

Service quality, satisfaction and revisit intention: A conceptual model

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Abstract

Tourist's satisfaction is a primary issue in the context of tourism because it is the key measure in determining whether a tourist is satisfied with their overall visit and their revisit intention. Previous underpinning theories in measuring tourist's satisfaction and behavioural intention was adopted to develop the conceptual model. The model identifies tourist satisfaction level based on service quality with the addition of two sustainable practice variables. In addition, two additional sustainability dimensions were included in the conceptual model to replicate the ecotourism destination attributes. The conceptual model is useful in determining tourist satisfaction and revisit intention especially in ecotourism-related destination.

Keywords:

Satisfaction; intention to revisit; service quality; sustainable practice; ecotourism

1 Introduction

Tourist's satisfaction is the main issue in the context of tourism. According to Oliver (1980), satisfaction is defined as the user's judgment toward the service that has been received. Besides that, the satisfaction of the user also means, the feedback of user

emotion toward the difference between their expectation and what they received from their experience, product and the service (Oliver, 1980). Nowadays, delivering services with high quality is considered as an essential strategy for success and survival in today's competitive tourism environment (Zeithaml et al., 1996; Dawkins & Reichheld 1990; Parasuraman et al., 1985; Zeithaml et al., 1990). Moreover, studies revealed that lack of tourist in tourism destination is related to tourists' dissatisfaction with lack of safety, security, facilities and infrastructure factors which have to discourage tourist from revisiting the destination (Yusof, Rahman, & Iranmanesh, 2015; Pourahmad et al., 2010; Arabatzis & Grigoroudis, 2010). These results show that the assessment of service quality is important to ensure the tourist's satisfaction and their willingness to revisit.

However, the characteristics of the services, which are different in each destination, are not something that can be underestimated (Frochot & Hughes, 2000). The bad service quality is always seen as the negative influence on the tourists' visit and revisit intention in the future. In ecotourism destination, most of the employees have lack of knowledge to serve the tourist especially among the developing countries (Libosada, 2009). This is one of the reasons why studies of tourist satisfaction in the ecotourism areas are necessary. Clifton and Benson (2006) found that most of the research that have been done in a natural environment on the aspect of ecotourism are mostly located in develop countries.

Table 1 shows several research that had been done in several countries regarding tourist satisfaction in a tourist destination. Most of the research have been done in developed countries such as Korea, Greece, Spain, and Taiwan. There are also lack of research concerning the assessment of service quality in ecotourism, especially in the developing countries, notably in South East Asia (Yusof et al., 2015). Furthermore, the models provided are less applicable to the context of ecotourism in developing countries (Donohoe & Lu, 2009). One of the ecotourism standards is that, the destination needs to meet a minimum standard of conservation and sustainability of nature (Marker et al., 2008). Thus, this research intends to fill the gap by using the improved model of SERVQUAL that was used by Yusof et al. (2015) which is the addition of two sustainable practices into the context of ecotourism in developing countries. This research also investigates the effect of an improved model of SERVQUAL toward behavioural intention of the tourist. This research will help to identify the dimensions of improved SERVQUAL that will have an impact toward the intention of a visitor to revisit an ecotourism destination. Tourist intention behaviour is assumed to be one of the important elements in determining tourist's satisfaction as it influences the choice of destination and decision to return (Maruthaiah & Rashid, 2014). This developed conceptual model can also act as a useful tool to encourage long-term relationships with tourists and increase the number of loyal tourists in ecotourism destinations.

Table 1: List of articles that publish on tourist satisfaction

Author	Destination	Variable	Survey Location	Analysis
Lita et al. (2014)	Indonesia	Tourist Attitude & Behaviour	Hotel and Restaurant	Factor Analysis & PLS
Lee (2015)	Korea	Satisfaction & Expectation	Zoo	Factor Analysis, Regression, T-Test
Arabitzis et al. (2010)	Greece	Satisfaction & Perception	National Park	MUSA, Gap Analysis
Jones et al. (2011)	Greece	Satisfaction & Perception	Coastal Conservation Area	Factor Analysis
De Rojas et al. (2008)	Spain	Satisfaction, Expectation & Emotion	Heritage Palace	Factor Analysis & Path Analysis
Chen et al. (2007)	Taiwan	Satisfaction & Intention Behaviour	Coastal Tourism Destination	Factor Analysis & SEM
Norzalita et al. (2012)	Malaysia	Satisfaction, Emotion, Intention Behaviour	Theme Park	Factor Analysis & Multiple Regression
Salleh et al. (2012)	Malaysia	Satisfaction	Island's Village	Mean Analysis, Gap Analysis & T-Test.

2 Review of SERVQUAL and sustainable practice

2.1 SERVQUAL

Tourist's satisfaction is a vital component in all organization's policies in tourism industry because tourist's satisfaction can give impact toward the future of the service provider especially in a tourist destination that provides the visitor with experience and services (Maruthaiah & Rashid, 2014). Tourist's satisfaction is also one of the important keys to engaging the tourist to the destination so that they will revisit and stay loyal to that destination (Zeithaml et al., 1996). Nowadays, tourism players are struggling to attract the tourist to come to their places. One of their strategies is by delivering the best quality service (Dawkins & Reichheld 1990; Zeithaml et al., 1996). Providing a great service quality to the tourist is one of the best long-term strategies to keep the business running (Yoon & Ekinici, 2003). According to Cronin and Taylor (1992), a great quality of service can lead to the satisfaction of the tourist which will give a significant effect on revisit intention.

Lewis and Boom (1983) viewed service quality as a measure of how good the service level meets the customer's expectation. A good service quality should match the expectation of the customer in a consistent basis. Furthermore, Parasuraman et al., (1985) said that "Service quality is an abstract and elusive construct because of three unique features to service: intangibility, heterogeneity, and inseparability of production

and consumption.” Hence, they have built a multiple-item scale for measuring service quality called SERVQUAL. Service quality is also defined as “Global judgement, or attitude, relating to the superiority of the service” (Parasuraman et al., 1988). This multiple-item scale has been constantly used by the researchers, business managers and service providers as a standard of an appropriate approach for assessing the quality of a firm’s service and to measure tourist perception of quality. SERVQUAL also have been used and adapted widely in other setting such as restaurant (Bojanic & Rosen, 1994), zoo (Lee, 2015) and ecotourism (Yusof et al., 2015).

The purpose of setting up the SERVQUAL is to describe the development of a multiple-item scale for measuring service quality and to discuss the scale’s properties and potential of its application (Parasuraman et al., 1988). SERVQUAL started with ten dimensions of service quality, generated from various dimensions of service quality from literature reviews. These ten dimensions are made of tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, competency, communication, credibility, security, access, courtesy and understanding of the customer. The development of the ten dimensions has generated 97 items with approximately ten items per dimension, and each item is allocated into two objectives which are; to measure the expectations about the firms in term of services provided and to measure the perception of the consumer about the service quality of the firm. Roughly half of the statements are a positive statement, and another half are negative statements. Each statement has a seven-point scale ranging from “Strongly Agree” (7) to “Strongly disagree” (1).

Parasuraman et al. (1985) used repair and maintenance, banking, telecommunication, securities brokerage, and credit card as their background study in the service sector. The result shows that the ten dimensions have been narrowed down into five dimensions of service quality which are tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. These five dimensions contained 22 paired items of service quality which have been narrowed down from 97 items. Table 1 shows the final five dimension and the definition of each dimension.

Table 2: SERVQUAL dimension

Dimension	Definition
Tangibility	The character of the external of the firm: physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of personnel
Reliability	The ability of the firm to perform the service as promised dependably and accurately
Responsiveness	This dimension examines the willingness of the employee to entertain and help the customer and provide a prompt service toward the customer
Assurance	Knowledge and the courtesy of the employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence.
Empathy	Caring to the customer and the firm can give individualized attention to their customers.

Source: Yusof et al. (2015)

SERVQUAL was developed to create a generic instrument for measuring service quality across a broad range of service categories (Yusof et al., 2015). SERVQUAL has become a benchmark for the service sector to study the tourist's satisfaction over the decade. The adaption of the SERVQUAL into the different background of service study has developed some new models to fit the dimension of study. Namkung and Jang (2007) stated that for a better understanding of quality features that leads to consumer choices, satisfaction, and subsequent purchasing behaviour, the scope of any study should go beyond the traditional SERVQUAL. This is because when the SERVQUAL model is applied to a new context, a new dimension may appear from the new dimension of background studies (Yusof et al., 2015). In assessing the service quality in specific service or destination, the refining of the model is necessary to make sure all the important aspects are taken into consideration (Yusof et al., 2015).

2.2 SERVQUAL in sustainability practice

Sustainability practice in tourism is one of the practices that has been applied by nature-based tourism in delivering services. Sustainable tourism can be defined as “the development that required the informed participation of all relevant stakeholder, as well as strong political leadership to ensure wide participant and consensus building. Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process, and it requires constant monitoring of impact, introducing the necessary preventive and corrective measure whenever necessary”. It also means that the tourism should maintain a high level of tourist's satisfaction and ensure a meaningful experience to the tourist and raising their awareness about sustainability issues and promoting sustainable tourism practice among them (World Tourism Organization, 2004). Ecotourism is a form of sustainable tourism. Ecotourism is defined as an environmentally traveling to the nature areas to enjoy, study, and appreciate the nature or the cultural feature of the destination. It is also a place that promotes conservation, has low visitor impact, and provides benefit to the local population (Ceballos-lascurain, 1993). It is the official definition adopted by the IUCN in 1996.

The case study conducted by Yusof et al. (2015) that measured the quality of ecotourism services in Tasik Kenyir was one of the fine examples that relates to the sustainable practice study. This research was conducted through a survey on 127 tourists that visited and were residing in any one of the resorts for at least one night at Tasik Kenyir. Two new factors have been introduced in the research which are, the tangible sustainability and sustainable practice. The result showed that Tasik Kenyir's service quality is lower than the tourist's expectation. This also showed that the dimensions in SERVQUAL could not be fully replicated to the ecotourism industry and it confirmed the significance of the sustainability dimension in the measurement of service quality in the context of ecotourism. The result also indicated that when the SERVQUAL model is applied to a new context, a new dimension may appear. Thus, there

is a need to refine the model to fit different contexts of the study and to make sure that all important dimensions are taken into consideration.

3 Behaviour intention

One of the primary goals of the service provider or the owner of the park and recreation is to have a repeated customer or visitor to help the continuation of the tourist destination in the future. Strategy to attract the visitor to revisit or to make the visitor be attached to the destination is a crucial aspect for the success of a tourism destination development (Chen & Tsai, 2007). Delivering a good quality service is considered as an essential strategy for success and survival (Zeithaml et al., 1996; Dawkins & Reichheld 1990; Reichheld & Sasser, 1990). A satisfied tourist will produce a loyal visitor to a destination (Cronin & Tylor, 1992; Oliver, 1980). Even though tourist’s satisfaction and the behavioural intention of visitor are not the same, but they are related to each other. The relation happens when a satisfied customer reinforces themselves to buy and use the product or the service again (Namkung & Jang, 2007; Cronin & Tylor, 1992; Oliver, 1980). The behavioural intention in this study refers to the visitor’s judgement on the likeliness to revisit the same destination or the willingness to recommend the destination to others (Chen & Tsai, 2007).

A study by Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman (1996) has developed a model that predicts the behavioural intention of the consumer from four different backgrounds of studies (computer manufacturer, retail chain, automobile, life insurer) from service quality perspective. Figure 1 shows the hypothesized effects of service quality on behavioural intentions.

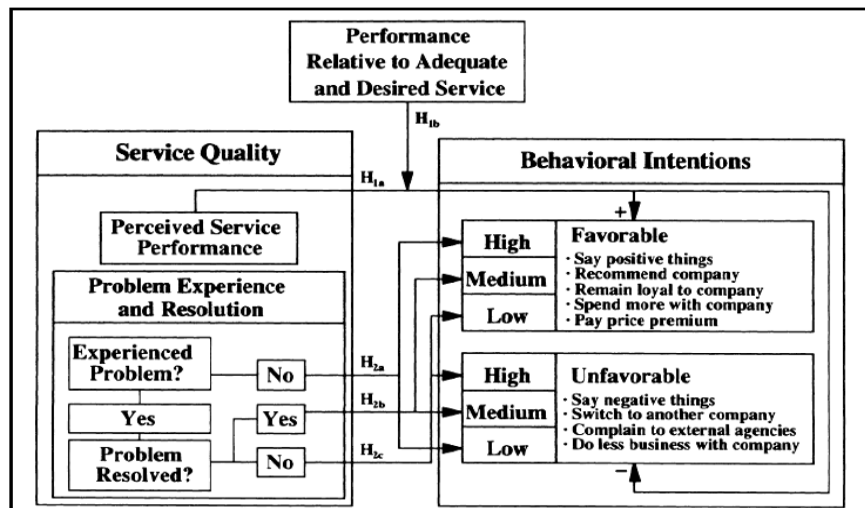


Figure 1: Hypothesized Effects of Service Quality on Behavioural Intentions

Source: Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1996)

The result from the study showed that there are four dimensions that are needed to predict the behavioural intention of the consumer. Table 2 shows the four dimensions of behavioural intention and items for each dimension.

Table 3: Behavioural Intention Dimension and Its Item

Behavioural Intention Dimension	Items
Word of Mouth (WOM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Say positive things and recommend the company or service provider to someone who seeks advice ii. Encourage friend and relative to beinvole
Purchased Intention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Consider the company or service provider as the first choice when to buy the product or services. ii. Do more or less business with the company or service provider in the next few years.
Price Sensitivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Choose other than the company or service provider that offer better prices ii. Continues to do business with the same company or service provider even though the price increases. iii. Willing to pay a higher price for the benefit from the same company or service provider rather than the competitor charge.
Complain Behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Switch to the competitor if the customers experience a problem with the company service. ii. Complain to other customers if the customer experiences a problem with company services iii. Complain to external agencies, such as the better business bureau, if the customer's experience a problem with company services. iv. Complain to the company's employees if having a problem with the company services.

Source: Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1996)

This conceptual model was built to understand the intermediate links between the service quality and profits (Zeithaml et al., 1996). It also aimed to find the component that has always influence the behavioural intention of the customer. On the other hand, this model begins with the assessment service quality of the customer. When the result of the assessment is high, and the behavioural intention of the customer are favourable, it may strengthen the customer's relationship with the company. However, when the assessments are low, the customer's behavioural intentions are unfavourable, and the relationship is more likely to be weakened. In this model, behavioural intentions can be viewed as an indicator that signals whether customers will stay loyal with the company or change to other company that sells the same product or services (Zeithaml et al., 1996).

Research has been conducted by Chen and Tsai (2007), on how destination image and evaluative factors can affect behavioural intentions. The study showed that the destination image and satisfaction has direct effects on behavioural intention while trip quality and perceived value have indirect effects on behavioural intention. This shows that satisfaction is one of the vital intermediate components that can affect the behavioural intention of tourists. Furthermore, a study conducted by Cronin and Taylor (1992) showed that perceived service quality influences satisfaction, and that satisfaction, in turn, positively affect future purchase intention. Several studies have used satisfaction component as the mediating role for post-purchase responses (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Namkung & Jang, 2007; Tian-Cole et al., 2002). Furthermore, Taylor and Baker (1994) stated that customer satisfaction could be a moderating variable in the relationship between service quality and behavioural intention, but it may depend on the type of product and service that is offered (Namkung & Jang, 2007). Therefore, the construction of the new model the behavioural and financial consequences of service quality model (Figure 1) is adapted in term of behavioural intention issues.

4 Conceptual model

Figure 2 depicts the conceptual model and shows the overall relationship in determining the satisfaction of tourist visitor and to predict the behavioural intention of the visitor.

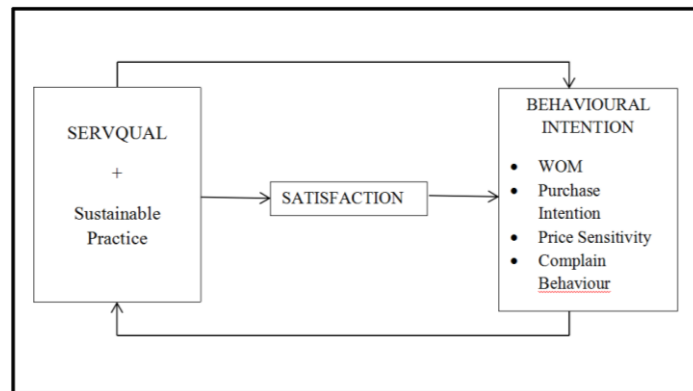


Figure 2: Conceptual Model of the Satisfaction and Behavioural Intention of Ecotourism Destination Visitor

The model starts from left to right and shows the actual activity in the visitor’s visit. It starts from the assessment of service quality with the addition of two sustainable variables to the satisfaction variable and ends with behavioural intention variable. Service quality with the addition of two variables acts as an independent variable, where it can influence the experience, satisfaction and behavioural intention of the visitor in the future. In this model, visitor demographic is used to differentiate the variable according to a different type of visitors. Hence, this model is to determine tourist’s

perception toward the improved service quality and satisfaction and consequently their behavioural intention.

5 Conclusion

Improved service quality is the main criteria that determine the tourist's satisfaction in ecotourism destination (Asubonteng et al., 1996). The addition of two sustainable dimensions into the service quality is to ensure that all of the aspects in ecotourism destination are taken into consideration of assessment. Most of the service industry used SERVQUAL to measure quality. Perceived quality means the total judgement and consumers' perception toward the superiority of the product or service (Parasuraman et al., 1988) and it integrates the consumer expectation toward the service and perceptions of the firm that provide the service (Aziz, Ariffin, Omar & Evin, 2012; Parasuraman et al., 1988). Previous studies have shown that SERVQUAL alone is not enough to cover all dimension in tourism service that is important to tourists (Yusof et al., 2015; Akbaba, 2006; Briggs et al., 2007). For example, Mackay and Crompton (1988) have introduced REQUAL model that adapted from SERVQUAL to study the service quality in the recreation and leisure industries. Steven et al. (1995) construct a scale designed to measure restaurant service quality called DINESERV. Modern researchers argue that for a better understanding of quality features that lead to customer's choice, satisfaction and intention behaviour, the scope of any studies should go beyond the traditional SERVQUAL (Namkung & Jang, 2007). Thus, in this development of the conceptual model, the SERVQUAL has been added with two sustainable practice variables to assess the service quality in ecotourism destination.

In term of behavioural intention in this conceptual model, the variables were adapted from Zeithaml et al. (1996). The variables are word of mouth, purchase intention, price sensitivity, and complain behaviour. According to Zeithaml et al. (1996), when service quality assessment is high, the customer's behavioural Intentions are favourable, which can make the relationship between the two parties strong. But when the situations are vice versa, the customer will have dissatisfaction toward the company, and it will disrupt the company's reputation. Hence it is vital to understand the behavioural intention of the visitor or the tourist in ecotourism industries for future research. As a conclusion, by understanding the relationship between the improved SERVQUAL, satisfaction, and behavioural intention, this will help destination tourism managers to have better understanding on the needs of the tourist and improve their destination image and service. Thus, it will trigger the behavioural intention of the tourist to revisit and spread good words to others. Nonetheless, these conjectures need to be tested empirically.

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