

LEVEL 7 ASSESSMENT SPECIFICATION

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Academic honesty / referencing:	Academic honesty is required. In the main body of your submission you must give credit to authors on whose research and ideas your work is based. Append to your submission a reference list that indicates the books, articles, etc. that you have used, cited or quoted in order to complete this assessment.		

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Part I – Evaluation of current research

Selected article

Full citation: Harrison, A., Popovic, V. and Kraal, B. (2015) ‘A new model for airport passenger segmentation’, *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 21(3), pp.237-250.

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Article abstract

The research topic of the selected article stemmed from the fast-changing environment of the aviation industry. Given the active development in air travel, the habits and expectations of airport passengers are also rapidly evolving. In light of the sheer pace of change, the authors opined that a new model ought to be developed in order to adequately address the characteristics of contemporary air travellers who have various needs at an airport. The traditional approach in analysing passengers which typically focuses on their travel purposes and travel frequency was deemed to be obsolete. Instead, the authors proposed a new analytical approach to characterise these airport users based on the passenger core value, *time*.

Qualitative research was conducted at the International Terminal of Brisbane Airport, Australia, in 2012-2013. Based on the research results, the authors postulated a new passenger segmentation model, which distinguished four types of passengers:

- (i) airport enthusiast (engaged and non-time sensitive);
- (ii) time filler (non-engaged and non-time sensitive);
- (iii) efficiency lover (non-engaged and time sensitive); and
- (iv) efficient enthusiast (engaged and time sensitive).

The authors envisaged that the new insights on passengers’ experience in the airport terminals could shed light on airport management in the optimisation of terminal space as well as future airport terminal planning and design.

Philosophy and theoretical perspective employed

Ontology

Ontology probes into the nature of reality. From an ontological point of view, there are two opposing paradigms, namely realism and relativism, with contrasting interpretations of what “reality” is constructed of. In a nutshell, realists believe that there is “one”, objective truth which is “static” and can be generalised (Killam, 2013). In contrast, relativism refers to the belief that truth is relational, which is dependent on the context (Drummond, 2005).

In this research, the ontological perspective is one of relativism. Under this interpretation, there is no single “truth” or absolute boundary delineating the different types of airport passengers. Therefore, in order to explore the factors influencing passengers’ engagement at the airport, researchers need to accept that different people would interpret the “truth” differently (Crotty, 1998). As such, this research reflects traits of relativism in its ontological perspective.

Epistemology

Epistemology is another key premises that is considered integral to the interpretive framework (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). At its core, this involves examining the relationship between the researcher and the research, and the way that the researcher acquires knowledge (Ormston et. al, 2014). The etic approach encompasses an external view of reality based on pre-existing theories, which is often adopted in quantitative research; whereas the emic perspective used in qualitative research emphasises the way that an insider views reality, which requires capturing the participant’s perspective (Lett, 1990; Markee, 2013; Yin, 2016).

The epistemology in this research is one of emic for it consistently emphasises exploring the core values of airport passengers’ engagement at the airport. In other words, the researchers seek to understand the phenomenon through grasping the participants’ standpoints, namely from the individuals who are participating in the context (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007), implying that the evidence is largely subjective. In essence, these constructs are believed to be elicited through interaction between the researcher and interviewee (Yilmaz, 2013). Thus, in this research, the researchers attempt to build rapport with the participants through *in situ* interviews and spending time with them in the field during the whole departure processing, highlighting to the interviewees that they were free to chat with the researcher along the way.

Axiology

Axiology sees to the role of values and is engaged with the way that the researcher assesses their own values throughout the research process (Creswell, 2007). Its importance lies in the influence over the formation of the research questions and the subsequent data analysis as the underlying philosophy will inevitably drive how the research is conducted and what is valued in the findings (Biddle and Schafft, 2015). In quantitative research, it is often deemed as essential that the data collection and analysis remain value-free, as researchers seek to be as unbiased and objective as possible with a view to explaining or predicting a population; conversely, qualitative researchers acknowledge that biases are present and that such research ought to be value-laden (Yilmaz, 2013).

In the selected article, the latter approach is adopted as the study of core values from the insider perspective of the airport passengers is emphasised throughout the article. Hence, is it acknowledged

that the stance of the researcher and the participants would substantially and the research findings are analysed with such underlying values and assumptions in mind.

Methodology

Methodology relates to the philosophies that prompt the ways through which researchers gather and analyse knowledge in the context of a particular paradigm (Mertens, 2007). Qualitative research is characterised by inductive logic, which requires the researcher to study the topic within its context and give abundant attention to the details of the particulars (Yilmaz, 2013). Thus, it appears that the current article has adopted the abovementioned approach in forming its foundational set of beliefs. By using open coding strategies, the researchers allowed the participants' core values and patterns to emerge from the findings, hence forming the ultimate proposed model after analysis.

Data collection methods

At its core, the research aims to explore the criteria that can be used to segment passengers in a way that relates to their behaviour in the airport terminal. The data collection of this article is thus based on two research questions, namely:

1. How do passengers relate to time, their key factor of influence?
2. What are the modes of passenger engagement in the terminal building?

Type of research method

A qualitative research approach was adopted with a view to answering the above research questions. It is stated in the article that a total of "49 participants (16 groups) were interviewed", and that they took place *in situ* at the International Terminal of Brisbane Airport. The interviews were conducted over a period of one year from February 2012 to February 2013.

Sampling

A non-probability, purposive sampling was adopted in the sampling of this research. Participants were recruited through the researchers' social media network through advertisement of the research project on Facebook and emails. There was only one pre-qualification condition, namely that the participant must be having an upcoming international trip departing from Brisbane Airport.

As the interviews were conducted *in situ*, the researcher met the participant at the entrance of the international departures level on the day of travel, at a time chosen by the passenger. The interview would start there and then, and end when the passenger boarded the plane.

Critique on the data collection methods used

Type of research method

In situ interviews are used in this research, meaning that the interviews were conducted onsite at the airport. This type of mobile or walking-based method is increasingly being adopted by researchers in different fields, such as sociology, social work and anthropology, as a way to facilitate a deeper engagement between the interviewees and the environment (Dubé et al. 2014). This allows a more dynamic interaction which need not be confined in a spatially static environment, such that the physical settings and landscape could prompt deeper discussion along the way (Anderson, 2004).

In this research, the interviews spanned the interviewees' whole departures process from the airport's departures entrance right until they boarded the plane. This provides an opportunity for the researcher to observe and shadow the participant's activities, behaviour and emotions, which allows a more meaningful and contextual interpretation of the interview answers.

The interviews were semi-structured, with the same set of main questions prepared before the interviews and follow-up questions based on the participants' responses. This approach is suitable for the research given that passengers are likely to have a variety of responses that require different follow-up questions.

Furthermore, the use of purposive sampling in this research is well-justified as it is necessary to identify passengers who experience the departures process in order to explore the core values that are important to them in the airport's departures environment and thus identify the characteristics that can be used to segment these passengers.

Sampling

Confusion regarding the number of participants. The articles states that "49 participants (16 groups) were interviewed", but no further explanation was given to elaborate on how these 16 groups were formed. Given that the interviews were conducted *in situ*, a best guess would be that 16 interviews were conducted, but as some interviews might have more than one passenger (for example friends and families travelling together), a total of 49 passengers were interviewed as a result.

Nevertheless, this would give rise to questions mainly pertaining to ethical issues. For example, if one participant responded to the researcher's online recruitment advertisement, was consent obtained from all his/her travel companions, and would the travel companions in any way feel obliged to participate in the interview for the fact that they were travelling together?

Another potential problem incurred by the sampling method is that the "only criterion" for selecting participants was that they were having an upcoming international trip departing from Brisbane Airport.

Such selection criterion neglects the obvious fact that the Internet can be accessed by a wide array of people, including minors and sensitive populations. In these cases, more ethical issues could be aroused, such as obtaining permissions from the human subjects review board or risking to conduct an interview with a minor even though the researcher might not be aware of it. The article needs to address these issues and explain how the researchers have implemented measures in the sampling process to ensure the adequacy of the interview sample.

Ethical issues

Participants' consent

Informed consent is an essential component that researchers must obtain and a process which must be observed in any research that is targeted at human subjects. The purpose of obtaining consent is principally related to research ethics, ensuring that the respondents' participation in a research study is entirely voluntary. Not only is consent required, it must also be given by the participant in a fully informed state of mind. To achieve this end, researchers ought to disclose all important information about the study and the rights of the participants, including but not limited to the research objective, duration, confidentiality and data protection, research procedures, etc. (Nijhawan et al. 2013). In sum, informed consent is a cornerstone of research ethics and researchers must behave towards the subjects with integrity (Spiker, 2007).

In this research, the authors have not made clear whether a consent form or letter had been distributed to the interviewees. Given the research method of this study, consent could be obtained essentially at two different stages, namely (i) at the time of the recruitment advertisement or (ii) at the time of meeting the participant at the airport. However, details of the recruitment advertisement posted on social media and email channels are not revealed, rendering it difficult to evaluate the extent to which the participants had sufficient information about the study to make informed consent. Furthermore, it appears that neither was consent obtained upon meeting the participant at the airport, as the interview started briefly after "an exchange of pleasantries".

Another element of consent is the inclusion of the option to withdraw. Not only should respondents accept to participate in a research study voluntarily at the beginning, researchers must also ensure that the respondents' participation remains just as voluntary throughout the whole process. Therefore, it must be clearly communicated that participants are free to withdraw at any point of the study should they feel like doing so.

In this research, option to withdraw had not been explicitly mentioned. This option is especially important given that the interviews were conducted *in situ*, meaning that the participants could encounter unexpected scenarios at the airport that might affect their willingness to continue with the

interview. For instance, if the processing time took longer than expected, the passenger could be rushing in the departures process; or that if the flight is substantially delayed, the passenger might not wish to spend the extra hours with the researcher.

Overall, the article ought to have indicated more clearly the way through which consent was obtained and that the objective and procedures had been thoroughly explained to participants before the commencement of the interview. Furthermore, the option to withdraw needs to be addressed and it should be emphasised that this option could be exercised by the participants at any point of the interview process. This way, participants would be fully informed and the consent given would be consistent throughout the interview process.

Confidentiality and data protection

Confidentiality is an important part of research ethics as the disclosure of participants' identity could affect the way they respond, and disclosure without the participants' prior consent could jeopardise their personal and work lives. Thus, identity ought to be fully protected, or else the degree of any such disclosure must be clearly communicated to and agreed by the respondents.

In this research, the interviewees are treated anonymously in the article and all interviewees are assigned a number (PAX1 – PAX49). However, it is not clear to what personal information was collected during the interviews, even though presentation of participants' demographics data is not too specific to a degree that their identities could be inferred or revealed. Additionally, the article should add information regarding the handling, custody and disposal of data, which have not been explicitly mentioned. This would include stating the personnel who had access to the data, the measures taken to control such access, as well as how and when the data was disposed after completion of the research.

Avoiding deception/bias

Deception is an issue typically caused by the instructions given to the respondents or the way that questions are phrased in interviews and surveys. In the research examined, care was taken by the researchers not to ask leading questions or to instill bias into the interviewees' answers. The main questions are appended in the article, and a close scrutiny of the wordings and phrasing does confirm that the researchers were careful in avoiding suggestive questions or statements. The questions, such as "How was your check-in experience today?" or "Was it longer or shorter than you expected?", are open-ended and do not imply or indicate an answer desired by the interviewer. This is critical for the research as the interviewees would be able to give honest and genuine responses rather than simply mimicking the interviewer's words. Overall, it could be assumed that

deception and bias due to instructions or interaction prompted by the researchers are negligible and minimised by the precautions undertaken and mentioned above.

Part 2 – Research Proposal

Passenger Segmentation at Hong Kong International Airport

Abstract

As passengers' expectations continue to grow, airports must strive to gain a deeper understanding of the passengers' perspectives in order to attract and retain passengers in a modern, competitive landscape. To this end, passenger segmentation allows an effective understanding of the airport users, which in turn enables airport managers to grasp the dynamic and contextual complexity in the airport experience encountered by passengers. Traditionally, such segmentation is largely based on demographics data; however, as the airport passengers' profile become increasingly complex, other behavioural data need to be analysed in order to portrait a fuller and more accurate picture of the airport users.

This research reveals that apart from demographics, passengers demonstrate different characteristics in regard to the level of time sensitivity, demand on servicescape and preferences on the mode of interaction. These values provide a more meaningful insight into the ways that passengers could be characterised and adequately segmented. Thus, the findings of this research have practical implications on airport management in terms of future terminal design and planning as well as in offering a personalised airport experience by leveraging on effective passenger segmentation.

Research questions

Since Hong Kong International Airport ("HKIA") is an international airport handling a complex and diverse group of customers, it is crucial to identify the core customer segments so as to cater to their different needs. Finding an effective way to profile and segment the clientele could put the airport ahead of today's competitive industry landscape.

In light of the above, this research aims to shed light on a core question:

- How could airport passengers be characterised in a way that effectively reflects the passenger segmentation at HKIA?

In order to answer the research question, the following objectives will be explored:

- What values do the passengers perceive as the most important during their airport experience?
- What are the criteria that could be used to segment passengers in a way that reflects their behaviour at HKIA?
- What activities are passengers engaged in other than processing activities at the airport?

Research Philosophy

Ontology

Ontology probes into the nature of reality. From an ontological point of view, there are two opposing paradigms, namely realism and relativism, with contrasting interpretations of what “reality” is constructed of. In a nutshell, realists believe that there is “one”, objective truth which is “static” and can be generalised (Killam, 2013). In contrast, relativism refers to the belief that truth is relational, which is dependent on the context (Drummond, 2005).

In this research, a relativist ontological perspective has been adopted on the grounds that the segmentation of a customer base is largely subjective. As such, there is no single “truth” or absolute boundaries that could distinctly delineate the values and activities that airport passengers are engaged in. Furthermore, this study does not attempt to generalise the findings to the whole population. Instead, the aim is to explore, in depth, the core values that are perceived as important to the passengers and hence to develop insights into the way that they could be categorised.

Epistemology

Epistemology is another key premises that is considered integral to the interpretive framework (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). At its core, this involves examining the relationship between the researcher and the research, and the way that the researcher acquires knowledge (Ormston et. al, 2014). The etic approach encompasses an external view of reality based on pre-existing theories, which is often adopted in quantitative research; whereas the emic perspective used in qualitative research emphasises the way that an insider views reality, which requires capturing the participant’s perspective (Lett, 1990; Markee, 2013; Yin, 2016).

The epistemology in this research is one of emic as it is necessary to probe into the insiders’ perspectives of the passengers who are primary users of the airport. This requires the researcher to interact with the participating passengers and to build rapport with a view to grasping the internal viewpoints. That way, a picture of their profile could be generated from inside-out, elucidating a fundamental understanding on the way that passengers perceive the airport environment surrounding them.

Axiology

Axiology sees to the role of values and is engaged with the way that the researcher assesses their own values throughout the research process (Creswell, 2007). Its importance lies in the influence over the formation of the research questions and the subsequent data analysis as the underlying philosophy will inevitably drive how the research is conducted and what is valued in the findings (Biddle and

Schafft, 2015). In quantitative research, it is often deemed as essential that the data collection and analysis remain value-free, as researchers seek to be as unbiased and objective as possible with a view to explaining or predicting a population; conversely, qualitative researchers acknowledge that biases are present and that such research ought to be value-laden (Yilmaz, 2013).

Therefore, in order to allow a deep understanding of the airport users' characteristics, the latter approach is adopted and the views and opinions of the participants were valued and examined in detail. As such, it is acknowledged that the values and ideological preferences of the researcher underpin the research, hence encompassing the researcher's stance in the study. It is vital to honour individual values so as to construe the passengers' views and allow meaningful inferences from the findings.

Methodology

Methodology relates to the philosophies that prompt the ways through which researchers gather and analyse knowledge in the context of a particular paradigm (Mertens, 2007). Qualitative research is characterised by inductive logic, which requires the researcher to study the topic within its context and give abundant attention to the details of the particulars (Yilmaz, 2013). It is of paramount importance in this research to delve into the passengers' perspectives first before onward interpretation in the process of contextualising their characteristics and experiences. Therefore, an inductive approach would provide adequate room for themes and patterns to surface through detailed analysis and the use of open coding. By allowing the data to speak for itself, the research findings and emerging phenomena ought to stem from bottom-up and reflect the genuine traits of the participants that could elucidate better passenger segmentation.

Literature review

At its core, customer segmentation allows organisations to focus on the characteristics of their clientele and the way the customers engage with the products or services (Gupta, Venkaiah and Ammani, 2016). At a corporate level, it could shed light on business priorities and strategic directions; while at an operations level, a clear insight into the customer profile could enable managers to effectively deploy resources (Freathy and O'Connell, 2012; Sinha and Uniyal, 2005). The degree to which an organisation seeks to decipher their customers' needs and wishes would have an impact on its product or service development and marketing strategies, thus segmentation remains one of the most powerful tools in marketing (Cohen and Ramaswamy, 1998; Gillian, 2011). As such, given that the services offered at airports are extremely diverse and complex, it is crucial that airport managers grasp not only a comprehensive picture, but to also delve more deeply into their customers' behaviour (Gupta, Venkaiah and Ammani, 2016).

Traditionally, demographic segmentation has persistently remained as one of the most widely used methods in analysing customer profiles (Marcus, 1998). In the context of airports, these include exploring travel behaviour based on the passengers' age, gender, frequency of travel, purpose of trip, etc. Nevertheless, as market segmentation develops over the years, the use of behavioural and attitudinal data, such as customer motivations, attitude and preferences, has become more prevalent in gaining a more meaningful insight into the clientele (Barry and Weinstein 2009). Harrison, Popovic and Kraal (2015) contend that the conventional criteria used to segment passengers no longer provide adequate insights into their airport experiences; while Freathy and O'Connell (2012) concur that a deeper and more intimate understanding of the passengers is required from airports.

Segmentation through a deeper exploration of the passengers' behaviour is gradually gaining momentum, whether in the academic field (e.g. Harrison, Popovic and Kraal, 2015), airport commissioned research (e.g. Tarbuck, 2012) or international organisations in the aviation industry (e.g. Airport Council International, 2016). As opposed to traditional one-dimensional profiles, these customer personas can vividly reveal insights about their attitudes, concerns and personality traits. In other words, discovering the users' mindset is a fundamental element in this type of profiling. By gaining a deeper understanding of the passengers' incentive and the factors drive their behaviours, airports could better empathise with individual passengers and hence provide the right kind of information and services as the particular traveller moves through the airport.

Explanation of data collection steps

Data Collection

In order to explore the passenger segmentation, a qualitative study was conducted, with data collected through conducting two focus groups totalling 14 participants (see Table A for details). Each participant gave full and informed consent by signing a written consent form before the start of the focus group sessions. The consent form introduced the purpose of the study and detailed the confidentiality policy including that any such data collected from the participants would be treated confidentially with controlled access by the research team and analysed on the whole with the participants' identities to remain anonymous. It was emphasised that participation was entirely voluntary and that the participants were free to withdraw at any time.

Table A – Focus groups and participants

Focus Group	No. of participants	Time and Date	Location
1	5	9 Oct 2019 @ 2130-2230	Private conference room at a clubhouse, Hong Kong
2	8	15 Oct 2019 @ 1900-2015	

Access and Rapport

Apart from gaining consent, it was equally important to build rapport with the participants given that interaction was integral to this qualitative research. Hence, the focus group sessions, which were held in a private conference room, commenced with 5-10 minutes of introduction of the study, exchange of pleasantries between all participants, and it was highlighted that the participants were free to share and exchange ideas on the discussion topics in a free flow. To allow more interaction, these sessions were semi-structured with a set of prepared questions (Appendix I) to keep the discussion flowing as participants shared their thoughts.

Sampling

Given that this study requires grasping the insiders' views of passengers who are actual users of the airport, a non-probability purposive sampling method was adopted. Participants had to fulfil the criteria that (1) they have arrived at and departed from Hong Kong International Airport in the past 12 months to ensure that they had relevant experiences and (2) they were over 18 years old so as to minimise ethical concerns of interviewing minors. Due to time constraints of this study, the participants were recruited through the researcher's social media channels.

Explanation of data analysis

To analyse the data, the focus group sessions were voice-recorded and field notes were taken with consent of the participants. After the sessions, the recordings were transcribed in English, which was the same language used in both focus group sessions. Hepburn (2004, p. 252) underlines that the interactional features of the conversations could be elucidated through a sufficiently detailed transcript which allows "exploration of crying as a topic of analysis". Subsequently, the transcripts were coded into themes. Coding is more than technical preparatory work seeing that it allows the researcher to retrieve and cluster data in a meaningful way as well as to relate different emerging ideas to one and other (Stuckey, 2015).

Preliminary findings

After the coding exercise, 3 major themes emerged. First, comments and expressions relating “time” was repeatedly mentioned by almost all the participants, though they all varied in the degree of time sensitivity; second, they had different demands on the “servicescape”, for example the airport’s facilities and ambience; and third, they had different preferences on how to interact and engage at the airport. Diagram 1 sums up the themes and their patterns discovered in the findings; whilst the chart in Diagram 2 lists out the codes, sub-themes and major themes that emerged from the study.

Diagram 1 – Emerging themes

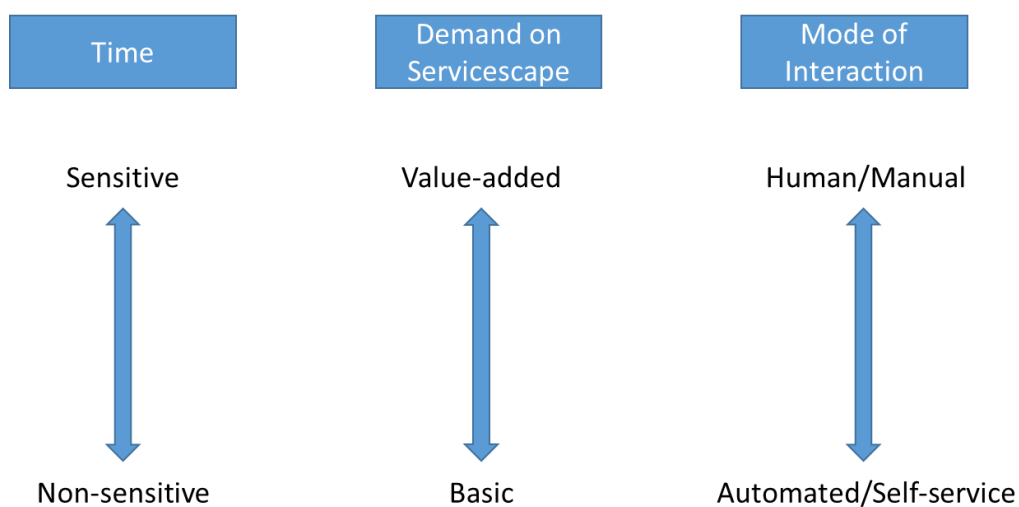
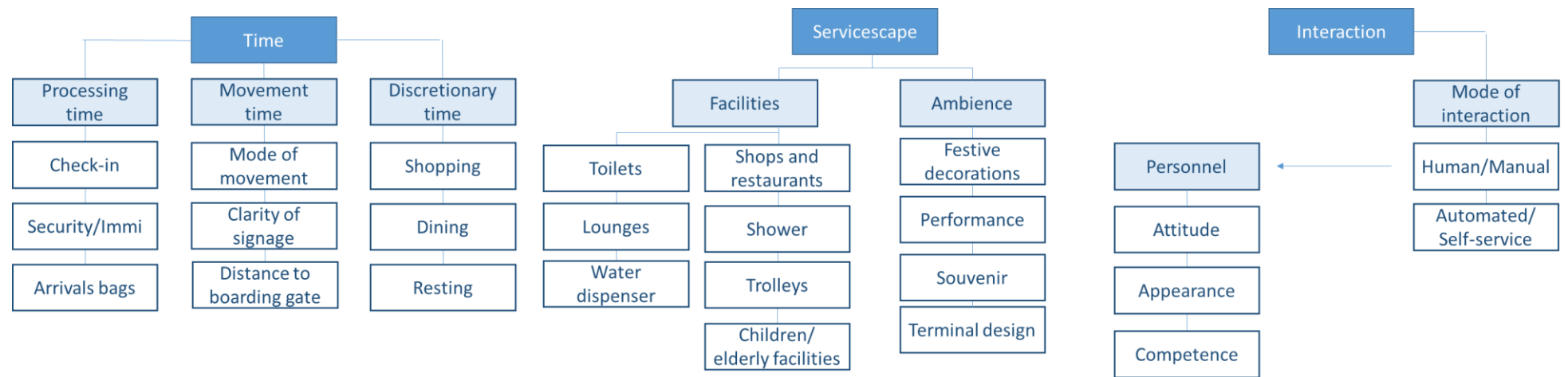


Diagram 2 – Codes and themes



Time Sensitivity

Throughout both focus groups, the participants made recurring remarks pertaining to “time” during their airport experience. These statements about “time” could be grouped into three sub-themes, namely processing time, movement time and discretionary time. The following extract remarked by one participant illustrates a high degree of sensitivity on processing time:

“...waiting for my luggage [upon arrivals] is the worst... I never check-in any luggage because I know I’ll need to wait very long time. So I [would] rather bring hand carry than wait so long.” (PAX4)

Not only does time appear to be of essence to this passenger, it also illustrates the behaviour that the passenger would adapt to in order to avoid prolonged waiting time.

Another participant displayed more sensitivity towards movement time inside the terminal as he remarked that:

“I don’t like shopping anyway, so I go straight to the gate and sit... the airport is quite large.” (PAX10).

To other passengers, the discretionary time used in resting, shopping and dining might rank higher in priority in their airport experience, as illustrated by this participant:

“I arrive to the airport at least 3 hours before my flight, so I am never rushing. I have lots of time so I can shopping and then eat in the lounge.” (PAX11)

Even though time is also an important value to this passenger, she appeared to be less sensitive towards processing time and movement time given the abundant dwell time she has at the airport.

On the whole, while the participants repeated mentioned about time, they demonstrated a diverse degree of sensitivity towards the time spent on different activities at the airport.

Servicescape

The second theme that emerged was “servicescape”, as the participants varied in the level of demand on the airport’s facilities and ambience. The facilities mentioned in the focus group sessions mainly included toilets, shops and restaurants, shower, lounges, trolleys, water dispensers and children or elderly facilities; while remarks about festive decorations, entertainment performances and terminal design all relate to the general ambience projected at the airport.

When asked about their needs at the airport, one participant remarked:

“[I] just [need] the essential ones [facilities], like enough seats, chargers. I don’t think there are enough chargers and computers to use.” (PAX9)

On the other hand, other participant showed more demand on not only the facilities *per se* but also on entertainment facilities as well as the ambience around the terminal. One participant shared that:

“You know in Changi [Airport] there is a waterfall. Hong Kong [Airport] is nice but it doesn’t have anything new for many years.” (PAX2)

Hence, it appears that the servicescape of the airport could not be defined solely as the provision of facilities, as the atmosphere and sense of place that are embraced the passengers should not be undermined. More importantly, it should be borne in mind that different participants demonstrated a different level of demand on these facilities and ambience.

Interaction

The last theme that emerged pertains to “interaction”, as the participants appeared to have different preferences on how to interact and engage at the airport. Generally speaking, it was found that the participants spread from being receptive towards self-serviced or automated services to being insistent on having manual services or having human interaction.

The following participant clearly preferred the latter, as she said:

“I was in a hurry, and I got to the security gates, and then oh my god, they were all e-gates and I couldn’t find any manual one with a security to help me.” (PAX10)

But another passenger seemed to be more confident in technology:

“...if I don’t have luggage, I will print my boarding pass at home and go straight in. It is easier to predict what time I should arrive at the airport.” (PAX4)

Discussion that emerged from findings

As postulated by various research, traditional customer segmentation is typically based on demographics, which in the context of airports generally include age, gender, travel frequency, travel purpose, etc. These customer characteristics are clear-cut and easy to categorise, hence they can help organisations to segment the customers into different markets and target their clientele more accurately. Nevertheless, contemporary research and literature suggest that while demographics remain a useful source of analysis, other data relating to the behaviour and attitude of the patrons may delve deeper into insightful traits. Furthermore, given the increasing complexity in the airports’ passenger profile nowadays, the traditional categories grounded on demographics alone can no longer provide adequate insights. As passenger segmentation moves forward, other values that are deemed important by the airport users ought to be used to analyse their profiles.

This qualitative study supports recent literature in that it reveals different values that could be used in passenger segmentation that emerge from the insiders' perspectives of airport passengers rather than extracted from extrinsic characteristics. Notions such as time sensitivity, the demands on servicescape and the mode of interaction are values that spread across a spectrum rather than fitting into definite categories. This inevitably implies that related research becomes more demanding on time and resources in terms of data collection and onward analysis. However, it does give us a fuller and more meaningful picture of the persona of the passengers.

More importantly, these new ways of segmentation also have practical implications on airport management. A deeper and more personal understanding of the passenger profile can shed light on the facilities and services required by different passengers, which has implications on the terminal's future design and facilities enhancements. Furthermore, it also highlights the complexity in modern passenger segmentation as the service scope of an airport must promptly reflect the rapidly evolving customer needs by paying enough attention to the values that matter to its passengers.

To give an example, since "time" is proven to be an integral value to passengers in their airport experience, airport managers could leverage on this data to enhance the service level. By finding out how much time a passenger has to spend at the airport, information could be prompted to them according to their personal needs. Customisation, however, would require a very large database for data collection and analysis. Therefore, as a way forward, solutions like big data and proximity messages could be very useful tools to enable better passenger segmentation and help to personalise the airport experience. Further research along similar lines to help airports better understand their users could offer valuable new insights to future airport management.

Personal reflections

Distinguished from quantitative research in many ways, qualitative research seeks to reveal the subjective understanding of reality from the perspectives of insiders. In this research, this method enabled a closer interface with the actual airport users in an attempt to grasp the attributes that could better represent different passenger segments. Having had little experience with this type of research methodology and philosophy, it was peculiar at first to adapt to the value-laden nature of qualitative inquiry for the fact that it was grounded on the idea that reality was multifaceted and subjective, depending on the chosen interpretation. In other words, it required a higher tolerance on ambiguity in order for the phenomena to emerge from the findings. Despite being unaccustomed to qualitative research, however, it later occurred that such an approach indeed shed light on the internal perspectives and logic that underlined the important aspects of an airport experience in the eyes of different passengers. This is especially vital for contemporary airport operators which manage a

service-intensive environment, in which the segmentation of their clientele ought to be conducted through the intrinsic lens of the passengers, rather than be solely driven by extrinsic views on what matters to the passengers.

Appendix I – Focus group main questions

1. What are the things most important to you during your time at the airport?
2. Which part of the airport do you spend the most time in?
3. Which part of the airport experience do you enjoy the most?
4. How well do you know your way around the airport?
5. What facilities did you like the most?
6. How was your shopping and dining experience at the airport?
7. Do you enjoy interaction at the airport?
8. Was the processing time in general acceptable?
9. Do you normally go straight to the boarding gate after immigration clearance?



Passengers Segmentation at Hong Kong International Airport

SBPD7002 – Qualitative Research

Angela Lau (SID: 1812881)

October 2019

Research Question

Research Question

- How could airport passengers be characterised in a way that effectively reflects the passenger segmentation at Hong Kong International Airport (“HKIA”)?

Research Objectives

- To explore the values that passengers perceive as the most important during their airport experience
- To analyse the criteria that could be used to segment passengers in a way that reflects their behaviour at HKIA
- To examine the activities that passengers engaged in other than processing activities at the airport

Research Philosophy

Realism	Ontology <i>Nature of reality</i>	Relativism	Types of airport passengers/activities – no single truth/absolute boundaries
Etic	Epistemology <i>Relationship between researcher & research</i>	Emic	Grasp insiders' perspectives of passengers – requires interaction & building rapport
Unbiased	Axiology <i>Role of values</i>	Biased	Need to honour individual values and to interpret the passengers' views
Experimental	Methodology <i>Philosophies guiding the collection & analysis of knowledge</i>	Phenomen- -ological	Inductive – need to know the passengers' perspectives first before interpretation

Literature Review

Customer segmentation

What is it? (Gupta, Venkaiah and Ammani, 2016)

- Characteristics of clientele
- How customers engage with the products or services

Why is it important? (Freathy and O'Connell, 2012; Sinha and Uniyal, 2005)

- Business priorities and strategic directions
- Effective resource deployment

How to segment customers?

- Demographic data (Marcus, 1998)
- Behavioural and attitudinal data (Barry and Weinstein 2009)

Traditional →

Modern →

In airport context (Harrison, Popovic and Kraal, 2015; Freathy and O'Connell, 2012)

- Age, gender, travel frequency, travel purpose
- Research gap: a deeper and more intimate understanding of the passengers is required from airports



Explanation of Data Collection Steps

Data Collection

- Focus groups, semi-structured
 - Group (1): 5 Participants, 9 Oct 2019 @ 2130-2230, private conference room at a clubhouse
 - Group (2): 8 Participants, 15 Oct 2019 @ 1900-2015, private conference room at a clubhouse

Access and Rapport

- Each participant signed a consent form before start of session
 - Study's purpose
 - Voluntary; Free to withdraw anytime
 - Data confidential; controlled access; remain anonymous
 - Recordings and field notes would be taken

Sampling

- Non-probability purposive sampling
- Criteria: Passengers who have arrived at and departed from Hong Kong International Airport in the past 12 months. Over 18 years old.
- Recruitment: Acquaintances of the researcher who matched the criteria were recruited

Explanation of Data Analysis

During focus groups

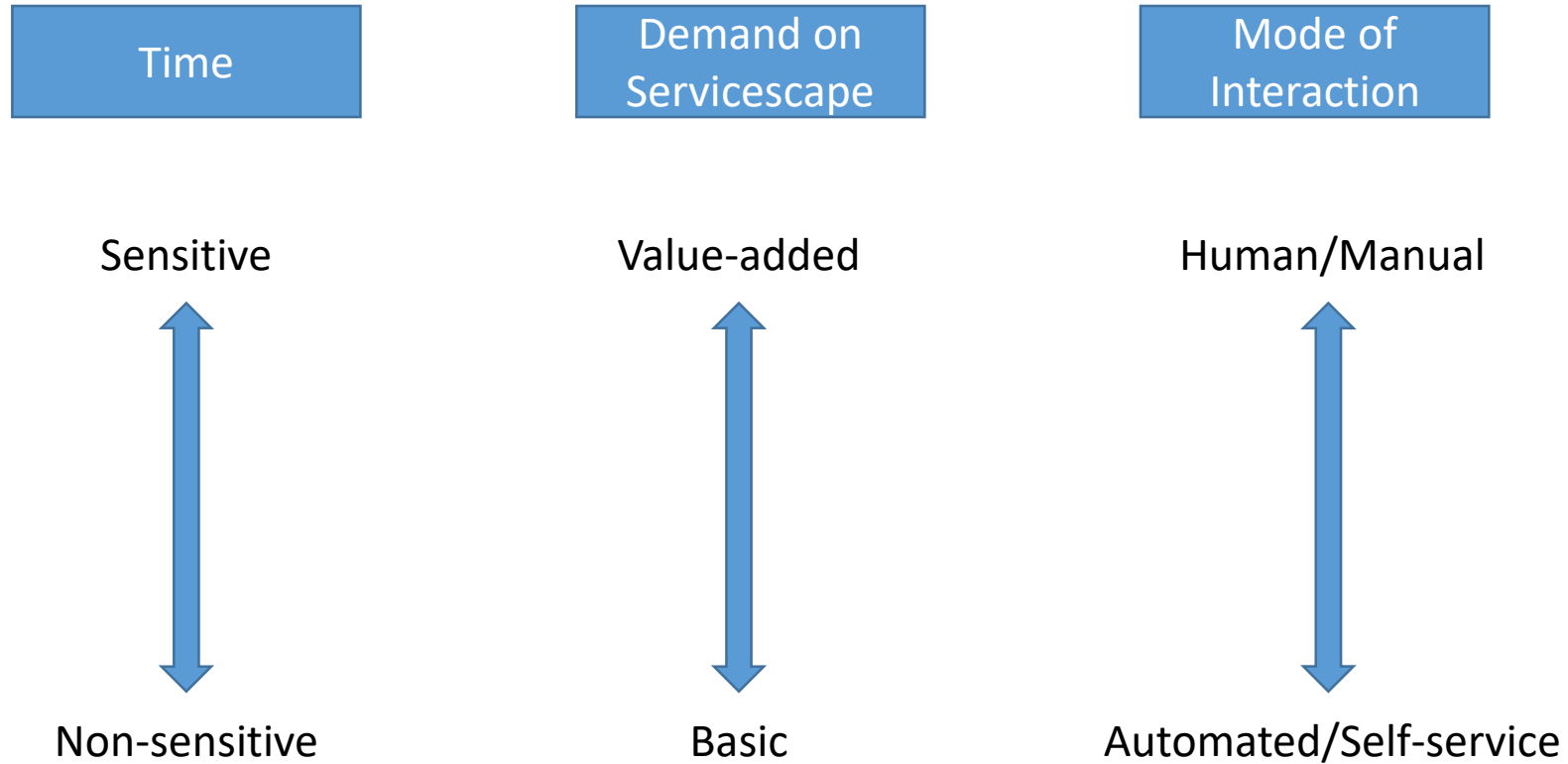
- Use of **recording**
- **Field notes** were taken

Post focus groups

- Recordings were **transcribed** for further analysis
- Transcripts were analysed and **coded** into themes

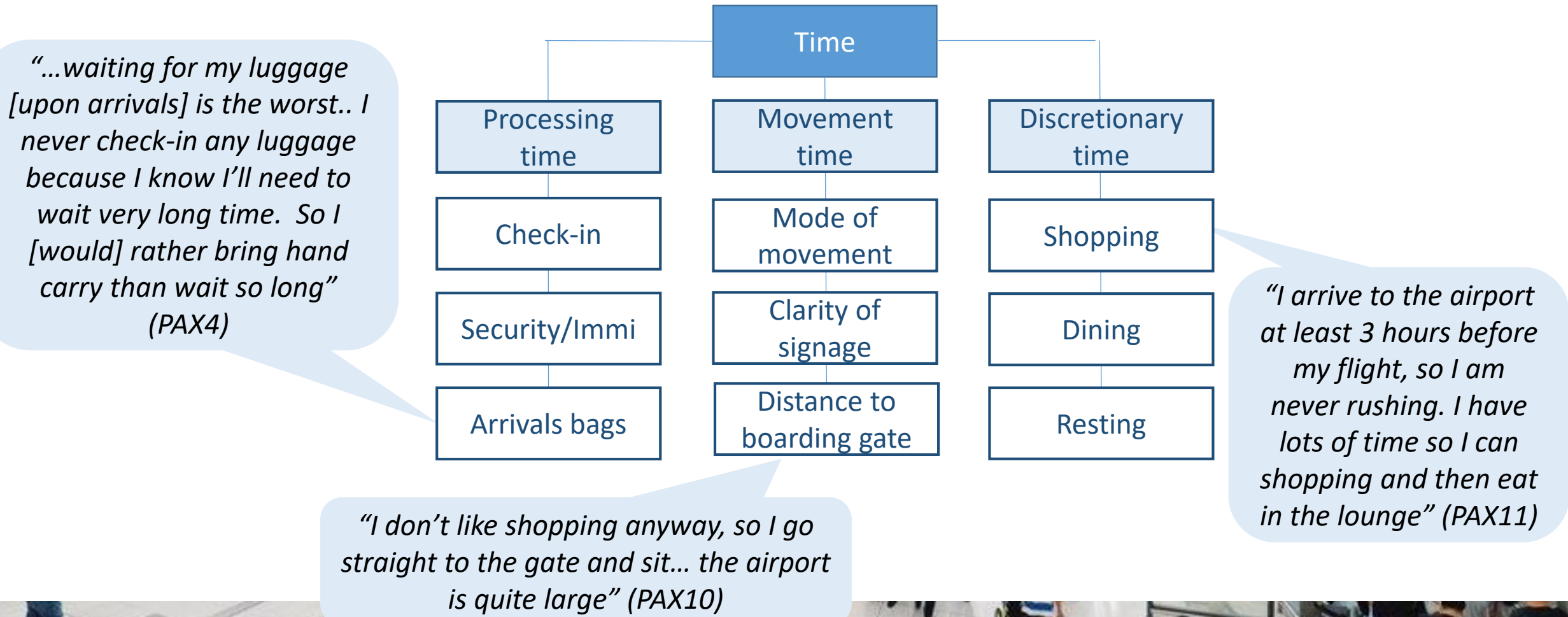
Preliminary Findings

Coding
Major themes



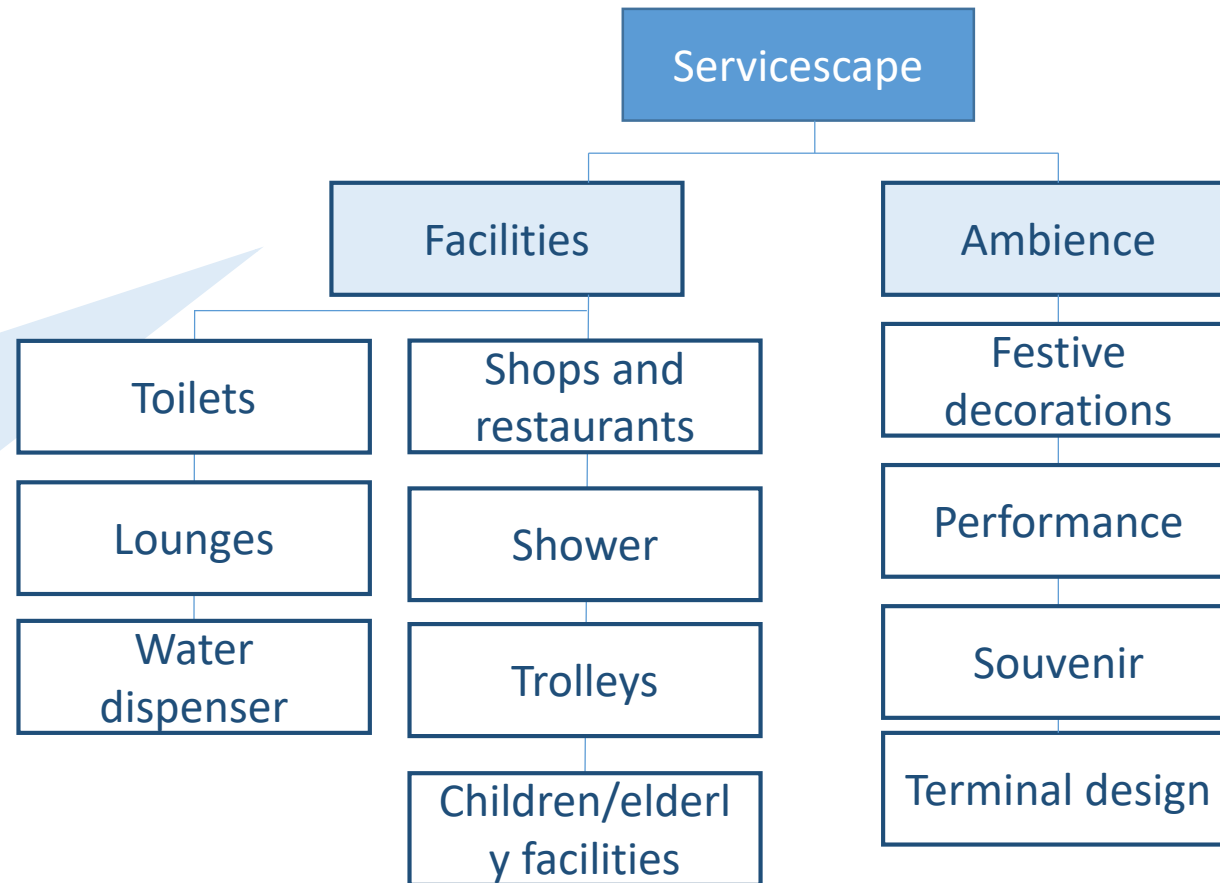
Preliminary Findings

Coding



Preliminary Findings

Coding

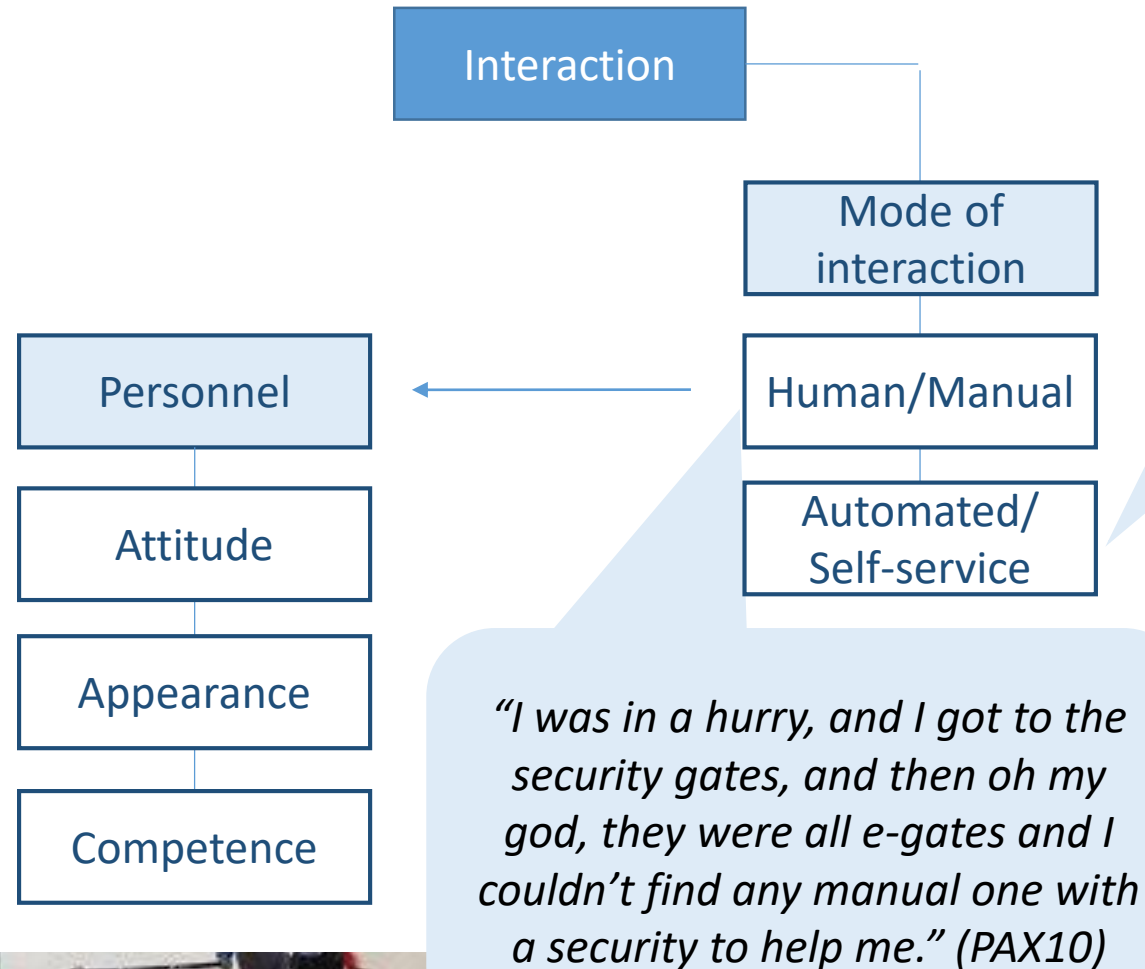


"[I] just [need] the essential ones [facilities], like enough seats, chargers. I don't think there are enough chargers and computers to use."
(PAX9)

"You know in Changi [Airport] there is a waterfall. Hong Kong [Airport] is nice but it doesn't have anything new for many years"
(PAX2)

Preliminary Findings

Coding

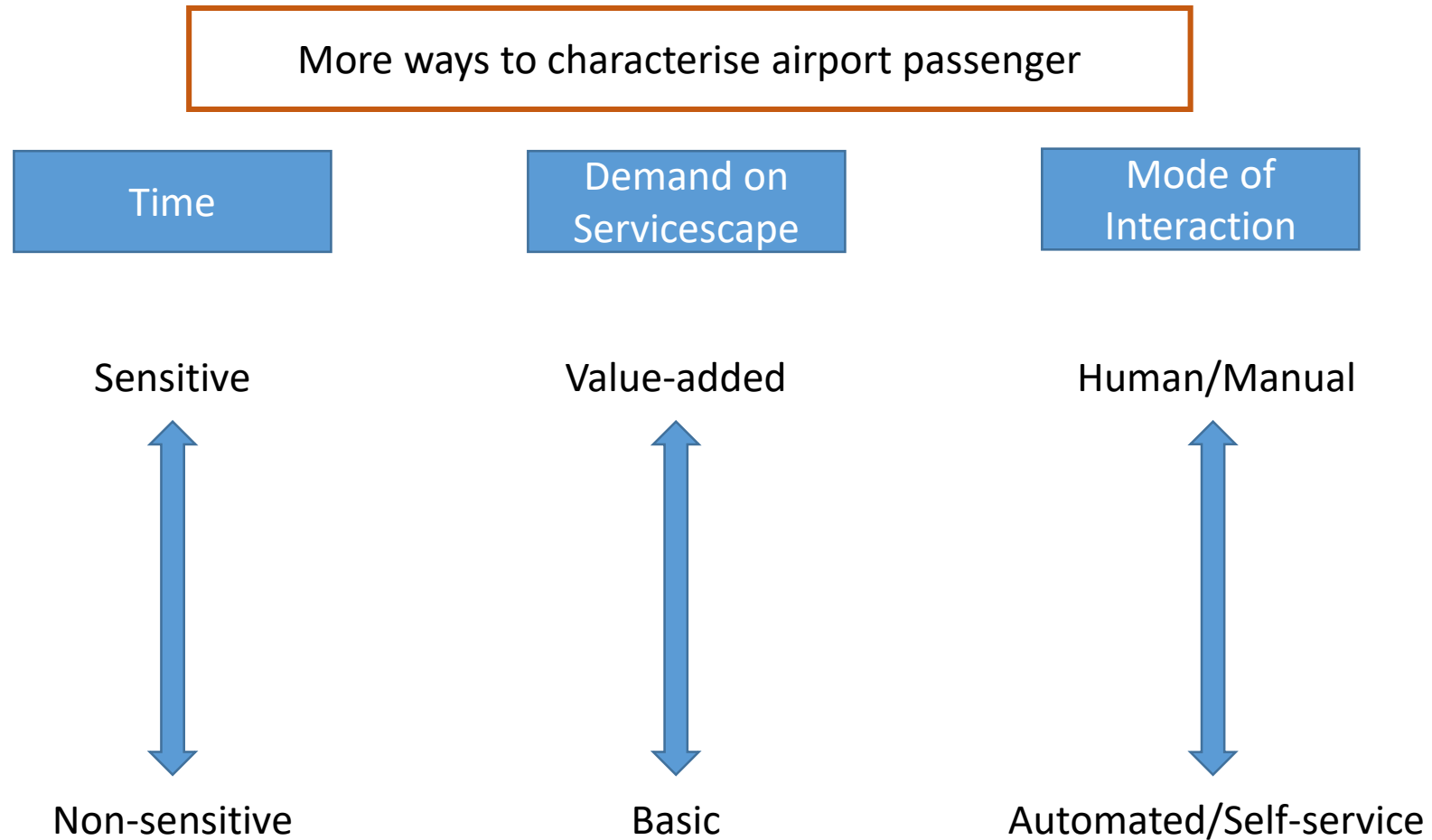


Discussion that emerged from findings

Traditional passenger segmentation

Age group	Travel frequency	Purpose of travel
17 or under	1-3	Leisure
18-29	4-6	Business
30-49	7-9	Study
50-64	10 or above	Visiting family
65 or above		

Discussion that emerged from findings



Discussion that emerged from findings

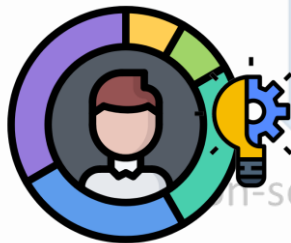
More ways to characterise airport passenger



Sheds light on the different facilities and services required by different passengers → terminal design and facilities enhancement



Highlights the complexity in modern passenger segmentation → e.g. segmentation by “time”



Use of big data and proximity messages to personalise the airport experience



THANK YOU



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