CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter established the managerial and academic importance of the topic under study and the issues related to it. The objective of this chapter is to provide a critical overview of the various literatures relevant to the issues of service quality, service expectations and perceptions of customer, customer satisfaction and measurement of service quality within the context of tourism sector.

First a historical perspective of service quality is discussed followed by a discussion of definitions and various relationships between service quality and customer expectations, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty and price. Dimensions of service quality are discussed next. Various scales to measure service quality are then discussed followed by its pros and cons.

Next portion discusses various scales exclusively developed for measuring service quality in tourism industry in developed and developing economies respectively. Some of these scales are based on SERVQUAL while some are developed without using SERVQUAL as base.

Third part discusses about the latest research undertaken in the same field by other researchers in India and Abroad. Time frame selected is 2008-2014.

2.2 QUALITY AND SERVICE QUALITY

Quality is widely defined as the performance of product or service (Churchill & Surprenant 1982). As O ‘Neill (2001) stated Quality is defined through customers and takes place only when organization supplies goods or services that specifies their needs. There, it can be said that quality is in the eyes of beholder as stated by Martin (2005). As for service quality, it is generally agreed that service qualities an attitude towards the service performance.( Robinson, 1999) . Moreover, perception of service quality is a specific to an individual service encounter.
It is the gap between expectations and perceptions provides a way to analyze the level of services rendered, so that effective actions can be taken to enhance service quality. Customers hold different types of expectations about services: the highest expectations can be termed as the level of service those customers wishes to receive. They explained that the threshold or the bottom level of acceptable performance of service is called “adequate services”. According to Johnson (1994) service quality disconformation model consist of three variables:

**Dissatisfaction**- resulting from poor perceived service quality

**Delight**- resulting from good or high quality and

**Satisfaction**- arising from sufficient quality.

Services are heterogeneous and the level to which customer is ready to accept the variation from what is perceived is Zone of Tolerance. If service is behind this ZOT, it will result in customer dissatisfaction. If performance is higher than zone of tolerance it will result in customer satisfaction. Thus ZOT can be defined as a range where customers notice performances. Martin (2005) used the example of airline travelers to explain how different customers have different zone of tolerance. Travelers getting late for check in are more likely to get irritated than those who came in time. Such passengers will have higher zone of tolerance.

Zone of tolerance also varies between various dimensions of services. There is an inverse relation between the importance of service dimension and zone of tolerance. More important is the service dimension narrower will be ZOT. Service quality has these four unique characteristic: intangibility, heterogeneity, inseparability of production and consumption and Perishability. Quality of service is an opinion or attitude exhibited by a firm and customer satisfaction is specific to the encounter of individual towards service.

**2.3 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION**

For sustaining competitive advantage customer satisfaction has been the most important tool in the hands of the company for survival. It is considered as the most
important strategy because it results in attracting new customers and this retaining and getting more business from existing one.

Customer satisfaction can be defined as an outcome or a process. As an outcome it is the end state resulting from consumption experience. Researchers have defined it as an outcome of purchase and use resulting from the comparison between rewards and cost of purchase. Customer satisfaction can also be defined as an evaluation of experience of service rendered. In Tse and Wilton’s definition (1998) three components of customer satisfaction can be:

- Customer expectation
- Perceived performance
- Gap between the two variables stated above.

Whether a customer’s positive expectation are met or negative, result is moderate satisfaction. First one is derived from positive confirmation and later is derived from negative. More specifically an individuals’ expectations positively filled when product or service performs as expected and negatively filled when it performs poorly than what is expected. This paradigm of confirmation and disconformation leads to emotional reaction.

2.4 THE DEBATE ABOUT CONCEPTUAL MEASUREMENT OF SERVICE QUALITY AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Customer satisfaction is derived from Latin word satis meaning enough and Facere meaning to make or do which implies that satisfaction leads to some kind of fulfillment. Bolton and Drew (1991 a, b) define overall satisfaction as a function of satisfaction with multiple experiences in the organization. Customer satisfaction is specific to an individual service encounter while service quality is an overall attitude towards the firm.

Also there is a disagreement as to whether two facts belong at the transaction specific or the global end of continuum, with one end representing satisfaction and other end representing global attitude. There are two schools of thoughts. First one says that
quality lends to customer satisfaction whereas the second group says that satisfaction leads to overall quality perceptions.

2.4.1 Customer Satisfaction and Service Quality

Few study initiated the idea that customer satisfaction can arise due to any dimension whether related to quality or not and its judgment may arise from non quality issues and require experience with service provider. Given this nature of satisfaction concept and generally recognized orientation of customer satisfaction mainly as behavioral response by the literature, research point towards the popular concept of service quality through which customer satisfaction can be better analyzed. However it is still debatable that whether customer satisfaction is an antecedent of service quality judgment or service quality is an antecedent of customer satisfaction.


However these dimensions were reduced to five as: Reliability, Assurance, Tangibles, Empathy and Responsiveness (Parasuraman. et al. 1998). SERVQUAL has been used by different researchers and in various studies conducted in hospitals, banking, and business school placement centers etc. Scale has limited application in financial services; it however remains as a scale that could be applied to measure service quality.

Ha and Jang (2009) argues that service failure occurs when perception do not meet expectations. Service failure may lead to a destroyed relationship between customer and organization. It is argued that service failure may lead to destroy the relationship between the consumer and organization. Gronroos (1983) argues that when consumers and service provider are in direct contact there are many factors that affect the level of satisfaction. In service production there is an extensive involvement of people that results into non standardization which do not exist in
production of service. According to Zeithaml and Bitner (2003), satisfaction is the consumer fulfillment response. It is an opinion that product or service feature provides a pleasurable level of consumption related fulfillment. Satisfaction as a broader concept than service quality includes both cognitive and affective evaluation while service quality is a cognitive procedure. Even though service quality and customer satisfaction are identical its similarity has been questioned. The idea of linking service quality with customer satisfaction has existed for a long time. Both the concepts have positive impact on word of mouth publicity and repurchase intention. Satisfaction positively affects post purchase behavior whereas service quality influences repurchase intentions

2.5 MEASUREMENT OF SERVICE QUALITY AND DEVELOPMENT OF SERVQUAL

It is generally argued that quality does not improve unless measured. It is mentioned that quality programs are one of the most powerful means of improving customer satisfaction, loyalty, competitiveness and profitability.

Since the measurement of Service Quality was so crucial, Parasuraman et al (1998) developed the 22 items instrument called SERVQUAL for accessing customers’ perception about service quality in service organizations. Initial 10 dimensions were reduced to five: Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Empathy and Assurance. Purifying SERVQUAL took two stages.

2.5.1 Dimensions of SERVQUAL

- **Tangibles:** include physical tangible elements including appearance of personal.
- **Reliability:** is all about the ability to perform services accurately and dependably.
- **Responsiveness:** it is the willingness to help customers and providing them prompt services.
- **Assurance:** it refers to the ability of employees to convey their trust and confidence to customers.
- **Empathy:** includes caring and individualized attention to customers.
Dimensions of assurance and empathy contain items that represent the following seven dimensions from original scales: communication, credibility, security, competence, courtesy, understanding the consumers and access. It means that SERVQUAL can be used across a broad spectrum of services and can be adopted or supplemented to fit to any needs of an organization.

SERVQUAL was revised based on empirical study conducted in different service companies. Original version of the scale used to produce unrealistic results so it was modified accordingly. Revised version focused on consumers’ expectations from the companies in delivering excellent services. They gave guidelines for correct usage this scale. It was further suggested that items which do not fall in any of the five dimensions should be treated separately and can be supplemented with quantitative and qualitative research uncovering the causes of gaps.

2.6 ALTERNATIVE METHODS TO MEASURE SERVICE QUALITY

a) Critical Incident Technique

Critical incident technique is an alternative way of measuring how customers perceive the quality of a given service. It has proved to be an important method of throwing light on defects in service quality. This method was first introduced by Flanagan in 1954. Study by Bitner et.al. In 1990 conducted a study and investigated source of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in service encounter. Under this method customers have to think about the situations where they felt exceptionally good or bad about any service encounter that becomes critical incidents. Reasons of why these situations were considered critical are also asked. With this the researcher can easily identify the factors that are perceived as important from consumers’ point of view and can easily explore the problem areas. CIT is just like a qualitative interview procedure that helps in identifying significant incidences. Objective is to gain understanding about the incident from the perspective of individual.

b) Importance Performance Analysis

This method was developed by Martilla and James in 1977. In this method the relative important attributes are first identified then how the company is performing on these
attributes are analyzed. In any service organization it is important to identify the important attributes as perceived by consumers. Performance of the companies on these attributes will help in measuring the level of customer satisfaction. Hudson et al. (2004) mentioned that IPA is a procedure that shows the relative importance of service attributes and performance of companies on these attributes. Process of IPA includes identifying the attributes, asking questions from respondents on these attributes like how it is important and how did they find the performance of the companies on these attributes. Results can be displayed graphically on a two dimension grid that makes the result easy to interpret.

c) Kano Model

This model was developed by Professor Noriaki Kano and is based on the Herzberg’s Motivator- Hygiene Theory. But due to this terminology it becomes difficult to interpret. Therefore, Kano redefined the attributes as attractive quality elements, one dimension element, must be quality element, indifferent quality elements and reverse quality elements. It was pointed out by Merger et. al. (1993) about the model that a customer idea about quality is often confusing and difficult to comprehend but it can be made clear. In this model the product attributes are classified on the basis of how they are perceived by customers and their effect on customer satisfaction. Kano has presented a model that defines attributes which not only meet or exceed expectations but also delight them.

Attributes are classified as:

**The Must be** attributes which consumers think must be fulfilled. If it’s not fulfilled then it will cause high dissatisfaction but fulfilling will not lead to any increase in satisfaction level. For example while buying a long route bus ticket if a passenger does not find a seat it will cause high level of dissatisfaction but finding a seat will not increase his satisfaction level as this is the basic expectation.

**The One Dimensional or Performance Quality** is the second type of quality where there is a linear relationship between performance and product attribute. Higher performance will lead to higher satisfaction and lower performance will result in
dissatisfaction. Most of the verbalized needs of the consumers will fall in this category

**The Attractive or Excitement Quality** is unspoken and unexpected by the consumers and that is why their presence will increase satisfaction level but absence will not cause any dissatisfaction. These attributes aims at latent needs which are hidden and not visible on the front. In the competitive environment where more or less all the providers are providing same type of services, this attribute can help a company to earn competitive advantage. These are also known as delighters.

### 2.7 RESEARCH ON SCALE DIMENSIONS TO MEASURE SERVICE QUALITY IN TOURISM

This section discusses the various scales that have been developed in the past to measure service quality and/ or customer satisfaction in tourism. These scales can be classified into two categories, those based on SERVQUAL and those that are not.

#### 2.7.1 Scales Based On SERVQUAL (In Developed Countries):

One of the earliest works related to development of scale for measuring service quality in tourism sector is done by Saleh and Ryan (1991). They developed a 33 item scale to measure service quality in hospitality industry using SERVQUAL model. The scale sought to reflect the basic premise of SERVQUAL. It was tested in Canada. The authors selected the items or sub dimensions appropriate to each of the five dimensions of SERVQUAL. Therefore, items that do not come under the purview of SRVQUAL were left out. Previous researchers have found evidence that SERVQUAL is not the true representative of service quality dimensions for other industries. Knutson et al. (1991) also used SERVQUAL for creating an instrument which is lodging specific known as LODGESERV that consist of 26 items specially created to measure consumers expectation about service quality in a hotel. As it is specifically aimed at lodging facility, its usage cannot be generalized.

Atilgan et al. (2003) have mapped service quality in tourism industry and have compared the perception of German and Russian tourists using SERVQUAL but with a different approach. This study employed correspondence analysis as new technique
on quality dimensions. This study presents a geographical interpretation of the data gathered through SERVQUAL to assist managerial decision making in tourism industry.

The study revealed that correspondence analysis can be used effectively in evaluating the service quality and displaying the differences in the expectations/ perceptions of distinct consumer group. Tour operators should consider cultural differences in service quality evaluations. However it was observed that even though correspondence analysis can allow easy visualization of the differences between items being considered, it cannot provide exact distance between the items. Hence, it would be better to combine it with other statistical techniques like MDS.

Costa et al. (2004) have studied the customer satisfaction aspect in resort hotels of Greece by focusing on recreational services. The researchers have studied an important attribute of European resort hotels which is hotel animation that includes leisure, fitness and sport activities and live entertainment. Researchers agree that tourism is a totality of experiences rather than a set of services. Animation in resort hotels can be respected in this fashion as a component of the total travel experience, which creates the socio-psychological environment. There is a conflict in the role and concept of recreation and animation services in the Greek hotel industry. Although they are supposed to be free of charge, they are engaged and assessed mainly for reasons of profit among other food, beverage and entertainment services. Evaluation should be a long term. Holistic process to examine all the aspects of a product as soon as it is defined by users and suppliers.

Mohammed G. (2006), in his study has analyzed the service quality of travel agents to present the view point of tourists in Egypt. Study was based on SERVQUAL and concluded that customers’ expectations of service quality exceeded their perception with the tangibility dimension having the highest gap. The result of factor analysis suggested five factors namely responsiveness, reliability, empathy, resources and corporate image, and tangibility to be considered. The result of regression analysis indicated that resources and corporate image is the most important factor influencing customers overall satisfaction as the partial correlation coefficient followed by the responsiveness factor, reliability, tangibility and empathy respectively.
2.7.2 Scales Based on Other Models

Otto and Ritchie in 1996 developed a scale in hotels, airlines, tours and attractions in Canada using factor analysis to identify the dimensions of services. Identified factors included peace of mind, involvement and recognition. However, the items used in this scale do not reflect a tourist’s experience, with the different entities in the value chain.

Another scale was developed by Diaz- Martin in 2000 in Spain to examine and check if expectations for quality can be used for market segment. Scale consisted of 22 items that represented rural tourism services. It loaded five factors namely employees’ professionalism, tangible element, complementary offers, primary benefits and locations.

Burns et al. (2003), conducted a study in United States of America by using a 19 item scale representing facilities, information, services and experiences. The scale was deployed for examining the ratings and importance of individuals on the attributes of water based recreation activities focusing on water sports and thus narrowing its scope.

In their study of analyzing the perception of tourists visiting UAE first time and those visiting again, Anwar and Sohail (2004) captured the travel experience using nine questions to measure the satisfaction level, five questions for factors that helped them in deciding UAE as alternative destination, six questions measuring the attractiveness of UAE as a tourist destinations and 11 questions for finding events visited/ not visited.

Lee and Chen in 2006 used Kano’s model for measuring and evaluating the service quality of hot spring hotels in Taiwan. Traditional model found that if service providers provide what consumers expect, it will lead to satisfaction. However two dimensional models identified the fact that only delivering what is expected will not help in any way. Factor analysis was done for reducing the variables and three main factors were identified- environment equipment factor, hot spring correlation factor and transport convenience.
2.7.3 Scales Based On SERVQUAL (In Developing Countries):

Antilgan et al. (2003) measured service quality in tourism in Antalya, Turkey. They used SERVQUAL scale based scale with 26 items that will fit into framework. Ekinci et al. in 2003 identified features of British tourists who have visited Crete and assessed their perception of service quality related to accommodation facilities by employing modified version of SERVQUAL.

The scale consisted of two dimensions: tangibles and intangibles measuring only the performance and the findings clearly validated the reliability of the modified scale and came up with the conclusion that service quality of accommodation in islands had two dimensions: tangibles and intangibles.

Prabhaharan et al (2003) in their study done in Kerala (India) found out that the meditating factor for service quality of domestic and foreign tourists is totally different. The tangibility dimension of SERVQUAL influences domestic tourists and the responsiveness dimension influences the foreign tourists. They have used six dimensions in order to measure quality in tourism in Kerala: Assurance, Responsiveness, Reliability, Service Responsibility, Tangibility dimension and Service product dimension. The researcher concluded that Kerala tourism staffs have got a low impact of commitment towards the domestic as well as foreign tourists.

2.7.4 Scales using other models (Developing Economies)

HOLSAT was developed by Tribe and Snaith in 1998 that studied satisfaction through expectation performance analysis. This instrument was used to measure service quality in Cuba. This instrument has 56 items covering facilities of nightlife, bar, restaurants, shopping options, hotel meal, prices, access to heritage and culture, pollution and service quality. Due to the small sample size (102), the results could not be generalized. However, the instrument ignored several important attributes like amenities (money exchange, internet, etc.)

Chaudhary in 2000 conducted a study for determining perceptions of tourists before and after the visit with India as tourist destinations. Sample areas included Delhi, Pune and Chandigarh and data was collected using 20 factors or attributes that
included: cheap destinations, cheap shopping facilities, good quality deluxe hotels, hospitality to tourists, proper transportation facilities, reliable train services, closeness to nature, safety issues, country of cheaters, poor guide services, proper transportation facilities, quality of roads, unhygienic conditions to name a few.

Edward (2006) has used attribute based approach for studying service quality of tourist destinations in Kerala. Perception was measured on the following attributes: availability of tourist information, quality of accommodation, activities for fun and excitement, basic facilities near tourist attraction spots etc.

Daneshwar et.al. in his study has evaluated service quality in tourism industry based on customer satisfaction and expectation in Mysore (India) by using case study approach. They did a gap analysis to find out the perception and expectation gap on the following 16 dimensions: Catering, safety, people attitude, staff attitude, price, hygiene, food, quietness, cultural level, availability of information, religious places, shopping places, guidance, historical building, festival and accommodation. The results showed that overall expectations of hotel guests are higher than their perception. The study shows that an important driver of customer retention is service quality. Where price and safety perceptions are poor, there is potential for improving service quality to a significant increase in rate of retention. However, where negative price per perceptions are associated with high perception of service quality, alone it will be inadequate to retain customers.

2.8 LATEST STUDY ON MEASURING SERVICE QUALITY IN TOURISM INDUSTRY IN INDIA AND ABROAD (2008-2014)

Ababneh (2013) in his study concluded that quality of services offered by tourism positively affect tourist satisfaction by increasing their accessibility to destination facilities and attractions. The study findings concluded that service quality has great effect on tourist satisfaction.

It was also found that tourists in Petra are moderately satisfied with the level of tourism services. This study confirmed the results of Abu Ali and Vajčnerová et. Al. (2014) in their study on Quality management of the tourist destination concluded that aspect of transport accessibility; culture and societal values are the factors for which
visitors were satisfied. And according to the analysis of the secondary data based on the information about the destinations tourists expectations from these two factors are high. This suggests an interesting fact: with fulfilled expectations of tourists, the visitors might have no expectations about specific factors.

Phusit et. al (2013) in their study highlighted the service expectations by utilizing a SERVQUAL scale that was validated. The findings revealed that Competitiveness represents the standard of service quality and accreditation is the first priority of expectation of customers of hotel.

The research work of Narangajavana and Hu suggested that Royal Thai Government motivated hotels of all star levels to take steps towards improvement in service quality to stimulate their involvement. Research was designed to measure the expectations for hotel services using a quantitative method applying modified version of SERVQUAL. Three dimensions that are different from the dimensions of SERVQUAL are Confidence, Professionalism and Competitiveness but two original dimensions Empathy and Tangibles remains same. LODGESERV scale has eight items in Empathy dimensions and seven items in the international version of LODGESERV.

Prabhakaran et. al. (2003) in the study on Kerala tourism industry examined the following mentioned SERVQUAL dimensions:

(1) **Assurance:**

- Served by proper personnel.
- Reassuring tourist confidence
- Experienced and competent hotel escorts
- Proper and understandable communication.

(2) **Responsiveness:**

- Problem solving attitude towards tourists;
- Providing adequate information to tourists;
- Responsiveness towards tourists’ request;
• Willingness to help tourists and advising them to use their free time properly.

(3) Reliability:

• Doing things right with the first time;
• Delivering promises;
• Providing error free services;
• No unwanted increase in tour cost

(4) Responsible Service:

• Pleasant natured personnel;
• Understanding individual’s specific needs
• Cultivating friendly relations.

(5) Tangibility:

• Modern and updated vehicles;
• Attractive accommodation facilities;
• Availability of information;
• Good quality meals

(6) Service Dimension:

• Easy contact on arrival to airport/ railway stations.
• Easy contact with hotel personnel;
• Services delivered on time;

Sofi et.al (2014) in their study of measuring tourist satisfaction in Jammu & Kashmir examined examines service quality and tourist satisfaction in Gulmarg, one of the famous tourist destinations of J&K tourism. From the regression analysis it was revealed that facilities and infrastructure were vital components of service quality influencing tourist satisfaction. The findings can be used as a benchmark element to make a comparison with other research studies to be undertaken during the seasons
and will help various stakeholders of J&K Tourism in designing future marketing strategies.

Markovic et.al. (2014) studied customer satisfaction and service quality in health tourism market. It is obvious that patients have high level of expectations for medical services for cleanliness of equipment, devices and hospital as a whole. Result indicated gaps in all the dimensions of SERVQUAL.

Kapiki (2012) in his study concluded that quality and high level of services are associated with tourism and hospitality industry. Quality is a long term commitment that results cost but lower than of non quality. Managers should prioritize towards quality improvement process.

Musinguzi et. al. (2010) study found that of all the services examined, tourists in Hong Kong were mostly satisfied with railway services which is not only fast and convenient but also less prone to problems with communications

Suwunniponth (2013) in his study on quality of online tourism revealed that the mean scores of the expectation in all categories were lower than the mean scores of the level of satisfaction. This implied that customers had high expectations and the e-commerce enterprises need to enhance their service quality. The fact that tourist customers were more satisfied with ecommerce than without indicated that there is a good potential future for more customers to accept the business transactions on e-commerce online. The demographic factors of education, occupation, and income had high influence the level of satisfaction. This can be explained by the fact that the majority of respondents had high education, and their occupation required skills in using the computer and internet. It pointed out that each occupation of a high skill level often lead to the different needs and wants in terms of goods and services. Therefore, these customers required the sellers to recognize their differences of needs. The findings also disclosed that the level of satisfaction in responsiveness to customers or tourists affected e-commerce quality the most.

Moharrer et.al. (2013) discussed the drivers of satisfying customer in case of on line tourism. E- Satisfaction has a great role in retaining customers that helps in
maximizing profits for the organization. However, no research has investigated the predictors of online satisfaction in tourism industry.

D’Silva et. al. (2008) studied perception of tourists by understanding factors that are collectively responsible for boosting country’s economic situations. Results indicated that perceived attractiveness for a destination depends on factors: Outdoor activities, natural beauty, culture and tradition, diversity in culture, historic sites, place of worship etc. This study represented a step further towards better understanding of the development of India in relationship of tourist industry and foreign tourists.

Kariru et. al. (2014) in their study studied customers’ perception and expectations of service quality in hotels in Kenya. It is evident that gap exists between customers’ perception and expectations of service quality standards of hotels. Findings indicated that actual services were less than expected service in 18 variables. Dimensions that have the greatest impact on customers’ satisfaction are responsiveness and empathy, reliability, tangibles and assurance. Dimensions of tangibles and reliability, empathy, assurance and accuracy emerged as the dimensions that require improvement. Findings indicated that hotels have to improve their service quality and should adapt to customers’ expectations to increase their satisfaction level.

Dargah (2012) found the factors that determine the convenience in E-tourism can increase the convenience of customers while they are using E-tourism. The factors are: time efficiency, purchasing availability any time and anywhere, direct link to information and customer service. The result shows the management of tourism website and E-tourism firms, that how they will be able to increase the convenience of their customers which as a result will increase customer satisfaction, retention, loyalty and finally the profit of the organization. Moreover the next phase of our research which was survey, determined that how the current E-tourism has satisfied customers in respect of these five factor. The result shows that convenience of purchasing anytime is the factor that has satisfied customers the most. On the other hand customer service in E-tourism could not satisfy customers, more than traditional travel agencies. As the result showed, lack of customer service is a threat for the E-tourism firms; however it can be converted to an opportunity for E-tourism organizations to gain more online customers by offering better services comparing with the traditional travel agencies. The authors suggest further research on determining the services
which can be offered to the customers, in order to enhance customer services in online tourism. Moreover, this research mentioned the advantages and disadvantages of E tourism but still there is a need for finding the barriers of running E-tourism by the tourism organizations especially in Iran.

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