The impact of The perceived quality of The optional excursions on tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty in Hurghada

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Abstract

The aim of this research was to identify the effect perceived service quality on tourist satisfaction and which factor influenced the destination loyalty of tourist in Hurgada. The objective was to assess the optional excursions in Hurghada. This paper clarified that there is a notable gap between the expectations and perceptions of tourists towards the optional tours. The research method used in this research was quantitative method. Survey method using questionnaire instrument was used to obtain the primary data. A total sample of 200 tourists in visiting Hurghada destination. The method of data analysis used was spss version 22. This study found that the optional excursions quality has a direct positive effect on satisfaction and loyalty. The dimensions of service quality including reliability, empathy and responsiveness gave empirical supporting to the destination image. Based on the results, some recommendations were suggested to improve the quality of optional excursions to reach the tourist satisfaction.

Key Words: Service quality dimensions, tourists' satisfaction , destination loyalty

1. Introduction:

Service quality has widely been discussed since 20th century and its idea is still relevant to help today organizations in creating differentiation and gaining competitive advantage in an era of borderless world and globalization (*Ali et al,. 2016;Fotaki, 2015;Ismail et al,. 2016*).

The service quality construct has been modified and simplified by US school of thought where it proposes that effective service quality should have five specific dimensions, namely tangible (physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of workers), reliability (ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately), responsiveness (willingness to help customer and provide prompt service), assurance (knowledge and courtesy of workers and their abilities to inspire trust and confidence), and empathy (caring, individualized attention the organization provides its customers) (*Ismail et al., 2016; Kaura et al,. 2015; Wan Edura and Jusoff , 2009*). However, these quality school of thoughts have different perspectives, the source of their ideas are developed based on individual attitudes and perceptions (*Sriram et al,. 2015, Yuen and Thai, 2015*).

This view believes that service quality is an important outcome of comparison between customer expectations before and after their experience of the service (*Gronroos, 2007*). If customers view that their expectations for service performance conform their perceptions of the service, this situation may lead to induce the notion of service quality (*Gronroos ,2007; Kitapci et al,. 2014; Naik and Byram,2016*). Tourist satisfaction is broadly defined as a difference between customers' expectations and experience performance after using a service and/or product at a certain period (*Azman et al,. 2016, Mosahab et al,. 2010*).

While, tourist loyalty is often related to as the willingness of customers to repeatedly purchase a good or service that is accompanied by psychological bond and hold favorable attitudes toward a good or toward the organization supplying the goods or services (***Deng et al,. 2010; Gede and Sumaedi, 2013; Yeo et al,. 2015***).

Within a workplace service quality model, many researchers concur that service quality, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty are distinct, but strongly interrelated constructs. For example, the ability of service providers to appropriately implement service quality in executing daily job may lead to greater customer satisfaction (***Azman et al,. 2016, Hussain Al Nasser and Hussain,2015***) and customer loyalty (***Bardauskaite, 2014, Lee and Lambert, 2008***).

Objectives of the Study:

This study aims to:

• Describing Excursionists' personal demographic characteristics**.**
• Identifying popular types of optional excursions in Hurghada city.
• Identifying the excursionists' expectations and perception of optional excursions quality**.**
• Comparing the average gap score between expectations and perceptions of Optional Excursion quality.
• Examining the correlation between service quality and tourist's satisfaction.
• Examining the correlation between service quality and destination loyalty.

hypotheses the study

This study proposed the relationship among service quality dimensions, tourist's satisfaction and destination loyalty. There were 3 hypotheses in this study.

• **Hypothesis 1**: There is a notable gap between excursionist expectations and perceptions of optional excursions quality
• **Hypothesis 2:** optional excursions quality has a direct positive effect on tourist's satisfaction
• **Hypothesis 3:** optional excursions quality has a direct positive effect on destination loyalty.

2. Literature Review:

2.1 Optional Excursions Concept

The concept of optional excursion is defined by Jafari, *(2002, p. 213)*, as "a short pleasure trip or side trip, purchased extra by tourist during a tour. Tour operator use the term to describe sightseeing programs". According to ***Mancini, (2012, p. 10***) explained that "Optional Excursion is a tour component that is not included in the tour price. The Tourist can purchase this optional during the tour. It's providing important income to tour managers". A lot of package tours provide optional excursions not covered inside the fee of the land package. Sometimes tourist may be required to sign up and pay for optional excursion on the first day of trip because reservation must be made and tickets purchased by tour leader (***Hill, 1992)***.

Excursions are added to increase the attractiveness of the accommodation product with the aim being to attract guests in the first place and possibly induce them to stay longer and spend more. Excursions can also be the main appeal of the vacation where accommodation itself (the lodge or the hotel) plays a secondary role, such as many tourists visit red sea for diving (***Ashley, 2005***).

2.2 Service Quality:

Thai (2015) defined Quality as consistency with fixed specifications and this agrees with **Ali *et al,. (2016)*** who defined Quality as anything that accords with the characteristics of the product to meet the external clients' needs. In addition, the product quality differs from that of a service as the earlier is tangible, whereas the latter is intangible.

The American Society for Marketing, for example, defines service as activities or benefits that are offered for sale, or that are offered for being related to a particular product. *Kotler (2003),* defined service as any behaviour or act based on a contact between two parties: the provider and the receiver, and the essence of this reciprocal process in intangible. *Huseyin et al,. (2005)* looked at service as a set of economic activities that provide time, location form and psychological benefits. *Beer (2003)* defined service as a set of characteristics and overall properties of the service which aim to satisfy the clients and meet their needs. *Thai (2015)* defined service as a set of characteristics that meet the clients' needs, strengthen the links between the organization and them, and enhance the clients' value as well*.*

Ismail et al,. (2014) defined service quality as "the outcome of an evaluation process where the consumer compares his expectations with the service he perceived he has received". Tourism service quality in an organization is defined in terms of quality of excellence, quality of value, quality of conformity to some extents, and quality is viewed as a very important for meeting tourism customer expectations (*Bardauskaite, 2014)*.

Lee and Lambert (2008) stated that there are ten criteria and dimensions through which service quality can be assessed:

- Reliability: the ability of an organization to accurately achieve its services in the proper time and according to the promises it has made to its clients.
- Responsiveness: the tendency and willingness of service providers to help clients and satisfy their needs, immediately reply to their inquiries, and solve their problems as quickly as possible.
- Competence: having adequate skills and knowledge that enable the employees to perform their jobs properly.
- Accessibility: providing easy access to a service in terms of location and through services provided via the telephone, the internet, or any other means of communication.
- Courtesy: treating clients respectfully in a polite friendly manner, understanding their feelings, and answering their phone calls gently.
- Communication: this occurs through gentlemanly listening to the client conveying information to them clearly and facilitating external communication with workers.
- Credibility: this can be achieved through full trust and confidence in the service provider as well as his honesty and straight forwardness.
- Security: this depends on whether the service is free from risks and hazards, defects or doubts so that it provides bodily safety, financial security as well as privacy.

- Understanding/ knowing the customer: this can be made achievable through the ability to pinpoint the customers' needs as well as understanding their individual problems.
- Tangibility: this includes physical aspects connected with service such as instruments and equipment, persons, physical facilities like buildings and nice decoration and other observable service facilities.

The above-mentioned ten dimensions have been integrated into only five ones. Researchers agreed on the fact that these dimensions are appropriate ones which help reveal the customers' expectations and perception. This new model is called 'Servqual'. This compound word consists of the two words 'Service' and 'Quality', these five dimensions include:

1. **Tangibility:** this includes physical facilities, equipment, and the physical appearance of on employee.
2. **Reliability:** this refers to the ability to provide the exact required service according to given specifications and conditions.
3. **Responsiveness:** the inclination and willingness of the employees to serve customers quickly and properly.
4. **Assurance:** feelings of trust and confidence in dealing with the organization. This reflects the workers' knowledge and experience and their ability to build self-confidence as well as confidence in the customers themselves.
5. **Empathy:** understanding the customers' personal needs, taking care of them individually and showing them all sorts of sympathy and affection, looking at them as close friends and distinguished clients.

These dimensions were applied in the search, in addition to two other dimensions , were (destination image and price) to the servqual scale.
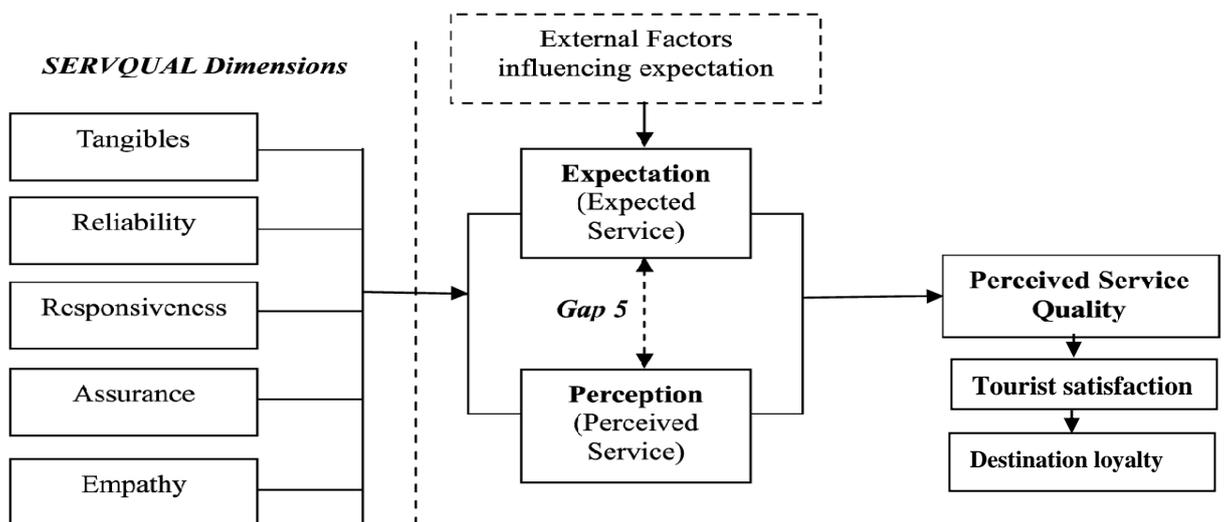

figure 1: the Model of service quality Dimensions

Source: Permatasari et al,. (2017)

Azman et al,. (2016), Hussain Al Nasser and Hussain (2015) see that tangibility, reliability and responsiveness are constant dimensions, whereas; the criterion of 'Assurance' includes courtesy, reliability and security. As for as 'Empathy' is concerned, it includes elements like providing service in terms of place, time, communication, and to what extent the service provider understands the beneficiary. however, believes that tangibility, assurance and empathy can be classified as being functional dimensions of service quality, while responsiveness and reliability can be classified as being technical dimensions.

There are two major approaches to creating and deciding on a model to measure service quality: the directional approach, a concept which is connected with satisfaction but not equivalent to it, and connected with the customers' perceptions of the actual performance of the service provided. This approach supports the fact that satisfaction is a psychological state prior to giving judgment on the quality of service.

Service quality as perceived by customers definitely indicates what is left of their previous perception of the service quality and the level of their satisfaction with the current performance of the service. This means that satisfaction is an intermediary factor between the previous perceptions of the service quality and the present perception of it. Accordingly, and within this general framework, customers can assess the service actual quality provided to them *(Ahmad et al., 2014)*. Hence, the tourist's satisfaction with the actual performance level of service has a further impact on the formation of the customers' perceptions of service quality. And one the service is purchased again, satisfaction becomes a major approach to the process of assessing service quality*(Vera and Trujillo, 2013)*. This approach is termed 'SERVPERE' (*Akbar et al,. 2010, Kitapci et al,. 2014).*

The other approach, called the Gap Approach, or 'SERVQUAL' model developed by (*Yeo et al,. 2015*) is based on the customers' expectations of the service level and their perceptions of the actual service performance level. So the axis of this model is represented by the gap between the customers' perceptions of the actual service performance level and their expectations of the service quality. This gap, in turn, depends on the nature, design and provision of this service. This study depends on this approach .

2.3 Customer Expectations

Grönroos (2007) suggested that in order to increase long term quality, the customer expectations should be focused, revealed, and calibrated. According to *Lovelock and Wirtz (2007*) understanding the expectations of customers mean understanding that when customers evaluate service they compare their expectations with what they think they received from the supplier and if the expectations are met or even exceeded customers believe that the service have high quality.

The expectations are influenced by previous experiences of the service provider, competing services in the same industry or related services in different industries. If the customer don´t have any previous experience they are more likely to base their expectations on word of mouth, news stories or the marketing efforts of the company. One more thing to consider is that customer expectations vary over time because they are influenced by advertising, new technologies, service innovation, social trends and so on. A successful company is able to meet expectations in every step (*Lovelock and Wirtz, 2007*)

2.4 Perceived service quality:

The first attempts to conceptualise service quality were in the 1980s and were based on suggested services characteristics and research in the field of cognitive psychology (*Mohamad and Alhamadani,2011*). According to **polyakova and Mirza (2015)**, the perceived service quality is "the outcome of an evaluation process where the customers compare their expectations with service they have received".

Rao Kondasani and Panda(2015) supported the same view, defining the concept of service quality as "a form of attitude related but not equivalent to satisfaction that results from a comparison of expectations with perceptions and performance".

Customers determine the perceived or cognitive value of service based on their experience with the service delivered. *Akbar et al,. (2010), Kitapci et al,. (2014), Yeo et al,. (2015)* stated that customers' expectations, service delivery process and service outcome have an impact on perceived service quality. **Yoo and Park (2007)** found that employees, as an integral part of the service process, are a critical element in enhancing perceived service quality. Furthermore, **Edvardsson (2005)** pointed out that service quality perceptions are formed during the production, delivery and consumption process. The author concluded that customers' favorable and unfavorable experience, as well as their positive and negative emotions may have an important impact on Measuring Perceived Service Quality Using servqual perceived service quality. Similarly, **O'Neill and Palmer (2003)** have reported that customers' perceptions of service quality may, to a large extent, be influenced by the degree of their prior experience with a particular service.

2.5 Service Quality Models

There are several quality models from which:
1- Grönroos (1984): Technical and functional quality model (Nordic model).
According to Grönroos there are two dimensions of service: technical and functional.
2- Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985): Gaps model of service quality (servqual).
Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry (1985) made the new model of service quality measurement. They try to cover the weakness of Nordic model by offering a new way for measuring service quality. In SERVQUAL model, they suggest to use the gap or difference between expected level of service and delivered level of service for measuring service quality perception with five dimensions: Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurances, Empathy, and Tangibility.
3- Bateson (1995): The Servuction System.
According to "the Servuction System" by *Bateson (1995*), service is based on the delivery of a bundle of service benefits which may come from a variety of sources. Two aspects are identified: invisible aspect and visible aspect. Visible aspect is represented by the inanimate environment in which the service encounter takes place and the contact personnel who actually deliver the service. Invisible aspect, on the contrary, refers to employees back-stage performance and supporting systems.
4- Haywood-Farmer (1988): Attribute service quality model.
Haywood-Farmer proposes that a service organization has "high quality" if it meets customer preferences and expectations consistently. His model categorizes service quality components into three groups: physical facilities and processes, behavioral aspects, and professional judgment.

5- Philip and Hazlett (1997): PCP attribute model.

Philip and Hazlett proposed a hierarchical structure formed model, which based on three main classes of attributes: Pivotal, Core and Peripheral. The whole model is built on the premises of using a combined scale instead of separate scales to measure the gap between expectations and perceptions and attaching different weights to individual dimensions to indicate the importance.

6 -Dabholkar, Shepherd & Thorpe (2000): Antecedents and mediator model.

According to **Dabholkar *et al.* (2000),** factors related to service quality should be viewed as antecedents to overall evaluations of service quality rather than its components. That is to say, customers form a separate overall evaluation of the service quality at the same time of evaluating different factors related to the service, rather than form a straightforward sum of the components. This research also find out that customer satisfaction strongly mediates the effect of service quality on behavioral intentions, while service quality is more closely related to specific factor evaluations about the service. At the same time, it illustrates the importance of measuring customer satisfaction separately from service quality when determine customers evaluations of service.

Parasuraman et al. (1985) analyzed the dimensions of service quality and constituted a GAP model that provides an important framework for defining and measuring service quality. They developed the GAP Service Quality Model through the findings from exploratory research that contains indepth and focus group interviews. GAP Service Quality Model showed the key insights gained through the executive interviews and focus group interviews about the service quality concept. The gaps revealed by the executive interviews were shown in the marketer side (GAP 1, GAP 2, GAP 3, GAP 4), and the GAP 5 which was formed by the focus group interviews was in the consumer side of the model. The GAP relations and names were shown below **(Yarimoglu, 2014)**:

GAP 1: Customer expectation-management perceptions gap, The Knowledge Gap.
GAP 2: Management perception-service quality specifications gap, The Policy Gap.
GAP 3: Service quality specifications-service delivery gap, The Delivery Gap.
GAP 4: Service delivery-external communications gap, The Communications Gap.
GAP 5: Expected service-perceived service gap, The Service Quality Gap.

Lovelock and Wirtz (2011) added the sixth gap to the model as GAP 6: Service Delivery and Perceived Service, The Perceptions Gap. According to the responses of focus group participants, the judgments of high and low service quality depended on how consumers perceived the actual service performance in the context of what they expected, and GAP 5 showed the expected service-perceived service gap. After the gaps modeling, the determinants of service quality that consumers used when interpreting the quality were described. The ten service quality determinants and their descriptions have been identified below.

2.6 Advantages and Reasons for Using the SERVQUAL Model to Measure the Service Quality (*Al Bassam and Al Shawi, 2010*):

- It can be used on a regular basis to track customer perceptions of service quality of a particular firm compared to its competitors. Once data have been analyzed they can be visually presented so that it is easy to identify strengths and weaknesses relative to competition.

- It provides the opportunity for a firm to assess its service quality performance on the basis of each dimension individually as well as the overall dimensions;

- It allows the firm to classify its customers into different segments based on their individual SERVQUAL scores.
- SERVQUAL gap analysis approach seems a logical and straightforward concept and the questionnaire is also pre-described and can be adapted as required.

- Finally, SERVQUAL is a tried and tested instrument which can be used comparatively for benchmarking purposes. It benefit from being a statistically valid instrument as a result of extensive field testing and refinement.

Implementing SERVQUAL and measuring customer perception and expectation of service may well result in customer retention, customer loyalty and positive word-of-mouth, increasing opportunity for cross-selling, employee benefits, improved corporate image, profit gains and financial performance (*Shahin, 2004*).

2.7 The Satisfaction Concept

Tourist satisfaction is considered one of the prime variables to sustain competitive business in the tourism industry because it affects the choice of destination, consumption of products and services (*Ali et al., 2016)*. Tourist satisfaction has been one of the key areas of tourism research for more than four decades. *Aunalal et al., (2017*) .

The Tourist's satisfaction has become a central concept in business discourse and management. According to *Ronglin and Jianqiong (2016*), the Tourist's satisfaction was how far the benefits of a product (perceived) based on customer's expectation. *Rajesh (2013)* stated that the customer satisfied feeling arose when consumers compared their perceptions of product performance or services with their expectations. Further, it was said that there were two main variables defined tourist's satisfaction that was the expectations and perceived performance. If the perceived performance exceeded the expectations, then tourists will be satisfied, but if not, then the tourists were not satisfied (*Kim et al., 2012). Prayag (2012*) stated that tourist's satisfaction was a summary of psychological condition resulting when the emotion revolved the expectations were not accrued multiplied by feelings formed of consumption experience. *Gallarza and Gil (2006*) also noted that tourist's satisfaction was an emotional response to experience related to products or services purchased. Thus, the tourist's satisfaction greatly depended on perception and consumers' expectation.

2.8 Attributes of Satisfaction

Quite large number of research has been dedicated to examine the practice of which customer's decision about a service or product and number of theoretical structures has been proposed to examine the attributes of satisfaction (*Hwang et al., 2005 and Castro et al., 2007*). Satisfaction were measured by efficiency, service quality, social value, play, aesthetics, perceived monetary cost, perceived risk, time & effort spent and perceived value (*Gallarza and Gil, 2006*). Satisfactions of tourist measured by general satisfaction attribute satisfaction (i.e. attractions, accommodation, accessibility, amenities and activities) and met expectations. The

satisfaction attributes included attractions, lodging, dining, shopping, accessibility, activities and events and environment (*Hosany and Prayag,2011*).

Attributes like perceived attractions, perceived quality, perceived risk and perceived value used measure the satisfaction of tourists (*Quintal et al., 2008*). Attributes like comfort facilities, safety & infrastructure, cultural attractions & shopping, tourist attractions & ambience and variety & accessibility affects tourist satisfaction (*Prayag, 2012*). Overall destination image, destination image (i.e. attractions, accommodation, accessibility, amenities, activities, local community and shopping) impact on tourist satisfaction (*Prayag, 2009*).

2.9 Destination Loyalty

Ronglin and Jianqiong (2016) defined "loyal customers as those who re-buy a brand, consider only that brand, and do no brand-related information seeking". *Caban (2012)* defined in "behavioral terms as repeat purchasing frequency or relative volume of same-brand purchasing". *Rajesh (2013)* defined loyalty at a higher level, which he termed 'ultimate loyalty', as those consumers who "fervently desires to re-buy a product or service, will have no other, and will pursue this quest against all odds and at all costs".

2.10 Determinants of Loyalty

Customer loyalty has been one of the key areas of business research for more than four decades and produced valuable insights into the process of building customer loyalty (*Jonathan and Ubah, 2018*). Customer satisfaction, customer experience, value, service quality or performance, product superiority, personal fortitude, social bonding and synergy, customer involvement, price, risk, brand name, demographics, habits and history of brand usage (**Jones and Taylor, 2007**). Cognitive image of natural resources, cognitive image of service quality, cognitive image entertainment and affective image were influences loyalty level of tourist (*Jonathan and Ubah, 2018*). Attributes like comfort facilities, safety & infrastructure, cultural attractions & shopping, tourist attractions & ambience and variety & accessibility affects tourist loyalty (*Prayag, 2011*). Tourist loyalty depends on satisfactions of tourist (i.e. attractions, accommodation, accessibility, amenities and activities) and met expectations (*Chi, 2012*). Overall destination image, destination image (i.e. attractions, accommodation, accessibility, amenities, activities, local community and shopping) impact on the antecedents of tourist loyalty (*Prayag, 2009*). Basic services, attractions and accessibility affect the tourist loyalty (*Permatasari et al ,. 2017*). Destination image, personal involvement, place attachment and overall satisfaction influence antecedents of tourists *(Prayag, 2012)*.

3. METHODOLOGY

Qualitative approach has been used for designing the questionnaire.The sample of the study is the tourists who visit in the Hurghada city are located in Egypt.

A total of 250 forms of questionnaire were distributed. Only 200 forms were answered and returned back and 28 of them were excluded because they were not completed, So about 162 forms were valid, completed and included in the analysis.

For questionnaire data analysis, statistical tools of **Statistical Package Social Science (SPSS 22.0)** are used for data input and analysis in using descriptive

statistics. The statistics results are presented by graphical form with details description. The data have been analysed using statistical indexes such as:

- Frequencies and percentages statistics.
- Means and standard deviation.
- Correlation

This study employed a causal research design using a combination sample (i.e. Judgment or purposive accidental sampling) which emphasizes on representativeness. The survey questionnaire was composed of the following two major sections: (i) questions about respondents identity information and the frequency of their site visits (ii) questions that measure service quality, satisfaction, and loyalty.

Service quality was measured using five items adapted from ***Mamoun, et al,. (2016)***. On a five-point Likert scale, tourists were asked to assess service quality ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Tourist's satisfaction was measured using nine items adapted from ***Aunalal et al., (2017)***. Respondents were asked to rate satisfaction with their experience on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly un satisfied) until 5 (strongly agree).

In this study, destination loyalty was measured using three items adapted from ***Aunalal et al., (2017)*** to assess tourist loyalty, with a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) until 5 (strongly agree).

Data processing and analysis

The data collected from the respondents was coded into SPSS V22 for data analysis. Normality test checked before the data analyzed. Descriptive statistics was done to characterize the demographic information of respondents while inference statistics, correlation analysis, was done to predict the effect of service quality dimension on Tourist's satisfaction. Correlation analysis was used to describe the relationship between independent variables (Tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy) and dependent variables (destination loyalty), how much independent variable determines the dependent variables?

Reliability analysis

Before proceeding with further analysis, the reliability testing was leaded in order to ensure consistent measurement across various items in the questionnaire. Indeed, the reliability of a measure indicates stability and consistency of the instrument. Consequently, this method determines reliability through examining the internal consistency of the research instrument such as questions (items) in the questionnaire, which are normally presented. Cronbach's Alpha is one of the most frequently applied metrics to measure a scale's reliability, in which its index ranges from 0.0 to 1.0. Researchers should target a value closer to 1.0, as Alpha value proves that the instrument of the study is strong and consistent. However, it's important to note that in social sciences the threshold value of 0.7 is considered acceptable.

Table.No.1: Reliability Statistics of service quality model

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	No. of Items
.917	.841	44

Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.917 for the 44 items in the service quality model was achieved, indicating good consistency and stability of the instrument. The results of the reliability tests are highlighted in Table (1).

Findings and discussion

After analyzing the questionnaires, the following results were extracted:

- **Frequencies and percentages statistics of demographic data:-**

Table.No.2 Demographic profile of the respondents

Descriptive Features	Frequency	Percentage%
1- Gender		
Male	90	55.6
Female	72	44.4
2- Age Categories		
Less than 20	33	20.4
20-30 years	18	11.1
31-40 years	24	14.8
41-50 years	33	20.4
51-60 years	39	24.1
More than 60	15	9.3
3- Marital Status		
Single	60	37.0
Divorced	18	11.1
Married	84	51.9
4- Monthly income		
Less than 1000	24	14.8
1000-2000 LE	51	31.5
2001-3000 LE	39	24.1
3001-4000 LE	33	20.4
More than 4000 LE	15	9.3
5- Nationalities of excursionists at Hurghada		
German	111	68.5
British	30	18.5
Ukraine	12	7.4
Czech	3	1.9
Other	6	3.7

Table (2) shows the discussion of the research findings begins with a brief demographic profile of respondents in terms of gender, age, marital Status, income, nationalit**y.** (55.6%) of the respondents were male whereas (44.4%) of them were female. The majority of the respondents (24.1%) was in the age group of 51-60 years The next most represented age groups were those of 41-50 years and less than 20 years (20.4%), the marital status of respondents. It is found that (51.9%) of them are married, (37.0%) are single and (11.1%) are divorced. The table shows that about (31.5%) of the sample has a monthly income between 1000 to 2000 dollar, about (24.1%) has an income between 2001 to 3000 dollar. The table illustrated that the majority of those who practice optional excursions were citizens of European Union member countries. It's clear that 68.5% from visitors surveyed were German.

- **Types of optional excursions at Hurghada**

Table No.3. Types of optional excursions

Nationalities	Frequency	Percent
glass boat	72	32.0%
marina sports	18	8.0%
dolphin show	36	16.0%
jeep safari	30	13.3%
Diving	69	30.7%
Total	225	100%

a.   Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1

Table (3) shows various types of Optional Tours in Hurghada. The variable that yielded the highest mean in terms of popular excursions is glass boat by 32.0% of respondents. It's followed by 30.7% of respondents who practiced Diving, then dolphin show which represents 16.0% of respondents. Next was jeep safari which ranked fourth by a percentage of 13.3% of respondents. The last one was marina sports which represent 8.0 % of respondents.

- **Descriptive statistics of Expectations and perception for Quality of Optional Excursions in Hurghad**

Table No.4. Means of Excursionists' Expectation and Perception of Optional excursion quality

Expectations					Perceptions		
Altitude	Mean	Std.		Items	Std.	Mean	Altitude
				Service quality			
Strongly agree	4.28	.763		1- The behavior of Staff in travel agency will instill confidence in excursionist	1.115	3.04	**Neutral**
Strongly Agree	4.37	.681		2- Excursionist will feel safe in their dealings with the travel agent specially in optional excursion	1.179	3.07	**Neutral**
Strongly agree	4.41	.714	**Assurance**	3- Staff in travel agency will be consistently courteous with excursionist	1.197	3.04	**Neutral**
Strongly agree	4.30	.690		4- Staff in travel agency will be experienced and have the knowledge to answer excursionist questions	1.157	2.98	**Neutral**

	4.34		Total mean			3.03	
Strongly agree	4.54	.770		1- Staff in travel agency will tell excursionists exactly when excursion will be performed	1.132	3.04	**neutral**
Strongly agree	4.50	.863		2- Staff in travel agency will give prompt service to excursionists	1.124	3.28	**neutral**
Strongly agree	4.52	.841	**Responsive ness**	3- Staff in travel agency will always be willing to help excursionists	1.173	3.02	**neutral**
Strongly agree	4.30	.882		4- Staff in travel agency will never too busy to respond to excursionist's requests	1.272	3.07	**Neutral**
	4.46		Total mean			3.10	
Strongly agree	4.48	.818		1- Travel agent will implement the promised excursion program.	1.228	3.04	**neutral**
Strongly agree	4.26	.828		2- Travel agent will implement the excursion program at the promised time.	1.242	3.07	**neutral**
Strongly agree	4.31	.886	**Reliability**	3- Travel agent will perform excursion program accurately, dependably and right first time	1.319	2.81	**neutral**
Strongly agree	4.37	.853		4- When excursionist has a problem , travel agent will show a sincere interest in solving it	1.289	3.13	**Neutral**
Strongly agree	4.28	.763		5- Travel agent will insist on error-free records	.919	3.20	**neutral**
	4.35		Total mean			3.05	

Strongly agree	4.35	.872		1- The equipment which will be used in the selected optional excursion will be up to date and modern looking.	.979	2.98	**neutral**
Strongly agree	4.20	.762	**Tangibles Facilities**	2- The physical facilities and materials associated with optional excursion (such as pamphlets or statements) will be available and visually appealing.	1.115	3.04	**Neutral**
Strongly agree	4.41	.740		3- The equipment which will be used in the selected optional excursion will ensure safety and comfort for the excursionists.	1.188	3.06	**neutral**
Strongly agree	4.39	.738		**4-** Staff of optional excursion will be smart in appearance	1.254	3.30	**Neutral**
	4.34		Total mean			3.09	
Strongly agree	4.59	.714	**Empathy**	1- Pleasant and friendly personnel provided services offered.	1.299	3.17	**neutral**
Strongly agree	4.44	.718		2-My exceptions and special needs were met as expected	.983	3.11	**neutral**
Strongly agree	4.44	.744		3-Personal safety was considered as a major aspect in every service provided	1.211	3.07	**neutral**
Strongly agree	4.37	.784		4- Travel agent will give excursionists individual attention	1.047	3.13	**neutral**
Strongly agree	4.41	.790		5- Travel agency will have operating hours convenient to all their excursionists	1.211	3.07	**neutral**

	4.45			Total mean		3.11	
Strongly agree	4.39	.787	**Destination Image**	1-The destination environment is attractive	.975	3.26	**Neutral**
Strongly agree	4.31	.773		2-I Think there is a good transportation in the destination	1.263	3.09	**neutral**
Agree	4.07	.988		3-It is easy to access historical and touristic places in the destination	1.115	3.04	**neutral**
Strongly agree	4.28	.763		4-I enjoyed the style of buildings in the destination	1.179	3.07	**Neutral**
Agree	4.17	.885		5-The residents of the destination are friendly	1.197	3.04	**Neutral**
Strongly agree	4.37	.831		6-The residents of the destination are good and welcoming to tourist	1.157	2.98	**Neutral**
	4.27			Total mean		3.08	
Agree	4.19	.919	**Price**	1-The price of the optional excursion is suitable for the quality of the service provided	1.132	3.04	**Neutral**

1- <u>Expectation</u>

The table (4) show highlighted that respondents have relatively high expectations in general all expectation means are higher than (4.28%). The highest expectation mean can be noted for items referring to Pleasant and friendly personnel provided services offered, (Mean =4.59) (SD=.714). It is followed by Staff in travel agency will tell excursionists exactly when excursion will be performed (mean =4.54) (SD=.770). It is followed by Staff in travel agency will always be willing to help excursionists (mean= 4.52%) (SD=.841).

Furthermore, high expectations mean (4.30) are evident with regard to" Staff in travel agency will be experienced and have the knowledge to answer excursionist questions. which agree with the result of (**Aunalal** *et al.,* **2017**) in their study of An empirical assessment of service quality of the context of Travel agencies in the Maluku Province, in which they stated that employees experienced and have the knowledge to answer customers questions. It means that customers expected to have good service and the travel agencies will meet their expectations during optional excursions.

2- Perception

As clarified in table (4) the attributes that yielded the highest means of Excursionists' Perceptions were for smart appearance of staff during optional excursion (mean = 3.30) (SD=1.254) which means that their appearance were attractive and satisfied to excursionists, which means that their appearance were attractive and satisfied to excursionists; which agree with the result of (**Aunalal *et al.,* 2017**) in their study of An empirical assessment of service quality of the context of Travel agencies in the Maluku Province, in which they stated that high perception mean was obtained for neat appearance of employees .It is followed by Staff in travel agency gave prompt service to excursionist and help excursionist (mean = 3.28)(SD=1.124) ; which agree with the result of (Rajesh, 2013) in her study Evaluation of perceived service quality provided by tourism establishments in Egypt, in which she find that employees gave prompt service to customers.

The lowest mean of tourists' perceptions was for Travel agent was perform excursion program accurately, dependably and right first time (mean score = 2.81) (SD=1.319) . It is followed by the item referring to The residents of the destination are good and welcoming to tourist (mean =2.98) (SD=1.157) , this result didn't much with (Rajesh, 2013) in her study Evaluation of perceived service quality provided by tourism establishments in Egypt, in which she highlighted that The residents of the destination are good and welcoming to tourist.

- **The difference between Excursionists Expectations and perceptions of Optional Excursions quality (Gap mean):**

Table No.5. The difference between Expectations and perceptions of Optional excursion quality

		Perceptions		Expectations		
	Items	Mean	Std.	Mean	Std.	Gap mean
Service quality						
Assurance	1- The behavior of Staff in travel agency will instill confidence in excursionist	3.04	1.115	4.28	.763	-1.24
	2- Excursionist will feel safe in their dealings with the travel agent specially in optional excursion	3.07	1.179	4.37	.681	-1.30
	3- Staff in travel agency will be consistently courteous with excursionist	3.04	1.197	4.41	.714	-1.37
	4- Staff in travel agency will be experienced and	2.98	1.157	4.30	.690	-1.32

	have the knowledge to answer excursionist questions					
Responsiveness	1- Staff in travel agency will tell excursionists exactly when excursion will be performed	3.04	1.123	4.54	.770	-1.50
	2- Staff in travel agency will give prompt service to excursionists	3.28	1.132	4.50	.863	-1.22
	3- Staff in travel agency will always be willing to help excursionists	3.02	1.124	4.52	.841	-1.50
	4- Staff in travel agency will never too busy to respond to excursionist's requests	3.07	1.173	4.30	.882	-1.23
Reliability	1- Travel agent will implement the promised excursion program.	3.04	1.272	4.48	.818	-1.44
	2- Travel agent will implement the excursion program at the promised time.	3.07	1.217	4.26	.828	-1.19
	3- Travel agent will perform excursion program accurately, dependably and right first time	2.81	1.228	4.31	.886	-1.50
	4- When excursionist has a problem , travel agent will show a sincere interest in solving it	3.13	1.242	4.37	.853	-1.24
	5- Travel agent will insist on error-free records	3.20	1.319	4.28	.763	-1.08

Tangibles Facilities	1- The equipments which will be used in the selected optional excursion will be up to date and modern looking.	2.98	1.289	4.35	.872	-1.37
	2- The physical facilities and materials associated with optional excursion (such as pamphlets or statements) will be available and visually appealing.	3.04	.919	4.20	.762	-1.16
	3- The equipments which will be used in the selected optional excursion will ensure safety and comfort for the excursionists.	3.06	1.170	4.41	.740	-1.35
	4- Staff of optional excursion will be smart in appearance	3.30	.979	4.39	.738	-1.09
Empathy	1- Pleasant and friendly personnel provided services offered.	3.17	1.115	4.59	.714	-1.42
	2-My exceptions and special needs were met as expected	3.11	1.188	4.44	.718	-1.33
	3-Personal safety was considered as a major aspect in every service provided	3.07	1.254	4.44	.744	-1.37
	4- Travel agent will give excursionists individual attention	3.13	1.392	4.37	.784	-1.24
	5- Travel agency will have operating hours convenient to all their	3.07	1.299	4.41	.790	-1.34

	excursionists					
Destination Image	1-The destination environment is attractive	3.26	.983	4.39	.787	-1.13
	2-I Think there is a good transportation in the destination	3.09	1.211	4.31	.773	-1.22
	3-It is easy to access historical and touristic places in the destination	3.04	1.047	4.07	.988	-1.03
	4-I enjoyed the style of buildings in the destination	3.07	1.211	4.28	.763	-1.21
	5-The residents of the destination are friendly	3.04	1.086	4.17	.885	-1.13
	6-The residents of the destination are good and welcoming to tourist	2.98	.975	4.37	.831	-1.39
Price	1-The price of the optional excursion is suitable for the quality of the service provided	3.04	1.263	4.19	.919	-1.15

The table (5) shows the perception means, expectation means, gap means regarding the differences between perceptions of received service quality and expectations. The more perceptions are close to expectations, the higher the perceived level of quality.

It must be noted that all the expectation scores in relation to the service attributes in this study were higher than the perception scores, indicating that each service attribute suffered a service quality shortfall.

According to **Rajesh (2013)** the research on measuring service quality has focused primarily on how to meet or exceed the external customer's expectations, and has viewed service quality as a measure of how the delivered service level matches consumer's expectations.

The largest gap mean were found for Staff in travel agency were tell excursionists exactly (Gap mean= -1.50), Staff in travel agency were always be willing to help excursionists (Gap mean= -1.50), and Travel agent was perform excursion program accurately, dependably and right first time (Gap mean= -1.50) . It is followed by the item referring to Travel agent was implement the promised excursion program (Gap mean= -1.44) and Staff in travel agency were be consistently courteous with excursionist (Gap mean = -1.37), which agree with the result of (**Aunalal *et al.,* 2017**)

in their study of An empirical assessment of service quality of the context of Travel agencies in the Maluku Province, in which they stated that the highest gap was recorded between the customers' perceptions and their expectations with regard to courteous of employees in travel agency. Travel agencies should permanently strive to invest in enhancing their employees' skills while also stimulating a sincere, courteous and responsive relationship with customers.

The lowest gap mean were found It is easy to access historical and touristic places in the destination (Gap mean= -1.03) , It is followed by Travel agent was insist on error-free records (Gap mean= -1.08).

- **Perceived quality of optional excursions dimensions**

Table No.6. Perceived quality of optional excursions dimensions

Dimension	Perception Means	Expectation Means	Gap Mean
Assurance	3.03	4.34	-1.31
Responsiveness	3.10	4.46	-1.36
Reliability	3.05	4.35	-1.30
Tangibles Facilities	3.09	4.34	-1.25
Empathy	3.11	4.45	-1.34
Destination Image	3.08	4.27	-1.19
Price	3.04	4.19	-1.15
Perceived quality			-8.90

The gap score analysis in table above enable us to find out how excursionists perceive optional excursions quality and try to identify what dimensions of optional excursions which had low quality. According to **Parasuraman *et al.,* (1985,** p.48) the higher (more positive) the perception (P) minus expectation (E) score, the higher the perceived service quality.

- **Responsiveness**

Responsiveness obtained average gap score of (-.1.36). Excursionists expect more from staff of travel agents in Hurghada who should tell excursionist exactly when optional excursion will be performed; give prompt service to excursionist, be always willing to help excursionist, not to be busy to respond to excursionist's requests. This study revealed the same tendency of expectations and perception that "responsiveness" was the most important dimension as shown the top score as 4.46 of customers' expectation and 3.10 of their perception.

- **Empathy**

It had average gap score of (-1.34). To this extent travel agents should give excursionists individual attention, operating hours should be convenient to excursionists, staff of travel agents should give excursionists personal service .They should understand the specific needs of their customers, and should have excursionist 's best interests at heart.

- **Assurance**

It was reported to have highest average gap score (-1.31), The findings reveal that Excursionists are not agree with the behavior of Staff in travel agency are consistently courteous with them, the behavior for Staff in travel agency instill confidence in excursionist, Staff in travel agency are experienced and have the knowledge to answer excursionist questions, Excursionists of travel agency are feel safe in dealings with their travel agencies specially in optional excursion.

- **Reliability**

Reliability obtained average gap score of (-1.30).which means that travel agents in Hurghada are expected to be more reliable in implementing the promised excursion program at the promised time. They should perform optional excursion program accurately, dependably and right first time. When excursionist had a problem, travel agent should show a sincere interest in solving it.

- **Tangibles**

It had average gap score of (-1.25). Excursionists were not agreeing with the tangibles quality of optional excursions. The equipments should be up to date and of modern looking, the physical facilities and materials associated with optional excursion (such as pamphlets or statements) should be available and visually appealing. The equipments which are used in optional excursion should ensure safety and comfort for the excursionist. Staff of optional excursion should be smart in appearance.

- **Destination image**

It had average gap score of (-1.19). The findings reveal that Excursionists are not agree with the destination environment and the destination residents are not friendly and do not know how to welcome tourists.

- **Price**

It had average gap score of (-1.15). Excursionists were not agreeing with the price of optional excursions, the price is not suitable for quality of service provided.

The overall quality of optional excursion had a negative mark (-8.90) which means that there is a notable gap between excursionist expectations and perceptions of optional excursions quality introduced by travel agents, indicating that the customer expectations of service quality were not met. Moreover these results indicated that the level of quality that excursionists perceive is lower than what they expect. Therefore H1 is supported

> **" There is a notable gap between excursionist expectations and perceptions of optional excursions quality"**

- **Descriptive statistics of Tourist's satisfaction of Optional excursion quality**

Table No.7. Tourist's satisfaction of Optional excursion quality

Items	Means	Std. Deviation	Altitude
I really enjoyed the visit to the destination and optional excursions	2.90	.356	**neutral**
I am satisfied with my decision to visit the destination and optional excursions	2.90	.356	**neutral**
I prefer this destination	2.01	.157	**unsatisfied**
I have positive feelings regarding the destination and optional excursions	2.02	.236	**unsatisfied**
This experience is exactly what I need	2.90	.327	**neutral**
My choice to purchase this trip was a wise one	2.90	.327	**neutral**
Total mean			2.73

The table (7) clarified the tourist's satisfaction of Optional excursion quality, it is found that they really enjoyed the visit to the destination and optional excursions and they have positive feelings regarding the destination and optional excursions (mean=2.90) (SD =.356) . The shown means in table (7) indicate that satisfaction was the general altitude among the sample respondents with neutral mean value which is 2.73.

- **Descriptive statistics of Tourist's loyalty of destination**

Table No.8. the loyalty of destination

Items	Means	Std. Deviation	Altitude
I will say a good experience from this trip to others	3.01	.157	**Neutral**
I will recommend that others visit this destination and its optional excursions	3.00	.000	**Neutral**
I will return into visit this destination and optional excursions again	2.02	.236	Disagree
Total mean			2.88

The shown means in table (8) indicate that loyalty altitude was neutral among sample respondents which mean value 2.88 .

- **Correlations between tourist's satisfaction and service quality dimensions**

Table No.9. The Correlations between tourist's satisfaction and service quality dimensions

service quality dimensions		Tourist's satisfaction
Assurance	Pearson Correlation	.916**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
The price	Pearson Correlation	.762**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Responsiveness	Pearson Correlation	.886**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Reliability	Pearson Correlation	.785**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Tangibles Facilities	Pearson Correlation	.880**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Empathy	Pearson Correlation	.871**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Destination Image	Pearson Correlation	.884**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As seen in table (9) there is a positive and significant relationship between tourist's satisfaction and assurance , price , Responsiveness , Reliability, Tangibles Facilities, Empathy , Destination Image the value of Pearson correlation were (,893**- Sig ,000) (,762**- Sig ,000) (,886** -Sig ,000) (,785**-Sig ,000) (,880**-Sig ,000) (,871**-Sig ,000) (,884**-sig ,000) respectively . These results showed that there is a strongly positive relation between tourist satisfaction and service quality dimensions. Therefore H2 is supported

" **optional excursions quality has a direct positive effect on satisfaction**"

- **Correlations between destination loyalty and service quality dimensions**

Table No.10. the Correlations between destination loyalty and service quality dimensions

Service quality dimensions		destination loyalty
Assurance	Pearson Correlation	.893**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
The price	Pearson Correlation	.758**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Responsiveness	Pearson Correlation	.852**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Reliability	Pearson Correlation	.766**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Tangibles Facilities	Pearson Correlation	.850**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Empathy	Pearson Correlation	.866**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Destination Image	Pearson Correlation	.886**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As seen in table (10) there is a positive and significant relationship between destination loyalty and assurance , price , Responsiveness , Reliability, Tangibles Facilities, Empathy , Destination Image the value of Pearson correlation were (,893**- Sig ,000) (,758**- Sig ,000) (,852** -Sig ,000) (,766**-Sig ,000) (,850**-Sig ,000) (,866**-Sig ,000) (,886**-sig ,000) respectively . These results showed that there is a strongly positive relation between destination loyalty and service quality dimensions. Therefore H3 is supported

" optional excursions quality has a direct positive effect on loyalty"

4- Conclusion and summary

Optional excursion as a service its quality now deserves more attention for organizations wishing to gain competitive advantages. Excellent Service quality is known to be a critical success factor that affects an organization's competitiveness. In addition, service quality is also considered an essential determinant that allows an organization to differentiate itself from the competition and therefore gain a sustainable competitive advantage. As managers, their main concern is focus on creating and building loyalty among their target customers. This can be achieved through the improvements of service quality. Improving services would be more focused rather than to compete only on price or offering similar products in competitive market (**Grönroos, 2007**).

The results show that the highest expectation mean can be noted for items referring to Pleasant and friendly personnel provided services offered, (Mean =4.59). the highest means of Excursionists' Perceptions were for smart appearance of staff during optional excursion (mean = 3.30) (SD=1.254).

Means of perceptions were generally lower than expectations. The largest gap mean were found for Staff in travel agency were tell excursionists exactly (Gap mean= -1.50), Staff in travel agency were always be willing to help excursionists (Gap mean= -1.50), and Travel agent was perform excursion program accurately, dependably and right first time (Gap mean= -1.50).

The result of analysis of the seven dimensions of the service quality indicated that responsiveness had the highest average gap score, followed by the empathy factor, then assurance, reliability, tangibles ,destination image, finally price. Evaluating the perceptions and expectations of optional excursions, show that no dimension of service quality achieved high quality, as result that excursionists were not satisfied.

The overall quality of optional excursion had a negative mark (-8.90) which means that there is a notable gap between excursionist expectations and perceptions of optional excursions quality introduced by travel agents, indicating that the customers' expectations of service quality were not met. Moreover these results indicated that the level of quality that excursionists perceive is lower than what they expect. the results showed that there is a strongly positive relation between tourist satisfaction and service quality dimensions ,and showed that there is a strongly positive relation between destination loyalty and service quality dimensions.

5-Recommendations:
1- Recommendations Directed to the Egyptian government
- Developing and upgrading the infrastructure of the places where the Optional excursions carried out.
- Securing the optional excursions.
- Provision of ambulance units near the optional excursions places.
- State should activate its supervisory role and establish criteria for Optional Excursion quality assessment, in addition to punish violators.
- Determining the capacity of the areas in which optional excursion implemented.
- Set a minimum price for optional Excursions, this may contribute to maintain the quality of these Excursions.

2-Recommendations Directed to Travel Agents and optional excursions managers.
- Developing equipment and use of modern and convenient transportation.
- Diversification of Excursions programs for tourists to attract more numbers of them.
- Stop reducing prices to maintain the quality level of optional excursions.
- Travel agents should implement the promised excursions programs accurately.
- Organizing competitions and presenting gifts to tourists during the Excursion.
- Responding to tourists inquiries immediately and trying to meet their needs.
- Using modern technology methods for customer convenience.
- Giving Attention to complaints and suggestions of tourists and not ignoring. them.
- Treating tourists friendly and show a sincere interest in solving their problems.

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