

## **THE IMPACT OF SERVICE QUALITY ON BEHAVIORAL INTENTION IN HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY**

**Ayse KURUUZUM**

Akdeniz University  
Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Antalya, Turkey  
E-mail: kuruzum@akdeniz.edu.tr

**Can Deniz KOKSAL**

Akdeniz University  
Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Antalya, Turkey  
E-mail: candeniz@akdeniz.edu.tr

### **Abstract**

*The purpose of this study is to determine the impact of service quality on behavioral intention in hospitality industry. In order to measure service quality, five-dimensional and twenty two-itemed scale which adapted for hospitality industry by Tsaaur, Lin and Wu from Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry's SERVQUAL scale, was used. Together with this scale, five-dimensional and thirteen-itemed scale which developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry was used in order to measure behavioral intention. This study was performed in five star hotels in Belek Tourism District in Antalya, and 610 questionnaire forms were returned out of 1000 distributed ones. According to the results of the study, the correlation values related with the dimensions of service quality and behavioral intention are found varying between 0.245 and 0.821. In the path analysis, with which, examining the impact of service quality on behavioral intention was aimed; we found that the service quality has more impact on the behavioral dimensions of "loyalty" and "pay more".*

**Key Words:** *Service quality, behavioral intention, hospitality industry*

**JEL Classification:** M1, L83

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The share of the service industry in the economies is growing every year together with its growing importance among other industry branches. Experienced technological, social and economic developments both ensure the awareness and increase the expectations of consumers, and force these companies to make changes in order to adapt themselves to the developments. Due to the increasing competitive conditions, particularly those enterprises are choosing the way of increasing their service quality in order to survive. The situation is the same for the lodging industry, which is a branch of the service sector. The hospitality industry that experienced rapid changes and developments after 1980 has entered into the race in providing better quality service by keeping customer satisfaction in first order. Because the offered products by the hotels have similar qualifications, the quality level of service offered becomes the main factor determining the customer's preference (Tsaaur and Lin, 2004).

In this content, generally, studies have been done for measurement and evaluation of the service quality with the improved major scales (such as SERVQUAL, SERPERF scales) in almost every

service sector. There are few empirical studies in tourism sector which examine the relationship between service quality and behavioral intentions. This paper examines the relationship between service quality and behavioral intentions.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2. 1. Perceived service quality**

Perception of quality in service is determined by comparison of customers' own expectations with the services given. According to Lewis and Boom (1983), service quality is a measure of how well the service level delivered matches customer expectations. Delivering quality service means conforming to customer expectations on a consistent basis (Parasuraman, et al., 1985:42). Perceived service quality, can be described as the judiciary obtained from the comparative results of consumer expectation from the service and perceived value from the actualized service performance (Bahia and Nantel, 2000: 84).

Customer expectations and quality performance perceived by customers are important factors in order to determine perceived service quality. In other words, before the purchasing any service, consumers will have certain expectations about the service and after the purchasing of service they shall compare their perceptions and expectations. Guests would always like and expect the service delivery processes to be perfectly standardized, streamlined and simplified so that they could receive the service without any hassles, hiccups or undesired/inordinate questioning by the service providers (Vijayadurai, 2008:4). As a result of this comparison, an assessment process will be experienced if the perceived service quality meets or does not meet consumer expectations.

### **2. 2. Behavioral intentions**

Behavioral intention represents the repurchase intentions, word of mouth, loyalty complaining behavior, and price sensitivity (Zeithaml et al., 1996). Previous research has not captured the full range of potential behaviors likely to be triggered by service quality. In many studies, positive word of mouth, willingness to recommend and repurchase intentions are used to measure behavioral intentions (Theodorakis and Alexandris, 2008; Ozdemir and Hewett, 2010). Zeithaml et al., (1996) compiled a list of specific favorable behavioral intentions, including loyalty, switching intentions, willingness to pay more, external response, and internal response. Bourton et al. (2003) revealed that customers experience is related to behavioral intentions (Vijayadurai, 2008:14). The more positive the customer's experience, the more likely he or she is willing to reuse the service.

### **2.3. Relationship between perceived service quality and behavioral intentions**

Establishing a link between service quality and customer behavioral intentions is an important task for researchers and practitioners, since it is evidence for the value of service quality research. Furthermore, the relationships between specific service quality dimensions and behavioral intentions are not yet clear, due to the different service quality models used and the different contexts of the published studies (Theodorakis and Alexandris, 2008:166).

In numerous researches, it has been found that quality of service affected the behavioral intentions. Cronin and Taylor (1992) have found a positive relationship between service quality and purchase intentions. In addition, previous research has demonstrated associations between service quality and specific dimensions of behavioral intentions. For example, in the study of Theodorakis and Alexandris (2008) that was conducted with 242 spectators, tangibles, responsiveness and reliability dimensions were determined as the moderate estimators of the word of mouth's

variance. Therefore, we expect customers who perceive the quality of the service as high to be more likely to demonstrate intentions.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Sample and data collection**

Data of this study were gathered from randomly selected 5 hotels out of 22 five-star hotels that were under operation in Belek region of Antalya and a questionnaire form as data collection tool was used to gather data. By the coordination of Human resources Managers of each hotel, 1000 questionnaire forms were distributed for survey and 610 questionnaire forms out of 1000 were returned.

#### **3.2. Measurement**

In this study, a questionnaire form was designed to measure the hotel customers' perceptions of service quality and behavioral intentions. And, this questionnaire form consists of two parts as including demographic characteristics of tourists in the first part and service quality and behavioral intentions scales in the second part. Questionnaire form was designed as in English, German and Russian. In order to measure perceived service quality, 5 dimensional (tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy) and 22 itemed scale which adapted for hospitality industry by Tsaour et al. (2005) from Parasuraman et al's. SERVQUAL scale was used. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for SERVQUAL scale was measured and the reliability coefficients were found as 0.84, 0.75, 0.72, 0.76 and 0.78 for the tangibility, reliability, the size of responsiveness, assurance and empathy dimensions, respectively. The validity of the scale was tested with confirmatory factor analysis and the five dimensions of the scale were confirmed. Compatibility indexes were found as  $\chi^2=674$  (df= 464, p=0.000), GFI=0.94 and AGFI=0.92. These results show that the data are appropriate to be used with five-factor model (Hair, et al., 1998).

In order to measure behavioral intention, 5 dimensional and 13 itemed scale which developed by Zeithaml et al. (1996) was used. These dimensions are named as; loyalty to hotel (loyalty), propensity to switch (switch), willingness to pay more (pay more), external response to problem (external response) and internal response to problem (internal response). The reliability of behavioral intension scale was measured by Cronbach's alpha coefficient and the reliability coefficients were found as 0.91, 0.77, 0.82, 0.71 and 0.73 for the loyalty, switch, pay more, external response and internal response dimensions, respectively.

The validity of the scale was tested with confirmatory factor analysis and the five dimensions of the scale were confirmed. Compatibility indexes were found as  $\chi^2=840$  (df= 461, p=0.000), GFI=0.96 and AGFI=0.93. These results show that the data are appropriate to be used with five-factor model. 5 point Likert type scale (from definitely disagree to definitely agree) was used in both scales.

### **4. RESULTS**

#### **4.1. Demographic characteristics of respondents**

The nationality distributions of respondents were ordered as Germans, Russian and other nationalities with the percentages 70%, 20% and 10%, respectively. The 55% of respondents is female and 45% is male. 18% of the participants is under the age of 35, and 38% is between the

age of 35-55, while 27% is over 55 years of age. Most of the respondents (75%) are the graduates of primary and secondary school. 45% of them are officers or employees, 31% of them are retirees and the rest run their own business.

The majority of them (63%) have monthly salary between 1000€ and 2000€. 60% of respondents indicated that they had come for the first time in to the hotel where they accommodated, while 16% of them indicated their second visit. Reasons of selecting the hotel for their stay are indicated by respondents as "agent's advice", "price-quality ratio is favorable" and "I experienced earlier in this hotel" with the ratios 36%, 30% and 34%, respectively. Majority of them (82%) were made their reservations (2-6 months ago) via an agency.

#### 4.2. Descriptive statistics and correlations

The average values related with perceived service quality and behavioral intentions are shown in Table 1. The service quality perceptions of hotel customers related with the dimensions of tangibles, reliability and responsiveness are shown high.

**Table 1: Mean values for service quality and behavioral intentions**

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Tangibility	4.16	0.664
Reliability	4.52	0.831
Responsiveness	4.23	0.542
Assurance	3.57	1.125
Empathy	3.18	1.105
Loyalty	4.51	0.938
Switch	3.90	0.662
Pay more	3.97	0.945
External response	3.83	0.686
Internal response	3.91	0.812

Assurance and empathy scores are moderate. The high scores of "loyalty" and "pay more" from the dimension of behavioral intentions are the indicators that customers like their hotels where they accommodated and they want to come back again. Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated in order to measure the degree of relationship between the 5 dimensions of perceived service quality and behavioral intentions. As it seen in Table 2, all correlations are found statistically significant at  $p=0.01$  level. But, the correlations between the dimensions of "perceived service quality", "loyalty" and "pay more" are higher than the correlations between the dimension of "switch", "external response" and "internal response".

**Table 2: Correlations Matrix**

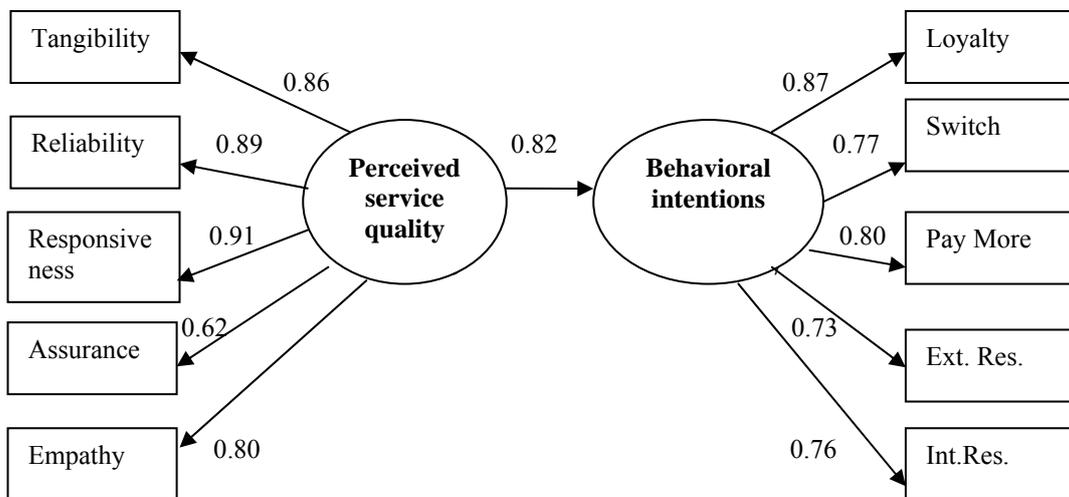
Variables	Loyalty	Switch	Pay more	External response	Internal response
Tangibility	0.538	0.642	0.664	0.425	0.450
Reliability	0.821	0.373	0.632	0.392	0.387
Responsiveness	0.715	0.575	0.495	0.333	0.345
Assurance	0.496	0.394	0.481	0.245	0.327
Empathy	0.342	0.312	0.361	0.255	0.314

Among all, especially the loyalty dimension was found in higher correlations with reliability ( $r=0.821$ ) and responsiveness ( $r=0.715$ ) dimensions. Reliable and accurate fulfillment of the services, customer assistance and willingness to offer fast service committed by the hotel management earlier leads the customer to be loyal and to pay more to receive the services given.

#### 4.3. The effect of perceived service quality on behavioral intentions

The behavioral intention is an extreme level of customer's satisfaction. It is also called as customer's delight (Vijayadurai, 2008:23). If the customer is satisfied with the quality of given services, then he/she may come back to the hotel again, may recommend it to others and may be willing to pay more for the hotel. The effect of perceived service quality on behavioral intentions was examined with Structural Equation Model (SEM) (Figure 1) and Path analysis was performed by using the LISREL VIII (Jöreskog and Sörbom, 2001).

**Figure -1: Path diagram**



The research model has a good fit to data according to indices which were recommended by SEM literature:  $\chi^2=6.15$ ,  $p=0.013$ ; RMSEA=0.065; GFI=0.95; AGFI=0.91 (Hair et al., 1998). As it is seen from Figure 1, the most important dimensions which have effect on the perceived service quality are responsiveness, reliability and tangibility. On the other hand, loyalty and pay more are the most important dimensions which have more effect on behavioral intention. Related with these results, it was found that there was a high relationship ( $\beta=0.82$ ) between perceived service quality and behavioral intentions.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between the perceived service quality and behavioral intention based on SERVQUAL and behavioral intention scales in lodging industry. Descriptive analysis conducted has shown that responsiveness (4.23), reliability (4.52) and tangibility (4.16) were the most important criteria in the assessment of the quality of hotel services. The most important criteria related to behavioral intentions were observed as loyalty (4.51) and share more (3.97), respectively.

According to the results of structural analysis made for the investigation of the relationship between service quality and behavioral intentions, it is found that service quality has a strong effect on the behavioral intention of hotel customers (i.e. loyalty, switch, pay more, external response and internal response). In particular, responsiveness, tangible and reliability dimensions were found most effective on behavioral intentions than any other dimensions. Despite there are not too many studies in related literature containing all dimensions of behavioral intentions, results of many studies are consistent with the results of our research. For example, Hutchinson et al., (2008) determined the service quality's slight and significant effect on the behavioral intention variables in a study made with golf travelers. Vijayadurai (2008) found a significant relationship between behavioral intention and reliability, assurance, responsiveness in a study done with 176 hotel guests. Based on the results in the present study, services provided in the hotel industry emphasize the role of reliability, responsiveness and tangibility.

Hotel managers should create attractive physical facilities for the clients to come back to the hotel again and to be willing to pay more money for the services. In order to realize these, they must be avoided from negative effective behaviors such as being unable to fulfill the promises they made before by creating high expectations that will never be served later on.

Current research's data were collected in September 2009 period from the five star hotels which are operated in a tourism specific region in Antalya, the city that has the maximum bed capacity in Turkey. Most of the guests staying at these hotels as from the German nationality, a cross-cultural comparisons could not be made. Future studies should be made to cover all the hotels in Antalya. On the other hand, the common effect of service quality and customer satisfaction on behavioral intentions was investigated in many sectors. The investigation of these three structures in hospitality sector may be more useful for practitioners.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bahia K., and Nantel J. (2000), 'A Reliable and Valid Measurement Scale for the Perceived Service Quality of Banks', *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, Vol.18, pp. 84-91.
- Cronin, J. J. and Taylor, A. S. (1992), "Measuring Service Quality: A Reexamination and Extension", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 56, pp. 55-68.

- Hair, J. F., Anderson R. E., Tahtam, R. L., Black, W. C. (1998), *Multivariate Data Analysis*. Pearson Education, New Jersey.
- Hutchinson, J., Lai, F. and Wang, Y. (2008), "Understanding the Relationships of Quality, Value, Equity, Satisfaction, and Behavioral Intentions Among Golf Travelers", *Tourism Management*, Vol. 30, pp. 298-308.
- Jöreskog, K. G., Sörbom, D. (2001), *Lisrel 8: User's Reference Guide*. Scientific Software International, Chicago.
- Lewis, R.C. and Boom, B. H. (1983), "The Marketing Aspects of Service Quality", ( in: Berry, L., Shostack, G., Upah, G. –Ed., *Emerging Perspectives on Services Marketing*), American Marketing, Chicago, IL, pp. 99-107.
- Ozdemir, V. E. and Hewett, K. (2010), "The Effect of Collectivism on the Importance of Relationship Quality and Service Quality and Service Quality for Behavioral Intentions: A Cross-National and Cross-Contextual Analysis", *Journal of International Marketing*, Vol 18, pp. 41-62.
- Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V. A. and Berry, L. L. (1985), "A Conceptual Model of Service Quality and Its Implications for Future Research", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 49, pp. 41-50.
- Tsaur, S-H. and Lin, Y-C. (2004), "Promoting Service Quality in Tourist Hotels: The Role of HRM practices and Service Behavior", *Tourism Management*, Vol. 25, pp. 471-481.
- Tsaur, S-H., Lin, C-T. and Wu, C-S. (2005), "Cultural Differences of Service Quality and Behavioral Intention in Tourist Hotels", *Journal of Hospitality & Leisure Marketing*, Vol. 13, pp. 41-63.
- Theodorakis, N. D. and Alexandris, K. (2008), "Can Service Quality Predict Spectators' Behavioral Intentions in Professional Soccer?", *Managing Leisure*, Vol 13, pp. 162-178.
- Vijayadurai, J. (2008), "Service Quality, Customer Satisfaction and Behavioral Intention in Hotel Industry", *Journal of Marketing & Communication*, Vol. 3, pp. 14-26.
- Zeithaml, V. A., Berry, L. L. and Parasuraman, A. (1996), "The Behavioral Consequences of Service Quality", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 60, pp. 31-46.