

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Dimensions of Tourism and Hospitality Service Experience: A Hermeneutical Approach

Rehab Daif, Khaled Elsayed\*

Helwan University, Egypt.

\*Corresponding Author: Khaled Elsayed

## Abstract

The aim of this paper is to enhance the knowledge and understanding of service experience dimensions in tourism and hospitality industry. It introduces management principles that are applied to the context of tourism and hospitality in relation to managing service experience. This paper examines the concepts of service experience and its impact on tourists. Moreover, the role of staff with the tourists' expectations will be explored as staff behaviours and attitudes have a direct impact on tourist satisfaction. This research is taking a hermeneutical approach by reviewing of literature regarding service experience in tourism and hospitality industry. The findings revealed that service experience should be properly managed by tourism and hospitality firms through understanding the needs of tourist expectation, tourist satisfaction, tourists' culture and staffing. To conclude, this study has addressed the dimensions of tourism and hospitality service experience by using a conceptual approach.

**Keywords:** *Service experience, Tourist expectation, Tourist satisfaction, Tourists culture, Hermeneutical approach.*

## Introduction

The concept of tourism and hospitality is always linked to the concept of experience [1]. The experience has constituted an important area in the tourism and hospitality research [2]. While the tourists' choice of destination depends mainly on the location and the price, service experience is one of the factors that influence the tourists' decision [3].

The tourist's service experience is unique and memorable [4]. The real value for tourists depends on their perceptions about the people, staff, culture and other intangible factors [5]. This is because most of the studies about service experience are empirical and there are lacks of conceptual researches about this phenomenon [3]. The needs for competitiveness encourage tourism and hospitality firm to differentiate themselves from competition by offering a unique service experience than their rivals [6]. Understanding service experience as a profit-making phenomenon has created a debate in the academic environment [7].

This paper explains that service experience as a new perspective has implications for the

management of tourism and hospitality industry. Customer service experience strategies are changing from a transactional approach to transformational approach where the focus on the tourist service experience. There are three phases to achieve tourist service experience goal [8-9].

### Phase 1

Tourism and hospitality businesses can meet expectations with their current tourists by creating satisfaction, having the answers to tourists' queries, and providing a good level of service. However, some organizations are still struggling to meet their tourist needs.

### Phase 2

To create loyalty, tourism and hospitality businesses must understand their tourists' expectations and trying to meet it.

### Phase 3

To meet unrecognized needs, tourism and hospitality organizations must learn more about their tourists' culture and develop a certain perception about what would make

them happy. To reach this level, staff should interact effectively with tourists. Unrecognized needs are often intangible, so staff training on how to deal with tourist service experience is very important. Moreover, e-marketing is very important in this phase. In this research, a conceptual methodology was developed as this research takes a hermeneutical approach [10]. Many researchers have been involved in using the concepts of hermeneutics [11]. These concepts are exploring the truths of epistemology and ontology [12].

The hermeneutical approach involves a conceptual and historical component [10]. Therefore, hermeneutic researchers believe that meaning does not sit in the interpretation or analysis; rather, it is produced through the development of the concepts [12]. The capability to merge different concepts and ideas is the hermeneutical position [10]. This paper undertakes a review of the relevant literature regarding the different opinions of several authors about the above-mentioned phases to highlight the dimensions of service experience in tourism and hospitality industry. Therefore, this research is going to expand the knowledge about service experience dimensions through understanding the different dimension that apply to tourism and hospitality industry as follows:

- The nature of tourism and hospitality services, experience and consumption
- Tourist expectations
- Models of tourist satisfaction in the tourism and hospitality industry
- Tourism and hospitality staff and managing service experience
- Tourist's culture and its impact on service experience

## Literature Review

### Definition of Service Experience

The Oxford English Dictionary defines service experience as the 'friendly and generous reception of tourists or strangers [7]. The Chambers English Dictionary defines it as, 'entertaining strangers and tourists kindly and without reward: showing kindness: generous: bountiful' [9-1], state, tourists needs to feel that the host is being hospitable through feelings of generosity, a desire to please and a genuine regard for the tourist as an individual.

This experience is strictly personal and implies the tourist's involvement at different levels. Its evaluation depends on the comparison between a tourist's expectations and the incentives coming from the interaction with the company and its offering in correspondence of the different moments of contact or touch-points [14]. Service experience comprises of service product, service setting and the service delivery [15].

Tourist's experience depends on how each single moment between a staff and a tourist is handled. The concept of guest logy means dealing and managing the hospitality businesses from the tourist's point of view. The organization's strategy, staff and systems are aligned to meet or exceed tourist's expectations. Organizations should strive to understand their tourists (Figure 1).

- The Service Product: can have both a tangible and intangible mix.
- The Service setting: the environment in which the experience takes place.
- The Service-Delivery System: includes the staff components and the physical production processes, the organizational and informational systems that assist in service delivery.



Figure 1: Components of service experience

## The Nature of Tourism and Hospitality Services, Experience and Consumption

[2]. Reported that tourism and hospitality services are different to physical selling in meeting the demand of a tourist. Services are actions offered for sale which for the buyer presents benefits and satisfaction. Services are intangible activities which provide satisfaction to tourists [16].

Concluded that tourism and hospitality services have the following characteristics; intangible nature, heterogeneous, production, distribution and consumption happen in simultaneous processes, core value produced in buyer-seller interactions, tourist participate in production, cannot be kept in stock and no transfer of ownership (Figure 2).

Intangibility means that tourism and hospitality services cannot be touched, and services cannot be experienced before it is bought. The intangibility is a central concept in managing customer service experience. Intangibility is defined as being inaccessibility through the five senses before buying. Perish ability refers to the fact that

services cannot be saved, stored, resold, or returned. This is because services are actions or acts whose production and consumption takes place at the same time. Simultaneity is one of the characteristics of hospitality services. It means that the production and consumption of a service occur simultaneously, making it impossible to produce and store a service prior to consumption [17].

Heterogeneity is major characteristic of hospitality services which results in discrepancy from one service to another, or variation in the same service from day-to-day or from guest-to-guest. Heterogeneity makes it difficult for a hospitality establishment to standardize the quality of its services.

Inseparability is an important characteristic of hospitality services which basically indicates that services are produced and consumed at the same time and can't be isolated from their providers as the customer becomes part of the service providers. Further, both the customer and the provider equally affect the service outcome [8].

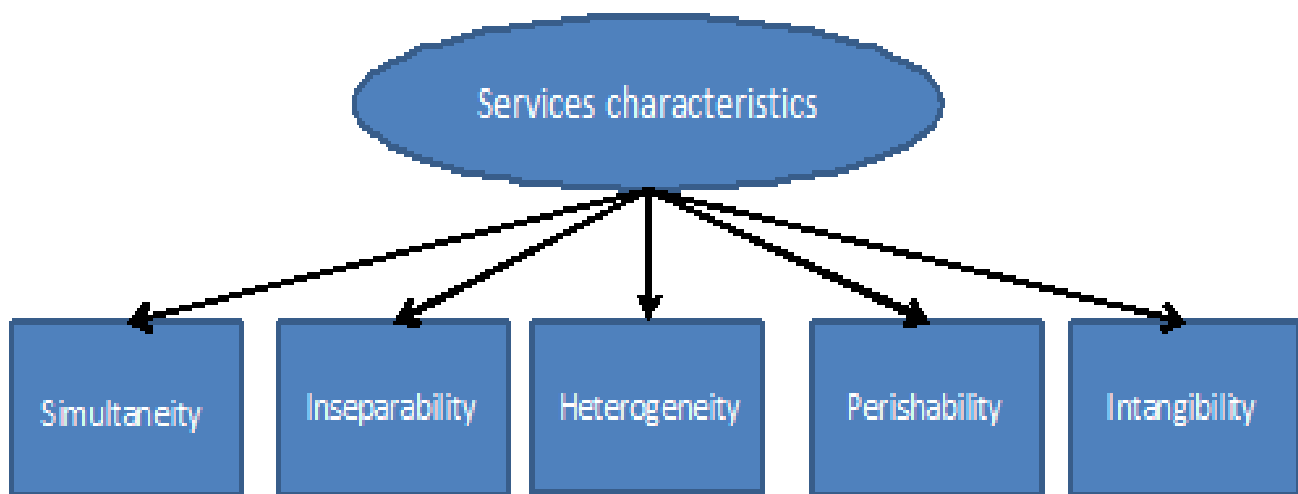


Figure 2: Service characteristics

Adapted from: [16-2].

## Tourist Expectations

[18], defined tourist expectations by how is significant for success in influencing tourist satisfaction to recognize how their expectations develops. The tourist expectations should be focused, revealed, and standardized and he also developed the dynamic model of expectation that refers to the quality of skilled services develops in a tourist relationship over time [3].

This model is illustrated in Figure 3 which classifies the Expectations into three unique types and can be categorised into the following:

- Fuzzy expectations exist when tourists expect a service provider to solve a problem but do not have a clear understanding of what should be done.
- Explicit expectations are clear in the tourists' minds in advance of the service

process. They can be divided into realistic and unrealistic expectations.

- Implicit expectations refer to element of a service which are so obvious to tourists that

they do not consciously think about them but take them for granted [3].

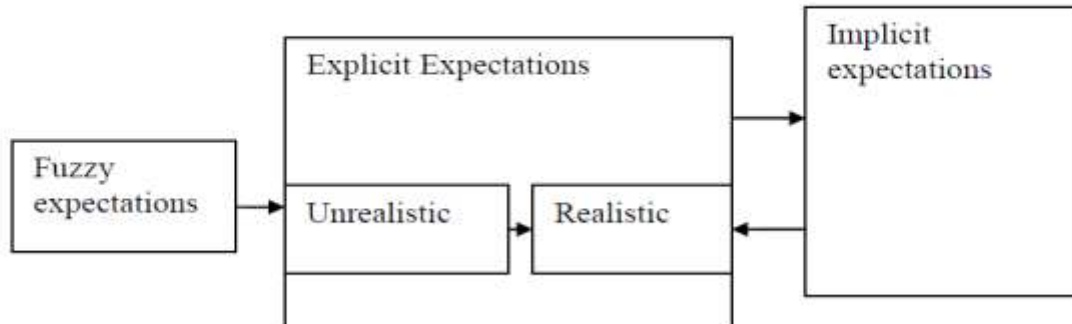


Figure 3: A dynamic model of expectations

**Tourist Expectations Vary Depending on Many Factors Including [5]**

- Expectations depending on different positioning strategies of different service providers.
- It influenced by previous experiences of the competitors services in the related services in different industries.
- Some tourist expectations depend on word of mouth, other tourists' experiences
- The marketing and promotions used by the service provider.

**Tourist's Expectations Have two Components as Follows [19] (Figure 4)**

- A probability of occurrence: it is the possibility that the service provider will be available to wait on tourists
- An evaluation of the occurrence: it is the level to which the service provider responsiveness is desirable or undesirable
- Expectations vary because they are influenced by new innovations in service technologies and social media.

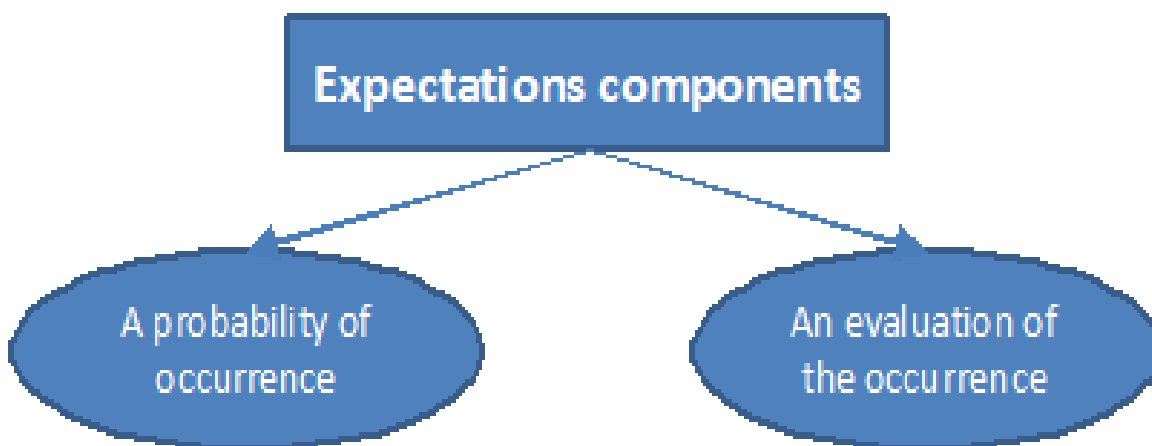


Figure 4 Expectations components

**Models of Tourist Satisfaction in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry**

In this section, some model of tourist satisfaction will be illustrated to understand the tourist service experience.

**Kano Model**

This Model of Tourist satisfaction identified attributes based on how they are perceived by tourists and their effect on satisfaction. Kano Model has many objectives such as [20]:

- Identifying tourist needs
- Determining functional requirements
- Concept development
- Quality Function Deployment
- Value Analysis

The Kano Model divides product is consisting of three categories: threshold, performance, and excitement. Threshold Attributes are the expected attributes of product or service and do not provide an opportunity for product differentiation [21]. Increasing the performance of these attributes provides returns in terms of tourist satisfaction. An example of a threshold attribute would be a table in a restaurant. Performance Attributes will increase tourist satisfaction. Conversely, a weak performance attributes return dissatisfaction. These attributes will form the needs against which service concepts will be assessed. The price which tourist is willing to pay for a service is closely related to performance attributes [22]. For example, tourists would be willing to pay more for a meal that provides them with healthy food. Excitement Attributes are mostly intangible and unexpected by tourists but can result in high levels of satisfaction. Excitement attributes often satisfy hidden tourist needs [23].

### **Spreng and Mackoy [24] Model**

[24] Developed a model for tourist's satisfaction. The authors integrate the service quality with tourist satisfaction, and suggest, among other things, that perceived service quality is an antecedent to satisfaction. They found that expectations had a direct influence on perceptions of performance. Performance has been recognized to have a direct effect on satisfaction.

Moreover, they highlighted that hospitality managers should not concentrate on meeting predictive expectations to satisfy tourists. If satisfaction is not simply a result of meeting tourists' expectations, hospitality managers using the expectations-disconfirmation approach may not be focusing on the right path.

### **Torres and Kline [25] Hotel Delight Model**

[25]. Develop a satisfaction model for the hotel industry. They argue that satisfied

tourist may result in a positive word of mouth communication. In their model; they argued that tourist delight is a better measure of tourist relationship management than tourist satisfaction. This model consists of three components.

The left side includes tourist satisfaction and the right side includes tourist delight. In between is "very satisfied". Therefore, the hotel tourist moves from being satisfied to being very satisfied towards being delighted. The tourist satisfaction side includes tourist, employee and organizational and environmental influences that lead to tourist satisfaction. For tourists to be satisfied, their expectations need to be met.

If their expectations are not met, tourists will be dissatisfied. At the centre of the model, there is "very satisfied". Very satisfied tourists have a higher degree of engagement and satisfaction than satisfied tourists. The right side of the model represents tourist delight. Delighted tourists are those whose expectations have been exceeded.

## **Tourism and Hospitality Staff and Managing Service Experience**

### **Recruitment and Selection**

The recruitment process begins with the creation of a group of qualified candidates. Selection involves choosing the right person from them [26]. Most hotels prefer to pay attention to the attitude and behaviour and consider skills needs in the selection of employees [27].

In strategic recruitment, it is important to create a large enough number of candidates to allow a chance to get the most qualified candidates from them [28]. Previous research has pointed out that hotel staff often recruited by advertisement in newspapers, Internet, internal advertising, and word of mouth [29].

### **Training and Development**

The training effort and initial development designed for employees is induction [30]. Induction familiarizes new employees of the organization and is often divided into general induction conducted by the human resources department led by the corresponding department head [27]. Tourism and hospitality firms, like any other organization, should give importance to the induction

because it improves employee retention and tourist satisfaction [26].

### **Hospitality Staff and Creating Tourist Value**

This section explains the role of hospitality staff in creating tourist value which might affect the tourist service experience.

#### **Front-Line Staff**

When tourists arrive at a hotel, the first employee he meets are frontline workers such. First impressions are important. First, warm greetings frontline receptionist can have a huge impact on the entire hotel stay. By remembering the names of tourists, meet special requests whenever possible (such as for a specific floor or room type), and considering that tourists may have had an exhausting day of work and travel, front desk can convey the feeling that tourists are welcome. Therefore, the front office has been described as the core of the hotel. It is an area which had a first at this hotel, and one of the tourists who rely on the left for information and services. Moreover, it is a place where tourists come first when something goes wrong. Some smaller accommodation facilities may not have front desk, and frontline staff. This function can be given directly to their owners and other workers [31].

#### **Hotel Managers**

The manager is someone who works with and through other people by coordinating their work in order to achieve organizational goals. In the hospitality industry, it means that he is not directly responsible for serving tourists. But he did not have to work through others as he lead and motivate employees to provide service levels that exceed tourist expectations. To make the service work, managers must set an example of doing things the right way - from dealing with tourists to interact with colleagues.

If a manager does his job properly, employees know what to do and how to do it, and then have a enough mastery of the work to implement it properly. Managers must constantly respond to the individual needs and wants employees to benefit from their commitment to set to work. He needs to select and train them and then lead, influence, and guide them. Finally, managers are expected to recognize outstanding performance and when necessary to correct

those who are not adequately implemented. This requires a high level of interpersonal communication skills [32].

### **Tourist's Culture and its Impact on Service Experience**

Tourism and hospitality premises not only provide their services to tourists locally, but also to people who come from overseas [33]. This cultural diversity of tourists has an impact on their perceptions and expectations [34]. Therefore, it is important for hospitality premises to understand the differences among their tourists' cultures [35]. Understanding the differences in tourists' cultures can help tourism and hospitality industry to play an effective role in meeting their tourists' needs [17].

To keep competitive advantage in the hospitality industry, it is vital to create services that can satisfy the diverse needs of tourists. Defined culture as the unique behaviours and attitudes of a certain group of people that help distinguish one group from another. Firms should understand that tourist experiences are not the same. Therefore, it is important for hospitality providers to identify the factors of tourist preferences to manage their tourists' cultural diversity more effectively [34].

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

This conceptual research has investigated the dimensions of service experience in tourism and hospitality industry. The paper finds that there is a need for tourism and hospitality firms to improve the service experience to enhance tourist's satisfaction. In summary, the study has identified the following dimensions of service experience: tourist's expectations, tourist satisfaction, tourism and hospitality staff and tourist's culture (Figure 5). Tourist expectations are the value that tourists search for from the consumption of services.

It is challenging for service providers to meet all their tourist expectation because the expectation may change over time. The expectations should be managed to fit the mission statement of the tourism and hospitality firms. Tourism and hospitality firm's intent to be strategic in their selection as they should adopt several methods that are highly reliable and valid meet the specification requirements of people and

involve the largest number stakeholders as possible in the selection and decision-making. It is expected to use different methods of selection based on the position hired as an employee selection for leadership positions should be further compared to that of non-managerial positions. Good staff selection leads to better tourist satisfaction.

Tourism and hospitality firms offer training opportunities primarily to meet competency requirements and the requirements of jobs therefore they also increase the chances of promotion of employees in the organization. Training of staff in the tourism and hospitality industry it is about efficiency in people. The quality of service depends on the characteristics of employees. Consequently, staff training is essential in many ways, it increases employees' productivity by providing them with a professional knowledge, skills and experience. Training also induces and inspires employees to provide tourist with a good level of service and therefore lead to high level of service experience. However, tourists appreciate when no employees friendly, knowledgeable, and helpful.

The tourists feel comfortable dealing with employees and know they can be trusted with their personal safety, items, messages, wake-up calls, etc. They appreciate it when employees reach their accommodation can be responsive, attentive, and enthusiastic. An employee with a friendly attitude - can do can impact more on loyalty ratings of room remodel expensive.

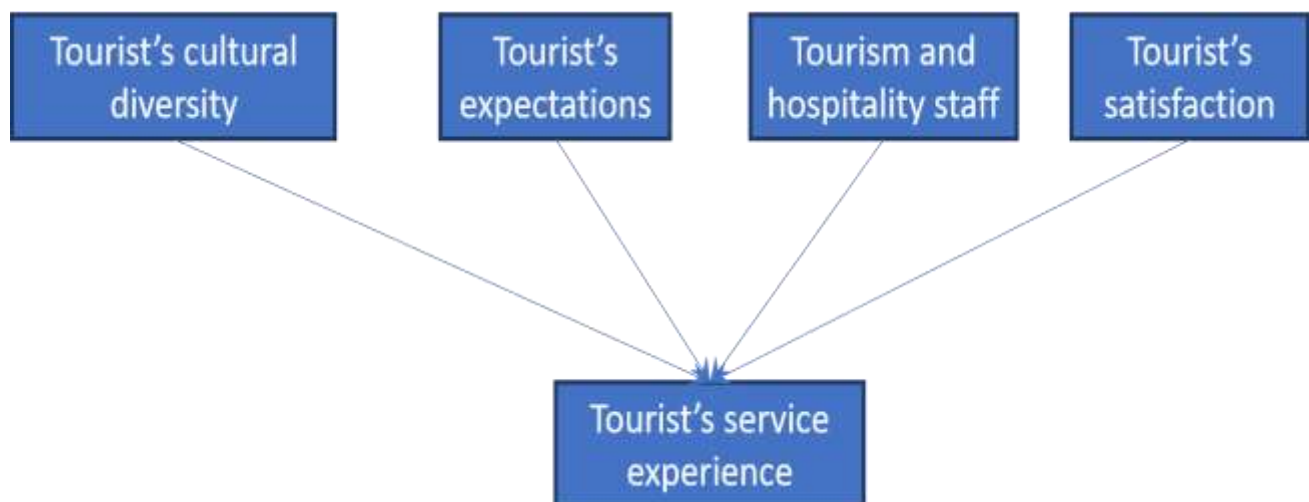
In general, the function of these key managers plan is to organize, make

decisions, communicate, motivate, and control. Planning function involves developing the company's goals and creates strategies for creating service experience for tourists. Customers with different cultures backgrounds consider different factors that affect their service experience.

Some researchers found that cleanliness is considered as an important factor affecting tourists' service experience. For example, sanitation was ranked most important by the tourists in the United States and was of less importance to the tourists in Hong Kong among [17]. The staff can strongly affect the tourist's experience. Therefore, managers should train their staff on dealing with cultural differences.

Tourist needs and expectations should be identified by tourism and hospitality managers. Some of tourist needs and expectations derived from cultural impacts that control tourist experience. In this study, the proposed theoretical model has focused on understanding the dimensions of service experience in tourism and hospitality industry through using conceptual approach.

Therefore, it is advisable to carry out other research that allows an empirical analysis of the developed model. Moreover, future research could address specific samples form national or international tourists to investigate the service experience. Future research could develop deep qualitative or quantitative analysis with relation to service experience in tourism and hospitality industry based on the proposed model.



**Figure 5: The proposed model of dimensions of tourism and hospitality service experience**

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