionnaires may induce common method variance (CMV). The researchers compared the fits of a one-factor model with those of a four-factor model by using CFA (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012). Results reported that the fits of the one-factor model were not great ( $\chi^2 = 817.96$ ,  $df = 77$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 10.62$ , GFI = 0.66, AGFI = 0.54, RMR = 0.05, SRMR = 0.10, RMSEA = 0.18, CFI = 0.72, IFI = 0.72). Accordingly, the empirical results suggested that CMV was not severe in our study.

### Correlation analysis

As shown in Table 3, customer trust was significantly correlated to customer cooperation ( $r = 0.50$ ), and customer satisfaction ( $r = 0.59$ ). Customer justice perception had a significant correlation with customer cooperation ( $r = 0.43$ ), and customer satisfaction ( $r = 0.54$ ). Customer cooperation showed a significant correlation with customer satisfaction ( $r = 0.52$ ).

### Test of hypotheses

We performed the structural equation model (SEM) to investigate the relationships between customer trust,

**Table 2.** Scale items, reliabilities, and CFA results.

Scale items	M	SD	Skewness/ Kurtosis	Factor loadings	Cronbach's alpha	AVE
<i>Customer trust to tour leaders</i>			$-0.20/-0.00$		0.90	0.70
I believe that this tour leader is concerned about my interest	3.89	0.73		0.82		
I have confidence in the services of this tour leader	3.92	0.71		0.88		
I feel that this tour leader is trustworthy	3.92	0.72		0.85		
I feel that this tour leader has the ability to provide good tour services	3.98	0.73		0.80		
<i>Customer justice perception toward tour leaders</i>			$0.01/-0.43$		0.70	0.51
The tour leader was appropriately concerned about my problem	3.75	0.78		0.78		
The tour leader's communications with me were appropriate	3.80	0.74		0.73		
The tour leader does not give me the courtesy I was due (reverse coding)	3.97	0.89		0.62		
<i>Customer cooperation behavior</i>			$-0.48/0.28$		0.88	0.65
I try to help keep this tour bus clean	4.39	0.64		0.72		
I give the tour leader my full cooperation	4.27	0.63		0.83		
I go out of my way to treat the tour leader with kindness and respect	4.30	0.62		0.91		
I carefully observe the rules and policies of this package tour	4.27	0.66		0.76		
<i>Customer satisfaction</i>			$-0.52/1.26$		0.89	0.74
What is your over satisfaction with the services provided by the tour leader?	3.98	0.68		0.83		
To what extent do you think the services provided by the tour leader in this package tour exceed or fall short of your expectation?	3.96	0.72		0.90		
How well do you rate the services provided by the tour leader in this package tour compared with the ideal set of tour leader services	3.99	0.67		0.85		



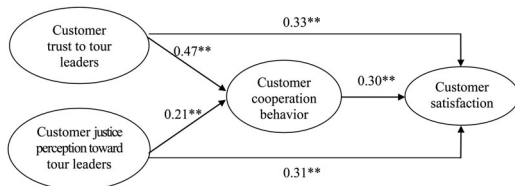
**Table 3.** Means, standard deviations, and correlations of all variables.

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Customer trust to tour leaders	3.93	0.63				
2. Customer justice perception toward tour leaders	3.84	0.62	.71**			
3. Customer cooperation behavior	4.31	0.55	.50**	.43**		
4. Customer satisfaction	3.98	0.62	.59**	.54**	.52**	

\*\*  $p < .01$ .

justice perception, cooperation, and customer satisfaction. Because the sample size influenced the chi-square statistic (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010), other fit indices were also included in the hypotheses testing. The results showed that the hypothesized model provided an accepted fit to the data ( $\chi^2 = 334.83$ ,  $df = 72$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 4.65$ ,  $GFI = 0.89$ ,  $CFI = 0.90$ ,  $IFI = 0.90$ ) (Hair et al., 2010; Williams & Hazer, 1986). As shown in Figure 1, the path from customer trust to customer satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.33$ ,  $T = 5.17$ ,  $p < .01$ ) was significant, indicating that H1 was supported. The path from customer justice perception to customer satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.31$ ,  $T = 4.34$ ,  $p < .01$ ) was significant, supporting H2.

Furthermore, the paths from customer trust to customer cooperation ( $\beta = 0.47$ ,  $T = 7.19$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and customer justice perception to customer cooperation ( $\beta = 0.21$ ,  $T = 2.98$ ,  $p < .01$ ) were significant. Customer cooperation was also positively related to customer satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.30$ ,  $T = 4.34$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The hypothesized model was a partially mediated model. The squared multiple correlation coefficients for customer cooperation and customer satisfaction were 0.26 and 0.42.



**Figure 1.** Structural path estimates model. Note: All path estimates are standardized; \*\* $p < .01$ .

The current study also conducted two nested model comparisons to assess whether an alternative model (full mediation) would be better than the hypothesized model (partial mediation) (Kelloway, 1998). As shown in Table 4, the chi-square of hypothesized model (334.83) was smaller than that of alternative model (395.62) and the result of the chi-square difference was significant ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 60.79$ ,  $\Delta df = 2$ ). The hypothesized model was superior to the alternative model. Therefore, H3-1 and H3-2 were supported.

Finally, the direct and indirect influences of customer trust on customer satisfaction were 0.33 and 0.14, respectively, yielding a cumulative influence of 0.47. The direct and indirect influences of customer justice perception on customer satisfaction were 0.31 and 0.06, respectively, yielding a cumulative influence of 0.37. Hence, the influence of customer trust on customer satisfaction was greater than that of customer justice perception.

## Conclusion and discussion

Customer satisfaction is pivotal to customer loyalty and retention (Han & Hyun, 2015; Kim, Vogt, & Knutson, 2015). Many studies on the GPTs field have investigated the antecedents of customer satisfaction (Bowie & Chang, 2005; Chang, 2014). In addition, the influences of customer trust, justice perception, and customer cooperation have been extensively studied in various domains (Limpanitgul et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2014; Yoo et al., 2012). By integrating these perspectives, a deep understanding of customers' underlying perceptions and subsequent customer satisfaction in the GPTs can be gained. Specifically, this study developed a framework to elucidate how both customer trust and justice toward tour leaders influence customer cooperation, which would enhance customer satisfaction. The results show that both customer trust and justice perception directly and positively influence customer satisfaction. Additionally, customer cooperation partially mediates the relationships between both customer trust and justice perception with customer satisfaction. Finally, compared with justice perception, customer trust has a more crucial role in the tour

**Table 4.** SEM comparisons.

Models	$\chi^2(df)$	$\Delta\chi^2$	$\Delta df$	GFI	CFI	IFI
Hypothesized Model (partial mediation)	334.83 (72)	–	–	0.89	0.90	0.90
Alternative model 1 (full mediation)	395.62 (74)	60.79	2	0.86	0.88	0.88

Note:  $\chi^2$  critical:  $\Delta df = 74 - 72 = 2$ ;  $\chi^2_{.95, 1} = 5.99$ .

leader–customer satisfaction relationship. The findings add value to previous studies in several ways.

First, although previous studies have explored the trust–satisfaction linkage in various contexts, including business-to-business (Bauer et al., 2002), online purchasing (Harris & Goode, 2004), and luxury product market (Chiou & Droge, 2006), research linking customer trust to customer satisfaction in tourism is limited. In the justice literature, one previous study investigated the effect of perceived justice on satisfaction in the service recovery setting (Kim et al., 2009); however, few studies have examined the relationship between justice perception and customer satisfaction within the services encountered in tourism. In addition, past studies have demonstrated that tour leaders are crucial for enhancing customer satisfaction during GPTs (Agrusa, 1994; Bowie & Chang, 2005). However, the influence of trust to and justice perception toward tour leaders on customer satisfaction during GPTs has received little attention. Therefore, this study replicates and consistently predicts that both trust and justice perception are positively related to customer satisfaction. Past studies have shown that the characteristics of a tour leader (e.g. emotion, performance, and leadership) have been investigated as determinants of customer satisfaction (Chang, 2008, 2014). These characteristics are factors that enhance tourists' satisfaction with their tour leaders. In short, when travel managers seek to enhance customer satisfaction in GPTs, trust and justice perception provided by tour leaders should not be overlooked.

Second, although past studies have investigated the link between customer trust and customer satisfaction (Zhu & Chen, 2012) as well as the relationship between customer justice and customer satisfaction (Bowie & Chang, 2005; Han, Robert, & Wang, 2008), research exploring how both customer trust and customer justice influence customer satisfaction during GTPs is scarce. Those studies by Harris and Goode (2004) and Maxham and Netemeyer (2003) even suggested that neither trust nor justice have influence on customer satisfaction. These inconsistent relationships are indicative of the gaps in knowledge of the customer trust–customer satisfaction relationship and the justice perception–customer satisfaction relationship. Therefore, this study contributes to the literature by explaining customer cooperation in GPTs and suggesting that cooperation is a vital process regulating the effect of trust and justice perception toward tour leaders on customer satisfaction.

Specifically, customer cooperation emerges as a vital mediator, not only for customer trust to satisfaction, but also for customer justice to satisfaction, indicating the important role of customer cooperation in the tourism field. Thus, this study offers a deep explanation of customer–tour leader relationships. These findings appear to echo with the assertions of Boström (1995), who argued that customer cooperation is a vital component of service dynamics. Customer cooperation has received attention only in retail and fitness industries (Bettencourt, 1997; Rosenbaum & Massiah, 2007). We add to the literature on tourism by providing empirical findings and suggestions regarding customer cooperation in the travel industry.

Finally, Bowen and Clarke (2002) reported that the influence of different factors on tourist satisfaction may be heightened or suppressed depending on the particular tourism situation. Therefore, the relative effect of different variables on customer satisfaction has been assessed (Chang, 2008). For example, Arnould and Price (1993) reported that, compared with consumer expectations, rafting experience has more influence on customer satisfaction. We supplement this line of research which compares the influences of different determinants on customer satisfaction by indicating that customer satisfaction varies in its sensitivity to customer trust and justice perception in GPTs. Specifically, compared with justice perception, customer trust has a stronger effect on satisfaction through customer cooperation. This may be because travel services are often intangible, but not returnable (Chang, 2008). Intangible and hidden travel services produce asymmetric information (Zillifro & Morais, 2004). As noted in a past study, customer trust can serve as a productive manner to diminish uncertainty (Pavlou, Liang, & Xue, 2007). When tourists are in an unfamiliar environment while traveling, trust seems to become more critical in reducing perceived risk and information asymmetry (Chang, 2014). Under such travel conditions, tourists require additional trust from their tour leaders to alleviate their travel uncertainty. In addition, prior studies have examined the justice–trust–outcome relationship (Turel, Yuan, & Connelly, 2008; Zhu & Chen, 2012) and have reported that justice influences customer satisfaction through trust (Chiu, Lin, Sun, & Hsu, 2009; Zhu & Chen, 2012). It implies that customer trust is a key mediator between justice and customer satisfaction, and is closer to customer satisfaction than justice perception

is. Hence, although both customer trust and justice perception have positive effects on satisfaction through customer cooperation, the effect of customer trust is more substantial.

### *Managerial contributions*

Proper customer satisfaction research informs tourism companies about the service attributes that are considered important by customers (Lin, Chou, & Hung, 2010). As discussed earlier, both customer trust and justice perception have critical roles in tourism (Chang, 2014; Nikbin et al., 2015). Hence, the current study is a pioneer to integrate two independent streams of customer trust and justice perception toward tour leaders into the customer satisfaction during GTPs. An attention on demonstrating trust and justice toward tour leaders in the outbound tour is a great starting point for achieving customer satisfaction, but it is not sufficient. The findings show that customer cooperation involves a psychological mechanism regarding how both customer trust and justice perception influence customer satisfaction. In other words, the underlying mechanisms of customer trust and justice perception are similar in the outbound travel. That is, tour leaders should focus on the same mechanism: customer cooperation in place of cultivating two distinct strategies. Accordingly, it is essential for tour leaders to consider how customers display cooperation behaviors in outbound tour practices.

Therefore, customer cooperation can be a positive indicator during an outbound trip. When tour leaders encounter unfavorable events, such as tourists who do not keep the bus clean (which reflects a low degree of customer cooperation), they should try to enhance the tourists' trust and perception of justice. Specifically, they can inquire about the tourists' interest, resolve their tour-related problems, and maximize their service quality. These strategies can increase tourists' cooperative behaviors and strengthen their satisfaction.

Because customer trust is more crucial than justice perception in service encounters in GTPs, we suggest that travel managers should pay attention to the role of customer trust in customer–tour leader relationships and managerial strategies designed aimed at building customer trust. For example, managers should train tour leaders to raise their service quality (Yamada, 2011) to increase customers' perception of trust. Providing tour leaders with work-related training courses (e.g. the improvement of problem-solving and

communication abilities) would be appropriate for enhancing their service delivery and travel-related abilities to ensure that they can deal with tour problems promptly and appropriately. In addition, Asian tourists prefer customer-centered services (Bowie & Chang, 2005). Hence, customer-centered services in GTPs can be adopted to eliminate tourist travel uncertainties. All of these strategies are aimed at showing that tour leaders are trustworthy, concerned about tourist interests, and can provide professional services on tour.

### *Limitations and further studies*

First, our study adopted a cross-sectional research design. An experimental and/or longitudinal research design needs to examine the cause–effect relationships among customer trust, justice perception, and satisfaction. Second, trust has various definitions and conceptualizations (McCole, Ramsey, & Williams, 2010). In GTPs, tourists encounter tour leaders, hotels staffs, and tour agency representatives, etc. Therefore, they may build a mutual trust with multiple people. However, we focused only on customer trust toward tour leaders. Future research should examine customer trust toward other specific targets to enable generalizing about trust–satisfaction relationships in the tourism domain.

Finally, this study paid attention to the mediating role of customer cooperation in the customer trust–satisfaction relationship and the customer justice–satisfaction relationship. Future studies should emphasize other moderators. For example, past studies have addressed the role of culture on customer assessments of service encounters (Mattila, 2000). People from highly masculine societies are more dissatisfied with travel services than people from less masculine societies are (Crotts & Erdmann, 2000). Moreover, Mittal and Kamakura (2001) showed that customer characteristics influence customer evaluations of satisfaction. In their studies, they reported that women rate satisfaction higher than men do, and elderly customers rate satisfaction higher than young customers do. Therefore, other situational or personal variables might influence the relationships among customer trust, justice, and satisfaction. Further research should be conducted to investigate these questions.

### *Disclosure statement*

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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