A TRIADIC ANALYSIS OF SERVICE QUALITY PERSPECTIVE BETWEEN CUSTOMER, EMPLOYEE AND MANAGEMENT: THE KNOWLEDGE GAP AND CROSS CULTURAL INFLUENCE ON THE SERVICE QUALITY PERCEPTION.

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ABSTRACT

Maldives is a renowned tourist destination in the world, growing rapidly within a competitive national and international environment. With similar service provided across the industry, differentiating through service quality is identified as the most imperative way to succeed and sustain in the business. Although design and process of service quality measurement is not fully conceptualized given the complexity of service characteristics, majority of academics have agreed that it should be assessed through the lens of customer expectations and their perceptions. SERVQUAL instrument is the most prominent tool used in this regard and hence, their dimensions will be used to assess the alignment between customer, employee and management’s perception of service quality for the five star resort island under study.

The objectives of this study will identify the key determinants of perception of service quality between the stakeholders and find out how this gap is formed between customer expectations and employee/management perception of this expectation. It will also investigate how these dimensions vary according to the guest nationality to understand the cultural context. Europe and Asia is used for the cultural cluster analysis, following the similar segmentation in the government and resort publications. It is found that there is no congruence of service quality perception between the stakeholders. However, there is significant correlation between Europe and Asian guest, having high priority for tangibility, assurance and reliability. The three areas investigated—communication, structure and marker research, of how the gap form underlines, the importance of soliciting the feedback, harnessing accommodating culture and being proactive to sustain service quality. The generalizing of the findings should be treated cautiously due to the small sample size of customers accessible.
DISSERTATION LAY OUT

The dissertation is structured in to five chapters. Chapter one highlights the background of the issue; informing the national and resort context as destination branding have considerable relevance to the customer perception of service quality. Chapter two critically discuss the theoretical data related to service quality and develop a framework that conceptualizes the area under investigation to address the research aim. Chapter three encompasses the theoretical view on the methodology justifying the type of research design adopted and detailing the methods used to address the objectives. Following, chapter four describe the findings and analysis that stipulate the empirical data with accommodating graphical representations for easier comprehension. These results will be accompanied with discussion for parallel reference. The last section, chapter five will comprise of conclusion, recommendation, limitation and future research.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

This chapter will start from outlining the national context, describing the nature of the service economy to comprehend the setting of the industry. Following will outline the organizational context that describes the resort environment leading to the strategic importance of the subject. This highlights the significance of the focus study, concluding with the research aim and the objectives. The chapter will end with an account of research planning to demonstrate the path of the study.

1.1 NATIONAL CONTEXT

Maldives, the little archipelago with 1190 low lying chain of islands with an area of 90,000 sq. km in the Indian Ocean is a developing country which has made its mark in the world as a popular tourist destination. Over the past 40 years in this business, Maldives have positioned as a 'halo' destination in the hospitality industry with its pristine beaches, colourful underwater coral reefs and the 'one resort one hotel' enclaves, giving the serenity and peace for tourists it serves. A thriving 6 billion dollar industry which has won numerous awards in international arena reached a milestone with one million tourist arrival for the first time in the year 2013.

Tourism in Maldives have grown 14.9% in the year 2013 which is above industrial average in an flourishing global market- the fastest growing industry of the world (WTTC-country report 2014). The growth rate is explained by the surge of new development of resorts in the past few years by domestic and internal hotel chains. According to World tourism report (2014), 46% of share represents from emerging economies. This is reflective to Maldives tourism market, where Asia has surpassed Europe- the market which has dominated the past decades, for the first time in 2014. China contributes for this increase comprising 64% of Asian guests and growth rate accrues to18.2%. According to Maldives Tourism Master Plan 2013-2017, (2013), the shrinking European market is due to the effect of GFC (global financial Crisis)which has driven down the disposable income and making the tourists to seek out value-for-money destinations with all inclusive packages. The report also emphasizes the importance of appropriate standard and price, given the majority of the resorts are of luxury hotels operating as five stars and above to fight the competition with South and South East Asia destinations. It is found that there is an increased competition between the hotel for better service quality and customer satisfaction (Parayani et al., 2010).
The report also emphasizes the importance of appropriate standard and price to fight the competition with South and South East Asia destinations. Research has found that there is an increased competition between the hotel for better service quality and customer satisfaction (Parayani et al., 2010). Standards of service or service quality become even more instrumental when majority of the resorts operating in Maldives are luxury hotels operating as five stars and above.

1.2 ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT

The organisation under review is a resort island; the name which will not be disclosed due to the sensitive nature of the information stipulated and with the given environment and the industry it operates on. However, an overview of the resort is necessary to understand the context of this case study.

The organisation, here on referred as ‘The Resort’, is 120 million USD valued 5 star luxury resort island opened in 2005 with 44 island villas and 56 water villas. It is 100% owned and managed by Maldivian company with a portfolio of another 2 resorts operating in Maldives. Positioning statement is “rediscover life’s beauty” which embodies on authentic and timeless image with an emphasis on the local heritage.

The Resort caters for number of segments varying from beach relaxers with services offered from spas and lavish amenities to honeymooners and experience seekers with water sports, diving and big game fishing among many of the other activities provided by the resort. The general segmentation is: Honeymooners - 50 %, Couples - 45 % and Family -5 %. Resort’s market share for 2014 comprised, 59% European and 36% Asian guests where majority is Chinese.

Service quality and satisfaction is measured through automated Guest Surveys carried routinely by email. It provides useful insight of the customer perception and their satisfaction, detailing comprehensively on the facilities provided. Departments effectively address the feedbacks along with online reviews given in the travel sites like TripAdvisor.
1.3 STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF THE AREA UNDER INVESTIGATION

Following the affordability of tourism in developing economies and with opening of new destinations (WTTC-country report 2014) in an already competitive industry, it becomes crucial to develop strategies for successful customer service given the high interaction with the service providers in the tourism industry. The quality of service delivery can be the most important apparatus to differentiate the hotel from the competition having similar attractions and services. Douglas and O’Connor, (2003) argues, the tangible products are mostly undifferentiated, stressing the significance of the use of intangible elements to differentiate from what is being offered in the market. It is identified that perceived quality and value is the most important variables that decide the choice of tourist destination (Ogorelc and Snoj, 1998). According to Maldives Visitor Survey 2015, 48% visit for its natural beauty following other parallel factors like beaches, underwater beauty, weather and peacefulness.

Perceived quality and value of services are among the most important factors in the guest choice of a particular tourist destination (Ogorelc and Snoj, 1998). As Maldives market research being weak across the industry (Maldives Tourism Master Plan 2014, 2012), customer information on their motivation, expectations and perceptions need to be monitored well at resort level and makes it more imperative given the fierce competition and changing travelling trend around the globe. There is already growing competition for high service quality and customer satisfaction in the global hospitality industry especially for hotels (Parayani et al., 2010). According to Maldives Visitor Survey 2015, 22% travel Maldives through word of mouth recommendations, emphasizing the influence of visited customer perception. Also, one fourth of the guests have traveled to similar destination like Mauritius, making the comparatives easier for the customer and therefore, industry professional should be more aware to address service quality matters diligently.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the key determinants of the perception of service quality by the customer, management and employee. These are the three stakeholders involved in the quality management system as referred in the service marketing by Zithmal and Bitner (2003). There is a need to align the service quality standards and how employee perceives the quality service delivery to bring maximum value and satisfaction to the customer. Results from the study could be used in the quality improvement process of hotel organization and to give some insight on developing service quality standards as currently taken up by the Resort.
1.4 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

AIM:
A triadic analysis of service quality perspective between customer, employee and management: the knowledge gap and cross cultural influence on the service quality perception.

OBJECTIVES:
1. To identify the congruence between customer, management and employee perception of service quality through SERVQUAL dimensions
2. To identify how the guest expectations varies according to their geographical region (Europe and Asia) and how it is perceived by the employees and management through SERVQUAL dimensions
3. To critically evaluate how this gap is formed between customer expectations and employee/management perception of this expectation.

1.5 RESEARCH PLANNING

The first step of research project is not only exploring the topic through literature review but also engaging conversation to the relevant people so it can become clearer to the researcher (Davis and Nathan, 2014). Likewise, discussions on the key issues that concerns and affects the tourism industry were carried out with the professionals in the sector. Careful consideration was given to the practicality in methodology for extracting quality primary data given the logistical impediments. Having identified the resort where such access was permitted, explorative study was carried to get familiar with the settings and their operations. Number of secondary data was analysed about the service provided, market segments, marketing materials etc. Customer reviews from various internet travel sites gave customer perspective outside from what can be provided in the Resort. This helped to identify the key issues on customer perception of the Resort in comparison to what it portrays through external marketing. According to Collis and Hussey (2003), the secondary assessment is essential to become familiar with the material to enable and build separate descriptions of events, opinions and phenomena which can be used to identify patterns that will aid in the primary research. A Gantt chart (Appendix 1), was drawn out once the topic was confirmed, to systematically carry the research with in the limited duration.
The secondary research lead to theoretical study on the themes and focused on the specific areas that can be feasible and interesting to explore. A conceptual framework was constructed after a literature review and consequently relevant research design was developed which constituted second stage of the study. In this stage, further to developing instruments of data collection and piloting, writing up of the report was started to distribute the work load evenly.

The final stage was collecting and processing the data along with drawing of the drafts and final report of the study. The following diagram (figure 1) depicts the research planning and their path.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW & CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

- Concepts relating to Service Quality in the service industry

The chapter on literature reviews will critically evaluate the elements in the research objectives. Opening with a brief on service and quality in general, which then gets narrowed to hospitality industry, discussing and evaluating the following areas: service quality; perception elements; measuring tool with the special address to the SERVQUAL dimensions used in the empirical study of the research and; the factors arising from the gap formed between expectation of the customers and the perception of their expectation from managers and employees. A synthesis will be made at the end of the chapter that constructs a conceptual framework aiding to explore the methodology chapter that follows.

2.1 SERVICE VS PRODUCT

Service is described as products in marketing literature (Cowell, 1991). According to Kotler (1997) there are four distinct categories of products: purely tangible goods, tangible goods with accompanying intangible service, a major intangible service and pure intangible service. This classification complements with ‘tangibility spectrum’ proposed by Shostack (1977) where he explains it as continuum ranging from tangible dominant to intangible dominant and the degree of intangibility differentiate as a product or a service. The classical characteristics of service known in marketing literature which discern service from product are perishability, intangibility, variability, and non-ownership (Williams, 2002). The original distinction therefore distinguishes the goods being produced and service being performed (Baker, 1995). But these views are considered rigid, categorising it as traditional marketing model by more contemporary authors like Grönroos (2001). He describes service as a process, a service marketing approach, where the production and consumption take place simultaneously. But it could be argued that there are services like day cleaning or lawn mowing where service is separable (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2012). Likewise, perishability can be justified through its durable value for services like education. Nonetheless, non-ownership addresses a valid characteristic regarded by many scholars in the field (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2012). Then, there are concepts that mirror opposite the traditional belief where all products are considered as services (Holbrook, 1999). Nevertheless, the classical characteristics of service conform to the tourism sector and are sited accordingly in related literature.
2.1.1 SERVICE IN TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

Hospitality and tourism industry is defined by composite of activities and interactions each of which has physical and emotional content (Nightingale, 1985), to satisfy the needs of tourist away from home (Kandampully et al., 2001). For the literal definition of hospitality, it can be referred as wide-ranging services that include lodging, food service, leisure, conventions, travel, and attraction (Ottenbacher et al., 2009). Major components of tourism destination are defined by Kandampully et al., (2001) as Accessibility: the function of tourist market to reach through transport and communication; Amenities: catering, entertainment, communication and internal transport that enable the tourist to move around; Accommodation; Attraction: like Scenic, historical, natural wonders and also event attraction (exhibition); Activities: indoor and outdoor recreation activities.

There are different types of hospitality service and facilities that vary according to the type of service provided. But, the one thing that overrides in the tourism literature is the high level of human interaction emphasis on many of its definitions. The interpersonal interaction between the service firm employees and consumers are crucial in this sector and these encounters can be identified as having a purpose oppose to being altruistic in nature; not assuming prior acquaintance where normal rules of social exchange to strangers does not take place like conversing openly without threat and; having behavioural boundaries where personal feelings are put aside to show respect and politeness (Czepiel et al., 1985). This classification may not always hold true due the complexity in human interaction influenced largely by culture. It is a service that runs in cycle, where all the activities conform to a non-ending loop (Ingram, 2000), making it more complex to have consistency in these relationships. Also, there are particular dimensions in this industry that influence the customer behavior: time, physical proximity, participation, degree of involvement, degree of customization, service providers and setting as defined by many authors (Gabbot and Hogg, 1998; Lovelock, 1996; Zeithaml and Bitner, 1996). This leads to conclude that tourism service as multidimensional (Reisinger, 2001) and therefore particularly challenging to control the quality.

2.2 QUALITY AND TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT

There are many views on how quality is defined. It can be viewed as ‘Performance to Standards’, ‘Meeting the Customer’s Needs’ or ‘Satisfying the Customer’ (Misra, 2014). Crosby (1979) define quality as conforming to the requirements, which is more relevant to tangible goods but the
requirements can be a factor to contribute to the expectation of the customers, as exceeding these expectations is related to service quality.

The research on definitions and measures are more focused on goods (Juran 1989), presumably due to the complex nature of service and is a recent industry comparatively. Today, service contributes two third of world GDP (WTO, 2010) which highlights the importance and relative significance of quality in the sector. As quality being a subjective term, Garvin (1988) identified it in five perspectives: transcendent view, product based, manufactured based, user based, and value based. Among this, it could be argued the latter two have more association to tourism service. This argument can be supported with instrument used in the sector of measuring quality, which is consistent with service management view that identifies quality through consumer's perspective (Grönroos, 1994).

There are soft and hard measure of quality, where ‘Soft standards provide direction, guidance and feedback to employees on ways to achieve customer satisfaction and can be quantified by measuring customer perception and beliefs’ (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2006 p. 292), while 'hard standards can be counted, timed or measured through audits'(Lovelock and Wirtz, 2012 p. 426). Organizations can use mixture of both measures to assess a balanced system.

W. Edward Deming (2000) proposed quality as a philosophy that runs through all the activities of the organisation and challenged the traditional belief that employees being the major factor of quality compromise. He proposed a 14 point guide to improve the quality. An interpretation of this guide can be summarised as creating a purpose of improvement by making it the philosophy of how the activities are carried out, initiated by oneself to foster people oriented culture based on equality and commitment. Thus, the basis of Total Quality Management (TQM) was born. It could be presumed, some of the elements generate to a utopian approach but, it gave away companies to adopt a holistic approach in managing quality. The management philosophy of TQM is recognized with regret ‘a complete anti-thesis of conventional management thinking’ by authors like Kandapully (2002, p. 72). Kaynak (2003) has given well rounded definition of TQM by describing it as holistic management philosophy that covers all the operations and seek to continuous improvement from resource procurement to customer support staff. Nonetheless, it can also be argued for its alignment with resources bases view (RBV) in attaining and sustaining competitive advantage (Yunis et al., 2013), and only draws to conclusion, the need to embrace it as appropriate especially in high interactive sectors like tourism.
2.3 SERVICE QUALITY

Service quality is defined as the customers overall impression of the superiority or inferiority of organisation and its services (Bitner and Hubbert, 1994). Gummesson, (1991) explains why customer’s perception is used in the definition of service quality- referencing to its origin from the development of marketing in contrast to operational management. He further added, it is also the consequence of variability in service with high interaction of employees and the lack of service design and statistical techniques in the service system. This customer oriented view is elaborated through the classification of service as a performance conducted usually in the presence of customer and therefore considered more subjective perception of an experience than objective assessment of physical object (Parasuraman, et al., 1985).

There are three dimensions under review to evaluate service quality: physical, corporate and Interaction (Lehtinen and Lehtinen, 1982). As interaction is integral to service, evaluation of its quality, influence the overall quality of service (Crosby and Stephens, 1987; Parasuraman, et al., 1985, Urry 1991), which ultimately adds value to the complete service experience (Lau et al, 2005). It is due to this interactive aspect that informs service quality as an abstract concept and more so highlighted through the view of service characteristics (intangibility, perishability, heterogeneity and inseparability) (Parasuraman et al., 1985).

There are various service quality models as proposed since 1980: the perceived service quality model( Grönroos 1982, 1994); GAP model- internal service quality gap model identifying all the stages that leads to the difference of customer expectation and perception (Paransuraman et al., 1985);SERVQUAL instrument -fifth gap of GAP model (Zeithaml et al., 1990); 4 Q model of offering quality (Gummesson, 1993); 7 Gap model –revised from the original 5 step model( Lovelock, 1994);Meyer –Mattmuller model (Meyer and Mattmuller, 1987) ;Linqvist index (Linqvist, 1988) and other models that have been adapted from Gronroos (1982)and SERVQUAL.

In today’s tourism research, The dominant constructs of service quality measurement used are SERVQUAL (Paransuraman et al., 1985, 1994)and SERVPERF (Cronin and Taylor, 1992), (Yüksel, 2008; Kandampully et al., 2001)which both constitutes same dimensions of assessment.
2.3.1 SERVICE QUALITY IN TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

Hotel Industry being an exponentially growing Industry in the past decades and much importance is given to service quality for its contribution to financial performance, customer satisfaction and retention (Akbaba, 2006; Ghobadian, et al., 1994; Gržinić, 2007; Martinez Caro & Roemer, 2006; Tam, 2000). It has also contributed positively for customer decision-making (Gummesson, 1991; Parasuraman et al., 1985, Zeithaml et al., 1990).

The impact of service quality on tourism is comprehensive, yielding to competitive edge through social trends, consumer behavior, and technology (Williams and Buswell, 2003), improving guest convenience generating traffic linking to profits, saving costs, higher market share, enhancing service provider’s image, and ensuring customer security (Wuest, 2001). It is therefore, imminent that the perception of service quality is significant for the success in today’s competitive environment (Fynes and Voss, 2001). Specially, given the interactive nature of service process, the evaluation of service quality is very personal and unique to the customer and is in extremely powerful position for the reputation of the hotel (Douglas and O’Connor, 2003).

Quality management in tourism strives for the improvement of the service to deliver a distinctive service (Williams & Buswell, 2003) and this is supported by the arguments of its relation to RBV concept (Yunis et al., 2013).

2.3.2 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION VS SERVICE QUALITY

In many marketing literature measurement of satisfaction and service quality, is used interchangeably. Oliver (1993) put forward the argument that service quality is an antecedent of satisfaction while Bolton and Drew (1991) contended that customer satisfaction contributes service quality and customer behavior. It is also debated that the customers do not distinguish it in assessing the service experience (Iacobucci et al., 1995). Looking through the main distinctions made for both, service quality is related to the attitude formed while satisfaction is transactions specific (Bitner, 1990; Bolton and Drew, 1991; Parasuraman et al., 1988) and therefor having more effect on purchase intentions (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Dabholkar et al., 1995). The difficulty emerges due to the high correlation between the two construct as observed from the empirical studies (Žabkar et al., 2009). Nonetheless, it has come to terms in the literature review that they
both are conceptually distinct but closely related construct (Dabholkar, 1995; Parasuraman et al., 1994; Sureshchandar et al., 2002).

Customer satisfaction, as a relative term it is, there are competing theories postulated on the subject: Expectancy- Disconfirmation Paradigm (EDP); the Value Percept Theory; the Attribution Theory, the Equity Theory; the Comparison Level Theory; the Evaluation Congruent Theory, the person situation fit model, the performance importance model, the Dissonance and Contrast Theory (Yüksel, 2008). In the tourism research however, EDP is more dominant following the major use of SERVQUAL, due to the similarity of satisfactions construct to service quality satisfaction (Juwaheer & Ross, 2003; Saleh & Ryan, 1991; Snoj & Mumel, 2002).

Then there is the argument on the impact of satisfaction by the relational quality. King and Garey (1997, p. 39) described the relational quality as ‘customer perceptions and evaluations of individual service employees’ especially for high interactive services. According to him these interactions induce feelings and emotional state through communication and behavioural aspects like courtesy, warmth, helpfulness and empathy which proves the link between service quality and satisfaction.

### 2.4 CUSTOMER PERCEPTION

Stauss and Mang (1999) indicated that customers perceive quality, mainly in the moment of interaction with the service provider. According to Zeithaml and Bitner (1996), there are four factors influencing customer perception: service encounters (moment of truth); evidence of service; image and price (value). In tourism perspective, Morgan (1996) describe it as external factors; tangible elements of the services; human elements of the services and personal factors. It is prominent in these descriptions human interactions as an important factor whether through service encounters, moment of interaction or human elements of the service.

Service quality is also expressed as quality of experience, attractions and value/environment (Woodside et al., 2000). Attractions or image emerge in the definitions, establishing the link to destination image which is highly emphasized in tourism literature. Destination image is defined as an individual’s mental representation of knowledge (beliefs), feelings and overall perception of a particular destination (Crompton, 1979; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991). It has been identified in the
previous researches, the specificity of the features are important in the measurement of quality (Žabkar et al., 2009) the destination is perceived for.

2.5 SERVICE QUALITY MEASUREMENTS AND ITS DIMENSIONS

There are number of measurement techniques of service quality in tourism services. Among are unobtrusive observations measures, employee feedback, one to one customer interviews, focus groups, critical incident technique, customer surveys (Kandampully et al., 2001). However, there are difficulties to evaluate service quality due to its ‘intangible and elusive nature’ (Min & Min, 1997 p. 582). So far, attribution techniques of customer survey such as SERVQUAL is found most systemic form of study through quantitative analysis.

Service quality definitions and its measurements were developed in the 1980s (Lewis, 1987). There are two prominent school of thought; Scandinavian school where Grönroos and Gummerson are notable contributors and American led researchers namely Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry (Williams, and Buswell, 2003). Grönroos model was based on technical quality (‘what’) the objective side and functional quality (how), the subjective side. His theory does not produce any dimensions for measurements but later was merged to Gummesson’s nine lessons on service quality (Gummesson, 1989) which produce into four dimensions: design quality, production quality, delivery quality and relational quality. Brady and Cronin (2001) developed a frame work where there are three dimensions and three further sub-dimension: interaction quality (attitude/behaviour/expertise); physical environment (ambient conditions/design/outcome quality) and outcome quality (waiting time/tangibles/valence).

Then, there are derivatives of SERVQUAL like DINESERV, LODQUAL (Getty and Thompson, 1994) and LODGSERV (Knuston et al., 1990) and SERVPERF (Cronin and Taylor 1992, 1994), all using the same RATER (Reliability, Assurance, Tangibility, Empathy and Responsiveness) dimensions proposed originally by SERVQUAL but with adaptation on indexes to suit the service provided. Kano (1984) critiques on the one dimensionality of service quality measurement and proposed to use dissatisfaction along with satisfaction, basing his argument on sufficiency on quality elements may not be par to customer expectations; modeled from Hertzberg's motivation-hygiene theory.
There are number of studies evaluating the service quality in various service industries in different parts of the world. In the Appendix 1 demonstrates some of the dimensions emerged through their factor analysis, either in independent index designed or through SERVQUAL instrument.

It can be evaluated, the dimensionality of service quality is dependent on the type of service offered (Babakus & Boller, 1992) and contextual to specificity of destination features (Zabkar et al., 2009). However, many of the tourism literature identify the use of RATER dimensions in measuring service quality.

### 2.5.1 SERVQUAL

Service quality is defined by Zeithaml et al., (1990) as the discrepancy between customer expectations and their perceptions. This is the fundamental construct of SERVQUAL instrument which is based on Expectancy- Disconfirmation Paradigm (EDP) (Oliver 1977; 1980). To develop the instrument, a research was conducted as an exploratory customer study though focus groups for four service sectors-retail banking, credit cards, securities brokerage, and product repair and maintenance. It was identified ten service dimensions were prevalent in sifting the information received from the focus group-tangibles, reliability responsiveness, competence, courtesy, credibility, security, access, communication and understanding customer. Citing the considerable correlations among some items identified through statistical analysis conducted by authors, it was later reduced to five dimensions (figure 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Ten Dimensions for Evaluating Service Quality</th>
<th>Tangible</th>
<th>Reliability</th>
<th>Responsiveness</th>
<th>Assurance</th>
<th>Empathy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tangibles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
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<td>Responsiveness</td>
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<td>Competence</td>
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<td>Courtesy</td>
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<td>Credibility</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Security
Access
Communication
Understanding the customers

Figure 2: Corresponding between SERVQUAL Dimensions and Original Ten Dimensions for evaluating Service Quality. Source: Zeithaml et al., (1990) p. 25

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIMENSIONS</th>
<th>DEFINITIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assurance</td>
<td>Knowledge and courtesy of employee and their ability to convey trust and confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangibles</td>
<td>Appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Caring, individualised attention the firm provides its customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>Willing to help customers and provide prompt service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: RATER Dimension definitions. Source: Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry (1990) p. 26

SERVQUAL is a quantitative survey instrument to identify gap between expectation and perception, where higher mean number informs a wider gap and lower mean identifies the otherwise. It uses 22 statements of expectations and perception to assess the service quality through the five dimensions—Reliability, Assurance, Tangibility, Empathy and Responsiveness (RATER).

According to Zeithaml et al (1990), SERVQUAL can be applied for comparing customer's expectations and perception over time, comparing competition scores, examining customer segments with different quality perception and assessing perception of internal customers.

**2.5.2 CRITICS ON SERVQUAL**

Measuring service quality objectively is criticized by authors like Karatepe, et al., (2005) for its abstraction and elusiveness. Yong, (2000) points out the disconfirmation paradigm that the SERVQUAL is based on, does not clarify service quality as sometime it does not involve customer experience and consumption. This is truer for hospitality industry due to heterogeneous nature and
high dependence of human performance (Kandampully et al., 2001). Its characteristics like inseparability from production and consumption leads to complexity to measure accurately.

Carman (1990) who conducted SERVQUAL on health care, education and retail service, critiqued the validity of analysing the discrepancy between expectation and perception and proposed the need for refinement of scales for its non-generic nature. The ‘expectation validly’ was further critiqued more strongly by Cronin and Taylor (1992, 1994) and raised the question of its relevance to the service quality. They developed SERVPERF using RATER dimensions, but only use service perception aspect for which they argued was most responsible for service quality variance. In the exploratory study conducted by Teas (1993) have also raised question on validly of expectation as customer’s may not identify the meaning correctly, posing inconsistency in discriminatory context of coding. As these research was conducted in America, the uni-cultural aspect could be the reason for the expectation variance to be constant (Armstrong et al., 1997) but as individuals are unique with influence of inter subculture, it can be assumed that expectation level may not always deem to be constant. Babakus and Boiler (1992) objected the uni-dimentional aspect of the survey instrument where the negatively worded questions affect the results but this was further reviewed and corrected by Paramasuran et al., (1994). In more recent term, Ladhari (2009) who reviewed twenty years of SERVQUAL research identified the following as the main critique of the instrument: use of different score, discriminant and convergent validity, emphasis on process that outcome, the applicability for online environment and in different cultural context.

Given to the imperfection of the instrument, it has yet proved one of the most prominent tool used in analysing customer perception and proven reliable and a valid instrument (Fisk et al., 1993 cited in Kandapully, 2002) and regarded as the “The leading protagonist in the area of service measurement studies’ (Douglas and Conner 2003, p. 167).

2.6 CULTURAL INFLUENCE ON CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS

The majority of service quality measurement techniques are based on confirmation-disconfirmation paradigm, seeking to establish the difference between customer’s purchase expectations and perceptions of service performance. This expectation is therefore used as the basis of for the customer satisfaction (kandampully, 2002). There are many factors that influence
the expectations such as word-of-mouth communication, past experience, external communication (Paramasuraman et al., 1990). Further factors were added by Zeithaml and Bitner (1996) as explicit and implicit service promise, personal needs, enduring service intensifiers, perceived service alternatives, situational factors, and transitory service intensifiers; and image by Morgan, (1996). Destination image specifically plays a very prominent factor for the tourism destinations as stressed in the relevant literature. Even though, culture is not included in these factors, it is an influencing aspect in decision making of customer purchase process and therefore important to understand how it is related to the consumption of hospitality goods and service (Williams, 2002).

In the marketing research, consumer behavior variation of different cultural groups is explained through values (Armstrong et al., 1997). Luk et al., (1993) further elaborated, through his literature review research, that there are 3 streams: Consumer attitude and values; relationship between consumption pattern and values and; impact of values on product brand preferences. As values are formed through culture, it is eminent that cultural factors play an important role in influencing consumers’ evaluations of service (Stauss and Mang, 1999). It has been argued that such understandings of place are largely socially constructed (Henderson & Frelke, 2000; Stokowski, 2002; Williams, 2002). According to Stauss and Mang (1999) these expectation are mainly differentiated through three different stages: the desired, adequate and predictive service.

**2.6.1 CROSS CULTURAL DIFFERENCES ON SERVICE QUALITY EXPECTATION**

Hofstede’s (2001, 2004) cultural dimension model is the main reference in regard to the cultural variations (Hsieh and Tsai, 2009), and in service quality literature, his dimensions are used to classify the differences as used by many academics like Furrer et al. (2000), who constructed Cultural Service Quality Index (CSQI) based on it. The dimensions of Hofstede’s are: Power Distance Index (PDI) - expecting and accepting of unequal distribution of power; Individualism versus Collectivism (IDV) – self-image as ‘I’ or ‘We’; Masculinity versus Femininity (MAS)-preference for masculine features like achievement, assertiveness, reward for success against feminine feature like cooperation and quality of life. Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI) – rigid codes of belief against more relaxed attitude; Long Term Orientation versus Short Term Normative Orientation (LTO) - more time honored, respect tradition against more pragmatic society; Indulgence versus Restraint (IND) free gratification against more suppressed and regulated norm.
To simplify European and Asia is not as convenient as these factors vary according to nationalities. But upon generalizing it with a mean score from the affiliated http://geert-hofstede.com, it could be identified that Europeans have low PDI, high IDV, high MAS, low UAI with LTO and high IND as compared to Asians.

There is very little research on relational quality on service provision and the impact of culture on service perceptions (Tsang and Ap, 2007). However, there are empirical studies carried out that establish the impact of culture on expectation of the customer (Luk et al., 1993; Armstrong et al., 1997). In the study of Armstrong et al., (1997), it was found out that there were sufficient differences between English heritage, European and Asian groups. Asia-Pacific region have significantly higher expectations of service quality compared to tourists from Europe and America (Luk et al., 1993). This conclusion is validated by Hsu and Kangs (2003) study that explains same trend for Asians higher expectation of service quality than western consumers. This could possibly be because of their importance to the value received from service as emphasized by Choi and Chu (2000) where they explain Asians tie their satisfaction to the value while Western guest satisfaction is mainly influenced by room quality factors. It is also proposed that power distance may influence customer perceptions of quality (Tsang and Ap, 2007). Asian consumers have more intention of praising if met with superior service but tend not to complain with inferior quality service and involve in more negative word of mouth communication (Liu et al. (2001). This could be subjected to their lower individualism or higher uncertainty avoidance as explained in the research.

However, to determine through the multidimensional aspect that service tourism manifest, it is even more challenging to define what the superior quality means to different cultures (Knight, 1999). It can be assumed with customers from different cultural backgrounds may have different expectations toward service encounters mainly differentiated through three different expectation stages: the desired, adequate and predictive service (Stauss and Mang, 1999), and thus, they may perceive the situations differently. But it should also be noted that there are not adequate research on perception of service quality in this regard (Weiermair, 2000).

2.7 SERVICE QUALITY ENABLERS

Employees play a critical function in understanding, filtering, and interpreting information and resources to and from the organization and its external constituencies (Tsang and Ap, 2007).
Sundaram and Webster (2000) stated that ‘employees’ display of affective characteristics, such as friendliness, responsiveness, and enthusiasm; positively influences customers’ overall evaluation of service consumption experiences and perceptions of service quality” (p. 378). This is true when one of the main characteristic of service being inseparability, employee are the direct face of organisation (Kandapully, 2002) especially in high interactive tourism service. In this sector, the interactions with the guests are expected to progress into relationships and employees are responsible not only to their behavior towards guests but the responses by guests to them (Crick, 2000). In the empirical studies, intangible factors like Responsiveness to be high priority (Coyle and Dale (1993) in customer perception compared to tangible factors, highlighting the importance of customer contact employees.

The importance of the role played by the customer contact employee is emphasized in Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and Customer Experience Management (CEM). In the latter model it goes more into detail with structuring the customer interface and engaging in continuous innovation (Schmitt, 2010). Concepts like ‘Service Encounter Theater’ are very pragmatic in using employees as actor to create favorable impression and also, ‘Emotional Labor’ for managing the service encounters (Maudie and Pirrie, 2006). However, Management’s role is nonetheless imperative as they are the policy makers and plays integral part in the service marketing. This is illustrated by Zithmal and Bitner (2003), ‘service triangle’ where, management is counted among customer and employees.

According to a study carried out by Cook (1991), found similarities of a group of hotels which she classified as service leaders- the highest rated by both customers and employees were the importance given to staffs who deliver the service and those supporting (Management) them. Communication, empowering, soliciting feedback, teamwork, staff competence, commitment by management proved to be the resonating attributes and there are many examples likewise and theories in the management literature supporting the importance of employee and management relationship in the superior performance of the organisation like in Six principles of service management by Grönroos (1990b.)

Kandampully, (2002) states employees are most valuable mean of gathering customer information and are in better position to evaluate customer's experience and, if this ‘moment of truth’ is not
managed well, it will invariably loss of customer confidence. Customer contact employee’s feedback on the service delivered is also a way to evaluate customer satisfaction (DeMoranville et al, 2008). They are the ‘listening posts’ (Hesket, et al., 1997) of the organisation. However, if this message is not properly communicated to the management, will be lost unused, highlighting the significance of good quality management philosophy running through the whole fabric of the organisation.

2.7.1 KNOWLEDGE GAP: CUSTOMER EXPECTATION.

Service quality management starts from the point of customer expectation and what holds value in their perspective. It is the first stage of service quality delivery as emphasized in Parasuramna et al., Gap analysis model and other refined versions of this model (Zeithmal and Bitner 1996; Lovelock et al, 2012). The three main factors contributing for the gap of not understanding the customer expectation are lack of marketing research orientation, inadequate upward communication and too many level of management (Zeithaml et al., 1990). Lack of marketing research orientation is further explained through the insufficient marketing research, inadequate use of research findings and lack of interaction between management and customers. However, this position by Zeithaml and Bitner(1996) further reviewed on the basis of more stronger position on service management concept and produced the reason for the gaps are- lack of marketing segmentation, focus on transactions rather than relationships and focus on new customer rather than existing customers. The latter two address on customer relationship management (CRM) and focus on long term relationship (Grönroos, 1994). However, it could be argued the practicality of CRM on its philosophy on existing customer focus than new customers, for hotels that are not internationally established and where there is high cost for customer to get repeated purchases, as it is seen as high risk product (Lewis & Chambers, 2000). And also the inclinations of tourism travel becoming more distributed in destination with major markets like China (IHG, 2014) and trends like trying new destinations (ABTA, 2015), affect the efficacy of such concept. However, it cannot be ignored the importance of its contribution not only through retentions but the positives on image and word of mouth marketing. Lovelocks and Wirtz (2012) addresses the first gap as knowledge gap and is aligned with Zeithaml el al., (1990) where it emphasizes on: sharpening market research; effective customer feedback system; increase interaction between managers and customers and; communication between frontline employees and management.
One thing common in both the gap factors is market research, which is evident to take place at least in today's market oriented service management. There, it focus on the total utility to customers compared to technical or product quality in the scientific management (Grönroos, 1994). Lickorish (1997) identified four different categories of tourism research: measurement of demand; market analysis, segmentation and motivation; product studies and performance. Even though operational deficiency is not included in the latter version, the role of employees and management is crucial as emphasised in the concepts like TQM, in carrying out all the activities of service delivery. The influence of structure is related to how the communication is carried out as expressed in the organisation theory and the power of empowerment in service industry (Bitner, Booms and Mohr, 1994).

Communication plays a major role in understanding the service quality of the organisation and as (Mazzei, 2010) has explained it is the means of making sense to what organizational actions are through the process of interaction and interpretation, these communication settings should be understood to properly assess the gap between the perceptions. It is emphasized how culture impacts on the communication by many academics such as Akgün et al., (2007) who explains that three stages of receiving, storing and interpreting information are influenced by the norms of the organisation.

### 2.8 DEVELOPMENT OF A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

To develop a conceptual framework for the assessment of the alignment between customer, employee and management's perception of service quality through SERVQUAL model dimensions, the dimensions itself were the core elements used by Parasuraman, et al., (1990) This is linked to gap 1 of the Gap analysis proposed by them which arise between customer expectations and management perception of customer expectation (figure 3). It consists, marketing research orientation, upward communication and levels of management.

As quality emanates from service commitment beginning with the policies and procedures established (Kandampully et al., 2001); this aspect is explored through formal or informal communications, from management to employees. Hence, communication from both perspectives validates the gap formed, taking this into account in the conceptual framework. Market segmentation as used in Zeithaml and Bitner (1996) gap preposition is cross-linked to cultural
aspect as it has been demonstrated in the empirical studies that expectation varies according to the cultural background of the guests.

![Diagram of Key Contributing Factors]

Figure 3: Key factors contributing to Gap 1.


Level of management, otherwise referred structure (Maudie and Pirrie, 2006), plays a major role in conveying the data from all the sides and is instrumental in implementing crucial elements of committed service quality-empowerment, leadership (Kandapully et al 2001), soliciting feedback, teamwork (Cook, 1991) and culture. It is emphasized how culture impacts on the communication by many academics such as Akgün et al., (2007). Levels of structures also affect how information is filtered, which influence the kind of information provided and how it is interpreted (Christensen, 2002).

The conceptual framework (fig 4) is constructed to give a view on the dimensions used to evaluate the perceptions (Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Tangibility and Empathy) to determine the satisfaction qualities for customers; to demonstrate perceptions gaps between customers,
employee and management and; to establish the gap between customer expectation and employee/management’s perception of this expectation through different cultural context.

Figure 4: Conceptual framework: Evaluation of perception and expectation gaps of service quality

**Conclusion:**
The theoretical data construed the conceptual framework and highlights the areas under investigation. In the following chapter, section 3.4. will incorporate the objectives into the framework to illustrate the research design.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Methodology refers to the overall approach to the research process from the theoretical underpinning to the collection and analysis of the data (Collis et al, 2003). This chapter therefore, briefly account all the stages of the methodology expressed in the Saunders (2012) Onion framework, ending with ethical issues addressed in due course.

3.1 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

Understanding research philosophy can help to clarify the research design, the feasibility of it and can identify, create or adapt it to specifically meet the constraints of the research area (Easterby-Smith et al, 2004). There are four main philosophical positions: If you consider the world is objective and external to the researcher it is positivism; or socially constructed and only understood by examining the perceptions of the human actors, it is Interpretivism (Collis et al, 2003); or a third realism where the truth vary from place to place and time to time (Collins, 1983); and finally pragmatism that evaluates knowledge about the world in the form of action it takes (Watson, 2010).

Positivism supports the use of scientific methods to study social reality in an objective manner which assumes its meanings to be independent of the social actors (Bryman, 2001) and knowledge can only be of any value if based on observed facts (Easterby-Smith et al., 2004). The critics describe it as reductionist of its objectivist forms of research and knowledge.

Interpretivism view, ‘Reality’ is determined by people rather than by external factors (Easterby-Smith et al, 2004) and knowledge must have been constructed by people through their constant social interactions (Burr 2003). It also identifies the human activity by focusing on the meaning, rather than the measurement of social phenomena but shows low reliability as it differs when applied to different social context, and therefore generalisation is subjected from one setting to other (Collis et al, 2003).

Realism is an approach of the development of knowledge which is independent of mind (Saunders et al., 2012). It has two views, direct realism and critical realism. Saunders el at., (2012) argues its similarity to positivism but in the critical realism, the methodological aspects have strong commonality with social constructionism even there is little resemblance to
empiricism (Olsen, 2013) - knowledge primarily coming from sensory experiences (Psillos et al., 2010). Skeptic’s questions, realism’s approach of independence from the world to our knowledge to how it can separate from the researchers knowledge given the social world being socially constructed with high significance of concept independence (Sayer, 2012).

Then comes pragmatism, the mid-point of the two extreme of positivism and interpretivism where you accept it is set of continua given to the multidimensional philosophical point it hold (Saunders et al., 2012). It is a theory of meaning (Talissee and Aikins, 2008), and evaluates knowledge about the world of its power to inform action (Watson, 2010). The action therefore addresses in great flexibility and less restrictive than if it is compared to empiricism or positivism, where it deals solely on experience and verification of the data (Malachowski, 2004).

3.1.2 PHILOSOPHICAL POSITION

The purpose of this research is to carry out a comparative analysis on customer perception of service quality through SERVQUAL dimensions between customer, employee and management. Within this study, it would also highlight if there is any variances in these dimensions in a cultural context of the customers and how the perception of service quality is constructed in the minds of employee and management.

The first two objectives finds out the congruence between the three stakeholders-customer, employee and management of their perception of service quality and also with the light of cultural difference. Customer perception, a derivative of satisfaction is a very relative term where it may not mean same thing to everyone (Oliver, 1997). This concept becomes even more complex as multi-faceted phenomena, tourism and hospitality service as it is (Reisinger, 2001). Even though there is high relational aspect in this regard, it cannot ignore the fact employee and management derives their perception through the service design which is part of the service quality management by the organisation and communicated through training and job specifications. There are also established standards in the tourism industry like Hotel-Stars, where it recognizes the facilities and amenities subjected to the standards the hotel conforms to. These are ‘observable social reality’ that entails the positivistic quality in determining service quality which customer can compare against. Final objective deals with ‘how’ the perception gap is formed with employee and management side. This relates to elements like structure, communication and research activities, which is partly conducted within the norms of organisation that can be identified either explicitly or implicit through regulations and policy.
But it requires, understanding human behavior from the participant's own frame of reference and seeking to investigate reality has an effect on that reality (Collis et al, 2003), reflects interpretivism in the objective.

Therefore, as this underpins two ends of epistemology, in each of these objectives, justifies the suitability of using pragmatism approach which combines facts that can be generalized and are value free with the factors of human construction. Given the mixed methods using both qualitative and quantitative data, it could further confirm on using of pragmatism (Saunders, et al., 2012).

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH ADOPTED

The design of research problem arises from induction and deduction (Saunders et al, 2012). Deductive approach emerges from a set of premises to reach the definitive conclusions (Sternberg, 2009). It can be referred to top down logic. In inductive approach, 'theory is developed from the observation of empirical reality; thus general inferences are induced from particular instances, which is the reverse of the deductive method' (Collis, and Hussey 2003, p.15). The third approach which Suddaby, (2006) explains it is an approach that moves to and fro from induction and deduction and combining the two approaches.

With the mixed methods used in this study, that are flexible in using either deductive or inductive approach or a combination of both (Saunders et al, 2012); given the time limitation, theoretical framework was built to construct a structured method of data collection and was implemented once, concluding more reference to deductive reasoning. Hence, pragmatism being the philosophical position, with the mixed method used, deduction was the approach adopted.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN, METHOD AND DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

Research design is about exploring things systematically to make useful contribution to the knowledge (Rugg and Petre, 2007) on the subject. According to Kumar (2005) the main two functions are identifying or developing procedures to undertake a study and emphasizing the quality of these procedures to ensure validity, objectivity and accuracy.

The first methodological choice is deciding to use mono-method- either quantitative or qualitative; or multiple methods, using both (Saunders et al., 2012). Quantitative research is
normally related to a positivist approach and is emphasized by quantification in the collection and analysis of data (Bryman, 2001) while qualitative methods are designed to help researchers understand the meanings people assign to social phenomena and to elucidate the mental processes underlying behaviors (Crabtree and Miller, 1999).

Having established the philosophical approach as pragmatism both qualitative and quantitative methods are used (Saunders et al, 2012). There are strong suggestions even with critical arguments of otherwise in the academic field of combining both qualitative and quantitative methods (Easterby-Smith et al 2004; Bryman 2001), leading to methodological triangulation (Rossman and Wilson, 1991) and confirming mutual support for the same conclusions (Kelle and Erzberger, 2004). This provides rich, fresh and holistic perspective of the investigation with high validity and decreases the discrepancies between the methods in assessing the objectives.

3.3.1 RESEARCH STRATEGY

Research Strategy is the approach or cause of action of how to carry out the methodologies which consist of many types, varying from Experimental Studies to Action Research chosen as appropriate to the philosophy adopted. As Pragmatism being the philosophical position adopted in this research, case study proves ideal in seeking different kind of evidence which is there to be abstracted and collated to get the best possible answers.

Yin (2009) explains that a case study are more explanatory in nature where it answers 'how' and 'why' questions, establishing operational links of what has happened over time and not only its frequencies. This encapsulate all the research objectives of this study from identifying the perception determinants and how the parity arises, justifying the suitability in this context. He further adds, case study is used in preference of examining contemporary events and the variety of evidence that can be used as undertaken in this research through documents, questionnaires and interviews. Through the array of investigative methods, ‘it provides and intensive analysis of many specific details often overlooked by other methods’ (Kumar, 2005).

There are other complimentary strategies that serve the objectives even more detail like Participative Enquiry or with a field experiment with its realistic setting favoring the depth of the information. The drawback is not having the control of the research (Rugg and Petre, 2007) as it could be compromised with the interventions of conscious and subconscious effort of
management and employees that serves their interest. This denies the validly of the research especially when the researcher being an outsider who is not armed with adequate knowledge in the settings of environment. Even though, bias is positive aspect gained, it raise a question of what can be the real ‘truth’ opposed to what is shown. Case study therefore, proves to be best suited for its depth in understanding the ‘underlying reasons of people’s feeling, perception, experience and process behind the outcomes’ (Gillham, 2000 p.7).

3.3.2 DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

Saunders et al., (2003) identify secondary data as information gathered or created in the past for some other purpose. This can be a convenient, economical, time efficient, stable, unobtrusive exact but is subjected to weakness like access deliberately being withheld, biased selectivity, bias reporting (Yin, 2009), inappropriateness of the data, altered information to protect own interest and lack of control over the quality.

Questionnaire are very absolute measurement technique (Davies and Hughes, 2014) that have advantages of low cost; avoidance of interviewer bias; ability to reach out to wider audience (Oppenheim, 2003); greater anonymity (Kumar, 2005), useful for opinions and feedback (Rugg and Petre, 2007). Disadvantages comprise of: low response rate; consequent biases, unsuitable for respondents with poor literacy, no opportunity correct misunderstandings, no control over the order of questions answered, unable to check for completeness, not able to assess on observation (Oppenheim, 2003).

Semi-structured interviews are one of the most important sources of case study due to its relation to human affairs and behavioral events (Yin, 2005) along with the attitude and opinions. Its advantages comprise of wider application, appropriateness of in complex situations, useful of collecting in-depth information, ability to supplement information (Kumar, 2005); spontaneity, improved response rate and quality of response (Oppenheim, 2003). As for disadvantages, it is expensive and time consuming; quality of interaction depends on the interviewer, bias by the researcher in framing and interpretation of data (Kumar, 2005). For Skype interviews specifically, the technical disruptions is one leading factor that is difficult to predict and if happens, does effect the mood and flow of the interview. Focus group and observation deems very relevant to this study but due to the logistical impediment the referred data collection tools are adopted.
3.4 THE OVERALL PROPOSED DESIGN

The research design comprises the sources you intend to collect data and how you propose to collect and analyse data (Saunders et al., 2012). The methods used to analyse the objectives of this research are secondary analysis, self-completion questionnaires and semi-structured interviews carried out sequentially. The time horizon for the study was cross sectional – ‘studying a particular phenomenon at a particular time’ (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 190), as it requires finding the current status of the service quality in the perspectives the three stakeholders. The relationship between the objectives and the methods used are depicted in the following conceptual framework (figure 5) as demonstrated in the section 2.8.

Figure 5: Readdressing Conceptual framework with research objectives
3.4.1 SECONDARY DATA

A) Structure

To find out customer perception of service quality, staff guest survey carried out by the resort during November 2014 and March 2015 to June 2015 was used. It is an automated programme called guestfolio (Appendix 3) which sends out invitations to participate in the survey to guests after three days of their departure from the resort. Survey data from December 2014 to February 2015 was missing from the resort’s system, and thus was not used in this study. The survey is not specifically designed to investigate on SERVQUAL dimensions but the commentary by guests of each section of resort facility provided substantial information on their perception of service quality. Particularity, it can be assumed for it to be more fitting for cultural difference analysis as the questions have features of critical incident technique (Stauss and Mang, 1999), identifying the most memorable and least desirable experience.

B) Analysis

The commentary of guests was coded through thematic analysis as it is appropriate to map out what is known and theorized. Through this interpretation, it allowed to identify the presence, absence or the frequency of the identified themes (Greene, 2007), as in this case to RATER dimensions and its associated variables. These variables as informed in the SERVQUAL instrument are mapped out to the RATER dimensions to identify the important service qualities for the customers and to identify the differences recurred between European and Asian guests. The coding frame with the associated variables is furnished in the Appendix 4.

C) Sample Size

Sample type is construed to be self-selection as guests have the choice of participating and declining the request from the resort in the guest survey. Total of 4846 guest arrived between the periods of survey report taken. It consists, 64% of European, 31% of Asian out of which Chinese are 25 % and 5% of other countries mostly from Middle East. The sample is size is 53 (1.09%) with 38 Europeans and 12 Asian with an inclusion of 3 other nationalities.
3.4.2 SELF-COMPLETION QUESTIONNAIRE (SCQ)

A) Structure

A self-completion questionnaire (Appendix 5) was constructed in to two sections, to investigate the employee’s perception towards service quality (section 1) and; analyse their role in the gap 1 of the gap model (Zeithaml et al., 1990; Lovelock et al., 2012) in delivering service quality as described in the conceptual framework. This identifies how employees facilitate customer feedback to the management and how they are supported within the system (section 2).

Section one consist of statements on service delivery that have factors of RATER dimensions as used by the SERVQUAL instrument (Zeithaml et al., 1990). Some statements are adjusted to focus on the relevant type of service delivery the resort and tourism sector provides, to make it more applicable for employees to answer. Each question is comprised of five statements relating to RATER dimensions using different factors to increase the validity (Silverman, 2011) as used in the SERVQUAL. Particular emphasis was placed on the presentation to encourage and help respondents to complete a questionnaire correctly and to make the subsequent analysis of the data much easier and increase the quality of response rate (Collis et al., 2003). Hence, it was asked from the respondents to rank statements in the order they feel is important to customers in 1 to 5 scale. It was argued by Oppenheim (2003) that ranking is a revealing way to assess the respondents rather than the objects being evaluated which complements on how the gap is formed in the section two. Similar design was adopted for the question on culture for European and Asian guests.

Section two implemented attitudinal measure scales with three directional Category likert scale, from negative, neutral to positive determinants according to the phrasing used in the question. This helps to combine attitudes to provide an indicator that is reflective of overall attitude (Kumar, 2005) on the issue. A comment section was also provided to get richer source of information (Welman et al., 2005) on employee’s perspective as it inquires on 'how' the gap arises.

B) Analysis

SPSS v20 and Excel spreadsheet was used to analyse the close ended ranking and categorical scale questions. To analyse the open ended questions, themes were identified from the texts which is the most fundamental task of qualitative research (Welman et al., 2005). Due to the
A number of contents analyzed within the limited time, pawning technique was used to identify the themes through ‘ocular scan method’ and highlight key phrases with different colored text (Welman et al., 2007). This was combined with Repetition and Key Words in Context (KWIC) technique for RATER dimension questions. After identifying the broader themes, the following three steps were carried out: winnowing the themes into manageable few; structuring it to hierarchies and linking them to theoretical model (Ryan and Bernard, 2003).

The questionnaire was piloted with five employees from another five star resort to sustain higher representativeness of the sampling and to eradicate any error either in coding or comprehension of the questions. This not only helped in wording of questions but ordering and formatting of the questionnaire (Oppenheim, 2003).

C) Sample Size

The sample size is based on purposive sampling which is deliberate unit that may regard as the best representative of the relevant populations (Welman et al., 2005). Target population is the customer contact employees which accounts for 111 employees -30% of the total workforce. Since all the employees are accessible given the number being small and resort managements’ facilitation in the assessment, the questionnaire was sent to all. To uphold the anonymity, envelops were provided to enclose the questionnaire after completing. This was necessary as the site is isolated and due to logistical difficulties, author not being able to collect it personally. The collected package was sent to an independent third party for scanning and sending electronically to the author. The following table provides the details of the participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Total number of employees</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Food and Beverage</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Front Office</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 House Keeping</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Spa</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Unidentified</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>111</strong></td>
<td><strong>91</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Number of customer contact staffs working in the Resort

The return rate for the self-completion questionnaire is 91 (82%). On the basis illegibility and incompleteness, 9 questionnaires were rejected.
3.4.3 SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

A) Structure

In this research, conducting interviews with the management helped to validate information given by the employees and to achieve methodical triangulation. As management is the dominant factor in service quality design and service management system, in-depth information of their perspective on the matter is a crucial for this study. Therefore, semi structured interviews with open ended questions were used for the opportunity of getting more considered responses with better access of interviewees view, their interpretations of events understandings, experience and opinions (Silverman, 2011). Cautious efforts were made to the flow the conversation by introducing the themes and letting the information lead without interjecting to give room as much as possible for the interviewee to express their view. This helped in negating any protective or defensive attitude that may come naturally when they are being questioned about their work and their communication with the employees.

Management was already given an overview of topics to be discussed and how the interview was conducted through email. It was assured in the mail and also before starting the interview the confidentiality of the information provided and to confirm the accuracy of conversation by revisiting the topics briefly. Appendix 6 furnishes, the general questions used in the interview.

Interview was conducted in a video call method using Skype, which is equivalent to face to face interview (Davies and Hughes, 2014) and can be potentially superior as it can record the interview (Bertrand & Bourdeau, 2010). The interview schedule was arranged according to their proposed timing and took 80 minutes on average.

B) Analysis techniques

The analysis is comprised to two stages: transcription and coding. Transcribing is important for it can be analyzed and checked for accuracy (Welman et al., 2005). Validating the transcripts did not prove to be that important as the information used are in general form to protect the identification of the interviewees and inefficiency it may create to get confirmation for long transcription on time. However, verbal validation was approved at the end of the interview. Coding was carried out in two sections. The RATER related questions were evaluated through thematic analyses as carried out in the method 1 and the rest were coded by identifying the recurring themes through cutting and sorting technique and then organizing it through pattern
coding. Cutting and sorting technique involves separating the remarks deemed to be important in separate index cards and pattern coding makes connection with different sections of the text to create meaningful complete narrative (Welman et al, 2005) on the subject as explored for the third objective.

**C) Sample Size**

Interview was carried out on purposive sampling method, where focus was on operational departments that are in direct contact with the customers along with two top management members, to have holistic view as the objectives requires. They are: Resident Manager, Marketing Director, Front Office Manager, Head of Departments of Housekeeping, Food and Beverage, Spa and Assistant Manager of Food and Beverage who have average 2 years of experience in the Resort and 10 to 30 years of experience in the related field.

**3.5 RESEARCH ETHICS**

Careful consideration was taken in the design and conduct of this study. Code of ethics and guidelines of the University of Bolton based the guided principles following the approval of required consent. As established before, the resort’s main criteria of access were to uphold the anonymity which is carefully addressed in the write up and using the documentations as provided. An invitation letter (Appendix 7) was forwarded to the resort with an outline of the research area, the strategic significance of its application with the methods used to collect data and how it would be carried out. Prior to this, informal consent was received to identify the accessibility of the information required and no objection letter was obtained to formalize the research (Appendix 8). The questionnaires provided a statement of participant’s information and completing the form proved the consensus from the employees. As for managers, direct correspondences, through email with further information of the specific area of inquiry was informed. The confidentiality, anonymity and dignity of participants were respected and were followed throughout the survey and interviews, also in using their quotations in the report.
Conclusion: This chapter highlighted the methodology, by critically analysing the literature review and justifying the research design adopted. In the Appendix 9, Cross Mapping Matrix is furnished to show the methodical triangulation in this research. The next chapter will discuss the findings through the structure of the methods used in 3.4.
CHAPTER 4. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter overviews the research findings and analysis structured around the three objectives (figure 6). Each stakeholder findings are brought separately, culminating at the end of each objective. Each quantitative section is followed by a qualitative account of the findings. Discussions will be accompanied with the analysis for easier navigation and comprehension of the results.

Fig 6: Flowchart- Structure of Chapter 4

4.1 OBJECTIVE 1: CONGRUENCE OF SQ PERCEPTION BETWEEN CUSTOMERS, EMPLOYEES AND MANAGEMENT

4.1.1 Customer

Guest survey referred in section 3.4.1 was used to understand the customer perceptions and their expectations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Australia</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Hong Kong</th>
<th>Italy</th>
<th>Luxembourg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Customers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationality share %</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Portugal</th>
<th>Singapore</th>
<th>Switzerland</th>
<th>Taiwan</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>UAE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Customers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationality share %</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Number of respondents from different countries
R: Reliability / A: Assurance / T: Tangible / E: Empathy / Re: Responsiveness

Figure 7: Cross Nationality comparison of RATER dimensions

Figure 8: Comparison of RATER dimensions among Customers
Tangibility (T) have both highest standard deviation (2.985) and variance ($s^2=8.910$) accounting more preference to this dimension by customers comparatively. Germany and UK contributed 63% which is about 54.7% of the sample population. Responsiveness (Re) has low variance due to low response received overall.

The comment sections emphasizes predominantly on unfavorable experiences. Among the most recurring, over third of the guests comment on the Tangible dimension especially for food quality improvement. Other aspects include, upgrading room standard and providing more activities. Key Assurance (A) qualities are courteousness and providing safety in the incidental issues. Reliability (R) variables are mostly associated to the tangible aspect where proper functionality of facilities and equipments were main themes.

### 4.1.2 Employee

The questions, A, B C and E of the self-completion questionnaire as informed in section 3.4.2 are used to address this part of the objective.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistics: Comparison of RATER dimensions among Customers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percentage of responses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard Deviation (SD)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Variance</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rank (Most prioritised)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Statistics-Comparison of RATER dimensions among Customers
For Employees, there is no significant difference between the RATER dimensions projecting low variance ($s^2=3.50$). It could be assumed this is due to the low discrimination to these qualities, ranking most of the statements at equal basis.

As for the definition of service quality, many have described it through Empathy (E) dimension, referring ‘going extra miles’ and ‘service from the heart’, following Reliability (R) outlining it as fulfilling ‘promise to our guest’, efficiency and timeliness. Conforming to standard of resort was one other aspect recurred in contrast to RATER, encapsulating both tangible and intangible qualities, and therefore reiterating the indifference to these dimensions.

### 4.1.3 Management

The same questions covered in the employee questionnaire (A/B/C) were requested to complete by Managers prior to the interview. This allowed structuring the interview better and exploring the themes further in the interview questions no. 1, 22 and 23 as mentioned in section 3.4.3.
Most of the dimension statements are ranked 1, comprising 65% of total response, showing less discrimination to dimensions as similar to employees. However, Assurance (A) qualities like having good knowledge, being courteous and problem solving are most highly scored, following Reliability (R) and Empathy (E) which recurs in the individual explanation of service quality definition. In comparison to Employees, Management has higher variance ($S^2=24.50$) given the low rating for Tangible (T) element.

All managers describe service quality as meeting or exceeding customer expectations and is the most important tenure in the service industry. Terms like ‘consistency’, ‘timeliness’ and ‘individual attention’ were used in the definition, which are factors of the dimension Reliability and Empathy.
4.1.4 Correlation of the RATER dimensions between the stakeholders

Comparison of RATER dimensions among Stakeholders

![Comparison of RATER dimensions among Stakeholders](image)

Scatter diagram for the correlation between Customer and Employee

![Scatter diagram for the correlation between Customer and Employee](image)

Figure 12: Correlation between Customer and Employee for RATER dimensions
Scatter diagram for the correlation between Customer and Employee

Figure 13: Correlation between Customer and Management for RATER dimensions

Scatter diagram for the correlation between Customer, Employee and Management

Figure 14: Correlation between Customer, Employee and Management for RATER dimensions
There is no significant correlation between Customers, Employees and Management. However, Management have positive correlation \((r=0.233)\), having more similarity to Customer perception in comparison to Employees that produced negative correlation \((r=-0.366)\) with complete opposite expectations. This identifies the gap formed for Assurance (A) and Reliability (R) dimension emphasizing more attention necessitating in the service delivery. Also, it could be assumed it is related to the indifference for the RATER dimensions by both Employees and Management, giving equal ratings in-discriminatory. Most prominent finding is the high variance between Tangibility (T), scoring highest by Customers but lowest from the Management side. Employees, who have ranked it third, share this sentiment with customers and often site it as one problem that management need to solicit. This is highlighted in the comments of how the gaps form as discussed in sections 4.3.

### 4.2 OBJECTIVE 2: CROSS CULTURAL DIFFERENCES OF SQ PERCEPTION BETWEEN CUSTOMERS, EMPLOYEES AND MANAGEMENT

#### 4.2.1 Customer

Guest survey referred in section 3.4.1 was used to understand the customer perceptions and their expectations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Number of customers</th>
<th>Share %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Number of respondents from Europe and Asia
Frequency and percentage distribution for RATER dimension for Europe and Asia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>R</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>Re</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Frequency and percentage distribution for RATER dimension for Europe and Asia

Figure 15: Frequency distribution for RATER dimension for Europe and Asia

Figure 16: Comparison (%) of RATER dimension for Europe and Asia
Statistics: Descriptive statistic for Europe and Asia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistics (based on %)</th>
<th>Europe</th>
<th>Asia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>144.0</td>
<td>165.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Descriptive statistic for Europe and Asia

Figure 17: Comparison (%) of RATER dimensions among European Customers

Figure 18: Comparison (%) of RATER dimensions among Asian Customers
There is high variance with in Europe ($S^2=144$) and Asia ($S^2=165$), citing the low response to Empathy (E) and Responsiveness (Re). Asia has higher variance as 35% of the response comprise of the Reliability(R) dimension. Tangibles (T) prove to be number one for Europe region. As for the congruence between the two regions, even with the differences mentioned above, there is high negative correlation for Pearson coefficient ($r=-0.794$). This shows similarity for high prioritization for dimension Tangibility, Reliability, Assurance and low for Empathy and responsiveness.

Europeans, mostly UK and German describe their perception in detail and often express through the first three dimensions. Asians in general conform to the standard provided by the resort but voice out for being less prioritized over European guests. This accounts for higher rating in

---

**Statistics of RATER dimensions for Europe and Asia**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>R</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>R</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>9.90</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>6.36</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>2.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>98.00</td>
<td>12.50</td>
<td>40.50</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>4.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: Statistics of RATER dimensions for Europe and Asia

---

**Scatter diagram of the Correlation between Europe and Asia (Region) to RATER**

![Scatter diagram of the Correlation between Europe and Asia (Region) to RATER](image)

Figure 19: Scatter diagram of the Correlation between Europe and Asia (Region) to RATER dimensions
Assurance (A). Management, however describes it is due to the less travelling experience of Asians comparatively for requiring more attention in this regard. The language barrier could be a contributory factor as more preferences could be communicated with the Europeans in English and thus giving an impression of special attention. Other than RATER dimensions, value was highlighted by few Asian guests, though it could not be as relevant as other dimensions given the expectation of high price for five star resort. However, In the findings it was argued that it is due to value importance for Asians making them have higher expectations than European travellers.

4.2.2. Employee

The questions, D and G of the self-completion questionnaire were used to address this part of the objective.

![Comparison (% of RATER dimensions between European and Asian Customers by Employees](image)

Figure 20: Comparison (%) of RATER dimensions between European and Asian Customers by Employees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>Re</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11: Ranking of RATER between European and Asian Customers by Employees
Most of the ranking was given in an indifferent manner following low variance for both Europe and Asia. However, Asia face higher variance with greater response to Reliability (R) and Interestingly low score to Assurance (A) which ranked second highest by Asian guests, showing the gap in the perception.

In the commentary, employees have described Europeans having more expectations for individual care, which is second least scored by the Europeans, possibly due to this high attention. Next to Empathy, Reliability and Tangible qualities were more stressed to be important for European guests, like delivering on time, providing more facilities and better standards in the hotel room. Europeans quality for demand is explained by one staff: 'European guest comes to Maldives as a repeat customer, so want the holidays to go perfect', addressing to high standards of the other resorts. This complements with the industry ananlysis where Europeans being the highest repeat customers comprising 31% (Maldives visitor Survey, 2015).

As for the Asian guests, the highlighting factor is the communication barrier. Many of the Asians accounting 81% Chinese nationality find it difficult to communicate in English. This is challenging for employees to identify their expectations. One staff reasons 'they have bit less expectation because they can't express themselves'.

**4.2.3. Management**

The question D of the self-completion questionnaire was requested to complete to be further explored in the interview questions 14, 15, 16, and 17.

### Statistic: Comparison between European and Asian Customers by Employees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistics (based on %)</th>
<th>Europe</th>
<th>Asia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>6.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12: Statistic - comparison between European and Asian Customers by Employees
There is less equal distribution of ranking Asia than Europe as depicted for scoring less in food quality and problem solving, referring to Tangible (T) and Assurance (A) dimensions. This could be associated to the particularities of majority of Chinese food consumption behavior as elaborated in the following and the language barrier mentioned in the section 4.2.1. However, the similarities overweight the differences, where Reliability for both is most prioritized.

The management describes cross cultural difference with various palate of opinion, culminating to a discerning difference between Europe and Asia while some extending this parity to the behavioral pattern. Here, they believe expectation of the service quality are same concerning to
the five star hotel service all the customers expect, but it is how the service are consumed reveal the differences-like European preferring meals in courses while Chinese at the same time. The reasons explained are, due to the experience level of European guest as more seasoned compared to majority of Asian guests. Apart from RATER dimensions, value for money is a theme more frequent in the Asian customers, being more cautious in how they spend which also complements some of the comments made by the employees and customers. This relates to the low indulgence rating of Asian countries explained in Hofstede cultural dimension as compared to European region.

4.2.4 Correlation of RATER dimensions between European and Asian Customers

![Comparison (%) of RATER dimensions between European Guests, Employees and Management](image)

Figure 22: Comparison of RATER dimensions with European Guest, Employees and Management
Comparison (%) of RATER dimensions between Asian Guests, Employees and Management

Figure 23: Correlation between Customer and Employee for RATER dimensions

Figure 24: Comparison of RATER dimensions with Asian Guests, Employees and Management
The results shown in the table 15, address high variance of European and Asian guests for RATER dimensions, and constructing weak correlation for two regions with coefficient of \( r = -0.360 \) and \( r = -0.394 \) for Employees and Management. For European guests this can be reasoned due to the low scoring of Responsiveness (Re) and high ranking for Tangibility (T) and Assurance (A) in contrast to employees and management. High Tangibility could be assigned to their
attention to detail, as one executive describe them ‘finicky’ and ‘more demanding’ by the employees. This also relays higher guest response for Guestfolio survey comprising over 70%. A contradiction was made by one associate highlighting that it is allied to how the Chinese culture showing reluctance to complain in the presence of host service. It could be assumed that there is correlation with the low scores of uncertainty avoidance (UA) by Asian countries in Hofstede cultural dimension as compared to European region. The explanation validates, when most of the Chinese share their unpleasant experiences to the travel agents after returning from the trip but not addressing during their stay. Another contrasting difference is Asians high score for Reliability (R) and Assurance that ranked low for both Employees and Management. This could be referenced to their less experience to Maldivian resorts, having less objectivity due to low exposure. These assumptions further could be related to the recent development of Chinese travelling freely from the imposed restrictions by their government- construing their high score for Assurance and Reliability. In addition, their travelling trend in groups for the security and could be associated to Hofstede dimension of collectivism.

4.3 KNOWLEDGE GAPS

4.3.1 Employee

A) Communication

About half of the employees agree the communication is good but 15% addresses this area is weak. Among those who have rated as good, emphasizes the need of improving the communication especially among the departments, for better link in cross sectional information flow. One staff has noted ‘it hinders departmental work with the miscommunications’. Within the department, information transmission is weak for front line staff and some feel that the required information is held back and there is no consistency in the communication. It was addressed that the briefing helps to inform the customer feedback but more on service quality standards and training and knowledge is required. As an example, one staff has suggested an area of training required is ‘how to deal with different types of guest’. Using English language in the briefing can be impediment for some of the lower level staff as they are not well understood. This was highlighted by few commenting ‘I never can understand what actually they are talking’ during these briefs. It was highlighted by some of the new staffs the importance of proper induction programme and noted in one comment ‘information is provided in the book but not clear to understand’.
B) Structure

The results of the structural ease for the employee communication are similar as above. Many staffs have informed the convenience of transmitting the information, prominent by certain sections, describing the management ‘welcoming’; ‘giving all the attention’ and ‘always close to us’ emphasizing the accessibility. There is no general trend of employee sharing the information with the top management. While few employees, identify they can only communicate to supervisory level, some have informed the accessibility to the top management like General Manager and Resident Manager. However, it was identified the flexibility of meeting the management for certain departments are easy while for other departments, it is not to the satisfactory level of employees. This sentiment is resonated by one staff as the communication accessibility ‘depends on the post and department’. One staff suggested, ‘at least once a month, management should meet the staff’, indicating a general meeting with entire management team.

C) Market Research

Little over half of the participants agree that management use their feedback even with irregularities. In the explanation, it is indicated on the spirit of acceptance like ‘being valued’ and ‘always taking it positive’. The positive aspect is reinforced as some department discusses the feedback in the briefing. Among the three areas, Market research has the most negative comments due to the invalidity of employees requests over time and action not been taken and when taken, it being slow. Hence, slight demotivated sentiments has been expressed like for example one staff has pointed out ‘I am not sure feedback will have any impact on the actual situation as many things can be improved but guests have been complaining and not much has been done’. Mainly these resentments arise from the majority of staff regarding the upgrading of the facilities and the environment of the resort.

4.3.2 Management

A) Communication

There are no written service quality standards and is ruled by Standard Operation Procedures (SOP) relayed in a booklet. Daily department meeting is instrumental to follow up on operational activities and issues discussed ‘openly with solution encouraged from the staffs to give ideas’ as
one manager highlights. With the recent joining of training manager, all the associates agree on the progress and improvement of the service by the front line staff. Some of the department selects the staffs that require certain training and are finalised by the heads of the department. The solicitation of the feedback is regarded as ‘very serious’ by the entire management and agrees that immediate matters that can be solved within the department are taken care effectively. But problems interrelated to external departments or top management may take considerable time to solve. Nonetheless, it was emphasized by one member that ‘right channel’ is not established to convey employees concern directing to more accommodating culture that need be harnessed for an open and free communication. Major issue recurred from all of the feedbacks of employees and as well as customers are standard of the villa and facilities provided, emphasizing sufficient communication is established from down to top but it is matter of not addressing it. This validates employee’s comments of not being properly solicited by the management. However, there is a slight disagreement between the management with one prominent issue that could not be informed here due the sensitivity. Top management sees it as a problem that need to be educated than taking corrective actions. This highlights the parity between the priorities and how it is comprehended with in the management- a gap in the system. There are also differences of how management feels the integration of communication with in departments as most agreeing there is effective communication with daily meeting conducted with all the operational heads.

It was notified in integration of more advanced technology in the effective communication as one associate pointed out ‘we could do much better’ in giving more quality service. A sentiment shared by most. Some have suggested in using programmes like FCS and TRITON but this information is not strategically discussed in a forum of service quality improvement.

B) Structure

The resort employs 343 staffs based in the island. There are 11 departments with 8 levels between the head of department and customer contact employees. It is a functional structure, with each department specializes on its field as used in the hospitality industry.

Within the departments, the structure is fairly flexible as agreed by all the management with an ‘open door’ policy as some state which majority of the employees agrees to. The interdepartmental meetings conducted on daily basis facilitates favorably to the communication as the issues raised with in the division level are conveyed in these meetings. It is agreed by
managers, some executive level managers are difficult to be approached by the front line staff, as described by an associate ‘untouchable’ and requires to be ‘more relational’ for better communication from all the levels of the staff.

The head of Department meetings are focused on operational activities of which some of the service quality assessment and issues are raised. In the monthly meetings with top management, service quality does not get addressed as structured issue that is discussed in an open forum to develop proactive measures.

The structure also facilitates the managers meeting the customers on the daily basis as a responsibility of the job and therefore, creates a culture of individual attention given by the resort and lead an example for the front line employees.

C) Market Research

This is a subject, where there is bifurcation between management’s thinking in what kind of information is helpful for their area of work. Some confident that current system providing substantial information while others comments are uncertain indicating more attention is required to find customer information through social media or finding the track of their past traveling record, to dig out their personal preferences for highly premium service. There are also views that enough data is collected but the ‘proper analysis’ is required to understand the trends and profiling guests as most appropriate.

The current market research includes Guestfolio, automated guest survey reported in the section 3.4.1, employee feedback and online travel sites like TripAdvisor. These feedbacks are discussed in the routine meetings and changes are brought as necessary. The stimulation of more participation of the guest in the survey is emphasized given the minimal response but, agrees on the quality information it provides to rectify some of the problems and underlines areas of focus.

The competition is monitored in the financial and operational aspect than targeting to the service quality standards. Occupancy and Average Room Rent are some of the key performance indicators (KPI)s used in this regard. These are syndicated information shared for mutual benefits in an industry where the information are very guarded and protected given the intense competition and no market research information circulated apart from the annual travel survey carried out by the Ministry of Tourism of Maldives. Most of the management believes, more
effort should be taken like ‘visiting other properties’ to understand the competition to perform better. However, some market intelligence is used through the network each has built in the industry.

It was also found out that there are plans for participation in integrated quality assessment, which is a consolidated online reputation management system and expected better management of market information.

Conclusion: This chapter analyse the congruence between the three stakeholders-Customer, Employee and Management on their perception of service quality. The gaps are highlighted and the major issues of objective three are addressed in a discussion to be concluded in the following chapter.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This Chapter will conclude all the major findings of the last chapter to formulate appropriate recommendation. Limitation to the design of the study and future research possibilities are furnished at the end.

5.1. Objective 1: Congruence of SQ Perception between Customers, Employees and Management

There is no significant correlation between the three stakeholders. However, Management is more line with the customer expectations but it could be assumed the high parity between the employees occurs as they don’t discriminate the dimensions with more even ranking. Nonetheless, attention for Assurance and Reliability should be addressed as there is considerable gap between the two that could be addressed in the training sessions for the staffs. Through the comments of the customers, it is also highlighted that Reliability dimension is associated mostly to the functionality of certain facilities, indicating the encompassing gap is caused by the Tangible dimension. It is also the highest rated dimension, where Employees addressing the importance of resolving the issues related to the dimension like upgrading of villas and facilities. The findings address, Management’s low priority for this dimension, and signify the importance of closing this gap for better congruence and higher satisfaction of customers.

5.2 Objective 2: CROSS CULTURAL DIFFERENCES OF SQ PERCEPTION BETWEEN CUSTOMERS, EMPLOYEES AND MANAGEMENT

There is strong congruence between European and Asian customers by having higher score for Tangibility, Reliability, and Assurance with low addressing of Empathy and Responsiveness. The ranking differences are overweighed by the similar strength of response to these dimensions. However, it is not aligned to Employees and Managements perception of their expectation. The variance occurs as Managers perceive Empathy is more necessary with its connotation to premium service and both the service providers’ low rating for Assurance dimension. European
guests’ expectation is assumed higher given their past experience in Maldivian resorts and identifies Tangibility gap in comparison to what they expect. European market being most experienced, they have high expectation as facilitated by the destination branding for Maldives. Asians also focus on Tangibility but indirectly through the Reliability dimension. Assurance deems to be most sensitive as identified from the qualitative analysis of the comment provided. The gap as identified in the analysis is caused by three factors. First, the communication barrier; second, lack of comprehension of their needs as they complain less and; third, employees perception of their expectation are low creating unintentional less priority as they ‘can be handled easily’ highlighted by one associate. This identifies their high Uncertainty Avoidance (UA) but should not be mistaken for their perception of service quality. It is also established Europeans have high indulgence (IND) and Asians low in this dimension following more address to the ‘value’ received and their cautious spending pattern. This could also indirectly give an impression to service providers, their low expectation of service quality.

5.3 OBJECTIVE 3: KNOWLEDGE GAPS

A) Communications

There is considerable gap in the comprehension of the quality of communication between employees and managers. Managers perceive the communications are well established in conveying the necessary information but about half of the employees emphasize more efforts are required in the improvement of this flow especially between the departments. This finding is contradictory with structure of the information flow which is well established and being carried out in the consistent basis. Therefore, it could be noted as highlighted by one of the manager that the right channel and culture is not embedded within the resort to freely communicate feedbacks and related issues. As the training manager is fairly new in the resort, it could be assumed that more time is required to get appreciation from the employees in realizing the effect of training programmes. As for the top management involvement, it is felt their importance to lead by example and allowing more accessibility to the frontline staff. Much of the discontent from the employees arises with the Tangible aspect and are disheartened by the corporate decision making not validating their concerns. As one executive point out ‘There is unbelievable potential in the resort....with the location .....and good substances of villa’ and therefore need appropriate attention for the development of the resort.
B) Structure

Structure shows a hierarchical but not too tall structure accommodating to the functional departments as required for the operational efficiently in the business. The structure is flexible with in the departmental level, having sufficient flow of information to the supervisory and head of department level. But there is gap between some of the top management and front line employees. This could be due to the low presence of the executives in the face of front line staff and culture for openness's is not adequately established to encourage approaching members high in authority even with a short structure. Effectiveness of communication does not only resort to simply the number of levels of the management but also their willingness ‘to listen and act upon where appropriate to employees concern’ (Maudie and Pirreier, 2006). Therefore, it could be concluded, the structure does not deem to be an obstacle for communication flow, but the intangible elements associated to structure like organizational climate and culture need to be fostered to work it effectively.

C) Market Research

Main source of Market information is by Guestfolio and from customers contact employees and social media. Middle management is also rigorously active in meeting the customers routinely. This information is used to model the operational activities but this valuable data is lost in the system without proper documentation and analysis to project future trends and synthesize innovative ways to serve the customer. Competition is not substantially monitored on the market behavior rather on financial figures and therefore, does not give enough liberty to strategically mold the actions to challenge and formulate better standards comparatively. However, the online research initiatives are promising using IQA will be able to understand customers better, as the electronic word of mouth being the most beneficial sources of information for the customers (Steffes and Burgee, 2009), that can influence their expectations and perceptions.

5.4 POSSIBLE RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

The data used for the customer perception is limited with the small number of respondents in the guest survey, compared to the tourist arrival during the period of study. Therefore, it is statistically insignificant and generalisation cannot be made. The proportion of data received
from different nationality shows considerable parity where Asians serve only 24%, construing irregular sample of Europe and Asia to be compared. Guest Survey, being secondary data, was not structured to gather their perceptions and expectations that restricted to understand and explore this subject directly. However, it does give some basis to understand the priority set by the customer perception of service quality and their dissatisfaction.

Using English language for the employee questionnaire, has challenged to explore employees perception with articulating in English as well as comprehension for some staffs, even with much effort of making it is as simple as possible in the use of language. But as it is the common language used to communicate with diverse nationality of the resort staff, English proved to be most ideal. It was recommended to the staffs to use Dhivehi-Maldivian mother-tongue, in answering the questions to answer conveniently but only few resorted to the advice.

The limitations of the method are minimized by providing an example at the beginning to make it clearer and using simple wordings as English is not the first language for many respondents. However, it is used to provide consistency and not to offend employees by undermining their knowledge in English. To increase the response rate (Oppenheim, 2003) and to avoid less bias of the information received, names of the employee was not asked, only; department, experience in the industry and Nationality due to the high percentage of foreign employees. As some sensitive questions were asked, it is assumed that employees will try to hold confidentiality in completing the forms without sharing their opinion to others. Also, the number of questions asked was limited to 9, to make it simple and easy to answer by not overwhelming the employees.
5.5. RECOMMENDATION

Preparation of a strategic action plan to address the issues related to Tangible dimension that is communicated well by all the levels of employees to solicit their feedback and give assurance for all the participants to compete with confidence in the market.

Introducing service mapping and blueprinting techniques to encourage better communication with the employees by using graphical methods to identify the service process and how it interrelates other departments. Miscommunication can be well handled with the explicit addressing of the points that other section are responsible for and can be particularly helpful to new recruits for easier integration into the system. This can also be introduced in the training session for scenario building to facilitate for dimensions like Assurance in incidental planning measures or how to deal with different nationalities.

Creating quality circles to address the service quality element in a strategic manner to constantly monitor it and be proactive in identifying key issues, before it is due and take appropriate action timely. Particular attention should be taken to use all level of staff to harness a culture on the importance of service quality and to innovate ways to efficient service design.

To use data mining techniques to profile the customers better. Not limited to guest motivation or nationality but also detail information on their preferences and expectations. Cultural variances among customers and their sub-categorization will give meaningful information to frontline staff to serve the respective customer as appropriately. Comprehensive data analysis will also leads to identify any prevailing trend, to design the service as demanded and also to be proactive to forecast the possible future trends to efficiently serve the customer. This information need to be easily accessible through a database where information can be contributed and at the same time used by the frontline employees. Experience Management (CEM) programme can be incorporated by binding with the market research. This can be complemented by introducing relevant Key Performance Indicators (KPI)s for service quality and administer it with adequate reward system. It will also give a quantitative guideline to measure the changes and gives better comprehension of strength and weakness to be further reevaluated.
5.6. FUTURE RESEARCH

More comprehensive customer perception survey on industrial scale is required to identify the variability in the different star categories of the resort hotels. This can highlight the correlation between the destination branding, International hotel and local resort.

Developing Hofstede cultural dimension in relation to the perception and expectations of different nationality guests can be helpful in the market segmentation and to identify the association of the current developments as constantly changed by the convergence of consumer behavior.

.............................
REFERENCE


Lindqvist, L.J. (1988), 'The quality perception of customers in the consumption phase', Swedish School of Economics and Business Administration, Helsingfors, Finland.


Appendix 1

### GANTT CHART - DISSERTATION 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>TASK</th>
<th>July</th>
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<th>September</th>
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<td>15th - 21st</td>
<td>22nd - 28th</td>
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Appendix 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researchers</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Country/Segment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Otto and Ritchie (1996)</td>
<td>Hedonics, peace of mind, involvement and recognition.</td>
<td>Canada hotels, airlines, and tours and attractions in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Ap and Lee (1996)</td>
<td>employee-customer interaction, tangibles/assurance and time</td>
<td>Airline ground services USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Ekinci et al. (1998)</td>
<td>Tangibles and Intangibles</td>
<td>Crete island accommodations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Panton (1999)</td>
<td>accommodation, attraction, food services, trans-</td>
<td>Ottawa-Hull, Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Author(s) &amp; Year</td>
<td>Dimensions/Attributes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
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<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Diaz-Martin et al. (2000)</td>
<td>Professionalism of employees, tangibles, complementary offer, basic benefits, and location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Kozak and Rimmington (2000)</td>
<td>Destination attractiveness, tourist attractions and facilities, availability of English language, and facilities and services at the destination airport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Callan and Kyndt (2001)</td>
<td>Location and image, competence, price/value, security, tangibles-bedrooms, tangibles-other, access, other services, leisure facilities, the service providers, and their understanding of customers and business facilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Millan and Esteban (2004)</td>
<td>Service encounters, empathy, reliability, service environment, efficiency of advice and additional attributes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Akama and Kieti (2003), measured tourist satisfaction in Kenya</td>
<td>Apart from the five SERVQUAL dimensions, they also considered two additional quality dimensions: price and perceived value (satisfaction)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Kozak (2001)</td>
<td>Accommodation services, local transport services, hygiene and cleanliness, hospitality and customer care, facilities and activities, level of prices, language communication and destination airport services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Yuksel and Yuksel (2001)</td>
<td>Food quality, service quality, hygiene and accommodation, hospitality, tourist facilities, beach and environment, price and value, entertainment, quietness, convenience, communication, security, water sports, transportation, airport services and weather.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Juwaheer and Ross (2003)</td>
<td>Tangibles, responsiveness, reliability, assurance, empathy, food and service related factors, extra room amenities factors, staff communication skills and additional factors, room attraction and decor factors, staff outlook and accuracy factors, and hotel surroundings and environmental factors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Poon and Low (2005)</td>
<td>Hospitality, accommodation, food and beverages, recreation and entertainment, supplementary services, security and safety, innovation and value added services, transportation, location, appearance, pricing and payment. (satisfaction)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Details</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Tat Y. Choi and Raymond Chu (2001)</td>
<td>Study identified seven hotel factors that were likely to influence customers’ choice intentions: 'Staff Service Quality', 'Room Qualities', 'General Amenities', 'Business Services', 'Value', 'Security' and 'IDD Facilities'</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Zabkar et al., (2009)</td>
<td>Easily reached destination, Overall cleanliness of the destination, Diversity of cultural/historical attractions, Quality of the accommodation, Friendliness of the local people, Opportunities for rest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Slovenia: City hotel, a seaside resort, a recreational resort and a spa resort

Appendix 2
Guest Survey

This document intends to help determine which information you wish to gather from the post-reservation survey.

Through a careful review of the thousands of surveys we have processed, we have proposed a sample survey below. You are recommended to use this as a template for the information you wish to collect.

We suggest no more than 15 questions maximum for your survey, it is preferred to have dependency questions which appear when a certain answer is given to a question, this can help you gather more specific information on an answer without overwhelming the guest.

1 of 2: Would you like to paginate the survey? Yes / No

In the scenario that you have multiple questions or groups of questions, it may be preferred to display each group on a separate page, a shorter looking survey is more likely to be completed by a guest.

2 of 3: Your survey.

Please review and modify any sections, questions and options below.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your feedback will be shared with our hotel managers and their teams. We sincerely thank you for sharing your opinions as we continue to do our best to provide you with the ultimate hotel experience.

Section: Booking Process

1. Your reason for choosing [[hotel.name]] for your stay? [Single choice option]
   - Friend or colleague recommended us
   - You’ve seen advertising
   - You viewed information on one of our websites
   - You viewed information on the internet
   - Your travel agent recommended us
   - You’re attending a conference/event/date
   - You’re a repeat guest (welcome back!)
   - Other, please specify: [Text Box]

2. How would you rate your overall booking experience? [Single choice]
   - Excellent
   - Good
   - Average
   - Fair
   - Poor

3. Do you have any additional comments regarding your booking experience? [Text Box]

201-1200 Alpha Lake Road, Whistler BC, V0N 1B1  ph: 604-932-2510
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>VARIABLES/ATTRIBUTES</th>
<th>ASSOCIATED DIMENSIONS</th>
<th>ASSOCIATED DEPARTMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. A1 | Not being polite  
Discrimination | Assurance | F&B |
| 2. E1 | Internet Speed slow  
Chair broken | Reliability  
Assurance | Resort |
| 3. E2 | Helpful | Assurance | |
| 4. A2 | Food not suitable for Chinese | Tangible | F&B |
| 5. A3 | Didn’t get confirmation in the reservation | Reliability | Reservation |
| 6. E3 | Stolen money | Assurance | Resort |
| 7. E4 | Food up to mark | Tangibility | F&B |
| 8. E5 | Not smiling-buffet  
Bathtub not clean/need updating  
Wine and food not up to mark  
Overpriced-spa | Assurance/Responsible  
Tangible  
Value | F&B  
House Keeping  
Spa |
| 9. E6 | More amenities-squash | Tangible | Resort |
| 10. E7 | Doctor not accessible  
Information not displayed-Restaurant  
Food quality not well  
Electricity problem  
More excursions | Assurance  
Tangibility  
Reliability  
Tangible  
Assurance/Reliability  
Empathy | Resort  
F&B  
F&B  
House Keeping  
F&B  
Front Office |
| 11. E8 | Ac Broken  
Food not good | Tangible  
Tangible | House keeping  
F&B |
| 12. A4 | AC not cool  
Late check-out time | Reliability  
Empathy | House Keeping  
Front Office |
| 13. E9 | AC not cool  
Food limited variety  
Not able to do booking  
Providing ice | Tangible  
Assurance/Responsive  
Empathy | AC not cool  
F&B  
Front Office |
| 14. E10 | Lamp not functioning  
Food quality low  
Pool overheat-no cooling system  
Too much trees-landscape | Reliability  
Tangible  
Tangible  
Tangible | House Keeping  
F&B  
Resort  
Resort |
| 15. E11 | Shower angles not suitable  
Kind friendly staff | Tangible  
Assurance/Responsive | Resort  
House keeping |
| 16. A5 | Ac problem  
Not hot water  
Checking long time  
Speed boat pricy | Tangible  
Reliability  
Value | House Keeping  
Front Office  
Resort  
Resort |
| 17. A6 | Wrongly charged but later resolved | Assurance | F&B |
| 18. E12 | TV not working  
Took too much skin of in pedicure  
Breakfast more variety-salami and cheese | Reliability  
Assurance  
Tangible | House Keeping  
Spa  
F&B |
| 19. E13 | Allocation to wrong villa  
More choice of food  
More activity-dolphin trip  
Doctors came quickly | Reliability/Empathy  
Tangible  
Tangible  
Assurance | Front Office  
F&B  
Resort  
Resort |
<p>| 20. A7 | DVD malfunction | Reliability | House Keeping |
| 21. E14 | Accident-going to picnic island-situation not | Assurance | Resort |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>handled well</td>
<td>Assurance</td>
<td>Resort</td>
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<tr>
<td>Launch driver not getting help</td>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>Front Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>Checkout terrible-long time</td>
<td>Assurance</td>
<td>Housekeeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe not working</td>
<td>Assurance</td>
<td>Front Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unfriendly attitude towards chines guest</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>House Keeping</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lights not working</td>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>Housekeeping</td>
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<td>No vegetarian food</td>
<td>Tangible</td>
<td>F&amp;B</td>
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<td>Not polite</td>
<td>Assurance</td>
<td>F&amp;B</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not having complimentary courtesy elements as promoted</td>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>Resort</td>
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<td>Not decorating room</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>House Keeping</td>
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<tr>
<td>AC not working</td>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>Housekeeping</td>
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<tr>
<td>No comb/tooth brush</td>
<td>Tangible</td>
<td>Housekeeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of hot water</td>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>Housekeeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AC not cool enough</td>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>Housekeeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food quality low</td>
<td>Tangible</td>
<td>F&amp;B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited activities</td>
<td>Tangible</td>
<td>Resort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dining costly</td>
<td>Value</td>
<td>Resort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More privacy required</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Spa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No trainers-gym</td>
<td>Tangible</td>
<td>Resort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More table tennis table</td>
<td>Tangible</td>
<td>Resort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control of Chlorine in swimming pool</td>
<td>Assurance</td>
<td>Resort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More water sports</td>
<td>Tangible</td>
<td>Resort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff stern in boutique</td>
<td>Assurance</td>
<td>Outsource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can in lagoon</td>
<td>Tangible</td>
<td>Resort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More lights within the resort</td>
<td>Tangible</td>
<td>Resort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough information on prices</td>
<td>Tangible</td>
<td>Resort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided movies not there</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Front Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilet renovation required</td>
<td>Tangible</td>
<td>House Keeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More information in the menu</td>
<td>Tangible</td>
<td>F&amp;B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly and helpful</td>
<td>Assurance</td>
<td>Resort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food not up to standard/limited choice</td>
<td>Tangible</td>
<td>F&amp;B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating hours inconvenience</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Front Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not able to use spa coupon</td>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>Spa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just fantastic</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Spa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too many Asian guests: therefore no guest in bar-no entertainment</td>
<td>Tangible</td>
<td>Resort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turning into Asian island-noisy</td>
<td>Result of other customers-culture clash</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not friendly to Chinese</td>
<td>Assurance</td>
<td>Front Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave money to upgrade for their requirement villa</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Front Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More juice in the morning</td>
<td>Tangible</td>
<td>F&amp;B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No sun Lounges</td>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>House keeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reminder of activity during sleeping time not too long after arrival</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Front Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not able to confirm reservation</td>
<td>Assurance</td>
<td>Front office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food not good</td>
<td>Tangible</td>
<td>F&amp;B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food variety</td>
<td>Tangible</td>
<td>F&amp;B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warmer food</td>
<td>Tangible</td>
<td>F&amp;B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kind personnel</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>F&amp;B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpful and Kind</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>House Keeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge form sommelier good</td>
<td>Assurance</td>
<td>F&amp;B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smiling staff</td>
<td>Assurance</td>
<td>F&amp;B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cocktail flavors more refined</td>
<td>Tangible</td>
<td>F&amp;B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bath room design updated</td>
<td>Tangible</td>
<td>House keeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly helpful staff</td>
<td>Assurance</td>
<td>Marine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowed to take part in turtle project</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Marine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>E32</td>
<td>Friendly helpful staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>E33</td>
<td>Friendly and helpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>E34</td>
<td>Friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>E35</td>
<td>Birthday celebration cake and wine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>E36</td>
<td>Took over hour for luggage arrival to room. Therefore no swimming time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>E37</td>
<td>Mask not cleaned/damaged/wrong size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Service not outstanding for 5 star standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>More activities required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>E38</td>
<td>Friendly staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix 4
Dear member of guest services team

This questionnaire about Service Quality is part of an independent research conducted as part of my dissertation study. The results of study will provide useful insights the expectations and satisfaction of guests and will be fed back to the management team to help improve service for future guests. I would be very grateful if you could provide your opinion on some key elements of service expectations. Please answer the questions honestly – there is no right or wrong answers. Once you have completed this anonymous questionnaire, please enclose it in the envelope provided.

Please be assured the information will remain confidential. By completing this questionnaire, you are giving your consent to use your responses in this research but your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason. I would very much value your participation and opinion.

Thank you.

Aminath Hassan

PART 1

Following are some statements on service delivery. Please rank this in the order you feel is important aspects of service delivery to guests, by giving a number from 1 to 5 scale, where 1 is for the most important and 5 for the least important.

This is an example.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  Reliability of the service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  Interior design of the resort</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  Helping the guest at any time</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  Being confident in your service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  Caring attitude towards the guest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dear member of guest services team

This questionnaire about Service Quality is part of an independent research conducted as part of my dissertation study. The results of study will provide useful insights the expectations and satisfaction of guests and will be fed back to the management team to help improve service for future guests. I would be very grateful if you could provide your opinion on some key elements of service expectations. Please answer the questions honestly – there is no right or wrong answers. Once you have completed this anonymous questionnaire, please enclose it in the envelope provided.

Please be assured the information will remain confidential. By completing this questionnaire, you are giving your consent to use your responses in this research but your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason. I would very much value your participation and opinion.

Thank you.

Aminath Hassan
A.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Providing the service at the promised time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Able to inform when service will be performed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Having the knowledge to answer customer’s questions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Giving individual attention to customer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Looking neat and well dressed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Performing the service right for the first time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Responding to customers request at all times</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Being consistently courteous and polite to customers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Having modern looking interior design</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Operating hours convenient to customers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Providing service with quality equipment’s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Addressing your customer by name</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Showing sincere interest in solving the problem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Never too busy to help the customer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Giving assurance to your customer at a time of a problem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D. Order the following according to your knowledge on European and Asian customer expectation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Europe</th>
<th>Asia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Quality food</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Solving problems as soon as possible</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Getting room ready on time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Providing speedy service to customers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Your personal attention to the customer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PART 2

Please tick [✓] as appropriate, for the following questions and express your opinion in the spaces provided as detailed as you can.

E. What does service quality means to you?

F. Generally you feel there is a difference in customer expectations for European and Asian guest?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

If yes, please explain how.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Europeans</th>
<th>Asians</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
G. Please indicate how you feel about the information and communication provided for you by the management on service quality standards of the resort:

[ ] Very poor  [ ] Poor  [ ] Okay  [ ] Good  [ ] Very Good

Please provide reasons for your response

H. Do you feel able to communicate feedback from customers to the management?

[ ] Very difficult  [ ] Difficult  [ ] Okay  [ ] Easy  [ ] Very Easy

Please provide reasons for your response

I. Do you think that your feedback on customers is listened to and acted upon by the resort management?

[ ] Strongly Disagree  [ ] Disagree  [ ] Neither  [ ] Agree  [ ] Strongly Agree

Please provide reasons for your response

Department...........................................

Thank you so much for your time and consideration
Appendix 5

1. In your opinion what does Service quality (SQ) means to you?
2. Is there any SQ guidelines?
3. How do you communicate SQ standards with your staffs?
4. What is the normal routine of briefing your staff on SQ?
5. How often are you able to interact with the customer contact employees?
6. What kind of feedback do you get from the management/employees on customers in relation to SQ?
7. Is there any other form of formal feedback system by customer contact employees?
8. Are employees are encouraged enough to facilitate in the feedback system?
9. Does the existing structure accommodate good communication between, management and employees?
10. Do you feel substantial actions are taken with regard to these feedback?
11. What are the instances that you are able to meet with customers?
12. How frequently are you able to do so?
13. What kind of feedback comes across in the interactions? Is it more in tangible or intangible aspect?
14. Do you find there is a difference between expectations depending on nationality?
15. What can you say about these differences between European and Asian guest?
16. Is the service designed differently to meet up these expectations?
17. Do you find it difficult to meet the service demands due to these differences?
18. What is the main source of customer information?
19. Does the current system provide substantial information to serve up to customer expectations?
20. Are you able to monitor competition?
21. Do you think the staffs are well trained to serve to this standard, or are there more room to improve?
22. What do you think of the physical environment of the resort in accordance to the standard that you want to uphold?
23. What kind of things, would you look into when servicing a customer to gain their full satisfaction?

........................
Appendix 6

Comparative Analysis on Customer, Employee and Management perspective on service quality

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Aminath Hassan; I am a graduate student in the Business School of the University of Bolton, UK. As part of my dissertation for my Master’s degree program MSc International Management, I am conducting a research study on the mentioned subject area and intend to make your resort as the case study for this investigation.

The research focus on assessment of the alignment between customer, employee and management’s perception of service quality through SERVQUAL model dimensions. As you may know due to the competitive nature of hotel industry, even more so now in Maldives with new resort developments and more international hotel chains establishing their presence in the sector; it is challenging to achieve the corporate goals along with quality service to customer satisfaction standards. Academics and industry professionals emphasize the importance of evaluating customer perception to anticipate their needs and modify the service delivery design by the management to be delivered through the customer contact employees. Although service quality measurement is very complex, a reasonable measure of service quality will be a good effort to improve the quality improvement exercise. Therefore, the objectives of this study will identify the key determinants of perception of service quality between the stakeholders as mentioned above and evaluating their gaps. It will also investigate how these dimensions vary according to the guest nationality to understand the cultural context.

SERVQUAL is actually a survey instrument carried out for the customers directly but knowing that you it will disrupt the customer privacy and conforming to your implicit policy in this regard, Guest survey conducted by your resort and reviews from selected travel site will be used to analyse the customer perception through SERVQUAL dimensions. But for the employees, I will be designing simple questions to answer the priorities in the attributes that they feel is more important with few open ended questions on the subject. The questionnaire distribution will be facilitated by the Human Resource department to be handed over back in sealed envelopes for each individual employee. As for the Managers, I will be conducting a Skype interview, approximately 50 minutes in length during the first week of August at any time convenient.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences by advising the researcher. With your permission, the interview will be recorded to facilitate collection of information, and later transcribed for analysis. The recorded files will be analysed only by me and then will be destroyed once transcription is complete. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any part of the report resulting from
this study, however, with your permission anonymous quotations may be used. The data collected will be securely kept in password protected computer files and will be accessed only by me.

There are no expenses that would incur to take part in this survey. There are also no financial incentives for participation.

Please accept this letter as my formal request for your participation in this research. If you have any comments or concerns I will be happy to answer any questions you may have regarding the survey. You may contact me at +447913310397 and ah12bbs@bolton.ac.uk.

Thank you for your consideration.

With kind regards
Aminath Hassan
(Student no: 1405115)
12 September 2015

To Whom It May Concern:

I hereby confirm that Hotels Pte Ltd has no objection for Mr. Aminath Hassan to undertake research into the resort properties that are owned and managed by the Company through means of conducting surveys and interviews with selected employees of the Company towards the completion of her research requirements for a degree of MSc in International Management at the University of Bolton.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if require any verification or further information regarding the above.

We wish her well in all her future endeavours.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
Appendix 8

Cross Mapping Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OBJECTIVES</th>
<th>Elements from Conceptual Framework</th>
<th>Method 1</th>
<th>Method 2</th>
<th>Method 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. To identify the congruence between customer, management and employee perception of service quality through SERVQUAL dimensions</td>
<td>RATER</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>A/B/C/F</td>
<td>1/22/23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. To identify how the guest expectations varies according to their nationality and how it is perceived by the employees and management through SERVQUAL dimensions</td>
<td>RATER Culture</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>D/F</td>
<td>14/15/16/17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. To critically evaluate how this gap is formed between customer expectations and employee/management perception of this expectation.</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>2/3/4/6/7/8/10/21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>5/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Market research</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>11/12/13/18/19/20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SD: Secondary Data/ SCQ: Self-Completion Questionnaire/ SSI: Semi Structured Interview