Service Quality of Maldivian Hospitality Industry: Chinese Tourists’ Perception

Sridar Ramachandran, Fathimath Ifthan Maumoon, Puvaneswaran Kunasekaran, Ahmad Shuib, Ahmad Puad Mat Som and Sudesh Prabhakaran

1Institute of Agricultural and Food Policy Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia
2Faculty of Economics and Management, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia
3Independent Scholar,
4Faculty of Applied Social Sciences, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, 21300 Kuala Nerus, Terengganu, Malaysia
5Binary University, IOI Business Park, 47100 Bandar Puchong Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia

Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to develop a scale on service quality of the Maldivian hospitality industry from the Chinese tourists’ perspective. Attributes from previous research were explored and tested to produce a new measurement scale. This combination of existing and new variables provided the platform to develop the scale. Factor analysis was used as the tool in the reduction method. The significant variables found were extracted and regrouped according to the appropriate factors in generating the new scale. Factor analysis on SERVQUAL dimensions in order to help identify which factors the Maldivian resort management and owners should focus most while attending Chinese Tourists.

Key words: Maldives • Measurement • Service quality • Factor analysis

INTRODUCTION

The number of tourist arrivals and Maldives popularity as a holiday destination has been improving over the years. However, Maldives with its years of experience in hosting international tourists has not been spared from controversies with the Chinese tourists [1]. They have vigorously expressed great dissatisfaction of their experiences while holidaying in Maldives.

An article [2] published recently helps shed some light on why Maldives may be facing these issues with Chinese Tourists. One of the facts mentioned in the article is that some Chinese travelers have not been abroad before or experienced different cultures. This fact leads them to face issues adapting to the service provided in other countries as they expect the service provided in the foreign country to be along the lines of what they have seen and experienced in their home country.

Factor analysis is conducted on SERVQUAL dimensions in order to help identify which factors the Maldivian resort management and owners are to be focused on most while attending Chinese Tourists. As aforementioned, Maldives may need to become more sensitive to the needs and wants of Chinese Tourists in order to successfully capture the highly potential market.

Service Quality: Service quality is a multi-dimensional construct and customer satisfaction also needs to be seen as a multi-dimensional construct [3]. This means that the customer satisfaction and service quality can transpire in various levels of a business. Customer satisfaction should also be handled and managed along the same factors as service quality.

As per the pioneers observation in this study[4], higher customer satisfaction happens when there is a high perceived service quality. The same way, there is a low or
no customer satisfaction when there is a low perceived service quality. It is also acknowledged that customer satisfaction depends on the level of service quality delivered by the service provider. The concept of connecting level of service quality and level of customer satisfaction has been practiced for a long time [5]. This research highlighted the need and importance of identifying and evaluating the major factors that influences the customers’ perceived service quality and also the customers’ overall satisfaction.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Quantitative approach was utilised to answer the objectives of the study. The researchers implemented quota sampling for targeting Chinese tourists above 18 years of age who have already experienced services at the resorts. After predetermining these factors, respondents in random were selected at Ibrahim Nasir International Airport and Lily Beach resort. The confidence interval was fixed at 5% and the confidence level at 95%. Based on these figures a calculation of sample size was conducted. There are five steps to determine the sample size in this method [6].

- Level of precision: ± 0.05
- Level of confidence: 95%
- Z value associated with confidence level: 1.96
- Population portion (based on Chinese tourist arrival figures 2011): \( \pi = 0.25 \)
- Determining Sample Size: 
  \[
  n = \frac{\pi(1-\pi)Z^2}{E^2}
  \]

\[
  n = \frac{0.25(1-0.25)(1.96)^2}{(0.05)^2}
  \]  

\( n = 288.12 \)  
\( n = 289 \)

Based on the above calculations the researchers targeted to collect 290 questionnaires. Factor analysis was used as a reduction technique to develop a new scale. Factor Analysis enables the researcher to work on groups of variables that tend to be correlated to each other and helps identify underlying dimensions. Factor analysis was employed to identify the most important variables. The significance of this factor analysis is that it will help identify which areas of service quality the Chinese tourists seek and value most in a service provider amongst Tangibility, Reliability and Empathy dimensions. In this research, the service providers are resort owners and their staff in Maldives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TAN1</td>
<td>.750</td>
<td>.121</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAN2</td>
<td>-.038</td>
<td>-.115</td>
<td>.892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAN3</td>
<td>.006</td>
<td>.902</td>
<td>.086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAN4</td>
<td>.461</td>
<td>.527</td>
<td>.070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REL1</td>
<td>.823</td>
<td>.041</td>
<td>.275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REL2</td>
<td>.886</td>
<td>.250</td>
<td>.056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REL3</td>
<td>.847</td>
<td>.059</td>
<td>.126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REL4</td>
<td>.772</td>
<td>.188</td>
<td>.155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REL5</td>
<td>.707</td>
<td>.499</td>
<td>.109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMP1</td>
<td>.590</td>
<td>.512</td>
<td>.531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMP2</td>
<td>.767</td>
<td>.470</td>
<td>.258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMP3</td>
<td>.246</td>
<td>.443</td>
<td>.720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMP4</td>
<td>.297</td>
<td>.485</td>
<td>.692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMP5</td>
<td>.550</td>
<td>.628</td>
<td>.440</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.  
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.  
a Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Relation Between Factors: After deciding on the number of factors, the next step in factor analysis is to identify the relationship between the factors which will help understand the relationship between the SERVQUAL dimensions most important to Chinese tourists and under which factor these dimensions fall into.

Rotated Factor Matrix: In Table 1 below, it indicates which variables are loaded into which particular factor. In simpler words which variables are more relevant to which factor. As evident from the highlighted values, TAN1, REL1, REL2, REL3, REL4, REL5, EMP1 and EMP2 belongs to Factor 1. While TAN3, TAN4, EMP5 belong to Factor 2 and TAN2, EMP3 and EMP4 belongs to Factor 3.

Naming and Interpreting Factors: Table 2 shows the name of the three factors based on the similarities of the variables in that particular factor. Factor 1 consists of TAN1 (Front desk and front office appeal), REL1 (Reservation efficiency), REL2 (Guest room arranged), REL3 (Amenities working), REL4 (Complaint handling), REL5 (Promise delivered), EMP1 (Accurate billing) and EMP2 (Care for guests). This factor is labeled as Resort and Staffs Efficiency.

According to variables in this factor Chinese tourists do give a lot of importance to physical aspects of service quality. Such as the resorts front desks, the staff’s physical appearance as well as the appearance of the resorts facilities.
Factor 2 consists of TAN3 (Resort quality), TAN4 (Cleaning and Maintenance) and EMP5 (Employees reactivity). This factor is labeled as Resort Status.

The Chinese tourists also seek luxurious aspects of service from Maldives. They expect a very high level of infrastructure and facilities that are well maintained as well as high level of service.

Finally, factor 3 consists of TAN2 (Restaurant Atmosphere), EMP3 (Identifying guests needs) and EMP4 (Language barrier). This factor is labeled as Attentiveness.

The Chinese tourists expect and want a very high attentiveness level from staff and resorts. Furthermore, they do face the issue of language barrier in Maldives. This is a very concerning factor that is significant to resort owners and service providers. The factor Analysis revealed three factors and service feature combinations to guide the resort owners and management.

The first is Resort and Staffs Efficiency. Which is about the physical aspects of service quality, such as the resorts front desks, the staff’s physical appearance to appearance of the resort’s facilities. Next is Resort Status. The Chinese tourists seek very exclusive and luxurious aspects of service from Maldives. Third is Attentiveness. The Chinese tourists expect and want a very high attentiveness level from staff and resorts. Furthermore, the Chinese tourists want to avoid or overcome the issue of language barrier in the Maldives. This is a very concerning factor that is significant to resort owners and service providers.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The service providers of Maldives need to take necessary actions to be more attentive to Chinese tourists’ needs and wants in order to provide a better service as the factor analysis revealed that the Chinese tourists value attentiveness of staff and as well as receiving exclusive and personalized service. Hence, Maldives service providers need to focus on providing a service that comprises of the aforementioned factors to meet Chinese tourists’ expectations. Genuine local communities’ participation [7-11] is essential to provide quality service that will result in sustainable tourism practice [12-13].

REFERENCES


