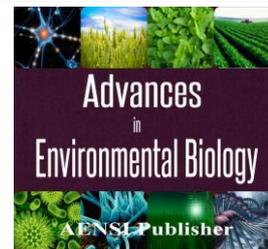




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### Quality of Service Provided in Isfahan Hotels from the Perspective of Foreign Tourists using the SERVQUAL Model

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#### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** The aim of this study was to investigate service quality as an important field in service marketing. In this study, the service quality in hotels of Isfahan city as one of the most attractive tourist destination in Iran – has been examined from the perspective of foreign tourists. The aim of selecting foreign tourists as respondents was to evaluate the possible role of cultural differences in the service quality perceptions. **Method:** Considering the descriptive nature of this study, a survey method was used for data collection. Accordingly, using a questionnaire as the survey tool, the respondents were simply selected randomly. Finally, as sample size, 36 foreign tourists from different countries participated in the study. **Findings:** The result of the analysis showed that perceptions and expectations of respondents were equal in all quality dimensions (i.e. tangibles, assurance, commitment, empathy, responsiveness, equipment, food, and security). Furthermore, there was a significant difference between participants' perceptions in terms of gender. On the other hand, there was not any significant difference in terms of their age, marital status, education level, income level, occupation, and the country of origin. Collectively, it can be concluded that in the context of this study, cultural differences had no role in the perception of tourists regarding service quality in Isfahan hotels.

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### INTRODUCTION

Despite the intense competitive environment, other organizations not only need to have a competitive strategy, tourist destinations but also its competitive strategies to develop effectively than competitors. Developing a competitive strategy requires an understanding of the determinants of competitiveness in tourism destinations; identify the most appropriate indicators of success and the relative strength of the index [45]. According to one of the most effective and satisfying tourists, services are provided by the hotels tourist destination, the purpose of this exploratory study was to examine the perceptions and insights of international tourist hotels in the level of service provided by one of the famous tourist spots in Iran is using the SERVQUAL model. SERVQUAL model is designed by Parasuraman *et al* [30] In order to measure the quality of service and care to assess the quality of their customers

#### Quality of Service:

The state of the overall assessment of quality by consumers is a service of excellence [43]. The concept of perceived quality, a comparison between customer expectations and what is received [35]). In the marketing literature, service quality can be defined as the value of the customer [14], compliance with the requirements [11], suitable for use [22] and to meet customer expectations [30]. In the new era of globalization, quality of service as the most important success factors is taken into consideration in the service industry [27]. This concept was introduced in the 1980s in the field of marketing services [18] and as a competitive advantage; it has attracted a lot of attention [34]. Several authors have stated that there is a positive relationship between satisfaction and loyalty and improve customer service and profitability [4]. Kasper *et al* [24] believe that service is the service and quality of service that is how much the service will meet user expectations? Grown Ross argues that service quality has two components: technical quality and functional quality. Technical quality to that service provider performs the service refers to the performance of that employee service provider, how is it

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delivered? Thus, quality of service, quality performance in a structure containing all the activities carried out by the director and staff of an organization. Only customers judge service quality. Service quality by comparing what they want or what they expect to perceive, are evaluated [34].

#### *Service Quality in the Hotel Industry:*

"Tourism or tourism" companies in various sectors including transport, tourism agencies and hotels that are closely related to each other; the goal is to engage the services of these companies lead to other companies involved in the travel and tourism sector. Hence different organizations are needed in the tourism industry to work together in the shade, and transfer the value chain to create value-added products and services to their customers. To create a system that tourist satisfaction at every step "tourism value chain" to supply chain performance will inspire each step, the holistic approach to the complex [44]. Some of the factors that led investigators to the satisfaction of the tourists have been examined. These include: tourist satisfaction and destination services, recreational facilities, cultural tours, hotels, restaurant, host culture and etc. [45]. Other factors, both controllable and uncontrollable destined to divide. Uncontrollable factors such as the natural environment, landscapes, culture, climate control factors such as cleaning the beach and the sea, and entertainment facilities are available. Also how visitors interact with the host will impact significantly on tourist satisfaction [33].

#### *Measurement of service quality:*

While this may be a general agreement about the assessment of service compared with the use of a tangible product, is a mental act, however, the implementation of quality of service as a structure, there is less agreement [12]. Companies around the world a combination of methods to assess the changing needs of customers and their perception of service quality make [34]. GAPS model by Parasuraman *et al* [30] proposed a model to measure service quality is the most comprehensive and widely used. This model is operationalized through the SERVQUAL scale. The SERVQUAL scale Airlines [38], Hotels [23], travel agents (Jones *et al*, 2004), financial services [29], medical care [25] public sector has been used. SERVQUAL model at the core of understanding of the nature of customer expectations of service quality is there, Expectations and perceptions of consumers in order to identify any deficiencies in service levels. Only when a customer's positive perception of the quality of the service provider will be more than he expected, Summary of the 22 SERVQUAL items to measure expectations and perceptions of uses. The model considers five dimensions: (1) tangibility, (2) reliability, (3) accountability, (4) assurance, (5) empathy to understand different customers' quality that can show [34]. Researchers such as Carmen [8], Cronin and Taylor [10], Bolding *et al* [4] and Coulthard [6] have criticized this model. Carmen [10] believes that it is better to collect data from customers, to investigate the discrepancy between expectations and perceptions, and direct general questions to be asked that question in each case separately. The experience level of the person using the service is also important and should be considered. Cronin and Taylor [10] argued that service quality should be measured as an attitude and perception of sentences, only to be used to measure service quality. In response to growing criticisms about the weaknesses of SERVQUAL model, Parasuraman *et al* [31] have modified this model. For example, to measure the quality of services appropriate to measure the differences between services and services are perceived.

#### *Cultural background and customer perceptions of service quality:*

Perception means the receipt, collection and disposal operation, has been used to understand the mind and senses. Companies that are looking for the most effective way to combine the best processes and services, have tended in the long run in terms of customer perception and the optimal way to achieve success. These top organizations in relation to its competitors and can be based on a solid foundation for customer loyalty to build services of various departments [34]. Poor or excellent service have a strong emotional effect on customers is pathetic about the organization, its employees and its services is the loyalties of. Between cultures, subcultures and consumer behavior has also been noted [13]. Services at the boundaries of the social, cultural and national clients assess the determinants of quality of service [32]. The impact of cultural differences on Vitez Horvath noted that service quality perception. In recent years, some researchers have placed great emphasis on the impact of culture on perceived service quality. Sultan and Simpson [33] pointed out that due to the customer's expectations and perceptions of different nationalities in an international environment. Matyla found in their study that cultural background of the people of West Asian customers in the tangibility of service quality will be considered. Ferrer and colleagues (2000) in their study concluded that consumers of different cultures, different weights are five SERVQUAL dimensions of service quality, which in turn is reflected in greatly. So the customer record cannot be ignored in assessing the quality of service [26]. However still not enough studies about whether a person's cultural background, His assessment of the quality of service will affect whether or not and research in this field is still in the exploration stage and empirical studies [16]. For example, studies in New Zealand and China show that it appears that customers in different countries, there are many similarities in their expectations of service quality [7].

*Research Objectives:*

Measurement of tourists' expectations and perceptions of service quality based on SERVQUAL model city hotels. Determine any other specific aspects of quality of service in tourist satisfaction effectively, The effect of different cultural backgrounds tourists on their assessment of service quality.

*Research Methodology:*

The research model (Figure 1), and since the study sought to evaluate the quality of services provided in the hotel has views of foreign tourists (because of their different cultural backgrounds of the people).



**Fig. 1:** Research pattern.

Tourist spots of the city, is a good place to do research, so the study sample, foreign tourists are in the city in May 2013. Tourists from the samples were selected randomly as the sample. For validity and reliability, in addition to getting the college experienced professors in the field of tourism management, hotel owners also were a number of comments. Finally, to select the most important quality, Kappa test was used. Reached agreement on the most important quality of the hotel as well as university professors, 43/0, according to Kappa Table 1 shows the experimental arrangement is average.

**Table 1:-** Kappa test results.

Agreement	Kappa
Chance agreement	0 > less than
Little agreement	20/0 to 01/0
Fair agreement	40/0 to 21/0
Average agreement	60/0 to 41/0
Substantial agreement	80/0 to 61/0
Almost perfect agreement	99/0 to 81/0

According to the multidimensional nature of service quality, SERVQUAL instrument for assessing the reliability of Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used that the internal consistency of the items was measured on each dimension separately. As shown in Table 2, all of the value of 7/0 was reliable.

**Table 2:** Quality scores: Cronbach's alpha.

Dimension	Items number	Reliability
Tangibility	7	83/0
Reliability	5	90/0
Commitment	4	87/0
Empathy	5	92/0
Accountability	2	94/0
Equipment	10	93/0
Food	5	85/0
Security	2	95/0

In this study, to collect information about the theoretical background of the method is to use the library. The purpose of this research was to study and application of the method of data collection and survey research is descriptive. A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed, 52 completed questionnaires were received that being faulty due to the 16 questionnaires, 36 usable questionnaires as software SPSS and Smart PLS results of the survey have been analyzed.

*Data Analysis:*

Demographic characteristics including gender, age, marital status, education, occupation and nationality is relevant findings are summarized in Table 3.

T-Test results showed that the expectations in all aspects of quality, expectations are higher than the reported mean (P value / sig. <0.05). T-Test results also showed that except for perception of commitment, empathy scale mean (= 3) were similar, other aspects have been higher than average. (P value / sig. <0.05), T-Test Results for Quality (Perception - Expectation) showed that the difference between perceptual and expectations were not significantly different from zero (P value / sig. > 0.05) in terms of the perceptions and expectations of the respondents (Table 4).

To determine the difference between the views of respondents in terms of variables such as gender, age, etc. Independent T-test for gender and ANOVA tests were performed for the other variables in SPSS. Independent

T-test showed that sex between men and women in all aspects of the quality of comments, except empathy, equipment and food, there is a significant difference (P value / sig.> 0.05). ANOVA test showed that there was no other significant difference in the quality of scaling varies according to age (P value. 0.05). ANOVA test showed that there was no other significant difference in the quality of the scaling variable marital status (P value. 0.05). ANOVA test results showed that in the other groups there was no significant difference in the quality of the education level (P value. 0.05). ANOVA test results showed that in the other groups there was no significant difference in the quality of the variables (P value. 0.05). ANOVA test results showed that in the other groups there was no significant difference in the quality of the country of origin variable (P value. 0.05).

**Table 3:** Demographic Results.

Demographic characteristics	Frequency
Sex	Male: 6/55 percent Female: 4/44 percent
Age	20 to 35 years: 4/19 percent Between 36 to 50 years: 3/33 Percent 51 or more: 3/47 Percent
Marital Status	Married: 9/38 percent Married: 4/44 percent Separated: 7/16 percent
Education	Diploma or less: 5/5 percent Degree: 3/8 percent BS: 7/30 percent Master's degree or higher: 5/55 percent
Job	Professional or managerial: 1/36 percent Coach / Teacher: 1/11 percent Retired: 2/22 percent Other Jobs: 6/30 percent
Nationality	Ukraine: 14% China: 14% Australia: 11% Czechoslovakia: 8% Austria: 8% Others (Germany, Italy, UK, Spain, Netherlands, Peru, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, Russia, Hawaii, America, Bahrain): 45%

**Table 4:** SERVQUAL Table.

Dimension	Perception	Expectations	P-E
Tangibility	3.4722	3.4921	-.0198
Reliability	3.3722	3.4278	-.0556
Commitment	3.2500	3.4097	-.1597
Empathy	3.2222	3.3000	-.0778
Accountability	3.2361	3.4167	-.1806
Equipment	3.3611	3.4639	-.1028
Food	3.4056	3.4500	-.0444

#### Discussion and conclusion:

In this study the addition of five SERVQUAL model, dimensions, equipment, food and safety were also assessed Based on findings about perceptions and expectations of the tourists. Cultural differences in customer perception of the quality of the hotels typically include lack of tangibility, reliability, commitment, empathy, responsiveness, equipment, food and security. The Sultan and Simpson [37] showed significant differences in expectations and perceptions of customers' overall perception of service quality based on nationality and there, thus, the social and cultural background of respondents may be different expectations and perceptions of service quality lead [34]. The findings conflict with other studies may be due to differences in data collection, analysis methods, and also is the nationality of respondents. The most frequent among respondents of Europeans (50%). Other nationalities were also described in Table 5.

**Table 5:** Classification of nationalities.

Nationality	Percent
North America	3/8 percent
South America	8/2 percent
Western Europe	25%
Eastern Europe	25%
West Asia	8/2 percent
East Asia	2/22 percent
Australia and Pacific	1/11 percent
Russia	8/2 percent

Among the respondents, 1/11% of them stated that they have come to do business with Iran, and the remainder to the circulation. Satisfaction of tourists who travel to work were far from satisfied tourists who had to travel more and spend leisure time as they always stay at a specific hotel that customer satisfaction and loyalty, which shows in its wake. Recreation or leisure tourists to come to Iran, the main reason for their trip to the country, its rich history and culture and there is also the main reason for the choice of many historic buildings and beautiful. One of the interesting cases in this study was showed that some of the tourists before traveling to Iran, due to negative publicity in the media thought safe enough in there, but after traveling to the country have changed their minds. In addition, there is security people would describe as kind and hospitable. Frustration at the lack of security also examined in this study is testament to this. Australian tourists (which is 1/11 percent of the respondents in this study comprised a) they were staying in a hotel, courtesy of the hotel management and staff were dissatisfied. Here it is necessary that the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization supervise the operation of a hotel, with proper supervision to prevent the creation of such grievances. Staffs are the most important element in ensuring service delivery and customer satisfaction are the result. Berry *et al* [3] proposed ten important lessons in order to improve service quality and that should fit the culture of the organization: Listen, reliability, delivery of basic services, the allocation of service, compensation, surprised the customers, fair play, teamwork, research staff and servant leadership. Management actions can include training and empowering employees to make more personalized and responsive service to customers. Role conflict and ambiguity employee can act as a barrier to providing effective services to customers. Efficacy, job satisfaction and adjustment, the employee's ability to serve customers in a correct manner increases [34]. Successful management services, which only occurs when management has a very good understanding of customer expectations and internal communication within the organization, there is plenty of expectations. [34].

#### *Suggestions:*

Tourism and tourism companies in various sectors including transport, tourism agencies and hotels that are closely related to each other. Overall satisfaction of tourists traveling to a country, they satisfied all these sectors depends and it is suggested that research in the field of transportation of tourists' satisfaction and also in the field of tourism services and utilities should be in place. According to the different cultural backgrounds of the people of East and West is recommended to do research on the effect of culture on tourist satisfaction, especially in the Middle East and Western tourists. The proposed research will also be conducted on factors affecting tourists' satisfaction.

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