

The Influence of Personality Traits on the Experienced Service Quality of Tourism and Hospitality Students as Guests in Resorts

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Abstract

While many studies had been conducted on provisions of quality service in hospitality organizations, very few researches exist on understanding the guests' personalities and their effect on their experienced service. The aim of this study was to examine the influence of personality traits of guests on the service quality that they experienced in the resort sector. Using quantitative research design, the study employed a three-sectioned questionnaire posted online, which was answered by 117 tourism and hospitality student-participants who had experienced service in a resort establishment. Through the statistical software program Jamovi, data were analyzed using regression and MANOVA. Results showed that there is a remarkable significant influence of all personality traits on the dimensions of experienced service quality. This has an important implication on resort management, which can plan on how they could meet guests' service expectations, and focus on developing specific strategies that address key drivers of guest satisfaction.

Key Words: Personality traits, Experienced Service Quality, Resort Sector, MANOVA

Introduction

Providing service quality and value that guests expect is a major hospitality principle. Achieving this most challenging for hospitality organizations (Kapiki, 2012) because service quality is not merely defined by tourism and hospitality organization owners, nor by their managers and staff, nor by their rating. Service quality is defined completely in the mind of the guests (Ford, Sturman, & Heaton, 2012). Guests' opinions and expectations are, therefore, crucial in the service quality process. Therefore, there is a need for various tools to measure and improve quality service, and for various mechanisms for quality recognition in the tourism and hospitality industry.

In addition to this, there has been an increase in expectations of accrediting hospitality organizations because of global competition, which calls for bigger accountability from governments. Moreover, because of students' demand for an education that trains them for a career in the field, most of the hospitality programs and curriculums are now obliged to have an effective process of assessing learning outcomes. This is viewed as a positive development because it can be considered as a best-practice in higher education (Reich, Collins, DeFranco, & Pieper, 2019).

Furthermore, while researchers have discovered the link between customer orientation, innovation, and business performance in different organizations, few such studies exist in the hotel industry sector. This is especially true about the resort segment, which is considered a unique and dynamic segment of the hospitality industry, producing a unique environment where managers must deal with a wide range of unique issues. Prior research into the area of resort management has been limited in scope, and calls for more investigation into the underlying reasoning behind management practices” (Brey, 2011).

One area of interest is the influence of personality types on notions of service quality, which is deemed relevant in determining hospitality industry performance. This could be an extension of previous studies such as those done by Tajeddini (2020), which explored the impact of customer orientation and innovativeness on the performance of the hospitality industry; and of Yusof, Rahman, and Iranmanesh (2015), which investigated the effects of resort service quality, location quality and environmental practices on the loyalty of guests, the results of which suggest that well-trained staff, prompt service and sufficient information on the tourism attributes of the resort are crucial to providing guests with high-quality service.

Many things have been said about how to improve consumers’ perceptions on satisfaction and empowerment, yet, very few research aims to give ideas on how consumers, depending on their personality traits, tend to perceive satisfaction and empowerment, and how such satisfaction relates to a state of empowerment (Di Mascio, 2010; Grewal, Krishnan & Lindsey-Mullikin, 2008; Hunter & Garnefeld, 2008). Moreover, Hovenga (2011) holds that there is a significant influence of some of the personality traits on some of the service quality dimensions in the hotel sector.

Thus, this study would like to examine the influence of personality traits of Hospitality and Tourism students on their experienced service quality as guests in resort establishments. This study would be significant to resort managers. Through insights gained on how to maximize the guest experience of service quality, they can develop specialized programs or plans for different components of their guests’ experience. Resorts can differentiate themselves from the competitors and gain a competitive advantage.

The main research questions of this study are as follows:

1. Do openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism (OCEAN personality traits) have a significant influence on the experienced service quality of resorts’ guests?
2. Which among the service quality experienced by the resort’s guests are significantly influenced by the five personality traits?
3. What are the possible impacts of these experienced service quality to the resorts’ guests, and what are their possible influence on resort management?

Literature review

This section includes some discussion on related literature about personality traits, service quality dimensions, and a description of the resort sector.

Personality traits

The Big Five Personality dimensions are considered important to understand how consumers behave and tend to prioritize aspects in a retail business environment. These dimensions are: (a) Extroversion, or the degree to which someone is talkative, sociable, active, aggressive, and excitable; (b) Agreeableness, or the degree to which someone is trusting, amiable, generous, tolerant, honest, cooperative, and flexible; (c) Conscientiousness, or the degree to which someone is dependable and organized, conforms to the needs of the job, and perseveres on tasks; (d) Emotional stability, or the degree to which someone is secure, calm, independent, and autonomous; and (e) Openness to experience, or the degree to which someone is intellectual, philosophical, insightful, creative, artistic, and curious.

There have been studies that provide evidence of how the Big Five Personality Traits are positively correlated to customer empowerment or a “state of empowerment” perception; and of how the dimensions of conscientiousness, agreeableness, and neuroticism have a significant relationship to the state of empowerment promoted among consumers (Castillo, 2017).

Furthermore, in the tourism and travel literature, the personality concept and its relationship with other behavioral variables have been investigated by other researchers. One set of studies investigates the service providers’ (staff) personality, while another set of studies focuses on the customers’ personality (Kocabulut & Albayrak, 2019).

Service quality

The concept of service is multidimensional and difficult to define and evaluate. It becomes a particularly complex issue in high-contact service industries such as tourism, hospitality, or leisure, which, by themselves, are extremely difficult to define and explain. Some measures of personality traits have been developed and validated for use in the different psychological processes.

The difficulty of defining a service and its quality is also increased by its subjective nature. The perception of a service level varies according to an individual's sociodemographic and cultural grouping, needs and requirements, and previous service experiences. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) reported that service quality is determined by a subjective customer perception of service. Lewis and Booms (1983) highlighted the subjective nature of service quality by noting that there is an element of "appropriateness" about service quality. They noted that evaluation of service quality depends upon "what is acceptable and what is not" (p. 100). The study of Lin and Yu-Chieh (2014), on the other hand, indicate that service quality positively affects tourist satisfaction and relationship quality as well as tourist loyalty; and that satisfaction and relationship quality positively affect tourist loyalty.

Resort sector

A resort is a full-service lodging facility that provides access to or offers a range of amenities and recreation facilities to emphasize a leisure experience. Resorts serve as the primary

provider of the guests' experience, often provide services for business or meetings, and are characteristically located in vacation-oriented settings (Brey, 2011).

In the Philippines, hotels and resorts, as mandated by the Department of Tourism (DOT) in the National Tourism Development Plan 2016-2022, are supposed to be “equipped with best practices and techniques for sustainable development and ecotourism that will largely contribute to the country's green economy and will lead to a highly competitive, environmentally sound and socially responsible Philippines.” These properties are seen as resorts in the truest sense. They serve as the primary motivation to visit a destination and have characteristically high levels of service.

In support of this mandate, several models have been developed to measure and manage service quality for research in the hotel and resort sector. These include the following: (a) Gap model or revised version: Ling-Feng Hsieh (2008), Rooma Roshnee Ramsaran- Fowdar (2006); Akan (1995); Juwaheer (2004); María Elisa Alén González (2007); Getty and Thompson (1994, LODGQUAL); (b) Two- and three-dimensional quality approach: Lehtinen et al. (1991); Rust & Oliver (1994); Grönroos (1984); (c) Third-order factor model: Brady and Cronin (2001); (d) Lodging Quality index: Getty and Getty (2003), Riadh Ladhari (2009); (e) HOLSERV: Mei et al. (1999).

Many studies in the past talk about hospitality and tourism industry, taking into consideration the provision of quality standards of products and services to the guests. Kapiki (2012) stated that “delivering quality service is one of the major challenges the hospitality managers will be facing in the following years as it is an essential condition for success in the emerging, keenly competitive, global hospitality markets”. But even if there are numerous tools used to measure and improve quality service, very few mentioned how experienced service quality might be influenced by personality traits of a guest in a resort. This include the study of Hee (2014) which attempted to conduct validity and reliability tests for the Big Five personality traits scale in a survey of 343 nurses in the health tourism hospitals in Malaysia.

Although many researchers deem it adequate to describe the structure of personality globally, it is suggested that conducting another validity and reliability test is necessary when a study is conducted in countries with different cultural perspectives. Therefore, this study could guide future personality research especially in the resort sector in the country. Moreover, there is always room for further research on the hospitality services, especially those that seek to address expectations of guests and to promote continuous quality improvement.

Conceptual framework

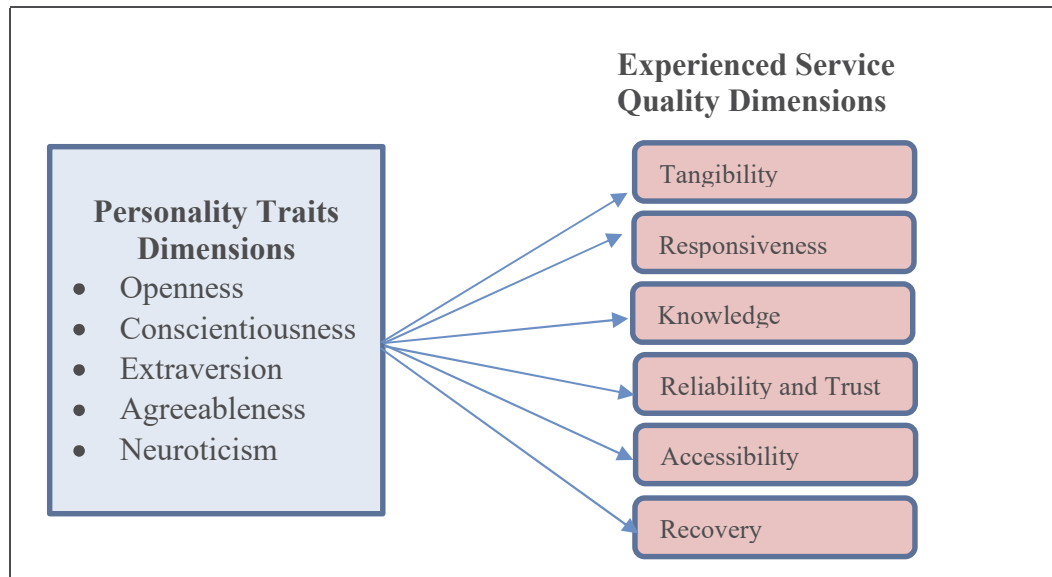
This study uses two models, namely the Big Five Personality Traits, and the Service Quality Model of Olorunniwo and Hsu (2014).

The five core personality traits captured in the Big Five Model are used by psychologists in many different areas, and has been proven useful both for individual assessment and for the elucidation of a number of topics of interests in personality (McCrae & John, 1992). The researcher finds it helpful to use the acronym OCEAN for the five basic dimensions of personality traits

(openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism) in its discussion and presentation (Hee, 2014). The appeal of the model is threefold: It integrates a wide array of personality constructs, thus facilitating communication among researchers of many different orientations; it is comprehensive, giving a basis for systematic exploration of the relations between personality and other phenomena; and it is efficient, providing at least a global description of personality with as few as five scores.

Olorunniwo and Hsu's (2014) Service Quality (SQ) model, on the other hand, is based on typology analysis of Olorunniwo (2006), which investigates service typology and the service quality construct. While different service typologies emphasize different dimensions of SQ, Olorunniwo claims that his typology is geared towards helping service employees serve customers better. Adopting Schmenner's (2004) service quality classification scheme, Olorunniwo adopted the dimensions deemed important among customers in the mass service, namely: (a) Tangibility, which includes the physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of personnel; (b) Responsiveness, or the willingness or readiness of employees or professionals to provide service targeted to customers' specific needs; (c) Knowledge, which refers to the knowledge and competence of service providers, possession of necessary skills, etc.; (d) Accessibility, or the service provider's ability – through its location, operating hours, employees and operational systems – to design and deliver the service capable of adjusting to the demands and wishes of customers in a flexible way; and (e) Reliability, or the degree to which customers can rely on the service provider to keep promises and perform with the best interests of the customers.

Figure 1
Conceptual Model



Source: (Olorunniwo & Hsu, 2014)

Hypothesis

H₀: Not all the five personality traits have significant influence on each of the dimensions of experienced service quality.

H_a: All five personality traits have a significant influence on each of the dimensions of experienced service quality

Methodology

Participants of the study were third year and fourth year Hospitality and Tourism Management students of a local community college who had experienced visiting a resort. These tourism and hospitality students are knowledgeable with the kind of service quality that guests expect from any hospitality establishment, making them valuable respondents for this study.

Using purposive sampling, this study was able to collect data from 117 respondents out of a total population of 130. This was more than the proposed sample size of 98, as computed using Slovin formula, with a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. Data were obtained by administering a three-sectioned self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire was posted online, through Google form. A web page linkage allowed the target population to access the online survey via e-mail and personal messages.

The Likert scales used ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), except for the question on demographic profile. The first part of the questionnaire is based on the OCEAN personality traits with the 44 item Big Five Inventory by John and Srivastava (1999). The second part was designed to measure the service quality, with questions was based on the questionnaire developed by Olorunniwo (2006). This questionnaire is based on perceptions only measurements (SERVPERF), which was designed for the hotel sector, and which took into consideration Schmenner's (2004) classification. This questionnaire is a revised version of the 22 questions of the SERVQUAL instrument. The third part of the questionnaire was designed to get the demographic characteristics of respondents such as gender, age, number of visits to the resort in a year, region of the resort and reason for going to the resort.

The data obtained were analyzed with the statistical software program Jamovi, a statistical platform use to provide statistical analysis for reliability, correlation and regression. Linear regression was used to examine the influence of personality traits on the experienced service quality of the guests in the resort.

Results and discussion

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the respondents. Among the 117 resort guests, majority are male (male :M=1;F=72 or 61.5%, female: M=2;F=45 or 38.5%), choose to stay in a resort twice a year (Once a year: M=1; twice a year: M=2; trice a year:M=3...M=6) in a standard resort (De Luxe: M=1; First Class: M=2; Standard: M=3; Economy: M=4) during holiday (Business: M=1; Holiday: M=2; others: M3).

Table 1*Descriptive Analysis of the Demographic Profile*

Demographic Characteristics	Counts	% Total	Cumulative %	Mean	Median
Gender				1	1
1 Male	72	61.5 %	61.5 %		
2 Female	45	38.5 %	100.0 %		
Frequency Stay at Resort				3	3
1 Once a year	0	0%	0%		
2 Twice a year	56	47.9 %	47.9 %		
3 Three times a year	32	27.4 %	75.2 %		
4 Four times a year	16	13.7 %	88.9 %		
5 Five times a year	7	6.0 %	94.9 %		
6 more than five times	6	5.1 %	100.0 %		
Classification of the resort				3	3
1 De Luxe	7	6.0 %	6.0 %		
2 First Class	12	10.3 %	16.2 %		
3 Standard	98	83.8 %	100 %		
Reason for stay in this resort				2	1
1 Business	71	60.7 %	60.7 %		
2 Holiday	1	0.9 %	61.5 %		
3 Others	45	38.5 %	100.0 %		

Construct reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha, to verify how well the set of item measures hypothesized for this construct belong together. Table 2 shows that the value of Cronbach's alpha ranged from 0.849 to 0.882, which means that all the value are higher than the recommended value of 0.80 (Taber, 2016) indicating that the scale holds an exceptional internal reliability and consistency.

Table 2*Reliability Analysis of the Constructs*

	Cronbach's Alpha
Openness	0.877
Conscientiousness	0.872
Extraversion	0.865
Agreeableness	0.871
Neuroticism	0.882
Tangibles	0.855
Responsiveness	0.849

Cronbach's Alpha	
Knowledge	0.851
Reliability	0.855
Accessibility	0.855
Recovery	0.853

The succeeding tables show all the linear regression results, which was meant to determine whether all the five personality factors such as openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism (OCEAN) have a significant influence on service quality experienced by resort guests. Table 3, for example, shows that it is openness and extraversion personality traits that have a significant influence on the tangibility dimension of experienced service quality, while Table 4 shows that openness to experience, extrovert and agreeableness are three factors that significantly influence the responsiveness dimension.

Table 3
OCEAN Influence on TANGIBILITY dimension

Predictor	Estimate	SE	T	P
Intercept	1.0850	0.669	1.622	0.108
Openness	0.2588	0.129	2.011	0.047
Conscientiousness	0.0774	0.147	0.527	0.599
Extraversion	0.3044	0.153	1.994	0.049
Agreeableness	0.1565	0.147	1.064	0.290
Neuroticism	-0.0210	0.138	-0.152	0.879

Table 4
OCEAN Influence on RESPONSIVENESS dimension

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p
Intercept	0.5404	0.624	0.866	0.388
Openness	0.2946	0.120	2.454	0.016
Conscientiousness	-0.1147	0.137	-0.837	0.404
Extraversion	0.4139	0.142	2.906	0.004
Agreeableness	0.3496	0.137	2.548	0.012
Neuroticism	-0.0384	0.129	-0.298	0.766

Table 5 shows that openness and extraversion have a significant influence on the knowledge dimension. Table 6, on the other hand, shows that it is only extraversion (being

talkative, sociable, active, aggressive, and excitable) that has a significant influence on the reliability dimension.

Table 5

OCEAN Influence on KNOWLEDGE dimension

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p
Intercept	1.4249	0.621	2.294	0.024
Openness	0.2986	0.120	2.498	0.014
Conscientiousness	0.0172	0.136	0.126	0.900
Extraversion	0.2878	0.142	2.029	0.045
Agreeableness	0.2092	0.137	1.531	0.129
Neuroticism	-0.1056	0.129	-0.822	0.413

Table 6

OCEAN Influence on RELIABILITY dimension

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p
Intercept	1.2860	0.674	1.90876	0.059
Openness	0.1721	0.130	1.32773	0.187
Conscientiousness	9.58e-4	0.148	0.00647	0.995
Extraversion	0.3564	0.154	2.31737	0.022
Agreeableness	0.1881	0.148	1.26930	0.207
Neuroticism	-0.0148	0.139	-0.10626	0.916

Table 7 shows that openness and extraversion have a significant influence on the accessibility dimension of experienced service quality, while Table 8 shows that extraversion and neuroticism influence the recovery dimension of experienced service quality.

Table 7

OCEAN Influence on ACCESSIBILITY dimension

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	P
Intercept	1.03665	0.590	1.7579	0.082
Openness	0.23443	0.113	2.0659	0.041
Conscientiousness	-0.00729	0.129	-0.0563	0.955
Extraversion	0.39510	0.135	2.9348	0.004
Agreeableness	0.12572	0.130	0.9692	0.335
Neuroticism	0.03106	0.122	0.2546	0.800

These results disprove the hypothesis that all personality traits have a significant influence on each of the dimensions of service quality. Evidence show that specific personality traits have an influence on specific service quality dimensions.

Table 8

OCEAN Influence on RECOVERY dimension

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p
Intercept	0.71542	0.574	1.2461	0.215
Openness	0.14479	0.110	1.3106	0.193
Conscientiousness	0.00636	0.126	0.0505	0.960
Extraversion	0.42297	0.131	3.2271	0.002
Agreeableness	-0.00797	0.126	-0.0631	0.950
Neuroticism	0.31567	0.119	2.6576	0.009

The researcher also tested the robustness of the data using the Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA), a statistical technique used to assess statistical differences on multiple continuous dependent variables by an independent grouping variable (Leeuw & Angeles, 2014). In this study, the service quality dimensions are the dependent variables and OCEAN factors of personality traits are the independent group of variables. Table 9 shows consistency with the result found in all the tables for linear regressions, which proved the robustness of the earlier statistical tests. Openness and extraversion, among all the five personality traits, are significant for some of the dimensions of the experienced service quality of the guests.

Table 9

Robustness Tests - MANOVA

Multivariate Tests		value	F	df1	df2	P
Openness	Wilks' Lambda	0.843	3.257	6	105	0.006
Conscientiousness	Wilks' Lambda	0.926	1.408	6	105	0.219
Extraversion	Wilks' Lambda	0.842	3.295	6	105	0.005
Agreeableness	Wilks' Lambda	0.930	1.312	6	105	0.258
Neuroticism	Wilks' Lambda	0.863	2.774	6	105	0.015

Conclusions, Limitations and Recommendations

It is remarkable that four out of the five personality traits have an important role to play in the experienced quality dimensions of tangibility, responsiveness, knowledge, reliability, accessibility and recovery. Although on the basis of regression analysis there are only specific

personality trait factors that influence specific dimensions of service quality, it was only conscientiousness that proved to be insignificant for all the service quality dimensions.

Indeed, the results have an important implication on resort sector. Resort management must be aware of how personality traits influence specific dimensions of service quality, in order for them to be able to plan on how they could meet the guest expectations of service. As Blanchard and Ridge (2010) said, “high performing organizations design work processes from the customer backward to ensure a flow that makes sense from a customer’s perspective. Internal cross-functional relationships and structures are organized around customer needs. This creates constant innovation in operating practices, market strategies, products, and services.

Just like any other research, this study is not without its limitations. A sample targeting a larger population would probably lead to a better result. Another limitation is in the variety of resorts where the respondents stayed is too large. Focusing on a specific classification of a resort could probably lead also to a more focused study of service quality of a resort. It is recommended that a similar study be undertaken, but with additional variables or with alternative tools that measure personality traits or service quality, and by employing other type of respondents.

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