

THE INFLUENCE OF PERCEIVED QUALITY OF SERVICE OF TOURIST GUIDES ON THE BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS: EXAMPLE OF ÇANAKKALE¹

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Abstract. Tourist guides are considered as one of the most important stakeholders in the tourism sector. Tourist guides have important duties both in terms of the development of the sector and in determining the quality of the service that tourists receive. In addition to the contribution of tourist guides to the promotion of the country, it is seen that they can directly affect the image of the country and destination. The problem of this research is the possibility that the quality of the guidance services provided by the tourist guides may negatively affect their intentions to revisit the destination or repurchase the guidance services as a result of the negative perception of the tourists. Therefore, the aim of this study is to determine the effect of perceived service quality of tourist guides on the behavioral intentions of tourists. The target group of the study is the local tourists who participated in the tours accompanied by a tour guide in the province of Çanakkale. A total of 435 valid questionnaires collected by easy sampling method were analyzed due to incomplete filling and inattentive responses. As a result of the evaluation and analysis; It is concluded that perceived service quality of tourist guides has an positive effect on behavioral intentions.

Keywords: tourist guide, service quality, behavioral intention.

INTRODUCTION

Although many technologic innovations have been emerged to make people lives easier, it is observed that human factor – the most significant power of service sector –still remains important. The tourist guides, which are one of the complementary elements of tourism sector, are also very important for the development and dynamism of the sector. The performance displayed by the tourist guides may create negative or positive perception for attractiveness of any destination to visitors or image of any country.

As in other sectors, the competition environment of tourism sector is enhanced day to day. It needs to be distinguishable among the increasing choices and provide service without falling below a certain level for the competitive advantage. Although this certain level is initially full measure for the guests, subsequently it may not be enough due to competition environment. The quality of provided guidance service is determined by the visitor's perception and behaviors rather than the characteristics of a tourist guide.

This study aimed to determine how the service provided by tourist guides is perceived by the tourists and the extent of influence of such perception on the behaviors when making a travel plan again. It also discussed how quality of service provided by tourist guides by the tourists as well as the problems that may be caused by negative influence of this on the behavioral intention of tourists. The problems, which may result from many factors from the negative effects on the perspective to guided tours to the loss of attractiveness of visited destination for the visitors, constitutes the fundamental point of this research. In the light of the findings to be obtained, solutions will be offered to avoid occurrence of such problems and take necessary actions.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Tourism sector makes a significant contribution to the economy of many countries. Since the tourists are in the center of the tourism, the whole organization and activities in a destination are also arranged for the tourists. Even if a different destination is visited within the same culture, tourists appear to need support for anything including entertainment and shopping because they are out of their living space. During their trip to a destination, people first rely on the travel agency as an organizer and then on the tourist

¹ Derived from the postgraduate thesis.

guide as the representative of that travel agency (Değirmencioglu & Ahipařaođlu, 2003). A tourist guide has also a key role in guiding of visitor behaviors (Avcıkurt, 2017). The performance of the tourist guide is one of the determining factors in the quality of service perceived by the visitor (Hu, 2007).

The World Federation of Tourist Guiding Associations (WFTGA) defines the tourist guide as “a person who is able to provide information on the history and cultural and natural riches of a specific area in the language of tourists’ choice and within the scope determined by the respective authority” (www.wftga.org). Additionally, the Law No. 6326 on Profession of Tourist Guiding and the Regulation on Profession of Tourist Guiding published on the Official Gazette No. 29217 dated 26.12.2014 defines the tourist guiding service as follows: “Introducing and visiting country’s culture, tourism, history, environment, nature, social and similar values and assets for the domestic and foreign tourists as a group or individual using the language chosen by them prior to trip in accordance with culture and tourism policies provided that it is not an activity of travel agency, or conducting and managing the tours and itineraries organized by the travel agencies as described in the written documents of travel agency and as sold to consumers.” The same law and regulation define the tourist guide as “a real person who is allowed to be a tourist guide and entitled and authorized to provide tourist guiding service pursuant to applicable law” (Regulation on Profession of Tourist Guiding, 2014). Tourist guides that have vocational education, perform legal obligations and take a step in this profession are mostly assigned to different domestic tours based on their qualifications. If a tour service is provided in a foreign country, the travel agencies may receive guiding service from a tourist guide who is a Turkish citizen in countries without legal barrier (Çeřmeci, 2018).

The size of service sector in the developed societies is considered an indication of development level of that society (Öztürk, 2010). This can be explained by the fact that things requiring service are increased with improved life standards. The countries whose more than half of the national economy is dependent on the service sector are referred to as the service economy and the Western countries are within this scope (Kayral, 2015).

The concept of service was first defined by French philosophers in 1700s as ‘any activities what is left from the agricultural activities’ (Midilli, 2011). Adam Smith suggested that this definition was insufficient and any activities that could not be embodied should be defined as service. So he introduced a new definition and underlined the abstract aspect of service for the first time (Güven, 2012). A general definition of service would be “any act or action, performance, social event or effort that is consumed where it is produced” (Collier, 1990; Sevimli, 2006). As the service is an abstract concept, it is not definitely known by the service producer how a sold product is perceived or interpreted by the consumer (Zeithaml et al., 1985).

The quality of service does not have a specific stereotyped definition as the concept of service. The broader definition of service quality is the first-class service that is provided to meet the consumer’s needs and expectations (Bulgan, 2002). The quality of service can be described in many ways. The quality of service is defined as being able to take measures, be reliable, solve problems, act kindly, display effective performance, provide a complete service, make correct diagnosis, and allow guests to receive a service that gets their money worth (Savař, 2012).

The perceived quality is the result of comparison of consumer’s expectations based on the past experiences with the performance displayed during provision of service (Khan, 2010). The perceived quality of service was defined in 1990s as “the judgment of consumers on the excellence of product or service (Zeithaml et al., 1990). As the perceived quality is revealed as a result of consumer’s expectations, there will be a lower quality if the standards for the products are not believed to be sufficient for the consumer (Townsend & Gebhardt, 1988). The perceived quality can be dependent on what the consumer feels and how the consumer perceives based on the consumer’s expectations. There are subjective perceptions rather than the actual quality in the service provided (Gölbařı & Noyan, 2009). In determining the level of perceived quality of service, the result obtained after the performance of service delivery is sought and the quality of service will be achieved if the consumer is satisfied (Bostanođlu, 2012). If the consumer satisfaction is lower than the expectations, then the quality of service has been perceived insufficiently (Altunışık et al., 2012).

The most extensive, the most advanced and the most reliable study among the studies performed for measurement of quality of service was the study performed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry (1988) (Şekerkeya, 1997). The scale developed in the study performed by those authors consists of two parts: the part I determines the expectation prior to delivery of service, and part II determines the levels of consumer’s perception after delivery of service. So, the levels of consumer’s expectation are initially determined, then how much of such expectations has been met is determined by the difference between the expectations and the perception (Parasuraman, et al.: 1988; Zeithaml, et al., 1990). As Cronin & Taylor (1992) argued that questions on expectation were unnecessary to measure the quality of service, and that measuring the perceived service would be enough to measure, they created the SERVPERF model (Yalkın, 2010; Bülbül & Demirer, 2008). In the SERVPERF model, it is sufficient to measure service performance, i.e., consumer’s

perception, in order to measure the quality of service (Tengilimoğlu, 2013; Yılmaz & Eleren 2011; Cronin & Taylor, 1992).

It is expressed that not all behaviors occur for no reason, and attitudes displayed must have a reason (Çetinkaya, 2017). The possibility of occurrence or non-occurrence of any behavior is directly proportional to the intention of that individual based on the past experiences and attitudes developed (Ajzen, 1991:181). In service sector, the level of perceived satisfaction for the received service is effective in the interactions between two persons and generation of behavioral intentions (Lin & Hiesh, 2007). The personal behaviors can be expressed and observed by others or involve conditions that can be experienced internally (Eroğlu, 2007). The behavioral intention is defined as a result of satisfaction or dissatisfaction process after a product or service is purchased (Anderson et al., 1994). Occurrence of non-occurrence of actions such as repurchasing and recommending to others and the potential future behaviors of a person are considered within the scope of behavioral intention (Lam & Hsu, 2006).

RESEARCH METHOD

In the area of tourism, many research on the quality of service (Akdu & Akdu, 2017; Sevgi, 2017; Tabaku & Cerri, 2016; Madar, 2014; Keskin, 2013; Kenzhebayeva, 2012; Mola & Jusoh, 2011; Mohsin & Lockyer, 2010; Yılmaz, 2009) addressed the accommodation establishments and aimed to identify the level of quality of service provided by the accommodation establishments. Similarly, the research on the quality of service provided by the tourist guides (Huang et al., 2010; Chang, 2014; Nasution et al., 2019; Lin et al., 2017; Olcay et al., 2015; Değirmencioglu, 2001) determined the level of quality of service provided and investigated the effects on the tourist behaviors. The results of those research show that the quality of service perceived by the tourists during an excursion had positive effects on the intention to repurchase and recommend to others. The main hypothesis of this study is provided below in accordance with the results of those research.

H1: The perceived quality of service provided by a tourist guide has a significant and positive effect on the behavioral intention.

This research used the convenience sampling method, a non-random sample method. In this method, anyone who wants to participate into research is included in the sample until the number required by the investigator is reached, and this method is widely used by the investigators (Altunışık et al., 2015). In the light of this information, the research universe included domestic tourists that visited Çanakkale and joined the guided tours. The tourist guides registered with Çanakkale Chamber of Guides provided support for administration of questionnaires. A pilot questionnaire was administered to 50 domestic tourists that joined the guided tour to determine the reliability and intelligibility of questions in the questionnaire of research. The questions remained unchanged after pretesting. The Cronbach's Alpha was 0.878 for the perceived quality of service, and the Cronbach's Alpha was 0.905 for the behavioral intentions scale. The correlation among the items was analyzed and the items consistently accounted for each other. The questionnaire was administered between 15 March and 15 June 2019. During this period, a total of 650 questionnaires were distributed and 472 questionnaires were returned. Data of 435 questionnaires were considered because some of the questionnaires contained incomplete information. The sample size was considered to represent the universe (Altunışık et al., 2015). The data obtained from the response of domestic tourists to questionnaire were analyzed by the statistical packet programs SPSS and AMOS.

The questionnaire consisting of three parts was used for data collection. The SERVPERF scale was used for the part I of questionnaire to measure the perceived quality of service of tourist guiding in the tour joined by the tourists. Cronin & Taylor (1992) reported that the SERVQUAL scale developed by Parasuraman et al. (1988) measured the expectation and perception at the same time, and that perception of service performance could be measured directly. So, they used the same items, made an assessment on the perception of service performance and developed the SERVPERF scale (Bülbül & Demirer, 2008). Değirmencioglu (2001) and Aksaray (2018) adapted the statements of perceived service quality in the SERVQUAL scale to the service of tourist guiding. This study also utilized the study of Değirmencioglu (2001) and Aksaray (2018) and used the 22-item SERVPERF scale adapted to service of tourist guiding. The adapted statements were submitted to two experts who were both an academician and a tourist guide for evaluation. The questions about the quality of service were based on 5-point Likert scale and the responses ranged from "1=Strongly disagree to 5=Strongly agree". In part II, the scales in the studies of Baker & Crompton (2000) and Gonzalez et al. (2007) were used to measure the behavioral intentions of tourists in the service of tourist guiding. The questions about the behavioral intentions were based on the 5-point Likert scale and the responses ranged from "1=Strongly disagree to 5=Strongly agree". The part III contains open-

ended and categorical questions about the participant's socio-demographic characteristics, gender, marital status, age, education level, income level, and whether they have participated into any guided tour.

According to socio-demographic findings, 50.1% of participants were female and 49.9% were male. Of participants, 11.5% ranged between 18 and 25 years of age; 38.6% ranged between 26 and 35 years of age; 34.3% ranged between 36 and 45 years of age, and 15.6% were 46 years old or over. Of participants, 5.1% were primary school graduates, 17.9% were secondary school graduates, 18.9% had an associate's degree, 47.1% had a bachelor's degree, and 11.0% had a master's degree. Of participants, 32.9% had an income of 2000-3000 TL, 26% had an income of 3001-4000 TL, 21.1% had an income of 4001-5000 TL, and 20% had an income of 5001 TL or over. 59.1% of participants were married and 40.9% were single. 76.8% of participants have participated into a guided tour before, and 23.2% of participants have never participated into a guided tour before.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) of Scales and Reliability Findings

The Cronbach's Alpha (α) of items in the scales was determined prior to factor analysis, and all items had α value of over 0.70. In addition, it was verified whether the data were normally distributed. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was performed to determine the normal distribution of data and $p < 0.001$ was considered significant after testing. For the Likert-type scales, normal distribution of data can be assessed by the coefficient of kurtosis and the coefficient of skewness (Büyüköztürk, 2002). If the coefficients of skewness and kurtosis range between -1 and +1, it is considered that data are normally distributed (Huck, 2012). The statements in the scales meet this condition, therefore, the data were considered normally distributed.

Table 1

EFA for the Perceived Quality of Service of Tourist Guides

	Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	OVY	Factors
H20	The tourist guide was always available to satisfy the requests of tour participants.	,833			,645	Eigenvalue: 3,667 Variance: 26,195% Mean: 3,74 Reliability : ,897
H21	The tourist guide paid personal attention to tour participants.	,808			,715	
H22	The tourist guide always tried to his/her best in the interest of tour participants.	,805			,743	
H19	The tourist guide could understand the feelings of tour participants.	,758			,683	
H18	The tourist guide was aware of the needs of tour participants.	,698			,629	
H2	The equipment used by the tourist guide during the service delivery was interesting.		,889		,822	Eigenvalue: 3,259 Variance: 23,279% Mean: 3,61 Reliability : ,868
H1	The tourist guide had modern equipment used during the service delivery (e.g., books, maps, brochures, etc.).		,887		,818	
H4	The physical items (e.g., buses, trip route, malls, museums, etc.) used for the delivery of guiding service were visually attractive.		,740		,625	
H3	The tourist guide had a nice and good appearance.		,685		,639	
H5	The tourist guide was able to perform the promised services in timely manner.		,575		,611	
H14	The tourist guide had good knowledge to answer the questions raised.			,808	,684	Eigenvalue: 2,691 Variance: 19,220% Mean: 3,97 Reliability : ,804
H16	The tourist guide was kind and gentle during the tour.			,757	,674	
H15	The tour participants had trust in the tourist guide for following the tour program.			,637	,609	
H7	The tourist guide was reliable.			,620	,584	
	Total variance extracted: 68.695%; Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Adequacy of Sample: 0,908; Bartlett's test of sphericity: χ^2 : 3530,568 s.d.:91, $p < .001$ Varimax rotation in principal components analysis. O.V.Y: Communalities					

The statements in the scales with item-test correlation coefficient lower than 0.30 were not included in the analysis. The Kaiser- Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test (a test for adequacy of sample) was performed to verify the adequacy of factor analysis. Although a value of KMO higher than 0.50 is an acceptable value, the lower value for KMO was considered to be 0.70 by the investigators (Altunışık et al., 2015). The Bartlett's test of sphericity is also required for the factor analysis (Yaşlıoğlu, 2017). To conduct an EFA, the result of Bartlett's test of sphericity needs to significant at $p \leq 0.05$ (Akkoyunlu, Soylu & Çağlar, 2010).

Table 1 provides the results of KMO and Bartlett's test of sphericity for the scale of perceived quality of service of tourist guiding. The value for KMO was 0.908, and the approximate value for chi-square test (χ^2) was 3380.428 according to Bartlett's test. The significance level was $p < 0.001$. These result show that scale was consistent with the exploratory factor analysis (EFA). According to the results of factor analysis, five items (H13, H6, H10, H17, and H12) were cyclical, therefore, they were removed from the factor analysis, respectively. Two items in the scale (H8 and H9) were removed from the EFA as the factor load was lower than 0.50; and one item (H11) was removed from the EFA as the communalities were lower than 0.50. A three-factor structure was obtained as a result of factor analysis. Total variance extracted of these three factors was 68.695%.

The factor 1 explained the scale at the highest level (26.19%). The items in this factor are contained in the empathy dimension on the original scale, therefore, this factor was referred to as the empathy. Participation of tourists into this dimension was 3.74. Four of five statements in the second dimension are contained in the dimension "physical appearance" on the original scale, therefore, this dimension was referred to as the physical appearance. The explanation level of scale was 23.27% and participation into this dimension was 3.61. Three of four items in the third dimension are contained in the assurance dimension on the original scale, therefore, this dimension was referred to as the assurance. The highest participation of tourists occurred in this dimension with 3.97.

Among the previous studies measuring the quality of service of tourist guides, the study performed by Aksaray (2018) did not test the construct validity for the dimensions of service quality, but the dimensions of service quality were addressed separately as physical elements, reliability, empathy, willingness and assurance. Nasution et al. (2019) displayed a similar approach and assessed the received quality of service of tourist guides based on the dimensions on the original scale without testing the construct validity. In the research performed by Değirmencioglu (2001), the service quality of tourist guides had four dimensions: physical appearance, reliability, willingness and assurance. Min (2016) measured the perceived quality of service of Taiwanese tourist guides and identified six dimensions for the quality of service: physical appearance, reliability, empathy, willingness, assurance and culture. Unlike the other studies, Min's study (2016) added the dimension "culture" that reflected the mediation of guides in cultural differences between the foreign tourists and the destination. In other studies addressing the quality of service, the study performed by Keskin (2013) identified four dimensions for the quality of service: reliability, willingness, assurance and empathy.

Table 2

EFA for Behavioral Intentions

	Items	Factor 2	OVY	FACTORS
DN5	I will tell others positive things about the tourist guiding service I received.	,923	,851	Eigenvalue: 4.621 Variance: 77.016% Mean: 3.52 Reliability: ,940
DN6	If I am asked about a tourist guide, I will recommend the tourist guide in my trip.	,916	,840	
DN4	I would encourage my friends to receive service from this tourist guide.	,908	,824	
DN2	I think I would receive service of this tourist guide again in the future.	,872	,760	
DN1	If I need to join a tour again in the future, my first choice will be this tourist guide.	,846	,715	
DN3	Even if the service I received from this tourist guide was more expensive, I will still choose this tourist guide in my next trip.	,795	,631	
	Total variance extracted: 77.016% Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Adequacy of Sample: ,896; Bartlett's test of sphericity: χ^2 : 2504,317 s.d.:15, $p < ,001$ Varimax rotation in principal components analysis. OVIY: Communalities			

This study found three dimensions for the perceived quality of service of tourist guides: empathy, physical appearance and assurance. The reason why service quality had different dimensions in different studies could be that tourists cared about different items, and tourist from different countries might have different expectations.

Table 2 shows the results of KMO test for the behavioral intentions scale and the results of Bartlett's test of sphericity. The value for KMO was 0.896, and the approximate value for chi-square test (χ^2) was 2504.317 according to Bartlett's test. The significance level was $p < 0.001$. These results show that scale was consistent with the exploratory factor analysis (EFA). The behavioral intentions scale was measured by six statements. The scale presented one dimension as a result of factor analysis and total variance extracted was 77.016%.

The behavioral intentions scale that represents the intention to re-visit a destination, repurchase or recommend to others usually has one dimension (Türkmen et al., 2018; Muskat et al., 2019; Levitt et al., 2019). However, there are studies evaluating it in two dimensions: re-visiting and recommending to others (Baloglu et al., 2014, Hultman et al., 2015). In this study, the behavioral intentions had one dimension.

Overall reliability (α) for the scale "Perceived Quality of Service of Tourist Guides" was 0.911 after EFA. Removal of each statement in the scale from the scale did have any significant negative or positive effects on the value α . In analysis of the value α for dimensions provided by the facto analysis, the value α for the dimension "empathy" was 0.897; the value α for the dimension "physical appearance" was 0.868; and the value α for the dimension "assurance" was 0.804. The overall reliability for behavioral intentions scale was (α) 0.940. Removal of each statement in the scale from the scale did have any significant negative or positive effects on the value α . According to Büyüköztürk (2012), total items' correlation coefficient for each item must be over 0.30. Total items' correlation coefficient for the items on the perceived service quality scale ranged from 0.464 to 0.676, and the overall mean for the behavioral intentions scale was 3.52. Considering that Cronbach's Alpha must be usually equal to or higher than 0.70 (Rybina et al., 2010; Altunışık et al., 2015), the perceived quality of service scale appears to be very reliable. The total items' correlation values for scale are provided in the table. According to Büyüköztürk (2012), total items' correlation coefficient for each item must be over 0.30. The statements on the scale meets this condition. The behavioral intentions scale is very reliable based on these results. The overall mean of statements on the scale was 3.52.

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to test the factors obtained after the exploratory factor analysis. The confirmatory factor analysis is used to test the accuracy of structures obtained from the EFA (Aytaç & Öngen, 2012). After the confirmatory factor analysis was performed for all the scales, the measurement model was tested to determine how well the variables on the scale represent the latent variables, and the correlation between the latent variables.

CFA for Service Quality

The CFA was performed for the perceived quality of service scale for tourist guiding, and the estimate value for the item "H5" was removed from the model as it negatively affected the consistence of model. The CFA was improved after that item was removed. Then the modification indices on the measurement model were reviewed, and a correlation was identified between the items "H18 and H21", "H19 and H22" and "H3 and H4". The error covariance for those variables was included in the model. The variables observed for the measurement model of *service quality* represented the latent variables at a satisfactory level as a result of analysis.

CFA for Behavioral Intentions

The CFA was performed for the behavioral intentions scale, and the estimate value for the item "DN3" negatively affected the consistence of model, therefore, it was removed. The CFA was improved after that item was removed. Then the modification indices on the measurement model were reviewed, and a correlation was found between the items "DN1 and DN2". The error covariance for those variables was included in the model. The variables observed for the measurement model of *behavioral intentions* represented the latent variables at a satisfactory level as a result of analysis.

Testing of Hypotheses with Structural Equation Modeling

The structures from the EFA were previously confirmed by the confirmatory factor analysis. In this section, hypotheses were tested by the structural equation modeling. Before proceeding with the structural model, the results of measurement model were provided and the reliability and validity analysis of structures

was reviewed. Table 3 provides the results of measurement model and Table 4 provides the results of reliability and validity.

To consider that model is reliable, the average variance extracted (AVE) must be greater than 0.50, and Cronbach's Alpha (α) and CR (composite reliability) must be greater than 0.70 (Forell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2010). In Table 4, the AVE for each dimension was greater than 0.50, and the CR and α were greater than 0.70. Based on this, the observed variables consistently and sufficiently accounted for their dimension.

Table 3

Results of Measurement Model

Measurement Model		SMC	β	t-value	p					
Empathy										
H22	The tourist guide always tried to his/her best in the interest of tour participants.	,156	,847	λ is fixed as 1						
H20	The tourist guide was always available to satisfy the requests of tour participants.	,165	,823	20,634	***					
H19	The tourist guide could understand the feelings of tour participants.	,191	,807	17,582	***					
H21	The tourist guide paid personal attention to tour participants.	,190	,787	19,023	***					
H18	The tourist guide was aware of the needs of tour participants.	,227	,773	18,528	***					
Physical Appearance										
H1	The tourist guide had modern equipment used during the service delivery (e.g., books, maps, brochures, etc.).	,152	,921	λ is fixed as 1						
H2	The equipment used by the tourist guide during the service delivery was interesting.	,146	,918	25,161	***					
H4	The physical items (e.g., buses, trip route, malls, museums, etc.) used for the delivery of guiding service were visually attractive.	,495	,640	15,248	***					
H3	The tourist guide had a nice and good looking.	,373	,578	13,278	***					
Assurance										
H16	The tourist guide was kind and gentle during the tour.	,255	,734	λ is fixed as 1						
H15	The tour participants had trust in the tourist guide for following the tour program.	,234	,756	14,428	***					
H7	The tourist guide was reliable.	,279	,693	13,310	***					
H14	The tourist guide had good knowledge to answer the questions raised.	,310	,660	12,697	***					
Behavioral Intentions										
DN6	If I am asked about a tourist guide, I will recommend the tourist guide in my trip.	,072	,950	λ is fixed as 1						
DN2	I think I would receive service of this tourist guide again in the future.	,307	,807	25,251	***					
DN4	I would encourage my friends to receive service from this tourist guide.	,130	,892	33,380	***					
DN5	I will tell others positive things about the tourist guiding service I received.	,064	,952	42,660	***					
DN1	If I need to join a tour again in the future, my first choice will be this tourist guide.	,487	,725	20,223	***					
	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	SRMR	RMSEA	GFI	NFI	IFI	TLI	CFI
Acceptable values			≤ 5	<0,08	<0,10	,900	≥ 0.90	$\geq .90$	$\geq .90$	$\geq .90$
Measurement Model	348,824	125	2,791	,0741	,064	,920	,940	,961	,952	,960
NOTE: The acceptable consistence indices are derived from the values in the study of Hair et al. (2010) and Awang (2012). ***= $p < .001$										

Then, the convergent validity and discriminant validity of measurement model were verified. The discriminant validity was achieved as AVE of each dimension was greater than the square of maximum of correlations between the dimensions (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). For convergent validity, the AVE must be greater than 0.50 and the CR must be greater than the AVE ($CR > AVE$; $AVE > 0.5$) (Hair et al., 2010). As shown in Table 4, this condition was met for the convergent validity.

The reliability and validity results for four structures on the measurement model of service quality and the consistence of model were satisfactory. Then, a path analysis was carried out to test the hypotheses. Figure 4 shows the results of YEM analysis performed to determine the effects of perceived quality of service of tourist guiding on the behavioral intentions, and the parameter values for research model.

Table 4

Reliability and Validity of Structures on the Measurement Model, and Results of Correlation between the Dimensions

<i>Dimensions</i>		<i>Alp.(α)</i>	<i>CR</i>	<i>AVE</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
1	Empathy	,897	0,946	0,779	0,567			
2	Physical Appearance	,860	0,889	0,676	0,416	0,173		
3	Assurance	,804	0,882	0,653	0,753	,397	0,567	
4	Behavioral Intentions	,941	0,948	0,786	0,655	,379	,704	0,495

NOTE: AVE at table was calculated by formula $AVE = \Sigma\lambda^2 / \Sigma\lambda^2 + \Sigma\epsilon$ ve $CR = (\Sigma\lambda)^2 / (\Sigma\lambda)^2 + \Sigma\epsilon$

The structural model was tested using eight goodness of fit criteria. All of the goodness-of-fit values used for assessment of research model were acceptable. This shows that research data fit well with the research model. The results of YEM analysis for research show that dimension “physical appearance” (one of the perceived quality of service dimensions) did not have a statistically significant effect on the behavioral intentions ($\beta = 0.077$; $t = 1.803$; $p < 0.001$). So, the **hypothesis H_{1a} was not supported**. The dimension “empathy” ($\beta = 0.265$; $t = 3.936$; $p < 0.001$) and the dimension “assurance” ($\beta = 0.474$; $t = 6.247$; $p < 0.001$) had a statistically significant and positive effect on the behavioral intentions of tourists. So, the **hypotheses H_{1b} and H_{1c} were supported**.

In regard to the explanatory power (R^2) of independent variables over dependent variables in the research model, the dimensions of perceived quality of service of tourist guiding explained 54% of variance in the behavioral intentions of tourists. Based on these results, the dimensions “empathy” and “assurance” (dimensions of perceived quality of service of tourist guiding) had positive effects.

Many studies suggest that perceived quality of service positively affects the behavioral intentions (Qin & Prybutoz, 2009; Bujisic et al., 2014; Su et al., 2016; Ha & Jang, 2010). In this study, the dimension “assurance” ($\bar{X} = 3,97$) and the dimension “empathy” ($\bar{X} = 3,74$) positively affected the behavioral intentions ($\bar{X} = 3,52$) whereas the physical appearance ($\bar{X} = 3,61$) did not have any significant effects. The physical appearance was the dimension perceived at the lowest level. The study of Nasution et al. (2019) reported that physical appearance was the dimension of service quality perceived at the lowest level and the assurance was the dimension perceived at the highest level as in this study. Other studies also suggest that assurance (one of the perceived quality of service dimensions) had a significant effect on the behavioral intentions of tourists. The “empathy” was another dimension that had an effect on the behavioral intentions in this study, but the study performed by Nguyen (2015) on Asian tourists did not find any effects of empathy on the behavioral intentions.

Table 5

Research Hypotheses and Results

Hypotheses	RESULTS
H₁: The perceived quality of service of tourist guides has positive and significant effects on the behavioral intentions.	Supported (2/3)
H_{1a}: The perceived quality of service for the dimension “empathy” has positive and significant effects on the behavioral intentions.	Supported
H_{1b}: The perceived quality of service for the dimension “physical appearance” has positive and significant effects on the behavioral intentions.	Not supported
H_{1c}: The perceived quality of service for the dimension “assurance” has positive and significant effects on the behavioral intentions.	Supported

This study also identified positive effect of physical appearance of tourist guides on the on the destination loyalty. Different studies suggested that different dimension could have an effect on the behavioral intentions. The primary cause of such differences might be due to culture of tourists and different expectations. In this study, first the assurance and then the empathy (dimensions of service quality perceived by the domestic tourists) had the highest effect on the behavioral intentions, however, physical appearance did not have any significant effect. The purpose of this research was to determine whether the tourists participated into guided tours intended again to participate into a guided tour based on the quality of service provided by the tourist guide. Table 5 shows the results of hypotheses developed for this purpose.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Tourist guides, playing an important role in tourism stakeholders, may affect tourists to have negative or positive opinion on the services received by them as all other factors. This research aimed to determine the effects of perceived quality of service of tourist guiding by the domestic tourists participating into guided tours in Çanakkale on the behavioral intentions. According to exploratory factor analysis performed, the “physical appearance, empathy and assurance” were the more prominent dimensions on the service quality scale. On the other hand, the behavioral intentions scale had one structure. In the light of this information, the hypothesis “the perceived quality of service has positive effects on the behavioral intentions in the guided tours in Çanakkale” (the primary purpose of the study) was substantially supported. It is concluded that a tour experience of tourists guided by a tourist guide was effective in purchasing the next trip.

The results obtained suggest that the service quality dimensions “empathy and assurance” had effects on the behavioral intentions, but the dimension “physical appearance” did not have the same effect on the behavioral intention. Therefore, it is concluded that a tourist participating into a guided tour pays more attention to empathy and attention of tourist guide to tourists during the tour than the physical materials used during the tour. This, which falls within the dimension “empathy” appears to be more effective in developing a perception of quality during the tour. The knowledge of tourist guide and overall attitude of tourist guide to tourists, which fall within the dimension “assurance”, were the criteria that have the highest effect on the evaluation by tourists of quality of received service. Again, these criteria had the highest effect on the behavioral intentions. It is concluded that decision of a tourist participating into a guided tour in Çanakkale to join the next guided tour was influenced by the trust they had in the tourist guide.

A tourist guide is expected to be someone who facilitates the job of tour planners. However, the sphere of influence of tourist guides is much larger. Based on the research results, by the service they provided the tourist guides had influence not only on the current tour but also on the next tour. The sphere of individual influence of a tourist guide is strongly felt, and this is consistent with the research results. Although the factors such as the materials used during the tour, tour vehicle, and appearance of tour guide are effective in development of perception of service quality, it is not as effective as the trust of tourists in the guide to perceive the quality of service of that guide. This might explain why service quality dimension “physical appearance” remained in the background more.

Recommendations to Academicians

This study measured the perceived quality of service of guides in tourists participating into guided tours in Çanakkale, and determined the influence of this perception on the behavioral intentions. The research’s area of application, which was Historic Battlefield of Gelibolu Peninsula and the Ancient City of Troy, might be effective in establishing order of importance of service quality dimensions. This study indicated that service quality dimensions that had the highest influence on the behavioral intentions were assurance, empathy, and physical appearance, respectively. This sequence might be due to the fact that tour involved a destination that brought guide’s knowledge and experience into the forefront. Different geographical conditions of Turkey may cause evaluations of tourists to be different. The physical factors may be more important in trips involving a longer travel where perceived quality of service of guides is assessed. Thus, the research can be applied in different destinations and different results can be achieved. As the findings of this study could also vary due to cultural differences, the same study can be performed again in Çanakkale but on tourists of different cultures. It can be expected that questions asked to tourists to measure the quality of service may be interpreted by tourist with a different point of view due to cultural differences. This should be considered in further studies to be performed on the quality of service of tourist guides.

Recommendations to Private Sector and Public Authorities

Based on their needs, tourists contact with many tourism establishments including food and beverage establishments, accommodation establishments, and travel agencies. When considering the concept of travel as a whole, services provided to tourists appear to be produced by the contribution of each tourism stakeholder. Although tourists were asked to evaluate the quality of service provided by the tourist guide in the guided tours, tourism establishments would play a positive or negative part in the perceived quality. While a guide is expected to perform his/her roles and responsibilities during a tour, the service establishments need to contribute to this process. Although the problems that may be caused by the tourism establishments are not the problems that a tourist guide should directly handle, the tourists will not ignore such problems and evaluate the tour as a whole when they evaluate their own travel. A tourist guide may be negatively affected by this, or needs to use extra effort not to be affected.

The establishments in the tourism sector have an important role in delivery of a high quality service by the tourist guides. Especially, the travel agents should be the major assistant of tour guides in the process from planning a tour program to the end of the travel. Not the commercial concerns but the quality of tour should be observed during a tour. It should be noted that a tourist guide is regarded as the representative of the travel agent during the tour. The state institutions and organizations have an important role to present and conserve historical, cultural and natural riches of a destination. Minimizing the potential problems in a tour would positively affect the perceived service quality by tourists. The major authority in this regard is the Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism which should take the initiative for arranging the areas, carrying out the required infrastructure activities, accessibility, easy transportation, safety and cleaning and take necessary actions to have a proper tour. Studies similar to this one will contribute to improvement of perceived quality of service.

Recommendations to Tourist Guides

Based on the research findings, the most important factor is the personal impression of the tourist guide although environmental factors have impacts on the measurement of service quality of tourist guides. The individual characteristics of tourist guide come to the forefront during a tour. The service quality dimensions “assurance and empathy” provided results of higher value as compared to the dimension “physical appearance”. Based on these data, difficulty of a tourist to express himself/herself to a tourist guide and their trust in the tourist guide are much more important than the physical appearance of the tourist guide or the materials used. Thus, tourist guides should consider to improve their communication skills and should not neglect to receive professional support, if needed.

When assessing the quality of service in the tours participated by tourists, it may be useful to identify the points that tourists focus on for the tourist guides to consider such points in the following tours. It appears that the knowledge and experience of tourist guides is one of the most important factors for the tourists to have trust in tourist guides. It would be very helpful for tourist guides to have substantial knowledge as much as possible for their professional development. The finding that guiding service provided during a tour affects the tourist’s approach to next tours should be considered.

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