The Relationship between Service Quality Dimensions and Behavioral Intentions in the Egyptian Hotel Industry

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Abstract

This study investigates the service quality dimensions within five-star hotels and how these dimensions further impact customer satisfaction and behavior intentions. A self-administrated questionnaire was used to collect the primary data of this study. The findings obtained from the factor analysis indicated five dimensions of service quality: tangibles, adequacy in service quality, understanding and caring, assurance, and convenience. The findings also indicated that the business guests had the highest importance for the dimensions of assurance, adequacy in service supply, understanding and caring, tangibles, and convenience. Although the findings of this study indicated that the adequacy in service supply, assurance, understanding, and caring in the hotels were rationally good, lower ratings were identified for other numerous factors. Multiple regression analysis was also applied and showed that these five dimensions had a statistically significant influence on customer satisfaction and behavior inventions.

Keywords: Customer Satisfaction, SERVQUAL, Service Quality, Behavioral Intentions,

Introduction

The tourism industry is the world's biggest industry contributing to developing countries (Jones & Haven-Tang, 2005). Egypt is a traditionally tourism-based economy, and the long-standing, strong market fundamentals make the country a good investment opportunity in the long term (Colliers, 2013). The tourism industry in Egypt has been severely influenced since 2011, in which Egypt's inbound tourism dropped by 33% (Colliers, 2013). Service is one of the most critical factors for hotels in order to gain a competitive advantage in the hospitality industry (Angelova and Zekiri, 2011). Although homogenous types of services have been offered in different hotels, the quality of service is one of the ultimate differentiators (Salazar *et al.,* 2010). Hung *et al.* (2003) revealed that providing customers with outstanding service quality impacts their satisfaction and

enhances their profits. Today's customers are frequently traveled and know what they want (Chacko *et al.,* 2012).

In the hospitality industry, customer satisfaction is the secret to success in severe competition by fulfilling customers' wants (Radojevic *et al.,* 2015). Customer satisfaction is an essential factor in providing the best service quality in hotels (Said *et al.,* 2013). According to Pizam et al. (2015), hotels should deliver high-quality service to improve customer satisfaction and differentiate them from competitors. Customers are considered to be satisfied when the weighted sum of their total experiences exceeded their expectations. Thus, hotel managers should be aware of factors that contribute to customer satisfaction.

El Saghier (2015) indicated that improving the service quality levels through using the SERVQUAL model is vital to satisfy customer expectations in Alexandria hotels in Egypt. Hence, this paper attempts to identify the importance and performance of service quality in five-star hotels in Greater Cairo in Egypt. Such a model is designed to measure service components that generate satisfaction within five dimensions provided by the SERVQUAL model. The current study identifies the gaps between customers' expectations and perceptions of the services offered. It is argued that the existence of these gaps is a source of dissatisfaction with the services provided. The present study also extends the service quality model developed by El Saghier (2015), which measured the relationships between the five dimensions of SERVQUAL and customer satisfaction. This study addresses the following main research questions:

- Is there any meaningful difference between customers' expectations and their perceptions of service quality dimensions in the Egyptian Hotel Industry?
- Which quality attributes are perceived to have more/less important to customers, and which ones have high/low-performance levels?
- What is the nature of the relationship between service quality, customer satisfaction, and behavioral intentions?

This paper aims to examine the relationships between the five dimensions of service quality and its subsequent effect on customers' satisfaction and their behavioral intentions in the Egyptian hospitality context. By identifying the nature of the relationship among these dimensions, Hotels' managers will develop better marketing strategies for their target customers.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

In the context of the hospitality industry, the measurement of service quality is critical to understanding customer expectations, the dimensions of the service quality, and their relative importance for customers (Ebrahimpour & Haghkhah, 2010; Markovic & Jankovic, 2013). Such measurement will improve the overall service quality levels by recognizing specific service elements requiring improvement (Akbaba, 2006). In addition, when the SERVQUAL instrument was applied over time, it helped service providers understand both customer expectations, perceptions of specific services, and areas of needed quality improvements (Saleh & Ryan, 1992; Parasuraman *et al.,* 1998; Zeithaml *et al.,* 1990). The conceptual framework of this study was adapted from the studies of Akbaba (2006) and El Saghier (2015), as shown in (Figure 1)

Figure 1: Theoretical framework
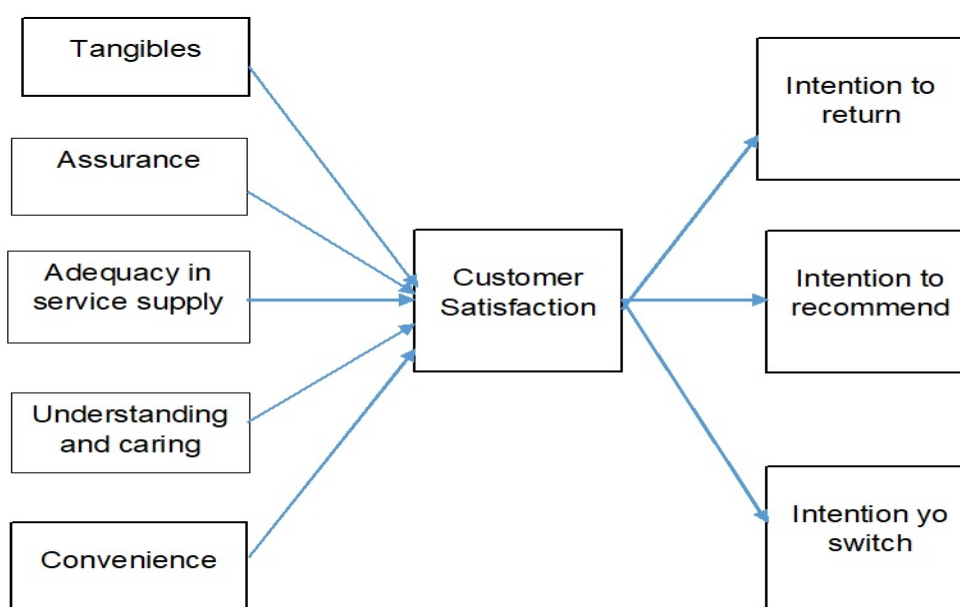
The relationship between reliability and customer satisfaction
Reliability (adequacy in service supply) refers to the ability to deliver the promised service consistently and dependably (Abu Alroub *et al.,* 2012). Consistency means uniformity of the quality, doing things in the same way, and depending on the same standards (Iberahim *et al.,* 2016). Frei *et al.* (1999) suggested that service quality should include compatibility of the promised service output around a typical target value determined by the customer, while dependability refers to the assurance of providing services as customers expected (Iberahim *et al.,* 2016). Reliability has a significant impact on customers' satisfaction through handling their services' problems, performing them right from the first time and within the promised time, and maintaining error-free records. (Iberahim *et al.,* 2016; Omar *et al.,* 2015; Gagnon & Roh, 2008). Hossain (2019) indicated that reliability has a positive impact on customer satisfaction. Based on the above review of literature, the following hypothesis was derived:
H1: Perception of adequacy in service supply positively influences customer satisfaction.

The relationship between assurance and customer satisfaction
Assurance perceived by customers is a vital dimension of service quality in any industry (Zeithaml, 2009). It is defined as: *"the employees' knowledge and courtesy and the service provider's ability to inspire trust and confidence"* (Zeithaml *et al.,* 2006, 119). If trust and confidence are not appropriately conveyed to the customers, their assessment of that provider's service quality will be lower, and their satisfaction may be affected negatively. By communicating competencies through their personnel, service providers can help manage customers' expectations, and in turn, quality concerning this customer service element will be high. It occurs through matching customers' expectations with what service providers promised to deliver; if there are gaps, improvements should be tracked through regular surveys to determine such expectations (Zeithaml, 2009). Munhurrun (2012) & Hossain (2019) showed that assurance positively impacts customer satisfaction. Based on the above review of literature, the following hypothesis was derived:
H2: Perception of assurance positively influences customer satisfaction.

The relationship between empathy and customer satisfaction

Empathy (understanding and caring) is defined as the *"caring, individualized attention the firm provides its customer"* (Zeithaml *et al.,* 2006, 120) through which the customer is treated as if he is unique and special. This dimension is more applicable in industries where building relationships with customers ensures the firm's survival as in the hospitality industry, opposing "transaction marketing" (Andaleeb & Conway, 2006). Empathy may be essential to ensure customer satisfaction and loyalty as the service provider knows how the customer likes his /her services (Harr, 2008). Munhurrun (2012) and Hossain (2019) showed that empathy has a statistically significant impact on customer satisfaction. Based on the above review of literature, the following hypothesis was derived:

H3: Perception of understanding and caring positively influences customer satisfaction

The relationship between responsiveness and customer satisfaction

Responsiveness (convenience) to the speed of the service providers to respond to the customers' needs. The response requires the presence of willingness and flexibility to help customers and provide prompt service (Zeithaml et al., 2006; Abu Alroub et al., 2012). To be responsive, a firm must determine how long it would take to get answers or have the customers' problems dealt with from the customers' perspective rather than its perspective (Zeithaml *et al.,* 2006). Mariappan (2006) indicated that information technology had brought serious changes in the business environment, especially in the convenience' of service delivery and creation of value-added services that will bring up customers' satisfaction (Zhu et al., 2002). Munhurrun (2012) and Hossain (2019) showed that responsiveness was the strongest predictor of customer satisfaction. Based on the above review of literature, the following hypothesis was derived:

H4: Perception of convenience positively influences customer satisfaction.

The relationship between tangibles and customer satisfaction

Tangibility refers to the environment in which the service is delivered. It also includes any tangible commodities that facilitate the service's performance or communication (Zeithaml and Bitner, 1996:111). Santos (2002:294) refers to tangibility as the visible facilities of a service such as the appearance of physical aspects, tools and equipment, personnel, and communication material. The importance of tangibility or creating an attractive physical environment has gained growing attention among scholars in the hospitality industry. It is a critical factor for attracting and satisfying more customers (Han and Ryu, 2009). According to several authors (e.g., Ryu and Jang, 2008; MunPanda and Satyabrat, 2014) physical environment has a significant impact on the customer's perception of the service's overall quality turn, which affects customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry. Munhurrun (2012) and Hossain (2019) indicated a positive relationship between tangibles and customer satisfaction. Based on the above review of literature, the following hypothesis was derived:

H5: Perception of tangibles positively influences customer satisfaction.

Moreover, this study's behavioral intentions indicators are the following: the intention to return, intention to recommend to friends and relatives, and intention to switch from the current service provider. (Homburg and Giering 2001, Oppermann, 2000; Bigné *et al.,* 2001; Chen and Gusoy, 2001; Cai *et al.,* 2003; Niininen *et al.,* 2004; Petrick, 2004; Burnham *et al.,* 2003; Carter *et al.,* 2014; Ting, 2014). The relationship between customer satisfaction and each of these indicators will be discussed in turn.

The relationship between customer satisfaction and intention to return
Several authors (Fornell, 1992; Bigne *et al.,* 2001; Pike, 2002; Chen and Tsai, 2007; Chi and Qu, 2008; Chen and Chen, 2010) emphasized that perceived quality, customer satisfaction are the most frequent factors used to explain the customer's intention to visit/revisit. Weiss (2003) and Weiss *et al.* (2004) concluded that high customer satisfaction, along with better service quality, is simultaneously the most significant attribute in predicting repeat purchase behavior (intent to return). Lately, Um *et al.* (2006) concluded that satisfaction is considered both a predictor of revisiting intention and as a moderator between such intention and perceived attractiveness, perceived quality of service, and perceived value for money. Munhurrun (2012) showed that customer satisfaction has a significant impact on customers' intention to revisit. Based on the above review of literature, the following hypothesis was derived:
H6: Customer satisfaction positively influences customers' intention to return.
H7: Customer Satisfaction mediates the influence of the five dimensions of service quality on the intention to return.

When people sharing their positive or negative evaluation of their experiences, they may or not influence others' purchase behavior (Susskind, 2002). Customer satisfaction is considered a significant reason for positive word of mouth (De Matos and Rossi 2008; Swan and Oliver 1989; Zeithaml et al., 1996). Satisfied customers can create a positive impact if they recommend a particular service provider to their friends, families, and colleagues (Reichheld, 2003). The importance of word of mouth brings attention to the intention to recommend a predictor of the service provider's performance (Keiningham et al., 2007; Morgan & Rego, 2006; Reichheld, 2003). Munhurrun (2012) showed that customer satisfaction has a significant impact on customers' intention to recommend. Based on the above review of literature, the following hypothesis was derived:
H8: Customer satisfaction positively influences the intention to recommend.
H9: Customer Satisfaction mediates the influence of the five dimensions of service quality on the intention to recommend

Customer satisfaction and intention to switch
Switching intention is typically arise from dissatisfaction with the current provider's performance of products or services. Although the switching intention was derived from the behavioral intention (Keaveney, 1995), switching intention indicates unfavorable outcomes for the service provider (Bansal & Taylor, 1999; Han et al., 2009). According to Oliver (1980), customer satisfaction exists when customers experience a service and compare it with their expectations. If the performance meets or exceeds expectations, customers are generally satisfied. However, if the performance does not meet expectations, customers are typically displeased with that service, and then they switch to another service provider. Previous studies identified a relationship between customer satisfaction and switching intentions (Bansal and Taylor,1999; Cronin et al., 2000; Kotler et al., 2002; Jang et al., 2013). Bansal and Taylor (1999) explained that customer dissatisfaction results in a greater likelihood of switching. Also, Cronin et al. (2000) empirically tested the significant association between customer satisfaction and their intention to switch. Zeelenberg & Pieters (2004) showed that dissatisfied customers are more likely to switch than are satisfied customers. The correlation between customer satisfaction and their intentions provides the fundamental service concept to the service operations that should

satisfy customers' needs and avoid switching (Kotler et al., 2002; Jang et al., 2013). Based on the above review of literature, the following hypothesis was derived:

H10: Customer satisfaction negatively influences the intention to switch.

H11: Customer Satisfaction mediates the influence of the five dimensions of service quality on the intention to switch.

Methodology

A self-administrated questionnaire was used to collect the primary data of this study. The questionnaire was developed by Akbaba (2006) and divided into three parts. The first part measured customer expectations and perceptions of services offered by hotels. This part also consists of 29 service quality attributes positioned in the questionnaire's center column. Customers were asked to rate their responses in relation to these attributes on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (very low) to 5 (very high), which were placed on the left and right sides of the center column, the left side assessing customer expectations and the right side measuring the perceptions. The reason for using this layout with a five-point Likert scale is to overcome confusion, length of the questionnaire; boredom stemmed from two administrations in SERVQUAL.

The second part of the survey measured the customer perceptions of overall service quality, expectations, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions. Overall service quality was assessed using the same five-point Likert scale. However, a five-point Likert scale was used to measure the overall customer expectations range from: (1= much less than expected to 5 = greatly exceeded expectations). A five-point Likert scale was used to measure overall customer satisfaction: (1= completely dissatisfied to 5 = completely satisfied). A five-point Likert scale was used to measure behavioral intentions: (1= strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The third part of the questionnaire measured the customers' characteristics.

A responsiveness sampling was used to target all the business travelers who stayed in three business hotels in Greater Cairo in Egypt. During their check-out periods, customers were approached and asked by receptionists if they would like to participate in this study. A total of 300 customers have filled out the questionnaire form and put it back in the collection box close to the reception desk, however 260 out of the 300 questionnaires were valid.

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 22.0 was used to analyze the data. A paired sample *t*-test was performed to examine the significant differences between two means of expectations and perceptions. Reliability analysis was carried out to ensure the internal consistency of the scale items. Construct validity was used through factor analysis to ensure all the indicators in the scale measure the same construct (Flynn *et al.,* 1995). Factor analysis was performed to explore the small dimension of the 29-attribute scale. Multiple regression analysis was carried out to identify the relative importance of the service quality factors in predicting overall customer satisfaction.

Results

Demographics

As noticed from Table 1, most customers (35.8%) fell into the 35-44-year age group, followed by the 25-34-year age group (26.2%). The respondents' highest proportion was males, who accounted for 66.2% of the sample as opposed to females (33.8%). In terms of employment status, 58.1% of customers were self-employed, followed by 32.7% of professional people; then, 5.4% were students, and 3.8% of customers were in "other jobs," such as "business representative, government official and retires." Regarding education levels, the largest respondent segments had a bachelor's degree (64.2%), whereas the smallest respondent segments had a college degree (12.7). Regarding the respondents' frequency of a stay at hotels, most customers stayed at hotels once a year (80.4%).

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics (n= 260)

Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage
Age	18-24	12	4.6
	25-34	68	26.2
	35-44	93	35.8
	45-54	60	23.1
	55-64	24	9.2
	65 or above	3	1.2
Gender	Male	172	66.2
	Female	88	33.8
Marital Status	Single	68	26.2
	Married	128	49.2
	Other	64	24.6
Occupation	Professional	85	32.7
	Student	14	5.4
	Self-employed	151	58.1
	Other	10	3.8
Education	High School	13	5.0
	College degree	33	12.7
	Bachelor's degree	167	64.2
	Other	47	18.1
Frequency of stay at Hotels	Once a year	209	80.4
	Twice a year	45	17.3
	Five times or more	6	2.3

Factor analysis

Factor analysis was performed to reduce the service quality attributes from 29 to 21 interpretable set of factors. The principal component analysis and Varimax rotation were used to identify the correlated dimensions' underlying structure that would be suitable for further examination (Hair *et al.*, 2010). In this study, a variable with factor loading greater than 0.4 and had eigenvalue equal to or greater than one was selected for interpretation and considered significant (see Table 2). Five main dimensions of service quality were extracted and named as follows: "tangibles," "adequacy in service supply," "understanding and caring, "assurance," and "convenience." The reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) was conducted to test the internal consistency of these five service quality (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). The total Cronbach's α score of these five dimensions was 0.941. The individual alpha coefficients ranged from 0.885 to 0.935, which indicates a good internal consistency between the items within each factor and across all the factors. Hence, the self-administrated questionnaire can be considered to be reliable for analysis (Pallant, 2007). Generally speaking, the correlation matrix's overall significance was 0.000 with Bartlett's test of sphericity value of 4595.7, which indicated that the data matrix had sufficient correlation to the factor analysis.

Based on factor analysis, factor one (assurance) was the most crucial factor for customers. It had four significant factor loadings, which explained 40.82% of the data's total variance, with an eigenvalue of 12.62. However, convenience was the least essential factor from customers' viewpoints, which explained 4.69% of the total variance and had three significant factor loadings.

Table 2: Results of factor analysis (n=260)

	Factor loading	Communalities	reliability coefficient	Eigenvalue	Explained Variance %	Factor
The hotel keeps accurate guest records	0.812	0.760	0.887	12.62	40.823	Assurance
The hotel operating hours are convenient for all their guests.	0.690	0.507	0.892			
The hotel provides its guests with a safe place.	0.601	0.519	0.890			
Employees have in-depth occupational knowledge.	0.450	0.475	0.886			
Employees are always willing to serve customers	0.892	0.757	0.895	3.01	14.952	Adequacy in service supply
The hotel provides the services as they were promised	0.789	0.701	0.892			
Hotel performs services right the first time	0.721	0.592	0.887			
Employees give guests individualized attention that makes them feel special	0.704	0.615	0.895			
Employees are always available when needed	0.652	0.483	0.888			
The hotel provides consistent services.	0.735	0.618	0.894	1.697	5.743	Understanding and caring
The hotel provides flexibility in services according to guest demands	0.598	0.455	0.896			
Employees always treat guests in a friendly manner	0.530	0.490	0.890			
Employees of the hotel understand the specific needs of guests	0.496	0.454	0.885			
The service units of the hotel have adequate capacity.	0.809	0.453	0.891	1.550	5.276	Tangibles
The atmosphere and equipment are comfortable.	0.718	0.596	0.885			
The hotel has modern looking equipment	0.620	0.467	0.889			
The equipment of the hotel works properly	0.562	0.453	0.886			
Food and beverages served are hygienic	0.509	0.691	0.884			
It is easy to access to the hotel	0.856	0.790	0.895	1.814	4.691	Convenience
Getting information about the facilities and services of the hotel is easy.	0.771	0.781	0.897			
The hotel resolves guest complaints and compensates for the inconvenience's guests go through	0.463	0.523	0.856			

Paired-sample t-test

A paired-sample t-test was used to compare the mean score of customer expectations with the mean score of customer perceptions. A paired sample *t*-test showed a significant difference of 20 out of 21 service quality attributes between expectation means and perceptions means (t < 0.01). The most significant gaps between customer expectations and their perceptions were for three factors: 'it is easy to access to the hotel' (-3.85); 'the hotel provides flexibility in services according to guest demands' (-2.31), and 'the hotel performs the services right at the first time' (-2.15). However, the smallest gaps were for: 'The equipment of the hotel works properly without causing breakdowns' (-0.70); 'Employees give guests individualized attention that makes them feel special' (-0.55) and 'the hotel provides its guests a safe place' (-0.21).

Table 3: Results of paired-sample t-test

Tangibles	Expectations Mean	Perceptions Mean	Mean Difference	t-value	P-value
Tangibles					
The equipment of the hotel works properly without causing breakdowns	2.52	1.82	-0.70	2.695	.059
The atmosphere and equipment are comfortable.	3.82	2.45	-1.37	15.881	.442
The hotel has modern looking equipment	3.57	2.68	-0.89	-11.563	.008
Food and beverages served are hygienic	4.34	2.51	-1.83	-14.421	.000
The service units of the hotel have adequate capacity.	4.26	3.03	-1.23	-13.059	.000
Adequacy in service supply					
The hotel provides the services as they were promised	4.06	2.37	-1.69	1.895	.000
Employees are always willing to serve customers	2.65	2.09	-0.56	-10.445	.000
Employees are always available when needed	4.43	3.35	-1.08	-11.22	.000
The hotel performs the services right at the first time	4.57	2.42	-2.15	-5.694	.000
The hotel provides consistent services.	4.23	3.20	-1.03	-18.162	.000
Understanding and caring					
Employees give guests individualized attention that makes them feel special	3.42	2.87	-0.55	-13.930	.000
The hotel provides flexibility in services according to guest demands	4.74	2.34	-2.31	-15.316	.000
Employees always treat guests in a friendly manner	4.37	3.06	-1.31	-3.804	.017
Employees of the hotel understand the specific needs of guests	3.75	2.26	-1.49	-18.673	.000
Assurance					
The hotel keeps accurate records	4.63	3.34	-1.29	-11.392	.000
The hotel and its facilities have operating hours convenient to all their guests.	3.42	1.70	-1.63	-13.752	.000
The hotel provides its guests with a safe place.	2.22	2.01	-0.21	-13.116	.000
Employees have in-depth occupational knowledge.	4.63	3.52	-1.11	-7.723	.000
Convenience					
It is easy to access to the hotel	4.28	0.43	-3.85	-2.422	.000
Getting information about the facilities and services of the hotel is easy.	4.08	2.28	-1.26	-7.1770	.000
The hotel resolves guest complaints and compensates for the inconveniences guests go through	3.08	1.95	-1.13	-13.080	.000

Multiple regression analysis

The multiple regression analysis was performed to test the relationship between service quality factors (independent variables) and behavioral intentions (dependent variables). The results of multiple regression analysis indicated that the coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.56, estimated that 52% of overall customer satisfaction variation is explained by the service quality factors (see Table 4). Also, the *F* ratio, which measures whether the regression model's findings could have occurred by chance. The *F* ratio has a value of 34.298, which is significant at 0.000, showing that the equation's findings would hardly occur by chance, and the regression model was meaningfully explaining the data. Multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis of the current study.

Table 4 shows a statistically significant relationship between three dependent variables and customer satisfaction (P=0.000). Specifically, the perception of adequacy in service supply was the strongest predictor of customer satisfaction (β=.40; t=5.91), compared to the perception of understanding and caring (β=.21; t=3.49). This finding indicates that customers' perceptions of assurance will lead to their satisfaction. How employees understand customers' needs and deal with them will slightly impact customer satisfaction in business hotels. However, customer perceptions of tangibles (β=.15; t=2.85) and convenience (β=.12; t=1.76) were not significant factors predicting customer satisfaction. Based on these findings, H1, H2, and H3 were accepted, whereas H4 and H5 were rejected.

Table 4: The relationship between service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction

Variables	Dependent		P-value
	Customer Satisfaction		
Independents	β	t	
Assurance	.33	4.33	.000*
Adequacy in service supply	.40	5.91	.005*
Understanding and caring	.21	3.49	.001*
Tangibles	.15	2.85	.080*
Convenience	.12	1.76	.120*
F Change	38.19		
R^2	0.56		
P value	.000		

Note: * p < 0.05

As shown in Table 5, customer satisfaction is significantly predicting the three dependent variables of this study. Customer satisfaction had the most substantial influence on intention to recommend (β=.83; t=19.05), while it had the weakest influence on intention to switch (β=.32; t=7.15). The findings also showed a statically significant relationship between independent variables and customer satisfaction as a mediator was created (R^2=.56, P=0.000). A significant relationship was also built between independent and dependent variables – intention to return (R^2=.36, P=0.050), intention to recommend (R^2=.39, P=0.000), and intention to switch (R^2=.22, P=0.000).

Table 5: The relationship between customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions

Variables	Dependents					
	Intention to return		Intention to recommend		Intention to switch	
Independent	β	t	β	t	β	t
Customer Satisfaction	.51	15.13*	.83	19.05*	.32	7.15*
P value	.000		.040		.000	
R^2	.42		.72		.25	
F Ratio	256.9		480.5		66.2	

Note: * p < 0.05

Customer satisfaction (the mediating variable) was added into the three relationship models between independent and dependent variables to complete the third condition of Baron and Kenny (1986). A significant relationship will disappear if customer satisfaction fully mediates between independent variables and each dependent variable. In contrast, when the significance is reduced, customer satisfaction will partially mediate the relationship mentioned above (see Table 6).

Regarding each independent variable's significance, Table 6 indicates adequacy in service supply and caring are the only two dimensions of service quality that remained significant in predicting all dependent variables. It is also noticed that these dimensions' β and t values were decreased compared to those values in Table 5. This finding indicates customer satisfaction partially mediated the relationship between these two dimensions and intention to return, intention to recommend, and intention to switch. Moreover, the relationship between caring and the three dependent variables become significant after including customer satisfaction in the regression model. In contrast, a decrease in β and t values showed that customer satisfaction partially mediated these relationships. Furthermore, the findings indicated that assurance did not predict intention to recommend before and after adding the customer satisfaction in the model as there is no significant relationship.

Table 6: Customer satisfaction mediates dependent and independent variables.

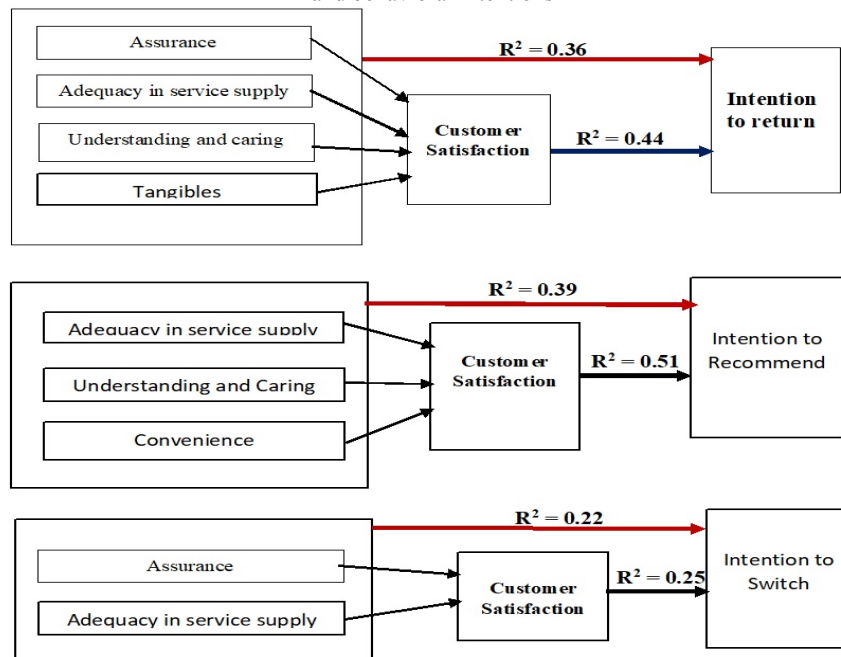| Variables	Mediating		Dependents					
	Customer Satisfaction		Intention to return		Intention to recommend		Intention to switch	
Independents	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t
Assurance	.40	5.91*	.28	3.84	.29	3.27*	.24	3.75*
Adequacy in service supply	.38	4.33*	.32	5.20*	.33	4.05*	.41	6.39*
Understanding and caring	.23	3.49	.24	3.37*	.20	2.84	.10	1.85
Tangibles	.17	2.85	.12	2.58*	.25	3.22	.16	2.36*
Convenience	.12	1.76	-.15	-2.13	.09	1.90*	.21	3.78
P value	.000		.050		.000		.000	
R^2	0.56		.36		.39		.22	
F ratio	38.19		20.64		31.55		14.71	

Note: * $p < 0.05$

The results also showed tangibles predicts only intention to return after adding customer satisfaction in the model, whereas β and t values decreased, which showed that customer satisfaction partially mediated these relationships. However, Table 7 shows that the tangibles dimension without customer satisfaction in the model significantly predicted intention to recommend and intention to switch, indicating that customer satisfaction fully mediated these relationships. Also, convenience predicts customers' intention to recommend before and after involving customer satisfaction in the model. However, the relationships between convenience, intention to return, and the intention to recommend have remained insignificant. This result means the convenience dimension with or without customer satisfaction did not predict the intention to return and switching intention.

Table 7: The effect of customer satisfaction as a mediator

Variables	Dependents					
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Intention to return		Intention to recommend		Intention to switch	
Independents	**β**	**t**	**β**	**t**	**β**	**t**
Assurance	.13	1.71*	.25	2.59	.15	2.17*
Adequacy in service supply	.16	3.08*	.31	3.97*	.23	3.62*
Caring	.09	1.69*	.05	.63*	.02	.77
Tangibles	.17	2.34*	.21	2.58	.10	1.45
Convenience	-.20	-1.10	.06	1.09*	.14	2.11
Customer Satisfaction	.38	6.21*	.54	7.81*	.20	4.88*
P value	.000		.000		.000	
R^2	0.44		.51		.25	
F Ratio	24.39		37.61		14.72	

Note: * $p < 0.05$

These findings draw the three sub-models of service quality dimensions, customer satisfaction, and behavioral intentions (see Figure 2). The findings indicated that after customer satisfaction had been included in the model, the R^2 value was enhanced for the three models: intention to return, recommend, and switch. R^2 value for model 1 increased from .36 to .44, .39 to .51 for model 2 and .22 to .25 for model 3 (see Table 7). The findings also showed that when customer satisfaction as a meditating variable was involved in models, the independent variables explained more variances in the dependent variables. Accordingly, H9, H10, and H11 are accepted.

Figure 2: Sub-models of service quality dimensions, customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions

Notes: Direct path checks the relationship between independent and dependent variables; the Indirect path checks the relationship between independent and dependent variables through a mediator.

Discussion

Service quality plays a critical role in the hotel industry's success, which cannot be denied. Identifying customers' specific expectations, the dimensions of the service quality, and their relative importance in achieving customer satisfaction for each specific segment of the hotel industry would undoubtedly help improve the service quality. The factor analysis findings suggested five main dimensions of service quality in business hotels: assurance, adequacy in service supply, understanding and caring, tangibles, and convenience.

This study used the five service quality dimensions of Akbaba (2006). The factor analysis findings showed that 21 factors were valid for further analysis compared to 23 factors in Akbaba's study. Eight factors were eliminated from the scale because they had a cross-loading and these factors are: 'materials associated with the services are adequate'; 'employees provide prompt service'; 'employees have the knowledge to provide information to guests in areas they would require'; 'the hotel provides the services at the time it promises to do so'; 'the hotel has visually appealing buildings and facilities'; 'employees of the hotel appear neat and tidy'; 'employees in still confidence in guests' and 'the hotel is also convenient for disabled guests.'

Meanwhile, the findings indicated that the business guests had the highest importance for the dimensions of assurance, adequacy in service supply, understanding and caring, tangibles, and donvenience. However, the findings of Akbaba's study (2006) found the business travellers had the highest expectations towards convenience, assurance, tangibles, adequacy in service supply, and understanding and caring. This finding may be because of the cultural difference between Turkey and Egypt, and the guests who visit Egypt may have different expectations than those who visit Turkey.

In the current study, the reliability score of service quality dimensions has also increased compared to Akbaba's (2006) study. In the present study, the total α value of the five major service quality dimensions is 0.941, while the total α = 0.931 in Akbaba's study (2006). Moreover, the findings of the paired-sample t-test showed that customer perceptions of quality of service provided were lower than their expectations, indicating that the quality of service provided by business hotels did not meet customer expectations. The most significant gap between customer expectations and their perceptions was: 'it is easy to access the hotel' (-3.85). However, the smallest gap was: 'the hotel provides its guests a safe place' (-0.21). This finding may be because most business hotels in Cairo do not have facilities and services for disabled people. Also, for security reasons, some business hotels have more than one point of customer inspections to allow him/her to enter the hotel, especially if s/he arrives at the hotel in private transportation.

This study is the first attempt to use the model of customer satisfaction as a meditator between service quality dimensions and behavioral intentions. This study failed to prove that tangibles and convenience were antecedents of customer satisfaction. This finding may be because information technology has brought changes in the business environment, especially in creating value-added services that will increase customers' satisfaction (Zhu et al., 2002; Mariappan, 2006). Although Panda and Satyabrat (2014) found the physical environment significantly affected customer perceptions of service quality, they did not prove if the tangibles affect customer satisfaction or not. However, Ekinci et al. (2008) indicated that the physical environment was positively related to customer satisfaction.

This study's findings also showed that service supply adequacy, assurance, understanding, and caring were antecedents of customer satisfaction. Ekinci et al. (2008) found that customers used to evaluate service by using elements of staff behavior, and

these elements have been recognized as a detriment to customer satisfaction. For example, Andaleeb and Conway (2006) pointed out that responsiveness influenced customer satisfaction. Lee et al. (2005)) found empathy influenced consumer satisfaction. In addition, the consequences of customer satisfaction in this study were intention to return, intention to recommend, and intention to switch. Past studies indicated that customer satisfaction positively influenced intention to return (Shanka and Taylor, 2003; O'Neill *et al.,* 2006; Chen and Chen, 2010); intention to recommend (De Matos and Rossi 2008; Keiningham *et al.,* 2007); intention to switch (Carter et al. 2014; Sahi et al., 2016).

The findings also indicated that customer satisfaction mediated the relationships between and service quality dimensions and behavioral intentions. As shown in Table 5, tangibles and convenience did not impact customer satisfaction. Hence, the outcomes of this study support 9 out of 11 hypotheses. Figure 1 suggests that the customer satisfaction route starts with achieving customers' assurance, perceptions towards adequacy in service supply, understanding and caring, and perceptions of tangibles, leading to positive customer behavioral intentions. In this study, it can also be noticed that adequacy in service supply is involved in the three models of customer satisfaction, showing the influential role of adequacy in service supply in predicting customer satisfaction, intention to return, intention to switch.

Based on the R^2 value, Figure 1 also shows the model labeled (b), which is the best-fit model that explains customer satisfaction in the current study, followed by (a) and (c). The R^2 values for these models improved after including customer satisfaction in the model of relationships between independent and dependent variables. For example, independent variables through customer satisfaction explained a total of 51% variance in customer intention to recommend. This finding means that the independent variables are better predicted than dependent variables through customer satisfaction. Moreover, figure 1 indicates that the weakest model was involved in the relationship between the independent variables and intention to switch. Perhaps other factors could mediate the relationship between independent variables, customer satisfaction, and intention to switch, such as switching costs (Bansal and Taylor, 1999). Thus, further research is needed to examine such relationships to see whether the customer satisfaction model will be improved with the intention to switch.

In this study, the findings are compared with other customer satisfaction studies and found that customer satisfaction models may result in customer intention to return, intention to recommend, and intention to switch. To the author's knowledge, this study, among other few studies to examine the relationship between each dimension of service quality and behavioral intentions in five-star hotels in Cairo in Egypt. This study's models merge all the variables used separately in previous studies of service quality, customer satisfaction, and behavioral intentions. This study concluded that when customers were satisfied with a hotel, they had a higher intention to recommend or revisit this hotel, and they were not likely to switch to other hotels.

Conclusion

The current study investigated customer satisfaction as a mediator between service quality dimensions and behavioral intentions in the Egyptian Hotel Industry. This study proved that assurance, adequacy in service supply, understanding, and caring were predictors for customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction also had the most substantial influence on intention to return, intention to recommend, and prevent customers from switching from a hotel to another. These findings can encourage marketers to attempt to raise customer

satisfaction with confidence in improving behavioral intentions. This study also provides hotel managers with insights into service quality dimensions that impact customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions.

Firstly, adequacy in service supply (reliability) is an important factor in influencing customers to return to a hotel or recommend it to a friend or relative and prevent them from switching. Secondly, this study's findings indicated that assurance was a critical factor for preventing customers' switching. Thus, hotel management should provide reliable service and accurate information in order to create a loyal customer base instead of spending a lot of money on advertising to attract new customers. Thirdly, understanding and caring contributed also to customer satisfaction and customers' intention to return and recommend. Therefore, hotel management should train the staff to give guests individualized attention that makes them feel special. The hotel managers should provide flexibility in services according to guest demands.

Fourthly, tangibles contribute directly to customers' intention to return. Thus, hotel managers should customize several aspects in hotels to full the desire of target markets for the physical environment. For instance, a hotel restaurant's color, design, music can be created to match customers' nationality, age, education level, and income. The above factors provide a good environment for the dining experience, which will result in building a strong relationship between customers and hotels. Finally, convenience contributes directly to customers' intention to recommend a hotel to a friend or relatives. Consequently, hotel managers should resolve guest complaints and compensate for the inconveniences guests go through. The hotel manager should also provide easy access to the hotel and provide a complete picture of its facilities and service to customers.

Although this study's findings indicated that quality performance (i.e., adequacy in service supply, assurance, understanding, and caring) in the sampled hotels was rationally good, lower ratings were identified for numerous factors. These factors involve but are not limited to: 'the hotel performs the services right at the first time'; 'the hotel provides flexibility in services according to guest demands' and 'it is easy to access to the hotel.' Thus, hotel managers should focus on the quality of staff behavior attributes because staff behavior had the most substantial influence on customer satisfaction. Based on the previous discussion, this study suggests the most critical dimensions of service quality in the hotels: 'assurance,' 'adequacy in service supply,' and 'understanding and caring.' These dimensions have different weights of importance about customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions.

Limitations of this study and suggestions for further research

This study examined customer satisfaction as a mediator between service quality dimensions and behavioral intentions in Greater Cairo in Egypt. Hence, to generalize this study's findings, another study should include several five-star hotels across Egypt. Since the Middle East countries have a similar culture, future research may apply this study's findings in one of those countries to see whether the findings will be the same or different. The current study focused on the service quality measures and switching intention roles of service performance. As an extension of this study, incorporating other crucial variables, such as switching barriers and service recovery activities into the proposed model, is recommended to better predict switching intention.

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