The influence of service quality on revisit intention: The mediating role of WOM and satisfaction (Case study: Guilan travel agencies)

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Abstract: Drawing on an overarching framework of marketing theory, this study develops and tests an integrated model of service quality on revisit intention. The purpose is to investigate the influence of service quality on revisit intention with the focus on the mediating role of WOM and satisfaction. Two softwares (SPSS and LISREL) were used for statistical processing. The sample included 500 travellers using Guilan travel agencies since spring 2016 to spring 2017. At last a two-step SEM approach, measurement model and structural model, were employed to the structural relationship between constructs. Results showed that good quality of travel agencies leads to an intention to revisit a destination via destination satisfaction and image. Moreover, the service quality has a direct impact on customer satisfaction and there is a direct, positive relationship between customer satisfaction and word-of-mouth. The theoretical and empirical implications of these results are discussed.

Subjects: Behavioral Sciences; Marketing; Organizational Studies

Keywords: service quality; revisit intention; WOM; satisfaction; travel agencies

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

This study investigates the influence of service quality on revisit intention with the focus on the mediating role of WOM and satisfaction. Two softwares (SPSS and LISREL) were used to analyse data. The sample included 500 travellers using Guilan travel agencies since spring 2016 to spring 2017. Results showed that, good quality of travel agencies leads to an intention to revisit a destination via destination satisfaction and image. Moreover, the service quality has a direct impact on customer satisfaction and there is a direct, positive relationship between customer satisfaction and word-of-mouth. So it is recommended that travel agencies should make sure they strive to satisfy passengers since customer satisfaction is viewed as influencing repurchase intentions and behaviour, which in turn leads to future revenue and profits for the organization.
1. Introduction

The fast growth of the tourism industry in the Asia Pacific region not only has brought significant economic development in the region but also has led it to become the world’s second largest tourist receiving region (Liu & Lee, 2016). In this regard repeat visitation is very important in the tourism industry (Ayuningtiyas, Nimran, & Hamid, 2014) and revisit intention is considered as one of the most important issues in contemporary marketing (Wu, Ai, Yang, & Li, 2015). The challenging thing is how to encourage the visitors to revisit the destination (Ayuningtiyas et al., 2014). A common marketing myth is that it is five or six times more effective to attract repeat customers than to gain new ones. Despite this, there have been few studies on the relationship between travel satisfaction and behaviour intent during the post-purchase destination selection process (Guntoro & Hui, 2013). In order to react to this challenge, competition between airlines has become more intense and service quality of airlines is receiving more attention than ever before (Hussain, Al Nasser, & Hussain, 2015). Furthermore, service quality and perceived value are cognitive responses to the experience of a consumer, with “service quality” referring to improve the quality of airline services to meet customers’ needs and expectations (Seo, Moon, & Lee, 2015). Kim, Duncan, and Chung (2015) indicate that customer satisfaction is influenced by customers’ perceptions of quality. In general, service quality is an antecedent of the broader concept of customer satisfaction (Cantallops & Salvi, 2014). Anderson et al., (1997) state that the importance of each dimension of service quality which has an influence on customer satisfaction varies with the situation. Thus, the relative impact of service quality on customer satisfaction in the airline industry is unique among industries. Customer satisfaction is a compelling issue because in the service industry customer retention is more important than attracting new customers (Kim & Lee, 2011). Furthermore, they will recommend their friends, relatives and everyone that they know to come to visit the destination (Ayuningtiyas et al., 2014). One of the factors evaluated in the consumer decision-making process is word-of-mouth (WOM) (Cantallops & Salvi, 2014). It is related to the informal communication of consumers who have used a product or a service and later communicate their experience—either positive or negative—about the characteristics of a business or a product to another consumer who plans to buy it (Suki, 2014). Yoon and Uysal (2005) consider that WOM “is one of the most often sought sources of information for people interested in travelling”.

In addition to the existence and emphasis of all these relationships, still there is a gap here whether “satisfaction and WOM” have mediating role in the influence of service quality on revisit intention. So to answer this main question, the purpose of this study is to contribute the influence of service quality on revisit intention with the focus on the mediating role of WOM and satisfaction.

2. Literature review and hypotheses development

2.1. Service quality and satisfaction

Satisfaction is an immediate response to consumption (Culiberg & Rojšek, 2010). Companies recognize that maintaining existing customers is more beneficial than obtaining new customers to replace those who have been lost (Boulter, 2013). As long as service quality is recognized as the basis for customer satisfaction, in order to obtain a high level of customer satisfaction, a high level of service quality must be delivered by the service provider (Hussain et al., 2015). Service quality is a difficult and complex item to define, even in developed economies (Jevons & Pidgeon, 2002). As it is shown in studies, just customers can define the quality and this happens when goods or services are supplied by an organization and they exceed customer satisfaction (Mbise & Tuninga, 2013). Perceived service quality involves customer perceptions of service quality based on a comparison of their desires or expectations and the actual received service (Ratanavaraha, Jomnonkwaao, Khampirat, Watthanaklang, & Iamtrakul, 2016), and it is defined as the customer’s evaluation of the overall excellence or superiority of the service (Liu & Lee, 2016). Service quality in the airline industry is related to the ability of the airline providers to transport passengers to their required destinations while providing excellent standards of service (Suki, 2014). Considering the intense competition in the airline industry, just satisfying customers is not enough. Rather, they
should be extremely satisfied (Hussain et al., 2015). Understanding the value of the customer depends on sacrificing (for example, monetary and non-monetary prices associated with the service experience) and the customer reference frame (Xia & Suri, 2014). Therefore, improving the quality of services depends on the ability of the airlines to meet the needs as well as the desires of the passengers (Hussain et al., 2015). This, in turn, provides various benefits to airlines, for example: (1) establishing strong relationships between airlines and its passengers, (2) providing a good basis for re-purchasing, (3) encouraging passenger loyalty, (4) creating word-of-mouth recommendations that will promote the airline, (5) creating a good reputation for the company in passengers’ minds, and, finally, (6) by prompting an increase in the airline’s profits (Rizan, 2010). Generally, the service evaluation is estimated through the service quality procedure known as SERVQUAL, which includes five dimensions: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles, using the 22-item tool for measurement (Hussain et al., 2015). Reliability is the ability to perform the promised services in a reliable, accurate and completely responsible way, without negligence and failure (An & Noh, 2009). Responsiveness has been operationalized by means of four items: willingness to help, paying attention to passengers’ needs, informing passengers about the delivery of services and updating passengers in case of any changes in the flight schedule (Hussain et al., 2015). Assurance has been operationalized via four items: the employees’ skilfulness in providing services, courtesy towards customers, employees’ ability to create self-confidence in passengers, and staff expertise when answering passengers’ questions. Tangibility refers to the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication materials (Lundstrom & Dixit, 2008). Security and safety are the greatest assets of the airline industry, and airlines are making great efforts to ensure their passengers the security and safety they require. In the end, communication has been defined here as the interaction between staff and passengers during the flight (Hussain et al., 2015). Much evidence exists indicating that there is a direct relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction (e.g. Lee, Graefe, & Burns, 2004; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985; Saravanan, Rao, & Rao, 2007). Potluri, Angati, and Narayana (2016) also showed that there is a strong association between service quality and customer satisfaction in banks. Shahid Iqbal, Ul Hassan, and Habibah (2018) also reveal positive and significant relationship between service quality, loyalty, and behavioural Intentions directly and indirectly via customer satisfaction. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 1. Service quality will be positively associated with satisfaction.

2.2. Service quality and word of mouth

Service quality is defined as “the customer’s overall impression of the relative inferiority and superiority of the organization and its services. He and Song (2009), Lai (2014) assume that the impact of service quality on behavioural intentions is indirectly affected through perceived value. Sun and Qu (2011) declared that in the service marketing sector, the power of WOM is regarded to be more important for courting customers than in any other industry sector. It is commonly accepted that a customer’s perception of service quality plays a crucial role for spreading positive words among other customers. Awo, Ukoha, and Ogwo (2016) define Word-of-mouth as “cost-free experience-based messages about a developer’s credibility and trustworthiness in terms of her product-delivery attributes which are often communicated and shared informally among people/peers". Word of mouth usually refers to informal communications between private parties about the evaluation of goods and services (Yang, Hu, Winer, Assael, & Chen, 2012). Studies have identified several attributes of perceived value: (a) monetary prices, (b) the quality of services they receive, and (c) what the consumer obtains from the price they pay (Liu & Lee, 2016). Alexandris, Dimitriadis, and Markata (2002), Hutchinson, Lai, and Wang (2009), and Oh (1999) all indicate that the perceived service quality has both direct and indirect effects on post behaviour of word-of-mouth communication. However, Maenpaa, Kale, Kuusela, and Mesiranta (2008), and Nadiri, KashifHussain, and Ekiz (2008) stated that satisfied customers are more likely to communicate through word of mouth than those who are dissatisfied with the service. Research shows that an unsatisfied customer will communicate to nine other people his or her bad
experience (Hoffman & Bateson, 2010). This negative word-of-mouth can be very harmful and can affect the reputation and profitability of the company (Hussain et al., 2015). Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 2. Service quality will be positively associated with word of mouth.

2.3. Satisfaction and word of mouth

Since pleasure and arousal are two important dimensions of customer motions, so it is likely that these emotions lead to satisfaction. Recent studies also have found that customers’ satisfaction leads to their sharing experiences with others (Zeqiri, 2011). Tourist satisfaction is the result of comparing between the tourists’ experience at destination visited and expectations about the destination (Guntoro & Hui, 2013). Satisfaction is closely related to consumer attitudes and intentions, which are part of consumers’ behaviour (Jung & Seock, 2017) and directly influences consumers’ positive behavioural intentions, such as repurchasing and loyalty, as well as positive WOM interactions (Gee, Coates, & Nicholson, 2008). In service encounters, consumer emotions have been shown to affect customer satisfaction, loyalty, and future behavioural intentions (Mishra, Bakshi, & Singh, 2016). Consumers are more likely to speak about their experiences than their possessions and get more value from doing so. Such conversations will facilitate re-living of the experience in question (Gilovich, Kumar, & Jampol, 2015). Satisfaction research has emphasized that both emotional response and cognitive judgment are necessary to create satisfaction (Ha & Im, 2012). Ha and Im (2012) confirmed that consumer emotions (i.e. pleasure and arousal) and cognition (i.e. perception of retail environment) are strong antecedents of satisfaction. Consumers who encounter appropriate services tend to engage in positive WOM communication, and positive WOM has been considered as a result of consumer satisfaction in service recovery. Collier and Bienstock (2006) found that consumers who are unsatisfied by service recovery become involved in negative WOM. Thus, consumer satisfaction has been studied as a detrimental factor in consumers’ WOM intentions (Jung & Seock, 2017). Therefore, it is important to understand whether consumer emotions such as pleasure and arousal lead to likelihood of WOM (Mishra et al., 2016). Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 3. Satisfaction will be positively associated with word of mouth.

2.4. Word of mouth and revisit intention

Intention to revisit is the willingness to visit a destination again. Destination marketers are interested in understanding the drivers of tourist intention to revisit, because the cost of retaining re-visitors is much less than the cost of attracting new visitors (Um, Chon, & Ro, 2006). The investigated importance of word-of-mouth (WOM) for service and tourism firms has been well recognized (Liu & Lee, 2016). Yoon and Uysal (2005) noted that word-of-mouth recommendations are very critical things in tourism marketing. The intention to engage in positive WOM, which can be powerful in generating new tourists, stems from an overall positive evaluation of a destination and reflects high levels of attitudinal loyalty (Papadimitriou, Kaplanidou, & Apostolopoulou, 2015). Word-of-mouth has been suggested to have a direct effect on revisit intention. Therefore, when customers are satisfied with service experiences, it is expected to recommend the service to their friends and they would like to visit the same hotel again (Cantallops & Salvi, 2014). A tourist who is very satisfied with a service will be willing to recommend the specific features of the destination to others and revisit the destination in the future. Thus, WOM praise should be positively related to revisit intention (Liu & Lee, 2016). Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 4. Word of mouth will be positively associated with revisit intention.

2.5. Satisfaction and revisit intention

One of the most important factors affecting revisit intentions of customers may be satisfaction (Wu et al., 2015). Satisfaction is a defining factor in determining whether a customer intends to revisit a destination or repeat a purchase (Kim, Kim, & Goh, 2011). It is also a central variable in
consumer behaviour research, due to its strong impact on customer loyalty and the intention to revisit a location (Kim et al., 2015). Customer Satisfaction represents a function of expectations and perceived product or service attributes. This is, in fact, an emotional reaction that appears when the perceived performance of a product or service exceeds expectations (Marinkovic, Senic, Ivkov, Dimitrovski, & Bjelic, 2014). Sweeney and Soutar (2001) showed that customer satisfaction is an emotional reaction to specific transactions that depend on the achievement of the expected products and services, on the correlation between predicted reactions and actual results. Literature indicates that tourists’ perceived image is a significant indicator of satisfaction as well as post-visit behavioural intentions such as revisit intention (Leung, Law, & Lee, 2011). Alexandris, Kouthouris, and Meligdis (2006) mentioned that the satisfaction plays a very vital role to make the visitors to revisit the place again. Campo-Martinez, Garau-Vadell, and Martinez-Ruiz (2010) had carried out a study on the repeat visitors in the island of Spain. Their results showed that overall satisfaction had the biggest influence on the tourist’s decision of whether to revisit a destination. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

**Hypothesis 5.** Satisfaction will be positively associated with revisit intention.

Figure 1 shows the research conceptual model.

3. **Methodology**

The statistical population was all travellers using Guilan travel agencies since spring 2016 to spring 2017, which were considered as unrestricted statistical population. In order to cover the diversity of the number and location of travellers, 500 of them have been studied by Convenience Nonprobability Sampling. For collecting more comprehensive samples, this study used the questionnaire presented in Table 1. Two softwares (SPSS and LISREL) also were used for statistical processing. At last a two-step SEM approach, measurement model and structural model, were employed to the structural relationship between constructs.

4. **Results**

Table 2 reports the details of the demographic profiles. The sample consists of 45.2% males and 54.8% females. Major passengers between the ages of 21 and 40 account for approximately 48.1% of all respondents. Passengers with university-level education represent 39.8%. Passengers with less than 12 million Rial in monthly income account for approximately 29.2% of respondents.

Assessment of model fit for measurement model a two-step analytical approach (using LISREL 8.8 software) is used to test the hypothesized model (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). The measurement models are tested using a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and this study tests the structural model by performing a SEM to determine if the hypothesized model is in accordance with the data. The measurement model includes five latent variables in a related

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**Figure 1. Research conceptual model.**
| Variables                  | References                                                                 | Cronbach's alpha |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Service quality           |                                                                           |                  |
| 1. Employees were friendly and courteous. | J. Hutchinson et al. (2009)                                              | 0.79             |
| 2. Employees provided prompt service. | (Johns, Avcı, & Karatepe, 2004)                                         |                  |
| 3. Employees were always willing to help. |                                                                           |                  |
| 4. Employees were knowledgeable about the products and service offered. |                                                                           |                  |
| 5. Employees were professional and gave you confidence. |                                                                           |                  |
| 6. Employees of travel agents understand your specific needs. | (Mohamed, 2006)                                                         |                  |
| 7. Travel agents provide their services at the time they promise to do. |                                                                           |                  |
| 8. Travel agents have modern looking equipment and new technologies. |                                                                           |                  |
| 9. All the promised tasks by travel agents well performed and perfected. |                                                                           |                  |
| 10. When there is a problem, there is always a quick response. |                                                                           |                  |
| 11. You feel safe in your transactions with the agency. |                                                                           |                  |
| 12. Travel agents look for the best for the interests of their customers. |                                                                           |                  |
| 13. Travel agents have flexible convenient working hours. |                                                                           |                  |
| WOM                       |                                                                           |                  |
| 1. I would say positive things about travel agency to other people. | N. M. Suki (2014)                                                       | 0.91             |
| 2. I would recommend this travel agency to someone who seeks my advice. | Y. K. Kim, H. R. Lee (2011)                                             |                  |
| 3. I would encourage friends and relatives to use this travel agency. |                                                                           |                  |
| 4. I would highlight the positive aspects of this travel agency to anyone who criticized it. |                                                                           |                  |

(Continued)
| Variables                  | References                                                                 | Cronbach's alpha |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Revisit intention          | 1. I consider this travel agency as my first choice compared to others.     | T. (Terry) Kim et al (2009) H. J. Kim et al (2013) | 0.92 |
|                            | 2. I intend to revisit this travel agency in the near future.               |                  |      |
|                            | 3. It is very likely that I will revisit this travel agency.                |                  |      |
|                            | 4. I would like to revisit this travel agency more often.                   |                  |      |
| Satisfaction               | 1. I think I made the right decision by choosing this travel agency.        | S. San-Martin et al (2015) H. J. Kim et al (2013) Y. Shi et al (2014) | 0.80 |
|                            | 2. I am pleased to have visited this travel agency.                        |                  |      |
|                            | 3. I feel satisfied with the travel agency service.                        |                  |      |
|                            | 4. The travel agency performance exceeds my expectations.                  |                  |      |
|                            | 5. The travel agency performance exceeds my hypothetical ideals for hotel service. |                  |      |
The hypothesis model, including service quality, satisfaction, WOM, and revisit intention. The results show that the five-factor model fit the data well ($X^2 = 619.95$, RMSEA = .092, GFI = .91, CFI = .92, NFI = .94, NNFI = .93). All the results are shown in Table 3. Figure 2 shows the Fit indicators for measuring models.

5. Conclusion

Based on this study’s results (first hypothesis), good quality of travel agencies leads to an intention to revisit a destination via destination satisfaction and image. The results (conforming first hypothesis) also show that service quality has a direct impact on customer satisfaction. Liu and Lee (2016) also confirm that the mechanism of perceived quality is the cognitive response to a service price and the nonmonetary price reaction of satisfaction, which is the best predictor of revisit intention.

Table 2. Demographic profile of respondents (N = 387)

| Variables       | Frequency | Percent |
|-----------------|-----------|---------|
| Gender          |           |         |
| Male            | 175       | 45.2    |
| Female          | 212       | 54.8    |
| Age (years)     |           |         |
| ≤20             | 69        | 17.8    |
| 21–40           | 186       | 48.1    |
| 41–60           | 95        | 24.5    |
| ≥61             | 37        | 9.5     |
| Education       |           |         |
| ≤ diploma       | 142       | 36.7    |
| Bachelor        | 154       | 39.8    |
| MA              | 91        | 23.5    |
| Income          |           |         |
| <12,000,000     | 113       | 29.2    |
| 12,000,000–30,000,000 | 100 | 25.8 |
| 30,000,000–50,000,000 | 109 | 28.26 |
| 50,000,000–70,000,000 | 37  | 9.6   |
| >70,000,000     | 28        | 7.2     |

Table 3. Confirmatory factor results

| Hypothesis                  | Standardized value | T-value | results | AVE | CR |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|---------|---------|-----|----|
| Service quality→ satisfaction | 0.65               | 12.24   | confirm | 0.53 | 0.75 |
| Service quality→ WOM        | 0.62               | 12.07   | confirm | 0.57 | 0.74 |
| satisfaction→ WOM           | 0.74               | 12.27   | confirm | 0.62 | 0.83 |
| WOM→ revisit intention      | 0.57               | 11.90   | confirm | 0.67 | 0.79 |
| satisfaction→ revisit intention | 0.67             | 10.87   | confirm | 0.59 | 0.85 |
The results of conforming second and third hypothesis reveal that there is a direct, positive relationship between customer satisfaction and word-of-mouth that leads to purchase more, purchase more frequently, try out new services presented by travel agencies, as well as provide them with sincere suggestions for improvement.

According to forth hypothesis, Word-of-mouth has been suggested to have a direct effect on revisit intention. Thus, when customers are satisfied with service experiences, they should be expected to recommend the service to their friends and be willing to revisit the same destination. Liu and Lee (2016) also confirmed that the WOM marketing strategy used in tourism and service studies may be identified as a share of information and opinions that will direct future or potential tourists from specific tourism services, brands and products when making a purchase or revisit decision. To support these ideas, managers of a low-cost airline company are advised to increase the overall service quality in order to improve the perceived value and customers’ WOM, which in turn encourage customers to desire to increase their willingness to revisit or their repurchase intention.

Conforming fifth hypothesis shows that the satisfaction that travellers experience in a specific destination is a determinant of their revisit intention. Due to the increased competition among travellers destination, determining their satisfaction and its influence on revisit and recommendation to others is important for marketers and destination managers. In brief, concerning the review of literature, studies about satisfaction revisit and destination loyalty is one of the thrust areas of tourism research that is highlighted by many researchers. Mustelier-Puig, Anjum, and Ming (2018) confirm that the overall tourist’s satisfaction does directly impact the intention to revisit the destination. Liu and Lee (2016) also emphasized that These results remind managers who should understand the customer’s needs and utilize an emerging marketing strategy, rather than being driven by the adoption of plans by their
competitors. Wu et al. (2015) also confirmed that service quality, can upgrade the level of customer satisfaction, therefore, a higher level of customer satisfaction should then ultimately increase customers' favourable intentions to revisit intention and may further increase positive word-of-mouth.

6. Practical and managerial implications

It is suggested that Destination marketers should put more emphasis on providing good transportation service to tourists, specifically in the areas of staff service, efficiency, punctuality, and safety. Also, they can provide incentives such as tax reductions on new vehicles purchased by service operators or free occupational training programs for people interested in working in this career.

Also, it is recommended that travel agencies should make sure they strive to satisfy passengers since customer satisfaction is viewed as influencing repurchase intentions and behaviour, which in turn leads to future revenue and profits for the organization. The results of the literature on this issue suggest that the credibility of WOM is even higher than that of the commercial information created or provided.

Liu and Lee (2016) also suggested that passengers will judge that the quality is high if perceived value meets their expectations, and the results showed that service quality as a fundamental features influence a traveller's willingness to pay monetary and behaviour prices. In addition, as service quality increases, WOM and the willingness to recommend others to use the service increase. Modelling of service quality, the mechanism of perceived quality and the marketing strategy of passengers and travellers compose individuals' expectation and value evaluation process.

It is also proposed to measure passengers' satisfaction on a regular basis and in a variety of ways such as interviewing and distributing questionnaires to make sure that they provide superior quality service by considering the six dimensions, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, tangibles, security and safety, and communications identified in the current research, in order to enhance customer satisfaction which leads to revisit intentions.

For customers, service quality is the most important factor in referring to a service unit. So managers are successful when they ensure this quality to their customers. The customer may be able to tolerate rigorous encounter of employees, perhaps he can ignore the time-consuming, but certainly cannot ignore the quality of service easily. He is even willing to pay more, but the service quality should be guaranteed.

Customer access to senior executives can make the customer more determined for future revisit intention. When the customer believes that he can easily meet the top managers and he can talk to them, his presence will definitely be fixed at the institute.

Creating change and diversity at the workplace based on the clients offers, will encourage them to cooperate with the institute so they will consider themselves as part of the institution. Managers who follow and study more about the customers’ opinions even the unsatisfied customers, and they try to apply them are among the successful managers who have found the way to develop and influence customers.

Employee satisfaction is the main factor for customer satisfaction. Whenever employees are dissatisfied with their level of welfare and salary at an institution, they will surely shift the same level of dissatisfaction to customers. Managers should try to make employee satisfaction as important as customer satisfaction; no institution with unsatisfied employees can step into the customer satisfaction.
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