

# Measuring Service Quality by Servperf Method: A Research on Hospitality Enterprises

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## ABSTRACT

The concept of quality has an important place in regards of hospitality enterprises. Nowadays there has been a severe competition in the world, and only those offering quality service and sustaining it can exist. Costumers are always the unique side evaluating if the service is quality or not, for this reason; enterprises should always take how costumers percept the quality into consideration. Services are activities produced and organized to meet human needs and they are influenced by when and where they are produced, and by whom they are provided, and also by the levels of costumers' perception and expectations of service quality. Servperf Scale was preferred to measure the service quality in this research. The purposive sampling method, which is one of the in coincident methods, was preferred as sampling method in the research and the costumers (n = 220) staying at 4 and 5 star hotels operating in Mersin, one of the cities having the most population density in Turkey are included in the research. Reliability (Cronbach's alpha coefficient  $\alpha > .70$ ) and validation tests (divergent and convergent validation) were executed on whole scale and its each factor, by which the costumers evaluated the service quality of the hotel they stay at, and measures of central tendency (frequency, percentage distributions), statistics of key determinant (mean, standard deviation) and discrimination tests were used to analyse the data, and Mann-Whitney U Test and Kruskal-Wallis test were used to identify the variations between the groups. The data were analysed by using SPSS 21.00. To the results of data provided from the samplings, it was identified that costumers perceived the service quality of the hotel enterprises at very high level. At the end of reviewing the sun-dimensions, it was determined that the physical and safety dimensions of Servperf Service Quality dimensions measured by 5 factors had the highest level satisfaction. It was discovered that service quality perception differentiated according to some certain demographic factors.

**Keywords:** Service Quality, Hospitality Enterprises Servperf Scale, Customer Satisfaction

## 1. INTRODUCTION

It is axiomatically known that hospitality enterprises having an important place in service sector in general and tourism sector in particular contributes in great deal to economical diversification, profitability and creating opportunities to decrease unemployment in quite many countries. In parallel with technological development in the world, when people can reach all the services easily; it is obvious how much importance the service sector gains for a destination in regards of monetary. Technology not only provides easiness for potential customers but also increases the competition among the hospitality enterprises and only those offering quality service and sustaining it can keep their seats or carry a step further. However important using technological and contemporary equipment for a tourist in choosing destination is, the perceptions related to the services provided by the enterprises in that destination and the general and special features of the employees giving those services at the first hand have vital significance. It is inevitable to understand costumers' needs better and to design the business climate accordingly (Augustyn and Ho, 1998).

To produce a quality service gets through adopting the quality understanding of employees-considered as internal costumers- as a value. Enterprises should take the costumers or consumers into consideration as they are unique side to determine if the service quality is high or not. Quality is difficult concept to measure, most particularly for service sector; it will obviously be more difficult. However difficult subject it is, hospitality enterprises have always been on the table to research if they are successful in regards of the service quality they offer. Enterprises should never make concession about service quality in dense competition environment if they want to exist. To exist, they must catch the needed level of profitability and sustain it. A sustainable profitability is directly related to service quality and costumers' satisfaction with the services. The target of this study is to bring light for the hospitality enterprises by measuring service quality at some certain hotels in a certain region.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Kotler, defines service as “activities or satisfactions-basically nonphysical- offered by one side to the other and never ends with possession of any of both side (Kotler, 1997). Another author, Karalar (2001) defines it as “ just on the contrary of physical goods in economics, service is an intangible and non-storable activity (such as tourism, communication and consultancy) intended and organized to meet human needs. Because of this feature distinguishing services from physical products, definition and measurement of service quality is relatively more difficult.

Researches have recently focused on perceived service quality and emotional behaviour in regards of tourism (Su et al., 2015). Zeithaml (1998) defines perceived service quality as the customer’s evaluation of the overall excellence or superiority of the service.

A customer’s evaluation of the level of service quality and their satisfaction are considered to depend on the gap between their expectations and experience of actual performance levels (Meshack and Datta, 2015). In the low-cost hotel customer context, it is thought that perceived service quality is a measure of how well the service meets travellers’ expectations and understood their requirements. Some authors asserted that expectations should be influenced by personal needs, responsiveness, and empathy (Saha and Theingi, 2009).

According to Ye et al. (2014), service quality should be considered to involve a trade-off between concepts of a customer’s valuation of the benefits of using a service and its price if perceived service quality is analogous to the concept of customer’s evaluation. A customer’s sacrifice (i.e., the monetary and nonmonetary prices associated with experiencing the service) and the customer’s frame of reference designate a customer’s value perception (Xia and Suri, 2014). Thus, customers’ assessments of service quality expected are anticipated to influence and determine their price perception of the monetary price and non-monetary price (e.g., behaviour, attitudes, time, search costs, convenience and values evaluation) because customers’ actual experience with respect to a specific transaction and their overall evaluation of a service are reflected by price perception (Kashyap and Bojanic, 2000).

Services differ from service providers to when and where they are provided (Aksoy, 2005). A customer’s expectation from a hotel operating in the sector for years and having an image and a customer’s expectation from an unheard hotel by name will be naturally different. Having no unique description of quality expectations in customers’ mind, it is hard to define customers’ quality expectations. There are two levels or dimensions of consumers’ quality expectations. The first one is the quality that a consumer wishes and the second one is the quality that a consumer finds reasonable (Parasuman et al., 1991).

What it should be used to define consumer expectations of service quality is the quality expectation that a consumer considers reasonable. Nonetheless, consumer expectations of service quality is not fixed or stable, that’s to say, it shows an alteration of expectation levels from one sector to another, and from one region to another in due course (Parasuman et al., 1991). Another dimension of consumer’s quality definition is sensing a perception after consuming. Consumer’s service quality perceptions are thoughts related to a service that a customer consumed (Teas, 1993). The consumer’s service quality perceptions are influenced by the level of service quality expectations.

Parasuman and his friends developed a formal model by gathering up problems preventing superior quality service presenting in 1985. To this model, the problems preventing superior quality service are;

- a-The gap between consumer’s expectation and management’s perception: Managers cannot always perceive consumers requests. For example; while a hospital manager thinks that a patient expects a more comfortable bed, the patient may expect a quieter ambiance.
- b-The gap between management’s perception and the definition of the service feature: Although the managers perceive consumers’ wishes, they may be incompetent to identify the service features to meet consumers ‘needs. For example; while a manager is telling a nurse to serve fast, he may not tell her how fast she should serve. The feature of service hasn’t been defined well in this situation.
- c-The gap between the definition of service features and presentation of the service: If the personnel aren’t trained well, they will be incompetent while presenting the service although the service features are defined well.
- d-The gap between presentation and the promise of the enterprise: formation of a consumer’s expectation is influenced by the mix of communication components (e.g. advertisement, sales people, promotion, sales promotion etc.). In this situation, if the enterprise exaggerates the promising service, it will cause a high expectation of a service quality, the service, which the consumer receives, will fall behind the expectations and it will not naturally satisfy their expectations. For example; if a medical centre promises a clean and well-cared rooms in their brochure, and if they cannot offer the room as quality as in the brochure, the expectation of the consumer won’t be satisfied.

e-The gap between service expectation and service perception: In some situations, consumer may misperceive the service. Actually the service is performed properly but the consumer misperceives it anyway. For example; a doctor visits the patient regularly in regards of proper care, but the patient may misinterpret this special interest.

### **2.1. Servperf Scale**

Cronin and Taylor (1992), examined Servqual Scale and analyzed the relation of the questions in the scale with service satisfaction (Jain and Gupta, 2004). Servqual Scale developed the Servperf Scale, based on the content of Servqual Scale, by asserting that it is incompetent to measure the performance (Cronin and Taylor, 1992). They explained the reason of incompetency of Servqual Scale that the consumers do not know about expectation related to service before they receive the service; they even do not know what to expect (Gürbüz et al., 2008). Cronin and Taylor (1994) developed Servperf Scale, based on performance have been recently supported by most researchers (Burch et al., 1995; Oliver 1993). Servperf has been identified that it has been used to measure service quality in entertainment parks, aerobic schools and investment consulting companies, retail companies, banks, hospitals and higher education foundations (Yılmaz, 2011). These can be inferred from the studies executed by Cronin and Taylor (Cronin and Taylor, 1994; Burch 1995):

- a-Cronin and Taylor (1994) specified that the scale they used to execute the studies in 1992 based on Servqual Scale and it is one of the updated changes explaining service quality scientifically.
- b-Cronin and Taylor (1994) asserted that regression analysis is the prevailing method to evaluate Servqual and Servperf scales as both scales use the five point Likert scale.
- c-Cronin and Taylor (1994) asserted that Servperf scale can measure service quality validly and reliably.

Although criticism on Servperf, they experienced it in four basic service sectors (e.g. banking, insect control, dry-cleaning and fast-food). They developed Servperf Scale, performance-based tool, versus Servqual Scale (Jain and Gupta, 2004). Thus, Cronin and Taylor (1992) revealed Servperf as an alternative measurement tool by asserting that the gap between performance and expectation should be measured on only performance-based (Yılmaz, 2011). Twenty-two variables and five basic dimensions developed for Servqual Scale by Parasuman et al. in 1988 took place in standard.

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

The target of this study is to evaluate the service quality of hospitality establishment with regard of costumer and make comparative analysis according to the costumers' features. The method of survey, one of the quality research approaches, was used in the study.

### **3.1. Sample and Participants**

As the universe is quite large, sampling was used to save time and cost of research. The preferred sampling method in the research is the purposive sampling method, one of the in coincident methods. In the research, the level of the service quality was tried to specify in the hotels operating in Mersin, one of the cities having the most population density in Turkey. The questionnaire study began on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015 and ended August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015. The universe of the research was the tourists staying at the 4 and 5 stars hotels in the region. 350 questionnaires were delivered by being apportioned, and the target of the research was explained to the hotel managers and the personnel. They were requested to give a questionnaire to each guest at the stage of check-in and provide the guest deliver it to the reception at stage of check-out. 236 of 350 questionnaires turned back. 16 of these 236 questionnaires were considered invalid for various reasons. The remained 220 questionnaires were basis to this research.

### **3.2. Data Collection Tool**

Servperf Scale, developed by Cronin and Taylor in 1992, was used to measure the service quality in the research. The original of the scale is Servqual scale, developed by Parasuman, Zeithalm and Bery in 1988. However, Servqual Scale is a tool to measure the service quality in terms of both expectation and performance but Servperf focuses on only performance. It consists of twenty-two variables and five basic dimensions (concrete/physical features, reliability, eagerness, safety, empathy). Five point Likert scale (1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree) was used in the research. Servperf was implemented in quite many sectors and proven reliability.

### **3.3. Analysing the Data**

Pilot scheme was executed on 30 final year students of Tourism Faculty, Selcuk University, on April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015, to test if each item was understandable. As a result of the pilot scheme, Servperf, originally consisting of 5 factors, 22 items, one in each

item (4<sup>th</sup> items) was removed from the scale according to the test results of divergent validity. That's to say, the number of items reduced from 22 to 19. Reliability (Cronbach's alpha coefficient  $\alpha > .70$ ) and validation tests (divergent and convergent validation) were executed on whole scale and its each factor, and measures of central tendency (frequency, percentage distributions), statistics of key determinant (mean, standard deviation) and discrimination tests were used to analyse the data. According to Kolmogorov-Smirnov test results, nonparametric tests were implemented to determine the divergences as the data were not distributed normally. The data were analysed by using SPSS 21.00.

### 3.4. The Reliability and Validation of the Scale

At this stage, after the basic implementation (n = 220), Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) reliability of whole scale and its sub factors was checked/tested.

The validity of the scale used in the research was performed through the divergent validity test and convergent validity test. When every item of the scales used in the research for divergent validity, its own dimension must have higher level correlation compared to the other dimensions where each item removed from the dimension. As for convergent validity, the sub-scales of the scale used in the research must have low but meaningful and positive correlation (Judd, Smith, Kidder, 1991). In this respect, there is high level correlation with most of analysed items of their dimensions and also it has been identified that the scale provided the convergent validity.

## 4. FINDINGS

### 4.1. Demographic Information

Of the 220 hotel guests participating the research, 52.7% is male, 45.9% is single, 26,4% is between ages of 21-25, 30,5% is civil servant, 66,4% travels with holiday purpose, 53,2% prefers the hotels by the response of promotions

### 4.2. Findings Related to the Perceptions of Service Quality

The variations of Servperf scale (19 proposals at 5 dimensions) were answered through the 5 point Likert scale by the participants. Servperf scores are seen on Table 2. In this research devoted to the hotel enterprises, the highest perception level is identified for the 2<sup>nd</sup> proposal in the physical dimension "Hotel has technological and contemporary equipment" and the lowest perception level is for 2<sup>nd</sup> proposal in Empathy dimension "Hotel arranges the working hours according to guests' needs". According to the values, the average level of the service quality performance of hotel enterprises is seen to be high.

The level of group average of Servperf quality dimensions is given in Table 3. According to the values, of the averages of performance level of services quality, the Physical dimension has the highest rate (3, 89) and the Empathy dimension has the lowest rate (3, 68)

### 4.3. Discrimination Tests

According to the results of analysis of Mann-Whitney U Test and Kruskal-Wallis Test; no variation has been identified among the discriminations of Gender, Monthly Income, Marital Status, Reasons to Prefer Hotel ( $p > 0,05$ ).

However, a variation related to Empathy dimension of service quality dimensions for the age groups of the guests has been identified according to the Kruskal-Wallis Test results ( $\chi^2=12,79$ ,  $p=,025$ ). According results of analysis carried out to identify

**Table 1: Reliability co-efficient and convergent validation results of servperf scale**

Variables	Number of items	A	Physical	Reliability	Eagerness	Safety	Empathy
Servperf	19	0.95					
Physical	4	0.90	--				
Reliability	4	0.89	0.71	--			
Eagerness	3	0.84	0.61	0.72	--		
Safety	3	0.82	0.67	0.68	0.67	--	
Empathy	5	0.89	0.60	0.71	0.72	0.63	--

\* Dimensions ( $p < 0.01$ , bi-directional n=220)

**Table 2: Information of participant**

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	116	52,7
Female	104	47,3
Marital Status		
Single	103	45,9
Married	103	44,1
Other	22	10,0
Age		
Under 20	19	8,6
Between21-25	58	26,4
Between26-30	50	22,7
Between31-35	25	11,4
Between36-40	47	21,4
Over 41	21	9,5
Income		7,3
Lower than 1000 TL	16	
1000-2000	44	20,0
2001-3000	92	41,8
3001-4000	36	16,4
Over 4001	32	14,5
Occupation		
Manager	42	19,1
Civil Servant	67	30,5
State Worker	36	16,4
Owner of a business	63	28,6
Other	12	5,5
The reason of being at the hotel		
Holiday	146	66,4
Business	73	33,2
Other	1	0,5
The reason to prefer the hotel		
Response of promotion	117	53,2
Recommendation of acquaintances	103	46,8

**Table 3: Servperf scores**

	Mean	Standard deviation
Physical-1 The physical appearance of the hotel is visually attractive	3.90	1.27
Physical -2 Hotel has technological and contemporary equipment	3.94	1.11
Physical -3 Hotel staff has clean and presentable appearance.	3.91	1.15
Physical -4 Not only the basic but also extra services of hotel are attractive.	3.79	1,11
Reliability-1 Hotel fulfils the promised services on time.	3,81	1.08
Reliability -2 The staffs are reassuring and friendly when there is a problem.	3.85	1.08
Reliability -3 Hotel fulfils the services instantly.	3.84	1.05
Reliability -4 The registration and invoicing related to hotel services are fair and reliable.	3.91	1.11
Eagerness-1 The staffs tell the guests when and where the services will fulfil accurately.	3.75	1.09
Eagerness -2 The staffs provide service in the possible shortest time.	3.74	1,07
Eagerness -3 The staffs are always ready, eager and volunteer to help.	3.93	1.01
Safety-1 The behaviours of the staffs raise the feeling of trust for the guests.	3.85	1.09
Safety -2 The guests put their trust in the services they receive.	3.87	1.02
Safety -3 The staffs are always respectful and kind towards to the guests	3.90	1.09
Empathy-1 The staffs show interest to the guests individually and personally.	3.60	1.23
Empathy -2 Hotel arranges its working hours according to the guests' needs.	3.57	1.33
Empathy -3 The staffs show special interest to the guests.	3.58	1,28
Empathy -4 The staffs are interested in the guests' benefits heartily.	3.85	1.15
Empathy -5 The staffs deduce the guests' special needs.	3.80	1.18
Valid n=220		

**Table 4: The level of group average of Servperf**

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
Physical	1.00	5.00	3.89	0.02
Reliability	1.00	5.00	3,85	0.94
Eagerness	1.00	5.00	3.80	0.92
Safety	1.00	5,00	3.88	0.95
Empathy	1.00	5,00	3.68	1.04
Valid n=220				

the reasons of variation; a variation between the group of “under 20” (Mean Rank = 94,53) and the group of “26-30” (Mean Rank = 137,67) has been identified.

Of service quality dimensions by occupations, a variation related to the dimensions of Reliability ( $\chi^2=12,97$ ,  $p=,011$ ), Eagerness ( $\chi^2=26,30$ ,  $p=,000$ ), and Empathy ( $\chi^2=21,34$ ,  $p=,000$ ) has been identified according to results of Kruskal-Wallis Test.

To the results of analysis to find out from which groups the variation stems; variations have been identified between Owner of a business (Mean Rank = 94,29) and State Worker (Mean Rank = 126,10) related to Reliability dimension, and between Owner of a business (Mean Rank = 84,21) and Civil Servant (Mean Rank = 130, 03) related to Eagerness dimension, and between Manager (Mean Rank = 88,94) and Civil Servant (Mean Rank = 134, 63) related to Empathy dimension.

To the results of Kruskal-Wallis Test; a variation of “the guests’ the reasons of being at the hotel” related to Empathy has been identified ( $\chi^2=6, 30$ ,  $p=, 043$ ). To the results of analysis to find out from which groups the variation stems; a variation has been identified between Work (Mean Rank = 95,40) and Holiday (Mean Rank = 118,15).

## 5. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Reliability (Cronbach’s alpha coefficient  $\alpha >.70$ ) and validation tests (divergent and convergent validation) were executed on whole scale and its each factor, and measures of central tendency (frequency, percentage distributions), statistics of key determinant (mean, standard deviation) and discrimination tests were used to analyse the data. The data were not distributed normally according to Kolmogorov-Smirnov test results, so nonparametric tests were implemented to determine the divergences. In this research devoted to the hotel enterprises, the highest perception level is identified for the 2<sup>nd</sup> proposal in the physical dimension “Hotel has technological and contemporary equipment” and the lowest perception level is for 2<sup>nd</sup> proposal in Empathy dimension “Hotel arranges the working hours according to guests’ needs”. The values show us that the average level of the service quality performance of hotel enterprises is seen to be high.

According to the values, of the averages of performance level of services quality, the Physical dimension has the highest rate (3,89), and the Empathy dimension has the lowest rate (3,68). These two rates give the tip of problematic area at hotel enterprises; hotels equipped with modern and sophisticated equipment satisfy the guests but the services related to employees-internal costumers- do not.

According to the results of analysis of Mann-Whitney U Test and Kruskal-Wallis Test; Gender, Monthly Income, Marital Status do not affect Reasons to Prefer Hotel ( $p > 0,05$ ). However, the age groups of the guests affect Empathy dimension of service quality dimensions; group of under 20 (Mean Rank = 94,53) and the group of 26-30 (Mean Rank = 137,67). Of service quality dimensions by occupations, a variation related to the dimensions of Reliability ( $\chi^2=12,97$ ,  $p=,011$ ), Eagerness ( $\chi^2=26,30$ ,  $p=,000$ ), and Empathy ( $\chi^2=21,34$ ,  $p=,000$ ) has been identified according to results of Kruskal-Wallis Test. To the results of analysis to find out from which groups the variation stems; variations have been identified between Owner of a business (Mean Rank = 94,29) and State Worker (Mean Rank = 126,10) related to Reliability dimension, and between Owner of a business (Mean Rank = 84,21) and Civil Servant (Mean Rank = 130,03) related to Eagerness dimension, and between Manager (Mean Rank = 88,94) and Civil Servant (Mean Rank = 134,63) related to Empathy dimension. To the results of Kruskal-Wallis Test; a variation of “the guests’ the reasons of being at the hotel” related to Empathy has been identified ( $\chi^2=6,30$ ,  $p=,043$ ). To the results of analysis to find out from which groups the variation stems; a variation has been identified between Work (Mean Rank = 95,40) and Holiday (Mean Rank = 118,15).

The constraints of this research are these that the research has been conducted in a restricted region and a city this restricted region; it contains restricted number of hotels and samples. Accordingly, as the universe is quite large, sampling was used to

save time and cost of research. The purposive method, which is one of the in coincident sampling methods, was preferred as a sampling method.

To what extent the sample represents the universe is not known, so a generalization about the universe cannot be made. To obtain more general results, it is recommended that sampling size should be enhanced, and random sampling be preferred and this study be executed in all regions in Turkey. This study is considered to be significant and rewarding in the regards of that it will fill in a gap in Turkish literature about the effect of service quality on costumers' satisfaction, and create an awareness of understanding of service quality.

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