
Service Quality on Guest Behavior at Restaurants (Special Reference to “Anuradhapura” District)

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A B S T R A C T

In the restaurant industry, quality is important. Hence, customers can be satisfied by assessing the quality of services provided to them in comparison with what they expected. Relatively a few studies have addressed the relationship between service quality and guest behaviour at restaurants in Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka. The ultimate purpose of this research study is to investigate and evaluate the service quality dimensions on guest behaviour at restaurants in the Anuradhapura district. Primary data was gathered through selected eight restaurants in Anuradhapura and collected from 140 customers who visited those restaurants using a structured questionnaire. The convenience sampling method was used as a sampling technique. With the support of the SPSS 21 version, descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression were used to analyze the data. The study found that the service quality is a key driver of guest behaviour in restaurants in the Anuradhapura district. The findings are expected to help the owners and managers of restaurants in the Anuradhapura district address the research gaps (customers' perceived service quality and actual quality of service in restaurants). Further, this study provides valuable insight into the roots of customer behaviour and restaurant-quality for all tourists and locals in the Anuradhapura district in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Guest behaviour, Restaurant, Service quality

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

The hospitality industry entirely relies on customer service and human interaction. Restaurant service quality can be considered as one of the most important factors in satisfying customers, which has an impact on revenue and market share because it allows for gaining competitive advantages. Among potential restaurant franchisees, perceived quality is considered the most important determinant of customer happiness (Dabholkar, David, & Thorpe, 2000). According to Downs (Downs, 1984), there is a significant relationship between the restaurant's overall success and the better-quality system. Therefore, service quality can be identified as a major determinant of guest behavioural intention towards restaurant revisit and the long-term success of a particular restaurant.

1.2 Research Questions

Service quality can be described as a major approach to developing the firm's sustainability and gaining competitive advantages. Since rivalry is getting viral in the field of hospitality, it is important to establish a dynamic set of attributes to attract and retain guests to the restaurant. In a situation like this, it is important to focus on restaurant-quality management. Even though Anuradhapura and the city of Polonnaruwa are vitally important "must visit" twin tourist attractions in the North Central province of Sri Lanka, according to the SLTDA information, a number of the foreign and domestic visitors who are visiting Polonnaruwa is higher than Anuradhapura. Therefore, it arouses curiosity whether this is because of something wrong with the service of the restaurants in the area. Thus, this study is focused on restaurants in the Anuradhapura district to measure their relationship and impact on the service-quality and guest behaviours. It will investigate the situation that is the relationship or impact affected by the low no of visitors to Anuradhapura compared with Polonnaruwa and also whether the guests receive the perceived quality from both registered and unregistered restaurants. As well as this study is to fill the gap of poor literature in the restaurant industry in Sri Lanka on service quality dimensions. Therefore, it is timely to investigate, is there any impact of service quality dimensions on guest behaviour at restaurants in the Anuradhapura district?

RQ1: What is the existing level of each service quality dimension in restaurants in the Anuradhapura district?

RQ2: What is the nature of the impact that service quality dimensions have on guest behaviour in restaurants in the Anuradhapura district?

2. Literature review

The restaurant industry is a subset of the hospitality industry food and beverage service provision (Powers, 2006). The restaurant business consists of those working to meet our biological needs and those serving primarily our social needs. According to Cousins & Lillicrap (2014), dining includes a variety of factors, including the need to fulfil physiological needs, economic needs, social needs, psychological needs and convenience needs. Consumers desire not only the fulfilment of the above needs and additionally, to experience a good quality of service. So, the restaurants have to focus their attention to service quality. This research study recognizes service definitions and dimensions as a unique concept under review for each service industry.

2.1. Service quality & service quality dimensions

Service quality is described as "the overall discrepancy between the expectations of a customer and their perception of the service experience (Parasuraman et al., (1985) (Ha & Jang, 2010). Mei, Dean, & White, (1999) Identified "employees, tangibles, and efficiency" as the three key dimensions of quality of service. Also, Marković, & Janković, (2013) revealed "reliability, empathy, staff skills, accessibility & tangibility" as the main dimensions of the hotel sector. One of the most successful quality of service activity models build to calculate the quality of services is referred to as the SERVQUAL model (Parasuraman, & Berry, 1991). SERVQUAL is seen as an appropriate standard for assessing the quality of the services provided by an entity. Their tangibility reflects the firm's image that conveys directly to the customers (Zeithaml, 1996). Reliability can be defined as the most critical dimension because every customer generally prefers to deal with others genuinely and also, they expected mutual understanding and they implicitly express their desire to the firm. Responsiveness means, helping and providing perceived service to the guest in a satisfactory way (Zeithaml, 1996). Assurance is concerned about the trust and confidence of the service provider. Further, overall trust and confidence are most probably related to the personnel who is going to interact with the guest (Zeithaml, 1996). Empathy is a significant factor in building a relationship with the guest which ensures company survival (Thomas, 1976).

2.2. Guest behaviour

Guest behaviour becomes the main area for assessing the restaurant industry's service quality. It can be defined as the degree to which a person has formulated intentional plans to perform or not perform certain specified future behaviours (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1980). Guest behaviour is generally divided into favourable and unfavourable behavioural intentions for ease of exposure. Favourable behaviour includes the fact that they say positive things about the product to others (Boulding, Ajay Kalra, Staelin, & Zeitham, 1993), that they recommend the company or service to others (Parasuraman, & Berry, 1991), that they pay the prices premium to the company and remain loyal to the firm. Unfavorable behavioural intentions include various forms of complaints (e.g., complaints to friends or external authorities) and concern regarding moving to competitors.

2.3. The role of service quality dimensions on guest behavioural intention

Guest behavioural intention may be defined as the most important goal for the long-term survival of a company while service quality is influencing guest behavioural intention (Soriano, 2002). Service quality can be described as the most important factor influencing guest behavioural intention, according to the restaurant industry (Soriano, 2002). Therefore, we can easily identify the relationship and effect of the dimensions of service quality on guest behavioural intentions. Ayse & Deniz (2010) in their research showed that service quality has a significant effect on the behavioural intentions of hotel guests. According to the past researchers, there is a strong positive relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions while most of them were found a positive impact between service quality and purchase intentions (Jang & Namkung (2008). This study further investigated how each of the service-related dimensions influenced guest behaviours such as repurchase intentions, word-of-mouth communications, price sensitivity and complaining behavior, taking into account the importance of the dimensions examined.

3. Research Methodology

Researchers have used the Deduction Approach which begins with the reading of existing theories, and then hypotheses are set and tested in reality (Bryman & Bell, 2007) while using quantitative research study as a research strategy. A cross-sectional design involves data collection to assemble a frame of quantitative data. The study is to evaluate the impact of service quality dimensions on guest behaviour in restaurants in Anuradhapura. The target population for this study was all customers who came to these 224 registered and unregistered restaurants in the Anuradhapura from September to January, while the sample was 8 Restaurants that were randomly selected for the study with 140 customers using the convenience sampling method. Primary data had gathered through questionnaires which were distributed among these customers. SPSS.v21.0 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software package was used to facilitate the data analysis process.

3.1. Conceptualization

3.1.1. Conceptual framework

After reviewing the existing literature relating to factors affecting the guest behaviour, the conceptual framework for the research was developed by the researcher -identifying dependent and independent variables as follows (See figure 3.1)

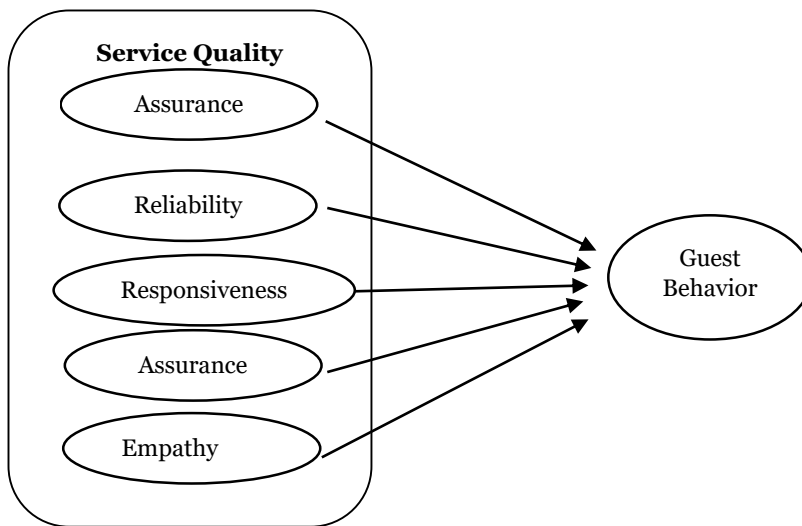


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3.2 Hypotheses

H1: There is a positive impact between tangibility and guest behaviour at restaurants in the Anuradhapura district.

H2: Reliability has a significant positive impact on guest behaviour at restaurants in the Anuradhapura district.

H3: There is a positive impact between responsiveness and guest behaviour at restaurants in the Anuradhapura district.

H4: There is a positive impact between assurance and guest behaviour at restaurants in the Anuradhapura district.

H5: There is a positive impact between empathy and guest behaviour at restaurants in the Anuradhapura district

3.3 Operationalization

3.3.1 Service quality factors

The service quality factors affecting the guest behaviour are examined based on five key service dimensions. Those are tangibility (physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of personnel), reliability (ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately), responsiveness (willingness to help customers and provide prompt service), assurance (knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence) and empathy (caring, individualized attention the firm provides its customers)(Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988).

3.3.2 Guest behaviour factors

There are some favourable and unfavourable factors (guest behavior factors) affecting overall guest behaviour in registered and unregistered restaurants in the Anuradhapura district. Here we consider the customer attitudes and their preferences in several aspects. These include word of mouth, purchase intentions, price sensitivity and complaining behaviour (Boulding, Kolro, Stoelin, & Zeithmal, 1993; Zeithmal, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996; Parasuraman, & Berry, 1991)

4. Data analysis and presentation

In this research study, the final sample included 100 usable survey questionnaires, representing a response rate of 71.42%.

4.1. Reliability analysis

All the reliability coefficient values of the variable's alpha values are higher than 0.7, at a satisfactory level, (See Table 4.1) further analysis of the study has used those variables with higher coefficient values.

Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test

Variables	Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha)	No of items
Tangibility	0.838	03
Reliability	0.884	03
Responsiveness	0.827	03
Assurance	0.860	03
Empathy	0.810	03
Guest behavior	0.918	13

4.2. Validity analysis: KMO and Bartlett's test

Validity analysis conditions were satisfied through which the results for Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy value are all greater than 0.500 and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity sig. value are all less than 0.05

4.3. Descriptive statistics of sample profile

In this study, four questions were asked under the respondents' demographic section such as gender, age level, marital and occupation status. According to the result, a majority (53%) of the customers were females and males were only 47%. The majority of female customers (25%) were between 26-35 years and male customers were between 26-35 years. 62% of the customers were married customers.

4.4. Descriptive statistics of variables

Table 2: Descriptive Statistic of the Items of Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy, and Guest Behaviour.

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis		
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Tangibility	3.6367	.78866	-.806	.241	.988	.478
Reliability	3.7567	.82451	-1.057	.241	1.192	.478
Responsiveness	3.6400	.73958	-.622	.241	.497	.478
Assurance	3.5867	.83299	-.632	.241	.030	.478
Empathy	3.6300	.73534	-.394	.241	-.106	.478
Guest behaviour	3.5177	.64515	-.478	.241	.154	.478

According to table 4.3 guests are almost at the agreed level according to the decision rule and with the existing level of tangibility with 3.6367 mean value and 0.78866 standard deviations, the existing level of reliability with 3.7567 mean value and 0.82451 standard deviations, the existing level of responsiveness with 3.6400 mean value and 0.73958, assurance in restaurants of service quality with 3.5867 mean value and 0.83299 standard deviations. Empathy in the service quality with 3.6300 means value and 0.73534. According to the results, all the dimensions are highly existing in restaurants in the Anuradhapura district. All the coefficients of skewness are between -2 and +2 therefore, data are approximately normally distributed.

4.5. Correlation analysis

Table 3: Correlations between Service Quality Dimensions and Guest Behaviour

	Tangibility	Reliability	Responsiveness	Assurance	Empathy
Tangibility					
Reliability	.826**				
Responsiveness	.753**	.794**			
Assurance	.796**	.792**	.827**		
Empathy	.807**	.794**	.799**	.746**	
Guest Behavior	.848**	.877**	.856**	.835**	.847**

Source: Survey Data, 2020

Table 4.4 shows the correlation values of the main variables of the study. According to the chart tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and guest behaviour coefficient of correlation were recorded as 0.848, 0.877, 0.856, 0.835, and 0.84. Also all the significance/ P-value were recorded as 0.000 (P-value < Significant level). Therefore, it shows that there is a significant relationship between all of the dimensions of the quality of service of restaurants in the Anuradhapura district and the guest behaviour. In addition, reliability can be recognized as the most important factor that influenced the guest behaviour compared to the rest of the service quality dimensions. Therefore, to test the hypothesis, these variables are suitable for regression analysis.

4.6 Regression analysis

4.6.1 Model fitness and ANOVA analysis

In this case, the R Square value of this study indicated that 87.4% of differences in guest behaviour are explained by dimensions of service quality, which means that the guest behaviour is strongly linked to Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy. the P-value is recorded as 0.000. It is less than 0.05 implies that the model fits the data and this model is generally significant. As a result, all the dimensions can significantly predict guest behaviour.

4.7. Results of regression analysis

Table 4: Coefficient of Independent Variables in Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.430	.126	xx	3.421	.001
Tangibility	.140	.062	.172	2.247	.027
Reliability	.234	.059	.299	3.940	.000
Responsiveness	.204	.067	.233	3.061	.003
Assurance	.099	.058	.127	1.700	.092
Empathy	.166	.064	.189	2.608	.011

According to the analysis of the output Table 4.7 show that β values of the Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance and Empathy were recorded as 0.172, 0.299, 0.233, 0.127, 0.189. It represents that each of the variables increased by one unit while other variables remained constant, the guest behaviour was increased by 0.172 in Tangibility, 0.299 in Reliability, 0.233 in Responsiveness, 0.127 in Assurance, and 0.189 in Empathy. And all the mentioned variables will affect the guest's behaviour in a positive way. The service quality dimension of the Tangibility, Reliability & Responsiveness, was recorded as 0.27, 0.000, and 0.003, which stated that it was a statistically significant relationship with the guest behaviour hence, its p-values were less than 0.05. While the service quality dimension of Assurance did not make a significant contribution to the model as its p-values were greater than 0.05 but there was a positive impact on the guest behaviours. Hence all values of the β coefficient can be identified as positive values, the guest behaviour has had a positive impact on Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy. Among these variables, guest behaviour was highly impacted by Reliability, and also Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, and Empathy were very significant for the model as its p-values were less than 0.05. Hence, all hypotheses were accepted according to the analysis.

5. Discussion of the findings

This study was exploratory, aiming to investigate the service quality on guest behaviour, using the theoretical frameworks suggested by Parasuraman et al. (1988) and zeithmal et al. (1996). When demographic factors of the sample are considered, most customers were employed, female, married, and between 26 and 35 years. In line with previous studies, this research supports results assuming there is a positive impact between service quality dimensions and behavioural intentions, as shown in Table 4.3 mean and standard deviations obtained from the descriptive statistics of variables that almost all the customers of restaurants highly agreed with the existing level of TRRAE of service quality in restaurants. Among these service quality

dimensions; the highest mean value is represented by Reliability. It makes sense that accurate and reliable delivery of the promised service is highly existing than other dimensions. The least mean value is recorded for the dimension of Assurance. This involves competence, courtesy of employees, and trust and confidence. According to the results, there is a significant positive relationship between TRRAEs and the behaviour of the guests. The outcome of the analysis is a continuation of the finding stated by Amin & Nasharuddin (2013) that the quality of services has a positive impact on behavioural intentions. Ayse & Deniz (2010) emphasized a positive impact between the quality-of-service dimensions and behavioural intentions.

Previous studies have shown that there has been a positive impact between service physical environment and customer behaviour (Bloemer, Ruyter, & Wetzels, 1999) (Juliet, Getty, Kenneth, & Thompson, 2008). Concerning the regression analysis results of this study tangibility prove that there is a positive impact on the behaviour in restaurants in Anuradhapura. It has been realized that restaurants should maintain the quality by using better physical facilities. According to the Zeithmal et al., (1996), reliability is a very important factor in service quality (Zeithmal & Bitner, 2000). According to the interpretation of the regression analysis of this research, the Reliability of service quality has a positive impact on the behaviour of guests in restaurants in Anuradhapura. The result of this study is confirmed by Theodorakis & Alexandris (2008), Alexandris, Dimitriadis, & Kosiara, (2001). The findings of this research show a significant and positive impact on the responsiveness to the behaviour of the guest, as same as research carried out by Ayse & Deniz (2010), Bloemer et al., (1999). It stated that addressing customer requests and orders in a quick and timely manner. And it also can be said that assurance has a positive impact on the behaviour of the customer but no significant impact between assurance and the behaviour of the guests. These results are confirmed by the findings of the research carried out by Boulding et al., (1993), Theodorakis & Alexandris (2008). In the above dimensions, empathy of the restaurant staff with customers has a positive and significant impact on the behaviour of the guests, i.e; offering customers personalized attention has enhanced customer trust, commitment, and positive purchasing behaviour for employees and the organization. These results are also confirmed by research conducted by Edward & Wang 2015; Ali et al.,2016).

The discussion was based on scholarly findings in alignment with this comprehensive quantitative study which is statistically validated. Therefore, it could be a theoretical validation for the statistically proved findings of the study with more trustworthiness. Consequently, all research objectives were addressed by regression analysis, and also all the hypotheses were accepted as there was a positive impact between the five dimensions of service quality and the behaviour of the guest. According to the results of the survey, among the five independent factors most important to the quality of the service was Reliability, which had more influence on the behaviour of the guest compared to other factors. This suggests that restaurants in the Anuradhapura district provide their services to the customer in a timelier, friendly, and reassuring manner.

6. Conclusion

Based on the overall findings of the research, it has a 71.42 % of responsive rate for the study. At first through the reliability test done on the questionnaire, all the reliability coefficient values of the variables were at a satisfactory level in this study. Under the profile of the sample, the majority of customers were female customers. According to the marital status of the customer, the majority of the customers who visited Anuradhapura restaurants were married customers. When considering the age factor, the majority of customers were in the age group

between 26-35 years. The lowest age group of customers was represented by over 56 age groups. When considering customer occupation status, the majority of customers were in the working category. The mean and standard deviation values of service quality dimensions have shown that customers are almost in agreement with the existing levels of Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy. Among the dimensions of service quality, the highest mean value is recorded for the reliability dimension. The lowest mean value has been recorded for the dimension of assurance in the restaurant's service quality. When considering the relationship between service quality dimensions and guest behaviour, there is a significant and strong positive relationship between service quality dimensions and guest behaviour. Based on research objectives, the research found that all five dimensions have a positive impact on the guest behavioural intention at restaurants in the Anuradhapura district. The service quality dimensions of Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, and Empathy significantly impacted the guest behaviour, but the dimension of assurance did not make a significant contribution to guest behaviour. Therefore, management should organize career guidance programs to develop their careers and enhance the self-respect, self-confidence, and self-image of employees, and they have to pay tribute to the employees for what they do well. On the other hand, if you do constructive criticism, you have to do it positively. Managers must always pay attention to customers while encouraging staff to think about customer care that goes beyond basic service. Maintaining eye contact, smiling greetings, and personalized attention to maximize customer satisfaction, restaurants themselves can engage in showmanship activities such as flaming, flagging, etc. The current study was limited in several ways first one is, that there are 24 districts in Sri Lanka but this study considered only the Anuradhapura district. The concept of service quality is broad and has many different areas. However, this study is based on the service quality of restaurants. Service quality affects many things such as brand equity, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, mental image, customer complaint behaviour and customer behaviour. However, this study is limited to service quality on guest behavior. A number of potential pathways for future researchers have been identified in this study. The present study was conducted on the quality of service on guest behaviour at restaurants in the Anuradhapura district. It is recommended that future studies can be carried out in the Sri Lankan context as a whole in order to obtain a broader and more representative view of the quality of service with guest behaviour in restaurants.

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