



"The Quality of Tourism Services as a Key Driver of Tourist Satisfaction in the Kurdistan Region – The Case of Some Tourism Destinations in Erbil City"

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ABSTRACT:

This study aims to enhance the Quality of Tourism Services to improve Tourist Satisfaction. The research problem was explicitly defined through a series of questions aligned with the study objectives. Is there a statistically significant correlation between the Quality of Tourism Services and Tourist Satisfaction in tourist locations inside Erbil city?

Researcher employ analytical descriptive methodologies. This study examines major hypotheses and analyzes the interrelationships and effects of research variables. The study population comprised tourists visiting attractions in Erbil city. A random sample of 384 tourists was selected for evaluation. Of the 384 issued questionnaires, 378 were deemed appropriate for statistical analysis. The hypotheses were subjected to statistical analysis with SPSS Version 26.

The study yielded multiple conclusions, one being that the quality of services at various stages of a trip is intricately connected to a positive visitor experience. Tourists expressed satisfaction with the quality of the hotels, restaurants, and travel agencies they utilized. The report presented a set of recommendations, one of which was that Tourist service providers in Erbil should implement globally recognized quality frameworks, such as the SERVQUAL model, to ensure the delivery of consistent, measurable, and customer-centric service. Moreover, to enhance the quality of tourism services, collaboration among the government, the corporate sector, and local communities is crucial for establishing a sustainable and efficient tourism ecosystem.

Keywords: Quality of Tourism Services, Tourist Satisfaction, Tourism Services, Tourism Destinations.



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW

The tourism sector is a complex field that greatly enhances the economic wealth and cultural development of countries globally [1]. In this evolving environment, the quality of tourism services is a crucial factor affecting tourist happiness, loyalty, and destination competitiveness. Destinations that provide exceptional service quality are likely to encourage return visits and enhance favorable perceptions, therefore drawing a greater number of tourists [2]. The Kurdistan Region, with Erbil as its capital, offers a distinctive backdrop to examine the complex relationship between tourism service quality and tourist loyalty.

Erbil is a city with a lot of history and culture. In recent years, there has been a big rise in tourism there. This is because of things like better security, more money being put into tourism infrastructure, and more people knowing about the city's attractions. As Erbil tries to become a more popular tourist spot in the Middle East, it's becoming more and more important to know how the quality of tourism services affects how loyal tourists are [3]. With this knowledge, stakeholders can strategically allocate resources, make targeted improvements, and eventually improve the overall tourist experience, which will lead to more repeat visits and good word-of-mouth recommendations. Increasing service quality is also linked to keeping customers coming back, which is important for the long-term success of tourist businesses [4]. Each client's experience is used to judge the quality of the service [5].

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Erbil, with its rich tapestry of historical sites, cultural landmarks, and burgeoning tourism infrastructure, offers a compelling case study to examine the impact of tourism service quality on tourist loyalty. Erbil is characterized by having historical attractions, entertainment activities and events, and natural resources. However, like any emerging tourist destination, Erbil faces challenges in ensuring consistent and high-quality tourism services across all touchpoints of the tourist experience. These challenges can range from language barriers and infrastructure limitations to inconsistencies in service standards and a lack of trained personnel. Addressing these challenges is crucial to unlocking Erbil's full potential as a premier tourist destination and fostering long-term tourist loyalty.

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

In recent years, the Kurdistan Region has experienced an increasing focus on the tourism sector as an essential element of economic diversification and cultural enhancement. Erbil has grown as a prominent destination among its cities due to its historical importance, safety, and evolving infrastructure. Nonetheless, despite the rising influx of tourists, apprehensions remain about the reliability and quality of tourism services offered.

Tourist satisfaction is a pivotal element that affects repeat visitation, favorable word-of-mouth, and the overall perception of a place. However, a significant vacuum exists in comprehending how the quality of tourism services—encompassing housing, transportation, hospitality, information accessibility, and customer care—impacts tourist satisfaction specifically within the context of Erbil.

This gap in the literature is significant because the unique cultural, political, and infrastructural context of Erbil may influence how tourists perceive service quality and, consequently, their overall satisfaction. Without an evidence-based understanding of these relationships, policymakers and tourism stakeholders may struggle to design effective strategies to enhance tourist experiences and foster sustainable tourism development in the region.

This study seeks to tackle the issue of inadequate empirical data and analysis about the influence of tourism service quality on tourist satisfaction in Erbil. Without a comprehensive assessment of this link, stakeholders may struggle to establish targeted measures to enhance tourist experiences and support sustainable tourism growth in the region.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the level of tourism service quality as perceived by the respondents in the study sample?
2. To what extent is the level of employee satisfaction evident among the study sample?
3. Is there a statistically significant correlation between the quality of tourism services and customer satisfaction within the research community?
4. Does tourism service quality have a statistically significant impact on consumer satisfaction within the research community?

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main aim of this study is to examine the influence of tourism service quality on Tourist satisfaction in Erbil, situated in the Kurdistan Region. The research specifically intends to:

1. Evaluate the degree to which tourist places in Erbil emphasize the quality of services offered to Tourists.
2. Assess the degree of tourist satisfaction attained by prominent destinations in Erbil.
3. Analyze the existence and magnitude of any statistically significant link between the quality of tourism services and tourist satisfaction within the research sample.
4. Assess whether the quality of tourism services significantly affects tourist satisfaction within the study framework.

These objectives will direct the research towards identifying critical service areas that affect visitor views and assist in informing strategic enhancements in the tourism sector of Erbil and the broader Kurdistan Region.

1.5 RESEARCH IMPORTANCE

Tourism plays an increasingly vital role in the economic and social development of emerging destinations, particularly in regions such as the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. As Erbil continues to position itself as a prominent tourist hub, understanding the dynamics that shape tourist satisfaction becomes essential for sustaining growth, enhancing competitiveness, and ensuring long-term visitor loyalty. This study is significant for several reasons:

1. It fills a noticeable gap in the literature by providing empirical evidence on the relationship between tourism service quality and tourist satisfaction in a Middle Eastern, post-conflict, and rapidly developing context such as Erbil.
2. The research offers valuable insights for policymakers, tourism planners, and destination managers in Erbil and the broader Kurdistan Region.

3. For tourism service providers, including hotels, tour operators, transportation companies, and cultural sites, the study provides actionable data that can help improve service delivery, enhance visitor experience, and foster a customer-oriented culture.
4. Enhancing service quality is a key pillar of sustainable tourism. By promoting higher standards in hospitality and service infrastructure, the research supports the broader goal of making Erbil a more attractive, sustainable, and competitive tourism destination in the region.

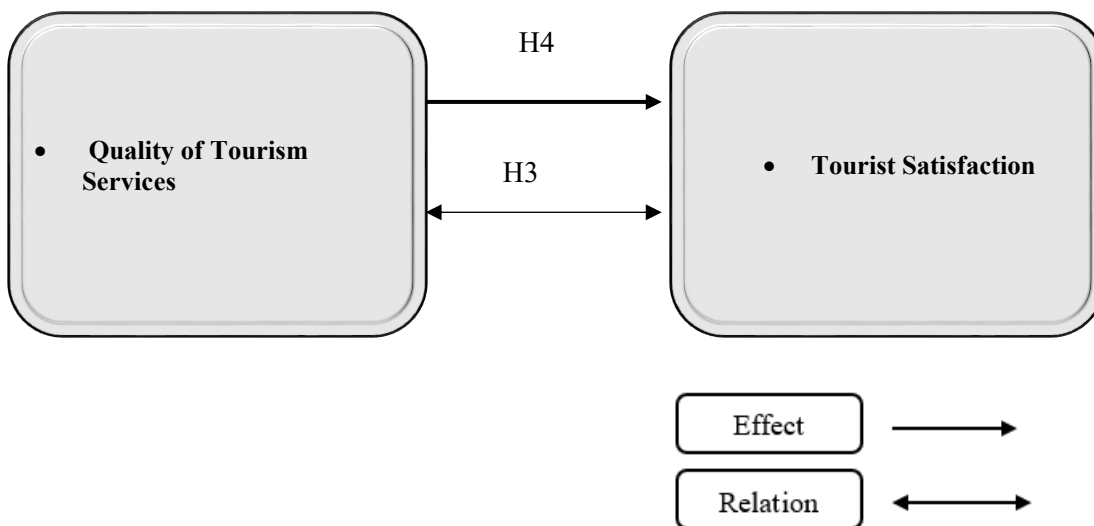
1.6 RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

First Hypothesis: There are statistically significant differences in the relative importance of the study variables and their dimensions based on the degree of reliance placed on them by tourists in the selected destinations of Erbil, Iraq.

The second hypothesis establishes a substantial correlation between the Quality of Tourism Services and Tourist Satisfaction at tourist locations in Erbil.

The third hypothesis states that the Quality of Tourism Services significantly influences Tourist Satisfaction at tourist locations in Erbil.

1.7 Research Hypothesis



Source: prepared by researchers

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 QUALITY OF TOURISM SERVICES

2.1.1 CONCEPT OF QUALITY OF TOURISM SERVICES

The Notion of Tourism Service Quality encompasses various interpretations, including luxury, merit, excellence, cost-effectiveness, comfort, and practicality. It is frequently defined as suitability for purpose. Quality is a complex notion encompassing various elements that hold significance for different clients [6]. Quality, in its general sense, is the organization's production of a product or provision of a service of a high standard, enabling it to meet customer needs and desires in a manner consistent with their expectations and achieving their satisfaction and happiness. This is accomplished by establishing criteria for product manufacturing or service delivery, and by cultivating a unique quality inside them [7]. Service denotes support, favor, care, and attention [8]. The American Marketing Association defines services as intangible products exchanged directly between producer and consumer, which are neither transported nor stored, and are typically prone to rapid deterioration, as they are produced and consumed concurrently [9]. A set of characteristics achieved through comparison between the service provided and what is expected to be obtained, i.e., the extent or degree to which customers' expectations of the service provided by the organization match the actual performance of the service [10]. Tourism service quality assesses the extent to which the service delivered to clients aligns with their expectations. Consequently, delivering a service of exceptional quality entails that the actual quality level aligns with or above client expectations. These expectations are founded on criteria by which the quality of service rendered to clients is assessed [11]. The quality of tourism services is determined by the degree to which tourists'

requirements and expectations are regularly fulfilled, and the system is effectively employed to address those demands [12]. Additionally, according to [13], quality encompasses both procedural and personal aspects, which are crucial for delivering high-quality services. The procedural dimension encompasses the processes and protocols established for service delivery, whereas the personal dimension pertains to the interactions of employees through their attitudes, behaviors, and verbal communications. Overcoming the expectations of the customer is how [14] described service quality. Service quality, as defined, refers to an organization's ability to deliver services that fulfill customer expectations. [15] described service quality, the administrative procedure entails aligning the quality of tourism services with clients' wants and expectations at a reasonable price. This alignment considers the established ideals, expectations, and activities.

2.1.2 DIMENSION QUALITY OF TOURISM SERVICES

Researchers regard service quality as a multifaceted concept, with the quantity and characteristics of these aspects differing based on the service organization. Consequently, the dimensions of service quality have fluctuated. Numerous researchers and authors have discussed the dimensions of service quality, noting that customers assess the service they receive based on a singular measure of its level and quality. Consequently, the dimensions selected in this study were tailored to its context and reflect the consensus among most researchers and authors, since service quality is characterized by five aspects. [9] [16] [17] [14] [14] [6] are: dependability, responsiveness, security, empathy, and tangibility.

Reliability refers to the service provider's capacity to deliver the promised service consistently and with a high level of precision. Numerous academics have demonstrated that reliability pertains to the degree to which a service provider can complete and adhere to commitments in delivering services to clients with dependability, precision, and consistency. Reliability in service sectors pertains to adherence to predetermined timelines for service provision and delivery to clients as agreed [18]. This dimension comprises five measurement variables: the organization's adherence to its commitments to customers, its dedication to addressing customer issues, its diligence in ensuring precision in service management, its obligation to deliver services punctually, and its maintenance of accurate records of its offerings [19]

Responsiveness: This denotes the capacity of service providers to swiftly address customer requests, successfully manage their recommendations and concerns, and instantly respond to questions. This dimension emphasizes accessibility to information, customer service, timely responses to requests, and a continual readiness to collaborate with clients [20]. When it comes to dealings, procedures, and methods used in the provision of services, it is the capacity of an organization or service provider to satisfy new and urgent consumer needs through more flexibility. The institution's capacity to promptly address complaints, recommendations, and initiatives from customers with receptiveness, while striving to fulfill their demands to the greatest extent feasible, is indicative of its effectiveness [14].

Safety: This dimension can be indicated by the state of reassurance customers feel when dealing with a hotel or tourism organization [17]. This is reflected in the knowledge and courtesy of service providers and their ability to confidently answer customers' questions. Safety in the tourism service sector is demonstrated by customers' reliance on or trust in the management and staff of the organization, and their confidence in their qualifications and capabilities [18].

Empathy: This expresses the degree of care and concern for the customer's problems and the effort to find solutions in sophisticated ways. It refers to the care and concern for the individual that an organization shows to customers through employees, and their ability to demonstrate courtesy and respect [21]. A reliable service provider's attitude toward customers encourages the customer to feel important, which leads to customer retention and referrals to other customers for the service. This is achieved through empathy, which is considered a very important factor, leading to customer satisfaction [22].

Tangibility refers to everything related to the physical and human facilities and equipment, communication equipment, buildings, and technology used, the physical elements of the service, such as seats, lighting, chairs, and the equipment and machines required to provide the service [23]. In addition to the organization's exterior look, design, and décor, this also refers to the physical amenities available to the organization, such as supplies, equipment, and the appearance of service providers, as well as the channels of communication with them. This culminates in the customer's assessment of the service quality [17].

2.2 TOURIST SATISFACTION

2.2.1 CONCEPT OF TOURIST SATISFACTION

Zeithaml and Coll characterize it as: "The assessment of product quality derived from the juxtaposition of customer expectations regarding service and performance" [24]. Customer satisfaction in the hotel sector is a crucial factor that directly influences its success and profitability. Content clients are likely to revisit, endorse the hotel, and compose favorable evaluations, so attracting new clientele and augmenting revenue. Moreover, customer satisfaction correlates with loyalty, which is crucial for sustaining a competitive edge in the very competitive hotel industry [25]. Addressing client preferences for product or service quality can lead to recurrent purchases, enhanced customer loyalty, and higher profitability [26]. Moreover, the customer's comprehensive assessment of a product or service's performance. It encompasses marketers' capacity to fulfill customers' fundamental expectations and requirements for product quality and

pricing. It conveys the sense of joy and satisfaction a customer has when acquiring merchandise from a specific organization. Customer satisfaction can be categorized into two levels: low and high [27]. However, [28] defines Tourist satisfaction as the favorable assessment derived from the whole interactions between customers and resorts or tourist sites. Satisfaction is assessed through three interconnected indicators: the image of the resort or tourist destination (the overall mental impression and reputation of the service), the customer experience (the aggregate of subjective responses to interactions during the stay), and perceived performance (the comparison of actual service against customer expectations). The degree of satisfaction assessed using research instruments is regarded as a crucial metric of relationship quality, customer loyalty, and deal sustainability. Although a globally accepted definition is lacking, customer satisfaction is frequently perceived as a unidimensional notion that encapsulates the comprehensive evaluation of service encounters, encompassing contentment with personnel and essential services. It is seen as a crucial element in client loyalty (attitudinal loyalty—the propensity to revisit and endorse) [29]

2.2.2 DETERMINANTS OF TOURIST SATISFACTION

The examination of customer satisfaction behavior is governed by two fundamental factors. The primary elements, cognitive and emotive, will be discussed. [30] [31] [32]

Cognitive Determinants of Customer Satisfaction: - The factors influencing customer satisfaction consist of three fundamental dimensions: expectations (anticipated value), actual performance (perceived value), and compliance versus non-conformity [33]. **Anticipations (anticipated value):** Expectations embody the customer's disposition regarding optimism and pessimism. An expectation is a positive or negative anticipation that a consumer form concerning a service, which determines whether satisfaction is attained or not [34]. **Actual Performance (Perceived Value):** This denotes the amount of performance that the customer perceives regarding the product or service, with the actual attributes of both. The performance measure can be trusted to indicate satisfaction or dissatisfaction [35]. **Conformity and Nonconformity:** Conformity transpires when the actual performance (the satisfaction experienced by the consumer) aligns with the anticipated standard. Nonconformity refers to the extent to which service performance diverges from the anticipated standard prior to the acquisition of the service. In this context, we identify two instances: first Positive deviation: Actual performance exceeds expectations, representing a favorable circumstance. Second Negative deviation: Actual performance falls short of expectations, representing an unfavorable circumstance [35].

Emotional determinants of customer satisfaction: - it has some determinants, which are; First Emotional response: A psychological condition resulting from a customer's assessment of reported occurrences. It may be followed by responses that define the nature of the feeling, which is manifested in the degree of satisfaction and culminates in an emotional judgment. A customer's encounter with a certain service elicits either a good emotional response, such as joy, contentment, or happiness, or a negative emotional response, such as wrath, resentment, or frustration [36]. Second A good emotional response from a consumer towards a certain service act as a crucial catalyst in the relationship between the customer and the organization. They signify a form of emotional gratification that aligns with the organization's interests and fortifies their relationship [37]. Third Negative emotional response: An emotional reaction stored in the customer's memory due to a poor service encounter. Research indicates that negative emotions exert a more significant influence on emotional satisfaction with a service than good feelings. This may result in diminished customer satisfaction and, therefore, the termination of the substandard service by the organization, jeopardizing its continuity [36].

Determinants of consumer happiness. Singh identified a series of characteristics that affect customer happiness and improve their contentment with the services offered by the firm, Speed of service, staff helpfulness to customers, customer friendliness, timeliness of customer requests, knowledge of what the customer wants, price competition, quality of service [32].

2.3 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN QUALITY OF TOURISM SERVICES AND TOURIST SATISFACTION

Service quality, broadly defined, encompasses the degree to which a service meets or exceeds customer expectations [38]. In the context of tourism, service quality encompasses various aspects of the tourist experience, including accommodation, transportation, attractions, hospitality, and the overall ambiance of the destination [10]. When tourism services consistently meet or surpass tourist expectations, it leads to enhanced satisfaction, which in turn fosters loyalty and repeat visitation [29]. Tourist satisfaction arises from aligning consumer expectations with the perceived service quality [39]. Conversely, when service quality falls short of expectations, it can result in dissatisfaction, negative reviews, and a reluctance to revisit the destination. Therefore, destinations are actively trying to improve service quality and create a distinct [13]. Quality of tourism services is a key factor for tourists when choosing a destination [33].

Tourist loyalty, a crucial outcome of positive tourism experiences, manifests in various forms, including repeat visitation, positive word-of-mouth referrals, and a willingness to recommend the destination to others. Loyal tourists not only contribute directly to the economic sustainability of the tourism sector but also act as brand ambassadors, promoting the destination through their networks [31]. Furthermore, retaining existing tourists tends to be more cost-effective than attracting new ones, highlighting the economic importance of fostering tourist loyalty [40]. Destination managers aim to maximize visitor satisfaction because of the strong relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty [41]. Customer

satisfaction is a key element of successful hotel businesses. Providing quality service is essential for hotels to gain customer satisfaction [42].

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 RESEARCH METHODS

A descriptive-analytical methodology was employed, referencing multiple pertinent scientific sources to fulfill the aims and hypotheses of this research. A questionnaire comprising a series of inquiries was developed and distributed to the target group. A quantitative study was performed on a sample of ecotourism and natural sites in Erbil, Kurdistan Region, Iraq, encompassing Korek Mountain, Gali Ali Beg Waterfall, Bekhal Waterfall, and Jundian. Various statistical analyses were executed using SPSS version 26 to assess the outcomes.

3.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE SURVEY INSTRUMENT

The researcher employed a field-based quantitative methodology for data collection, utilizing a randomly distributed structured questionnaire. The research sample consisted of 384 tourists visiting selected destinations in Erbil, Kurdistan Region. Of the distributed questionnaires, 378 were deemed valid for further analysis, representing a response rate of 98.5%. The questionnaire was divided into two main sections. The first section covered demographic characteristics of the respondents, including gender, age, and frequency of visits. The second section focused on the core study constructs, namely the Quality of Tourism Services and Tourist Satisfaction, measured through 33 items adapted from prior validated studies. These items were subject to minor modifications to align with the specific context of the tourism sector in the Kurdistan Region.

For the statistical treatment, both descriptive and inferential techniques were applied. Descriptive analysis, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, was employed to summarize respondent characteristics and assess the general tendencies of responses. To ensure the reliability and validity of the measurement instrument, Cronbach's Alpha and factor analysis were conducted. Inferential techniques such as correlation analysis, regression analysis, and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to test the research hypotheses and examine the relationships between the quality of tourism services and tourist satisfaction.

3.3 STUDY POPULATION, SAMPLE, AND UNIT OF ANALYSIS

The study population comprised tourists visiting ecotourism and natural tourist sites in Erbil, Kurdistan Region. The sampling procedure followed a simple random sampling technique, whereby every visitor at the selected sites during the data collection period had an equal chance of being invited to participate. Four major tourist destinations were chosen as representative sites: Korek Mountain, Gali Ali Beg Waterfall, Bekhal Waterfall, and Jundian. The final sample consisted of 378 valid respondents.

Data collection was conducted over a two-month period between [insert exact months/year, e.g., June–July 2024], which allowed for capturing responses during peak tourist activity. Ethical considerations were carefully observed: respondents were informed of the study's purpose, assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses, and participation was entirely voluntary with the option to withdraw at any time.

The hypotheses were examined using a series of descriptive and inferential statistical analyses carried out with the statistical software package SPSS (Version 26).

3.4 DEMOGRAPHICS

Table 3.2 indicates that the majority of participants in this study are male (61%) in contrast to females (39%). The number of female tourists is lower than that of male tourists in the tourist destinations examined in the study. The predominant demographic of tourists polled in the tourist destinations was aged between 19 and 29 years, constituting 43% of the overall population. The 30-39 age demographic constituted 29% of the overall total. This signifies that the predominant portion of participants in this study was youthful. The demographic aged 40-49 comprised 13% of the overall population. Individuals over 50 comprised 9% of the overall population, and those under 18 accounted for 6%. The categorization of repeat visits indicates that the majority of surveyed tourists had frequented Erbil destinations between one to five times, accounting for 49%. This was succeeded by those who had visited Erbil and its tourist destinations once, comprising 31%. Subsequently, 14% had visited Erbil between six to nine times, while the smallest proportion, 6%, had visited more than ten times.

Table 1. Demographic Information

Variable	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	231	61%
	Female	147	39%
	Total	378	100%
Age	Less than 18	24	6%
	19-29	163	43%
	30-39	108	29%
	40-49	49	13%
	More than 50	34	9%
	Total	378	100%
	frequency of visits	First time	118
2-5 times		184	49%
6-9 times		53	14%
More than 10 times		23	6%
Total		378	100%

Source prepared by researchers

3.7 VALIDITY TEST

The revised questionnaire was distributed to a limited group of target respondents (n = 20) to assess face validity, guaranteeing their representation of the study population. They were asked to evaluate the clarity, readability, and overall presentation of the questionnaire. Minor adjustments were made to improve clarity and formatting, aiding responders' understanding and completion of the instrument.

3.8 NORMAL DISTRIBUTION TEST

Table 2. Reliability of measurements for all variables

Variables	Number of questions	Cronbach's Alpha
Quality of Tourism Services	15	0.880
Tourist Satisfaction	15	0.897
Overall	30	0.938

Source prepared by researchers

Table 2, The subsequent information delineates the values of Cronbach's coefficient computed to evaluate the internal consistency of the measurement. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients are 0.880 for Quality of Tourism Services, 0.897 for Tourist Satisfaction, and 0.938 for all independent and dependent variables. Table 3.2 demonstrates that all constructs have successfully met the reliability criteria, with all α -values exceeding the minimum level of Cronbach's alpha [44].

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 DATA ANALYSIS

This section delineates the statistical results of the investigation. This section includes descriptive statistics, correlation, and analysis via a thorough linear regression model. The results are obtained from questionnaires distributed to visitor roles at participating destination tourism sites in Erbil City.

4.1.1 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS ABOUT QUALITY OF TOURISM SERVICES

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Quality of Tourism Services Dimensions

Items	Paragraph	Mean	SD.	Agreement percentage
X1	Tourism entities adhere to clearly defined quality standards in delivering their services.	3.9	0.95	78
X2	Employees consistently demonstrate a willingness to assist tourists.	4.44	.793	88.8
X3	Inquiries and complaints are addressed promptly and effectively.	4.14	.800	82.8
X4	Information related to tourism services is provided accurately and clearly.	4.10	.861	82
X5	The scheduled time for delivering services is respected and adhered to.	4.10	.847	82
X6	The scheduled time for delivering services is respected and adhered to.	4.09	.871	81.8
X7	Tourism services are delivered in an organized and coordinated manner.	4.15	.800	83
X8	Service providers exhibit a good understanding of the individual needs of tourists.	4.01	.888	80.2
X9	Visitors are treated with kindness and respect.	4.00	.877	80
X10	Tourist destinations prioritize safety standards for visitors.	4.01	.819	80.2
X11	Tourism services and activities are regularly updated and improved.	4.04	.818	80.8
X12	The quality of tourism facilities (hotels, restaurants, travel agencies) is satisfactory.	4.42	.824	88.4
X13	Safety and security are ensured during the provision of tourism services.	4.11	.742	82.2
X14	A variety of recreational activities and services are available to suit different types of tourists.	4.00	.874	80
X15	Service providers fulfill their promises with accuracy and transparency.	4.03	.840	80.6
Overall		4.11	0.88	82.05

Source: Output of SPSS

The tourists’ perceptions of selected destinations in Erbil, Kurdistan Region of Iraq, are presented in Table 3, which outlines the 15 items of the independent variable (X1–X15) representing the quality of tourism services. Overall, the results indicate a high level of perceived service quality, with an average score of 4.11 (SD = 0.88), corresponding to an acceptance rate of 82.05%.

Among the items, statement X2—“Employees consistently exhibit a readiness to assist tourists”—received the highest rating (M = 4.44, SD = 0.79; 88.8% agreement), indicating that staff responsiveness is the most prominent aspect of service quality. Conversely, statement X1—“Tourism organizations comply with explicitly established quality standards in providing their services”—received the lowest score within the set (M = 3.90, SD = 0.95; 78% agreement), though it still reflects an overall positive perception among respondents.

4.1.2 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS ABOUT TOURIST SATISFACTION

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Tourist Satisfaction Levels

Items	paragraph	Mean	SD.	Agreement percentage
Y1	I am generally satisfied with my tourism experience in Erbil.	4.10	.900	82
Y2	The quality of services exceeded my expectations.	4.54	.725	90.8
Y3	I consider my visit to Erbil to be an enjoyable and successful experience.	4.15	.768	83
Y4	I intend to visit Erbil again in the future.	4.04	.915	80.8
Y5	I would recommend Erbil as a tourist destination to others.	4.11	.843	82.2
Y6	The services provided were worth the value paid.	3.91	.988	78.2
Y7	The services I received enhanced my overall tourism experience.	4.03	.861	80.6
Y8	The level of comfort provided during my trip was high.	3.91	.977	78.2
Y9	There was a good balance between the price and the quality of services.	4.15	.769	83
Y10	I felt cared for by the service providers during my visit.	4.00	.914	80
Y11	I felt safe and secure during my stay in Erbil.	4.38	.810	87.6
Y12	I did not encounter any major difficulties while using tourism services.	4.24	.750	84.8
Y13	Tourist sites in Erbil adhere to safety and health standards.	4.16	.739	83.2
Y14	I have a positive impression of Erbil following this visit.	4.31	.769	86.2
Y15	My experience in Erbil was better compared to other tourist destinations in the region.	4.17	.810	83.4
Overall		4.14	0.83	82.93

Source: Output of SPSS

Table 4 presents the results for the period (Y1–Y15) concerning the dependent variable Tourist Satisfaction, based on responses from visitors to the designated tourist sites in Erbil, Kurdistan Region, Iraq. The overall mean score of 4.14 with a standard deviation of 0.83 corresponds to an agreement level of 82.93%, indicating a generally high level of satisfaction among participants.

Among the examined items, statement (Y2) — “The quality of services exceeded my expectations” — emerged as the most influential factor, with 90.8% agreement (M = 4.54, SD = 0.725). In contrast, statements (Y6) and (Y8) — “The services provided were worth the value paid” and “The level of comfort during my trip was high” — received the lowest relative agreement at 78.2% (M = 3.91, SD = 0.988).

These results lend support to the initial hypothesis, which anticipated variation in tourists’ perceptions of the studied destinations. The comparative means demonstrate this relationship: the independent variable (Quality of Tourism Services) registered 82.05%, while the dependent variable (Tourist Satisfaction) reached 82.93%. This alignment underscores the conclusion that the perceived quality of tourism services exerts a direct and significant influence on tourist satisfaction in the context of Erbil’s tourism sector.

4.2 CORRELATION

Correlation analysis was utilized to determine the link between independent and dependent variables. Regression analysis is a statistical method used to illustrate the functional relationship between a response variable and a set of explanatory or predictor variables. Subsequently, Simple Linear Regression Analysis was employed to identify explanatory variables, including the Quality of Tourism Services, that predict the response variable (Tourist Satisfaction) [45].

Table 5. Correlation Analysis Between Tourism Service Quality and Tourist Satisfaction

		Tourist Satisfaction
Quality of Tourism Services	Pearson Correlation	0.826**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	378

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Source: Output of SPSS

Table 5 exhibited a strong, positive, significant connection between the independent variable of Quality of Tourism Services and the dependent variable of Tourist Satisfaction (0.826**).

The second hypothesis affirms a strong correlation between the quality of tourism services and tourist satisfaction in the investigated destinations of this study. The findings in Table 4.3 validate this hypothesis by illustrating a direct and significant correlation between the independent variable (quality of tourism services) and the dependent variable (tourist satisfaction).

4.3 REGRESSION

Table 6. Simple Linear Regression Analysis of the Effect of Tourism Service Quality on Tourist Satisfaction

	Coefficients			Model Summary	ANOVA	
	B	t	p-value	R-square	F	p-value
(Constant)	12.116	7.387	0.000	0.682	807.388	0.000
Quality of Tourism Services	0.826	28.415	0.000			

Source: Output of SPSS

Table 6 displays the ANOVA table evaluating the goodness of fit for the explanatory variable (Quality of Tourism Services) in relation to the response variable (Tourist Satisfaction), demonstrating model suitability with $F=807.388$ and $P\text{-Value}=0.000$. The table above displays the outcomes for the constant, slope, t-value, and coefficient of determination (R-squared). The Regression Coefficient (B) for Quality of Tourism Services is 0.826, signifying that a one-unit increase in Quality of Tourism Services will lead to a 0.826 increase in Tourist Satisfaction. The coefficient of determination (R^2) measures the degree to which the independent variable explains the variation in the dependent variable. The coefficient (R^2) reveals that Tourist Satisfaction accounts for 68.2% of the variation in Quality of Tourism Services, with the remaining variation ascribed to other factors influencing Knowledge Orchestration.

According to the findings of this study, the third hypothesis was validated, which confirmed that the quality of tourism services has a substantial impact on the level of satisfaction experienced by tourists at the tourist places that were investigated.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study highlight the complex relationship between tourism service quality and tourist satisfaction in Erbil, a rapidly developing destination in the Kurdistan Region. By situating the findings within existing literature, this study provides both a contextual understanding of Erbil’s emerging tourism market and a comparative perspective with more established destinations.

A key outcome is that different service quality dimensions—responsiveness, trust, empathy, assurance, and tangibles—exert varying levels of influence on tourist satisfaction. Notably, satisfaction was shaped not only by the technical delivery of services but also by the perceived safety of the environment and the respect for cultural diversity. These aspects frequently emerged in participants’ qualitative responses. Given Erbil’s historical challenges, ensuring a secure environment and demonstrating customer care were perceived as central to tourists’ sense of value for money.

When compared with findings from destinations such as Dubai, Istanbul, and Amman, similar patterns of dimensional impact are observed. However, Erbil’s case underscores the heightened importance of responsiveness and assurance in developing markets, where tourists are particularly sensitive to perceived risks and service shortcomings.

From a practical standpoint, these insights suggest that both policymakers and practitioners in Erbil’s tourism sector should adopt a dimension-specific approach to enhancing service quality. First, investment in safety infrastructure and

transparent security communication can strengthen tourists' trust and reduce risk perceptions. Second, training programs for tourism staff should emphasize responsiveness and empathy to better address the concerns of international visitors. Third, cross-cultural awareness initiatives can enhance respect for diversity, aligning Erbil with global tourism standards. Finally, collaboration between public authorities and private operators is essential to integrate physical (e.g., facilities), emotional (e.g., hospitality), and psychological (e.g., assurance of safety) dimensions into a coherent service strategy.

In conclusion, the discussion underscores that sustainable growth of Erbil's tourism industry depends not only on broad improvements in service quality but also on targeted, actionable interventions that reflect the city's unique context. Such measures would position Erbil more competitively in regional and global tourism markets.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

CONCLUSION

1. The quality of services at different points in a trip is closely linked to a good tourist experience. Tourists were pleased with the quality of the hotels, restaurants, and travel companies they used.
2. The most important things that make customers happy are responsiveness, dependability, and skill in service delivery. The findings showed that tourism businesses that follow these guidelines have more loyal customers.
3. For tourism to be sustainable in the Kurdistan Region, service quality must keep getting better. This can be done by putting in place rules that are based on how satisfied tourists are and getting regular feedback to help improve performance.
4. There is a strong and statistically significant link between the level of tourism services and how happy tourists are at tourist spots in Erbil, Kurdistan Region.
5. Quality of tourism services has a statistically significant positive effect on how happy tourists are at tourist spots in Erbil, Kurdistan Region

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Service providers in Erbil that work with tourists should use globally recognized quality frameworks, like the SERVQUAL model, to make sure they provide consistent, measurable, and customer-focused service.
2. Booking, customer service, and travel information should all be done on digital platforms to make things easier and faster for both tourists and service providers.
3. To raise the quality of tourism services, the government, the business sector, and local communities must work together to create a tourism ecosystem that works well and lasts.
4. To make sure that all tourist service providers follow ethical standards, control quality, and stay safe, clear regulatory frameworks need to be created.
5. It is very important to have rules and education programs that protect the environment, honor local culture, and encourage tourists to behave responsibly.
6. Integration of marketing strategies that stress Erbil's historical, cultural, and natural assets should be used to build a strong image of the city as a one-of-a-kind, high-quality tourist spot.

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