Measuring Service Quality of the Muslim Friendly Hotels in England and its Impact on Behavioural Intention

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the size of gap between Muslim visitors’ perceptions and expectations of the Muslim friendly hotels service quality in England, as well as to describe and analyse the relationship between the perceived service quality and behavioural intentions. To accomplish these objectives, two-stage cluster sampling of 400 subjects was selected from a population of Muslim visitors in England. The Parasuraman et al., 1988 SERVQUAL scale for measuring service quality was used after developing it to suit the Muslim friendly hotels service quality by adding a new dimension pertaining to Islamic law. Results revealed that there is a significant differences gap between the Muslim visitors’ perceptions and expectations for the whole score of the Muslim friendly hotels service quality. There is a negative insignificant differences gap between the Muslim visitors’ perceptions and expectations in empathy, responsiveness, assurance, and reliability domains. Additionally, there is a negative significant difference gap between the Muslim visitors’ perceptions and expectations in the Shari’a compliant amenities domains. However, there is a positive insignificant difference gap between the Muslim visitors’ perceptions and expectations in tangible domains. Also, the findings reveal that there is a significant relationship between the perceived service quality and behavioural intentions. These results substantiate the importance of the provision of high quality of service provided to promote the Muslim visitors’ behavioural intentions.

Keywords: Behavioural Intentions, Islamic Tourism, Service Quality Dimensions, SERVQUAL, The Muslim Friendly Hotels

INTRODUCTION

The last few years have witnessed a huge leap in addressing Islamic Tourism at both a practical and academic level. On the practical level, a number of hotels, referred to as ‘Muslim-friendly’, have appeared recently (www.mypremiumeurope.com; www.tripadvisor.co.uk; www.halaltrip.com). Important websites, interested in the Muslim tourist and how to provide Shari’a compliant amenities have been setup, (for example www.en.halalbooking.com). Additionally, Islamic magazines which are used as a guide for the Muslim tourist, so they can achieve their desires in accordance with Shari’a, have come into circulation; including www.islamicitourism.com. At
the academic level, there are many studies related to religious tourism (Carboni, Perelli et al. 2014, Zamani-Farahani, Henderson 2010, Al-Hamarneh, Steiner 2004, Eid 2013, Weidenfeld, Ron 2008, Battour, Ismail et al. 2011, Battour, Ismail et al. 2010) which have recently included academic terms related to religious tourism, including ‘the Muslim tourist perceived value’ (Eid, El-Gohary 2014) and ‘the service quality of the Muslim tourist’ (Eid 2012).

The service quality is considered one of the important issues in which both researchers and practitioners have been interested in during the last few years. The research efforts which handled and analysed this issue varied and the service quality dimensions differ according to the service nature and sector. Moreover, they differed in the same service from one study to another (Banerjee, Sah 2012, Calisir, Gumssoy et al. 2012, Cheng, Chen et al. 2012, Akhlaghi, Amini et al. 2012, Carlucci, Renna et al. 2013, Munnukka, Järvi et al. 2013, Finn 2011, Suki 2014, Han, Ham et al. 2012, Ahsan, Rahman 2013, Thaiichon, Lobo et al. 2014, Guesalaga, Pitta 2014). The study of the Muslim tourist service quality dimensions should not be limited to the five traditional dimensions, but a sixth dimension relating to compatibility to Islamic Shari’a, like separate swimming pools and providing prayer amenities, should be included.

The behavioural intentions of the tourist is an indicator of plans to revisit the same hotel in the future and recommending visiting the hotel to others (Lai, Chen 2011, Som, Marzuki et al. 2012, Prayag, Hosany et al. 2013, Kim, Ham et al. 2013). Due to the increasing number of the Muslim tourists from Islamic countries, whether for tourism or education, hotels are keen to create a good impression on the tourist so that they recommend the hotel to other potential tourists. This research tries first to investigate whether the Muslim-friendly hotels match the expectations of the Muslim tourist, then to identify how much the perceived service quality influences the future behavioural intentions of the Muslim tourist.

There are three main differences between this study and previous research. Firstly, to measure the service quality from a Muslim’s perspective in the Muslim friendly hotels in England, this study depended not only on the traditional service quality dimensions (tangibles, empathy, responsiveness, assurance and reliability) but added a new dimension regarding Islamic law (the Shari’a compliant amenities). Secondly, there is no previous study that has measured the service quality in the Muslim friendly hotels in England. Thirdly, though some studies identify the relationship between the perceived service quality and behavioural intentions (Lai, Chen 2011, Udo, Bagchi et al. 2010, Shi, Prentice et al. 2014, Clemes, Gan et al. 2010, Al-alak, EL-refae 2012), these studies did not use the Shari’a compliant amenities as the one of the service quality dimensions in this relationship. As a result, the present research seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- Investigating the level of the gap between Muslim visitors’ perceptions and expectations for measuring the Muslim friendly hotels service quality in England;
- Measuring the level of importance of each specific dimension for the Muslim visitors of the Muslim friendly hotels’ services in England;
- Identifying the relationship between the perceived service quality and Muslim visitors’ behavioral intentions in the Muslim friendly hotels in England;
- Identifying the best methods to be used for building and developing the service quality dimensions in the Muslim friendly hotels in England in order to maximize Muslim visitors’ behavioral intentions.
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