

The Role of Service Quality in Development of Tourism Industry

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the role of service quality in tourists' revisit and the development of tourism industry. It initially reviews the importance of tourism industry and the concept and dimensions of service quality, and then it deals with the impact of service quality in tourism and customer satisfaction. Finally, it presents the theoretical model of the research indicating the dimensions of quality in tourism. The results from the research showed that such dimensions as Quality of accessibility, accommodation, venue and their components contribute directly in satisfaction of tourists, their intend to return and eventually development of tourism industry in a region.

Keywords: service quality, tourism, service quality dimensions, tourists' revisit

Introduction

Tourism has been one of the world's fastest growing industries, and there are large societies entirely dependent upon the visitor for their sustenance¹.

Tourism is the world's largest industry. It sustained 120 million jobs in 1995, accounting for 7% of the global workforce. It is estimated that the number of international travelers in 1994 will double to 1 billion by 2010, and 80% of tourists come from the 20 richest countries (The Hutchinson Encyclopedia).

¹ http://planningcommission.nic.in/plans/stateplan/sdr_hp/sdr_hpch19.pdf

The impact of tourism is extremely varied. On one hand, it plays an important and certainly positive role in the socio-economic and political development in destination countries by, for instance, offering new employment opportunities. Also, in certain instances, it may contribute to a broader cultural understanding by creating awareness, respecting the diversity of cultures and ways of life. On the other hand, as a tool to create jobs, it has not fulfilled its expectations. At the same time, complaints from tourist destinations concerning massive negative impacts upon environment, culture and residents' ways of life have given rise to a demand for a more sustainable development in tourism².

The influence of travel and tourism on a community is significant. Most obviously, tourists bring revenue. However, the ways in which this revenue is attracted and the numbers of people who reap the benefits vary greatly. So does the way the money is spent and the manner in which it is reinvested. At one extreme, large scale, all-inclusive resorts owned and operated by corporations may have little or no economic influence on a community. People from the community may be offered only low-skilled minimum wage jobs. In these extreme cases, tourism becomes a highly sanitized, in-resort experience. In effect, there are tourists and a tourism industry, but virtually no further community involvement.

Communities are developing local tourism in innovative ways, making sure to include various individuals and groups, small business owners, entrepreneurs, local associations and government officials. The community tourism industry is, quite simply, the collection of local businesses and people that create and sell a variety of goods and services to visitors.

The development of this industry is a growing phenomenon as communities respond to the opportunities and in some cases the threats, of tourism³ (Tohidy Ardahaey and Hydarizade, 2010).

Service quality is an abstract concept, and in operationalizing it, Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988) have identified five dimensions of service quality. They are Tangibles (appearance of physical facilities, personnel and materials), Reliability (dependable and accurate performance), Responsiveness (willingness to help customers and the promptness of service), Assurance (knowledge and courtesy of employees) and Empathy (caring and individualized attention to customers). Although existing literature has shown the effects of service quality on revisit intentions, few, if any, have examined the impacts of each service

² <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/ngo4.pdf>

³ <http://www.maesariang.com/lanna/pdf/APTA103.pdf>

quality dimensions on revisit intentions. Examining the impact of each service quality dimension on tourists. Revisit intentions not only allows management of nature-based tourism businesses and organizations to identify their strengths and weaknesses, but also help them focus their limited resources on those service attributes that affect tourists' revisit intentions the most⁴.

The present study is concerned with the impact of service quality in tourists' revisit and the development of tourism industry.

Tourism Industry and its Importance

Tourism industry is the most cultural issue of economy. Economic experts believe that tourism is only a part of the economy, which is greatly tied up with culture, because on one hand it provides desirably the introduction of cultures, civilizations, races, lands, tribes and different dialects with each other and on the other hand it can also be a resource of income for different countries. As tourism economy is the best stimulus for the countries that have a decreasing industry due to possessing a single product or limited sources of income, it is becoming one of the largest economic realities for developing countries (Padash and Esfahani, 2008).

Tourism industry is considered as one of the most important, most diverse and richest global industries in the twenty-first century and by the end of the next decade it would lay at the top of the table of the world's high income industries. Foreign exchange earnings in this industry has a high added value for national economy of any country, that is why many countries consider this growing industry as the main source of income, an opportunity for employment, private sector growth and economic infrastructure strengthening. Especially developing countries and communities in which other forms of economic development such as extraction of natural resources or production of artifacts are not economically efficient and do not have

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<http://fama2.us.es:8080/turismo/turismonet1/economia%20del%20turismo/calidad%20y%20turismo/SERVIC E%20QUALITY%20DIMENSIONS%20AFFECTING%20NATURE%20TOURISTS%20INTENTIONS%20TO%20REVISIT.P DF>

a very important role in world trade, have turned to the tourism industry more than ever (Tohidy Ardahaey and Hydarizade, 2010).

Service Quality

Service quality has been defined as a gap between the customer's expectations of a service and the customer's perceptions of the service received (Parasuraman et al., 1985). The consumer satisfaction literature views these expectations as predictions about what is likely to happen during an impending transaction, whereas the service quality literature views them as desires or wants expressed by the consumer (Kandampully, 2002). To date, "there is no universal, parsimonious, or all-encompassing definition or model of service quality" (Reeves & Bednard, 1994, p. 436). Grönroos (1984) defines service quality as "the outcome of an evaluation process where the consumer compares his expectations with the service he perceived he has received" (p. 37).

Definitions of quality have included: a) satisfying or delighting the customer or exceeding expectations; b) product of service features that satisfy stated or implied needs; c) conformance to clearly specified requirements; and d) fitness for use, whereby the product meets the customers needs and is free of deficiencies (Chelladurai & Chang, 2000)

Service Quality Dimensions

The literature reveals that no generic measure of service quality for all industries has emerged (Bloise & Tankersley, 2004). Thus, service quality is generally believed to be a multi-level construct with multiple dimensions making up each level. However, scholars have varied as to the number of dimensions included in each model.

The service quality construct evolved out of the quality literature in manufacturing. Quality initiatives date back to the 1920's when manufacturers began to focus on controlling the physical production of goods and the internal measurements of the production process (Kandampully, 2002). The Total Quality Movement (TQM) within manufacturing slowly faded and has given way to a new paradigm focused upon the service sector and the customer/provider relationship. More than two thirds of American workers now reside in the service sector (Orwig, Pearson, & Cochran, 1997). Service quality has become a great to outcomes such as customer satisfaction (Anderson, Fornell, & Lehmann, 1994; differentiator between companies and is one of the most powerful weapons which many leading service organizations possess (Kandampully, 1998). Service quality has been linked Grönroos, 1984, 1990, 2001; Ko & Pastore, 2004), customer loyalty (Kandampully, 1998; Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry, 1990), value (Laroche, Ueltschy, Shuzo, & Cleveland, 2004) and repurchase intention (Fornell, 1992).

Service Quality Dimensions

Core Product	Human	Physical	Model/Dimension
Outcome Quality	Process Quality		(Lehtinen & Lehtinen, 1983)
Technical	Functional		(Grönroos, 1984)
	Reliability		(Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988)
	Responsiveness		
	Assurance		
	Empathy		
	Interactive	Physical	(Lehtinen & Lehtinen, 1991)
Service Product	Service	Service	(Rust & Oliver, 1994)
	Reliability	Physical	(Dabohlkar, Thorpe, & Rentz, 1996)
	Personal	Aspects	
Outcome Quality	Interaction	Physical	(Brady & Cronin, 2001)
	Quality	Environment	

Table 1: Service Quality Dimensions

A wide variety of service quality dimensions have been proposed (See Table 1). Most targets of quality evaluation have emphasized: a) the physical context such as facilities; b) the interpersonal interactions between either the client and employee or between two clients; and c) the core service (Chelladurai & Chang, 2000).

Grönroos (1984) offered a two-dimensional model comprised of technical quality and functional quality (pp. 29-38). Lehtinen and Lehtinen (1983) set forth a two-dimensional approach to service quality consisting of process quality and outcome quality. Lehtinen and Lehtinen (1991) also introduced a three dimensional approach comprised of physical quality, interactive quality, and corporate quality (pp. 288-290). Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry's (1988a) SERVQUAL model consisted of five dimensions, which includes tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy (pp. 12-40). Rust and Oliver (1994) introduced a three-dimensional model of service quality encompassing the service product, service delivery and service environment (pp.

11-13). Dabholkar, et al.'s (1996) three-dimensional model included physical aspects, reliability and personal interactions (pp. 3-16). Brady and Cronin's (2001) three-dimensional model of service quality consisted of interaction quality, physical environment quality and outcome quality (pp. 34-39).

Service Quality in Tourism

According to Baker and Crompton (2000), the literature related to quality in the tourism and recreation field dates back to the early 1960's (p. 785). The tourism literature has revealed various attempts to make sense of how tourists evaluate the quality of services they receive while on vacation (Atilgan, Akinci, & Aksoy, 2003; Baker & Crompton, 2000; Chadee & Mattsson, 1996; Frochot, 2004; Hudson, Hudson, & Miller, 2004; Vogt & Fesenmaier, 1995; Weirmair & Fuchs, 1999), travel agency quality (Ryan & Cliff, 1997), hotel quality (Suh, Lee, Park, & Shin, 1997) and so forth. However, as Frochot (2004) points out, "the nature of tourism services, based as much on the sale of utilitarian services as on the provision of

service through which consumers can achieve deep-rooted needs, renders its evaluation reasonably complex” (p. 224).

Managers in tourism strive to improve the quality of their services and the level of customer satisfaction in the belief that this effort will create loyal visitors. Loyal visitors will return to the destination and recommend it to others (Tian-Cole & Crompton, 2003).

Sparks and Westgate (2002) suggest that service failure can have devastating effects on an organization because customers frequently switch to a different provider when they experience a service failure. However, among customers who experience service problems, those who receive satisfactory resolution are more likely to remain loyal to the service provider (p. 214).

Pawitra and Tan (2003) use SERVQUAL in order to analyze the image of Singapore from the perspective of tourists from Indonesia. The authors note that the use of SERVQUAL in measuring a destination image requires that it be modified in order to ensure that the data reflect the unique attributes provided by the destination. Tourist satisfaction can be obtained by assessing the gap between predicted and perceived service. The destination image can be determined by analyzing tourist perceptions (p. 399-411).

Atilgan et al. (2003) suggest that cultural characteristics have an effect on perceptions of service quality in tourism. They found that different cultural groups can have different levels of expectations and perceptions in terms of service-quality dimensions (p 420). Therefore, many of the items on the SERVQUAL instrument can be salient to different customers for different reasons. Brown and Bond III (1995) attribute the importance of these items as to whether or not the customer is conscious of aspects such as time, quality of work, finances, and so forth (p. 30).

Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction

A second debate within the literature pertains to the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction. Satisfied customers tend to be loyal to the company and more likely to return (Greenwell et al., 2002a). Understanding satisfaction is important in the sense that dissatisfied customers rarely complain, but rather simply

purchase from another service provider (Milbourn, 1998). Satisfaction is most commonly described in terms of the disconfirmation approach, which describes it as the variation between a customer's pre-purchase expectations and post-purchase perceptions of the actual service performed (O'Neill, 2001). The general thought is that satisfaction mediates the relationship between perceived service quality and firm performance (Babikas et al., 2004; Fornell, 1992; Gotlieb et al., 1994). However, some research suggests that satisfaction is an antecedent to service quality (Bitner, 1990; Bolton & Drew, 1991).

Considerable confusion continues to exist regarding the relationship between customer satisfaction and service quality (Burns et al., 2003). Caruana (2000) claims that service quality and satisfaction have often been used interchangeably. Distinctions between customer satisfaction and service quality include: a) satisfaction is a post-experience decision customer experience while quality is not; b) in the satisfaction literature "expectations reflect anticipated performance" made by customers about levels of performance during a transaction. In the service quality literature, expectations are conceptualized as a normative stand of future wants.

According to Spreng and Mackoy (1996), there is no clear definition of satisfaction, although most definitions would involve "an evaluative, affective or emotional response." The distinction between perceived service quality and satisfaction is important because managers need to know whether their objective is to provide the maximum level of perceived service quality or to have satisfied customers. The standard of comparison in forming satisfaction is predictive expectations, or what the consumer believes will happen. Perceived service quality is the result of a comparison of performance and what the consumer feels a firm should provide (pp. 201-214).

Burns et al. (2003) describe negative disconfirmation as an occurring when performance is less than expectations. Positive disconfirmation is evident when performance is greater than expectations (pp. 363-380). Customer satisfaction results in the disconfirmation of prior expectation, that is if the service provider meets or exceeds expectations then the customer is more likely to be satisfied (Rust et al., 1995).

Millán & Esteban (2004) claim that satisfaction is perceived as the final result of all activities carried out during the process of purchase and consumption. All reviewed definitions imply:

a) the existence of an objective that the consumer wishes to reach; 2) the attainment (satisfaction) of this objective can only be judged by taking a standard of comparison as a reference; and c) the evaluation process of satisfaction implies the intervention of at least two stimuli; a result and a reference or standard of comparison. Satisfaction is related to size and direction of “non-confirmatory: experience defined by the difference between initial expectations of the individual and the actual result derived.” Expectations are the needs or desires of the consumer, based on what the consumer feels should be delivered before receiving it. Perceptions are the beliefs of the consumer relative to the service received. The consumer’s opinion of satisfaction or dissatisfaction depends on how the consumer perceives the actual result obtained relative to what was expected (pp. 533-546).

Much of the attention given to service quality is motivated by the premise that it will increase customer satisfaction and ultimately lead to better financial performance (Babikas et al., 2004). The quality of products and services has also been linked to external indicators of customer satisfaction such as complaints, warranty, litigation and market share (Ahire & Dreyfus, 2000). Satisfied customers often lead to loyal customers who continuously repurchase the product or service. Depending upon the industry, Fornell (1992) contends that not all companies are equally affected by customer satisfaction. However, all organizations are dependent upon repeat purchases that lead to higher profitability (p. 7). Empirical evidence suggests that customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between service quality and firm performance (Babikas et al., 2004; Fornell, 1992; Gotlieb, Grewal, & Brown, 1994).

“Incidents of satisfaction over time result in perceptions of service quality” (Parasuraman et al., 1988, p. 16). Some research suggests that satisfaction is an antecedent to service quality (Bitner, 1990; Bolton & Drew, 1991). Tian-Cole and Crompton (2003) suggest that service quality is related but not equivalent to satisfaction because perceived service quality is a global judgment or attitude relating to the superiority of service. In contrast, satisfaction is related to a specific transaction (p. 71).

Milbourn (1998) suggests that the economic success of companies fluctuates with the quality of service that is offered. They report that dissatisfied customers rarely complain. Instead, most dissatisfied customers simply purchase from another store. Across industries, service

organizations who deliver high quality service consistently receive repeat customers. More importantly, these repeat customers account for increased profits (pp. 15-19). Depending upon the complexity of the service, Oliver (1993) claims that a customer can experience both negative and positive affective reactions (p. 420).

Uelschy, Laroche, Tamlia and Yannopoulos (2004) claim that measures of service quality and satisfaction can be nonequivalent across cultures. In other words, a measure that works well in the United States may not perform properly overseas. Across cultures, the translation, interpretation and meaning of particular terms can introduce response bias. Thus, due to cultural differences, one cannot assume that a citizen of one country will perceive quality in the same way as one from a different country. Because beliefs are a part of culture, two individuals can experience identical consumption and register differing levels of satisfaction based on differing schematic reference points they bring to a situation (pp. 901-912).

Thus, no consensus has been formed concerning the relationship between these two constructs.

Factors Affecting Service Quality in Tourism

1. Destination

The geographical location where the event takes place should be highly accessible. Some destinations are more accessible than others because a wide variety of airlines provide transportation services into the regional area (Yeoman, Robertson, Ali-Knight, Drummond, & McMahon-Beattie, 2004). It should be easy for the visitor to reach the destination, whether traveling by plane, train, bus or automobile and appropriate signage should be displayed at various transportation nodes to provide direction to points of interest.

2. Hotel

The location of the hotel can be a tremendous source of satisfaction or dissatisfaction for the tourist. Proximity from the hotel to the sporting venue is an important factor for many travelers (Bernthal & Sawyer, 2004). Hotels that are not within walking

distance of the sporting venue often provide public transportation shuttles. When the hotel provides shuttle services it is important to have a sufficient amount of signage directing customers to the bus pick-up and drop-off locations. The guest may also evaluate the ease of access to their room, restaurants, parking, taxi-cabs and transportation stations such as bus stops, airports, train stations and so forth. Transportation should be readily available from the hotel to move spectators to the various attractions around the city.

3. Accommodation Quality

Within urban areas, accommodation usually refers to hotels, although it can refer to a wide variety of other accommodations such as motels, cabins, lodges, resorts and so forth (Murphy, 1997). Tourists may judge accommodation based upon several considerations, including the evaluation of interactions, hotel environment and the value associated with staying at the place of accommodation.

4. Interactions

One way to evaluate customer satisfaction concerning the accommodation is on the basis of interactions that take place during the stay. This concept is similar to Grönroos' (1984) reference to functional quality and Brady and Cronin's (2001) interaction quality. Interactions can take place in relation to the accommodation provider's personnel and/or other guests staying at the place of accommodation. Service personnel may include employees at the front desk, housekeeping, bell services, concierge services and restaurant employees. Hotel personnel can directly influence the quality of the visitor's experience. For example, a hotel bell captain may misplace a tourist's equipment vital to the contest or the reservation department may overbook the hotel and leave a visitor with nowhere to stay. In the same way, other guests can be a source of dissatisfaction when a crying baby or a loud television from a neighboring room prevents a guest from sleeping (David J. Shonk, M.S., 2006).

5. Environment

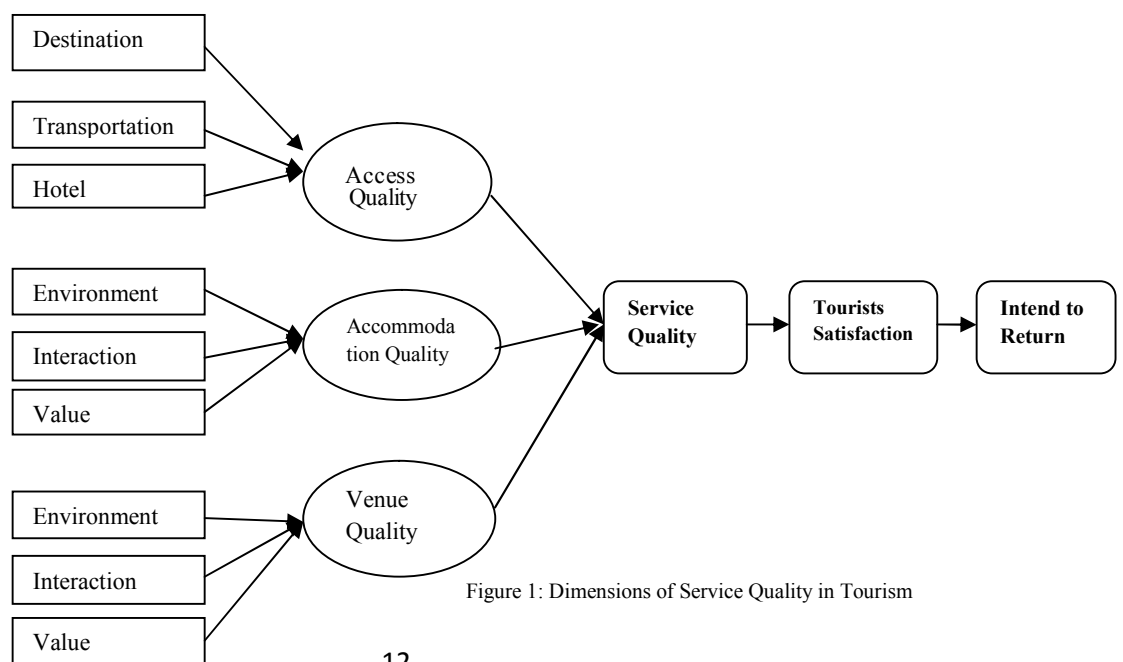
Environment of the hotel pertains to the servicescape (Bitner, 1992) of the facility. The service quality literature suggests that physical evidence such as

noise level, odors, temperature, colors, textures and comfort of furnishings may influence perceived performance in the service encounter. Such variations in physical environment can affect perceptions of an experience independently of the actual outcome (Bitner, 1990). Brady and Cronin (2001) suggest that ambient conditions, facility design and social conditions directly influence the physical environment (pp. 39-40). Cooper, Fletcher, Gilber and Wanhill (1993) claim that the accommodation market competes for customers based on physical facilities (p. 172). Facilities may include such items as the room, lobby, hotel restaurant, pool, and fitness center.

6. Value

Delivering high quality service within the hospitality industry positively influences a customer's perception of value. The process of the purchase judgment originates from the trade-off between benefits and sacrifices (Al-Sabbahy, Ekinici, & Riley, 2004). Guests judging the value of the accommodation to be worth the cost paid are more likely to stay past the end of the sporting event and will tend to be more satisfied with the event itself. In the case of many events, Silvers (2004) claims that specific hotels may be identified, rooms are blocked or reserved, and housing is assigned without much input from the attendees (p. 123).

Research Model



Research Methodology

In this study two methods of documents (library) and dynamical models have been used. The research is applied in respect of purpose, and in terms of implementation it is a mathematical and quantitative modeling. Methods of dynamic and simulation modeling have been used to study the situation. To develop a conceptual framework for the research, the previous studies and theories of cultural and natural systems are reviewed and after assessment and researches related to the subject, the dimensions, indices and variables of the research are developed by offering a model. In regards with the analysis method, it should be noted that problems have been identified in the first stage and then the variables, parameters and constants were identified using a group qualitative or quantitative decision making (e.g. dematel) and the main chart Stock & Flow was designed. After amounting and simulating the model, the behaviors of variables were studied and the reality check was done. Finally, based on Sensitivity Analysis, different scenarios and behaviors of variables were analyzed. Currently, the research is at the stage of amounting and simulation.

Research Hypotheses

H₁: There is a significant relationship between quality of accessibility to the places and things one wants to see and do and the tourism quality.

H₂: There is a significant relationship between quality of the visitor's accommodation during the stay and the tourism quality.

H₃: There is a significant relationship between quality of venue and the tourism quality.

Research Findings

According to the theoretical model of the research illustrated in figure 1, all the dimensions and components of service quality affect directly and positively the tourists' satisfaction and intend to re-visit which in essence would lead in the development of tourism industry.

Thus, the results from testing the hypotheses in this research showed that:

- Quality of accessibility to the places and things one wants to see and do contributes directly and positively to the tourism quality.
- Quality of the visitor's accommodation during the stay contributes directly and positively to the tourism quality.
- Quality of venue contributes directly and positively to the tourism quality.

Conclusion

An important outcome for a sport tourism provider is a satisfied customer who intends to return to the destination. Tourist satisfaction is the result of the interaction between a tourist's experience in the destination area and his or her previous expectations about the destination. Satisfying the tourist is critical because it has an effect on the expectations and intentions for the customer's next destination purchasing decision (Fuchs & Weiermair, 2004).

The main purpose of this research was to study the role of service quality in tourists' revisit and the development of tourism industry. The results from the study showed that such dimensions as Quality of accessibility, accommodation, venue and their components have significant, direct and positive relationship with satisfaction of tourists, their intend to return and eventually development of tourism industry in a region.

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