

Vol. 5, No. 2, August, 2015

Bi- Annual

ISSN No. 2278-8379

TOURISM INNOVATIONS

An International Journal of Indian Tourism and Hospitality Congress (ITHC)

Chief Editors

Prof. S P Bansal

Vice Chancellor

*Maharaja Agrasen University, Baddi
Himachal Pradesh.*

Prof. Sandeep Kulshrestha

Director

*Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel
Management, (IITTM), Gwalior
Madhya Pradesh*



Indian Tourism and Hospitality Congress
www.indiantourismcongress.org

Tourism Innovations: An International Journal of Indian Tourism and Hospitality Congress (ITHC)

Copyright : Indian Tourism and Hospitality Congress (ITHC)

Reproduction in whole or in part, in any form without written permission is prohibited.

ISSN : 2278-8379

VOLUME : 5

NUMBER : 2

Publication Schedule:

Twice a year : February-August

Disclaimer:

The views expressed in the articles are those of the contributors and not necessarily to the editorial board and publisher. Authors are themselves responsible for any kind of Plagiarism found in their articles.

Claims and court cases only allowed within the jurisdiction of HP, India

Published by: Bharti Publications in association with Indian Tourism and Hospitality Congress (ITHC)

All Correspondence Should be Address to :

Managing Editor

Tourism Innovations

Bharti Publications

4819/24, 3rd Floor, Mathur Lane

Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi-110002

Email: journal.itc@gmail.com, bhartipublications@gmail.com

Website: www.indiantourismcongress.org, www.bhartipublications.com

Analysis of Online Service Quality Gaps: A Study of Tourism Sector in India

Mandeep Kaur, Nitasha Sharma

ABSTRACT

In present time, service quality is an interesting and dynamic concept. But, it varies from time to time. What is considered as "good" in customer services today may be termed as "bad" tomorrow. Customers are now demanding more individualistic and customized services. Hence, it is necessary to identify and prioritize the customers' expectations for service quality. The efficiency of any sector depends upon how best it can deliver services to its target customers. But quick and efficient delivery of services is not possible with traditional service quality. Therefore, concept of traditional service quality has been replaced with online service quality. Therefore, current study is an attempt to study the expectations and perceptions of tourists in online tourism and tried to find out the gap and significant difference between expectations and perceptions of tourists in online tourism. Data has been collected with the help of a questionnaire. Gap analysis and Paired sample t test have been employed to analyze the collected data. It was found that with regard to gap analysis of tourists' expectations and perceptions in online tourism, the dimension of Responsiveness accounted for the highest gap score. Further, it was noticed that there was no significant difference between expectations and perceptions except for the dimensions Security and Reliability.

Keywords: Tourism, Online, Service Quality, Gap, Expectations, Perceptions

Introduction

In present time, service quality is a fascinating and flexible theory. This theory changes from time to time. What is measured as "good" in consumer services these days may be deemed as "bad" tomorrow. Customers are now demanding more individualistic and customized services and are no longer willing to accept delay in transactions. A "customer centric" vision has been substituted by the previous "product centric view" (Singh and Arora, 2011).

Many researchers have discussed the concept of service quality and connected it to the notion of perceptions and expectations (Parasuraman et al., 1985, 1988). According to Ostrowski et al., 1993, "Service quality is considered as service provider's ability to attract more and more customers". It is a practice to gratify consumers so that they clutch optimistic move towards the shopping as they expected. According to Crompton and Mackay (1989) "Service quality is the relationship between what customers'

Mandeep Kaur, Associate Professor, Department of Commerce, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, Punjab

mandeep.gndu@gmail.com, mkaur02@yahoo.co.in

Nitasha Sharma, Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce, Doaba College, Jalandhar
nitasha.sharma20@yahoo.com

desire from a service and what they perceive". Service quality is the discrepancy between consumers' perceptions of services offered by a particular firm and their expectations about the firms offering such services (Parasuraman et al., 1985). Customer evaluates the service quality as low if perceptions are less than expectations and they take it high if perceptions are greater than expectations. According to Gronroos, 2001, "Service quality has been conceptualized as the difference between customer expectations regarding a service to be received and perceptions of the service being received". Thus, Service quality stems from a comparison of perceptions and expectations toward service quality. The customer perceives the service quality to be high if it is perfect on his expectation and it leads to customer satisfaction with the related service (Santos, 2003). Moreover, service quality may be described as the aptitude of the goods or services to satisfy the requirements of customer as expected. It is commonly said that what is not measured is not managed. Without measurement, managers cannot be sure whether quality of services is better or not or service quality gaps exist (Lovelock et al., 2006). Evaluation is enviable to decide whether purposes for improvement

or maintaining quality of services are being employed. Comparison of customers' actual and expected satisfaction level can be calculated with the help of various service quality scales. But, among them SERVQUAL scale created by Parasuraman et al., (1985, 1988 and 1991) is the best as it covers each and every dimension which is necessary to measure quality of services and it is specifically designed for use in the service sector. SERVQUAL measurement proposed by Parasuraman et al. (1985, 1988, and 1991) has been extensively acknowledged and employed in tourism sector also. Following are the dimensions of SERVQUAL scale:

1. **Responsiveness**—"The willingness to help consumers and to provide prompt service"
2. **Tangibles**—"The appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communications materials"
3. **Assurance**—"The knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence"
4. **Empathy**—"The provision of caring, individualized attention to consumers"
5. **Reliability**—"The ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately"

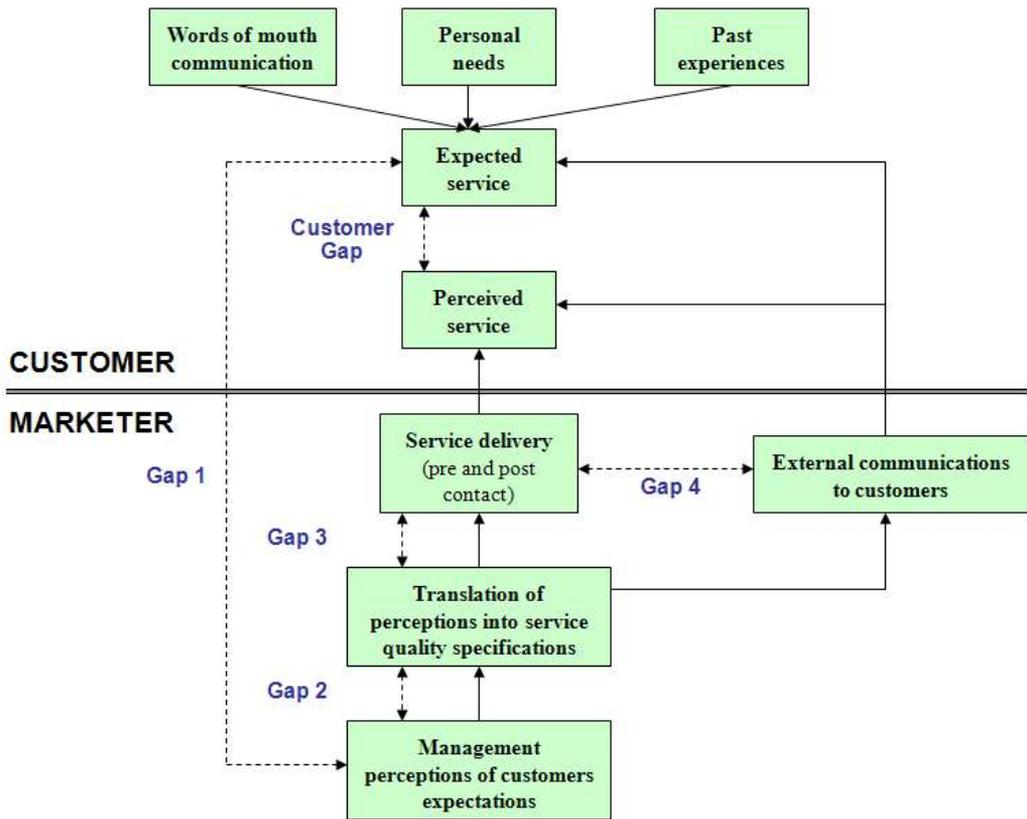


Fig. 1: SERVQUAL Model of Gap Analysis

Source: Parsuraman et al., 1985

Service quality is measured by gap analysis with the help of the following equation:

$$\text{Perceptions} - \text{Expectations} = \text{Gap}$$

Gaps of SERVQUAL scale proposed by Parsuraman et al., 1985, 1988 and 1991 are as follows:

Gap 1 (Positioning Gap)—“It pertains to managers’ perceptions of consumers’ expectations and the relative importance consumers attach to the quality dimensions”

Gap 2 (Specification Gap)—“It is concerned with the difference between what management believes the consumer wants

and what consumers expect the business to provide”

Gap 3 (Delivery Gap)—“It is concerned with the difference between the service provided by the employee of the business and the specifications set by management”

Gap 4 (Communication Gap) – “It exists when the promises communicated by the business to the consumer do not match the consumers’ expectations of those external promises”

Gap 5 (Perception Gap) – “It is the difference between the consumers’ internal perceptions and expectations of the services” (Parsuraman et al., 1991).

Review of Literature:

Some of the reviewed studies in this direction are as follows:

Table 1: Studies on Gap Between Expectations and Perceptions in Tourism and Other Sectors

Author	Country (Sample)	Research Objectives	Variables	Methodology
McQuilken et al., 2000	Otway, Victoria (151 tourists)	To examine the consumer expectations, perceptions and satisfaction levels of tourists	Tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy	Regression Analysis
Lather, 2005	India (150 Indian & 150 foreign tourists)	To explore the difference between expectation and satisfaction level of Indian and foreign adventure tourists and the relationship between the levels of expectation and satisfaction of Indian and foreign adventure tourists	Aesthetic Appeal, Facilities, Food Accommodation, Information and Safety and Security	Gap Score
Parikh, 2006	India (102 respondents)	To measure the gap between the customers' expectations and their perceptions about the service quality of retail store	Physical aspects, reliability, personal interaction problem solving and policy	Factor Analysis
Mohamed, 2007	Egypt (226 respondents)	To assess customers' expectations and perceptions of service provided by travel agents	Responsiveness, reliability, empathy, resources and corporate image and tangibility	Descriptive Analysis
Li and Law, 2007	China (750 respondents)	To measure the gap between the customers' expectations and their perceptions about the service quality of hospitals	Tangibility, reliability, assurance, responsiveness and empathy	Gap score and Paired sample t test
Dhar and Kushwah, 2009	Gwalior (400)	To analyze the service quality of public and private sector banks in terms of customers' expectations and perceptions	Tangibility, reliability, assurance, responsiveness and empathy	Factor and z test

Lin, 2009	Taitung (386 respondents)	To explore the extent of expected importance and perceived satisfaction of tourists regarding various services provided by resort hotels	Tangibility, reliability, assurance, responsiveness, empathy and entertainment	T- test
Naik, 2010	Hyderabad (369 respondents)	To analyze the gap between perceptions and expectations of the customer concerning with services at retail units in the South Indian state of Andhra Pradesh	Tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, empathy and assurance	Reliability Analysis, Correlation Analysis and Regression Analysis
Appaw Agbola, and Afenyo Dehlor, 2010	Italy and (200 respondents)	To evaluate the customers' perceptions of service quality in selected private sector banks	Tangibility, reliability, assurance, empathy and responsiveness	Gap Score
Shahin and Janatyan, 2011	Iran (30 respondents)	To find out service quality gaps and to estimate customer dissatisfaction based on those gaps	Tangibility, reliability, assurance, empathy and responsiveness Analysis	Correlation Analysis, Gap Score and Regression
Renganathan, 2011	India (252 respondents)	To analyze the hotel guests' expectations and perceptions of hotel services	Tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy Analysis and EFA	Descriptive Analysis, Regression
Kariru and Aloo, 2014	Kenya (120 hotels guest)	To investigate hotel guests' perceptions of service quality in hotels within the Western Kenya tourism circuit	Tangibility, reliability, assurance, empathy and responsiveness	Paired sample t test
Khan et al., 2014	Dhaka (150 respondents)	To extract crucial factors affecting the service quality	Tangibility, reliability, assurance, empathy and responsiveness	Paired sample t test

Source: Compiled from different studies; EFA: Exploratory Factor Analysis

Thus, Service quality is a concept that has aroused considerable interest in the literature. Every tourism firm is trying to improve quality of its products and presenting them online due to changing attitude of tourists. Thus, an analysis of service quality perceptions and expectations from tourists' perspectives' is of paramount importance in the today's competitive environment.

Need of the Study:

As far as service quality in tourism sector is concerned, it has been identified as a key factor in differentiating services of different tourism service providers. Moreover, the competitive innovations made tourism service providers more concerned about their survival by providing best services, because with the entry of new generation technology and the expansion of travelling, the notion of quality of services has come out as a major aggressive bludgeon in tourism sector in order to gain larger market share. Outlook of customers have changed after employing the latest technology and they are inspired to explore the alternatives available to them through websites. So it is rightly said that in today's cut throat competition, not only the online presence of tourism service providers is necessary but also they are required to persistently perk up the quality of tourism services to grant continual satisfaction to the tourists (Singh and Arora, 2011). Generally tourists expect high service quality from online tourism service providers but they receive low service quality. So, it is necessary to examine the gaps for e-service quality. However, till date, many researchers have examined service quality in tourism and its allied sectors. Despite the increasing importance of e-tourism on one hand and key role of customer satisfaction on the other hand, very few

studies have been conducted in this regard. Accordingly, current study is going to shed light on online service quality and its gaps in online tourism.

Objectives of the study:

Following are the specific objectives of the current study:

1. To find out the gap between expectations and perceptions of tourists in online tourism.
2. To find out the significant difference between expectations and perceptions of tourists in online tourism.
3. Database and Research Methodology:

To find out the gap between tourists' perceptions and expectations towards online service quality in tourism sector, a modified E-SERVQUAL questionnaire relevant to the tourism industry has been constructed. The questionnaire includes items of the E-SERVQUAL instrument, developed and updated by Zeithaml et al., 2002 as well as some other important items based on review of literature. The data regarding perceptions and expectations of customers were collected on a 7-point interval scale, where 1 stands for strongly disagree and 7 stands for strongly agree. Sampled respondents were selected through convenience cum judgement Sampling Method. The universe of the study was those tourists who have used online tourism at least once in their life. Total 500 questionnaires were distributed among respondents in the three major cities of Punjab i.e. Ludhiana, Jalandhar and Amritsar because these cities are representative of three major regions of Punjab. Moreover, Amritsar was selected due to religious tourism and Jalandhar and Ludhiana were selected due to business tourism.

In order to analyze the collected data, Gap Score and Paired Sample t test have been used. First of all, to find out the gap between expectations and perceptions, mean scores were calculated for expectations and perceptions and then their difference was taken as gap. The negative signs of the gaps indicate that the perceptions are lower than the expectations. It is important to mention that the negative gap is not necessarily implying that the customer is not satisfied. Pearce (1988) and Hughes (1991) have argued that tourists may be satisfied even though their experiences did not fulfill their expectations. Consequently, in order to find out the significant difference between expectations and perceptions of tourists in online tourism, further, Paired Sample t test was employed.

Hypotheses for the Study:

To find out the gap between expectations and perceptions of tourists in online tourism, some hypotheses were set which are as follows:

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between expectations and perceptions of tourists for dimension 'Ease of Use'.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between expectations and perceptions of tourists for dimension 'Website Design'.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference between expectations and perceptions of tourists for dimension 'Responsiveness'.

H₀₄: There is no significant difference between expectations and perceptions of tourists for dimension 'Empathy'.

H₀₅: There is no significant difference between expectations and perceptions of tourists for dimension 'System Availability'.

H₀₆: There is no significant difference between expectations and perceptions of

tourists for dimension 'Reliability'.

H₀₇: There is no significant difference between expectations and perceptions of tourists for dimension 'Security'.

Sample Characteristics

As far as the demographic profile of the respondents is concerned, the sample comprised of variety of respondents belonging to different economic and professional background. It can be seen from Table 2 that more male respondents participated in survey (55.8%) than female (44.2%) respondents. Furthermore sample population formed the majority (44.7%) in the age group of 30-40 years of age. The next largest category comprised the respondents from 40-50 years of age (23.7%).

The next largest category was made up of those who are less than 30 years of age (22.9%). Furthermore, respondents falling in the age category of above 50 are just 8.8%. With regard to marital status of the sample, then it is clear from Table 2 that almost 60.8% respondents are married and 38.4% are unmarried whereas 0.8% respondents are divorcee. As far as respondents' occupation is concerned, then Table 2 explains that majority of the respondents belong to service category (31.4%), followed by businessmen (31.2%), students (20.8%), retired (8.6%), housewives (5.7%) and others (2.3%).

As far as education level is concerned then Table 2 depicts that 51.4% of the respondents are graduates followed by matriculates (33.33%). The next largest category comprised of those respondents who are post graduate (13.8%). As per income categorization, Table 2 shows that 55.3% respondents are falling in the income category of Rs.20000-40000 followed by 23.1% who belongs to income category of Rs. 40000-60000. Though just 15.3% are

falling in the income category of less than Rs. 20000 yet 6.3% are falling in the income category of above Rs.60000 income group.

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Particulars		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	266	55.8
	Female	211	44.2
	Total	477	100.0
Age (Yrs)	Less than 30	109	22.9
	30-40	213	44.7
	40-50	113	23.7
	Above 50	42	8.8
	Total	477	100.0
Marital Status	Married	290	60.8
	Single	183	38.4
	Divorcee	4	0.8
	Total	477	100.0
Education Level	Matriculation	159	33.33
	Graduation	245	51.4
	Post Graduation	66	13.8
	Any other	7	1.5
	Total	477	100.0
Occupation	Student	99	20.8
	Businessman	149	31.2
	Service	150	31.4
	Retired	41	8.6
	Housewife	27	5.7
	Others	11	2.3
	Total	477	100.0
Monthly Income (Rs.)	Less than 20000	73	15.3
	20000-40000	264	55.3
	40000-60000	110	23.1
	More than Rs 60000	30	6.3
	Total	477	100.0

Source: Compiled through Survey

4. Analysis and Interpretation of Gaps between Expectations and Perceptions of Tourists in Online Tourism

Firstly mean score for expectations and perceptions were calculated and their difference was taken as gap. According to Parasuraman et al., 1988, "It is however common for consumer's expectation to exceed the actual service perceived which results in a negative gap score (Perception-Expectation)". The results for gap analysis are as follows:

H₀₁: There is no Significant Difference between Expectations and Perceptions of Tourists for the Dimension 'Ease of Use': According to Al-Momani and Noor, 2009, "Ease of use is defined as the degree to which a person believes that using an information system would be free of effort". Table 3 shows negative gap (-0.0587) between expectations (4.931866) and perceptions (4.873165618) for dimension "Ease of use" which indicates that tourists are satisfied and they find it easy to operate tourism websites. Under dimension "Ease of Use", item wise analysis indicated that the highest level of displeasure was experienced for item 'Tourism websites are easy to use (gap=-0.07547, sig=0.544)'. On contrary to it, satisfaction was found for the item 'Tourism websites load pages fast (gap=0.048218, sig=.466)', followed by 'It is quick to complete a transaction on tourism websites (gap=0.010482, sig=.020)' and 'Tourism websites have minimum scrolling of pages' (gap=0.7891, sig=.000). Moreover, p value for this dimension is more than 0.5 at 5% level of significance; hence null hypothesis is accepted meaning thereby that there is no noteworthy gap between expectations and actual satisfaction level of the tourists for dimensions "Ease of Use". Thus, "Ease of use" is considered as one of the important dimension in e-service quality.

It also reproduces the importance of the tourism website through tourists routing and aims to decrease frustration of customers (Janda et al., 2002). Customers will move to other tourism websites if they found themselves confused during the search process.

Therefore, "Ease of Use" is an important component correlated to service performance. According to Kim and Eom, 2002, "A good level of perceived usability could lead to higher levels of satisfaction, trust and loyalty towards a specific website". It is possible that users who use online mode of booking will abandon and move to other tourism websites if a website takes too long time to download information. Therefore, website access is an important component associated to service recital. For the ease of use for the visitors, the website should be spontaneous, straightforward and accessible for completing transactions (Novak et al., 2000 and Kim and Lee, 2004). There should be easy payment, easy ordering and easy order tracking on the websites. Users should be able to navigate and locate information on the websites easily and they should be able to access the website at a good download speed. Lastly, service providers should organize their site content in a logical and consistent way to ensure that customers view their website as simple and user-friendly.

H₀₂: There is no Significant Difference between Expectations and Perceptions of Tourists for the Dimension 'Website Design': According to Hudson et al., 2000, "Website design defines the tangible aspect of a website". It includes colors, layout, photographs, graphic and animation. As far as dimension "Website Design" is concerned its expected mean score was 5.683089 and perceived mean score was 5.564640112 with a negative

difference of -0.11845. For current dimension, largest negative gap score was observed for the item 'Layout of tourism websites is in a logical sequence with gap score of -0.7631(sig=.257)' followed by 'Tourism websites show creativity (gap=-0.38155, sig=0.000)', 'Tourism websites offer good illustration of services (gap=-0.32704, sig=.000)'. On the contrary, the positive gap was found for the item 'Graphics and animation on tourism websites do not distract users (gap=0.109015, sig=.874)' followed by 'Tourism websites are visually attractive (gap=0.0587, sig=.328)' and 'Tourism websites have good multimedia features (gap=0.010483, sig=.949)'. Moreover, p value at 5% level of significance is greater than 0.5 for website design, so null hypothesis is accepted which shows that there is no notable gap between expected and actual satisfaction level of tourists for the dimension "Website Design". It proves that tourism service providers are using best multimedia features. The lack of proper website design can cause an adverse impact on the users and they may shift to other tourism websites. According to Hoque and Lohse, 1999, "Poor graphic design elements and presentation styles can confuse and negatively affect consumers' willingness to browse or buy through an online channel". These results are in accord with the findings of Park and Gretzel, 2007. As per Nielsen, 1999, "Simple, clear and consistent layout, good use of frame and provision of a site map allow users to skip sections those are of no interest for them". A good web page can motivate the users to use a particular website again and again. Tourism service providers have understood that the deficiency of website design can result in a negative impression of the website quality to the customers, and customers may exit the purchase process (Hongxiuet

al., 2009). Hence, website design must assure a high degree of multimedia features. **H₀₃: There is no Significant Difference between Expectations and Perceptions of Tourists for the Dimension 'Responsiveness'**: According to Kaynama and Black, 2000, "Responsiveness means how the website responds to their customers in an online environment". It was noticed that expected and perceived mean score for "Responsiveness" was 5.30608 and 5.027777778 respectively with negative gap of -0.2783 and higher level of discontent was experienced in items like 'Tourism website compensate for not delivering services as mentioned (gap= -0.70231, sig=0.84)' followed by 'Customers have facility to return to previous pages conveniently (gap=-0.66876, sig=.974)', 'Tourism websites have facility for order cancellation (gap=-0.54717, sig=417)', 'Tourism websites compensate me for site's problems (gap=-0.12788, sig=.194)', 'Tourism website compensate me for not delivering services on time (gap=-0.08386, sig=.035)'.

On the other hand, positive gap score was found in case of item 'Tourism websites offer a meaningful guarantee about the quality of services (gap=0.002097, sig=.000)'. However, item 'Tourism Website has its address on all documentation' has very little gap score (sig=.000) it means expectations for this item of the customers are being met with their perceptions by tourism websites. Furthermore, "Responsiveness" dimension accounted for one of the maximum downbeat score (-0.2783) which shows poor reply of tourism websites towards tourists' requirements and delivering prompt service. Moreover, p value is greater than 0.05 meaning hereby that null hypothesis is accepted at 5% level of significance which means that there is no significant difference between expected

and actual satisfaction level of tourists for the dimension “Responsiveness” at 5% level of significance. These results also consonance with the findings of Wolfinbarger and Gilly (2003) and Yang et al. (2004), who reported that there is no gap between expectations and perceptions of tourists for the dimension

“Responsiveness” and it is a major contributor towards customers’ satisfaction. Tourism websites should be more responsive and tourism service providers should try to maintain long run relationship because according to Janda et al., 2002, “There is a significant positive correlation between Responsiveness and user satisfaction”.

Table 3: Results for Gap between Expectations and Perceptions of Tourists in E-tourism

Statements	Mean of Perceptions	Mean of Expectations	Gap between E and P	t- value	Sig.	Results
It is quick to complete a transaction on tourism websites	4.844864	4.834382	0.010482	-2.344	.020*	Rejected
Tourism websites load pages fast	4.838574	4.790356	0.048218	-.730	.466	Accepted
Tourism websites are easy to use	4.901468	4.976939	-0.07547	.607	.544	Accepted
Tourism websites have minimum scrolling of pages	5.408805	4.649895	0.75891	5.855	.000*	Rejected
Ease of Use	4.873165618	4.931866	-0.0587	-1.594	.186	Accepted
The layout of tourism websites is clear and in logical sequence	4.932914	5.696017	-0.7631	1.135	.257	Accepted
Tourism websites show creativity	5.396226	5.777778	-0.38155	5.714	.000*	Rejected
Tourism websites offer good illustrations of the services	5.358491	5.685535	-0.32704	6.421	.000*	Rejected
Tourism websites should be visually attractive	5.765199	5.706499	0.0587	-.980	.328	Accepted
Graphics and animation on tourism websites do not distract users	5.752621	5.643606	0.109015	-.159	.874	Accepted
Tourism websites have good multimedia features	5.719078	5.708595	0.010483	-.064	.949	Accepted
Website Design	5.564640112	5.683089	-0.11845	1.562	.179	Accepted
All the relevant order confirmation details	5.696017	5.691824	0.004193	7.298	.000*	Rejected

should be sent to my e-mail within 24 hours						
Tourism websites have facility of order cancellation	5.075472	5.622642	-0.54717	-.812	.417	Accepted
Tourism Website have its address on all documentation	5.412998	5.422998	-0.01	9.817	.000*	Rejected
Customers have facility to return to previous pages conveniently	5.006289	5.675052	-0.66876	-.032	.974	Accepted
Tourism websites offer a meaningful guarantee about the quality of services	5.004193	5.002096	0.002097	10.439	.000*	Rejected
Tourism websites compensate me for not delivering service as mentioned	4.8826	5.584906	-0.70231	1.731	.084	Accepted
Tourism websites compensate me for site's problems	5.236897	5.36478	-0.12788	1.300	.194	Accepted
Tourism website compensate me for not delivering services on time	4.840671	4.924528	-0.08386	2.117	.035*	Rejected
Responsiveness	5.02777778	5.30608	-0.2783	2.375	.051	Accepted
Tourism websites develop a platform for users to exchange travel experience	4.712788	4.861635	-0.14885	10.222	.000*	Rejected
Tourism websites provide a telephone number for contact	4.702306	5.404612	-0.70231	-.068	.946	Accepted
Tourism websites have customer service representatives online	5.410901	5.406709	0.004192	10.455	.000*	Rejected
Policies for canceling orders laid out on the site are customer-friendly	4.786164	5.461216	-0.67505	8.613	.000*	Rejected
Tourism websites provide FAQs (Frequently asked questions) information	4.773585	5.368973	-0.59539	-1.010	.313	Accepted
Email responses are relevant, accurate and appropriate to customer requirements	5.404612	5.343816	0.060796	-10.030	.000*	Rejected
Tourism websites guide what to do if my transaction is not processed	5.412998	4.691824	0.721174	3.337	.001*	Rejected

Empathy	5.085055406	4.853249	0.231806	.979	.365	Accepted
The tourism websites do not crash	5.104822	5.366876	-0.26205	-1.358	.175	Accepted
Pages at tourism websites never freeze after I enter my order information	4.943396	4.853249	0.090147	1.551	.121	Accepted
Tourism websites have variety of tour packages in stock	4.784067	4.884696	-0.10063	1.416	.158	Accepted
System Availability	4.8	4.837177	-0.03718	.892	.466	Accepted
Tourism websites respond quickly to the order information	4.672956	4.773585	-0.10063	-.126	.900	Accepted
Tourism websites deliver services when promised	4.691824	4.683438	0.008386	-9.050	.000*	Rejected
I get what I booked from tourism websites	5.415094	4.815514	0.59958	-.617	.538	Accepted
Tourism website show sincere interest in resolving any queries	5.436059	5.398323	0.037736	.591	.555	Accepted
Tourism websites are truthful about its offering	5.337526	5.373166	-0.03564	-.805	.466	Accepted
Reliability	5.144234801	5.145073	-0.00084	9.003	.000*	Rejected
Tourism websites protect my personal information	4.840671	5.454927	-0.61426	8.859	.000*	Rejected
Tourism websites protect my credit card information	4.830189	5.371069	-0.54088	9.264	.000*	Rejected
Tourism websites will not give my information to other sites without my permission	4.790356	5.454927	-0.66457	8.479	.000*	Rejected
Tourism websites protect my web shopping behavior information	4.836478	5.381551	-0.54507	-1.714	.087	Accepted
Tourism websites have adequate security features	5.503145	5.400419	0.102726	9.683	.000*	Rejected
Privacy/Security	4.95639413	4.97065	-0.01426	3.216	.032*	Rejected

Source: Calculated through SPSS based on data collected; A Gap mean =perception mean – expectation mean; (*) Indicates significance at 5% level

H₀₄: There is no Significant Difference between Expectations and Perceptions of Tourists for the Dimension ‘Empathy’. Empathy is feeling of caring, individ-

ualized attention toward consumers. Dimension “Empathy” has mean perception score of 5.085055406 and mean expectation score 4.853249 with a gap

score of 0.231806 which is indicating less dissatisfaction for this dimension. Under this dimension, highest negative gap was found for the item 'Tourism websites provide a telephone number for contact (gap= -.67505, sig=.946)' and 'Policies for canceling orders laid out on the site are customer-friendly (gap= -.67505, sig=.000)' followed by Tourism websites provide FAQs (Frequently asked questions) information (gap=-0.59539, sig=.313)', 'Tourism websites develop a platform for users to exchange travel experience (gap=-0.14885, sig=.000)'. Whereas highest satisfaction was found for item, 'Tourism websites guide what to do if my transaction is not processed (gap=0.721174, sig=.001)', 'Email responses are relevant, accurate and appropriate to customer requirements (gap=0.060796, sig=.000)' and 'Tourism websites have customer service representatives online (gap=0.004192, sig=.000)'.

Moreover, p value at 5% level of significance is greater than 0.5 so null hypothesis is accepted for the dimension "Empathy". Web pages should be written in hypertext which provides the opportunity to build individualized relation with tourists (Maroney, 1997). Thus, tourism websites are taking sufficient steps to pay more concentration on these aspects and paying customized attention to satisfy the needs of the tourists.

H₀₅: There is no Significant Difference between Expectations and Perceptions of Tourists for the Dimension 'System Availability': System Availability means easy availability of server and easy to download material from websites. For the dimension "System Availability" the mean score of expected and actual satisfaction level was 4.837177 and 4.8 respectively with negative gap score - 0.03718. Under this dimension the

statement titled 'Tourism websites do not crash' accounted for the highest gap of - 0.26205 with p value of 0.175 followed by 'Tourism websites have variety of tour packages in stock (-0.10063, sig=.158)' and 'Pages at tourism websites never freeze after I enter my order information (gap= 0.090147, sig=.121)'. Moreover the p value is more than 0.05 at 5% level of significance meaning hereby that there is no difference between expectations and perceptions of tourists for the dimension 'System availability'. As per Jandaet al., 2002, "Long waiting time for downloading a web site or poor download speed due to access lags, transmission lags or server lags can be a source of irritation to users".

H₀₆: There is no Significant Difference between Expectations and Perceptions of Tourists for the Dimension 'Reliability'.

According to Parsuramanet al., 1985, "Reliability is the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately". The mean score for this dimension has been calculated as 5.145073 and 5.144234801 for expectations and perceptions respectively with a negative gap score -0.00084. Under this dimension the statement labeled 'Tourism websites respond quickly to the order information' accounted for the highest negative gap (gap=-0.10063, sig=.900) followed by the item 'Tourism websites are truthful about its offering (-0.03564, sig=.466)' whereas high degree of satisfaction was found for the item 'I get what I booked from tourism websites (gap=0.59958, sig=.538)' followed by 'Tourism websites show sincere interest in resolving queries (gap=0.037736, sig=.555)' and 'Tourism websites deliver services when promised (gap=0.008386, gap=.000)'.

Moreover, p value at 5% level of

significance is smaller than 0.5 so null hypothesis is rejected for the dimension "Reliability" is meaning thereby that there is wide difference between expected and actual satisfaction level of tourists. In order to fill this gap, online tourism providers must offer error-free services to make tourists feel comfortable using online tourism services (Lee and Lin, 2005). To gain the trust of tourists, online websites must be updated frequently and need to be prompt in replying to all queries of tourists as well as ensuring prompt delivery of services.

H₀₇: There is no Significant Difference between Expectations and Perceptions of Tourists for the Dimension 'Security'.

Security means providing secure transactions to the tourists. Security indicates how a website proves its trustworthiness toward its customers. Zeithamlet al., 2002, Security concerns are associated with purchasing behavior and satisfaction with the website. With regard to the dimension "Security" average scores of expected satisfaction level and perceived satisfaction level respectively were noticed as 4.97065 and 4.95639413 with a negative gap of -0.01426. Under this dimension the statement namely 'Tourism websites will not give my information to other sites without my permission' accounted for the highest gap (-0.66457, sig=.000) followed by 'Tourism websites protect my personal information (gap=-0.61426, sig=.000)', 'Tourism websites protect my credit card information (gap=-0.54088, sig=.000)', 'Tourism websites protect my web shopping behavior information (gap=-0.54507, sig=.087)' whereas high degree of satisfaction was found for the item 'Tourism websites have

adequate security features (gap=0.102726, sig=.000)'.

Moreover, p value at 5% level of significance is smaller than 0.5 so null hypothesis is rejected meaning hereby that there is wide difference between expected satisfaction level and perceived satisfaction level for dimension Security. Increasing incidents of misuse of personal information and abuses of privacy are liable for gap between expectations and perceptions for the dimension "Security" (Than and Grandon, 2002). On the other hand, there had been much research that does support the importance of security in online scenario (Szymanski and Hise, 2000; Ranganathan and Ganapathy, 2002 and Santos, 2003). But, some researchers found security as critical dimension which may adversely affect the satisfaction of the tourists. As a result, due to risk related to misuse of personal information, many people are still reluctant to purchase services through internet. Security addresses the mechanical terms of tourism websites. According to Shaohan and Minjoon, 2003, "Security also incorporates company reputation, confidence and general confidentiality among consumers and those operating within the company".

It has been concluded that now a day's tourists are familiar with latest technology. They prefer to book their trips with the help of tourism websites. But they can take the benefits of tourism websites if these websites fulfill the expectations of tourists. Tourism websites should contain adequate information to reduce the perceived risks associated with online purchases and to enhance customers' intentions. Further, summarized findings of hypothesis testing have been shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Summarized Findings of Hypothesis Testing

Hypotheses	t value	Significance level	Results
H ₀₁ : There is no significant difference between expectations and perceptions of tourists for the dimension 'Ease of use'	-1.594	.186	Accepted
H ₀₂ : There is no significant difference between expectations and perceptions of tourists for the dimension 'Website design'	1.562	.179	Accepted
H ₀₃ : There is no significant difference between expectations and perceptions of tourists for the dimension 'Responsiveness'	2.375	.051	Accepted
H ₀₄ : There is no significant difference between expectations and perceptions of tourists for the dimension 'Empathy'	.979	.365	Accepted
H ₀₅ : There is no significant difference between expectations and perceptions of tourists for the dimension 'System Availability'	.892	.466	Accepted
H ₀₆ : There is no significant difference between expectations and perceptions of tourists for the dimension 'Reliability'	9.003	.000	Rejected
H ₀₇ : There is no significant between expectations and perceptions of tourists for the dimension 'Security'	3.216	.032	Rejected

Source: Compiled from the results of Paired sample t-test

The results from Table 4 show that there is no significant difference between perceptions and expectations of tourists except for the dimension "Security" and "Reliability". As far as gap analysis is concerned the dimension of Responsiveness was responsible for the highest gap score. Thus, perceptions of tourists are not fully being met with their expectations (The gaps indicate that the perceptions are lower than their expectations) for the dimension

Responsiveness. Pearce 1988 mentioned that the "gap is not necessarily implying that the customer is not satisfied". Hughes 1991 argued that "tourists may be satisfied even though their experiences did not fulfill their expectations". Therefore, there is need for tourism service providers to improve the matter related to the security and reliability for their customers. They should pay more attention to these critical websites.

Thus, delivering customer satisfaction is at the heart of modern marketing, which is a post-purchase judgment of the consumers. The gap between desirability and availability for these dimensions is an alarming bell for tourism websites and for tourism companies.

Recommendations and Implications of the Study:

- The study will also helpful for tourism service providers to understand those factors which are perceived important by tourists while they use online mode of booking.
 - Moreover, it will also enable the managers of tourism and travel websites developers to identify their strengths and weaknesses and consequently help them in investing the available resources in the critical dimensions.
 - However, online customers are greatly concerned about website functionality and usability, therefore the study will help tourism web site designers to understand the requirements of the tourists while framing and maintaining their websites.
 - Study can be helpful for tourism website designers to understand the importance of ICT to remain competitive.
 - As far as recommendations of the study are concerned then results of the study show a significant difference between expectations and perceptions of tourists for the dimensions 'Security'. So tourism service providers need to awaken to this empirical fact and should take quick steps for the security and privacy of tourists. Managers of tourism companies should allocate specific space for protection and privacy policies.
- There is also significant difference between expectations and perceptions for the dimension 'Reliability'. The study will prompt the managers of tourism websites to develop right strategies to retain customers by concentrating on the dimensions of Reliability. Therefore, tourism service providers should try to provide trustworthy services in order to retain the customers.

Limitations and Scope for Further Research:

- Current study was conducted by taking 500 respondents from 3 cities of Punjab only. The results may differ on increasing the sample size. Moreover, the behaviour of respondents from one part of India may vary from other part of India. Therefore, the results of the present study may not be generalized.
- As questionnaires have been used to collect data, its freeness from personal biasness cannot be claimed.
- Seven dimensions were used to find out the gap between expectations and perceptions of tourists in e-tourism. Some other dimensions may be taken to find out the gap between expectations and perceptions in online tourism.

References

1. Al-Momani, K. and Noor, N.A. (2009).E-service Quality, Ease of Use, Usability and Enjoyment as Antecedents of E-CRM Performance: An Empirical Investigation in Jordan Mobile Phone Services. *The Asian Journal of Technology Management*, 2(2), 50-63.
2. Appaw-Agbola, E. T. and AfenyoDehlor, S. (2011). Service Quality in Ghana's Tourism Industry: A Perspective from Tourists and Hotel Managers in the Volta Region. *World Review of Business Research*, 1(5), 110-125.
3. Crompton, J. L. and Mackay K. (1989).Users' Perceptions of the Relative Importance of Service Quality Dimensions in Selected Public Recreation Programs.*Leisure Sciences*, 11, 367-375.
4. Crompton, J.L. and Love, L.L. (1995).The Predictive Validity of Alternative Approaches to Evaluating Quality of a Festival.*Journal of Travel Research*, 34(11), 11-24.
5. Dhar, R. and Kushwah, V. (2009).Service Quality Expectations and Perceptions of Public and Private Sector Banks in India: A Comparative Study.*IMJ (IIM INDORE)*, 1(3), 34.
6. Gronroos, C. (2001). *Service Management and Marketing: A Customer Relationship Marketing Approach*. 2nd ed. Wiley: New York, NY.
7. Hamilton, J.A., Crompton, J., and More, T.A. (1991).Identifying Dimensions of Service Quality in a Park Context.*Journal of Environmental Management*, 32, 211-220.
8. Hongxiu, L., Yong, R. and Reima, S. (2009). Measurement of E-Service Quality: An Empirical Study on Online Travel Service. Paper presented at 17th European Conference on Information Systems, Available at <http://www.ecis2009.it/papers/ecis2009-0449.pdf>, Accessed on 12 July, 2013.
9. Hoque, A. Y. and Lohse, G. L. (1999).An Information Search Cost Perspective for Designing Interfaces for Electronic Commerce.*Journal of Marketing Research*, 36(3), 387-394.
10. Hughes, K. (1991). Tourist Satisfaction: A Guided Cultural Tour in North Queensland.*Australian Psychologist*, 26 (3), 166-171.
11. Janda, S., Trocchia, P. and Gwinner, K. (2002).Consumer Perceptions of Internet Retail Service Quality.*International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 13(5), 412-431.
12. Kariru, and Aloo, (2014).Customers' Perceptions and Expectations of Service Quality in Hotels in Western Tourism Circuit.*Journal of Research in Hospitality, Tourism and Culture*, 2(1), 1-12.
13. Kaynama, S. A. and Black, C. I. (2000).A Proposal to Assess the Service Quality of Online Travel Agencies: An Exploratory Study. *Journal of Professional Services Marketing*, 21(1), 63-89.
14. Khan, F., Tabassum, A. and Jahan, K. (2014).Assessment of Service Gap in Superstores of Bangladesh by using SERVQUAL Model.*World Review of Business Research*, 4(4), 109-128.
15. Kim, E. and Eom, S. 2002. Designing effective cyber store user interface.*Industrial Management and Data System*, 102(5), 241-251.
16. Kim, W. and Lee, H. (2004).Comparison of Web Service Quality between Online Travel

- Agencies and Online Travel Suppliers. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 17(2/3), 105-116.
17. Lather, A., Singh, R. and Singh, A. (2005). Comparing the Levels of Expectation and Satisfaction of Indian and Foreign adventure Tourists Visiting India. *Applied Studies in Agribusiness and Commerce-ABSTRACT groin form Publishing House, Budapest*.
 18. Lee, G-G. and Lin, H-F. (2005). Customer Perceptions of E-Service Quality in Online Shopping. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 33(2), 161-176.
 19. Li, K. W. and Law, R. (2007). A novel English/Chinese information retrieval approach in hotel web site searching. *Tourism Management*, 28 (3), 153-166.
 20. Lin C., (2010). Examining E-Travel Sites: An Empirical Study in Taiwan. *Online Information Review*, 34(2), 205-228.
 21. Lovelock, C. Wirtz J. and Chatterjee, J. (2006). *Service Marketing*. V Ed. Pearson Education.
 22. Maroney, D. (1997), "In Praise of Hypertext, *Journal of Advertising Research*", *Advertising Research*, 37 (7/9), 1-14.
 23. McQuilken, L., Brenth, R. and Shaw R. (2000). Consumer Expectations and Satisfaction Levels: An Evaluation of Tourism in the Otway Region Visionary Marketing for the 21st Century: Facing the Challenge. *Tourism Management*, 9, 111-131.
 24. Mohamed, 2007 Mohamed, G. (2007). Service Quality of Travel Agents: The View Point of Tourists in Egypt. "Tourismos: An International Multidisciplinary Journal of Tourism, Vol. 2 (1) Spring, 63-87.
 25. Naik, C. N., Gantasala, S. B. and Prabhakar, G. V. (2010). Service Quality (Servqual) and its Effect on Customer Satisfaction in Retailing. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 16(2), 23.
 26. Nielsen, J. (1999). *Designing Web Usability: The Practice of Simplicity*. Indianapolis, In: New Riders Publishing.
 27. Novak, T., Hoffman, D. and Yung, Y. (2000). Measuring the Customer Experience in Online Environments: A Structural Modeling Approach. *Marketing Science*, 19(1), 22-42.
 28. Ostrowski, P.L., O'Brien T.V. and Gordon, G.L. (1993). Service Quality and Customer Loyalty in the Commercial Airline Industry. *Journal of Marketing*, 22(2), 16-24.
 29. Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V.A. and Berry, L.L. (1985). A Conceptual Model of Service Quality and its Impli+cations for Future Research. *Journal of Marketing*, 49, 41-50.
 30. Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V.A. and Berry, L.L. (1991). Refinement and Reassessment of the SERVQUAL Scale. *Journal of Retailing*, 67 (4), 420-440.
 31. Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V.A., and Berry, L.L. (1988). SERVQUAL: A Multiple Item Scale for Measuring Consumer Perceptions of Service Quality. *Journal of Retailing*, 64 (1), 12-40.
 32. Parikh, D. (2006). Measuring Retail Service Quality: An Empirical Assessment of the Instrument. *Vikalpa*, 31 (2), 1.18.
 33. Park, Y. A. and Gretzel, U. (2007). Evaluation of Emerging Technologies in Tourism: The Case of Travel Search Engines. In ENTER 2006.

-
34. Pearce, P. L. (1988). *The Ulysses Factor: Evaluating Visitors in Tourist Settings*. New York, Springer Verlag.
 35. Ranganathan, C. and Ganapathy, S. (2002). Key Dimensions of Business-to-Consumer Web Sites. *Information and Management*, 39(6), 457-465.
 36. Renganathan, R. (2011). Service Quality in Hospitality Services: Gap Model and Factor Analysis. *European Journal of Social Science*, 26 (2), 159-175.
 37. Santos, J. (2003). E-service Quality-A Model of Virtual Service Dimensions. *Managing Service Quality*, 13 (3), 233-247.
 38. Shahin, A. and Janatyan, N. (2011). Estimation of Customer Dissatisfaction Based on Service Quality Gaps by Correlation and Regression Analysis in a Travel Agency. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 6(3), 1-15.
 39. Shaohan, C. and Minjoon, J. (2003). Internet Users' Perceptions of Online Service Quality: A Comparison of Online Buyers and Information Searchers. *Managing Service Quality*, 13(6), 504-520.
 40. Singh, S. and Arora, R. (2011). A Comparative Study of Banking Services and Customer Satisfaction in Public, Private and Foreign Banks. *Journal of Economics*, 2(1), 45-56.
 41. Szymansky, M. D. and Hise, T. R. (2000). E-satisfaction: An Initial Examination. *Journal of Retailing*, 76(3), 309-322.
 42. Than, C. and Grandon, E. (2002). An Exploratory Examination of Factors Affecting Online Sales. *Journal of Computer Information Systems*, 42(3), 87-93.
 43. Wolfenbarger, M. and Gilly, M. (2003). E-tailQ: Dimensionalizing, Measuring and Predicting E-tail Quality. *Journal of Retailing*, 79(3), 183-198.
 44. Yang, Z., Jun, M. and Peterson, R. T. (2004). Measuring Customer Perceived Online Service Quality. *International Journal of Operations and Production Management*, 24(11), 1149-1174.
 45. Zeithaml, A., Parasuraman, A. and Malhotra, A. (2002). Service Quality Delivery through Websites: A Critical Review of Extant Knowledge. *Service Journal of Academy Marketing Science*, 30(2), 362-367.