

The Effect of Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction: A Research on Hotel Businesses

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Introduction

Quality is a substantial factor for businesses in achieving competition nowadays. Therefore, a good definition for quality is a must. Quality is defined as the collection of features based on the ability to meet the determined or possible requirements of a product or service. There is currently used another concept together with quality. This concept is mentioned as service quality in literature. Service quality is described as the comparison of service expectations of customers with the actual performance. The importance of service quality has been emphasized by many writers (Mohsin and Lockyer, 2010; Yılmaz, 2009; Ganeson-Lim, vd. 2008; Gržinić, 2007; Akbaba, 2006; Douglas and Connor, 2003; Santos, 2002; Carneiro and Costa, 2001).

The service qualities of hotels have become critical in literature since service quality is associated with customer satisfaction, and revisiting. All over the world, hotels place importance on service quality in order to produce positive products and services as well as to show standards (Mosin and Lockyer, 2010: 168). Thus, the knowledge about factors affecting service performance and dimensions of service quality is crucial. The general dimensions of service quality are the concepts as reliability, specific features, eagerness, and empathy (Çiftçi 2006: v). Since these dimensions have an impact on the perceived service quality and this also affects customer satisfaction, hotel businesses should place importance on this issue. In other words, considering service quality with regards to hotel businesses, it is described as a strategic instrument used in order to produce products that can be able to meet the existing or possible needs of tourists, to increase the efficiency of a business, and to reduce costs through an effective control process of costs. This study has examined the effect of service quality on customer satisfaction by means of a research conducted on hotel businesses.

The Concept and Importance of Service Quality

The need for services has accompanied the need for quality service. People have been after getting the best of the services they need, and being satisfied. Also, everyone assuredly asks for the best of transport, education, health, and tourism services that they receive. Therefore, quality should be paid attention in services to be provided (Karahana 2006:18). On the other side, the service provided with product or independently of product needs to be of good quality. Service comes

before everything. Quality service refers to the surpassing of inadequate competitors in this regard. In order to increase sales, to enter into new markets, to expand the market share, and all in all to be successful in the market, the product and service quality are needed to be considered together (Taşkın 2005:55).

Service quality: “is an evaluation with a predominant cognitive aspect that emerges as a result of the comparison of the service (perceived service) quality that a consumer receives with the service quality shaped according to the expectations of consumer before the purchase.” (Altunışık, et al. 2007:176). Due to the feature of the concept “service”, service quality differs from its concept in production businesses (Oral 2005:322). Service quality includes both outputs in the end of production process, and the way that service is provided or its form. Since services have abstract quality, service quality has also abstract structure. Therefore, the term perceived service quality is used rather than the term of service quality. Perceived service quality is the result of the comparison of expectations before services with real experience of service and is considered as the difference between the expectations of service receivers and their perception (Avcıkurt ve Aymanıkuy 2006:285). The abstract structure of services, their consumption in where they are produced, their other sophisticated features make the definitions of service quality difficult (Özkuş 2007:125).

There are two main factors which are effective in producing services. One of them is the equipments which provide service; the other one is organizing people who provide services. Of these, defining, measuring, and comparing the equipments that enable to provide service are not difficult. For instance, we can determine the restaurant which is better than other one by comparing two restaurants in terms of the quality of tables, chairs, plates, spoon, fork, and food. However, the definition, evaluation, and comparison of service are quite difficult since the service given by people differs greatly for everyone (Karahana 2006:38).

The measurement of service quality is sophisticated since the satisfaction of the expectations of customers may not be always provided. In other words; service quality depends on the perceptions of customers. The person providing service, the technical result of service and general image of the company providing service affect service quality (Küçükaltan 2007:60). People evaluate service quality, get services. Thereby, service quality varies from person to person. This difference mainly results from the expectations of people. The educations, culture, income, society levels of individuals are the factors which have impact on service quality. Service quality can be stated as compatibility to expectations (Karahana 2006:18).

Kotler et al.(2003) indicate the benefits of service quality for companies as follows: it is emphasized to be effective in creating customer loyalty, avoiding price rivalry, keeping able staffs and reducing costs (Küçükaltan 2007:65).

In conclusion, the notion of “service quality” refers to an evaluation. In this evaluation, the consumer has expectations about the service in his/her mind before getting the service. After consumption experience, s/he compares the service that s/he receives with the one that s/he expects. If the received service is better than expected one, service quality is high. Otherwise, service quality is inadequate and consumption experience ends up with dissatisfaction (Altunışık, et al 2007:176).

The Relationship between Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction

Expectations and perceptions, customer satisfaction and service quality are the most significant variables in literature. The expected service quality refers to the expectations of customer related to service and the features which customers want service to have in order to be satisfied. Thereby, whether customers are satisfied with received service or not is closely related to whether their expectations come true or not (Yılmaz 2007:26). In other words, the service package provided should meet the expectations of customers so that perceived service quality can be fulfilling (Alnıaçık ve Özbek 2009:129). For example, if one of the most important expectations of a customer about the service provided by the hotel where s/he stays is the breakfasts and dinners provided as an open buffet, the customer would be satisfied during his/her stay in hotel when this expectation is fulfilled. Otherwise, s/he would have dissatisfaction (Yılmaz 2007:26).

In the evaluation of service quality and providing customer satisfaction, the perceptions of consumers play an extremely deterministic role (Altunışık 2009:30). The term of “perceived service quality” is used rather than service quality due to its abstract structure. The relationship between the expectations of customers before service and service performance provided is informative about “perceived service quality” and its way (Canoğlu 2008:28).

Therefore that perceived service quality could be fulfilling, service package provided should be meet the expectations of customers. It is an intended situation that perceived quality is equal or more than expectations. When it is below the expectations, quality does not exist (Çiftçi 2006:34). Perceived service quality has impact on two matters, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty (Gil, Hudson and Quintana, 2006:48).

The Evaluation Methods of Service Quality

Several models have been developed in order to evaluate service quality until today. There is a certain consensus that service quality should be defined in terms of the viewpoint of customers (Akbaba 2007:319). Qualified service emerges when expected service is at least equal to perceived service or more than it. In order to measure service quality, the service that service receiver expects and his/her perceived service should be measured (Saat 1999:113).

There are several scales about service quality, and some certain service quality scales have been used in this study, and some of the main ones: the scale of INTQUAL; the scale of SERVQUAL; the scale of LODGSERV; the scale of *LODGQUAL*; the scale of *DINESERV*; the scale of ECOSERV; the scale of LODGING QUALITY INDEX (LQI); the scale of RECQUAL; Critical incident Technique – CIT ; Consecutive incident technique; Structural Equation Modelling-SEM; Fuzzy Topsis/Numbers Modelling; the scale of ISSERVQUAL; the scale of INTERSERVQUAL; the scale of P-C-P (pivotal – core – peripheral); the scale of HOLSAT; the scale of LibQUAL; the scale of HISTOQUAL; Analytical Hierarchy Process-AHP; the scale of Hotelzot ; the scale of Tourservqual ; the scale of HOLSERV and the scale of QUALITOMETRO (Öztürk 2000; Akbaba 2007; Yılmaz 2007; Kılıç ve Eleren 2009).

Since the scale of SERVPERF is utilized in this study, the explanation of this scale is more elaborately. The scale of SERVQUAL has been developed by considering it as the start point, and is a model that is utilized by both the attention of researchers and managers in this sector. This scale

developed by Cronin and Taylor (1992:55) claimed that only performance should be used the basis of the evaluation of service quality, and there is no need to evaluate expectations. In the evaluation of service quality, this model utilizes 22 pieces of expressions which are gathered in same five dimensions with servqual and the evaluation is conducted by means of 7 graduated ruler (Akbaba 2007:321).

Today, the most used and well-accepted is Zeithaml dimensioning. Therefore, this dimension has been examined more profoundly.

Table1: Dimensions of Service Quality

Dimension	Expansion
Physical Appearance	The appearance of buildings, facilities, equipments, staffs and communication materials
Trustfulness	The reliable and accurate implementation of offered service
Eagerness/Willingness	The willingness of helping customers and providing service in time
Assurance- Security	The kind and well-informed characteristic of staff, their creating a sense of trust
Empathy	Their showing personal attention and behaving sensible towards costumers

Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V.A. ve Berry, L.L. (1988). SERVQUAL: A Multiple-Item Scale for Measuring Consumer Perceptions of Service Quality, *Journal of Retailing*, 64(1), 12-37.

In terms of accommodation managements, service quality can be described not only as delivering acceptable standards to target group but also as determining how services are perceived by customers and producing policies which are appropriate for this perception (İçöz and Tavmergen, 1998:128).

The perceptions of service quality by hotel customers are a result of the comparison of the feels of customers about services, which should be offered by hotel, with the perceptions of hotel performance. This perception is also related to the direction and degree of difference between the expectations and perceptions of customers. While expectation is a prediction of the state which will come true in the process of service in terms of customer satisfaction, it is the demands of customers in terms of service quality. Thereby, the important point in terms of service quality is what hotel should offer rather than what it offers (Demirer, 1996).

When examined the studies on service quality, the significance of service quality for hotels become obvious once again. In the study of Reimer and Kuehn (2005), physical appearances - the concretes of the dimensions of service quality- have been found to be more effective in perceived service quality than other dimensions. Moreover, all dimensions of service quality have been more effective in perceived service quality. In the study of Santos (2002), the degree of abstract and concrete elements has been revealed to be a significant factor in the service quality perceptions of customers. The concrete elements have been found to be possibly perceived differently in various service industries. Mohsin and Lockyer (2010) have emphasized the departments of reception, room service and restaurant have an impact on the service quality perceptions of customers staying in the hotel. Yılmaz (2009) has evaluated the performance of service quality in the point of view of

customers. According to findings, physical elements are least while empathy is the most important factor of service quality at five-four-three star hotels in the Region Cappadocia. Ganesan-Lim, et al (2008) have emphasized that age is effective for a travel company serving passenger transportation in the perceptions of service quality of customers whereas gender and income level are not effective. Grzanic (2007) has evaluated the service quality of Croatian hotel businesses. In the study, the most distinctive difference between expectation and perception has been found in security dimension and physical elements. Akbaba (2006) has investigated the service quality at business hotels in his study. According to this study, the most significant dimension is physical elements. Douglas and Connor (2003) have emphasized that the element of assurance is crucial for customers in their perception of service quality while physical elements are important for hotel administrators. Carneiro and Costa (2001) have emphasized that staffs are effective in the perceptions of customers at five-star hotels in Lisbon. Besides, the concepts of quality, product, price, service, quickness, publicity, reliability, and communication have impact on customer satisfaction. All of these have shown that customer satisfaction is not an easy matter and both local and foreign customers should work together.

The Aim and Significance of This Research

The aim of research is to determine the impact of perceived service quality at hotels on customer satisfaction and to put forth these determined factors as the suggestion of applicable precautions and proposals.

Market saturation and increasing competition in hotel management industry have further increased the significance of service quality especially for hotel businesses. The efforts of hotels in order to differentiate themselves from their rivals have been an effective factor in placing much more importance to customer satisfaction and service quality of these businesses. Therefore, at hotels which are active in service sector and where customer relationships have quite significant place, service quality and customer satisfaction has been becoming increasingly crucial. Providing more qualified services at hotel businesses refers to the maximizing of value obtained by more benefit in terms of consumer. This ensures that hotel customers are satisfied in the hotel businesses. In this way, hotel businesses enhance their work performance; they can also increase their business profitability by decreasing marketing costs.

The Methods of the Research

The data of this research have been obtained by means of questionnaire developed. The questionnaire mainly consists of two parts. In the first part, there are questions about perceived service quality. In this study, the scale of SERVPERF developed by Cronin and Taylor (1992) has been utilized. There have been five dimensions in 22 expressions. The assessment has been conducted by means of 7-point Likert scale. The 22 expressions in five dimensions of this study have been organized by means of 5-point Likert scale in terms of the characteristics of hotel. 1st point is "I strongly disagree it" and 5th is "I strongly agree it". In the second part, there have been demographic and open-ended questions. The developed questionnaire was implemented on January 2 – January 2, 2013 through simple sampling method by means of face to face interviews with

tourists staying in 13 hotel businesses with five-four-three stars affiliated with Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Çanakkale centrum, and in the town of Kepez. The analysis of the data of 300 participants of this study has been indicated.

The data obtained by means of the questionnaires have been transferred to computer environment. In the analyses, not only descriptive statistics like frequencies, distribution of percentage, average, standart deviation, quarters but also factor analyses have been utilized.

Finding and Evaluation

According to the findings found as a result of the analysis of the data obtained by means of questionnaires which have evaluated the effect of service quality on customer satisfaction at accommodation businesses, the demographic features of people participating in the research are as in Table 2.

Table2: The Demographic Features of Visitors

Gender	N	%	Age	N	%
Male	177	59	20-29	59	19,7
Female	123	41	30-39	147	49
Total	300	100,0	40-49	75	25
			50 and over	19	6,3
			Total	300	100,0
Job	N	%	The Purpose of Visiting	N	%
Self-Employment	148	49,3	Recreation and Entertainment	79	26,3
Civil servant	67	22,3	Business Travel	119	39,7
Retired	32	10,7	Historical and Cultural Trip	91	30,3
Worker	35	11,7	Health Purposes	11	3,7
Total	282	100,0	Total	300	100,0

According to table 2, 59% of the research participants are male; 41%, female. 49% of visitors have been with an age of 30 - 39. 39, 7% of them have stayed at hotels due to business travel; 30, 3% of them due to historical and cultural trip; 26, 3% due to recreation and entertainment, and %3,7 stay at hotels with health purposes. 49, 3% of the visitors are self-employed people, 22, 3% of them are civil servant, 11, 7% of them are worker, 10, 7% of them are retired. The high rate of business travel and self-employment shows that visitors visiting the hotels in Çanakkale have a certain income. Besides, upon counting historical and cultural trip as well as recreation and entertainment within business travel, taking into consideration of this visit group when creating tourism policies is of an important in terms of the tourism of Çanakkale. On the other hand, it is also substantial that the owners of hotels provide service and organize their hotels considering this group. The least rate among these rates has been the health purposes. However, Çanakkale has a background in health tourism. In terms of Çanakkale tourism, making this

background more active is crucial. Indeed, this demographic feature may help about what kind of tourism should be active in Çanakkale and how marketing activities should be implemented.

At Table 3, there are the results of factor analysis on the expressions about perceived service quality. Before conducting the factor analysis, the reliability of data (Cronbach alpha) has been tested. The reliability of the scale has been found to be 0,93. This rate shows the scale is highly reliable (Ural and Kılıç: 2005: 262). According to the results of Cronbach alpha, the factor analysis has been utilized in data. The result of Barlett test, the value of 4,423 and the level of $p < ,001$, and the sample value of Kasier-Meyer-Olkin value turned out to be 0,922. This value is within acceptable range. In the analysis of principal component which has been implemented to data, the option of variamax has been used and the ones over one of the eigenvalues obtained have been analysed.

Table 3: The Factor Analysis Results of the Expressions about Perceived Service Quality

	Homogeneous-ness	Load	Eigen Value	Variance %	Average	Trustfulness	The value of F-	The value of P-
I. FACTOR Empathy/Sensibility			3,743	17,01	3,73	0,896	6,647	,000
Hotel staffs perceive your individual requirements.	,784	,864						
Hotel staffs show special attention for you.	,776	,830						
They show special attention for you at hotel.	,714	,794						
They value your benefits above at hotel	,714	,775						
The working hours of the hotel are suitable for all customers.	,620	,595						
II. FACTOR Trustfulness			3,216	14,61	3,86	,870	3,468	,000
Hotel completes its services within time they promise.	,732	,755						
Hotel takes care of keeping accurate record.	,688	,714						
Hotel shows warmly interest for solving problems of their customers.	,690	,693						
Hotel fulfills its promise on time.	,687	,665						
Hotel provides accurate service at the first time.	,670	,662						
III. FACTOR Physical Appearance/Concretes			3,149	14,31	3,59	,894	6,740	,000
Hotel buildings and facilities are easy on the eye	,867	,894						
Hotel building has a modern appearance.	,830	,878						

When hotel provides service, the materials they utilize are easy on the eye.	,760	,763						
Hotel staffs are presentable.	,703	,705						
IV. FACTOR Willingness/Eagerness			2,991	13,59	3,91	,857	2,182	,090
Hotel staffs provide service on time.	,782	,791						
Hotel staffs always try to help you.	,739	,743						
Hotel staffs give you information about when service is provided.	,641	,673						
Hotel staffs are never too busy to meet your needs.	,614	,646						
V. FACTOR Assurance/Guarantee			2,814	12,79	3,90	,862	,311	,818
The behaviours of hotel staffs give sense of trust.	,782	,810						
In your processes with hotel you feel in confidence.	,784	,803						
Hotel staffs show respect to you for always.	,743	,726						
Hotel staffs have knowledge to solve your problems.	,595	,541						

The analysis of Varimax rotatory basic components . Explained total variance: %72,33

The adequacy of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin sample: %92,2; The globularness test of Barlett : X²:4,423 s.d.:231, p<0,001

At table 3, the results of factor analysis are shown. The first factor is the factor of Empathy/Sensibility. In this factor, there are five variables and it accounts for 17, 01% of total variance. This variable has revealed the same result in Yılmaz (2009). When examined the variables forming the variables, the major variable has been found to be “Hotel staffs perceive your individual requirements (864)”. On the other hand, “Hotel staffs show special attention for you (830)” has been indicated to be a significant variable.

The second factor consists of five variables and accounts for 14, 61% of total variance. This factor has been named as “Confidence”. In this factor, the major variable is “Hotel completes its services within time they promise (, 755)”. It is also a significant variable that “Hotel takes care of keeping accurate record (, 714).”

The third factor of “Physical Appearance/The Concretes” consists of four variables. In this factor, which accounts for 14, 31% of total variance, the major variable is “Hotel buildings and facilities are easy on the eye (, 894). Although physical appearance has taken the third place in this research, there are many studies where physical appearance takes the first place (Reimer and Kuehn 2005, Santos 2002, Mohsin and Locyer 2010, Akbaba 2006). On the contrary, there are also studies in which physical appearance is the most insignificant (Yılmaz 2009).

The fourth factor accounts for 13, 59% of total variance. This factor consisting of four variables and have been named as “Willingness/Eagerness”. Carneiro and Costa (2001) have indicated that this is the most significant factor.

The name of the fifth factor is “Assurance/Guarantee” and accounts for 12, 79% of total variance. Unlike this study, Douglas and Connor (2003) have stated that the factor “Assurance” is the most significant variable.

Table 4: Which hotel activities are effective in your revisiting?

Variables (128)	Number	%
Genial hotel staff	40	31,2
The service of hotel	31	24,2
The price of hotel	20	15,6
The hygiene of hotel	10	7,8
The service of restaurant	10	7,8
The location of hotel	10	7,8
The decoration of hotel	5	3,9
The situation of rooms	1	,8
The reliability of hotel	1	,8
Total	128	100,0

At table 4, the answer of participants of “Genial hotel staff” with 31, 2% to the question “Which activities are effective in your revisiting?” has taken the first place. The service of hotel and price of hotel come after this expression. The situation of rooms and the reliability of hotel have been the least effective variables.

Table 5: Which hotel activities are effective in your not revisiting?

Variables (43)	Number	%
The insincerity of staff	9	20,9
Poor service	8	18,6
Unreasonable price of hotel	3	7,0
Poor Hygiene	7	16,3
Poor restaurant	5	11,6
The remote location of hotel	2	4,7
Poor condition of rooms	8	18,6
Unreliability of hotel	1	2,3
Total	43	100,0

At table 5, the answer of participants of “The insincerity of staff” with 20, 9% to the question of “Which hotel activities are effective in your not visiting?” has taken the first place. Poor service, bad smell of rooms and poor hygiene come after this variable. Unreliability of hotel has been the least effective variable.

The most significant fact that is effective in revisiting or not revisiting of customers has been employees. Employee satisfaction which is increasingly coming into prominence today is

significant for hotel managements since hotel staffs that have directly impact on customers have vital importance for hotel managements. Therefore, a great attention should be paid for staff satisfaction.

Conclusion

In this research on determining the effect of service quality in hotel businesses on customer satisfaction, these results have been found: 59% of the participants consist of men and the rest consists of women. 39, 7% of the participants stay at hotel due to business travel; 30, 3%, historical and cultural trip; 26, 3%, recreation and entertainment; and 3, 7%, health purposes. 49, 3% of participants have been self-employed, 22, 3% are civil servant, 11, 7% are workers and, 10, 7% are retired.

The most significant factor of perceived service quality for participants is empathy. This result is same in Yılmaz (2009). Reliability, physical appearance, eagerness and assurance come after the factor of empathy. Unlike this study, there have been several studies in which physical appearance takes the first place (Reimer and Kuehn 2005, Santos 2002, Mohsin and Locyer 2010, Akbaba 2006) and there have been several studies in which physical appearance takes the last place (Yılmaz 2009). On the other hand, there have been also studies in which eagerness takes the first place (Carneiro and Costa 2001) and other studies in which assurance takes the first place (Douglas and Connor 2003)

Genial hotel staff is effective in participants' reprefering hotel. On the contrary, the most significant variable in their not preferring has been the insincerity of staff. Therefore, this result shows that staffs are effective in perceived service quality.

Considering all these results, these suggestions have been offered:

- Empathy has been found to be the most significant factor on perceived service quality. It is important that this variable as well as other factors are examined and perceived service quality is developed to a higher level. Thus, customer satisfaction is further increased.
- The people visiting Çanakkale have been determined to be self-employed and to be civil servants. Arranging the services of hotel with respect to this group will increase customer satisfaction.
- The reasons of people to visit Çanakkale mainly consist of business, culture and recreation. It is crucial for those shaping tourism policy to pay importance to these three factors when taking decision. Besides, some people, even if they are minority, visit Çanakkale for health purposes. The further decisions to taken with reference to this result may affect the tourism of Çanakkale.
- Hotel staffs are a substantial factor in revisiting the hotel or not. Business owners should place importance to this subject. Staff satisfaction is especially an important factor.

These results have shown that tourism in Çanakkale can be easily provided for 12 months. Upon the importance of local managers and hotel management owners about service quality, customer satisfactions will increase since tourism in Çanakkale has so different aspects including its history, its culture, its business construction, its water sports, and its health tourism that this tourism can't be provided only seasonally. As in all studies, there

may be some shortcomings in this study. The main one is the research of hotels with 5, 4 and 3 stars in Çanakkale, which affects the generalization. Moreover, its conducting in a certain period of time creates another problem. Therefore, that future researchers conduct a research including all areas of Çanakkale and include employees during research would make the research more accurate.

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