

CULTURAL TOURISM EXPERIENCE ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION: EVIDENCE FROM THAILAND

Kanchana Sukanthasirikul

Suranaree University of Technology, Thailand
kansukan@sut.ac.th

Wanee Trongpanich

Rajamangala University of Technology Isan, Thailand
wanee.tr@rmuti.ac.th

ABSTRACT

This study examines the service quality of cultural tourism experience perceived by tourists on their satisfaction and further explores the relationships between perceived value, appraisal emotion, and customer satisfaction. A total of 327 respondents completed a survey conducted at two cultural festivals in Thailand. Using structural equation modeling (SEM) technique, the results reveal the direct and positive effects of the service quality on perceived value, appraisal emotion, and customer satisfaction. This study summarizes the findings and offers some interesting implications for practitioners and researchers.

Keywords: Cultural tourism, Satisfaction, Service quality

1. INTRODUCTION

Cultural tourism has become a critical part in establishing the attractiveness of tourism destinations (Nolan and Nolan, 1992; Harrison, 1997; Prentice, 2001, Richards, 2002; McKercher et al., 2005). According to Richards (1997), cultural tourism defined as all movements of persons for essentially cultural motivations with the intention to gather new information and experiences to satisfy their cultural needs. Thus, cultural tourism is traveling undertaken with historic sites, museums, the visual arts, and/or the performing arts such as study tours, performing arts and other cultural tours, travel to festivals and other cultural events, visit to sites and monuments travel to study nature, folklore or art or pilgrimages (Tighe, 1991; World Tourism Organization, 1985). As an industry, cultural tourism is extremely service driven in which service quality is a major issue. This study takes a marketing approach to allow a focus on some of the main drives of customer satisfaction in cultural tourism. From a marketing perspective, service quality plays an extremely important role in determining the tourist satisfaction which is the aim that both private and public cultural tourism providers strive to achieve (Voon and Lee, 2009). Understanding of service quality viewed by customers can provide insights on how to highlight quality as critical objectives for revitalising tourism industry. As such, service quality has become the centre of attention in all sectors of cultural

tourism as greater understanding of tourists is essential to achieve more effective development and marketing of cultural tourism (Craik, 1997).

Although previous researches have been widely discussed the concept of service quality by tourism researchers (Otto and Ritchie, 1996; Petrick and Backman, 2002; Al-Sabbahy, Ekinci and Riley, 2004; Tam, 2004; Petrick, 2004; Gallarza and Saura, 2006; Sanchez et al., 2006; Moliner et al., 2007; Ryu, Han and Kim, 2008), only a limited number of empirical studies have attempted to comprehensively investigate tourists' satisfaction in cultural attractions. Given the importance of the aspect of service quality in all facets of the tourism industry, this study addresses this gap in the literature by empirically investigating tourists' satisfaction in cultural tourism through festivals in Thailand. Specifically, this study focuses on satisfaction perceived by tourists' experiences and also explores the relationships between cultural tourism experiences. A better understanding of these relationships enable service providers and researchers gain insights into knowing tourists' perceived value and appraisal emotion, and adjust their services to meet tourists' satisfaction.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Tourists' satisfaction with their experience has become important for contemporary tourists in cultural tourism (Poria, Reichel and Biran, 2006; Reisinger and Steiner, 2006; Yeoman, Brass and McMahon-Beattie, 2007). In marketing perspective, satisfaction is the attitude consequence from the comparison of the expectation of performance and the perceived performance of the service experience (Oliver, 1980). Considering tourists as customer, customer satisfaction is primarily referred to as a function of pre-travel expectations and post-travel experiences. Further, Gill, Byslma and Ouschan (2007) and Ryu, Han and Kim (2008) explored that perceived value may be a better predictor of behavioural intentions than either satisfaction or quality. Value refers to the mental estimate that consumers make of the travel product, where perceptions of value are drawn from a personal cost/benefit assessment (Morrison, 1989). As such, the time or money spent in a trip is compared with tourists' experiences gained from that visit. In this sense, perceived value elicits form an assessment of the product or services purchased at the destination (Steven, 1992). In this study, service is what is that cultural tourists buy when they consume an experience, participate in an event (Lehman, Wickham and Fillis, 2014). When experiences compared to expectations result in feelings of gratification, the tourist is satisfied. Tourist experience is also an important factor for increasing tourists' satisfaction with the visited site (Tung & Ritchie, 2011). Further tourists' positive experience with the place visited enhances their satisfaction by enhancing their positive attitude toward the visited site (Moscardo, 1996; Pearce, 2009). Filep and Deery (2010) indicated that tourists can experience positive emotions such as joy, interest and contentment during their onsite activities and tourists' happiness is likely to produce positive satisfaction (Pearce, 2009).

Drawing on the cognitive appraisal theory from the marketing and tourism literature, this study attempts to illuminate the impact of tourists' perceived value of service quality through their experience on overall satisfaction. More specifically, this study focuses on the relationship between tourists and places as a determinant of satisfaction by examining the extent to which satisfaction varies across a cultural tourism through festivals on-site experience (Cohen, Prayang and Moital, 2014). Previous researches have also suggested that perceptions of service quality and value affect satisfaction (e.g., Oliver, 1980; Fornell, 1992; De Rojas and Camarero, 2008). In the study of Su and Hsu (2013), service quality, which

comprises of peripheral and core service quality, is an antecedent of tourists' consumption emotions that in turn influence satisfaction in the context of cultural tourism. If tourists perceived something beyond their expectation, a feeling of unexpected surprise will arise and in turn enhance their emotional experience (Tung and Ritchie, 2011). In this sense, appraisal emotion helps to produce a positive tourism experience of some personal emotional thoughts (Wang, 1999). To enhance tourists' perceived value and their appraisal emotion with the visited site, both peripheral and core service quality are required for comprehensive examination of specific factors for entirety of the experience and its augmentations (Lovelock and Gummesson, 2004).

Customers derive value from the exchanges and the purchases they make from factors such as convenience, from price savings, from emotional outcomes, from extra customer service and added extras. The benefit received by customers for the price of the service exchanged affects to emotion outcomes (Jones and Suh, 2000). As a result, the pleasure dimension of emotions results in customer satisfaction. Given all these theories, tourist' perceived value should result in their appraisal emotion and satisfaction of the site. Thus, a conceptual relationship model of this study is proposed (see Figure 1) and four hypotheses are made as follows.

- H1** Peripheral service quality has a direct and positive relationship to perceived value.
- H2** Core service quality has a direct and positive relationship to perceived value.
- H3** Perceived value has a direct and positive relationship to appraisal emotion.
- H4** Appraisal emotion has a direct and positive relationship to customer satisfaction.

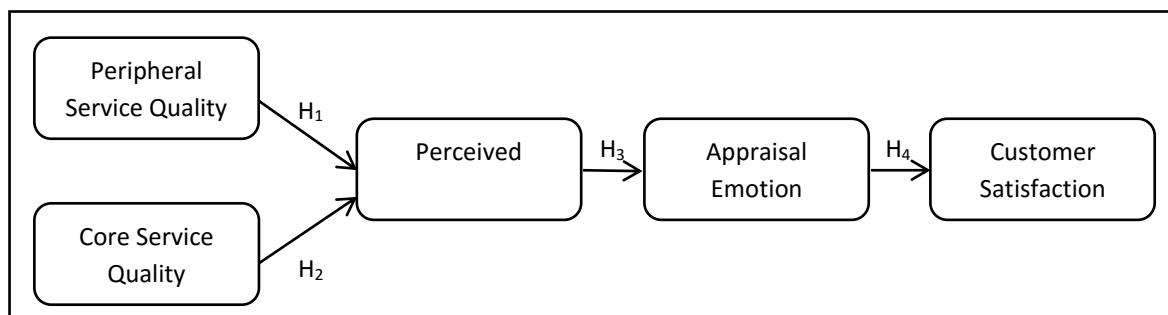


Figure 1: Conceptual model

3. RESEARCH METHOD

3.1. Sample and data collection

This study was conducted on-site in the travel stage. The target population was all the tourists. A self-administrated questionnaire survey was conducted to collect empirical data from tourists who visit in the traditional festival (1) The Candle Festival (Hae Thian), the traditional parading of elaborate candles to celebrate the largest religious ceremony, is held in Ubon Ratchathani, North Eastern, Thailand, and (2) The Ghost Festival (Phi Ta Khon), the traditional

parading of wearing ghost marks, is held in Dan Sai, Loei province, North Eastern, Thailand. Data collection was carried out over a period of two months from June to July 2014. From the sample size of 327 respondents, 58% are female tourists and about 51% are aged between 20 to 35 years old, while the majority (71%) of the respondents are single and around 58% hold a university degree.

3.2. Measurement of constructs

The questionnaire was designed based on a review of the literature and specific characteristics of cultural tourism and was pre-tested and revised to ensure content validity. The research instrument consisted of items dealing with peripheral service quality, core service quality, perceived value, appraisal emotion and customer satisfaction plus a number of items that captures demographic variable.

All items were tailored for wording to fit the cultural tourism context. Peripheral service quality was measured via the 6-item scale developed by Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1996). Core service quality was measured via the 7-item scale adapted from the industry structure scale originally developed by Murphy, Pritchard and Smith (2000) and Danaher and Mattsson (1994). Perceived value was measured via the 7-item scale developed by Murphy, Pritchard and Smith (2000), Balton and Drew (1991). Appraisal emotion was measured via the 6-item scale developed by Westbrook and Oliver (1991), De Rojas and Camarero (2008), and Hume and Mort (2010). Finally, customer satisfaction was measured via the 3-item scale developed by Oliver (1980) and De Rojas and Camarero (2008). Apart from respondent information measured by a categorical scale, all items of the constructs are measured by a 5-point Likert-type scale from 'strongly disagree (=1)' to 'strongly agree (=5)'.

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) are used to refine the measures and to assess the construct validity. Both statistical approaches are used to investigate the theoretical constructs, or factors that might be represented by a set of items. First, the principles' component analysis was used to decide on the number of factors by examining Eigen values output. All factors with Eigen values greater than 1 were selected using the Kaiser-Guttman rule (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2000). Orthogonal rotation using Varimax extraction method was then used to discover the factor structure internal reliability. Scale inclusion was determined using the reliability measure of Cronbach's alpha (Miller, 1970). Thus, all variables were considered acceptable as they exceed .60, indicating tolerable reliability.

All factor loadings are statistically significant (p -value $>.01$) and the composite reliabilities of each construct exceed .80, well-above the usual .60 benchmark (Hair et al., 2006). Thus, these measures demonstrate adequate convergent validity and reliability. To assess discriminant validity, this study examines whether the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct is greater than its highest shared variance with other constructs (Fornell and Larker, 1981). Overall, these results show that all items loaded appropriately onto their respective factors as show in Table I. Thus, the measures in this study possess adequate reliability and validity and the preliminary analysis indicated that the psychometric properties of the measures were acceptable to examine the hypotheses.

Table 1: Preliminary analysis

| | AVE | Composite Reliability | Cronbach Alpha | Loadings |
|--|------|-----------------------|----------------|----------|
| Peripheral service quality (6 items) | .575 | .889 | .851 | |
| 01. Parking accessibility | | | | .722 |
| 02. Travel convenience | | | | .795 |
| 03. Information venue availability | | | | .797 |
| 04. Comfortable accommodation | | | | .818 |
| 05. Food cleanliness | | | | .747 |
| 06. Safety system | | | | .659 |
| Core service quality (7 items) | .463 | .857 | .809 | |
| 07. Decorative costume attraction on the parade | | | | .705 |
| 08. Elaborate traditional parading | | | | .720 |
| 09. Portraying scenes from culture of the parade | | | | .617 |
| 10. Traditionally ascribing to the origins of the parade | | | | .689 |
| 11. Fully providing the details of the festival | | | | .627 |
| 12. Enriching value of the knowledge on the festival | | | | .697 |
| 13. Offering distinctive traditional ambience | | | | .699 |
| Perceived value (7 items) | .476 | .863 | .814 | |
| 14. Well deserving trip | | | | .755 |
| 15. Worth for money | | | | .774 |
| 16. Worth for effort | | | | .756 |
| 17. Worth for other relative attractive place | | | | .679 |
| 18. Worth for time | | | | .553 |
| 19. Worth for experience received | | | | .648 |
| 20. Good decision made to visit | | | | .678 |
| Appraisal emotion (6 items) | .580 | .892 | .853 | |
| 21. Contented | | | | .701 |
| 22. Entertained | | | | .712 |
| 23. Impressed | | | | .813 |
| 24. Joyful | | | | .808 |
| 25. Excitement | | | | .811 |
| 26. Spectacular | | | | .712 |
| Customer satisfaction (3 items) | .606 | .821 | .673 | |
| 27. Fulfilling a desire | | | | .704 |
| 28. Above expectation | | | | .810 |
| 29. Positive feelings | | | | .817 |

4. THE FINDINGS

The partial least squares (PLS) methodology for the measurement of structural equation models (SEM) was used to perform the analysis. SEM enables the simultaneous assessment of both the path (structural) and factor (measurement) models in one model. Smart-PLS 2.0 M3 tool was used to analyse the data to test the hypotheses. Table II provides explanation of target endogenous variable variance and inner model path coefficient sizes and significance. The coefficient of determination (R square) is 0.571 for the endogenous latent variable (customer satisfaction). This means that the four latent variables (peripheral service quality, core service quality, perceived value, and appraisal emotion) moderately explain 57.1% of the variance in customer satisfaction. While R square is 0.429 for the endogenous latent variable (appraisal emotion) which means that the three latent variables (peripheral service quality, core service quality, and perceived value) moderately explain 42.9% of the variance in appraisal emotion. Finally, peripheral service quality and core service quality together explain 42.6% of the variance of perceived value.

The path coefficients suggests that appraisal emotion has the strongest effect on customer satisfaction (0.755), followed by perceived value (0.655), core service quality (0.406), and peripheral service quality (0.302) respectively. All the hypothesized path relationships (between peripheral service quality and perceived value, between core service quality and perceived value, between perceived value and appraisal emotion, and between appraisal emotion and customer satisfaction) are statistically significant as their standardized path coefficient is higher than 0.1. Thus, the results can be concluded that AE and PV are both highly strong predictors of customer satisfaction. While core service quality is moderately strong predictors of customer satisfaction, and peripheral service quality is less strong predictors of customer satisfaction.

Table 2: Partial least squares results for the conceptual model

| Predicted variables | Predictor variables | Hypothesis | Beta | R Square | Critical ratio |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|------------|------|----------|----------------|
| Peripheral service quality | Perceived value | H1 | .302 | - | 2.249* |
| Core service quality | Perceived value | H2 | .406 | .426 | 2.998* |
| Perceived value | Appraisal emotion | H3 | .655 | .429 | 12.228* |
| Appraisal emotion | Customer satisfaction | H4 | .755 | .571 | 17.310* |

Note: *Indicates meets or exceeds minimum acceptable levels

5. CONCLUSION

Understanding the relationship between cultural tourism experience and customer satisfaction is likely to assist cultural service providers in determining those aspects of a service that should be measured, which procedures should be used in such measurement, and which factors are most likely best to predict the satisfaction of the tourists. The results of this study confirm that customer satisfaction is enhanced by appraisal emotion derived from service quality in cultural tourism. In the area of marketing applied to cultural tourism, stimulating tourists' activities are fundamentally awakening tourists' interest and increasing their knowledge about a specific matter so that the tourists will experience pleasure. Both private and public cultural tourism providers strive to achieve tourist satisfaction. This means

that cultural tourism providers should pay attention not only to improving the quality of service attributes, but also to improving the perceived value on appraisal emotion that tourists obtain from their service experience. However, core service quality was considered more important than peripheral service quality. The unique traditional architecture of the cultural tourism serves as the key factor for attraction. The extra or peripheral service that leads to perceived value will further enhance visitor satisfaction. Their costume, dances, handicrafts, language and cultural activities can be very attractive for satisfying tourist. This study shows when tourists participate in an event and consume the value inherent in the experiences offered affects in their satisfaction. Understanding the different levels of would provide useful insight into the nature of the cultural tourism experience. Thus, if a cultural tourism provider ignores the psychological environment of the cultural tourism service experience, the result will be an incomplete understanding of the core tourism experience. Cultural tourism processes should be managed around the emotion encounters which impact significantly on overall tourist satisfaction. The research findings offered some interesting implications for practitioners and further research. Firstly, it provides service providers and policy decision makers an insight into the tourists' expectations and emotion. Secondly, policy decision makers have to develop activities tailored to meet needs of the tourists. Finally, the policy decision makers must allocate resources and develop attractive policies towards the cultural tourism through festivals.

LITERATURE

1. Al-Sabbahy, H.Z., Ekinci, Y. and Riley, M. (2004). "An investigation of perceived value dimensions: implications for hospitality research", *Journal of Travel Research*, 42(3), 226–234.
2. Bolton, R.N. and Drew, J.H. (1991) "A multi-stage model of customers' assessments of service quality and value", *Journal of Consumer Research*, 17(4), 375-384.
3. Cohen, S.A., Prayang, G. and Moital, M. (2014) "Consumer behaviour in tourism: Concepts, influences and opportunities", *Current Issues in Tourism*, 17(10), 872-909.
4. Craik, J. (1997) "The culture of tourism". In *Touring cultures: Transformations of travel and theory*, Rojek C. and J. Urry (Eds). Routledge: London.
5. Danaher, P.J. and Mattsson, J. (1994) "Cumulative encounter satisfaction in the hotel conference process", *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 5(4), 69-80.
6. De Rojas, C. and Camarero, C. (2008) "Visitors' experience, mood and satisfaction in a heritage context: evidence from an interpretation center", *Tourism Management*, 29(3), 525-537.
7. Filep, S. and Deery, M. (2010) "Towards a picture of tourists' happiness", *Tourism Analysis*, 15(4), 399-410.
8. Fornell, C. (1992) "A national customer satisfaction barometer: the Swedish experience", *Journal of Marketing*, 56(1), 6-21.
9. Fornell, C. and Larcker, D.F. (1981) "Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error", *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18(1), 39-50.
10. Gallarza, M.G. and Saura, I.G. (2006) "Value dimensions, perceived value, satisfaction and loyalty: an investigation of university students' travel behaviour", *Tourism Management* 27(3), 437–452.

11. Gill, D., Byslma, B. and Ouschan, R. (2007) "Customer perceived value in a cellar door visit: the impact on behavioural intentions", *International Journal of Wine Business Research*, 19(4), 257-275.
12. Hair J.F., Black, W.C., Babin, B.J., Anderson, R.E. and Tatham, R.L. (2006) *Multivariate data analysis*. 4th ed. Prentice Hall: New Jersey.
13. Harrison, J. (1997) "Museums and touristic expectations", *Annals of Tourism Research*, 24(1), 23-40.
14. Hume, M. and Mort, G.S. (2010) "The consequence of appraisal emotion, service quality, perceived value and customer satisfaction on repurchase intent in the performing arts", *The Journal of Services Marketing*, 24(2), 170-182.
15. Jones, M.A. and Suh, J. (2000) "Transaction-specific satisfaction and overall satisfaction: an empirical analysis", *Journal of Services Marketing*, 14(2), 147-59.
16. Lehman, K., Wickham, M. and Fillis, I. (2014) "A cultural tourism research agenda", *Annals of Tourism Research*, 49(6), 156-158.
17. Lovelock, C.H. and Gummesson, E. (2004). "Whither services marketing? In search of a new paradigm and fresh perspectives", *Journal of Service Research*, 7(1), 20-41.
18. McKercher, P., Ho, P.S.Y. and Cros, D.H. (2005). "Relationship between tourism and cultural heritage management: evidence from Hong Kong", *Tourism Management*, 26(4), 539-548.
19. Miller, D.C. (1970) *Handbook of Research Design and Social Measurement*. 2nd ed., David McKay, New York, NY.
20. Moliner, A.M., Sanchez, J., Rodriguez, R.M. and Callarisa, L. (2007) "Relationship quality with a travel agency: the influence of the post purchase perceived value of a tourism package", *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 7(3): 194-211.
21. Morrison, A.M. (1989) *Hospitality and tourism marketing*. Albany, N.Y.: Delmar.
22. Moscardo, G. (1996) "Mindful visitors: Heritage and tourism", *Annals of Tourism Research*, 23(2), 376-397.
23. Murphy, P., Pritchard, M.P. and Smith, B. (2000) The destination product and its impact on traveller perceptions", *Tourism Management*, 21(1), 43-52.
24. Nolan, M.L. and Nolan, S. (1992) "Religious sites as tourism attractions in Europe", *Annals of Tourism Research*, 19(1), 68-78.
25. Oliver, R.L. (1980) "A cognitive model of the antecedents and consequences of satisfaction decisions", *Journal of Marketing Research*, 17(4), 460-469.
26. Otto, J.E. and Ritchie, J.R.B. (1996) "The service experience in tourism", *Tourism Management*, 17(3), 165-174.
27. Pearce, P. (2009) "The relationship between positive psychology and tourist behavior studies", *Tourism Analysis*, 14(1), 37-48.
28. Petrick, J.F. (2004) "First timers' and repeaters perceived value", *Journal of Travel Research*, 43(1), 29-38.
29. Petrick, J.F. and Backman, S.J. (2002) "An examination of the determinants of golf travelers' satisfaction", *Journal of Travel Research*, 40(3), 252-258.
30. Poria, Y., Reichel, A. and Biran, A. (2006) "Heritage site perceptions and motivations to visit." *Journal of Travel Research*, 44(3), 318-26.
31. Prentice, R. (2001) "Experiential cultural tourism: Museums and the marketing of the new romanticism of evoked authenticity", *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 19(1), 5-26.

32. Reisinger, Y., and C. Steiner (2006) "Reconceptualising interpretation: the role of tour guides in authentic tourism." *Current Issues in Tourism*, 9(6), 481-98.
33. Richards, G. (1997) "The social context of cultural tourism". In Richards, G (ed.) *Cultural Tourism in Europe*. Wallingford: CAB International.
34. Richards, G. (2002). "Tourism attraction systems: Exploring cultural behavior", *Annals of Tourism Research*, 29(4), 1048-1064.
35. Ryu, K., Han, H. and Kim, T-H. (2008) "The relationships among overall quick-causal restaurant image, perceived value, customer satisfaction, and behavioural intentions", *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 27(3), 459-469.
36. Sanchez, J., Callarisa, L., Rodriguez, R.M. and Moliner, M.A. (2006) "Perceived value of the purchase of a tourism product", *Tourism Management*, 27(3), 394-409.
37. Stevens, B.F. (1992) "Price Value Perceptions of Travelers", *Journal of Travel Research*, 31(2), 44-48.
38. Su, L.J. and Hsu, M.K. (2013) "Service Fairness, Consumption Emotions, Satisfaction, and Behavioral Intentions: The Experience of Chinese Heritage Tourists", *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, 30(8), 786-805.
39. Tabachnick, B.G. and Fidell, L.S. (2000). *Using Multivariate Statistics*, 4th ed., Harper-Collins, New York, NY.
40. Tam, J.L.M. (2004) "Customer satisfaction, service quality and perceived value: an integrative model", *Journal of Marketing Management*, 20(7), 897-917
41. Tighe, A. (1991) "Research on cultural tourism in the United States", *Travel and Tourism Research Association Proceedings*, 387-391.
42. Tung, V.W.S. and Ritchie, J.R.B. (2011) "Investigating the memorable experiences of the senior travel market: an examination of the reminiscence bump," *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 28(3), 331-343.
43. Voon, B.H. and Lee, N. (2009) "Identifying dimensions of tourist satisfaction for a cultural destination", *International Journal of Business and Society*, 10(1), 65-82.
44. Wang, N. (1999) "Rethinking authenticity in tourism experience", *Annals of Tourism Research*, 26(2), 349-370.
45. World Tourism Organization (1985) *The role of recreation management in the development of active holidays and special interest tourism and the consequent enrichment of the holiday experience*. Madrid: World Tourism Organization.
46. Westbrook, R.A. and Oliver, R.L. (1991) "The dimensionality of consumption emotion patterns and consumer satisfaction", *Journal of Consumer Research*, 18(1), 84-91.
47. Yeoman, I., D. Brass and U., McMahon-Beattie (2007). "Current issue in tourism: the authentic tourist", *Tourism Management*, 28(4) 1128-1138.
48. Zeithaml, V.A., Berry, L.L. and Parasuraman, A. (1996) "The behavioral consequences of service quality", *Journal of Marketing*, 60(2), 31-46.