



Adaptation of hospitality service quality scales for marina services



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ABSTRACT

Main purpose of this study is to reveal the effects of service quality perceptions of yachtsmen on their satisfaction, repurchase, and recommendation intentions towards “Five Gold Anchors” awarded marinas in Turkey. Research was conducted in four languages on 246 yachtsmen from 19 nations. Confirmatory factor analysis is used for data purification of Marinas' Service Quality Dimensions. Multiple regression analyses are used to test the research hypotheses. Besides putting forward a sector specific service quality instrument, results revealed significant recommendations on how to increase the degree of yachtsmen's satisfaction towards their service providers for both researchers and practitioners.

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1. Introduction

Marinas were intrinsically constituted as an alternative to berthing in open waters for three main reasons which are convenience, safety and security (Swanson and Spaulding, 1990). Therefore, it can be stated that the marinas which provide convenient and high quality services are preferable for yachtsmen. For the last two decades, service quality and its assessment has become a crucial and distinctive feature for the service organizations. As Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry stated in 1985, importance of service quality to firms and consumers is unequivocal. Besides, measurement of service quality has received growing attention of tourism and leisure researchers (Saleh and Ryan, 1991; Reidenbach and Sandifer-Smallwood, 1990; Fick and Ritchie, 1991; Leblanc, 1992; Gabbie and O'Neill, 1997; Fu and Parks, 2001; Hudson et al., 2004; Kouthouris and Alexandris, 2005; Hu et al., 2009). Even though these studies dealt with such tourism organizations as hotels, hospitals, restaurants, clubs and travel agencies, service quality research in marinas is still very rare.

This study aims to understand emotions and behaviours of yachtsmen towards service quality of marinas and thus to reveal the relationship between yachtsmen's perceptions of marina service quality and their satisfaction, likely repurchase and recommend

intentions. The study also aims to assess service quality dimensions of marinas by proposing an instrument as an advanced version of existing service quality measurement instruments. The study first instructs about the leisure yachting industry in general and reviews the satisfaction and service quality concepts in the context of marina industries. Following the methodology section that describes the sample, methods, and measures, the data analysis and results of the research are presented. Next, findings of the study are discussed in terms of implications. The study concludes with the main limitations and recommendations for future research.

2. Leisure yachting industry and marinas

Referring to John Masefield's (2008) quote “I must down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky”, we may presume that he is dedicated to hearing the call of the oceans with the desire to explore world's seas, mystic islands and distant shores, thus the poem indeed expresses the very special instinct of yachting. Yachting is defined as a special interest marine tourism product or niche tourism activity which is accomplished by the use of vessels like boats, providing satisfaction to recreation, sports, enjoyment and related needs of sea lover global independent travellers (Richins, 1992; Avcikurt, 2004; Sariisik et al., 2011; Luković, 2012). Quildon and Pun (2011) defined yachting as “provider-located services characterized by cross-border flows of consumers with their purchasing power”, thus yacht tourism may be regarded as part of coastal and marine/nautical tourism leading to higher yield tourists who

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spend much higher amounts on average when compared with other categories of international tourists (Hall, 2001; Karanci, 2011: 3) for at least 180–210 days actively in the year (Kovačić et al., 2011; Jugovic et al., 2011). At this juncture, marine and nautical tourism were accepted as synonyms by various authors (Marusic et al., 2014) and include all recreational tourist activities related with the sea such as cruises, diving, fishing and maritime excursions (Diakomihalis and Isik, 2011).

Even though the nautical tourism industry is identified by a “scenery of strong international demand” (De Sousa et al., 2009) “the exact number of marine tourists remains unknown” (Hall, 2001). Moreover, this industry is known with the “difficulty in recording of statistical data for the precise estimation of its real size” (Diakomihalis, 2007). Some statistics on yachting industry reveal the attractiveness with six million recreational crafts and that some 32 million people participate in leisure boating per year in Europe (ICOMIA, 2007). In the USA, estimated number of recreational crafts is some 16.35 million and 83 million adults participated in recreational boating (including surfing, cruising, fishing, scuba-diving, yachting, etc.) at least once during 2011 (NMMA, 2012). According to National Marine Manufacturers Association’s (NMMA) statistical abstract, half of all boat and engine imports of USA in 2011 were from Asia. Leisure yachting industry has a considerable positive economic impact, especially to some high share European countries like England and France, since the sector has seven–eight times more value than the yacht sales and an average yacht tourist spends nearly six times more onshore (Douglas, 2005: 44). In Asia, Asia Pacific countries are among the featured places for yachting due to the increasing attention towards recreational boating and upward economies of China, India, Southeast Asia, and Korea (Hare, 2015). China has a 32 thousand kilometres coastline including mainland and islands. According to NMMA (2014), marine tourism and yacht sport will become a primary recreation option for the ascending Chinese middle class. Additionally, Japan is currently the world’s 11th largest boat market and Taiwan has a marine sector that is well-developed and competitive in yacht and ship building industry (NMMA, 2014).

Realistically, tourism activities have both positive and negative impacts on the destinations’ environment. Fletcher et al. (2013: 177) indicate that “On the negative side, tourism may have direct environmental impacts on the quality of water, air and noise levels. Sewage disposal in to water will add to pollution problems, as will the use of powered boats on inland waterways and sheltered seas.” The negative impact on environment and sustainability issues linked to yachting activities may compose of; improper boat operation, boat grounding, sewage, garbage and oil disposals, emission of substances and anchoring which should be dealt with in detail (Hall, 2001; UNEP, 2009; NORA, 2013). As an example, the use of anchors for mooring recreational boats can be extremely harmful for near-shore marine ecosystems such as fewer fish, fewer living and new corals, more algae growth, cloudy water, destruction of sea grass beds (Mill, 2008: 136). Since yacht tourism travels are becoming very popular, related topics, such as safety and security of recreational boaters (Garau-Vadell, 2007), sustainable management of nautical facilities, control and measuring their use of natural resources, flexibility and adaptability of services to the recreational boaters’ needs (Hall, 2001; Carrasco, 2002; Jugovic et al., 2011; Horak, 2013) should be taken into consideration. Accordingly, prevention of the natural surroundings is an essential prerequisite for the progress and sustainability of tourism sector, thus, protecting the nature must be a priority for the nautical tourism activities (Favro et al., 2008). Diakomihalis and Lagos (2008) stated that an important factor in the progress of yachting is harbour infrastructure and possibility of providing services to the yachtsmen in marinas. In this regard, marinas are becoming crucial for the leisure yachting industry on a

global scale. This being the case, looking through some definitions related with marinas and the range of services they offer seems to be useful.

2.1. Marinas and their services

In order to encapsulate what a marina is, it can be said that it’s a “specially designed harbour with moorings for pleasure yachts and small boats” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2014). According to The Yacht Harbour Association (TYHA, 2007) of Britain “a marina can range from a small yacht haven accommodating only a few boats to a multiple vessel harbour with a boat yard and commercial outlets.” Besides these, for more inclusive and complicated marinas, IMI (International Marina Institute) (1998 as cited in Mill, 2001) employs the term “Destination Resort Marina” and explains it as follows: “A destination resort marina is; accessible by land and by water, including berth places for visitors, accommodation, dining facilities, swimming pool, and other entertainment and leisure facilities that provide a resort atmosphere”. A destination resort marina must be something more than just a parking place for boats and should offer a variety of facilities and services such as a boatyard, showers, restaurants, cafe and bars, vending machines, a fish cleaning station, shops for fishing and boating equipment, grocery and souvenir shops, boutiques and so on (Stone, 2000). Apart from marinas, there are some other “recreational nautical installations” (Gonzalez et al., 2015) such as private and public ports, piers, dry docks, fishing harbours, etc. Every single type of recreational nautical installation provides a different bundle of services appropriate to its capacity and category. According to Gonzalez et al. (2015) four main criteria might be used for the classification of marina services as; basic services; peripheral services (electricity, water); basic derived services (toilets, swimming pool, dry docks) and complementary services (recreational activities away from the sea) (Chaparría, 2000 as cited in Gonzalez et al., 2015).

On the purpose of classifying recreational nautical installations, various certification and standardization systems are in use at national or international levels and “Gold Anchor Award” is one of the most popular and wellknown classification systems conducted by TYHA. Gold Anchor award scheme has been auditing marinas for more than 25 years and marinas that are holding award form one to five gold anchors are subject to a series of meticulous tests (TYHA, 2014). The main marina audit consists of a comprehensive set of criteria and is surveyed by a marina expert. If the marina cannot meet the criteria, it cannot gain any Gold Anchors (TYHA, 2014).

In Turkey, totally there are 42 marinas and boat yards from very low capacity ones to the large ones (Association of Tourism Writers & Journalists, 2015). These marinas and boat yards provide national and international yachtsmen with a wide range of services. At the time of field research, ten marinas which held “Five Gold Anchor” award in Turkey were chosen to reach their yachting customers as a market niche of the Mediterranean nautical industry.

3. Satisfaction and yachtsmen’s attitudes towards marina services

The service industries become more important each day as the economies prosper (Taylor, 2003). In addition to that, the service industries are increasingly becoming more concerned about customer satisfaction due to; changing profile of the consumers, increasing competition and changing trends towards innovation for successful operations and higher sales (Gordon and McDougall, 2000; Mosahab et al., 2010). Therefore, it could be useful to mention some of the reasons for the primacy placed on customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction such as, significance of keeping customers in today’s competitive environment, difficulty and expensiveness

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