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Service Quality Measurement from Customer Perception Based on Services Science, Management and Engineering

Xinglong Xie*

Xi'an University of Technology, Xi'an, China, P.Q:710048

Abstract

Service quality perceived by customers plays a critical role in the success of a tourism destination management, where it acts as a determinant for visitor satisfaction, royalty and revisit in the tourism market. This paper is aimed at measuring tourist-perceived quality for three tourist attractions in Xi'an to find out countermeasures for increasing customer revisit and improving tourism management performance. The study reviews and reflects on research arguments in service quality measurement of a tourist attraction. Based on services science, management and engineering, the study offers a framework with five dimensions and twenty one indexes to gauge perceptive service quality for three landscapes at Xi'an. The paper then employs AHP to calculate the value of each parameter, and scale the index for the perceived service value in the three sceneries empirically from customer valuation. One main finding is that Tang Paradise offers a very satisfactory service quality, with the global score being 4.35 as this attraction creates an impressive experience for each visitor through integrating everything representative of Tang Dynasty, such as the poetry, the dance, lifestyles, and sciences, and movies shown on a water film. It concludes with strategies for achieving customer satisfaction, royalty and revisit for the sampling tourist attractions, and future research directions. One important countermeasure is to deal with customer expectations, needs and talents, particularly in creating an exhilarating experience for sightseers.

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Key words:Engineering;Services science;Perceived service quality; AHP; Tourist attraction

1. **Introduction**

Service quality in tourism has a great effect on tourist experience of and satisfaction with sightseeing and has been recognized as a critical determinant of tourist attractiveness and satisfaction. Consequently, the value of service quality has been brought to light in current literature and has been developed into a crucial concern in tourism management. Furthermore, perceived quality by tourists has been a better predictor of re-visiting a travelling destination than either satisfaction or quality. So, it matters much how to measure service quality in a reliable and scientific way from a customer perception to explore the roots of problems arising from travel management practice on the ground of which to propose countermeasures for motivating re-visit with the ultimate objective being survival in the increasingly competitive tourism.

The purpose of this paper is to make an empirical study of service quality in Huashan Mountain(HM), the Qianling Mausoleum(QLM), Tang Paradise(TP), from a customer perception, based on services science,

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* Tel.:13991224807
E-mail address:long86886@yahoo.com.cn

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Management, and engineering(SSME), to propose effective strategies to advance service quality and achieve varying management objectives. HM is located in the confluence of Shaanxi, Shanxi and Henan Province, renowned as the "most steep and extraordinary mountain in the world", made of a huge and compete granite rock mass. QLM, a special practice of building tombs, was first built in 684. Many cultural relics and murals have been discovered and stored. TP，a theme park illustrating Tang civilization, is located in the southeast of Xian City， where you may have the illusion that you are living in Tang Dynasty.

This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 synthesizes the findings of existing publications of measures of service quality for a visitor destination. In section 3 a model and methodology are analyzed. Section 4 presents empirical analysis. In Section 5 concluding remarks, suggestions, and future research directions are provided.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Domestic Literature Review

For the sake of developing and protecting travel resources, China's government has drafted "Contemporary Management Provisions for Tourist attractions" but it failed to specify items in relation with service quality. The National Travel Bureau officially published "Standard of Rating for Quality of Tourist Attractions" in 1999 and made amendments to it in 2002 to advance the further development of scenic spots.

Service quality of tourism has drawn attention from the academic circle in the mid-90s. Wang (1997) proposed twenty factors for tourism service quality and system[1], Zhang(1999) introduced international classifications of tourism services into China[2],Li(1999) put forward a service standard for tourism covering three aspects, Wang(1999) explored service quality for hotels[3], Shen(1999) dealt with service quality at travel agency and consumer satisfaction, Li(2001)investigated factors for tourism service quality [4], Dong and Yang(2005) established an indicator framework to gauge tourist satisfaction[5].

2.2. Foreign literature Survey

Much has been done on service quality management for tourism in current literature. Gronroos (1982) applied service quality theories into tourism to put forward the concept of travel service quality and proposed a quality-perceived specification stressing the effect of an enterprise's image on customers in 1984. Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985) summarized ten factors on service quality[6], based on which constructed a five-factor model (SERVQUAL) to measure service competence in 1988, which ever since has been universally acknowledged as an effective instrument of assessing service quality[7]. Rust and Oliver designed a service quality model consisting of serving products, delivery and environment in 1994, and Yong and Donna constructed a four-dimension model in 2004 covering the project, interactive, result, and environment quality. Yun lok Lee(1985),Terry Lam(1999),Arie Reichel(2000),and Bruce S.Urdang(2001) employed SERVQUAL analysis to empirically explore service quality for tourism.

However, some researchers have adjusted dimensions and items under the SERQUAL model. Cronin and Talor created SERVPERE to evaluate service quality, which succeeded five SERVQUAL's dimensions but decreased 50% investigation items[8].Other typical examples are Leblan's analyzing a Canadian travel agency (1992), Bojani and Rosen's researching chain stores(1994), Yuksel Ekinci el dealing with British Cretan[9]and John Akama and Damiannah Kieti exploring Kennya Tsavo West national park(2003)[10]. Those authors made a certain amendment of PZB' indicators deliberately for more accurately calculating service quality indexes. Notwithstanding all this, SERQUAL has received the widest use in research.

2.3. Perceived Value

In an increasing quantity of research on service quality, perceived value by customers is attached great importance to, defined as ''the customer's overall appraisal of the utility of a product (or service) on the basis of perceived benefits and perceived costs (Lovelock, 2000) [11]. Holbrook (1999) has put forward a typology of value on the ground of three dimensions: self-oriented vs. other-oriented, active vs. reactive, and extrinsic vs. intrinsic [12]. Recent studies proposed that perceived value may be a better forecaster of repurchase intentions than either satisfaction or quality (Cronin et al., 2000; Oh, 2000) [13]. Perceived value can be probed into with either a self-reported, one-dimensional measure or a multidimensional scale. Nevertheless, the validity of one-dimensional

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