

Olgun Kitapci
Cumhuriyet University

Perceptions of Service Quality in Turkey's Hotel Industry : A Perspective from International Tourists

The aim of this study is measuring the perceptions of service quality in Turkey's hotel industry from the perspective of international tourists. The sample of the study consists of the international tourists staying at Turkey's five and four star hotels. A questionnaire was used to survey a sample of total 646 international tourists. The analysis is used to evaluate the service quality of Turkey's hotel industry and to examine the differences between tourists' expectations and their actual perceptions. Results of the gap analysis show that service quality of five star hotels is better than four star hotels. Five star hotels provide international standard comfort and better service quality then those at four star hotels.

Key words: Service Quality, Hotel Industry, Turkey, SERVQUAL

Dr. Olgun Kitapci
Assistant Professor
Department of Management Information Systems
Faculty of Business and Administrative Sciences
Cumhuriyet University
P.K. 58140, SIVAS/TURKEY
okitapci@cumhuriyet.edu.tr
Cellphone : +90 532 3617902

Introduction

Over the last two decades Turkey has made considerable investments on infra and super structures. This also includes transport infrastructure such as improvement and modernisation of airports and air terminals as well as construction of new ones. The accommodation industry at present, includes a range of facilities from the top quality, super modern deluxe hotels, holiday complexes, and boutique hotels to the affordable ones. Although city hotels, summer resort hotels and holiday complexes constitute the greater portion of the accommodation industry, there are numerous ski, winter resorts and spa hotels in various parts of the country. Most high standard hotels and holiday complexes have a variety of recreation, entertainment facilities.

The hotel industry in Turkey has grown rapidly. According to Ministry of Culture and Tourism (2006), there were 2773 hotels in 2006, with a total capacity of 545.938 beds. These hotels include 276 five-star hotels, and 497 four-star hotels. These establishments provided employment for about 200.000 people. In 2006, net tourism income was estimated to be 12,534 billion. In terms of European tourists' arrivals, almost 16.400 million tourists in 2005 and 19.819 million tourists visited Turkey in 2006 and. Report of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism showed that there was a 21 percent increase in tourist arrivals between 2005 and 2006. (<http://www.kultur.gov.tr/TR/BelgeGoster.asp>) Turkey is now a vey important market for all tourists who seek holidays in Turkey. In the wake of increasing competition in the tourism industry in Turkey, there is a need for hotel managers and international investors to recognize the importance of service improvements in establishing a competitive advantage.

Turkey has to compete for the same market with counterparts in Europe region, such as Greek, Spain, Italy ann France, all of which are well established and have a sophisticated hotel industry, with similar products and almost similar service. The future of Turkey's hotel

industry looks challenging and it is important to identify the quality and variety of service and products provided by Turkey's hotel industry.

Service Quality Models

In the past two decades, service quality has become a popular topic of academic investigation, and has become recognized as a key factor in building competitive advantage (Santos 2003; Cronin and Taylor 1994; Kang and James 2004). There has been a continued research on the definition, modeling, measurement, data collection procedure, data analysis etc., related to issues of service quality, leading to development of sound knowledge base for current and future researchers (Seth and Deshmukh, 2004)

It has been proposed that service quality is a function of the differences between customer expectation and performance (Haywood-Farmer 1988). Parasuraman *et al.* (1985) has conceptualized a model, which consists of several links, or gaps, between the activities of service organization and perceptions of quality. Proposed as the GAP model, it identifies five major gaps:

- Gap 1 : Difference between consumers' expectation and management's perceptions of those expectations.
- Gap 2 : Difference between management's perceptions of consumers' expectations and service quality specifications
- Gap 3 : Difference between service quality specifications and service actually delivered
- Gap 4 : Difference between service delivery and the communications to consumers about service delivery

- Gap 5 : Difference between consumers’ expectations and perceived service. This gap depends on size and direction of the four gaps associated with the delivery of service quality on the marketer’s side.

According to this model, the service quality is a function of perception and expectations. This model is (Seth, Deshmukh and Vrat 2005; Teas 1993; Teas 1994):

$$SQ = \sum_{j=1}^k (P_{ij} - E_{ij})$$

SQ = SERVQUAL overall service quality of stimulus i .

k = number of attributes

P_{ij} = performance perception of stimulus i with respect to attribute j .

E_{ij} = service quality expectation for attribute j that is the relevant norm for stimulus i .

The focus of this study is on Gap 5, which is the measurement between consumers’ expectations and their perceptions of service delivery.

Methodology

Based on current literature, 36 service quality attributes were developed in the questionnaire to identify and analyze service gaps (Gap 5) between tourists’ expectations and the perceptions of tourists from service quality. The questionnaire was divided into three parts. Part one consisted of questions related to international tourists’ demographics. Part two measured respondents’ expectations of service quality, using a five-point Likert scale (Likert, 1934) consisting of “1” (very low) to “5” (very high) expectation. Part three measured respondents perceptions of service quality, using a five-point Likert scale with “1” (strongly

disagree) to “5” (strongly agree) point scale. The questionnaire was written including in English and Russian.

Data were collected from four- and five-star hotels in Antalya; the hotels were selected on the basis of a nonprobability convenience sampling technique. Every 100th tourist who checked in to the hotel was surveyed. A total 900 questionnaires were distributed to the guests of which 680 were returned, but 34 were not usable for analysis. This represents a response rate of 71.7%. SPSS 14.0 was used for data analysis; analysis is based mostly on descriptive statistics.

Results

The main results are summarized in Tables 1-3. Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the respondents, Table 2 shows the differences between tourists’ expectations and perceptions of service quality in 5-star hotels, and Table 3 shows the same information for 4-star hotels.

Table 1 Respondents’ Profile (n=646)

	f	%		f	%
<i>Gender</i>			<i>Occupation</i>		
Female	223	34,5	Self-Employed	121	18,7
Male	423	65,5	Professionals(doctors,lawyers etc)	186	28,8
TOTAL	646	100	Government (officers etc)	56	8,7
<i>Age</i>			Students	87	13,4
18-27	224	34,7	Housewives	73	11,4
28-37	253	39,2	Retired	46	7
48-57	115	17,8	Others	77	12
58 above	54	8,3	TOTAL	646	100
TOTAL	646	100	<i>Nationality</i>		
<i>Level of Education</i>			Russian	317	49
Sec. School or high School	152	23,5	Ukrainian	184	28,5
Graduate Degree	381	58,9	Iranian	83	12,8
Master Degree	89	13,9	Others	62	9,7
Doctorate Degree	24	3,7	TOTAL	646	100
TOTAL	646	100	<i>Hotel stay</i>		
			5-star	208	32,2
			4-star	438	67,8
			TOTAL	646	100

Tourists' Expectations and Perceptions of Service Quality

Comparison of tourists' actual perceptions of service quality with their expectations for 5 star hotels, using the paired *t* – test, indicated a statistically significant difference on 10 of the 36 attributes examined. According to Table 2, “Comfortable bed and pillow” (+0,27, sig 0.01), “Availability of fitness and health club” (0,24, sig 0.01), “Variety of water sports (+0,23, sig. 0.05), “Availability of eating and drinking facilities (+0,23, sig 0.01), “Availability of sauna and massage” (+0,23, sig 0.05), “Availability of animation service” (+0,22, sig 0.05), “Comfortable and welcome feeling” (+0,22, sig 0.05) and “Friendliness of employees” (+0,21, sig 0.05) have positive mean scores. The biggest gaps were found in items “Quietness of room” (-0,08), “Taste of food” (-0,08), “Adequacy of fire safety facilities (-0,06), “Employees give personel attention” (-0,04), “High quality of food in restaurant(s)” (-0,04), “Professionalism of employees” (-0,03) “Reservation system was easily accessible” (-0,03) and “Reliable wake-up service” (-0,01). Gap 5 was +0,10 (sig. 0,05).

Table 2 Differences between tourists' expectations and perceptions of service quality of 5-star hotels in Turkey (n=208)

Attributes	Expectations Means(E)	Perceptions Means(P)	Gap (P-E)	t-value
1- Professionalism of employees	3,83	3,80	-0,03	+0,36
2- Hotel staff with multi-lingual skills	3,58	3,62	+0,04	-1,17
3- Polite and courteous employees	4,00	4,17	+0,17	-1,63
4- Friendliness of employees	4,10	4,31	+0,21	-2,23*
5- Employees perform the service right the first time	4,02	4,16	+0,14	-1,37
6- Employees give personel attention	4,08	4,04	-0,04	+0,48
7- Cleanliness of room	3,82	3,98	+0,16	-1,46
8- Cleanliness of bathroom in room	3,86	3,92	+0,06	-1,49
9- Comfortable bed and pillow	3,60	3,87	+0,27	-2,80**
10- Availability of room service	4,02	4,10	+0,08	-0,53
11- Security of room	3,90	3,98	+0,08	-0,51
12- Quietness of room	3,88	3,80	-0,08	+1,02
13- Hot/cool of room with aircondition	3,80	3,93	+0,13	-1,26
14- Availability of safe-case	3,93	3,98	+0,05	-1,18
15- High quality of food in restaurant(s)	3,86	3,82	-0,04	+0,46
16- Variety of all meal menu in restaurant(s)	4,08	4,20	+0,12	-1,22
17- Availability of late breakfast	3,76	3,96	+0,20	-2,18*
18- Taste of food	3,71	3,63	-0,08	+1,16
19- Availability eating and drinking facilities	3,91	4,14	+0,23	-2,39**
20- Variety of water sport	4,05	4,28	+0,23	-2,11*
21- Atractive decor and furnishings of room/lobby	3,96	4,12	+0,16	-1,56
22- Availability of indoor swimming pool	3,66	3,85	+0,19	-1,91*
23- Availability of open-air swimming pool	3,86	3,98	+0,12	-1,12
24- Availability of fitness and health club	3,80	4,04	+0,24	-2,40**
25- Availability of sauna and massage	3,76	3,99	+0,23	-2,23*
26- Availability of conference/ meeting room facilities	3,40	3,60	+0,20	-1,78
27- Availability of transfer from airport	3,77	3,94	+0,17	-1,52

28- Reservation system was easily accessible	3,66	3,63	-0,03	+0,36
29- Reliable wake-up service	3,60	3,61	-0,01	+0,16
30- Availability of animation service	3,88	4,10	+0,22	-1,98*
31- Quick check-in and check-out	3,73	3,72	-0,01	+0,13
32- Security of hotel	3,90	4,00	+0,10	-0,66
33- Easy attainable hotel location	3,89	3,90	+0,01	+0,12
34- Reasonable room rate/value for money	3,90	3,92	+0,02	+0,18
35- Adequacy of fire safety facilities	3,76	3,72	-0,06	+0,85
36- Comfortable and welcome feeling	3,92	4,14	+0,22	-2,11*
Overall (combined scale of 36 attributes)	3,84	3,94	+0,10	-2,62**

Notes : * *t*-test two-tail probability <0,05; ** *t*-test two-tail probability <0,01;

In Table II, a comparison of tourists' actual perceptions of service quality with their expectations for 5 star hotels, using the paired *t* – test, indicated a statistically significant difference on 10 of the 36 attributes examined. According to Table II, “Comfortable bed and pillow” (+0,27, sig 0.01), “Availability of fitness and health club” (0,24, sig 0.01), “Variety of water sports (+0,23, sig. 0.05), “Availability of eating and drinking facilities (+0,23, sig 0.01), “Availability of sauna and massage” (+0,23, sig 0.05), “Availability of animation service” (+0,22, sig 0.05), “Comfortable and welcome feeling” (+0,22, sig 0.05) and “Friendliness of employees” (+0,21, sig 0.05) have positive mean scores. The results indicated that the hotels were providing good relationship with tourists. The results of other attributes that the hotels were not doing good job in meeting tourists' expectations. The biggest gaps were “Quietness of room” (-0,08), “Taste of food” (-0,08), “Adequacy of fire safety facilities (-0,06), “Employees give personal attention” (-0,04), “High quality of food in restaurant(s)” (-0,04), “Professionalism of employees” (-0,03) “Reservation system was easily accessible” (-0,03) and “Reliable wake-up service” (-0,01). Gap 5 was +0,10 (sig. 0,05). Managers of 5 star hotels must improve those attributes to overall service quality. (Table II)

Comparison of tourists' actual perceptions of service quality with their expectations in 4 star hotels, using the paired *t* – test, indicated a statistically significant difference on 15 of the 36 attributes examined. According to Table 3, “Friendliness of employees” (+0,04), “Polite and courteous employees” (+0,02), “Reasonable room rate/value for money” (+0,02)

have positive mean scores. The biggest gaps were “Cleanliness of bathroom in room” (-0,38 sig 0.01), “Cleanliness of room” (-0,36 sig 0,01), “Good working of aircondition” (-0,36, sig 0.01), “Comfortable bed and pillow” (-0,34 sig 0,01), “Hotel staff with multi-lingual skills” (0,33 sig 0,01). Gap 5 was -0,14 (sig. 0,01).

Table 3: Differences between tourists’ expectations and perceptions of service quality of 4-star hotels in Turkey (n=438)

Attributes	Expectations Means(E)	Perceptions Means(P)	Gap (P-E)	t-value
1- Professionalism of employees	3,74	3,52	-0,21	+2,95**
2- Hotel staff with multi-lingual skills	3,52	3,20	-0,33	+3,68**
3- Polite and courteous employees	3,90	3,92	+0,02	+0,12
4- Friendliness of employees	3,94	3,98	+0,04	+0,26
5- Employees perform the service right the first time	3,82	3,62	-0,20	+3,33
6- Employees give personel attention	3,60	3,56	-0,04	+0,46
7- Cleanliness of room	4,02	3,66	-0,36	+3,42**
8- Cleanliness of bathroom in room	4,04	3,66	-0,38	+1,36
9- Comfortable bed and pillow	3,84	3,50	-0,34	+3,58**
10- Availability of room service	3,66	3,56	-0,10	+1,36**
11- Security of room	3,40	3,36	-0,04	+0,34
12- Quietness of room	3,46	3,28	-0,18	+2,72**
13- Good working of aircondition	3,50	3,12	-0,36	+4,06**
14- Availability of safe-case	3,65	3,60	-0,05	+0,72
15- High quality of food in restaurant(s)	3,68	3,54	-0,14	+2,00*
16- Variety of all meal menu in restaurant(s)	3,56	3,42	-0,14	+2,12**
17- Availability of late breakfast	3,70	3,60	-0,10	+1,48
18- Taste of food	3,71	3,66	-0,05	+0,82
19- Availability eating and drinking facilities	3,59	3,48	-0,11	+1,38
20- Variety of water sport	3,60	3,43	-0,17	+2,68**
21- Atractive decor and furnishings of room/lobby	3,48	3,28	-0,20	+2,49**
22- Availability of indoor swimming pool	3,10	3,08	-0,02	+0,56
23- Availability of open-air swimming pool	3,72	3,56	-0,18	+2,23**
24- Availability of fitness and health club	3,62	3,58	-0,04	+0,43
25- Availability of sauna and massage	3,44	3,42	-0,02	+0,13
26- Availability of conference/ meeting room facilities	3,50	3,43	-0,07	+0,85
27- Availability of transfer from airport	3,62	3,58	-0,04	+0,43
28- Reservation system was easily accessible	3,80	3,73	-0,07	+0,60
29- Reliable wake-up service	3,73	3,60	-0,13	+1,64
30- Availability of animation service	3,46	3,32	-0,14	+1,98*
31- Quick check-in and check-out	3,64	3,60	-0,04	+0,36
32- Security of hotel	3,68	3,54	-0,07	+0,85
33- Easy attainable hotel location	3,85	3,77	-0,08	+0,93
34- Reasonable room rate/value for money	3,84	3,86	+0,02	+0,18
35- Adequacy of fire safety facilities	3,90	3,72	-0,18	+2,36**
36- Comfortable and welcome feeling	3,78	3,55	-0,22	+2,96**
Overall (combined scale of 36 attributes)	3,67	3,53	-0,14	+4,52**

Notes :* *t*-test two-tail probability < 0,05; ** *t*-test two-tail probability <0,01;

Discussion and Conclusions

The results show that international tourists' perceptions of 5-star hotels in Turkey were higher than their expectations. Positive gaps indicate that the delivered service level was above the tourists' expectations. The biggest negative gaps related to "taste of food" and "high quality of food in restaurants". This shows hotel managers must improve food quality and taste of food in five-star hotels.

The results also show that international tourists' perceptions of 4-star hotels in Turkey were lower than their expectations. These negative gaps indicated that the delivered service level was below tourists' expectations. The biggest gaps related to "cleanliness of rooms and bathrooms" and "comfort of customer such as aircondition, bed and pillow". This shows that managers of the 4-star hotels must make substantial improvements in quality of these attributes.

According to this study, there are different service quality between 4-star and 5-star hotels in Turkey. The findings presented here show that service quality of 5-star hotels are better. The managers of 4 star hotels must increase service quality to conform to international standards.

The result of this study shows that managers in the hotel industry in Turkey should carry out this type of analysis regularly so that they can understand more about the tourist evaluation process and thus meet tourists' expectations more consistently.

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