

Mediating Role Of Destination Image Between Service Quality Dimensions And Tourist Satisfaction

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Abstract

This study investigates how service quality dimensions have impact on tourist satisfaction. It also examines the mediating effect of destination image. Findings showed that destination image mediates the relationship between service quality determinants and tourist satisfaction as well as destination image mediates the relationship between human elements, non-human, core services, services capes and social responsibility factors with tourist satisfaction. Service quality have +VE relationship with tourist satisfaction. These findings provide theoretical and practical implications for Tourist satisfaction.

Keywords; service quality dimensions, destination image, tourist satisfaction.

1. Introduction

According to a World Tourism and Travel Council "study on the future of the industry," the COVID-19 pandemic has shifted travelers' attention away from abroad travel and toward local travel, as well as nature and outdoor vacation regions (Behsudi, 2020). The outbreak has had a particularly devastating impact on the tourism business in Pakistan, with 60–70 percent fewer tours predicted to travel in 2020 alone (Hussain, 2020). Furthermore, according to the Asian Development Bank's 2020 research, Pakistan's tourism industry will lose \$5.8 million in 2020. As a result, the tourism industry is seeking a new strategy that will ensure not just stability and survival, but also future growth potential. The hotel industry is not only popular around the world, but it is also becoming one of the most competitive (Presbury, 2009).

The phrase "tourism industry" presented the concept of a "market basket," which highlighted how

travelers select local goods and services while visiting a tourist location (Lee, Wall, & Kovacs, 2015). According to theorists, the concept of offering quality service in order to satisfy customers and increase customer loyalty has long been predicated on assumptions about how people perceive higher quality service (Bowen & Chen, 2001).

According to Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) service quality model appears to be widely accepted for its applicability in assessing the quality of services provided by organizations. Where tourists' perceptions of tourist sites are crucial (Ruiz, Gonzalez, & Zamora, 2018). According to the most recent Tourism Marketing standards, the creation of a tourist destination's image is based on the consumer's reasoning and emotionality, and is the result of the interaction of two key components or dimensions, namely perceptual/cognitive and affective emotions (Stojanovic, Andreu, & Curries-Perez, 2018).

The attributes of a destination's resources and attractions that attract tourists determine its image (Stojanovic, Andreu, & Cures-Perez, 2018). Service quality is a fuzzy and difficult to measure notion, unlike commodity quality, which can be objectively validated by variables such as longevity and fault count (Brown, Churchill & Peter, 1993). Ground-breaking research on the image of tourists' destinations undertaken in the 1970s and 1980s revealed basic theoretical and conceptual limitations that must be addressed (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993). Destination settings are constantly changing and overlapping, necessitating greater investigation and examination (Lv & McCabe, 2020). Examining the relationship between tourism service quality and tourist satisfaction via destination image is a critical area of research, according to the literature, because it allows researchers to gain a better understanding of the relationship (Ruiz, Gonzalez, & Zamora, 2018). Whereas tourist literature has prioritized service quality, tourism scholars and practitioners have not prioritized the consumer experience (Chen & Rahman, 2018; Sangpikul, 2018). According to Sanchez-Rebull, Rudchenko, and Martn (2018), little research has been conducted on the effect of service delivery on tourist satisfaction and destination image in non-western, collectivist countries. Prior research has focused on the quality of tourism services and marketing tourism-related goods (the supply side), rather than on tourists and addressing their needs (the demand side).

Few empirical studies have been conducted to assess the relationship between the quality attributes of tourism services and satisfaction (Chenini & Tsai 2018; Khuong & Phuong, 2017). Furthermore, little is known about the relationship between tourist service quality dimensions and visitor satisfactions, as well as the impact of these dimensions on the deployment of a destination image as a mediator (Ruiz, Gonzalez & Zamora, 2018). There have been no previous studies that investigate tourists' perceptions of service quality, as well as satisfaction, in developing country tourism industry environments (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020).

This study's primary objective is to investigate the role of service quality determinants in predicting

tourist satisfaction among tourists through the lens of destination image. The goal of this research is to create a comprehensive model that demonstrates how higher service quality given by Pakistan's tourism sector can increase tourist satisfaction.

2. Theoretical foundation and Literature review

Parasuraman et al., (1985) serve as the foundation for this study in terms of service quality theory. In a variety of research, the Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT) model has been found to be useful at predicting behavioral intentions and consumer satisfaction levels (Han & Hyun, 2012). Han & Hyun (2012) proposed that other characteristics be examined in order to further define customers' active participation in service marketing. The ECT theory was chosen as the foundation for this study in order to build a framework for better understanding of tourist satisfaction and destination image.

2.1 Determinants of Services Quality

According to a number of different researches, the term "service quality" has been used to refer to a variety of distinct things. For example, Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985) defined service quality as the contrast of client expectations and client perceptions of service. Cronin and Taylor (1992) define attitude toward service quality as a long-term, thorough assessment. This appears to be consistent with Roest and Pieters' (1997) definition of service quality as a relativistic and cognitive gap between performance in terms of service benefits and performance against experience-based norms (Roest & Pieters, 1997).

Researchers have made an effort to determine the critical dimensions and attributes that consumers use when evaluating service quality (Loonam & O'loughlin, 2008; Kang & James, 2004). As a result, some academics have worked to improve the current literature on service quality by investigating service quality dimensions or enhancing service quality models, among other techniques. Perceived service quality is a challenging term to grasp (Zaibaf, Taherikia & Fakharian, 2013). There are numerous dimensions that can be used to describe the content

or character of service quality, as well as divergent expert perspectives (Berry, Parasuraman & Zeithaml, 1988). Understanding the service quality dimensions enables the determination of which service quality variables are more influential in the formulation of consumer expectations (Brady & Cronin, 2001). According to Kang and James (2004), service quality factors can be used to assess performance in service organizations by determining which aspects are most critical for defining, measuring, and improving consumer perceived service quality.

2.2 Destination Image

Assaker (2011) defines the destination image as "the overall perception of the destination that is formed over time by processing information from various sources such as ideas or perceptions about a destination held individually or collectively by people. Despite significant research on the concept since the early 1970s (Stepchenkova & Mills, 2010), empirical validation of the relationship between the various characteristics of destination image remains elusive. Destination image as having three key components: cognitive, affective, and conative elements (Asgarnezhad, Nemati, & Abbasgholizadeh, 2019; Ruiz, Gonzalez, & Zamora, 2018; Jeong & Kim, 2019). However, the dimensions of the target image can be investigated separately to have a better understanding of its total complexity (Lee & Xie, 2011).

2.3 Tourist Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction, which has been recognized as the most important factor influencing loyalty in relation to the existence of a destination image (Jeong & Kim, 2019; Chenini & Touaiti, 2018). Personal satisfaction with tourists' experiences, as well as the growing importance of satisfaction in determining whether or not a tourist is willing to pay for an experience, are dependent on tourist and service provider partnership (Gronroos, 1990).

Examining the relationship between tourism service quality and tourist satisfaction via destination image is a critical area of research, according to the literature, because it allows researchers to gain a

better understanding of the relationship (Ruiz, Gonzalez, & Zamora, 2018; Khuong & Phuong, 2017). A pleasing reply to customers' services and products is satisfaction (Kozak & Rimmington, 2000; Kuo et al., 2016; Oliver et al., 1997). According to Gronroos (1990) the result of the existing quality of the tourism services and product is satisfaction while Parasuraman et al. (1985) stated that one of the most important topics of the tourism sector is becoming tourist's satisfaction, understanding the factor that influences tourist satisfaction is crucial (Yoon & Uysal, 2005).

3. Hypothesis development

3.1 Mediating role of destination image between service quality determinants and tourists' satisfaction.

Many researchers, like Parasuraman et al. (1985), have found that improving the quality of service provided by facilities increases consumer satisfactions. Higher service levels offer value to the consumer experience (Gallarza and Saura, 2013). Moon et al. (2011) investigated the relationships between service quality, perceived value, and behavioral intent, finding a link between service quality and destination image. According to evaluations, a destination's image plays a significant role in influencing a variety of features of tourist behavior, such as destination selection and the desire to promote a place (Eid & Elbanna, 2018).

Gannon et al. (2017) assert that destination attributes have an effect on the destination's image. Additionally, visual effects are associated with post-travel evaluations (tourist satisfaction) and intentions for future behavior, such as referrals to others (Eid & Elbanna, 2018). Favorable attitudes toward a destination's image have been shown to have a positive effect on overall tourist satisfaction (Eid & Elbanna, 2018).

Additionally, there is evidence that a favorable correlation exists between a destination's image and tourist satisfaction (Assaker et al., 2011). Gannon et al. (2017) discovered that destination image is inextricably linked to satisfaction when they

constructed and tested an integrative model exhibiting relationships between destination image, satisfaction, and behavioral intents. Chiu et al. (2016) conducted a study to examine the relationship between destination image and tourist satisfaction among Chinese visitors to Korea.

Numerous empirical researches have established the importance of the destination's image in terms of consumer satisfaction. Lee (2015) established a positive association between destination image and level of satisfaction, and later research (Assaker, 2011; Wang & Hsu, 2010) supported the existence of this direct relationship. Although some studies in this area have yielded inconsistent findings, others have not.

H1: Destination image mediate the relationship between service quality determinants and tourists' satisfaction.

H1a: Destination image mediate the relationship between human aspect of service quality determinants and tourists' satisfaction.

H1b: Destination image mediate the relationship between non-human aspect of service quality determinants and tourists' satisfaction.

H1c: Destination image mediate the relationship between core services aspect of service quality determinants and tourists' satisfaction.

H1d: Destination image mediate the relationship between services capes of service quality determinants and tourists' satisfaction.

H1e: Destination image mediate the relationship between social responsibility aspect of service quality determinants and tourists' satisfaction.

3.2 The link between service quality determinants and tourist satisfaction

Customers' satisfaction has been carefully examined and described in a variety of ways over the last four

decades, owing to the fact that descriptive content is one of the most significant topics in marketing literature (Hussain, 2016). Customer satisfaction, according to Oliver (1980), is the outcome of comparisons between expectations and the performance of a product or service, which constitutes "disconfirmation theory" in practice.

The majority of empirical research in marketing and tourism has concentrated on the positive relationship between anticipation and satisfaction (Wang et al., 2009). When Han and Hyun (2015) looked at a conceptual model of the impact of perceived medical quality and perceived service quality on satisfaction, trust, and price reasonableness in the medical tourism industry. Han and Hyun (2015) investigated the relationships between overall restaurant image, image congruence, and contentment with the physical environment, service, and food. According to Jeong et al. (2019), a positive perception of service quality is linked to the growth of visitor satisfaction, place attachment, and behavioral intentions.

H2: Service quality determinants have +VE relationship with tourist satisfaction.

H2a: Human aspect of service quality determinants have +VE relationship with tourist satisfaction.

H2b: Non-human aspect of service quality determinants have +VE relationship with tourist satisfaction.

H2c: Services capes of service quality determinants have +VE relationship with tourist satisfaction.

H2d: Core services aspect of service quality determinants have +VE relationship with tourist satisfaction.

H2e: Social responsibility aspect of service quality determinants have +VE relationship with tourist satisfaction.



Figure 1: The conceptual framework of the current study
Source: Developed by the researcher

4. Methodology

The purpose of this Study was to investigate the relationship of service quality determinants (human elements, non-human elements, core services,

services capes and social responsibility) with tourist satisfaction and destination image used as a mediator. Hypothesis H1, H1a, H1b, H1c, H1d, H1e and H2, H2a, H2b, H2c, H2d, H2e were tested.

Table 6: Study description

Experiments	Hypothesis Testing	Hypothesis Acceptance level	Effects	Factors involved	Mediators
Study 1	H1	Accepted	Mediating effect	service quality determinants	Destination image
	H1a	Accepted	Mediating effect	Human elements	
	H1b	Accepted	Mediating effect	Non-human elements	
	H1c	Accepted	Mediating effect	Core services	
	H1d	Accepted	Mediating effect	Services capes	
	H1e	Accepted	Mediating effect	Social responsibility	
	H2	Accepted	Mediating effect	Destination image	
	H2a	Accepted	Mediating effect	Tourist satisfaction	
	H2b	Accepted	Direct effect		
	H2c	Accepted	Direct effect		
	H2d	Accepted	Direct effect		
	H2e	Accepted	Direct effect		
			Direct effect		
			Direct effect		

4.1 Data collection

The area of the study pertains to tourists belong to northern areas of Pakistan. Cross sectional method was carried out. The study period was 2021. Kalyar et al (2021) states that sampling is used to reduce the amount of data that must be collected by focusing on a limited group of people rather than every member of the community when collecting data from the

entire population is impractical, sampling is a viable alternative to conducting a survey. This is especially true when researchers are limited by both funding and time restrictions.

It is practically impossible to collect data from every tourist in the hospitality industry in Pakistan due to a lack of freely accessible information and the vast number of tourist spots. As a result, Kalyar et al

(2021) believes that sampling is more precise in this sense. Furthermore, picking fewer samples through sampling yields more detailed information about the events under inquiry (Majumdar, 2021). Purposive sampling is the most fundamental type of sampling. Purposive sample was used to collect the data from the tourism sector in northern areas of Pakistan. According to research released by the Pakistan Tourism Ministry, Pakistan has between 0.2 and 0.3 million hotels, with the majority concentrated in major cities.

This figure is just out of proportion to the scope of this investigation. Thus 880 was the sample size and data were collected from the 880 tourists in the tourism sector of Pakistan. Research was undertaken using primary data. A survey was conducted.

4.2 Measure

Because the goal of this study is to determine the causal relationship between service quality, destination image and tourist satisfaction, primary data collection was conducted via questionnaire. Almost every item in the questionnaire was borrowed from previous studies. It was expected that appropriate indicators were used (i.e., five dimensions of service quality, two of destination image and one of tourist satisfaction). Each of these dimensions was quantified using a “5-point Likert scale” ranging from “1 to 5”, with (1) representing strong disagreement and (5) representing strong agreement. Service quality was measured by using a 41-item scale (Sureshchandar, Rajendran & Kamalanabhan 2002). Destination image was measured by using a six-item scale (Hankinson, 2005). Tourist satisfaction was measured by using a four-item scale (Shafiee, 2016).

4.3 Data-analysis

Hypotheses were analyzed using the Hierarchical linear regression modal approach because this study data was hierarchical in nature. The data analysis was conducted by using AMOS 21 and SPSS 21. Reliability analysis was conducted to know about the scale reliability. Skewness and kurtosis statistics

were also used to evaluate the assumptions of normality, which were required for Hierarchical linear regression modal (Kline, 2016; Hair, 2010).

Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to know about the variance contribution of each factor. Another descriptive statistic applied in this study was the Pearson correlation coefficient (Pearson's r) as per the suggestions of Raudenbush and Bryk (2002), i.e., that correlations between variables must be examined before conducting Hierarchical linear regression analysis. The regression coefficient (R^2) were used to assess the improvement in the model fit of the hypothesized predictor the higher the R^2 , the better the effect (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). To examine mediation hypotheses, this study adopted the procedures outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986). This study examined the direct and indirect effect hypotheses.

4.4 Results

This study examined the relationship between service quality determinants and tourist satisfaction and the mediating effects of destination image between human elements, non-human elements, core services, service capes and social responsibility with tourist satisfaction.

Reliability analysis found that all scales were reliable. Human elements having 17 items with alpha value $\alpha = .966$, non-human elements having 6 items with alpha value $\alpha = .899$, core services having 5 items with alpha value $\alpha = .931$, services capes having 6 items with alpha value $\alpha = .953$, social responsibility having 7 items with alpha value $\alpha = .921$, destination image having 6 items with alpha value $\alpha = .868$, tourist satisfaction having 4 items with alpha value $\alpha = .926$. The reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) values for human elements, non-human elements, core services, services capes, social responsibility, destination image and tourist satisfaction are calculated as presented in Table (1) which exists between, 0.95 to 0.7 that showed very good reliability. Reliability analysis was conducted to assess the internal consistency of each measure.

Table 1: Reliability analysis

Variables	N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Human	17	.966
Non- human	6	.899
Core services	5	.931
Services capes	6	.953
Social responsibility	7	.921
Destination image	6	.868
Tourist satisfaction	4	.926

Data presented in Table2 is normal because Data is considered to be normal if skewness is between -2 to +2 and kurtosis is between -7 to +7 (Kline, 2016).

Table 2: Means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis statistics

	N	Mean	St. Error of mean	SD	Skewness	Std. Error of Skewness	Kurtosis	Std. Error of Kurtosis
Human elements	880	4.5401	.01701	.50473	-.744	.082	-.987	.165
Non-human elements	880	4.4804	.01063	.31546	-.113	.082	-1.027	.165
Core services	880	4.8160	.01115	.33062	-1.728	.082	1.695	.165
Services capes	880	4.5337	.01346	.39934	-.177	.082	-1.664	.165
Social responsibility	880	4.6261	.01053	.31243	-.826	.082	-.376	.165
Destination image	880	4.3267	.01584	.46997	-.055	.082	-1.434	.165
Tourist satisfaction	880	4.5841	.01287	.38192	-.544	.082	-1.138	.165

The results of confirmatory factor analysis showed in Table 3, that all the factors produce significant variance that is maximum .909 and minimum .509.

Table 3: CFA analysis

Factors	Loadin g	Factor s	Loadin g	Factor s	Loadin g	Factor s	Loadin g	Factors	Loadin g
hum1	.923	hum15	.938	scape1	.905	Dima2	.872	Dloy3	.827
hum2	.905	hum16	.927	scape2	.979	Dima3	.872	Dloy4	.678
hum3	.979	hum17	.872	scape3	.721	Dima4	.617	HUM	.994

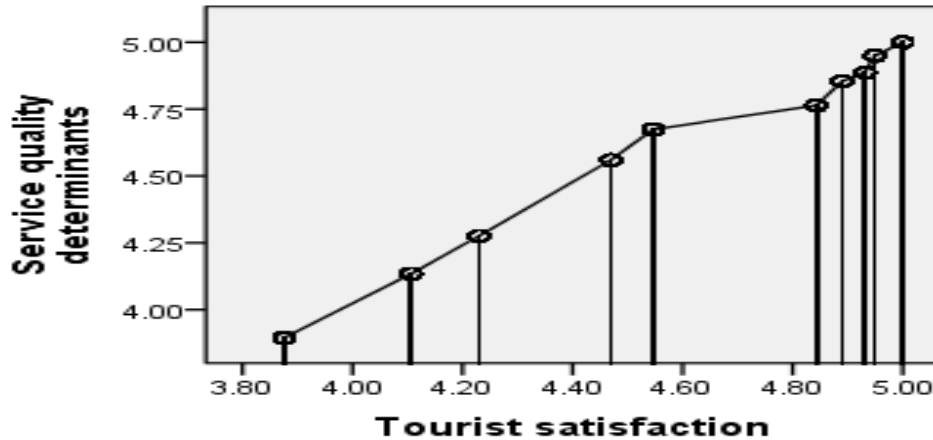
Destination image	.152	.243	.480	.708	.181	.456	.041
Tourist satisfaction	----	----	----	----	----	----	.864
R2	.989	.987	.956	.860	.969	.963	.866

4.5 Discussion

The findings of this study showed that destination image mediates the relationship between service quality determinants and tourist satisfaction as well as destination image mediates the relationship between human elements, non-human elements, core

services, services capes and social responsibility factors with tourist satisfaction. Service quality determinants have +VE relationship with tourist satisfaction.

Figure:2 Service quality determinants and Tourist satisfaction



5. Conclusion

The main objective of this study was to investigate the relationship of service quality determinants with tourist satisfaction. All the proposed hypotheses were supported by the findings. The results of this study supported the hypothesis that there is a relationship between service quality determinants and tourist satisfaction (Han and Hyun, 2015). The results also supported the hypotheses regarding mediators like destination image (Chen & Tsai, 2018) mediate the relationship between service quality determinants and tourist satisfaction.

These results are reliable with those of earlier studies which also found that the quality of the service provided has significant impact on customer or visitor satisfaction (Cronin and Taylor, 1992). Destination image has a positive effect on tourist satisfaction (Assaker et al., 2011).

5.1. Theoretical implications

The key drive of this research is to provide a complete understanding of the theory of service

quality and to examine its outcomes. The study has provided a few methodological and theoretical contributions to the literature relating to tourist satisfaction in tourism and hospitality management. First, the findings have extended the literature of tourist satisfaction, because other researchers suggest that this should have to investigate as concluded from other studies like few empirical studies have been conducted to assess the relationship between the quality attributes of tourism services (Chenini & Touaiti, 2018; Khuong & Phuong, 2017) and little is known about the relationship between tourist service quality dimensions and visitor satisfactions, as well as the impact of these dimensions on the deployment of a destination image as a mediator (Le & Le, 2020; Ruiz, Gonzalez & Zamora, 2018) as well as there have been no previous studies that investigate tourists' perceptions of service quality, as well as satisfaction, in developing country tourism industry environments (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020). According to (Le & Le, 2020; Ruiz, Gonzalez & Zamora, 2018) destination image should use as a mediator. Therefore, destination image was use as a

mediator between service quality determinants and tourist satisfaction and significant results was obtained.

Furthermore, this study key methodological contribution is that it is one of very few in tourism and hospitality literature, to empirically and theoretically examine tourist satisfaction by using a multilevel analysis. This study also offers clear directions for future studies.

5.2. Managerial implications

The findings can be helpful for hospitality managers to manage their tourist by providing good service quality. If hospitality managers provide good service quality like take care of the human elements, non-human elements, core services, services capes and social responsibility then this means that tourist have good destination image. Hospitality practitioners can play a very significant role to satisfy the tourists.

Hospitality practitioners could advance a training program for managers by keeping in mind this study factors to make their tourists satisfied to the destination. In particular, managers could be encouraged to allow their employees, particularly in the sense of delivering good service quality. Practitioners should never give up on making the Tourist satisfied to the destination.

5.3. Limitations and suggestions for future research

This study is not without limitations. The generalizability of the findings may be limited because the data was collected in Pakistan. In addition, the context of this study is limited to Pakistan only other countries should have to be investigated to refine the generalizability of the study. Future research is invigorated to examine other tourist outcomes in relation to destination loyalty. Future research could also examine the different dimensions of destination loyalty and its outcomes, so that a more understanding implication could be explored. Comparative studies should have to conduct that will compare different countries tourist destination loyalty. Other mediators should have to use and this study have no moderator others

studies should have to introduce moderator variable as well and compare the studies to find out the generalizability.

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