



## DIMENSIONS OF SERVICE QUALITY IN TOURISM: ADAPTION AND VALIDATION OF A SCALE

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### Abstract

Service Quality concept is a persistent topic for industry analysts and researchers. According to Badler services are an important element of business that must be improved in order to survive today and in the future (Badler, H. 2004). Comprehensive measurement of quality, in turn, is the key to effective quality management (Martin Fassnacht Ibrahim Koesel 2006). The aim of this paper is to study service quality dimensions in the tourism sector in order to emphasize the need for better quality services.

**Keywords; Service Quality, Dimensions of Service Quality, Tourism Sector.**

### Introduction-Indian Tourism Sector

Tourism is the world's largest and dynamic industry in today's global economy. It makes a major contribution to the economies of most developed and developing countries because it is being used as a ubiquitous vehicle for economic development and diversification and an integral element of economic development policy at a local, regional and national level (Sharpley, Richard and Telfer & David J. 2002.)

Indian tourism sector is one of the most contributing sectors to GDP (Gross Domestic Product) and foreign exchange reserve of the country. Tourism in India contributes to 9.6% to the National GDP and 9.3% of the total employment. According to WTTC 4<sup>th</sup> April 2017 report, India ranks 7<sup>th</sup> in terms of in terms of total contribution to GDP. The world tourism organization reports that the international tourism receipts in 2016 grew by US\$208.9 Billion, India with a share of 22.8 billion receipts holding 40<sup>th</sup> position in the world in terms of international visitors. Tourism has the potential to become a major source of revenue and employment generation in India. According to World Travel and Tourism Council, India will be a tourism hotspot, having the highest growth potential.

### Literature Review

Many scales have been developed to measure service quality in different service sectors and thereby identified dimensions specific to each sector. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) developed SERVQUAL battery for measuring service quality which is a widely adopted scale to measure service quality by academic and industrial practitioners. The extant literature review identifies that the SERVQUAL specific dimensions do not measure service quality in all the sectors. Niranjana and Metri (2008) challenged Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988), gap model and argued that a new paradigm was needed to accurately depict service quality in different sectors. They also suggested to instigate a separate scale for measuring service quality concept in different contexts. The earliest form of scale measuring customer satisfaction in tourism sector was developed by (Pizam, 1978). The most popular among the service quality scales is SERVQUAL a 22 item scale which was developed by Parasuraman et al. (1985). Several scales have been developed based on SERVQUAL model. Saleh and Ryan (1991) were the earliest researchers to develop a scale with 33 items which measures service quality in tourism sector by adopting SERVQUAL model. Knutson, Stevens, Wullaert, Patton, and Yokoyama (1990) developed LODGSERV an instrument which measures service quality of a lodge. Akama and Kieti (2003) and Ekinci, Prokopaki, and Cobanoglu (2003) have also developed scales based on SERVQUAL model.

In line with the above background, this study seeks to examine the dimensions measuring quality of services in tourism sector. We need to study further the factors that enable tourism corporations to entice and retain their customers.

### Method

#### Data Collection

The data has been collected from the tourists who have used the services of tourism development corporations of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana during the period January 2015 to February 2016. Using a purposive sampling technique (Lai & Chen, 2011), a total of 300 domestic tourists were interviewed. A screening question was asked ascertaining whether they have stayed at least one night in hotel during their visit in Hyderabad (70), Papikondalu (100) and Dindi (72). Out of 300 questionnaires distributed 68 questionnaires were unusable.

#### Measures

Service quality was measured using dimensions that were adapted from different studies from literature namely: Tangibility, Assurance, Reliability, and Responsiveness (Parasuraman et al., 1985), Core tourism experience (Sureshchandar, Rajendran, & Anantharaman, 2002), Hygiene (Yüksel & Yüksel, 2001).

### Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using IBMSPSS v21 software. The principal component analysis (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Malhotra, 2005) was performed with orthogonal varimax rotation to identify underlying dimensions of tourism service quality attributes. To test the measurement properties of the scale researcher first conducted reliability analysis by grouping the items according to the six priori conceptual dimensions from past literature.

### Results

An individual item analysis of the service quality scale showed that the items had a mean scores ranging from 5.42 to 5.58 and satisfactory inter-item correlation values. The sample adequacy is ensured with KMO value (.72) must exceed .50 (Joseph F. Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). Table 1 shows the factor loadings and reliability of the service quality dimensions. Principal component analysis was used as the extraction method to identify the underlying dimensions in the present study. Each group of variables was analysed using a varimax rotation, with a factor loading of .5 or above. A series of iterations was then conducted to eliminate items with low factor loadings on all factors or high cross-loadings on two or more factors. This iterative process resulted in the final service quality scale, consisting of 33 items on six dimensions, which study labelled as Reliability, Assurance, Tangibility, Core Tourism, Responsiveness and Hygiene.

**Table 1: Factor Loadings and Reliability of the Service Quality Dimensions**

	Reliability	Assurance	Tangibility	Core Tourism	Responsiveness	Hygiene	Alpha
RL2	.901						.835
RL3	.813						
RL4	.656						
RL6	.656						
RL5	.638						
RL1	.618						
AS1		.834					.832
AS5		.819					
AS2		.712					
AS3		.660					
AS4		.617					
AS6		.603					
TG5			.746				.769
TG4			.668				
TG3			.665				
TG2			.634				
TG1			.621				
TG6			.565				
CT5				.762			.729
CT4				.659			
CT3				.643			
CT1				.623			
CT2				.583			
RS3					.839		.767
RS4					.783		
RS5					.650		
RS2					.618		
RS1					.545		
HG3						.780	.630
HG4						.691	
HG1						.553	
HG5						.537	
HG2						.518	



The percentage of variance explained by the six factors are 55.52%. The computation of the Cronbach alpha, was performed separately for the six dimensions (.63 to .84)are satisfactory for service quality to ascertain the extent to which items making up each dimension shared a common core.

### Discussion

This paper has tried to measure the importance attached by a tourist to each of these dimensions and in turn at a particular destination by adapting scale for measuring the construct. Following a literature review of the existing scales for measuring service quality in tourism, it was found that existing service quality scales are either services specific, western consumer perspective, or have weak psychometric properties. The service quality scale was then purified and validated through principle component analysis and reliability analysis respectively. The final version of the tourism service quality assessment scale contains 33 items under six dimensions namely, Reliability (6 items), Assurance (6 items), Tangibility (6 items), core tourism services (5 items), Responsiveness (5 items) and Hygiene (5 items). However the further validation of scales is required in terms of tourist perception in the other part of country for generalizability.

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