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Advancement of Destination Service Quality Management Technology in Tourism industry

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ABSTRACT: In this study, the researchers have proposed, developed and tested a novel model which highlighted the effect of the Destination Service Quality (DSQ) dimensions (like local transport, accommodation, cleanliness, hospitality, different activities, airport, language communication services) on the tourist satisfaction, in UAE's tourism industry. For this purpose, the researchers distributed 700 questionnaires amongst the international tourists visiting Dubai. 565 of the 700 (i.e., 80.71%) of the valid tourist questionnaires were returned. Thereafter, the researcher carried out the multiple- regression fortesting all research hypotheses. The findings have supported all the study's hypotheses. The destination marketers, planners and managers must investigate all dimensions for developing better marketing and operational strategies.

KEYWORDS: destination service quality management, tourism industry

I. INTRODUCTION

In the past few years, the UAE government has expressed a lot of interest in the tourism sector [1]. For this purpose, they have developed an advanced infrastructure and additional facilities for fulfilling the needs of the foreign tourists, upgrading the services of the hotel sector, improving the transportation facilities and organising events and festivals for attracting more tourists [1]. UAE is an attractive tourist destination because of the luxury tourism services offered by Dubai, which has helped the country acquire international fame [2]. Thus, UAE is hugely dependent on tourism and considers it a vital non-oil economic sector [3].

In the 1970s and 80s, the oil sector contributed significantly to the GDP of the UAE [4], [5], [6]–[13], [14]. Thereafter, along with manufacturing, trade, finances, real estate and the logistics sectors, the tourism sector increased and acquired the 9th position amongst the Top 10 traveler destinations in the world. The World Tourism Organisation has regarded UAE as one of the Top-10 traveler destinations, with 15.5 million tourists visiting the country. Tourism is an imperative financial segment in the country [1]. In 2016, it contributed AED 68.5 billion (USD 18.7 billion, i.e., 5.2%) to the GDP of the country. Overall, it has made a total contribution of AED 159.1 billion (\$42.3 billion, or 12.1%) to the country's GDP. This has made UAE an attractive tourist destination for the families [15].

The tourist destinations in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are like other destinations [1]. All tourist destinations are very competitive, and constant diversifications and improvements are required for improving the general competitiveness of the international tourist places [16], [17]. Several factors increase the competitiveness of the various destinations [18], and hence, the DSQ dimensions were regarded as vital for attaining a competitive advantage. [19] have argued that the service quality and the image components were

important with regards to the destination assessment of the tourists. It was seen that the various tourist destinations displayed an advantage over others if they improved the quality of their services [17], [20].

In their study, Fornell & Wernerfelt [21] noted that a lower cost is required for maintaining the existing customers compared to engaging new ones. Reichheld [22] stated that a 5% growth in client retaining could increase revenue progress by 25–95% crossways several industries. Hence, a large proportion of the profit could be derived [23]. Furthermore, the loyal customers acted as inexpensive Word-Of-Mouth (WOM) advertising agents who could encourage their relatives, friends and other customers to purchase a specific product or service [20], [24], [25]. It was seen that the WOM referrals accounted for ≈60% of the sales to the new customers [25], [26]. Because of an exceptional return, loyalty was an important component in all the organisations [27]–[29].

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Service Quality and Destination Service Quality (DSQ):

The notion of the DSQ was a component of the ‘parental’ service quality concept that was used in many marketing studies [17]. Generally, it is regarded as the perception of the service quality that is experienced by the tourists during their stay which is measured based on the services that they still remember after they have returned to their hometown [30]. Thus, it refers to the measurement of the performance of the services which are consumed by the tourist at their destination. It must be noted that some studies use the concepts of the natural quality of the destination and DSQ, interchangeably. Also, the components of the destination and the destination quality are often used as substitutes for one another [24], [30], [31]. Thus, it was seen that the properties and the service quality of a destination are interconnected [28]. Furthermore, the destination quality is further subdivided into DSQ and the destination natural quality [24]. This study used the 7 DSQ components described by Tosun, Dedeoğlu & Fyall [17], i.e., the accommodation, Cleanliness, Local transport, Hospitality, Language communication, Activity and Airport services.



Figure 1: Destination Service Quality Components

Source: Adopted from Reichheld & Sasser [26]

B. Destination service quality and Tourist satisfaction:

The tourist perception related to the quality of the destination, their satisfaction level regarding their experiences and the resultant behavioural intention are important factors that can reflect the destination marketing and management strategies [20], [31]–[33]. The correlation between the DSQ dimensions, customer loyalty and customer satisfaction has been widely debated in the business sector. Many models were proposed and tested in different industries, even tourism. It was seen that in the leisure industry, high SQ and the resultant customer satisfaction led to a significant WOM opinion [25], [33], repeated visits and referrals which influenced the financial performance of the service providers related to the tourism sector [31], [34].

In the tourism sector, most of the empirical studies corroborated the view that the dominating quality affected customer satisfaction [29], [35]–[37]. The antecedent role played by the quality was further supported in the leisure and sports centres [38], festivals [39], cultural centres [40], and all tourist attractions at a destination [24], [41]. Additional research was performed in the event context [42], which did not observe any association among SQ (antecedents) and customer satisfaction. Lee & Chon [43] observed some inconclusive results with regards to the direction of interconnection noted among the variables when they investigated the entertainment park setting. Lee, Graefe & Burns [42] observed that the supposed SQ significantly affected traveler

satisfaction; however, they failed to clarify it. They also stated that satisfaction was dependent on many additional variables that were beyond the control of the suppliers like social group interactions and climatic conditions.

None of the earlier studies determined the effect of DSQ dimensions on the tourist satisfaction. In this study, the researchers showed that DSQ positively affected tourist satisfaction. Tosun, Dedeoğlu & Fyall [17] also noted that the above-mentioned DSQ dimensions positively affected the destination image. Many studies have noted that the destination image significantly affected tourist satisfaction levels [44]. Hence, the researchers proposed the following hypotheses:

- H1: Tourist's perceptions regarding the service quality dimensions positively affected tourist satisfaction.
- H1: Tourist's perceptions regarding a high-quality accommodation service could positively affect tourist satisfaction.
- H2: Tourist's perceptions regarding a high-quality local transport service could positively affect tourist satisfaction.
- H3: Tourist's perceptions regarding a high-quality cleanliness service could positively affect tourist satisfaction.
- H4: Tourist's perceptions regarding a high-quality hospitality service could positively affect tourist satisfaction.
- H5: Tourist's perceptions regarding a high-quality variety activities service could positively affect tourist satisfaction.
- H6: Tourist's perceptions regarding a high-quality language and communication service could positively affect tourist satisfaction.
- H7: Tourist's perceptions regarding a high-quality airport service could positively affect tourist satisfaction.

III. METHODOLOGY

Fig.1 illustrates the proposed model and the relationships among variables (DSQ- TS), These relationships are derived from Tosun, Dedeoğlu & Fyall [17] for DSQ, and Žabkar, Brenčič & Dmitrović [31] for TS.

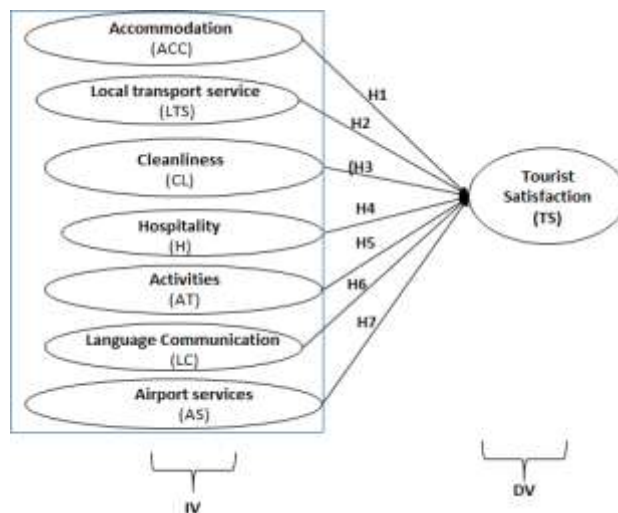


Figure 2: Proposed research model

A 35-item questionnaire was developed for this study. This study applied 7-point Likert scales. For this study, a pre-testing was conducted with 50 tourists from Dubai hotels, UAE to resolve any ambiguity associated with wording or measurement. Then the items were pilot-tested to examine their inner constancy. Out of 700 surveys administered to Dubai tourists, 565 were completed and reverted (80.71% response rate). Data collection was collected 'in-person' from April 2018 until December, 2018 to Dubai tourist.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

A. Descriptive Analysis:

The researchers distributed 700 questionnaires for the Dubai’s international tourists. The valid questionnaires returned are 565 (80.71%) out of 700. Results revealed that male percentage is 42.83%, and female represents 57.17% international tourists. The majority of the participants of international tourists range from 40 to 49 years old. As Table 1 presents that 35.9 % of the respondents were aged 40 to 49 years, 31.5 % from 36 to 35 years. Surprisingly, the highest nationality for those tourists is Indian (more than 23%). On the other hand, the second highest nationality is Saudi almost 19%, see Table 1. Key demographics are presented in Table 1.

Table1: Respondents Profile

		Freq.	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	242	42.83
	female	323	57.17
Age	Less than 20	42	7
	20-29	117	21
	30-39	131	23.2
	40-49	203	35.9
	50 years and Over	72	12.8
Nationality	Indian	131	23.2
	Saudi	107	18.9
	British	97	17.2
	Omani	63	11.2
	American	56	9.9
	Others	111	19.9
Total		565	100%

B. Hypotheses Tests:

Regression test was implemented to test the study hypotheses through observing at the beta-value (B) and R2. Results in Table 2 show that the 7-hypotheses are accepted. ACC, LTS, CL, H, AT, LC, and AS, significantly predict tourist satisfaction. Henceforth, H1 to H7 are accepted with (B=0.156, t=3.258, P<0.01), (B=0.094, t=2.313, P<0.05), (B=0.139, t=3.307, P<0.01), (B=0.262, t=6.387, P<0.001), (B=0.220, t=5.354, P<0.001), (B=0.108, t=2.752, P<0.01), and (B=0.117, t=2.569, P<0.05) respectively. Based on the standardized path coefficient's results, Hospitality (H) is the most important indicator for tourist satisfaction. Destination service quality dimensions are explaining 26.2 % of the variance in TS.

Table 2: Hypotheses Tests

Hyp.		Std Beta	Std Error	t-value	p-value	R ²
H1	ACC -> TS	.156	.048	3.258	.001	
H2	LTS -> TS	.094	.040	2.313	.021	0.262
H3	CL -> TS	.139	.042	3.307	.001	
H4	H -> TS	.262	.041	6.387	.000	
H5	AT -> TS	.220	.041	5.354	.000	
H6	LC -> TS	.108	.039	2.752	.006	
H7	AS -> TS	.117	.045	2.569	.010	

V. DISCUSSION

Based on the earlier studies that were published in the service and tourism sectors, this study has explored the various mechanisms used by the service quality for affecting the tourist satisfaction of the international tourists to Dubai. In this study, the researchers stated that the tourists were likely to revisit a destination if the service quality was satisfactory. To the best knowledge of the researchers, this was the first study which developed and investigated the effect of the DSQ dimensions on tourist satisfaction in the Middle East context.

The seven sub-hypotheses related to the accommodation, local transport, cleanliness, hospitality, leisure activities, language and communication, airport services. Results presented in table 2 highlighted the positive relationship between the various DSQ dimensions and tourist satisfaction. There are no studies which have investigated these factors in the UAE context. Furthermore, similar results were reported earlier by Myo, Khalifa & Aye [20], and Trung & Khalifa [24], who investigated the event sport tourism sector. They noted a positive correlation between 4 DSQ dimensions like - (1) contest quality (denoted by the process and product of the contest); (2) venue quality (that consisted of the interactions, values and environment), (3) accommodation quality (consisting of the interactions, environment, and value), and (4) access quality (including an access to the hotel, sports venue and destination). The results indicated that destination service quality factors effect on tourist satisfaction.

It was seen that the hospitality and activities dimensions could affect the satisfaction of the tourists; followed by the accommodation and the cleanliness. However, the language and communication showed the least effect on the tourist satisfaction. These results were dissimilar to those presented by Tosun, Dedeoğlu & Fyall [17], who noted that the language and communication showed the highest effect on the tourists' intention to revisit a location.

VI. IMPLICATIONS

It has been shown that the inbound tourism (i.e., international tourists who visited UAE) played a vital role in increasing the employment, economy, image and infrastructure of the country. As UAE targets a higher share in global tourism, the government aims to attract the maximal number of foreign tourists. In this study, the researchers have proposed a theory that could help the government, tourism managers and marketers to develop effective strategies for developing the services and products related to the tourism sector [45], [46],.

The destination planners, managers and marketers must know that the favorable perception related to the DSQ increases the revisiting intentions of the tourists if the tourists are satisfied with the service quality offered and have a positive perception about destination image. Thus, improving the service quality, based on increasing tourist satisfaction and destination image, offered a competitive advantage related to the tourist destination, which helped them retain the existing tourists and even attract new tourists, thereby generating higher income [47], [48].

Additionally, the outcomes of the current research propose that tourism's senior managers need to concentrate on increasing satisfaction and destination image level of their tourists by providing higher service quality. Destination service quality management method delivered to tourists that aids travelers increase their positive experience, which is essential in the highly industry competitiveness [49]. The travel industry directors who consider service quality to be a continuing venture or a futile consumption tend not to apportion adequate assets, while in reality it is the exact inverse. Additionally, the results of SQ upgrade projects ought to be assessed in different ways, for example, through client overviews, peer studies, and supervisors' assessments [50], [51], [52].

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