

THE ROLE OF SERVICE QUALITY AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN TOURISM INDUSTRY: A REVIEW OF SERVQUAL MODEL

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ABSTRACT

Service quality has been an imperative issue of research involving in tourism industry. In spite of an extensive number of studies on service quality, the role of service quality and customer satisfaction in tourism industry and their relationship have remained unanswered. The main focus of this paper is to review the existing literature on service quality and customer satisfaction in tourism industry. This paper also discusses famous SERVQUAL model, and explains other various service quality and customer satisfaction models in tourism industry. The model focuses on the relationship between functional quality, technical quality, and image. This conceptual paper proposes application of the dimensional model in the tourism department and encourages service providers to improve its management to satisfy their guests.

Keywords: Customer satisfaction, Service quality, SERVQUAL, Technical quality.

INTRODUCTION

Service quality has been an imperative topic of study linking Tourism & Management departments. Although a considerable amount of research on quality of services, the motive behind revisit of tourist towards a destination along with what is the requirement of superior quality service from the tourism department has to be answered. This paper tries to evaluate accessible literature on service quality management in the tourism department. According to **Parasuraman et al. (1985, 1988)**, the research proposed the scope of service quality is in the midst of the vital aspects influencing tourist satisfaction. **Al Rousan (2011)**, **Mohsin et al. (2011)**, and **Parasuraman et al. (1985)** revealed that this measurement was the focal point on numerous studies where tour operators established the maintenance for the execution of better service quality. **Antony et al. (2004)** and **Harvey (1998)** studied that service quality mainly covers meeting and surpassing of the expectation of customers. Since the late 1970s this picture of service quality is becoming popular. This study of service quality initiated since the marketing area begins and laid its importance in the link among customer and its business.

Parasuraman et al. (1985) evaluated the service quality that stressed on disconfirmation model that anticipated service quality is a meaning of the discrepancy among performance and expectations. Presently the ideas of SERVQUAL are on consumer satisfaction are inadequate. Not just association needs experimental information to comprehend the level of clients' fulfillment yet in addition they have to see how to incorporate these service quality ideas into dealing with the tourist satisfaction. Now days, service industry create a progressively more significant function in the market of various countries. According to **Parasuraman et al. (1985)**, **Reichheld & Sasser (1990)**, and **Zeithaml et al. (1990)**, the present worldwide focused condition conveying quality services is measured as a basic procedure for progress and survival. Many scholars have different view about the definition and information method of service quality. Scientists and administrator intended for insightful learning regarding segments of service quality for clear reason of consumer satisfaction, expanded productivity, and so forth. According to **Leonard & Sasser (1982)**, **Cronin & Taylor (1992)**, **Gammie (1992)**, **Hallowell (1996)**, **Chang & Chen (1998)**, **Gummeson (1998)**, **Lassar et al. (2000)**, **Silvestro & Cross (2000)**, **Newman (2001)**, **Sureshchandar et al. (2002)**, and **Gurău (2003)**, over the last few years service quality has emerge as a main field of awareness to specialists, researchers and managers unsettled to its sturdy force on industry performance, tourist satisfaction, lower costs loyalty of customers and productivity.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present paper is based on majorly secondary data derived from various literature sources which includes various research papers, news articles, and websites. The statement and findings of the paper

carries the effect of personal visit to the destination and discussion with tourist, service providers, officials and other stakeholders.

LITERATURE REVIEW

SERVICE CONCEPT

According to **Johns (1999)**, the term 'service' has various implications which turn out to a little perplexity as described in the management study the service can be defined as a trade, an output, a performance or a development. **Kotler & Keller (2012)**, stated that service is an elusive act that acts as a crucial medium for a company offer to attain the customers, where it does not shift the tenure from the service providing party to the customer.

QUALITY CONCEPT

Gitlow et al. (1989) stated that "Quality is the extent to which the customers or users believe the product or service surpasses their needs and expectations". According to **Feigenbaum (1986)**, "Quality is the total composite product and service characteristics of marketing, engineering, manufacture and maintenance through which the product in use will meet the expectations of the customer." Quality has been defined in several ways by diverse authors. **Solomon (2009)** defines it as one of the things that the buyer looks for when they pursue an offer.

SERVICE QUALITY CONCEPT

There are different views and still no agreement on a clear definition of service quality used for quality. **Parasuraman et al. (1985)** defined "Service quality as perceived by the customer is the degree and direction of discrepancy between customer service perceptions and expectations". According to **Zeithaml (1988)**, service Quality' is defined by as the brilliance or excellence of a service, and yet goes on to depict 'perceived service quality' as the assessment of the largely value of an entity by a purchaser. **Eshghi et al. (2008)**, defined service quality as the overall measurement of a service by the customer. **Ghylin et al. (2008)** stated that in service quality companies will be competent to deliver services with superior quality level which results in higher customer satisfaction. According to **Asubonteng et al. (1996)**, SERVQUAL is planned to assess service quality as perceived by the consumer and expectations of customers are calculated in evaluating the overall service quality. **Cronin & Taylor (1992)** eliminated the "expectation" element from SERVQUAL model and made the scale called SERVPERF which exclusively evaluated the "performance" to estimate service quality. According to **Minh et al. (2015)**, SERVPERF was considered more advance because it has almost 50 percent less items than SERVQUAL scale. According to **Parasuraman et al. (1985, 1988)**, it measured Service Quality based on how customers perceive the service, wherein when the performance exceeds customer expectation, the service quality is rated high and if the performance falls below expectation, the quality is classified as low. According to **Grönroos (1984)**, **Parasuraman et al. (1985, 1988)**, **Cronin & Taylor (1992)**, **Dabholkar et al. (1996)**, **Brady & Cronin (2001)**, there are many service quality models that are used in measuring service quality. The initial effort towards creating such a model was made by **Grönroos in 1984** which was based on functional and technical dimensions. The earliest recorded model of service quality measurement was developed by **Gronroos (1984)**, where service quality is explained in terms of features connected with technical or outcome aspects and process or functional related aspects (**Kang & James, 2004; Balasingh, et al., 2006; Laroche et al., 2004**). There is a new variant known as HOLSERV which is derived from the SERVQUAL scale with some omissions and additions of items to the original SERVQUAL scale. It is measured more trustworthy tool than SERVQUAL to measure service quality in hotel industry.

There are numerous researches which have recognized SERVQUAL model; however the foremost to conclude that the way of advertising service is important aspect in tourist satisfaction is **Parasuraman et al. (1985)**. As per **Ladhari (2009)**, service quality mainly in the tourism sector, is complex to recognize evaluate by quality of product as earlier is elusive. A number of research addressed regarding the SERVQUAL model is not common as level in tourism service quality actually relies upon the analyzed of service. In SERVQUAL model there is the gap between perceptions and expectations that builds the formation that is the **Parasuraman et al. (1988)** service quality measuring tool. This tool is related on the thought of the disconfirmation model and evaluation of tourist potential through their understanding from the service. By and large, there are five dimensions of the tool which are explained from 22 attributes and their importance is analyzed by Likert Scale. **Teas (1993)** enquired and analysis the expectations operationalization. **Avkiran (1999)** clarified a propensity and making a gap between perceptions and expectations unavoidable after placing expectations superior than perception. The SERVQUAL model is

broadly utilize tool with established usefulness that can be used reasonably for standard use (**Brysland & Curry, 2001**).

The Definitions of the SERVQUAL Dimensions include:

1. Tangibility- Physical elements that can be observed. The notion of physical appearance, employees, tools, and communication items.
2. Reliability- The ability to convey the services which are promised accurately and dependably. This aspect includes the promises which should be fulfilled relating to pricing, delivery and complaint handling.
3. Responsiveness- The enthusiasm to help consumers in a quick style. This aspect advocates optimistic service outlooks and also required employees to pay attention to the request of customers query and their complaints.
4. Assurance- The awareness and courtesy of staff and their capacity of exercising trust and confidence.
5. Empathy- The attitude of caring and special attention given by service providers to its consumers.

SERVQUAL IN TOURISM INDUSTRY

According to **Zhao & Di Benedetto (2013)**, some tourism scholars have recommended that the service quality role is very important when investigating the problem of tourist dissatisfaction and when trying to attract new tourists or secure revisit intentions. Tourism scholars have recognized that providing premium service is one of the most imperative aspects for success (**Atilgan, Akinci, & Aksoy, 2003**). **Hudson et al. (2004)** revealed that service quality in the tourism industry receives growing deliberation and most of the studies in tourism use the SERVQUAL instrument to evaluate service quality. This model has been utilized to measure service quality in different sectors of tourism industry such as, sport tourism (**Kouthouris & Alexandris, 2005**), airline tourism (**Pakdil & Aydin, 2007**), and restaurant (**Qin & Prybutok, 2008**). However, according to **Akbaba (2006)**; **Briggs et al. (2007)**, **Gilbert & Wong (2003)**, earlier studies have shown that SERVQUAL does not cover all aspects of the services in tourism that are imperative to tourists. **Fick & Ritchie (1991)** measured the SERVQUAL instrument in four tourism service sectors, hotel, airline, skiing and restaurant and found that the scale is not valid for all sectors in tourism. **Juwaheer (2004)** customized SERVQUAL for hotel industry and recognized nine factors in hotel that is assurance, reliability, staff communication skills, extra-room benefits sought and additional benefits, décor and room attractiveness, staff outlook, empathy and accuracy, and hotel surroundings including environmental factors and food and service-related factors.

SERVICE QUALITY DETERMINANTS

In the tourism industry, many service quality models have been developed. **Lehtinen & Lehtinen (1982)** advocated three paradigms for service quality: (1) corporate quality, (2) physical quality, and (3) interactive quality. Also, **LeBlanc (1992)** point out six factors of consumer judgment of service quality, which are competitiveness, corporate image, courtesy, responsiveness, accessibility and competence. **Grönroos (2000)** combined various earlier studies and suggests a model of service quality which is based on seven principles: skill and professionalism, behavior and attitude, flexibility and accessibility, trustworthiness and reliability, service recovery, atmosphere, credibility and reputation. This model planned to suggest a theoretical structure to understand some features of a service including its process, outcome, and image aspects. It also paid interest to employee's quality in providing services.

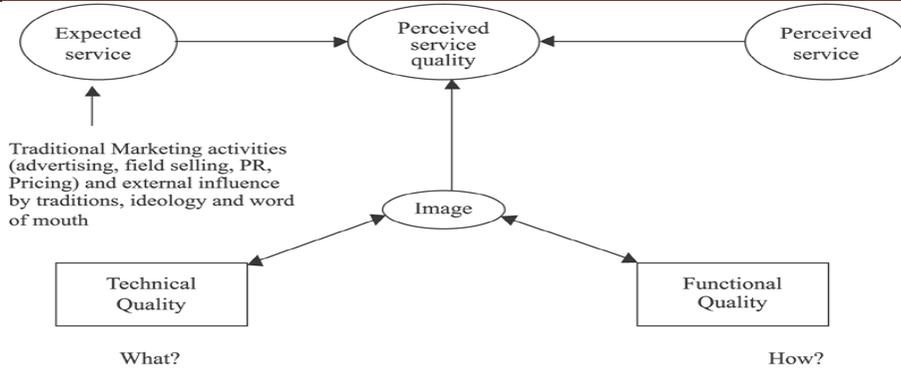
TECHNICAL AND FUNCTIONAL QUALITY MODEL

An organization if want to compete effectively should have an understanding of customer perception of the quality and the way service quality is influenced. To manage perceived service quality and to achieve customer satisfaction a firm has to match the expected and perceived service to each other. The examiner recognized three mechanisms of service quality, which are technical quality; functional quality; and image (Figure 1).

(1) Technical quality is the quality of what customer truly gets as a result of their contact with the service organization and is imperative to their assessment of the quality of service.

(2) Functional quality is how customers get the outcome from technical aspects. This is important to their analysis of service which they received.

(3) Image is one of the important component in service organization and it could be projected to build up generally by functional and technical quality of service which include other factors also like ideology, word of mouth, tradition, public relations and pricing.



Source: Grönroos (1984)

Figure 1: Three components of service quality

GAP MODEL:

Parasuraman et al. (1985) proposed that service quality is a function of the differences between expectation and performance along the quality dimensions. They developed a service quality model based on gap analysis. The various gaps visualized in the model are:

Gap 1: Difference between consumers' expectation and management's perceptions of those expectations, i.e. not knowing what consumers expect.

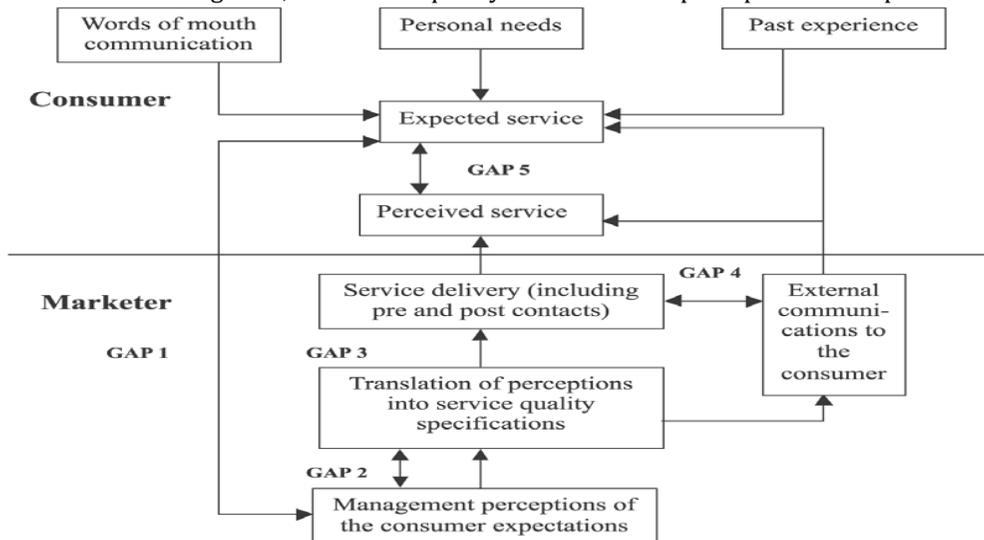
Gap 2: Difference between management's perceptions of consumer's expectations and service quality specifications, i.e. improper service-quality standards.

Gap 3: Difference between service quality specifications and service actually delivered i.e. the service performance gap.

Gap 4: Difference between service delivery and the communications to consumers about service delivery, i.e. whether promises match delivery.

Gap 5: Difference between consumer's expectation and perceived service. This gap depends on size and direction of the four gaps associated with the delivery of service quality on the marketer's side.

According to this model in Figure 2, the service quality is a function of perception and expectations.



Source: Parasuraman et al. (1985)

Figure 2

Criticism of Service quality Model through GAP Model and SERVQUAL

- Cronin & Taylor (1992) planned SERVPERF (a tool of service quality for measuring perceptions only) and EP (Evaluated Performance) model respectively which was yet again disapprove by Parasuraman et al. (1985) and countered further by Cronin & Taylor (1992).
- Cronin & Taylor (1992) revealed out that service quality is an antecedent of customer satisfaction, that has a directly effect on purchase intentions and it leads to the development of model of perceived service quality and satisfaction.

- Cronin & Taylor (1992) pointed out that consumers don't always buy best quality service, they might instead purchase on the basis of their assessment of value of service. This highlighted the importance of "value" and thus acts as a motivating point for researchers to include model value for improvement/understanding of service quality.

CONCEPT OF SATISFACTION

At present, the most commonly used definition of satisfaction states that satisfaction is "the customer's fulfillment response. It is an opinion that a service or product feature, or the service or product itself, offered a satisfying level of consumption-related fulfillment, including levels of under-or-over fulfillment" (Oliver, 1997). The significant point to notice is that the appraisal of a customer's satisfaction usually rose when processing activity is in end stage, which permits for both speedy decisions of products and services that are quickly consumed and also satisfaction's judgment emerged from products and services with lengthy spending periods.

ZONES OF TOLERANCE

The important element of satisfaction to think about is customers' *zones of tolerance*. This assumption advocates the several expectations about service that customers have in their mind. The foremost of these expectations, services which are desired are basically the level of service which consumers are expecting to receive. It is a blend of what the buyer supposes can be and should be offered in the perspective of service quality and customer service. The next expectation is indicated as an acceptable service that a buyer will accept (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2000). The space between the two points desired service and acceptable service can be considered as the zone of tolerance. The customers will be discouraged, if the services fall below the acceptable service points and their satisfaction with the organization challenged and the customers will be delighted and surprised also if the service performance surpasses the desired service point (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2000).

THE DISCONFIRMATION MODEL

The Disconfirmation Model has three outcome states on a variable scale. According to Johnston (1995), the three states are "dissatisfaction", resulting from poor perceived quality (negative disconfirmation), "delight" from high quality (positive disconfirmation) and "satisfaction" from adequate quality (confirmation). When expectations exceed the actual outcome of an interaction, negative disconfirmation occurs and the customer is often left dissatisfied. The events that created this disconfirmation are considered to be service failures (Johnston, 1995). It is the responsibility of the service organization to resolve these situations.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SATISFACTION IN TOURISM

Many scholars revealed the problem of satisfaction, behavioral intention and service quality among visitors. They suggest in their finding that service quality is an imperative antecedent of customer satisfaction and that satisfaction plays an intervening role between service quality and behavioral intention. They offered evidence to propose that repeat customers exhibit higher satisfaction levels as compared to first time visitors. Some of the different methods to measure service quality and satisfaction are comment cards, mystery shop programmers and focus groups measured on both qualitative and quantitative data. The data can be quantified into metrics and can prove extremely helpful for tourism industry. One of the important concepts is the Disconfirmation Paradigm which provides understanding of how the customer defines quality of products and services and facilitates the development of the tourist satisfaction questionnaire (Pizam & Ellis, 1999).

CONCLUSION

There is not any accepted conceptual and operational definition of service quality and from the review it is found that there is a criticism from various scholars on the criteria of measuring service quality. Though the study of SERVQUAL model and definitions of service quality support the view of evaluating service quality by comparing expectation with the perception of service quality experienced. This conceptual paper highlighted some important models of service quality in a detailed way and outlined the crucial steps of service quality and its relationship with tourist's satisfaction. Some of the researchers suggested that while frontline, middle and top management should provide a framework by analyzing the practices of service quality that will increase their capability to satisfy the final customers. To manage perceived service quality it is necessary to match the expected service and the perceived service to each other so that tourist satisfaction can be achieved. Alternatively, there are models like SERVPERF which is based only on

perceptions of performance. SERVQUAL and SERVPERF share the same concept of perceived quality; though, some scholars revealed that the main difference between these two models lies in the management assumed for their estimation and in the utilization of expectation that should be use.

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