

# The Influence of Information Search Channel on Service Quality Attributes of Tourism Service Provider

Changsuk Chun

Dept. of Tourism Management Namseoul University  
91 Daehak-ro, SeungHwan-eup Seobok-Gu, Cheonan, Korea  
[cschun@nsu.ac.kr](mailto:cschun@nsu.ac.kr)

**Abstract.** It is important to understand the difference of service quality attributes which is important when consumers make a decision to purchase travel service. The three major channels used for information gathering to purchase travel service are known as interpersonal channel, office channel, and internet. We confirm that the important service quality attributes of tourism service providers are significantly different according to information search channel. The level of information search efforts for each channel also have significant influence on the importance of service quality attributes.

**Keywords:** Information search channel, Service Quality Attribute, Tourism.

## 1 Introduction

In case of travel business, the costs of travel products depend heavily on the element suppliers of tourism like hotels, restaurants, attractions, and airlines. This cost condition of tourism products created low-margin model of travel service providers and eventually made small portion of promotional and advertising budget allotment in the business. Small and medium-sized travel business also have little budget and experts for market research and communication strategy. But the newly emerged technologies of information and communication such as Internet, mobile communication technology including smartphone had a significant influence on the decision-making process of consumers and could be a successful source of communication between small and medium-sized travel business and consumers (A: Angel Diaz-Chao, et., el., 2015). The Internet have changed the manner of information search and business advertising and now travelers use search engine on their desktop computer at home or use mobile phone to log in the internet homepage to find useful information. Some consumers prefer to call on the travel agency directly to gather and confirm the relevant information. At last, some of them love to communicate with people who have same interest and expert-level knowledge and information (B: Carmen Sabote-Ortiz, et. el., 2014). This study tries to explore the difference of service quality attribute of tourism service provider when consumers use different information search channels.

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Information search channel for travel-related service purchase

Information search behavior is conducted to reduce the risk of purchase and particularly in case of service products; high degree of uncertainty, information search behavior is more sophisticate. Products with strong service attributes make us search information especially through interpersonal information source (C: Fodness, et., el., 1999). Touristic behavior was correlated with high involvement and high involvement situation also required more information regarding service quality attribute (D: Jamrozy, et el., 1996). The construct of opinion leadership was adapted to find out the impact of interpersonal communication in the context of small products and fashions (E: Childers, 1986). Word-of-mouth known as one of the interpersonal influence communication methods also has more credibility than advertising messages. Nowadays travelers use the interpersonal information channel through friends, colleagues and family members who had enough experience and knowledge. Travel agency also played important role in the field of information distribution channel for a long times and it was one of the traditional and popular source of tourism information (B: Carmen Sabiote-Ortiz, et, el., 2014). In case of complicated routs, multi-destinations, a reputable travel agent can save time, money, and uncertainty. Internet based on-line information search channel is currently the most widely used information channel for tourism products. The Internet had changed the manner of information search and business advertising. Many SNS websites provide travel blogs and social networks for travel service on the Internet (F: Zheng Xiang et., el., 2014). Many studies examined the information search behavior based on the time of trip planning, type of service products, the cost of information search and found that travelers used multiple information sources with different purposes under different reasons (G: S. H. Jun. et., el., 2007).

### 2.2 Service Quality Attributes in Tourism Contexts

Previous studies on service quality dimensions on touristic contexts are strongly related with re-visitation and satisfaction of consumers and many studies on tourism e-service quality are also associated with customer satisfaction and repurchase (H: Mohammed, et., el., 2016). In this study, we tried to explore the difference of service quality dimensions according to multiple information channels which the consumers use. Online SERVQUAL studies found out dominant service quality dimensions (I: A. Zeithaml, et., el., 2002). This study previewed several papers not only from e-service quality dimension of tourism contexts but from service quality of travel agencies (J: G. LeBlanc, 1992). Finally, we had adopted common factors of service quality attributes from the both offline and online service quality attributes. The selected service quality dimensions for this survey were personal service, convenience system, reputation, customer relationship, accessibility, and responsiveness. The questionnaire includes 20 items of on & off-line service quality attributes from the six

service quality dimensions. Respondents were asked to check the importance of service quality attributes when they are in search of travel-related service through their preferred type of information search channel.

**Table 1.** Service Quality Dimension

	Online service quality attribute	Offline service quality attribute	Dimensions in this research
Dimension of SQA	Customer service	Personal service	Personal service Convenience Reputation Customer relationship Accessibility Responsiveness
	Information quality	Corporate image	
	Ease of use	Convenience system	
	Website functionality	Reputation	
	Efficiency	Atmosphere	
	Reliability	Customer relationships	
	Personalization	Empathy	
	Access	Accessibility	
	Responsiveness	Responsiveness	

### 3.1 Collecting and analyzing the data

The survey was conducted in major tour operators and travel-related service providers in Seoul city for two weeks during January of 2017. The sample was made up of 300 respondents. Respondents visited travel agency to consult travel-related service for their vacation. The interviews were administrated by the assistants. They distributed the questionnaires and explained when respondents had questions at on-site. Finally, 288 questionnaires were returned, yielding a response rate of 96 percent. The survey questions to measure the influence of information channels on service quality attribute of travel service provider were based on the previous major studies. The collected data was analyzed using ‘Statistical Package for Social Science’: PASW Statistics 18. And Statistical techniques such as factor analysis and multivariate analysis of variance were used to achieve the objectives of this study.

### 3.2 Research model and hypotheses

The purpose of this research was to find the difference of important service quality attributes of travel service provider when consumers approach information search behavior through three different kinds of information channels including interpersonal source, travel service provider, and Internet source. Based on the model (figure 1) this study proposes following hypotheses to explore the difference of service quality attribute of travel service provider according to three different information search channels.

H1: Service quality attribute of travel-related service provider show significant difference according to information search channel.

H1a. Interpersonal information search will show significant difference on service quality attribute.

H1b. On-the office premise information search will show significant difference on service quality attribute.

H1c. Media information search will show significant difference on service quality attribute.

H2: Service quality attribute of travel-related service provider show significant difference between the two groups; high level information search group and low level information search group.

H2a. The level of interpersonal information search efforts will show significant difference on service quality attribute.

H2b. The level of office information search efforts will show significant difference on service quality attribute.

H2c. The level of Internet information search will show significant difference on service quality attribute.

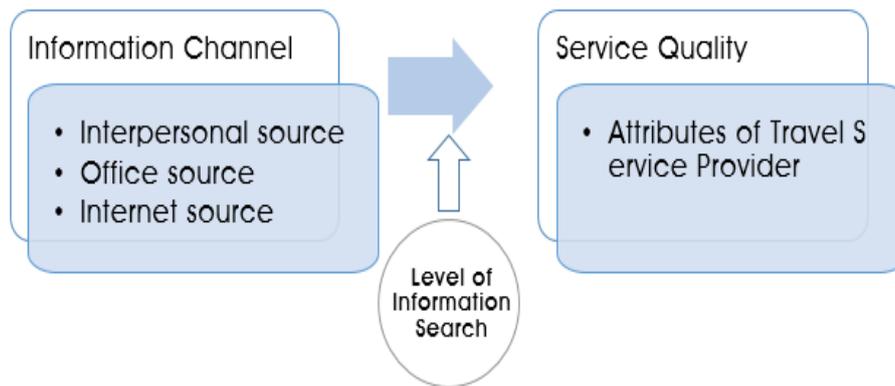


Fig. 1. General framework of research

## 4 Results

### 4.1 Factor analysis

The factor analysis performed on the important service quality attributes resulted in identifying six service quality dimensions. The PCA analysis with varimax rotation method revealed six factors with eigenvalues greater than one. The six factors are named as personal service, convenience system, customer relationship, reputation, responsiveness and accessibility.

**Table 2.** Factor Analysis of Independent Variable

Factor and Items	No. of items	Eigen Value	Variance	Alpha
Personal service	4	6.	30.4	0.842
Convenience system	4	2.	15.1	0.804
Customer relationship	4	2.	9.0	0.762
Reputation	3	1.	6.3	0.724
Responsiveness	3	1.	5.2	0.713
Accessibility	2	1.	3.2	0.652

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy = 0.865, Sig. = 0.000

Bartlett Test of Sphericity = 3562.537, Total Percent of Variance Explained = 69.2%

#### 4.2 MANOVA Analysis

For this analysis we had divided the data into high level information search group and low level information search group by the means of respondents' reply on each information channel item. Table 3 presents the result of MANOVA analysis and we found that four factors of service quality showed significant differences between the two groups. And the result also showed that the most significantly different factor between the two groups is personal service.

**Table 3.** Interpersonal Information Search on the Service Quality Attribute

Factor	The level of information search via interpersonal source		F	Sig.
	Low	High		
Personal service	-0.476	0.246	51.967	0.000
Convenience system	-0.234	0.210	9.723	0.002
Customer relationship	-0.431	0.223	43.973	0.000
Responsiveness	-0.201	0.102	8.325	0.004
Wilk's Lambda = 0.2153 p<0.01				

Table 4 showed that four factors of service quality attribute had significant differences when consumers are in search of the information through travel related service provider. The high level information search group through travel-related service provider showed that accessibility is the most significant and important factor.

**Table 4.** Office visitation Information Search on the Service Quality Attribute

Factor	The level of information search via travel agent source		F	Sig.
	Low	High		
Convenience system	-0.108	0.153	1.877	0.003
Customer relationship	-0.232	0.262	29.481	0.001
Reputation	-0.319	0.236	33.726	0.000
Accessibility	-0.397	0.322	58.638	0.000
Wilk's Lambda = 0.1883 p<0.01				

Table 5 showed that high level internet information search group had the significant differences with four factors of service quality of tourism service provider. The high level Internet information search group considered convenience system as the most important factor of service quality attribute.

**Table 5.** Internet Information Search on the Service Quality Attribute

Factor	The level of information search via internet source		F	Sig.
	Low	High		
Personal service	-0.125	0.158	12.255	0.000
Convenience	-0.357	0.291	47.929	0.000
Customer relationship	-0.252	0.197	25.723	0.033
Responsiveness	-0.196	0.125	7.561	0.001
Wilk's Lambda = 0.6518 p<0.05				

## 5 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the differences of service quality attributes of travel related service providers when consumers are using different information search channels. A multivariate analysis of variance was conducted to find the differences on service quality attributes between those who are in high level information search group and those who are in low level information search group. According to the findings consumers talk with people like friends, relatives, acquaintances to gain the travel-related service quality information particularly about personal service. The other three service quality dimensions including customer relationship, convenience, and responsiveness were also important factors for those who were engaged in interpersonal information search. The group with high level efforts on interpersonal communication to gather travel related service information showed highest importance to the personal service dimension. People visited travel service providers to gain the information regarding accessibility, reputation, customer relationship and convenience. The most important service quality attribute for high level efforts on visiting office was accessibility dimension. With regards to Internet information search, the factors of convenience, customer relationship, personal service, and responsiveness were important service quality factors. The most

important information of service quality factors for high level internet users was convenience factor including payment method, detailed products information, safe & easy reservation system, and concierge service for related service. Understanding the differences of service quality attributes according to various information search channels will be useful and helpful to establish on & off-line communication strategies for travel related service providers.

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