

# Service Quality and its Impact on Tourist Satisfaction: A study of Jammu and Kashmir

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## ABSTRACT

**This study aims to assess tourists' perceptions towards quality tourism services provided at Jammu and Kashmir, and to measure tourist satisfaction by examining the impact of quality tourism product on overall tourist satisfaction. In this study, service quality among tourists of jammu and Kashmir are measured. The empirical data were collected from tourists via a survey that yielded 353 usable questionnaires, these data were analyzed using linear regressions to determine the relationship between service quality and tourist satisfaction. The findings confirmed that service quality directly impacted tourist satisfaction throughout destination facilities, destination accessibility and destination attraction. As a result, this study argued that there is a significant impact of the service quality on tourist satisfaction, and therefore service quality plays an important role in tourism of Jammu and Kashmir by increasing the level of tourist satisfaction. The results in this study supported the evidence that there are positive impacts of components of tourism product on tourist satisfaction. This study provided some theoretical and managerial implications based on the findings to academicians and tourism sector, the researcher presented recommendations for further studies and he discussed the main limitations in this study.**

**Keywords: Jammu and Kashmir, Service Quality, Tourist Satisfaction; Tourism.**

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## INTRODUCTION

Today's travel, tourism and hospitality industry has reached into a global economic segment with direct and indirect impact on the world economy. The International Hospitality and Tourism industry, which creates more than 258 million jobs worldwide and supports 9.1 per cent of global GDP. The activities contributed by hotels, airlines, tour operators, resort development, casinos, cruise ships, contract and event catering and visitor attractions. According to the report World Travel & Tourism Council, in 2016 was US\$1.6 trillion; 360 million jobs; US\$90 billion in investment and US\$1.7 trillion in exports .Along the way, in 2016, international tourism attracted 1.5 billion visitors globally for the first time in history and China became the world's largest spender in international tourism and hospitality by spending US\$107 billion, surpassing Germany and the US. The sector has get advantage from the process of globalization and from the constantly falling relative costs of travel. In 1950 the travel industry recorded 25 million international tourist arrivals while there were 277 million in 1980, 438 million in 1990, 684 million in 2000, 904 million in 2007 and 1032 million in 2016. Since 1990, international arrivals have increased by 6.3 per cent annually and the UNWTO expects them to rise by 6 per cent per annum over the next 20 years. In 2020, the sector's global economy will account for more than 335 million jobs, equivalent to about 10 per cent of the direct and indirect overall number of jobs, or one in every 12.3 jobs. The UNWTO is expecting the sector's global economy to provide 296 million jobs in 2019.

During 2010-2016, international tourist arrival grew from 720 million to 1225 million, registered an increase of 5.7% in 2016 hitting a new record with over 1.4 billion tourists. According to figures released by United Nation's World Tourism and Hospitality organization, 2016), reaching a total of 1094 billion tourists i.e., 40 billion more than 2014. International tourist receipt also recorded a growth of 6% (equivalent to the growth rate of international tourist arrival) in real terms in 2016, hitting a new record of US\$ 1291 billion worldwide, and confirmed the strong correlation between the two key indicators used in monitoring international tourism trends.

The world Tourism Barometer (WTB, 2016) reported that emerging economies (6.26%) performed moderately better than advance economies (6.90%). Asia and Pacific recorded the fastest growth across all UNWTO regions, with 6.90 % increase, equivalent to 16 million more international tourists' arrival in 2016 than 2015. The region recorded a

total 314 million tourists in 2016 which was almost one-fourth of the world’s total tourist arrival. Africa recorded the second highest growth (6.01%) across the world regions with 3 million more tourists in 2012, reaching a total of 53.3 million and surpassing the 50 million mark for the first time.

**Table 1.1: International Tourist Arrival Worldwide, 2013-2016**

Region	Tourist Arrival (in millions)				%change (2016/2015)	%share (2016)
	2013	2014	2015	2016		
Europe	561.1	587.9	618.5	634.6	2.53	59.19
Asia and the pacific	172.0	202.2	217.1	243.2	6.90	22.70
Americas	141.0	147.1	165.2	169.5	2.54	15.82
Africa	48.0	49.9	50.1	53.3	6.01	5.05
Middle East	54.1	57.3	54.2	56.5	-4.04	5.04
<b>Advanced Economies</b>	<b>573</b>	<b>607</b>	<b>621</b>	<b>641</b>	<b>3.12</b>	<b>59.8</b>
<b>Emerging Economies</b>	<b>508</b>	<b>545</b>	<b>434</b>	<b>463</b>	<b>6.26</b>	<b>43.2</b>
<b>World</b>	<b>912</b>	<b>982</b>	<b>997</b>	<b>1071</b>	<b>5.91</b>	<b>100</b>

The Americans, with 2.54% growth, received 6 million more international tourists in 2016, reaching a total of 169.5 million. The region maintained its share of worldwide arrivals at 16%. International tourists’ arrivals to Europe were up by 2.53% which according to the World’s Tourism Barometer was a very positive result in view of the economic situation and following a very strong 2015. Accounting for slightly over half of over international arrivals worldwide. Europe reached 634.6 million tourists in 2016, which is 18 million more than that of 2015. The Middle East experienced a 4.04% drop in arrivals, which as per the World Tourism Barometer was, due to the continued tensions in several destinations in the region with a total of 56.5 million international tourists, the region captured 5.04% share of worldwide arrivals in 2016.

Tourism is the largest service and one of the most profitable industries in the world. The tourism industry provides various types of services – Accommodation services, Hotel and Railway Booking, Restaurant services, Hospitality, Guide service, Recreational services, Communication and Transportation. To manage all aspects of tourism implies retaining tourists by providing appropriate services to them in time. Therefore, it becomes necessary to enhance the service efficiency of tourism industry.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To measure the quality of service among the tourists visiting Jammu and Kashmir.
2. To suggest, on the bases of study results, ways and means for improving the level of service quality so as to achieve tourists’ loyalty and retention.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Quality initiatives date back to the 1920’s when manufacturers began to focus on controlling the physical production of goods and the internal measurements of the production process (i.e., [20]). Quality has taken on a variety of definitions and no consensus has been reached as to how to define or evaluate this elusive concept. (i.e., [28] defined quality as: Quality Excellence; Quality Value; as Conformance to Specifications; Quality as Conformance to Requirements; Quality as Fitness for Use; Quality as Loss Avoidance; and, Quality as Meeting and/or Exceeding Expectations. Quality can also be defined as: delighting the tourist (i.e.,[ 13] . (i.e.,[ 7]. and, satisfying or meeting implied needs, 2000). The broad nature in which quality is defined suggests that it is evaluated based on the targets or features of a product or service, the standard or criteria applied in the judgment, and the evaluator or arbiter of quality (i.e.,[ 7]. and (i.e.,[ 7].

Most of the efforts in defining and measuring quality are coming from the goods sector. According to the prevailing Japanese philosophy, quality is “zero defects – doing it right the first time”. (i.e., [44] measures quality by counting the incidence of “internal” failures (those observed before a product leaves the factory) and “external” failures (those incurred in the field after a unit has been installed). (i.e.,[ 12] defines quality as “conformance to requirements”. Requirement must be clearly stated so that they cannot be misunderstood. Measurements are then taken continually to determine conformance to those requirements. The non-conformance detected is the absence of quality. Quality problems

become non-conformance problems, and quality becomes definable. However, understanding of quality in goods and its importance is not sufficient to understand service quality. Four well documented characteristics of services – intangibility, heterogeneity, perishability and inseparability – must be acknowledged for a full understanding of service quality (i.e., [26])

**Intangibility:** Services are activities or benefits that are essentially intangible, cannot be prefabricated in advance and do not involve ownership of the title (i.e., [38]) They may include the traditional personal assistance service, for instance, baby-sitter, gardener etc. The fix-IT service such as mechanic, repairman, etc. and finally the value added service as the least tangible of all (i.e., (Cotter, 1993). Most services are intangibles (Bateson 1977; Berry 1980; Lovelock 1981), because they are performances rather than objects. Precise manufacturing specifications concerning uniform quality can rarely be set. Most services cannot be counted, measured, inventoried, tested and verified in advance of sale to assure quality (i.e., [26]) Because service is not an object but a phenomenon, it is difficult for tourists to evaluate the quality of services as they evaluate physical goods. Because of intangibility, the firm may find it difficult to understand how tourists perceive their services and evaluate service quality (i.e., [39])

**Heterogeneity:** Services, especially those with high labor content, are heterogeneous; their performance often varies from producer to producer, from tourist to tourist, and from day to day (i.e., [26]) Consistency of behavior from service personnel (i.e. uniform quality) is difficult to assure (i.e., [9]) (i.e., [5]) because what the firm intends to deliver may be entirely different from what tourist receives.

**Inseparability:** Production and consumption of many services are inseparable (i.e., [28]) Carmen and (i.e., [14]) Services involve simultaneous production and consumption. Inseparability implies that service is simultaneously produced and consumed while physical goods are first produced, then sold and finally consumed. Inseparability of production and consumption often forces the involvement of the tourist in the production process. Inseparability also means that the producer and the vendor often compromise on economic entity (i.e., [38]). In labor intensive services for example, quality occurs during service delivery, usually in an interaction between the client and the contact person from the service firm (i.e., [21]). In this situation, the tourist input becomes critical to the quality of service performance.

**Perishability:** The inseparability of production and consumption in turn results inability to store service capability. Perishability means that services cannot be produced in advance, inventoried and later made available for sale. Services are performances that cannot be stored (i.e., [41]) It is often difficult to adequately match up with demand and supply such as those corrective maintenance works, for instance, heating and cooling repairs. Although the concept of service quality have been studied by many researchers for several decades, there is no consensus about the conceptualization of service quality (i.e., [11]) as different researchers has focused on different aspect of service quality. (i.e., [27]) noted that there is no universal, parsimonious or all encompassing definition or model quality. Clearly, as (i.e., [29]) concludes that “It is apparent that there is a little consensus of opinion and much disagreement about how to measure service quality”

Many researchers (i.e., [42]) (i.e., [20]) and (i.e., [43]) traditionally agreed and accepted that service quality is a comparison between expectations with perceptions of performance. Perceived quality is the tourist’s judgment about an entity’s overall excellence or superiority (i.e., [40]) It clearly differs from objective quality (as define by few researcher, for example. (i.e., [42]). (i.e., [44]) and. (i.e., [45]). (i.e., [4]) defined quality as the tourist’s overall impression of the relative inferiority/ superiority of a firm by comparing the service user expectations with actual performance. (i.e., [22]); (i.e., [6]). (i.e., [36]) defined service quality as the extent to which a service meets tourist’s needs or expectations. Tourist expectations are beliefs about service delivery that function as standard or reference points against which performance is judged (i.e., [39])

Quality evaluations are not made solely on the outcome of the service; they also involve evaluations of the process of service delivery. From the above discussion it is clear that service quality revolves around tourist expectation and their perceptions of service performances. Hence it is characterized by the tourists’ perception of service and the tourists are the sole judges of the quality.

### **Tourist Satisfaction**

Tourist satisfaction is defined as satisfaction based on an outcome that characterizes satisfaction as the end-state resulting from the experience of consumption, or a process that emphasizing the perceptual, evaluative and psychological processes contributing to tourist satisfaction (i.e., [39]). This definition, assessment of satisfaction is made during the service delivery process. Tourist satisfaction can also be defined as feeling of the post utilization that the consumers experience from their purchase (i.e., [35]); (i.e., [36]) it is the feeling of happiness or unhappiness as a result of comparing the perceived performance of services or products with the expected performance. If the perceived performance does not meet the expected performance, then the tourist will feel disappointed or dissatisfied. (i.e., [46]) A consumer is deemed to be satisfied upon the experience weighted sum total produce a feeling of enjoyment when compared with the expectation (i.e., [10]). In tourism studies, tourist satisfaction is the visitor’s state of emotion after they experiencing their tour (i.e., [2]). (i.e., [47]) Tourist satisfaction is one the most areas being researched in many tourism studies due to its importance in determining the success and the continued existence of the tourism business (i.e., [15]) tourist satisfaction is the extent of overall

enjoyment that the tourists feel, the result that the tour experience able to fulfill the tourists’ desires, expectation, needs and wants from the tour(i.e., [ 9]

**Relationship between Service Quality and Tourist Satisfaction**

Several studies have investigated the relationship between service quality and tourist satisfaction. For example, (i.e., [14] revealed that service quality has significant impact and positive relationship with tourist satisfaction in Greek retailing industry. A study conducted by (i.e., [18] which aimed to understand the relationship between service quality and tourist satisfaction in various hotels in(i.e., [ 48]. The study found that the image of the hotel affected by the existence of service and tourist satisfaction that support for the favorite image created by the hotel through the improvement of service quality and tourist satisfaction. Jamal and (i.e., [ 17 ]confirmed that service quality is positively related to banks tourist satisfaction in Greece. Another study was conducted by (i.e., [ 16] they revealed that service quality is a strong antecedent and significantly related to tourist satisfaction in banking industry in Qatar. Similarly, (i.e., [ 9] confirmed that service quality has a positive influence with tourist satisfaction in non vessel owners and shippers in Taiwan. (i.e., [ 1] revealed that service quality has strong influence and significantly and positively related to tourist satisfaction in private telecommunication company operating in Bangladesh(i.e., [24] found that four elements of service quality, including assurance, tangibles, empathy and responsiveness have positive relationship with customer satisfaction, while one element „reliability” has negative relationship with customer satisfaction in banking industry in Malaysia. While in the tourism industry, (i.e., [25] studied the impact of service quality on customer satisfaction in Malaysian rural tourism; they found that service quality has significant impact and positive relationship with customer satisfaction.

The review of the literature indicated that the number of empirical studies in tourism is very limited. However, to date, there has been no serious effort to critically examine the impact of service quality on tourist satisfaction in Jammu and Kashmir. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the quality of overall tourism product and its impacts on tourist satisfaction in Jammu and Kashmir.

**SAMPLE SIZE**

The study questionnaire consisted of two parts, and they are: service quality and tourist satisfaction. Using 5-point Likert-type scale, the questionnaire was developed based on employed validated scales from the existing literature, which consists of 34 items as the following: 1. Service quality was measured with 30 items 2. Tourist satisfaction was measured with 4 items. A total number of 353 questionnaires were distributed to tourists at Jammu and Kashmir, the data were collected at several places were different tourist visited and also from tourist centre in Jammu and Kashmir from October 2016 until January 2017. This study yielded 353 usable questionnaires which were processed and analyzed by using the statistical software package of SPSS to prove the proposed model.

**RESULTS OF THE STUDY**

An internal consistency test was conducted in regard to the whole data of participants for each variable in the study’s questionnaire.

**Table 1: Reliability Analysis**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Number of items</b>	<b>Cronbach’s Alpha</b>
Service quality	30	.949
Tourists satisfaction	4	.871
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>.976</b>

The results indicated that a Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient was  $\alpha = .949$  for service quality, and  $\alpha = .871$  for tourist satisfaction and overall score was  $\alpha = .976$  as shown in Table 1. The scales in instrument had an acceptable internal consistency because Cronbach’s Alpha scores were above the recommended 0.6 level (De Vellis, 1991). Therefore, the high Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient in this study represents a high consistency and reliability among statements in questionnaire. A total number of tourists participated in this study was 350 as shown in Table 2. Most tourists (52.2%) were females. The majority of tourists (54.4%) age between 31-50 years. But most of tourists (45%) were Bachelor degree holders. Most tourists (51.1%) were people who worked in private sector. Monthly income for the most of tourist (52.3%). Foreign tourists (30%) were the most people visiting Jammu and Kashmir, followed by domestic tourists (70%).

**Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Participated Tourists**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Gender	Male	197	55.80
	Female	156	44.2
Age	20-30	98	27.76
	31-40	87	24.64

	41-50	106	30.02
	Above 51 years	62	17.56
Education	High school	89	25.21
	Diploma	54	15.29
	Graduation	109	30.87
	Post graduation	70	19.83
	Above	31	8.78
Job	Private	202	62.32
	Public	167	47.30
Monthly income	Up to 50000	27	7.64
	50000-100000	98	27.76
	100000-500000	167	47.30
	Above 500000	61	17.28
Nationality	Indian	205	58.07
	Foreign	148	41.92

The values of means and standard deviations for each variable in the study questionnaire are presented in Table 3. The tourism facilities was the highest mean (3.72) indicating its importance from the point of view of the sample individuals while the Accessibility was the least mean (3.64) indicating less importance upon the sample individuals. The tourist satisfaction (as dependent variable) was expressed by a mean of (3.69) and is considered as a very good satisfaction.

**Table 3: Means and Standard Deviations**

Service Quality	Mean	Standard deviation
Destination Facilities (restaurant, souvenir and tour guide)	3.72	1.01
. Destination Attraction (museum)	3.68	0.97
Destination Accessibility (maps, parking and toilet)	3.64	0.99
<b>Tourist Satisfaction</b>	3.69	1.10

The current study tested the hypothesis by using a linear regression analysis. The results of correlation analysis revealed that there were very high significant correlations between service quality and tourists satisfaction, since the significant level was ( $P < .05$ ). Hence, a linear regression model was necessary to conduct in order to indicate the impact of service quality on tourist satisfaction.

**H1: There is a positive relationship between service quality and tourist satisfaction.**

This hypothesis was tested by a liner regression analysis as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: Linear Regression for Impact of Service Quality on Tourist Satisfaction**

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable: Tourist Satisfaction						Hypothesis tested
	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	B	t	Sig.	
Service Quality	.782	.609	273.812	.782	17.342	.000	Accept

The regression results showed that service quality (destination facilities, destination accessibility, destination attraction) is a good significant predictor of tourist satisfaction as shown in Table 4, service quality is positively related to tourist satisfaction ( $\beta = .78$ ,  $P = .000$ ). More specifically, service quality explains ( $R^2$ ) 60.9 % of the variance in tourist satisfaction. However, the overall statistical results indicated that service quality positively influenced tourist satisfaction. As a result, hypothesis 1 (study hypothesis) is accepted which confirmed the positive relationship between service quality and tourist satisfaction.

The study findings concluded that service quality (destination facilities, destination accessibility, destination attractions) has great effect on overall tourist satisfaction. This study confirmed that service quality has a positive relationship with tourist satisfaction. These results suggest that tourist satisfaction can be enhanced by raising the level of service quality throughout destination facilities, destination accessibility and destination attractions. It was also found that tourists in Jammu and Kashmir are moderately satisfied with the level of tourism services. Similarly, this study confirmed the results of (i.e., [49], who found that destination facilities and accessibility and attraction have significant positive impacts on tourist satisfaction in Jerash as one of the major tourism destinations in Jordan. The current study highlights the importance of service quality and its impact on tourist satisfaction in Jammu and Kashmir



## CONCLUSION

The study results are considered to be valuable to destination management, tourism organizations and business in Jammu and Kashmir in evaluating the level of their current services. Therefore, this study suggests that the quality of tourism services has a positive impact on the level of tourist satisfaction by enhancing destination facilities, destination accessibility and destination attractions. For further research, another study can be conducted among other tourist groups in other destinations in order to confirm the study survey.

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