



Title      Conceptualising 'quality of a tourism destination': An investigation of the attributes and dimensions of quality of a tourism destination

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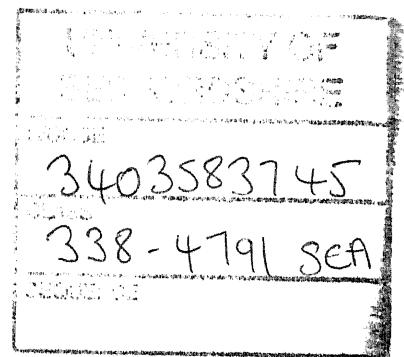
by

Arthur Seakhoa-King

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University of

Bedfordshire

April 2007





# **Conceptualising 'quality of a tourism destination': An investigation of the attributes and dimensions of quality of a tourism destination**

A. Seakhoa-King

## **ABSTRACT**

Tourism destinations need to continuously improve in quality to succeed, if not to survive. To improve quality, current levels need to be measured to identify areas requiring improvement. However, no adequate technique for measuring the quality of a tourism destination has yet been developed. More importantly, tourists' understanding of the meaning of the term 'quality of a tourism destination' has not been investigated; a pre-requisite step for developing a technique for measuring the quality of a tourism destination.

This thesis aims to ascertain the attributes and dimensions of quality of a tourism destination and to specify implications for the development of a technique for measuring its quality. To achieve this aim, a qualitative research approach is employed in the first stage of the thesis. The findings from this stage are used to inform the ensuing, mainly quantitative phase.

The main results are summarised here. Firstly, seventy-five attributes and twelve dimensions of quality of a tourism destination were revealed in the qualitative phase of the study. Secondly, in the quantitative stage, an analysis of mean score values revealed that tourists strongly associated all seventy-five attributes and twelve dimensions with the quality of a tourism destination. Thirdly, it was established that the twelve dimensions of quality of a tourism destination differ in either breadth or scope from both service quality dimensions widely used in tourism and product quality dimensions from the quality management field.

This thesis suggests that the quality of a tourism destination can best be defined as 'conformance to tourist requirements'. The main hypothesis; that there are significant differences in interpretations of the meaning of 'quality of a tourism destination' within groups of tourists, is rejected. Finally, the thesis ascertains that a tool for measuring the quality of a tourism destination can be developed based on the findings of the thesis. Such a tool, though predominantly quantitative, should include open-ended questions. This would allow changing tourist needs to be captured periodically and the results used to update the tool for measuring the quality of a tourism destination.

**DEDICATION**

**To,**

*my father Alfonso*

*and*

*in loving memory of my mothers Lydia and Grace*

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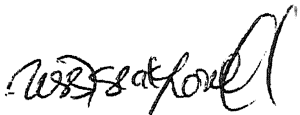
I also owe loving thanks to my wife Shireen, my daughter Kimberly and son Arthur Jr. My special gratitude is due to my brother, my sisters and their families for their loving support. Finally, I am forever indebted to my parents for always believing in me.

## DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University of Bedfordshire.

It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

Name of candidate: Arthur Seakhoa-King

Signature: 

Date: 27 June 2007

# **Chapter 1 Introduction**

## **1.1 Research Background**

Many researchers within the field of tourism (e.g. Eraqi, 2006; Gooroochurn and Sugiyarto, 2005; Kozak and Remington, 2000; Ritchie and Crouch, 1997; Postma, 1997 and Augustyn, 1998) agree that the future success of a tourism destination depends on its ability to continuously improve and manage quality. Two major developments in the tourism industry account for the increasing importance for tourism destinations to adopt a strategy that focuses on continuous quality improvement (Woods and Deegan, 2003). These are; firstly, the ever intensifying competition among tourism destinations throughout the world, and secondly the fact that tourists have become increasingly sophisticated and discerning (Eraqi, 2006; Nowacki, 2005; Woods and Deegan, 2003; Sharpley and Forster, 2003).

In addition to the traditional competition from other destinations within their own country, tourism destinations throughout the world are facing ever-increasing competition from destinations abroad (Woods and Deegan, 2003). This is partly due to the advent of cheaper air travel, which has resulted in tourists being able to access destinations that were previously considered out of reach (Jani, 1999). Indeed, competition among tourism destinations has been stimulated by the fact that tourists have become more experienced and sophisticated, and are therefore increasingly less willing to compromise and accept tourism products of mediocre quality (Kandampully, 2000; Laws, 1995). If tourists are not happy with the quality of a tourism destination, they are more inclined to take any future business to competing destinations (Laws, 2002). Furthermore, tourists are now more

aware of their rights and, as a result, have become more confident in claiming compensation for tourism products of inferior quality (Sharpley and Forster, 2003).

It is argued that a strategy based on continuous quality improvements can yield several benefits for tourism destinations (Ekinici *et al.*, 1998). One of the most often cited benefits of such continuous improvement is that it enhances tourist loyalty (Iraqi, 2006; Lenehan and Harrington, 1998; De Keyser and Vanhove, 1997). By looking after visitors, a tourism destination can generate repeat visits and may even attract new tourists from positive word of mouth communication (Tian-Cole and Crompton, 2003). Given that it can cost as much as five times more to attract new customers (tourists) than to keep old ones (Evans and Lindsay, 2002), a strategy that enables tourism destinations to retain their customers (tourists) is certainly cost effective (Lenehan and Harrington, 1998).

Moreover, by adopting a strategy based on continuous quality improvement, a tourism destination can differentiate its offerings, thereby gaining competitive advantage over its rivals (Ramsaran-Fowdar, 2007; Campos-Soria *et al.*, 2005; Kandampully, 2000). Competitive advantage gained by delivering quality is known to be more sustainable than alternative strategies such as competing on price (Porter, 1985). The reason is that a strategy based on price can be easily copied (Porter, 1985), i.e. if a tourism destination lowers its prices, competitors can easily respond by cutting theirs. By way of contrast, because a strategy based on quality is concerned with the unique manner in which a tourism destination delivers products, improvements are usually difficult for competitors to copy (Gronroos, 2000).

### **1.1.1 Rationale for the Study**

As the discussion in the preceding section has demonstrated, tourism destinations need to continuously improve their quality in order to succeed, if not simply to survive. According to several tourism researchers (e.g. Ryan and Cliff, 1997; De Keyser and Vanhove, 1997), before any attempt is made to improve quality, the current levels should be measured in order to identify those areas requiring improvement. This view is also shared by quality experts from the quality management field (e.g. Oakland, 1993; Deming, 1982; Juran and Gryna, 1988).

However, in order to develop a technique for measuring the quality of a tourism destination, it is important to first conceptualise this notion by establishing the tourists' understanding of the meaning of the term, particularly as regards its attributes and dimensions. Such an approach is needed since tourists, as consumers, are the main judges of the quality of a tourism destination (Weiermair, 1997).

A review of the existing literature indicates that no technique adequate for measuring the quality of a tourism destination has yet been developed. More importantly, this researcher found no published, investigative study of tourists' understanding of the meaning of the term 'quality of a tourism destination' in the literature. One of the main goals of this thesis is to fill this knowledge gap. Unlike previous related studies aimed at measuring quality of individual tourism organisations operating at tourism destinations (e.g. Saleh and Ryan, 1991; Ekinci *et al.*, 1998; Mei *et al.*, 1999), this thesis will conceptualise the quality of a tourism destination from a holistic perspective, where the whole destination constitutes one unit of study.



## 1.2 Aims and Objectives of the Study

Stated more formally, the aim of this thesis is as follows:

to ascertain the attributes and dimensions of the notion of quality of a tourism destination from the tourists' perspective, and to specify its implications for the development of a technique for measuring the quality of a tourism destination.

This aim will be achieved through the objectives presented in Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1 Objectives of the Study**

---

- i. To explore the understanding of the meaning of the term quality of a tourism destination amongst tourists by establishing the attributes and dimensions of quality of a tourism destination
  - ii. To establish which attributes tourists most strongly associate with the quality of a tourism destination
  - iii. To establish which dimensions tourists most strongly associate with the quality of a tourism destination.
  - iv. To establish whether there are any significant and meaningful differences in understanding of the meaning of the term 'quality of a tourism destination' within a group of tourists, given a number of independent variables.
  - v. To explain why tourists strongly associate dimensions identified in (iii) above with the quality of a tourism destination
  - vi. To explain why there are, or are not, significant and meaningful differences in understanding of the meaning of the term quality of a tourism destination between groups of tourists as found in this study (objective iv).
  - vii. To compare and/or contrast the attributes and dimensions of the 'quality of tourism destination' with service quality dimensions of specific tourism products found in the literature
  - viii. To specify the implications of this study for the development of a new technique for measuring the quality of a tourism destination
- 

## 1.3 Methodology

The methodology adopted in this thesis is split into two major phases. In the first, mainly qualitative phase, an exploratory study was conducted. The aim of the exploratory study was to explore the meaning of the notion of 'quality', in the

context of a tourism destination and from a tourist perspective, through establishing the attributes and dimensions of quality of a tourism destination and to design a research instrument for the subsequent stage of the research. In the second, mainly quantitative, phase a descriptive/explanatory study (Cooper and Schindler, 1998) was conducted. The aim of the descriptive/explanatory study (Cooper and Schindler, 1998) was mainly to describe and explain the relationships between a number of independent variables (e.g. age, income) and the tourists' understanding of the meaning of the notion of quality of a tourism destination.

To increase the validity and reliability of the research outcomes, triangulation of methods was employed (Miles and Huberman, 1984; Finn *et al.*, 2000; Dey, 1993). Consequently, in comparison to previous related studies, an increased number of data collection and/or data analysis techniques were utilised. It was anticipated that the outcomes of this research study would lead to achieving the objective of specifying implications for the development of a new technique for measuring the quality of a tourism destination i.e. achieving objective (viii) see Table 1.1.

#### **1.4 Structure of the Thesis**

The thesis consists of eight chapters. This first chapter comprises an introduction which, in addition to listing aims and objectives, has also described the context and scope of the research.

**Chapter Two** sets the scene for the rest of the thesis by investigating how quality has been previously conceptualised, mainly in the services marketing and quality management fields. The reasons for investigating how quality is conceptualised in services marketing field are two-fold. Firstly, quality dimensions widely

employed in tourism have been developed in the service-marketing field (Weiermair, 1997) and, as a result, by focusing the investigation in this field it would be possible to obtain in-depth knowledge regarding the origins of these dimensions. Secondly, tourism is regarded as a service industry (Kandampully, 2000) and, as such, investigating how quality is conceptualised in a related field provided this researcher with an opportunity to become familiar with the key issues which needed to be addressed in order to achieve the objectives of this thesis (Table 1.1).

The decision to investigate how quality is conceptualised in the quality management field is based on the view that the study of the meaning of quality has a much older history in this field than within the field of services marketing (Reeves and Bednar, 1994; Garvin, 1984). As a result, the quality management approach to quality, which is not widely used in tourism (Hope, 1997), could yield new insights that may be helpful in developing an approach to establishing the attributes and dimensions of quality of a tourism destination.

**Chapter Two** begins by investigating how quality is conceptualised and measured in the quality management field. The major approaches to conceptualising and measuring quality in the quality management field are reviewed and critiqued. In addition, the main dimensions of quality in the quality management field are highlighted and discussed.

In the second part of Chapter Two, major reasons why an approach to conceptualising quality specifically for the service-marketing field was developed are reviewed. This is followed by a critical review of the theory that underpins the conceptualisation of quality in the services marketing field. Within these

discussions, the key quality dimensions from leading schools of thought within the services marketing field are identified. Further, the results from the most frequently employed techniques for measuring quality in the services marketing field are examined with a view to ascertaining their applicability. The discussion in Chapter Two is concluded by comparing and contrasting services marketing and quality management fields approaches to conceptualising quality.

**Chapter Three** focuses on how quality is conceptualised and measured in tourism in general and at tourism destination level in particular. It commences by arguing that the services marketing theory of quality informs the study of quality in tourism in general. This is followed by a discussion on how the services marketing theory of quality has been applied in tourism. Here the weaknesses of employing the services marketing theory of quality in tourism are highlighted and discussed. Chapter Three discusses whether the services marketing theory of quality is an appropriate basis for conceptualising and measuring the quality of a tourism destination. Finally, factors that could affect tourists' understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination are discussed. Chapter Three is concluded by stating nine hypotheses aimed at achieving objective (iv) see Table 1.1.

**Chapter Four** presents the methodology employed to achieve the objectives set out in Chapter One (Table 1.1). Chapter Four gives an explanation of the overall methodology of the field research (qualitative and quantitative). This is followed by a discussion on the philosophical theories that underpin each research approach used in this thesis. Chapter Four explains and justifies the data collection techniques, sampling procedures and data analytical techniques employed in the field research of the qualitative and quantitative phases of this thesis.

**Chapter Five** presents the results from the qualitative phase of the thesis. The first part of the chapter discusses the results of a pilot study conducted to test the applicability of three techniques of data collection that had been proposed for the field research. The second part Chapter Five presents the results of the main field research conducted in the qualitative phase. In short, these are that the quality of a tourism destination is judged by seventy-five attributes, which can be categorised under twelve higher order dimensions. The meaning of each of the twelve dimensions is explained.

**Chapter Six**, reports on the results of the quantitative phase of the study. The first part of the chapter presents the results of analysis conducted to establish the attributes and dimensions tourists most strongly associate with the quality of a tourism destination. Chapter Six also presents the results of a number of tests of hypotheses done to identify any significant and meaningful differences in understanding of the meaning of the term 'quality of a tourism destination' within a group of tourists, given a number of independent variables.

**Chapter Seven** presents a discussion of the results of this thesis. The key findings of the thesis are first summarised and then discussed within the context of the literature reviewed in Chapters Two and Three. Chapter Seven argues that the dimensions established in the fieldwork are closely linked to what can be regarded as factors that motivate people to go on holiday. In addition it also demonstrates that some of the dimensions correspond with the human needs suggested by Maslow (1973). These findings suggest that the meaning of quality in tourism is linked to tourists feeling that what they experience at a tourism destination satisfies their needs and motivations for travel.

**Chapter Eight** provides a conclusion. It restates the objectives of the thesis and reviews the points discussed in the literature review. The key findings and conclusions are then summarised. The chapter highlights both the limitations of the thesis as well as its contribution to knowledge. Finally, Chapter Eight discusses the overall implications of the thesis towards developing a tool for measuring the quality of a tourism destination and provides suggestions for future research.

## **Chapter 2 Approaches to Conceptualising Quality**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate how quality has been conceptualised and measured, mainly in the fields of quality management and services marketing. The main reasons for focusing the discussion in this chapter on how quality has been conceptualised and measured in these two fields are as follows: conceptualising and measuring quality within the quality management field has a much older history than in most other fields where quality has been studied (Reeves and Bednar, 1994). In addition, although the quality management field approach to conceptualising and measuring quality had been applied widely in other fields, it has not received the same attention within tourism (Hope, 1997).

Consequently, investigating how quality has been conceptualised in the quality management field could yield new insights that would be helpful in developing an approach to establish the attributes and dimensions of quality of a tourism destination. The main reason for also investigating the conceptualisation and measurement of quality in the services marketing field is that quality attributes, dimensions and measurement techniques, widely used in tourism, were developed in this field. As a result, an investigation into how quality has been conceptualised in the services marketing field could provide a means for understanding the origins and justification of quality attributes, dimensions, and measurement techniques widely used in tourism.

More importantly, such an exercise could provide clues for how best to conceptualise the quality of a tourism destination. In addition, because tourism is widely considered a service industry (Weiermair, 1997), investigating how quality

has been conceptualised in a similar field could reveal both theoretical and practical challenges that this thesis needed to address to achieve its aim of conceptualising the quality of a tourism destination.

It must be noted that quality conceptualisation and measurement within both the services marketing and quality management tourism fields have mainly been conducted at the organisation level. As a result, most of the literature reviewed in this chapter relates to the study of quality at this level.

## **2.2 Conceptualising Quality in the Management Field**

At its most basic, quality means ‘excellence’ (Oxford University, 2004). One view is that this definition was derived from the Greek word ‘arete’, meaning ‘superiority’ or being the ‘best’ (Yong and Wilkinson, 2002). Another view is that it originated from philosophy, especially the work of Plato (Sebastianelli and Tamimi, 2002). In Sebastianelli and Tamimi (2002), a parallel is drawn between Plato’s description of beauty and the meaning of quality. Plato argued that ‘beauty’ was one of those terms best understood only after one has been exposed to a succession of objects that bear its characteristics (Garvin, 1988). Similarly, it is argued that quality could only be understood after one has been exposed to a product that bears its characteristics (Garvin, 1988).

But defining quality as ‘excellence’ has several disadvantages. According to Yong and Wilkinson (2002:102), defining quality as ‘excellence’ is synonymous with saying that whatever quality is, ‘you will know it when you see it’, which is not very helpful in efforts to produce a quality product. In addition, defining quality as ‘excellence’ is thought to encourage an individualistic approach, which results in quality being defined by the supplier as opposed to the customer (Reeves and



Bednar, 1994). Ignoring the views of the customer, who is essentially the ultimate judge of quality, almost amounts to 'commercial suicide' at the market place (Yong and Wilkinson, 2002).

Early researchers (e.g. Shewhart, 1931) within the quality management field defined quality as 'conformance to specifications'. Specifications are targets and tolerances determined by designers of products (Crosby, 1979). The origins of the 'conformance to specifications' definition of quality can be traced to the manufacturing industries of the eighteenth century industrial revolution period (Reeves and Bednar, 1994). It is argued (e.g. Yong and Wilkinson, 2002) that defining quality as 'conformance to specifications' arose mainly due to the demand for interchangeable parts for mass production during this period. If parts did not conform to specification, they would not be interchangeable and products could not be produced in large numbers (Yong and Wilkinson, 2002).

Of course, a major advantage of defining quality as 'conformance to specifications' was that it made quality monitoring a relatively straightforward process (Yong and Wilkinson, 2002). The extent to which quality objectives could be met could be checked easily by assessing the extent to which products met predetermined quality specifications (Zhang, 2001). The main weakness of defining quality as 'conformance to specifications', however, is that it fails to clearly state whose specifications should be met (Yong and Wilkinson, 2002). Consequently, quality specifications ended up being set within manufacturing organisations, based solely on managements' understanding of the meaning of quality (Sebastianelli and Tamimi, 2002). This resulted in products that met organisational quality specifications but failed to meet those of the customers in the market place (Arnheiter and Harren, 2006; Reeves and Bednar, 1994).

In more recent years, major contributions to the study of quality within the quality management field have come mainly from the works of a number of researchers widely known as 'quality gurus' (e.g. Deming, 1986; Juran, 1974; Crosby, 1979; Feigenbaum, 1951; Taguchi, 1986; and Ishikawa, 1985). These researchers' contributions are discussed next.

### **2.2.1 'Gurus' Contribution to Quality Conceptualisation and Measurement**

Juran (1974), one of the quality 'gurus', defines quality as 'fitness for purpose or use'. He argues that quality can only be defined in terms of the extent to which a product successfully serves the purpose of the customer or user. If the product does not perform its intended function, it is useless to the user or customer (Juran and Gryna, 1988). Juran and Gryna (1988) add that a quality product is not only one that is fit for purpose; it is also affordable i.e. available at a price a customer can afford to pay.

Juran and Gryna's (1988), approach of incorporating price in the definition of quality was not entirely new. Earlier, Feigenbaum (1951) had included price in his definition of quality as 'value'. Feigenbaum (1951) rejects the idea that quality can be viewed as meaning 'best' in the absolute sense, as implied in the 'quality as excellence' definition. He argues that quality can only mean 'best' under certain conditions and that these are the actual use and selling price of a product. This implies that a quality product can be defined as one that provides the required performance at an acceptable price (Garvin, 1988; Feigenbaum, 1983).

The approach gave birth to a belief shared by several other researchers (e.g. Padula and Busacca, 2005; Holbrook and Corfman, 1985; Oliver, 1993) that quality was essentially one of the many components of value, best conceptualised

as resulting from a comparison between the investments made (price or cost) and the performance received. Although defining quality as value has some practical advantages in that comparison between widely unrelated products could be made on the basis of price to determine their quality, it also had weaknesses (Reeves, 1994).

Defining quality as 'value' can give the misleading impression that price is the sole component of value (Reeves and Bednar, 1994; Reeves and Bednar, 1995). In addition, defining quality as value is problematic in that the debate regarding the relationship between quality and value is still unresolved. Some researchers see value as a subcomponent of quality (e.g. Padula and Busacca, 2005), whilst others see quality as a subcomponent of value (e.g. Stahl and Bounds, 1991). A further disadvantage in defining quality as value is that such an approach is difficult to apply in practice, in that it attempts to blend two related but distinct concepts of 'excellence' and 'worth' (Garvin, 1988). This results, as Garvin (1988: 46) noted, in '...a hybrid of affordable 'excellence' which lacks well-defined limits'.

Taguchi (1986) defined quality in terms of the 'loss' imparted to a society from the time a product is shipped. The main examples of such 'loss' are a) the failure of the product to meet customers' requirements, and b) the dangers a product might cause to customers. According to Taguchi (1986), the smaller the 'loss', the more desirable the product. One of the main contributions of Taguchi's (1986) definition of quality is that it highlights the fact that businesses have a responsibility to the society they serve. This is particularly important given that businesses can be preoccupied with making profits at the expense of the well-being of the society (Sureshchandar *et al.*, 2001)

Ishikawa (1985) defines quality as the development, design, and production of a product that is most economical, most useful, and always satisfactory to the customer. According to Ishikawa (1985), quality concerns all the process that is involved in the making of a product. In addition, like Juran and Gryna (1988), Ishikawa (1985) believes that a quality product is one that is available at a price the customer can afford. Ishikawa (1985) also believes that delivering quality extends beyond the product and encompasses after-sales service.

Crosby (1984) defines quality as 'conformance to requirements', which is similar in many ways to the previously noted 'conformance to specifications' definition. Consequently, as with the conformance to specification definition, the main criticism is that defining quality as 'conformance to requirements', fails to specify whose requirements should be conformed to (Williams and Buswell 2003). Later, Oakland (1993) rephrased the 'conformance to requirements' (Crosby, 1984) definition to 'conformance to customer requirements' thus stressing the need for a customer orientation.

Oakland (1993:9) notes that if quality means meeting customer requirements then 'the first item on the list of things to do is to find out what these requirements are' Indeed, identification of customer requirements constitutes the core of the modern quality management theory (e.g. Evans and Lindsay 2002, Oakland, 1993; Ho 1995; Evans and Lindsay, 2002). According to Anand (1997) conformance to customer requirements is the most widely used definition of quality in the quality management field.

Deming (1986) views quality as the elimination of variations or defects in the production process. He calls variation a 'culprit of poor quality'. According to

Ghobadian and Speller (1994) although the gurus may appear to differ in how they define quality, there are a number of similarities. In particular, a common theme in all the gurus' quality philosophy is that the achievement of quality is concerned with the whole process that leads to the production of finished products. In addition, all gurus stress that quality starts and ends with the customer (Ghobadian and Speller, 1994). This means that to produce a quality product an organisation needs to investigate the customer's understanding of the meaning of quality and then incorporate this into its production designs (Evans and Lindsay, 2002).

### **2.2.2 Disentangling Product Quality**

However it is defined, the abstract nature of the 'quality' construct gives it a difficult meaning to grasp. Many researchers (e.g. Garvin, 1988; Brucks *et al.*, 2000) have suggested that disaggregating the quality construct into its basic elements or dimensions may be the best way to understand what quality really means. By definition, dimensions represent those characteristics of a product that customers use to judge quality (Hedvall *et al.*, 1991; Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988; 1985, Garvin, 1988; 1984; Gronroos, 1984). Garvin (1988) proposed eight main dimensions of quality which are presented in Table 2.1 (below). Although there are others, the eight dimensions proposed by Garvin (1988) are the most frequently mentioned product quality dimensions (Evans and Lindsay. 2002; Brucks *et al.*, 2000). For this reason, the eight main dimensions (Garvin, 1988) are discussed further.

**Table 2.1 Summary of Garvin's (1988) Eight Product Quality Dimensions**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Example</b>
Performance	The primary operating characteristics of a product	Top speed of a car. Sound clarity and power of stereo system.
Features	The secondary characteristics that supplement its basic functioning	Stopwatch function on wristwatch. Remote control on digital camera
Reliability	The probability of failure-free performance over a specified period of time.	Mean Time Between Failures (MTBF), and the Mean Time to First Failure (MTFF) are classic Measures.
Conformance	The degree to which a product's physical and performance characteristics meet design specifications	Specified hole diameter, overall length of part, etc.
Durability	A measure of useful product life i.e. the amount of use a customer gets from a product before it deteriorates or must be replaced	Operating hours on a jet engine before it must be replaced
Serviceability	The ease, speed, courtesy and competence of repair	Time and effort required to get brakes repaired
Aesthetics	How the product feels, sounds, tastes or smells, a matter of personal preference.	Clothing colour, styling, and material.
Perceived Quality.	Quality based on reputation	French wines, German cars,

*Note: (Adapted from Sebastianelli and Tamimi, 2002).*

a) *Performance.* The dimension 'Performance' suggests that customers can assess the quality of a product from its primary operating characteristics (Arnheiter and Harren, 2006; Garvin, 1988) see Table 2.1. For a car, the primary operating characteristics would be traits like speed and comfort, while an important aspect of performance for fast foods and airlines would be the absence of waiting time (1987).

The connection between performance and quality is dependent on the needs of the customer, which implies that customers of diverse needs may equate quality with performance in different ways (Garvin, 1988). For instance, while one cosmetic

wearer may judge quality by a product's resistance to smudging, another with more sensitive skin may assess the quality of the same product based on comfort of application and wear (Garvin, 1988). According to Sebastianelli and Tamimi (2002), performance is the most important product quality dimension.

*b) Features.* The dimension 'Features' suggests that customers can assess quality based on the secondary characteristics that supplement the product's basic functions (Garvin, 1988) see Table 2.1. In many cases, the line separating primary product characteristics (performance) from secondary characteristics (features) is difficult to draw (Garvin, 1988). The rationale being that the distinction between primary and secondary product performance characteristics is mostly dependent on which characteristics of a product the customer views as important (Garvin, 1988). Often customers have different views about which product function is important to them and as result what is a primary product function to one customer may be a secondary function to another (Garvin, 1988).

*c) Reliability.* The dimension 'Reliability' reflects the probability of a product malfunctioning or failing within a specified period e.g. the average time it takes for a new product to fail for the first time (Table 2.1). The longer a new product takes before it fails, the more likely a customer will view it as a quality product. Because reliability measures require a product to be in use for some period, they are more relevant to durable goods than to services which are consumed instantly. However, Evans and Lindsay (2002) suggest that in the service sector, reliability can be assessed in terms of variability in time it takes for a customers' request to be processed.

*d) Conformance.* The dimension of 'Conformance' is concerned with the degree to which a product's design and operating characteristics meet pre-established standards (Garvin, 1988) see Table 2.1. The greater the extent to which a product meets its pre-established standards, the higher the likelihood of customers rating its quality positively. Although, as previously discussed, 'conformance' has the advantage that it can be easily measured by comparing actual and pre-established standards, it also has some weaknesses (Garvin, 1988). Attaining a pre-established standard does not necessarily entail quality. For instance, if quality standards are set within the organisation, the result could be a product that confirms to organisational standards but fails to meet those of the customer.

*e) Durability.* The dimension 'Durability' suggests that the customer determines quality based on a product's life (Garvin, 1988) see Table 2.1. Durability has two sub-dimensions, which are 'economic' and 'technical' (Garvin, 1988). Technically, durability can be defined as the amount of use one gets from a product before it physically deteriorates and cannot be repaired (Garvin, 1988). For instance, the number of hours one can get from a light bulb before the filament burns out and the bulb has to be replaced (Garvin, 1988). Where a product can be repaired after breaking down, durability takes on a different dimension i.e. 'economic' durability, which is the amount of use one gets from a product before it breaks down and replacement is regarded as preferable to continued repair (Garvin, 1988).

*f) Serviceability.* The dimension of 'Serviceability' refers to the speed, courtesy, competence and ease of repair (Table 2.1). It implies that customers assess quality not only on the basis of the frequency with which a product breaks down but also the service they receive when the product is being repaired e.g. the time it takes



before the product is repaired (Garvin, 1988). The dimension 'serviceability' highlights an important point that quality can be assessed both objectively and subjectively (Garvin, 1988). For example, while the time it takes to repair a product can be measured objectively in terms of number of hours or days, courtesy or standards of professional behaviour are subject to personal interpretation (Garvin, 1988).

*e) Aesthetics.* The dimension of 'Aesthetics' suggests that a customer can judge quality on the basis of a product's appearance i.e. how the product looks, feels, sounds, tastes, or smells Garvin (1988) see Table 2.1. For example, in the services sector it is possible for a customer to judge the quality of a bank on the basis of the appearance of the bank's lobby area (Evans and Lindsay, 2002). A product's appearance is mostly a matter of personal judgement and reflects personal preference (Garvin, 1988). This implies that the dimension 'Aesthetics' is judged subjectively by customers (Arnheiter and Harren, 2006).

*f) Perceived Quality.* According to Garvin (1988), customers do not always possess complete information about a product's or a service's characteristics (Table 2.1). As a result, customers tend to rely on indirect measures such as a product's country of origin, brand name and image when judging its quality. Indirect measures represent the perception of quality rather than the reality itself (Garvin, 1988). Customer perceptions about a given product can differ from one customer to another, which implies that the dimension 'Perceived Quality' is assessed subjectively by customers (Garvin, 1988).

Arnheiter and Harren (2006) suggest that there are differences between the dimension of Perceived Quality and other quality dimensions. They argue that

perceived quality is based on reputation, which must be slowly built up over time. On the other hand, dimensions like 'Reliability', 'Durability', or 'Performance' determine the market's perception of today's products (Arnheiter and Harren, 2006).

Overall, the eight dimensions can be viewed as being linked to definitions of quality previously discussed. Forker *et al.*, (1996) argued that because 'Reliability' and 'Conformance' gauge a product's adherence to specifications or requirements, they correspond with the quality as 'conformance to specifications or requirements' definitions. Similarly, 'Durability' and 'Serviceability', which appraise a product's performance in terms of time and costs, appear to be synonymous with the 'quality as value' (Feigenbaum, 1951) definition. And 'Aesthetics' and 'Perceived Quality' which represent customer judgments about the superiority of a product corresponds with the quality as 'excellence' and the 'fit for purpose' definition (Juran and Gryna, 1988).

Garvin's (1988) eight dimensions have not been without criticism. Brucks *et al.*, (2000), for instance, argue that Garvin's (1988) eight dimensions have only been proposed but not empirically validated. They further assert that with an increased emphasis on producing quality products, it is necessary to establish empirically supported quality dimensions. Brucks *et al.*, (2000) conducted research to establish dimensions of quality of consumer durable goods. They established six dimensions: 'Ease of use', 'Versatility', 'Features', 'Durability', 'Serviceability', 'Performance', and 'Prestige'.

Brucks *et al.*, (2000) noted that all their dimensions, except 'Ease of use', are similar to the eight dimensions proposed by Garvin (1988). 'Ease of use' involves

the consumer's ability to start and operate the product as well as clarity of instrumentation and instructions (Brucks *et al.*, 2000). They also note that although their dimensions appeared conceptually distinct, they may be related empirically. For example, the lower the versatility, the easier the product may be to use. In cameras, for instance, easy-to-use products have a limited number of options (lens settings, distance indicators, light settings); therefore, they are low in versatility (Brucks *et al.*, 2000).

### **2.2.3 Quality Measurement within the Quality Management Field**

Quality measurement is recognised as an important means for achieving quality within the quality management field (e.g. Deming, 1986). Initially, quality measurement provides an organisation with an indication of where the organisation is currently at i.e. answers the question 'where are we now?' (Oakland, 1993). Subsequent quality measurement allows an organisation to monitor how well it is achieving its quality goals (Deming, 1986). For example, by comparing actual and set quality targets an organisation can determine the extent to which it has met its quality targets (Yong and Wilkinson, 2002).

In addition, quality measurement also provides motivation for achieving organisational goals in the sense that what gets measured usually gets done (Oakland, 1993). Quality management researchers (e.g. Deming, 1986; Crosby, 1979) stress that quality measurement takes place during and not after the production process. Deming (1986), for instance, advocates the need for employees to understand statistical theory so that they can be in a position to detect and correct variations (defects) as they occur. Similarly, Juran (1974) and Crosby (1979) argue that measuring quality during the production process has the advantage of resulting in fewer rejects.

The rationale is that defects are identified early enough to allow corrective action before the end of the production process (Deming, 1986). Fewer rejects can mean lower costs of quality i.e. costs associated with non-conformance to requirements, e.g. having to rework finished goods (Deming, 1986). Crosby (1979) believes that over time costs of quality will eventually be eradicated thereby reaching what he terms the 'zero defect standard' i.e. the point where workers get it right every time. However, given that the majority of quality problems are due to factors beyond the control of workers (Deming, 1986) the effort of employees alone is not sufficient to achieve zero defects.

In terms of actual techniques for measuring quality, a broad range of tools, which come under the umbrella term Statistical Process Control (SPC) have been developed in the quality management field. Although there are disagreements as to which tools constitute SPC, the most widely cited are those Ishikawa (1985) termed the seven basic tools for quality measurement, which all employees should know. These are as follows:

- i. Process flow charts- what is done
- ii. Check sheets and tally charts –how it is done
- iii. Histograms –what overall variations look like
- iv. Pareto analysis- what the significant problems are
- v. Cause-and effect diagrams – what causes the problems
- vi. Scatter diagrams-what the relationships between factors are
- vii. Control Charts - which variations to control and how

*(Adapted from Ghobadian and Speller, 1994:68)*

The main characteristics of the SPC tools are firstly; they involve techniques for measuring quality objectively and secondly they are designed to measure quality from the organisation's point of view as opposed to the customer's perspective (Reeves and Bednar, 1994). As a result, the main criticism of researchers within

the quality management field is that, although they argue consistently that quality starts and ends with the customer, they have as yet developed no tool for measuring quality directly from the customer's point of view (Augustyn and Seakhoa-King, 2004).

### **2.3 Conceptualising Quality in the Services Marketing Field**

Initially, quality definitions developed in manufacturing industries dominated the study of quality in the services marketing field (William and Buswell, 2003; Reeves and Bednar, 1994). However, by the late 1970s and early 1980s, services marketing researchers (Shostack, 1977; Sasser *et al.*, 1978; Lovelock, 1981; Zeithaml, 1981) had started questioning the applicability of the quality management field based definition of quality in the services marketing field (Reeves and Bednar, 1994). These researchers argued that definitions of quality developed in manufacturing industries failed to take into account the differences between physical goods and services (discussed in Section 2.3.1).

An academic debate ensued and by the early 1980s a new definition of quality specific to the services marketing field had been developed (Reeves and Bednar, 1994). Gronroos (1983) noted that the term 'quality' in the services marketing field referred to service quality. Service quality was defined as the consumer's subjective judgement about an entity's overall superiority (Zeithaml, 1988), which resulted from a comparison of expectations with perceptions of performance (Gronroos, 1983; Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988). The important feature of the service quality definition was that it stressed the need to view quality in the eyes of the customers. Zeithaml's *et al.*, (1990) comment, that only the customer's definition of quality mattered and that all other definitions of quality were essentially

irrelevant, best illustrates the significance placed on the customer's understanding of the meaning of quality in the services marketing field.

### **2.3.1 Differences between Goods and Services.**

As Section 2.3 indicated, one of the main reasons a definition of quality specific to the services marketing field was developed, was related to the supposed differences between manufactured goods and services. This section presents a critique of the alleged differences between manufactured goods and services and their supposed implications for the conceptualisation and measurement of service quality.

Some of the most oft-quoted differences between goods and services relate to certain characteristics, which are considered unique to services. These are 'intangibility', 'inseparability of production and consumption', 'heterogeneity' and 'perishability' (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985) and 'search', 'experience' and 'credence' (Nelson, 1974; Zeithaml *et al.*, 1981).

Services are regarded as mainly intangible, whereas physical goods are mostly tangible (Reisinger, 2001). Intangibility implies that services cannot be touched, seen, felt, heard, or smelled in the same way as goods (Bateson, 1995). A traveller, for example, cannot experience the outcome of a holiday he or she has purchased, in advance (Reisinger, 2001). The intangible characteristic of services is regarded as having several implications to the conceptualisation and measurement of quality service environments (Nowarck, 2006; Brogowicz *et al.*, 1990).

Because services are intangible, indicators of quality in the services environment are said to be difficult, if not impossible, to describe or to demonstrate (Nowarck

2006, Brogowicz *et al.*, 1990). For instance, while physical goods, such as shoes, can be displayed for customers to try on and assess their quality before purchase, a travel agency cannot display a trip to Hawaii for potential travellers to try before purchasing (Reisinger, 2001). However, it must be noted that advances in technology have now made it possible for travel agency customers to access additional information (e.g. videotapes) about the destination they are intending to visit (Reisinger, 2001). As a result, travel agency customers are now better able to infer the quality of the destination before travel (Reisinger, 2001).

The term 'inseparability of production and consumption' is derived from the concurrent nature of production and consumption, which is characteristic of most services (Khan, 2003). Unlike goods, which can be produced, inventoried, sold, then consumed, services are usually sold first, then produced, and consumed simultaneously, because they cannot be inventoried (Khan, 2003). A passenger of an airline, for example, first purchases an airline ticket and then consumes the in-flight service as it is produced (Bateson, 1995). This implies that, in the absence of experience, the customer often pays for services about whose level of quality he or she has no prior knowledge, and which they can only assess during or after consumption (Reisinger, 2001).

Services are heterogeneous, and as a consequence there are variations of performance from and between different producers (Lovelock, 1991). This means that a service to one customer is unlikely to be exactly the same as the same service to another customer or even the same service to the same customer on another day (Wirtz and Bateson, 1999). The same can be said about the quality of service a customer receives from a service provider at another time. The rationale being that, because service delivery is a function of human performance, it is

dependent on such factors as the level of skills and knowledge, moods, feelings and attitudes of the service producer (Wirtz and Bateson, 1999; Sureshchandar, 2001).

Therefore, the heterogeneity of services implies that service providers may find it difficult to deliver a service at a level of quality that customers would view as consistent (Reisinger, 2001). In contrast, physical goods (e.g. cars) tend to be relatively homogeneous, regardless of their brands (Reisinger, 2001).

In addition, the presence of the customer and his or her participation in the service production process can also add to variations in the level of quality delivered by a service provider (Reisinger, 2001). For example, apart from having different needs, customers often have varying abilities to communicate these needs to the service provider. As a result, the quality of service delivered by a service producer can differ from one customer to another for the simple reason that one customer is better able to articulate their needs than another (Gronroos, 2000). However, technology has been used successfully to eliminate variations in service delivery in some service settings (Gronroos, 2000). For instance, in some hotels the human voice has been replaced by computerised telephone answering systems, which provide a standard pre-recorded voice (Gronroos, 2000).

Services are highly perishable which means that, unlike physical goods, they cannot be kept as stock (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1985). For instance, a spare seat on a flight that is leaving today cannot be saved and moved to the next day if the next day's flight is overbooked (Reisinger, 2001). Furthermore, the perishability of service means that once a service of poor quality has been performed it cannot be called back and reworked to improve its quality, as you can with physical goods.

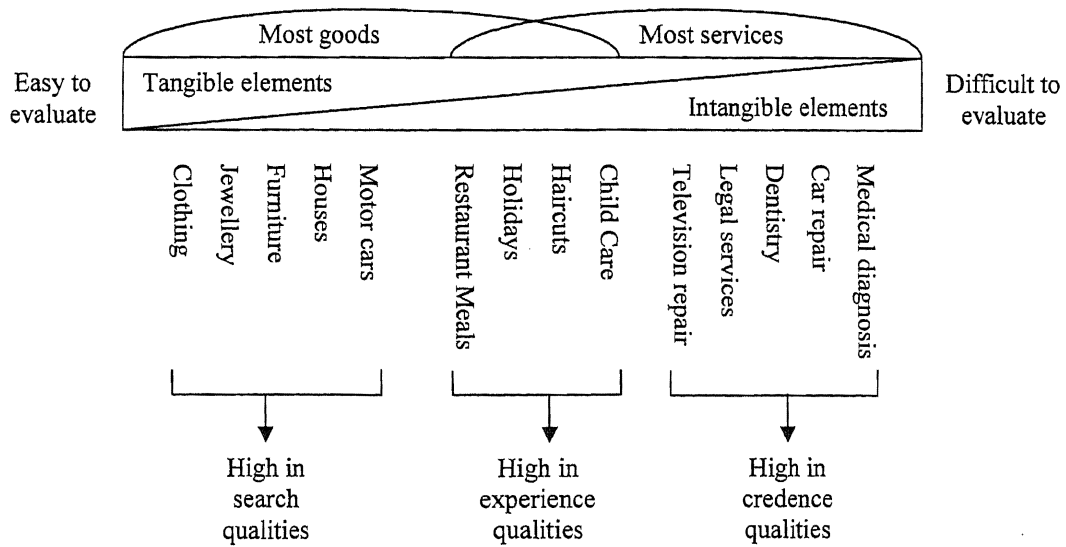


The implications are that the service provider may be under more pressure to deliver the service that meets customer expectations first time than providers of manufactured goods. However, this view is made redundant by the argument that reworking of manufactured goods represents costs (Crosby, 1979) and, as a result, manufacturers of goods are also under pressure to get it right first time, every time.

The goods-services continuum (Zeithaml, 1981) is another approach frequently used to explain the difference between goods and services and how these affect customers' conceptualisation and evaluation of quality in services and goods (Becker, 2000; Galetzka *et al.*, 2006). At the left-hand end of the continuum (Figure 2.1) are goods/services high in 'search characteristics' (Zeithaml, 1981). Search characteristics are features of goods / services that can be evaluated accurately and efficiently before usage; using knowledge, inspection, and normal channels of information such as consumer reports (Powpaka, 1996). For example, the quality of a pair of trousers can be visually examined and touched before being purchased (Stafford *et al.*, 1996).

On the right-hand end of the continuum (Figure 2.1) are credence characteristics which represent goods/services features that cannot be evaluated accurately and efficiently even after the goods/services have been consumed, largely due to lack of technical expertise (Zeithaml, 1981). For example, a patient may not have the skills to evaluate how well medical surgery has been conducted (Becker, 2000). In the middle of the continuum are goods-services (Figure 2.1) containing experience characteristics. These represent goods/services features customers can judge during and after consuming the product (Powpaka, 1996). For instance, a traveller can determine the level of enjoyment of a week's holiday at a resort

**Figure 2.1 Goods-Services Continuum.**



*Adapted from: Rushton and Carson (1989)*

while experiencing the vacation or immediately after the vacation is over (Stafford *et al.*, 1996).

Services are generally viewed as low in search but high in credence characteristics and therefore tend to fall in the middle to right-hand end of the continuum (Zeithaml, 1981). Conversely, goods which are generally low in credence but high in search characteristics are found mostly in the middle and left-hand end of the continuum (Zeithaml, 1981). This implies that customers are likely to find it more difficult to judge quality in services than in goods (Powpaka, 1996). In the next section, the theories that underpin the conceptualisation and measurement of service quality are discussed.

### **2.3.2 Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory**

As noted previously, quality in the services marketing field is widely defined as the difference between customers' expectations and their perceptions of the service they actually receive from a service provider. This definition is based on

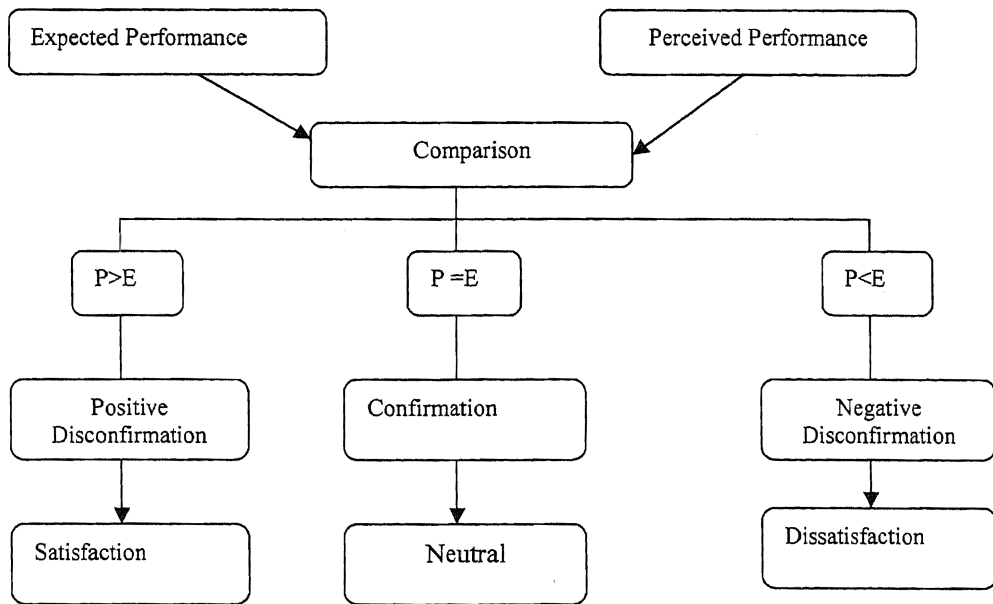
Oliver's (1980) expectancy-disconfirmation theory (Carman, 2000). As a result, the expectancy-disconfirmation theory is widely regarded as the theory that underpins the conceptualisation and measurement of quality in the services marketing field (Dawes and Rowley, 1999).

Though widely criticised (Section 2.3.4), the significance of the expectancy-disconfirmation theory (Oliver, 1980) in the conceptualisation and measurement of quality cannot be underestimated. Dawes and Rowley (1999) describe the theory as being at the core of service quality conceptualisation and measurement. Therefore, a discussion of this theory (Oliver, 1980) could yield more insights on how quality is conceptualised and measured in the services marketing field. However, because expectancy-disconfirmation theory was originally developed to explain how customers reach decisions about satisfaction (Cronin and Taylor, 1994), it is appropriate to introduce the discussion by focusing on the theory's original application.

According to the expectancy-disconfirmation theory, customers reach satisfaction decisions by comparing a product's performance with prior expectations (Oliver, 1980). The theory can be understood as encompassing four constructs, namely: expectation, performance, disconfirmation and satisfaction, and that these are linked in a process involving a number of stages (Oliver, 1980). In the first stage, a customer develops expectations regarding the likely performance of a product he or she is about to purchase and use (Figure 2.2).

In the second stage, the customer acquires and makes use of the product. Following this, the customer compares his or her perceptions of the product's performance with his or her initial expectations. In the third and final stage, the

**Figure 2.2 Disconfirmation model of Customer Satisfaction**



*(Adapted from Walker, 1995)*

customer makes a determination of how well the product has measured up to his or her initial expectations (Reisig *et al.*, 2001). The customer may judge the product as having performed better than, worse than, or equal to what he or she expected before using it (Oliver, 1980). The extent to which perceptions of performance match prior expectations dictates the type of disconfirmation a customer experiences, and has a direct effect on satisfaction (Oliver, 1980).

If the customer's expectations are exceeded ( $P > E$ ) the customer experiences positive disconfirmation (Figure 2.2) which results in the likelihood of the customer feeling satisfied by the product's performance (Figure 2.2). If the customer's expectations are matched ( $P = E$ ), the customer experiences confirmation and this has no effect on satisfaction. This means that the customer is likely to feel neither satisfaction nor dissatisfaction (zero disconfirmation) with the product (Oh and Parks, 1997). However, it may occur that product performance fails to meet the customer's expectations ( $P < E$ ). Here the customer

experiences negative disconfirmation, which is likely to result in the customer feeling dissatisfied with the performance of the product. Figure 2.2 below summarises the expectancy-disconfirmation theory.

Within the services marketing field, the expectancy-disconfirmation theory (Oliver, 1980) is widely known as 'gap' theory (e.g. Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). Its application to service quality is very similar to that within the context of customer satisfaction. Gap theory proposes that customers decide whether they have received quality service by comparing their prior expectations of a service with their perception of the service they receive (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985).

If the customers' perception of the performance matches their prior expectations ( $P = E$ ), then they feel that quality service has been attained. If the customers' prior expectations are exceeded by perceptions of performance ( $P > E$ ) then the customers will view the quality of service as high and this may result in their feeling more than satisfied with the service they have received. On the other hand, if performance is less than prior expectations ( $P < E$ ) then the customers will view the service as being of poor quality and as a result they are not likely to be happy with it.

The discussion on the application of the expectancy-disconfirmation theory to service quality raises several issues, with implications for understanding how quality is conceptualised within the services marketing field. The two major issues are presented here as questions. Firstly, are service quality and customer satisfaction one and the same construct, as their definitions suggest? Several researchers (Brady *et al.*, 2002; Teas 1994; 1993a; Cronin and Taylor, 1994; 1992,) argue that by applying the expectancy-disconfirmation theory to the service

quality context Parasuraman *et al.*, (1988) might be confusing two related, but different notions of service quality and customer satisfaction.

Secondly; is it appropriate to use the expectancy-disconfirmation theory as a theoretical framework for conceptualising and measuring quality in the services marketing field? This issue is particularly important because several researchers (e.g. Llosa *et al.*, 1998; Babakus and Boller, 1992; Cronin and Taylor, 1992) have criticised the direct application of the expectancy-disconfirmation theory to the conceptualisation and measurement of service quality. These two issues are further investigated in the discussed that follow.

### **2.3.3 Are Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction one and the same?**

Attempts to obtain a clearer understanding as to how service quality is conceptualised and measured are often hindered by confusion over the usage of the terms 'service quality' and 'customer satisfaction'. Although most researchers seem aware of the differences between service quality and customer satisfaction, the two terms continue to be used interchangeably (e.g. Howat *et al.*, 1996; Leblanc, 1992) as if they were synonyms (Tian-Cole and Crompton, 2003). This has led some researchers (e.g. Augustyn and Seakhoa-King, 2004) to question whether the purported conceptualisations of service quality, dominant in the services marketing field, are really of service quality or of customer satisfaction.

The term 'satisfaction' derives from the Latin words '*satis*', which means enough, and '*facere*' which means to do or to make (Oliver, 1993). This implies that customer satisfaction is concerned, mainly, with some form of fulfilment of customers' needs and/or motives (Oliver, 1993). On the other hand, as has been previously indicated, service quality as defined in the services marketing field

(e.g. Gronroos 1983; Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988) is about meeting customer expectations.

Indeed, researchers (e.g. Rust and Oliver, 1994; Taylor and Baker, 1994) have made a number of propositions to explain how service quality and customer satisfaction differ from each other. One view is that service quality and customer satisfaction can be differentiated on the basis of the degree of control that a service provider has over the attributes that relate to each of the two notions (Rust and Oliver, 1994). Rust and Oliver (1994) argue that a service provider has relatively more control over attributes of service quality than attributes of customer satisfaction. The rationale being that service quality attributes are said to be service specific, which makes them easier for the service provider to control (Bou-Llusar *et al.*, 2001; Rust and Oliver, 1994).

The attributes of customer satisfaction can take any form be it service specific or not (Oliver, 1994). This means that attributes of customer satisfaction may be based on factors outside the boundaries of a service provider such as 'loyalty' (Oliver, 1994). This makes it difficult for the service provider to exert any control (Bou-Llusar *et al.*, 2001).

Customer satisfaction and service quality can also be differentiated in terms of 'breadth' and 'specificity'. However, there are disagreements over which of the two notions is broad and which is specific. Some researchers (e.g. Anderson and Fornell, 1994; Baker and Hubbert, 1994; Taylor and Baker, 1994) see service quality as a specific notion, whereas customer satisfaction is the broader notion. These researchers argue that the differences between the two notions are evident, in that service quality judgements tend to be based on attributes specific to a

service, whereas dissatisfaction or satisfaction judgments can result from any attribute whether service related or not (Bou-Llusar *et al.*, 2001).

Other researchers (e.g. Dawes *et al.*, 1999; Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988; Bitner 1990; Bolton and Drew 1991; Carman, 1990) take the opposite view; namely that customer satisfaction is the specific notion, whereas service quality is the broader notion. These researchers draw mainly from Oliver (1981) who described customer dissatisfaction or satisfaction as a customer's emotional reaction following an experience with a service provider in a specific transaction, to support their views.

According to Baker and Crompton (2000), the difference between the notions of service quality and customer satisfaction lies in what is required of the customer to be in a position to assess whether either of them has been attained. With customer satisfaction evaluation, the customer needs to have experienced the service in order to assess his or her satisfaction with it (Baker and Crompton, 2000). However, with service quality judgements, the customer does not necessarily need to have experienced the service in order to judge its quality (Baker and Crompton, 2000).

On the basis of the arguments presented in the preceding discussion, it seems there is some consensus amongst researchers that service quality and customer satisfaction are two distinct notions. Indeed, results from more recent studies (e.g. Ismail *et al.*, 2006; Sureshchandar *et al.*, 2002) also indicate that service quality and customer satisfaction are distinct. However, there seems to be some agreement amongst researchers (e.g. Sureshchandar *et al.*, 2002; Baker and Crompton, 2000) that service quality and customer satisfaction share a unique



relationship. What is in question is the direction of this relationship (Cronin and Taylor, 1994).

Two opposing views regarding the nature of the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction have since emerged. On the one hand, some researchers see service quality as an antecedent of customer satisfaction and argue that an accumulation of perception of quality leads to a feeling of satisfaction (e.g. Anderson and Fornell; 1994; Cronin and Taylor, 1994; Taylor and Bullard 1993; Woodside *et al.*, 1989; Bitner and Hubert, 1994; Taylor and Baker, 1994). However, other researchers view customer satisfaction as an antecedent of service quality and so argue that incidents of feeling satisfied lead to perception of quality (e.g. Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988; Bitner, 1990; Bolton and Drew 1991; Carman, 1990). With both sides of the debate having been able to demonstrate that their point of view holds good on the basis of results from empirical research, the debate is far from over.

The debate regarding the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction has implications for how quality is conceptualised and measured in the services marketing field (e.g. Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988; 1985). Parasuraman *et al.*, (1988; 1985) justify the use of the expectancy–disconfirmation theory in conceptualising and measuring service quality on the basis that service quality is related to customer satisfaction. Given that the debate regarding the relationship between the two notions has not yet been concluded, Parasuraman’s *et al.*, (1988; 1985) decision to employ the expectancy–disconfirmation theory to explain how customers reach service quality decisions may have been taken prematurely. Indeed, in a later study Parasuraman’s *et al.*, (1994a: 112) appeared to concede

that more research is needed to understand the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction. They say:

‘In the past we have distinguished between the two (service quality and satisfaction) according to the level at which they are measured. However, on careful reflection we now believe that this distinction may need to be revised’.

The discussion exposed the fact that, although the terms ‘service quality’ and ‘customer satisfaction’ are frequently used interchangeably, the distinction in meaning between the two terms is not yet fully understood. This suggests that more research is needed to enhance current knowledge with regards to the meaning of the notions of service quality and customer satisfaction (Tian-Cole and Crompton, 2003). In the next section, the previously raised issue of the appropriateness of applying the expectancy-disconfirmation theory to the services marketing field for the conceptualisation and measurement of quality is investigated.

#### **2.3.4 How Appropriate is it to Conceptualise Quality on the Basis of Expectancy–Disconfirmation Theory?**

As previously noted, the expectancy-disconfirmation theory was originally developed to explain how customers reach satisfaction decisions, but is now being applied to the conceptualisation and measurement of service quality. Although the approach appears sound, in that it is a common practice in research for one field to borrow theories from another, the expectancy-disconfirmation theory nevertheless brings with it enough weaknesses to raise the question as to whether using this theoretical framework in conceptualising and measuring service quality is at all appropriate.

One of the main weaknesses with the expectancy-disconfirmation theory concerns the Expectations Construct (Buttle, 1996). Expectations represent the comparison standard against which actual performance is assessed to reach service quality decisions (Webb, 2000; Johnson and Mathews, 1997). The main problem is that the meaning of expectations is yet to be fully understood (e.g. Devlin *et al.*, 2002; Teas, 1993b).

Some researchers (e.g. Miller, 1977; Swan and Trawick, 1979) view expectations as predictions of future performance (Ojasalo, 2001). Miller (1977), for instance, defines expectations as predictions of the level of performance the customer feels *will be* provided. Similarly, Swan and Trawick (1979) define expectations as the level of performance that *would be* necessary to please the customer. Other researchers (e.g. Spreng and Olshavsky, 1993; Cadotte *et al.*, 1987; Prakash 1984; Swan *et al.*, 1982) view expectations as 'normative standards', which represent the level of performance customers feel they 'should' receive. 'Normative standards' also incorporate 'ideal standards', which is the 'wished for' level of performance or what the customer feels the performance of the product *can be* (Miller, 1977).

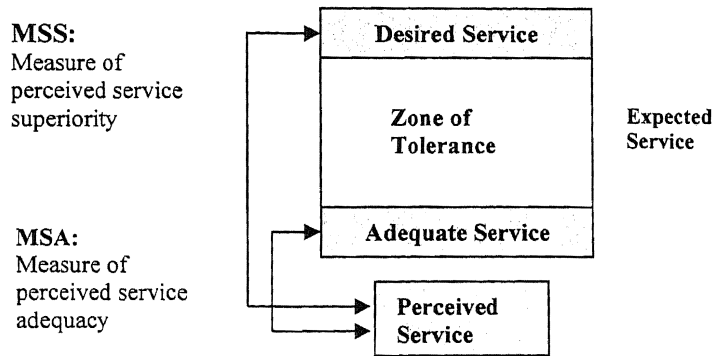
The challenge for researchers has been to decide which of these varying meanings of expectations is applicable to service quality conceptualisation and measurement. The dominant method of service quality conceptualisation and measurement (e.g. Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988; 1985) is based on the normative *should be* expectations (Devlin *et al.*, 2002, Walker and Baker, 2000). Parasuraman *et al.*, (1988) argue that the *should be* definition of expectations is applicable to service quality conceptualisation and measurement because service quality is about meeting all expectations of customers i.e. what customers think

they should get. However, some studies (e.g. Boulding *et al.*, 1993; Zeithaml *et al.*, 1993) suggest that service quality expectations can also be viewed as predictions of future performance. This implies that the question regarding which definition of expectations is appropriate for service quality is still unresolved.

Another contentious area with implications for the appropriateness of the expectancy-disconfirmation theory in service quality conceptualisation and measurement is that surrounding the exact nature of expectations against which customers compare actual performance (Teas, 1994; 1993a; 1993b). Early service quality conceptualisations (e.g. Gronroos 1983; Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988; 1985) presented expectation as a point-specific standard against which customers compared actual performance. However, such an approach was criticised as too rigid and therefore fails to take into account the heterogeneous nature of services (Teas 1994; 1993a). A number of researchers including Teas (1994; 1993a) argue that most customers are aware that services are heterogeneous and as a result accept some variations in service performance.

Criticisms of the expectation construct resulted in Zeithaml *et al.*, (1993) developing a new model to explain expectations within the context of service quality conceptualisation (Figure 2.3). In this model, expectations are defined not as specific points but as a range known as the zone of tolerance (Zeithaml *et al.*, (1993) see Figure 2.3. The upper level of the zone of tolerance (Figure 2.3) represents the desired level of performance or what the customer *hopes* to receive, which is a blend of what the customer believes *can be* and *should be* received (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1993). The desired level is similar to what Liechty and Churchill (1979) describe as the level of performance the customer *ought to receive* or *deserves*, given a perceived set of costs.

**Figure 2.3 Conceptual Model of Expectations Services Quality Evaluation**



Measure of service superiority (MSS) Perceived service minus desired service  
 Measure of service adequacy (MSA) Perceived service minus adequate service

*(Adapted from Zeithaml et al., 1993)*

The lower level of the tolerance zone (Figure 2.3) is represented by the ‘adequate’ level, reflecting the level of performance the customer *feels is acceptable*. The ‘adequate’ level is comparable to the ‘minimum tolerable level’ of (Miller, 1977) and Cadotte *et al.*, (1987)’s ‘experience based norms’ (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1993). The ‘zone of tolerance’, or the gap between ‘desired service’ and ‘adequate’, represents the predicted level or what the customer believes, is *most likely to occur* (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1993) see Figure 2.3. According to Zeithaml *et al.*, (1993) the ‘zone of tolerance’ is a range of service performance that a customer considers *satisfactory*. This implies that any increase in performance within the ‘zone of tolerance’ will only have a marginal effect on perceptions (Johnston, 1995). Only when performance moves outside of this range will it have any real effect on perceived service quality (Johnston, 1995).

The application of the ‘zone of tolerance’ in the conceptualisation of quality has not been without criticism. The concept has long been employed in customer satisfaction research where it is known by a variety of names such as ‘zone of

uncertainty' (Bluel, 1990), 'zone of indifference' (Heskett *et al.*, 1994; Woodruff *et al.* 1983) and 'latitudes of dis/satisfaction' (Miller, 1977). Consequently, the application of the zone of tolerance in the service quality context raises the familiar criticisms by Cronin and Taylor (1994), that Zeithaml *et al.*, (1993) continue to confuse the notions of customer satisfaction and service quality (Walker and Baker, 2000) see Section 2.3.3.

The conceptualisation of quality on the basis of the expectancy-disconfirmation theory also has a weakness in that some of its propositions do not always apply in practice (Oliver, 1993). The expectancy-disconfirmation theory suggests that, when expectations are met (confirmation) or exceeded (positive disconfirmation) then quality is attained or exceeded respectively (Section 2.3.2). However, in practice, customers are known to develop low expectations for some services based on their prior experience with a service provider, so that when these are actually met or exceeded, the result is not always that the customer feels quality has been attained (Oliver, 1993). In addition, it is also possible for customers to be satisfied with the quality of a service they would have received even though the service did not meet their expectations (LaTour and Pleat, 1979). This can occur when the service in question is better than anything else currently available (LaTour and Pleat, 1979).

Another major weakness of the expectancy-disconfirmation theory, with implications for the appropriateness of conceptualising service quality based on this theoretical framework, concerns the consequence of perceptions failing to meet expectations. Smith (1995) argues that the result of perceptions failing to meet expectations might be the same irrespective of the direction of the failure (Smith, 1995). i.e. whether expectations exceeded perceptions ( $ES > PS$ ) or

expectations were less than perceptions ( $ES < PS$ ). The reason for this is that customers have been known to perceive the quality of a service unfavourably solely on the basis that their expectations did not coincide with their perceptions ( $E = P$ ).

In summary, this chapter has argued that the conceptualisation of service quality within the services marketing theory based on the expectancy-disconfirmation theory (Oliver, 1980) is problematic. In the next Section, 2.3.5, the conceptualisation of quality in the services marketing field is investigated further by looking at the basic elements that constitute the service quality construct i.e. attributes and dimensions.

### **2.3.5 Disentangling Service Quality**

As previously noted, the abstract nature of the quality construct implies that its meaning is best understood by studying its basic elements or dimensions (Section, 2.2.2). Brogowicz *et al.*, (1990) categorise the study of service quality dimensions into two schools of thought; the 'Nordic School' (e.g. Lehtinen and Lehtinen, 1982; Gronroos, 1984; 1983) and the 'North American School' (e.g. Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml, 1988; 1985). Although researchers representing these two schools of thought largely agree that quality is best defined as the gap between expected service and experienced service, they disagree on what its dimensions are (Lassar *et al.*, 2000).

The 'Nordic School' predates the 'North American School' (Brogowicz *et al.*, 1990). However, it is the service quality dimensions of the North American School that are used most widely in the services marketing fields. Researchers from the Nordic School tended to focus more on service quality conceptualisation,

without providing strong empirical evidence to support their position (Brady and Cronin, 2001). Whereas, researchers from the 'North American School' extended their quality conceptualisation with empirical work leading to the development of one of the mostly frequently used tools for measuring service quality; the SERVQUAL scale (Brogowicz *et al.*, 1990). The dimensions from the perspectives of the 'North American School' and 'Nordic School' are discussed next.

#### **2.3.5.1 Dimensions from the North American School**

Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml (1988; 1985) are some of the most influential researchers in the study of dimensions of quality of service. Service quality dimensions developed by these researchers are arguably the most widely employed in the services marketing field (Brogowicz *et al.*, 1990). These dimensions can be viewed as falling into two groups according to the techniques used in developing them.

These are the 'qualitative group' (Table 2.2), which comprises dimensions developed through the use of the qualitative research approach (i.e. using qualitative data collection and data analytical techniques), and the 'quantitative group' (Table 2.2), which consists of dimensions developed through the use of the quantitative research approach (i.e. using quantitative data collection and analytical techniques) (Table 2.2).



**Table 2.2 Service Quality Dimension (North American School)**

#Qualitative Group (Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml 1985)	*Quantitative Group (Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml, 1988)
Reliability	Reliability
Tangibility	Tangibility
Responsiveness	Responsiveness
Competence Courtesy Credibility Security	Assurance
Accessibility Communication Understanding/Knowing the customer	Empathy

# Developed using the qualitative research approach, \* Developed using the quantitative research approach

Each of the two groups of service quality dimensions is discussed under their respective heading below.

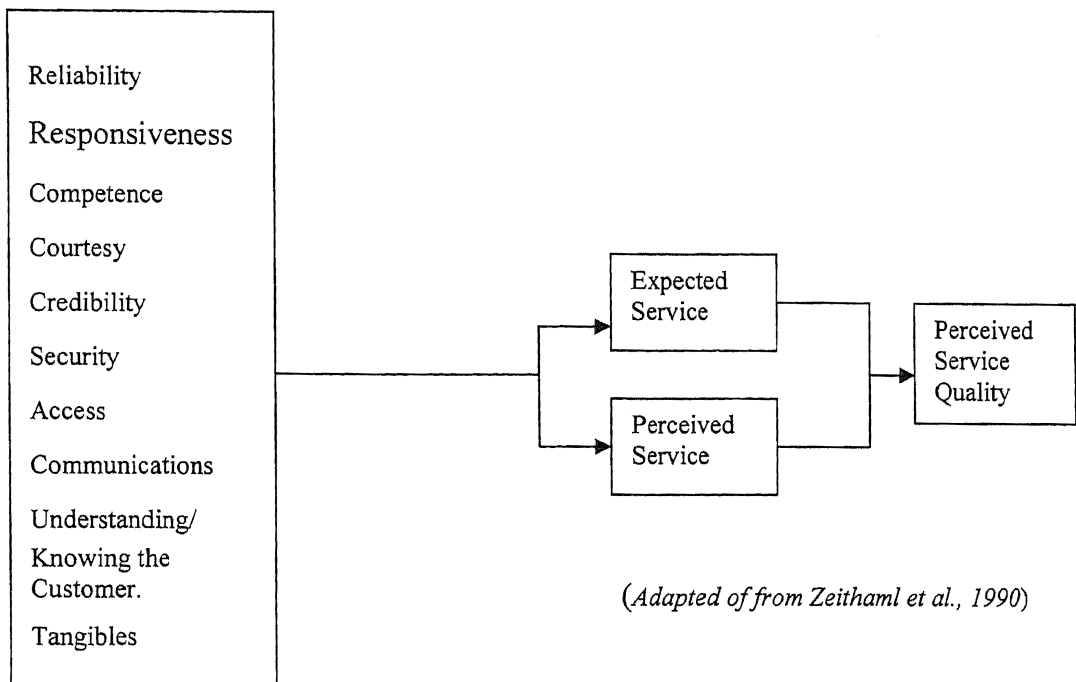
***Dimensions Developed Using the Qualitative Research Approach.***

In their early work on service quality conceptualisation, Parasuraman *et al.*, (1985) conducted a series of qualitative exploratory studies in four service settings, namely Credit Card, Banking, Brokerage, and Repair Services. Using qualitative data analysis techniques, Parasuraman *et al.*, (1985) produced ten service quality dimensions which they presented in what they termed the ‘Gap Model’ (Figure 2.4).

In Figure 2.4, the dimension ‘Reliability’ refers to the ability of a service provider to perform the promised service dependably and accurately (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). Dependability means being able to fulfil promises, whereas accuracy refers to making a minimum number of mistakes (Raajpoot, 2004). According to Parasuraman *et al.*, (1985) service providers have a tendency to over-promise and then under-perform. The inconsistencies between service promised and actual service delivered often result in customers perceiving the service as being of poor

quality (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). According to Zeithaml *et al.*, (1990) the dimension ‘Reliability’ highlights the need for service providers to honour promises they make to customers regarding the service they intend to deliver.

**Figure 2.4 Gap Model of Service Quality**



Parasuraman *et al.*, (1988) note that ‘Reliability’ was the most important service quality dimension, irrespective of the service industry. In addition, ‘Reliability’ is also considered to be the dimension with the narrowest ‘zone of tolerance’ (Section 2.3.4), which implies that even the smallest shortfall in delivering a reliable service could result in the quality of the service being judged unfavourably (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1991a; Zeithaml *et al.*, 1993). However, several studies (e.g. Jabnoun and Khalifa, 2005; Van der Wal, 2002) indicate that ‘Reliability’ is certainly not always the most important dimension. In fact, some studies in service quality (e.g. Reimer and Kuehn, 2005; Wuest *et al.*, 1996) do not even have ‘Reliability’ as a dimension of quality at all. This suggests that Parasuraman *et al.*, (1988) may have over-emphasised the importance of ‘Reliability’ as a dimension of service quality.

'Responsiveness' is concerned with the extent to which a service provider demonstrates a willingness to help customers and to provide a prompt service (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1990; Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988). This is best demonstrated by the attitude and actions of its staff during service delivery (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). The staff of a service provider, also known as customer contact staff, can demonstrate their willingness to help customers by responding promptly to customers' requests (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). For example, in the banking environment, a bank staff member can demonstrate willingness to help by responding promptly to a customer's request for a bank statement (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1990).

Parasuraman *et al.*, (1991a) found that 'Responsiveness' is consistently the second most important dimension of service quality regardless of the service industry being studied. However, some studies (e.g. Wuest *et al.*, 1996; Saleh and Ryan, 1991) do not identify 'Responsiveness' as a relevant service quality dimension in certain service settings.

'Competence' refers to the technical ability of a service provider's customer contact staff to deliver a service that meets the customers' expectations (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1990; Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). It is concerned, mainly, with the extent to which members of a service provider's customer contact staff have the skill and knowledge to deliver the service that meets customers' expectations (LeBlanc, 1992). The relevance of 'Competence' as a dimension service quality must be viewed with caution on two main accounts.

Firstly, some customers lack the technical skill to judge whether the service provider is competent or not (Galetzka *et al.*, 2006; Becker, 2000; Powpaka,

1996). This can be particularly true for services that are high in credence characteristics (Section 2.3.1), such as medical surgery. Secondly, the dimension 'Competence' implies that the customer must be in direct contact with the staff of a service provider in order for perceptions of service quality to develop. However, this is not always the case, as in some services a customer does not necessarily have to meet face to face with staff in order to judge quality. For instance, the customer of a bank using an automatic teller machine does not always come into contact with the service provider's staff but yet can still judge the quality of service provided by the bank (Sureshchandar *et al.*, 2001).

'Access' is concerned with the ease with which customers can reach the service of a service provider (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). It incorporates physical accessibility and service accessibility (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). Physical accessibility is concerned with the convenience of location of the service provider and the customer's ease of access (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1990). For example, where the access to a service can only be gained by means of telephone, the extent to which the telephone lines are not always busy, and/or the time the customers stay on hold, will determine how the service is viewed as 'accessible' by customers (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985).

In contrast, service accessibility is concerned with the ease with which the customer is able to receive the service, e.g., waiting time (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). If customers have to wait long hours before receiving a service, then the quality of the service may be judged unfavourably by the customers (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1990).

The dimension 'Courtesy' is concerned with the conduct and manner in which a service provider's customer-contact employees interact with customers (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). Courteous staff are polite, friendly and show respect to the customer (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). In addition, courteous staff demonstrate good manners when providing a service to the customer (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1990, Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). The adage 'the customer is king', and should therefore always be treated with respect whether right or wrong, is applicable here. Being courteous also means that the customer-contact staff show sensitivity in the manner in which they address customers. For example, courteous customer-contact staff will know when they need to address customers formally and when informally (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1990).

'Communication' is concerned with how the service provider keeps its customers informed about the service it provides (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). Because service providers serve customers from diverse backgrounds, both in terms of level of education and culture, the task of keeping customers informed can be a challenging one. If communication is not carefully thought out, a service provider may end up being unable to get its message across to its customers (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1990).

One innovative communication strategy is that a service provider can adjust the language it uses to convey its message for different customer segments e.g. '...increasing the level of sophistication with the well educated customer and speaking simply and plainly with a novice...' (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985:47). But communication is not only one way; customers often have something to say to the service provider, e.g., they may want to make certain complaints about service (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1990). As a result, the service provider's ability to listen to what

the customer has to say about the service it delivers is an important aspect of communication (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1990).

‘Credibility’ is concerned with the extent to which customers view a service provider as honest and trustworthy (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). To be viewed as honest and trustworthy by customers, a service provider needs to always have customers’ best interests at heart (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). The main factors that contribute to a service provider’s credibility are their reputation, their name, and the character of their customer contact staff (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1990).

If a company has a good reputation for delivering quality in a certain service, it becomes far easier for customers to trust that company than when the company is known for poor service quality delivery staff (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). Credibility is one of the dimensions of quality which a customer can judge prior to the consumption of the service (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1990). This limits the problems regarding quality measurement posed by the intangible nature of service characteristics (discussed in Section 2.3.1.).

‘Security’ refers to the customer’s freedom from danger, risk, or doubt in his or her dealings with a service provider (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). The main security related issues are: physical safety and financial security (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). Physical safety refers to the extent to which customers feel that they will not face risk when consuming the service. Security poses questions such as; ‘Do customers feel safe when using our bank’s automatic telling machine?’ (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). Financial safety refers to the extent to which a customer feels safe when conducting finance-related business with a service provider. For example, when a customer deposits money with a bank, he or she

needs to be made to feel that the money is safe with the bank (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985).

‘Understanding/knowing the Customer’ is concerned with the extent of the effort which service providers make to understand the needs of their customers (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). Service providers can demonstrate their interest in understanding the needs of customers by seeking customers’ opinions regarding the exact type of service they expect to be delivered. For example, in a restaurant, the waiter can ask the customer to explain how he or she prefers his or her steak or egg to be prepared. Such information can be helpful to the waiter in delivering a service that meets customer expectations (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1990). Further, the hotel staff can also show that they know their customers by making an effort to remember customers by name, especially the regular ones (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1990).

The ability of a service provider to demonstrate that they know the customer by providing individualised service is not always possible or even necessary in all service industries (Sureshchandar *et al.*, 2001). For instance, individualised attention can be difficult to demonstrate in the fast food industry where the goal is usually to provide uniform service to all customers. In fact, clientele for fast food chains are often aware of the type of service to expect, which implies that they may view individualised attention as not too important in the delivery of service quality (Sureshchandar *et al.*, 2001).

‘Tangibility’ refers to the appearance of the service provider’s physical facilities, personnel, tools, or equipment used to provide the service (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). As noted previously (Section 2.3.1), because services are intangible, they cannot be displayed for the customer to inspect before purchasing, unlike goods

(Lovelock, 1991). In the absence of goods to inspect, the customer is often unsure of the quality of service he or she is likely to receive from the service provider (Reimer and Kuehn, 2005; Bitner, 1992; 1990). Consequently, the customer may rely on the appearance of the service provider's physical facilities, the personnel, the tools, or equipment, to estimate the quality of service he or she is likely to receive (Reimer and Kuehn, 2005; Bitner, 1992; 1990). For example, neatly dressed customer-contact staff can give a customer the impression that the service provider is professional and hence will be able to deliver quality service i.e. a service that meets his or her expectations (Bitner, 1992; 1990; Zeithaml *et al.*, 1990).

Several researchers (e.g. Johns and Howard, 1998; Johnston *et al.*, 1991) have criticised the dimension 'Tangibility' of Parasuraman *et al.*, (1988). One of the main criticisms of 'Tangibility' is that it encourages the lumping together of all tangible aspects of a service (Johns and Howard 1998). This can result in the meaning of the dimension being difficult to interpret (Johns and Howard 1998; Johnston *et al.*, 1991). In addition, according to Raajpoot (2004), the conceptualisation of tangibility is limited to descriptions of buildings and equipment and ignores other important aspects such as; lighting, design, music etc.

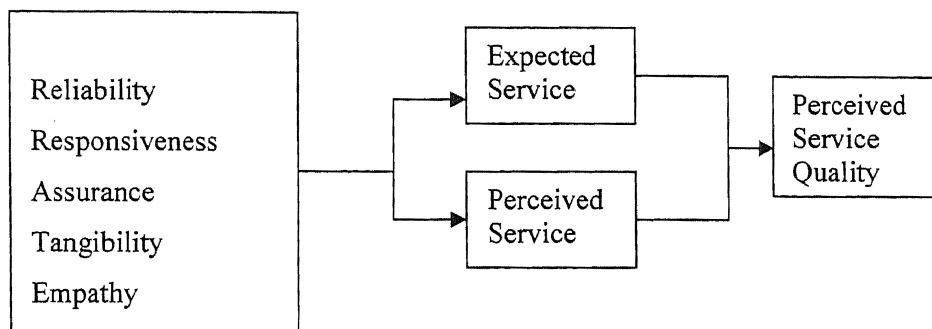
### ***Dimensions Developed Quantitatively***

In their subsequent work, Parasuraman, *et al.*, (1988) further refined the ten original dimensions (Parasuraman, *et al.*, 1985) using a number of statistical data analytical techniques. They presented a much-reduced list of five dimensions, comprising three from the original list of ten: 'Reliability', 'Tangibility' and 'Responsiveness', and two new ones: 'Assurance' and 'Empathy' see Figure 2.5.



Parasuraman, *et al.*, (1988) state that that these five dimensions, ‘Reliability’, ‘Tangibility’, ‘Responsiveness’, ‘Assurance’ and ‘Empathy’, also known by the acronym RATER (Tanner and DeTorro, 1992), are generic, meaning they are applicable to all service industries. Since the other three dimensions have been discussed already, this section focuses on ‘Assurance’ and ‘Empathy’ only.

**Figure 2.5 Revised Gap Model of Service Quality**



*(Adapted of from Zeithaml et al., 1990)*

The dimension ‘Assurance’ results from the merging of ‘Competence’, ‘Security’, ‘Credibility’, and ‘Courtesy’ (Parasuraman, *et al.*, 1988). ‘Assurance’ refers to the knowledge of the service personnel and their ability to invoke trust and confidence i.e. whether or not the customer-contact personnel have sufficient knowledge to understand and deliver the service expected by the customer. Generating confidence and trust in customers is linked strongly to competence of service personnel (Raajpoot, 2004). As previously highlighted, evaluating the competence of the service personnel can be extremely difficult before service experience, and in certain cases, even after service experience.

‘Empathy’ results from a merger of the dimensions ‘Accessibility’, ‘Communication’, and ‘Understanding/knowing the customer’. Empathy is

concerned with the extent to which customer-contact staff care about the customer's needs. It also involves the ability of the customer-contact personnel to give individualised attention to the customer (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988).

**Table 2.3 Dimensions of Service Quality provided by Johnston (1995)**

Dimensions	Definitions
Access	The physical approachability of the service location.
Aesthetic	The extent to which the components of the service package are agreeable or pleasing to the customer.
Attentiveness/ helpfulness	The extent to which the service provider is willing to help customers or gives the impression of interest in the customer and shows willingness to serve.
Availability	The availability of service facilities, staff and goods to the customer.
Care	The concern, consideration, sympathy, and patience shown to the customer.
Cleanliness/ Tidiness	The cleanliness', and the neat and tidy appearance of the tangible components of the service package
Comfort	The physical comfort of the service environment and facilities
Commitment	Staff's apparent commitment to their work.
Communication	The ability of the service providers to communicate with the customer in a way he or she will understand.
Competence	The skill, expertise, and professionalism with which the service is executed.
Courtesy	The politeness, respect and propriety shown by the service, usually contact staff, in dealing with the customer
Flexibility	A willingness of the service worker to amend or alter the nature of the service or product to meet the needs of the customer
Friendliness	The warmth and personal approachability of the service provider, particularly of the contact staff.
Functionality	The serviceability and fitness for purpose or 'product quality' of service facilities and goods.
Integrity	The honesty, justice, fairness, and trust with which the service provider treats customers.
'Reliability'	The 'Reliability' and consistency of performance of service facilities, goods, and staff.
Responsiveness	Speed and timeliness of the service delivery.
Security	Personal safety of the customer and his or her possessions while participating in or benefiting from the service process

Some researchers (e.g. Johns and Howard, 1998; Johnston, 1995) criticised the approach taken by Parasuraman *et al.*, (1988) to reduce the number of dimensions from the original list of ten to five, saying that the list had become less

comprehensive. Johnston (1995) went further, extending the original ten-service quality dimension developed by Parasuraman *et al.*, (1985) to eighteen dimensions in a study in the banking service sector. Johns and Howard (1998) regards Johnston's (1995) eighteen dimensions of service quality (Table 2.3) as one of the most comprehensive sets in the services marketing field.

### 2.3.5.2 Quality Dimensions from the Nordic School.

In the Nordic School, service quality is conceptualised as comprising two (Lehtinen and Lehtinen, 1991) to three (Gronroos, 1983; Lehtinen and Lehtinen, 1982) dimensions (Table 2.4). Like Parasuraman *et al.*, (1988; 1985) researchers from the Nordic School (e.g. Gronroos, 1984; Lehtinen and Lehtinen, 1982) presented their service quality conceptualisations in the form of models. Each of these models is discussed under the relevant heading.

**Table 2.4 Service Quality Dimensions (Nordic School)**

Lehtinen and Lehtinen (1982)	Gronroos (1983)	Lehtinen and Lehtinen (1991)
Physical quality	Technical	Output
Corporate quality	Functional	Process quality
Interactive quality.	Image	

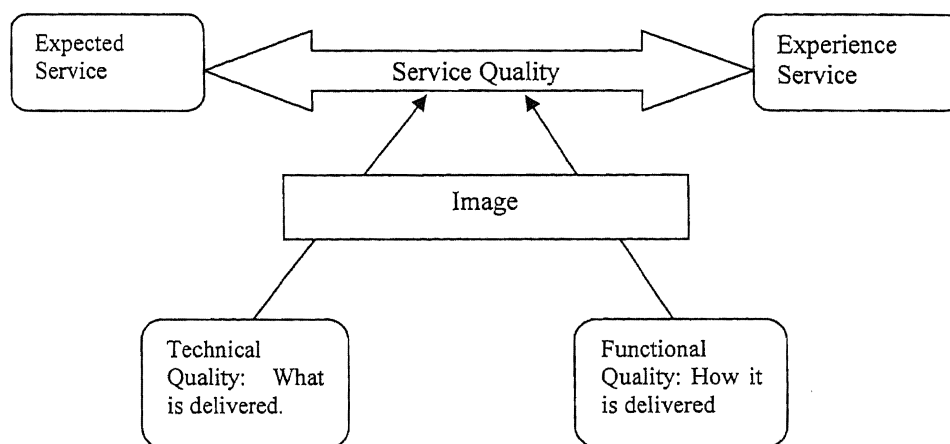
#### *Gronroos's Service Quality Model*

According to Gronroos's (1983) model, service quality, which is defined as the difference between expected and experienced service, has three dimensions: 'technical quality', 'functional quality', and 'image quality' (Figure 2.6). Technical quality is concerned with what the customer gets or what the customer is left with when a service has been delivered (Ramsaran-Fowdar, 2007, Gronroos, 2000). Because technical quality represents the outcome of a service production and delivery process, some researchers (e.g. Lehtinen and Lehtinen,

1991) refer to it as the outcome quality dimension (Ramsaran-Fowdar, 2007 Carman, 2000).

An important characteristic of the technical quality dimension is that it captures the relatively more quantifiable aspects of the service that customers receive from a service provider, such as the number of free drinks in a restaurant (Gronroos, 1984). This characteristic makes technical quality an important dimension for judging service quality, for both the customer and the service provider (O' Neill, 2001). However, it is not always possible for customers to evaluate technical quality (Gronroos, 2000). For instance, in service settings with high credence characteristics (Section 2.3.1) such as dentistry, customers are often not able to evaluate technical quality due to a lack of relevant skill (Gronroos, 2000).

**Figure 2.6 Perceived Service Quality**



*(Adapted from Gronroos 1983:28)*

The second dimension of quality in Gronroos's (1983) perceived quality model is 'functional quality' which concerns the manner in which a service provider delivers the service to the customer. This means that while 'technical quality' is concerned with *what* the customer gets in the service delivery process, functional quality addresses *how* the customer gets it (Gronroos, 2000). As noted previously,

how a service is delivered is dependent on a number of factors such as the attitude of staff providing the service (Section 2.3.5.1).

Customers' perception of the manner in which any service is delivered is subjective and, as a result, evaluations of functional quality tend to be subjective (Gronroos, 2000). Baker and Lam (1993) argue that in cases where customers are unable to evaluate technical quality, they often resort to functional quality. Because functional quality is concerned with the process of service delivery, some researchers (e.g. Lehtinen and Lehtinen, 1991) refer to it as 'process quality' (Carman, 2000).

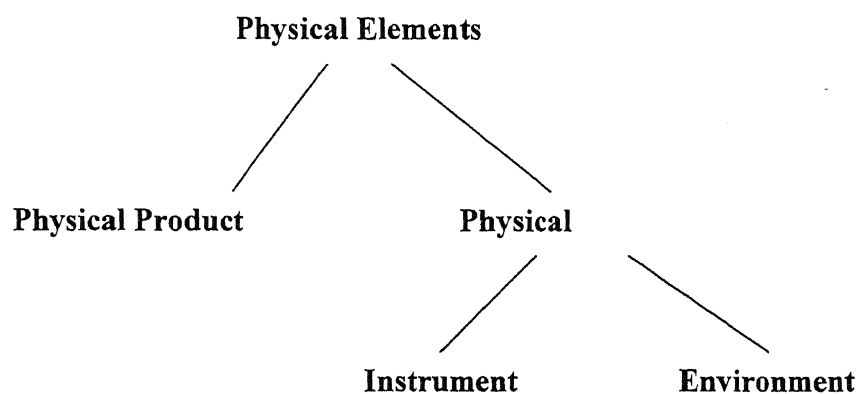
The final dimension in Gronroos's (1983) model is 'Company and local image'. This is the dimension of quality which is associated with the name of the company. According to Gronroos (2000), if a service provider is good in the minds of the customer, i.e. the service provider has a favourable image, minor mistakes in service delivery are likely to be forgiven. However, if mistakes occur often then the service provider will acquire a bad image. When this happens, the consequences of any mistake by the service provider will often be considerably greater than they would otherwise be if the image were favourable. Gronroos (2000) notes that as far as perceptions of quality are concerned, 'Company image' acts as a filter, in that customers' perceptions of both technical and functional quality are affected by the company's image.

### ***Lehtinen and Lehtinen's (1982) Conceptualisation of Service Quality***

In their early work, Lehtinen and Lehtinen (1982) conceptualised service quality as comprising three dimensions: 'physical quality', 'corporate quality', and 'interactive quality'. Physical quality represents the results of the 'physical

elements' of a service and these are the 'physical product' and the 'physical support' (Figure 2.7). 'Physical products' refer to what the customer consumes in the service production process. The term 'physical product' should not be taken as implying that a physical product actually exists or is important for service production and delivery (Lehtinen and Lehtinen, 1991). For instance, in some services such as dance schools, there may be no physical product at all (Lehtinen and Lehtinen, 1991).

**Figure 2.7 Physical Elements in Service Production**



*(Adapted from Lehtinen and Lehtinen 1991)*

The other element of 'physical quality' is the 'physical support' representing the framework that enables services production to take place (Lehtinen and Lehtinen, 1991). There are two factors concerned with 'physical support': the 'environment' and 'instruments' (Figure 2.7). The 'environment' is the setting of the place where the service delivery process occurs e.g. the interior decorations in a restaurant. 'Instruments', on the other hand, are the equipment used in the service. In a restaurant, plates and forks would be examples of 'instruments' (Lehtinen and Lehtinen 1991). 'Physical quality' can be viewed as being similar to 'technical quality' and 'functional quality' proposed by Gronroos (1983), in that 'physical

quality' incorporates *what* is delivered (physical products) and *how* it is delivered (physical support).

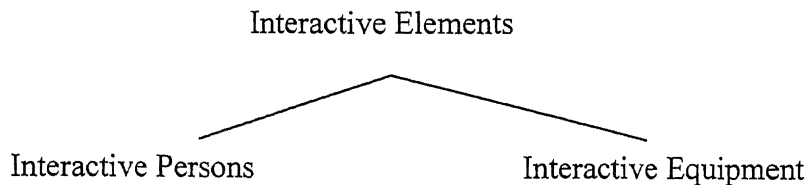
The second dimension in the Lehtinen and Lehtinen (1991) conceptualisation of service quality is 'interactive quality'. 'Interactive quality' refers to the results of an interaction between the customer and the interactive elements of a service provider (Lehtinen and Lehtinen, 1991). The 'interactive elements' of the service production process are the resources of a service provider that the customer interacts with in order to receive the service. 'Interactive elements' fall into two categories and these are 'interactive persons' and 'interactive equipment'. To illustrate; for a service provider such as a hotel, the interactive persons are the staff of the hotel, (e.g. waiters and receptionists) (Lehtinen and Lehtinen, 1991). Equipment refers to the assets of the hotel that a guest may use, e.g. computers, telephones, laundry machines and saunas (Lehtinen and Lehtinen, 1991).

As most of the major services become automated, it is possible that customers will be able to experience the same service via customer-contact staff as they do via interactive equipment (Lehtinen and Lehtinen, 1991). One example where this is already taking place is the banking industry, where a service such as cash withdrawal can be obtained from either an automatic telling machine (interactive equipment) or via a bank teller officer (interactive person) (Lehtinen and Lehtinen, 1991). Similarly, booking an airplane ticket can be done either via the Internet or through a travel agency's ticket reservation assistant (Lehtinen and Lehtinen, 1991).

'Interactive quality' also incorporates the results of any interaction between customers during the service production process (Lehtinen and Lehtinen, 1991).

For example, in a service such as a nightclub, the interaction between customers may exert a stronger influence on customers' views of the quality of the nightclub than the interaction between customers and nightclub staff (Lehtinen and Lehtinen, 1991).

**Figure 2.8 Interactive Elements in Service Production**



*(Adapted from Lehtinen and Lehtinen (1991))*

The final dimension in Lehtinen and Lehtinen's (1982) conceptualisation of service quality is 'corporate quality' - how current and potential customers view a service provider. 'Corporate quality' can be viewed as similar to Gronroos's (1983) service quality dimension 'company image' which is developed during the history of a service provider. This means, for instance, a newly established business will not have corporate quality due to its newness (Lehtinen and Lehtinen, 1991). However, corporate quality can be attained if a new business is a franchise of an already known service provider (Lehtinen and Lehtinen, 1991).

Various issues distinguish corporate quality from both 'physical quality' and 'interactive quality' dimensions. 'Corporate quality' has a time lag, in that it may continue to be viewed as high for some time even when physical and/or interactive quality has started deteriorating (Gronroos, 2000). Furthermore, 'Corporate quality' is one of the few service quality dimensions that can be experienced before participating in the service production process (Lehtinen and Lehtinen, 1991). As a result, corporate quality provides some solution to problems



(Section 2.3.1.) posed by the intangible characteristics of service, which otherwise make it difficult for customers to evaluate quality before purchase and consumption (Gronroos, 2000) see Section 2.3.1.

In addition, corporate quality differs from both 'physical quality' and 'interactive quality' in a number of ways. 'Corporate quality' develops more incrementally than 'physical quality', which can suddenly be sharply improved through changes such as renovations (Gronroos, 2000). In addition, 'interactive quality' can vary sharply according to the mood and feelings of those who are interacting, whereas 'corporate quality' is relatively less affected (Gronroos, 2000).

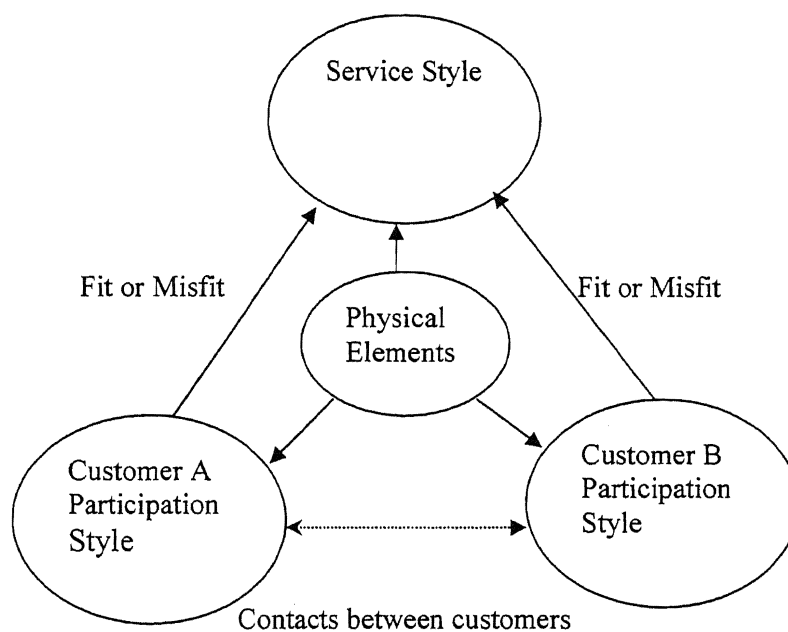
In their more recent work, Lehtinen and Lehtinen (1991) conceptualise service quality as comprising two dimensions; namely 'process quality' and 'outcome quality'. The dimension 'process quality' is concerned with the customer's subjective evaluation of his or her participation in the service production system (Lehtinen and Lehtinen, 1991). The customer experiences the service production process on the basis of his or her participation and this can vary between intense and very light. For instance, a person using a gymnasium to get fit can be regarded as involved in heavy participation, whereas a person having his car filled with petrol would be in light participation (Lehtinen and Lehtinen, 1991).

'Process quality' is dependent on the fit between the customer's style of participation and the service style (Figure 2.9). The customer's style of participation (Figure 2.9) refers to the manner in which the customer conducts him/herself in the service production process. Service style (Figure 2.9) is the manner in which customer contact staff participate in the service production process (Lehtinen and Lehtinen, 1991). 'Process quality' can be viewed as

comparable to ‘functional quality’ (Gronroos, 1984) and ‘interactive quality’ (Lehtinen and Lehtinen, 1991), which are concerned with the process of service production.

Output quality is the result of the service production process (Lehtinen and Lehtinen, 1991). It can be divided into two categories: tangibles and intangibles

**Figure 2.9: Process Quality Model**



*(Adapted from Lehtinen and Lehtinen 1991)*

(Lehtinen and Lehtinen, 1991). ‘Tangibles’ refers to the physical results of the service production process e.g. the results of a car wash or haircut. A key characteristic of tangible output quality is that it can be evaluated by outsiders not participating in the production process (e.g. car wash and hair cut). On the other hand, intangible refers to the less physical results of the service production process i.e. results that can be described in terms of feelings or sensations e.g. a roller coaster ride (Lehtinen and Lehtinen, 1991).

‘Output quality’ is evaluated subjectively by customers. However, it is not always possible for a customer to evaluate it (Lehtinen and Lehtinen, 1982). In some

service settings such as health, a 'customer' may not have the technical skills to evaluate the quality of output. In such a situation, the customer may rely on process quality to judge the service. 'Output quality' can be viewed as similar to 'technical quality' (Gronroos, 1984) and 'physical quality' (Lehtinen and Lehtinen, 1982), which are concerned with the outcomes of the service production process.

### **2.3.5.3 Applicability of Service Quality Dimensions in Practice**

Of the many service quality dimensions discussed in Section 2.3.5.1 and 2.3.5.2 'Reliability', 'Assurance', 'Tangibility', 'Empathy' and 'Responsiveness' (RATER) developed by Parasuraman *et al.*, (1988) are the most widely employed dimensions in the service industry. Consequently, this section will mainly investigate the applicability of RATER dimensions to the services marketing field.

As noted previously, Parasuraman *et al.*, (1988) developed a tool for measuring service quality known as the SERVQUAL scale, which is the most widely employed tool for measuring quality in the service industry. It measures service quality along the five RATER (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988) dimensions. Therefore examining the results of studies that have employed the SERVQUAL scale could provide insights into the applicability of the RATER dimensions in the services marketing field.

The SERVQUAL scale measures service quality in terms of the gap between customer expectations and perceptions (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988), based on Oliver's (1980) expectancy-disconfirmation theory. This implies that investigating the results of the application of the SERVQUAL scale could also yield valuable

information regarding the applicability of expectancy-disconfirmation theory in service quality conceptualisation and measurement.

#### **2.3.5.4 Measuring Quality Using the SERVQUAL Scale**

The SERVQUAL scale measures service quality in terms of the 'gap' between consumers' expectations and their perceptions of the performance of the firm providing the service (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988). In its original (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988) format, the SERVQUAL scale consisted of twenty-two pairs of items representing the RATER dimensions of service quality. One half of these items measure the customer's service expectations from a particular service industry, while the other twenty-two matching items measure customers' perceptions of the service provided by a particular service provider (Perceptions). The items are presented in a 7-point Likert scale response format ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'.

Parasuraman *et al.*, (1988) maintain that service quality dimensions used in the SERVQUAL scale are generic and that, as a result, the scale can be applied to any service industry with little or no modification. Indeed, since its establishment, the SERVQUAL scale has been applied in a variety of service settings e.g. a dental school patient clinic, a tyre shop (Carman, 1990), discount and department stores (Teas, 1993a), hospitals (Babakus and Mangold, 1992), higher education (Boulding *et al.*, 1993) and more recently in the law enforcement (police) services (Donnelly *et al.*, 2006) sector.

#### ***Results of the SERVQUAL scale's Application***

A recurring finding from studies that have employed the SERVQUAL scale is that the RATER dimensions proposed by Parasuraman *et al.*, (1988) are neither

universally applicable nor the only possible dimensions (Babakus and Mangold, 1992; Carman, 1990). Service quality dimensions that differ from the RATER dimensions are reported in many studies (e.g. Babakus and Mangold, 1992; Carman, 1990) that have employed the SERVQUAL scale in a variety of service settings.

In addition, several studies (e.g. Koozmneef, 2006; Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Babakus and Boller, 1992; Carman, 1990) measuring quality using the SERVQUAL scale also report different numbers of dimensions from the five proposed by Parasuraman *et al.*, (1988). These studies indicate that service quality dimensions can range from as few as one to as many as eight depending on the sector to which the scale is applied - more in some cases, and less in others (Buttle, 1996). Interestingly, Parasuraman, *et al.*, (1991a) were unable to replicate their own work in a later study, which produced six dimensions (two closely related) rather than the expected RATER dimensions.

The inconsistent results from one service setting to another, in studies employing the SERVQUAL scale raises questions as to whether enough is known regarding the 'dimensionality' of service quality (Buttle, 1996). Even the original developers of the RATER dimension themselves, in their later work, conceded the need for further research in order to fully understand the dimensionality of the notion of service quality (Parasuraman, *et al.*, 1994a).

The inconsistency of the results of studies employing the SERVQUAL scale has generated several theoretical and operational criticisms of the scale (e.g. Carman, 1990; Cronin and Taylor *et al.*, 1994; 1992; Babakus and Boller, 1992; Buttle, 1996; Llosa *et al.*, 1998). Because criticisms raised by these researchers have

implications regarding the relevance of the RATER dimensions further discussion is provided. However, some of the criticisms of the SERVQUAL scale are similar to those of the expectancy-disconfirmation theory discussed in Section 2.3.4 so these will not be repeated here.

The principal criticism of the SERVQUAL scale is that the scale is inappropriately based on the expectancy-disconfirmation theory (see Llosa *et al.*, 1998; Buttle, 1996; Cronin and Taylor, 1994; 1992; Babakus and Boller, 1992; Carman, 1990). According to Cronin and Taylor (1992), if service quality, is equivalent to an attitude (e.g. Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988) then this should be reflected in its measurement. Drawing from previous literature on attitude measurement (e.g. Mazis *et al.*, 1975; Churchill and Surprenant, 1982), Cronin and Taylor (1992) argue that service quality is best measured by assessing perceptions of performance only, rather than the 'gap' between expectations and perceptions as in the SERVQUAL scale. Cronin and Taylor (1994; 1992) have gone on to develop the SERVPERF scale, a tool that measures service quality on the basis of perceptions of performance alone.

The approach to measuring service quality by computing the difference or 'gap' between perceptions (P) and expectations (E) scores in the SERVQUAL scale has also received criticism from several researchers (Buttle, 1996, Teas, 1993a; 1993b; Cronin and Taylor, 1994; 1992). Differences scores are known to be notoriously unreliable, even when the scales from which they are derived themselves are highly reliable (Buttle, 1996; Iacobucci *et al.*, 1994). In addition, several researchers (Teas, 1993a) have questioned the meaning of perceptions minus expectations scores or 'gap scores' given that several computations can result in the same gap score. There are six ways of arriving at perceptions (P)

minus expectations (E) gap of score of minus one e.g.: a)  $(P = 1) - (E = 2) = -1$ , b)  $(P = 2) - (E = 3) = -1$ , c)  $(P = 3) - (E = 4) = -1$ , d)  $(P = 4) - (E = 5) = -1$ , e)  $(P = 5) - (E = 6) = -1$  and f)  $(P = 6) - (E = 7) = -1$  see P =4, E5; P =5, E =6; P =6, E =7] (Buttle, 1996).

There is also the criticism that the SERVQUAL scale focuses mainly on process quality (Lehtinen and Lehtinen, 1991) and ignores outcome quality (Lehtinen and Lehtinen 1991). Specifically, it is argued that four of the five dimensions (Reliability, Assurance, Empathy and Responsiveness) in the SERVQUAL scale are concerned mainly with ‘process quality’ or the service delivery process (e.g. Sureshchandar *et al.*, 2001; Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Mangold and Babakus, 1991). Only the fifth dimension, Tangibility, makes some reference to ‘outcome quality’, as being important in customer perception of service quality. As the discussion above (Section 2.3.5.2) highlights, although ‘process quality’ is important, ‘outcome quality’ or what is actually delivered is also equally important in delivering service that meets customer expectations. This implies that models that conceptualise quality from either a process or outcome viewpoint only, cannot be sufficiently comprehensive to capture the meaning of the notion of quality in its fullest extent (Powpaka, 1996).

A further criticism of the SERVQUAL scale concerns the confusion over what, exactly, the tool measures. Although the SERVQUAL scale is meant to be a tool for measuring service quality, in practice, the scale is also frequently used to assess things like customer satisfaction. This approach ignores the fact that customer satisfaction and service quality are two distinct notions (Section 2.3.3), which may require different measuring tools. According to Cronin and Taylor (1994:127) the SERVQUAL scale does not measure either customer satisfaction

or service quality, but rather it ‘...appears at best an operationalisation of only one of the many forms of expectancy-disconfirmation...’.

It must be noted that Parasuraman *et al.*, have vigorously defended the various criticisms levelled against the SERVQUAL scale (see Parasuraman *et al.*, 1994a; 1994b, 1994c; 1991b). However, according to Ekinici (2001), problems in the SERVQUAL scale persist, despite it having been refined on a number of occasions (e.g. Parasuraman *et al.*, 1991b, Parasuraman *et al.*, 1994a).

The SERVPERF scale (Cronin and Taylor, 1992) seems to adequately address some of the problems of the SERVQUAL scale, in particular that of measuring quality by computing the gap scores. As noted previously, SERVPERF scales avoid this by measuring quality based on customer ‘perceptions of the performance only’. In the study of service quality in banks, pest control, dry cleaning and fast food domains, Cronin and Taylor (1992) were able to demonstrate empirically that the perceptions of the performance-only based SERVPERF scale perform better than the expectancy-disconfirmation theory based SERVQUAL scale. Other studies (e.g. Churchill and Surprenant, 1982; Babakus and Boller, 1992) also support the results of Cronin and Taylor’s (1992) study. Babakus and Boller (1992) in particular found that the ‘gap’ approach to measuring service quality does not provide any additional information beyond that contained in the perception component of the SERVQUAL scale.

However, the SERVPERF scale is not without its weaknesses. The main shortcoming is that, unlike Parasuraman *et al.*, (1988), Cronin and Taylor (1994; 1992) did not go further in developing quality dimensions for the SERVPERF scale. Instead, the SERVPERF scale used the same RATER dimensions proposed



by Parasuraman *et al.*, (1988). Consequently, although the SERVPERF scale avoids some of the problems associated with the SERVQUAL scale, it remains prone to other problems e.g. the previously noted weakness that the RATER dimensions are not universally applicable.

The discussion so far clearly indicates that conceptualisation and measurement of quality in the services marketing field is problematic. It is based on a theoretical framework that is not fully understood and is fraught with enough problems to make its appropriateness as the basis for service quality conceptualisation and measurement questionable. In the next section the approach to conceptualising quality in the fields of quality management and services marketing are compared and contrasted.

#### **2.4 Approaches to Quality in the Fields of Quality Management and Services marketing Fields Compared**

The fields of quality management and services marketing are both similar and different in their approaches to conceptualising and measuring quality. Although quality is defined variously in the quality management field, the most commonly used definition of quality is 'conformance to customer requirements' (Evans and Lindsay 2002). On the other hand, in the services marketing field quality is defined as the gap between customer expectations and their perception of the service they receive from a service provider (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988). While these two definitions may appear to differ there are actually many similarities. For instance, the emphasis in both definitions is that the customer is the final judge.

In addition, in both the fields, quality is viewed as a multi-dimensional construct i.e. comprising of many dimensions. Further similarities between the fields of quality management and services marketing are that quality measurement is

recognised in both fields as a prerequisite for quality improvement. However, within the quality management field, quality measurement takes place within the organisation using a range of objective measures. By contrast, in the services marketing field, quality measurement involves capturing the subjective views of customers regarding the quality of service delivered by an organisation. Further differences are that in the quality management field quality is viewed as involving all the processes that are involved in the production of a product. In contrast, the services marketing field places emphasis on quality of the service delivery process also known as quality of intangibles.

## **2.5 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has discussed the conceptualisation and measurement of quality, primarily within the fields of quality management and services marketing. First, the conceptualisation and measurement of quality in the quality management field was discussed. It was emphasised that the conceptualisation of quality in the quality management field has a much older history than it does in the services marketing field.

In addition, a number of differences in quality conceptualisation between the services marketing field and the quality management field have been identified. However, despite these differences, there seems to be a common view that the best definition of quality is one based on customers' understanding of the meaning of quality in the field where quality is being studied.

The latter part of the chapter has discussed the conceptualisation of quality in the services marketing field. It has been emphasised that quality in the services marketing field is defined as the consumer's subjective judgement about an

entity's overall superiority, which results from a comparison of expectations with perceptions of performance (Gronroos, 1983; Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988). This definition is based on the expectancy-disconfirmation theory (Oliver, 1980) or gap theory, as it is commonly known in services marketing literature.

In Section 2.3.4 criticisms of defining quality as a gap between customers' expectations and their perceptions have been discussed. One of the major criticisms of it is by Cronin and Taylor (1994; 1992) who argued that defining quality as gap between expectations and perceptions is flawed. They suggested that quality can be adequately defined and measured on the basis of perception of performance only. In Section (2.3.5), the major dimensions of quality from two schools of thought (the North American and the Nordic schools) were discussed.

In Section 2.3.5.3, the applicability of the RATER dimensions of quality in the services marketing field was investigated. It was established that the applicability of these (RATER) dimensions in the services marketing field was highly questionable. In addition, it was argued that measuring quality by calculating the 'gap' between expectation and perception was problematic.

The approach to conceptualising and measuring quality in the services marketing field was shown to be problematic in the field it was originally developed for. The question that arises is; what chance does the services marketing theory of quality have in the tourism field where it has been applied widely? This issue forms part of the subject of investigation in the following chapter.

## Chapter 3 Conceptualising Quality in Tourism

### 3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the conceptualisation and measurement of quality in tourism in general and at a tourism destination in particular are discussed. The conceptualisation and measurement of quality in tourism in general has been informed mainly by the services marketing theory of quality, especially the work of Parasuraman *et al.*, (1988; 1985), discussed in Chapter Two. Several factors illustrate the dominance (Weiermair, 1997) of the services marketing theory of quality in tourism and some of the major ones are as follows; the most commonly employed definition of quality in tourism, which regards service quality as a ‘gap’ between tourists’ expectations and their perceptions of the performance of the organisation providing the service is derived from Parasuraman’s *et al.*, (1988; 1985) definition of service quality within the services marketing field.

In addition, the ‘RATER’ (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988) dimensions widely used in studies of quality in tourism were developed within the service-marketing field. The SERVQUAL scale (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988), which is the most frequently employed tool for measuring quality in tourism (Akbaba, 2006; Juwaheer, 2004), was also developed within the services marketing field. But, as Chapter Two has demonstrated, the services marketing theory of quality is fraught with serious theoretical and operational weaknesses. So the question that arises is whether the services marketing theory of quality provides an appropriate basis for conceptualising and measuring quality in tourism in general and the quality of a tourism destination in particular.

### 3.1.1 Services Marketing Theory of Quality in Tourism

One way of addressing the question of whether the services marketing theory of quality provides an appropriate basis for conceptualising and measuring quality in tourism is by investigating results of studies that have employed the SERVQUAL scale in tourism. The rationale for such an approach is two-fold. First, apart from being the most frequently employed technique for measuring quality in tourism, the SERVQUAL scale is regarded as one of the best example of how the services marketing of quality has been directly applied to tourism (Otto and Ritchie, 1996; Ryan, 1999).

Second, the RATER dimensions form the basis for measuring quality using the SERVQUAL scale. By investigating the results of studies that have employed the SERVQUAL scale in tourism, it is possible to gain some insight into whether the RATER dimensions, and by extension the services marketing theory of quality, are applicable to tourism. Chapter Two has observed that the SERVQUAL scale faces fierce criticism within the services marketing field, where it was originally developed. Despite these and similar criticisms from a number of tourism researchers (O'Neill and Palmer, 2003; Ryan and Cessford, 2003; Ekinci and Riley, 1998), the SERVQUAL scale remains widely employed in tourism. (Akbaba, 2006) Table 3.1 provides some examples of results of studies that have employed the scale compared to the five generic dimensions developed by Parasuraman *et al.*, (1988).

**Table 3.1 Examples Dimensions of Service Quality of Identified in Tourism Related fields Against the Original Dimensions developed by Parasuraman *et al.*, (1988.)**

Researchers	Research Area	Technique of data collection	Method	Outcome
Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988)	Credit Card, Banking, Brokerage, Repair Services	Questionnaire (sample size 200 at every stage) Stage one 97 - item questionnaire (10 dimensions) Stage two 34 - item questionnaire (7 dimensions) Stage three 22 - item questionnaire (5 dimensions)	Factor analysis	5 dimensions (Reliability, Assurance, Tangibility, Empathy, Responsiveness)
Akababa (2006)	Hotel	Modified SERVQUAL scale-29 items derived from literature review and interviews with tourism experts (academia and industry) sample size 234 usable.	Factor analysis	5 dimensions (Tangibles, Adequacy in service supply, Understanding and Caring, Assurance, and Convenience.
Getty and Getty (2003)	Lodging	Development of new scale based on Parasuraman <i>et al.</i> , (1985) ten original dimensions amended through literature review and in-depth interviews with service users to identify scale items representing each of the 10 dimensions; 63-item questionnaire mailed to frequent-traveller business owners from 12 large US cities; Stratified random sampling; 222 usable questionnaires; 45-item scale after purification; second data set; 229 usable questionnaires; purification of scale to 26 items (LQI scale)	Factor analysis	5 dimensions (Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Confidence, Communication)
Juwaheer and Ross (2003)	Hotels	Modified SERVQUAL scale – 39-item, derived from exploratory interviews with ten hotel managers and 25 tourists of different nationalities. Mauritius; 401 usable questionnaires	Factor analysis	9 dimensions of which 4 are similar to Parasuraman <i>et al.</i> , (1988)
Ekinci, Riley and Fife-Schaw (1998)	Hotel	Modified SERVQUAL scale 18 - Items questionnaire. (Sample size 115).	Factor analysis	2 dimensions (Tangibles and Intangibles)
Nowacki (2005)	Museum	Modified SERVQUAL scale – 36-item based on literature review. Sample 103	Factor analysis	3 dimensions for reception are and ticket office (Orientation marking, Safety information, Personnel). 4 dimensions for Exhibition area (Exhibition and personnel standard, technical aspects of

**Table 3.1 Examples Dimensions of Service Quality of Identified in Tourism Related fields Against the Original Dimensions developed by Parasuraman *et al.*, (1988.)**

Researchers	Research Area	Technique of data collection	Method	Outcome
				the Exhibition, exhibition theme and stimulation)
Frochot and Hughes (2000)	Historic houses	Modified SERVQUAL scale extended by items relating to historic houses; 24-item scale (called HISTOQUAL); 5-point rating scale; perception only; interviewer filling the questionnaire; sample frame: visitor to three historic houses in England and Scotland; convenience sampling; 790 usable questionnaires	Factor analysis	5 dimensions (Responsiveness, Tangibles, Communications, Consumables, Empathy)
Mei <i>et al.</i> , (1999)	Hotel	Modified SERVQUAL scale 27 items. (Sample size 155 usable).	Factor analysis	3 dimensions (Employees, Tangibles, Reliability)
O'Neill and Palmer (2003)	Theme Park	Modified SERVQUAL 22 items, derived from literature and interview with part them park users scale sample 138 (135 in the first stage and 103 in the second stage)	Factor analysis	4 dimensions. The factors Only two of the factors had alpha of an acceptable level. One factor cannot be labelled.
Akan, (1995)	Hotel.	Modified SERVQUAL scale. 30 - Item questionnaire adapted from the original list of ten service quality dimensions of Parasuraman <i>et al</i> (1985). (Sample Size 234).	Factor analysis	7 Dimensions. (Courtesy and competence, Communication and transaction, Tangibles, Knowing the customer, Accuracy of reservation, Accuracy and speed, Solutions to problems).
LeBlanc (1992)	Service Quality in travel agencies	Modified SERVQUAL scale. 50 - Attribute questionnaire. (Sample size 600)	Factor analysis	6 Dimensions (Corporate image, competitiveness, courtesy, responsiveness, accessibility and competence
Saleh and Ryan (1991)	Hotel	Modified SERVQUAL scale 33 - Item questionnaire from literature. (Sample size 200).	Factor analysis	5 Dimensions (Conviviality, Tangibles, Reassurance, Avoid Sarcasm and Empathy).
Ryan and Cliff (1997)	Travel Agencies	SERVQUAL scale without modifications Applied the 22 - item SERVQUAL scale	Factor analysis	3 Dimensions (Reassurance, Reliability and Tangibles)

**Table 3.1 Examples Dimensions of Service Quality of Identified in Tourism Related fields Against the Original Dimensions developed by Parasuraman *et al.*, (1988.)**

Researchers	Research Area	Technique of data collection	Method	Outcome
		(Sample size 1000)	Cluster analysis	
Bigne, Martinez and Miquel, (1997)	Travel Agencies	SERVQUAL scale with Modification 22 items used with wording changes Sample size no given by authors.	Factor analysis	5 dimensions (Reliability, Assurance, Tangibility, Empathy, Responsiveness)
Qu and Tsang (1998)	Service Quality in Hotel industry	SERVQUAL scale with Modification 35 - Item questionnaire based on literature review including items from Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, (1988). (Sample size 270)	Factor analysis	6 dimensions. (Price and value, Staff skill and performance, extra amenities, Facilities and atmosphere, Availability and efficiency service, Reliability)
Khan (2003)	Eco-tourists' Quality Expectations.	Modified SERVQUAL scale 30- Adapted from SERVQUAL supplement by literature, tourism experts and focus group. (Sample size 1051)	Factor analysis	6 dimensions (Ecotangibles Reliability, Assurance, Tangibility, Empathy, and Responsiveness).
Lam and Zhang (1999)	Travel Agency	Modified SERVQUAL scale 26 items literature and interviews with six managers travel agency	Factor analysis	5 dimensions (Responsiveness and assurance, Reliability, Empathy, Resources and corporate image and Tangibility.)
Bojanic and Rosen (1994)	Restaurant	SERVQUAL scale without Modifications Applied the 22 – item (Sample size 85)	Factor analysis	6 dimensions (Reliability, Assurance, Tangibility, Knowing the customer, Access and Responsiveness)



A close scrutiny of Table 3.1 reveals that the application of the SERVQUAL scale in tourism has followed two general approaches. The first is by researchers who have used the SERVQUAL scale in its original format i.e. as developed by Parasuraman *et al.*, (1988). These are researchers (e.g. Bojanic and Rosen, 1994; Bigne, *et al.*, 1997) who initially appeared to share Parasuraman's *et al.*, (1988) view that the RATER dimensions were generic and therefore that the SERVQUAL scale was applicable to all services industries (Table 3.1).

The second approach to employing the SERVQUAL scale in tourism differs from the first. Several researchers (e.g. Nowacki, 2005; Saleh and Ryan, 1991) have employed the modified versions of the SERVQUAL scale (Table 3.1). Modification of the SERVQUAL scale has taken many forms, but the most common approaches involve adding attributes and/or using the perception component of the SERVQUAL scale as recommended by Cronin and Taylor (1994). Attributes that have been added to the scale derive mainly from literature and occasionally from interviews (Table 3.1).

The main argument from most researchers who have modified the SERVQUAL scale is that the RATER dimensions failed to take into account some of the unique features of the service setting pertaining to the researchers' studies and the tourism field in general. However, whether the original or a modified version of the SERVQUAL scale was, like in the services marketing field, the RATER dimensions are seldom replicated (see Table 3.1.) In fact, dimensions that completely differ from 'RATER' have frequently been identified where the SERVQUAL scale has been used in tourism (see Table 3.1).

Also, the application of the SERVQUAL scale in tourism persistently reveals conflicting results regarding the number of quality dimensions applicable in the same service setting (Table 3.1). For instance, in studies employing the SERVQUAL scale in the hotel sector, Akan (1995) identifies seven dimensions whereas others (e.g. Saleh and Ryan, 1991) find only five, and still others (e.g. Wong *et al.*, 1999; Getty and Thompson, 1994) uncover just three dimensions. In addition, dimensions as few as two have also been reported in studies employing the SERVQUAL scale in the hotel industry (e.g. Ekinici *et al.*, 1998) see Table 3.1.

Unsurprisingly, contradictions also exist regarding dimensions that contribute the most to the overall service quality in the same service setting. Taking the hotel example again: whereas Akan (1995) reports that ‘Courtesy and competence’ is the dimension that contributes the most to the overall service quality of a hotel, for Saleh and Ryan (1992) it is ‘Conviviality’, for Knutson *et al.*, (1991) it is ‘Reliability’ and for Ekinici *et al.*, (1998) it is ‘Tangibles’. Further, while Mel *et al.*, (1999) ascertain that ‘Employee’ was the best predictor of overall service quality in hotels, for Qu and Tsang (1998) it is ‘Staff skill and performance’ and more recently, Akbaba (2006) finds that the dimension ‘Tangibles’ contributes the most to the overall quality of a hotel.

But the inconsistent results from studies that have employed the SERVQUAL scale in tourism have not been limited to hotels. Varying numbers of dimensions of quality within the same service setting have also been reported in the travel agency, restaurants, and theme parks service sectors (Table 3.1). In a study applying the SERVQUAL scale within the travel agency business, LeBlanc (1992) identifies six dimensions while the Ryan and Cliff (1997) study reveal

three. LeBlanc (1992) states that 'Corporate image' contributes the most to overall quality of a travel agency whereas for Lam and Zhang (1999) it is 'Reliability'.

In another study which uses the SERVQUAL scale to assess customer perception of quality in the tour operator sector, O'Neill (2000) establishes that 'Assurance' is the most important dimension of overall service performance. What these conflicting results from studies that have employed the SERVQUAL scale in tourism certainly indicate is that more research is still needed to fully understand how tourists conceptualise quality within the context of tourism (Augustyn and Seakhoa-King, 2004).

However, amidst the mixed results from the application of the SERVQUAL scale in tourism, some researchers (Table 3.1), though generally in the minority, are able to confirm RATER dimensions. Nevertheless, this has not spared the SERVQUAL scale from criticism. The major criticisms of the services marketing theory of quality in tourism are discussed in the next section.

### **3.1.2 Criticism of the Services Marketing Theory of Quality in Tourism**

The principal criticisms of the services marketing theory of quality applied to tourism are those directed at the SERVQUAL scale and its associated RATER dimensions (Williams, 1998). Indeed, there are many similarities between criticisms of the SERVQUAL scale in tourism and those within the services marketing field discussed in Chapter Two. As a result, some of the discussion in this section may appear to repeat the weaknesses of the SERVQUAL scale previously discussed. However, the intention here is to stress the objections to the SERVQUAL scale, which are unique to the tourism field.

At the centre of criticisms of the services marketing theory of quality in tourism is the SERVQUAL scale's approach to measuring quality by computing the 'gap' between expectations and perceptions, and also the relevance of the RATER dimensions in tourism (Williams, 1998). Many (e.g. O'Neill and Palmer, 2003; Ekinci and Riley, 1998) tourism researchers contend there is no real evidence to suggest that tourists conceptualised quality as resulting from the difference between expectations and perceptions as suggested in the SERVQUAL scale.

It is further argued (e.g. Fallon and Schofield, 2003; Ekinci and Riley, 1998) that, in any case, weaknesses inherent in the expectations construct would render any assessment of quality by calculating the 'gap' between expectations and perceptions more problematic, if not irrelevant, within the context of tourism. As noted in Chapter Two, expectations are the comparison standard against which actual performance is assessed to reach service quality decisions. This implies that customers develop a baseline standard (e.g. from past experience) by which actual performance is assessed (Kozak, 2000). For frequently purchased services, such as those typical within the services marketing field, where RATER dimensions were developed, it may be easier to have baseline standard (Kozak, 2000).

However, in the case of tourism services where the customer (tourist) may take only one or two vacations in a year, it seems unlikely that the customer will establish an accurate standard concerning either a particular tourism service or destination (Kozak, 2000; Meyer and Westerbarkey, 1996). This is mainly due to the fact that customer memory tends to be unreliable, especially over the long term (Kozak, 2000). Apart from questions concerning the accuracy of expectations, there are also doubts as to whether expectations for tourism products exist at all (O'Neill and Palmer, 2003; Barsky, 1992).

Indeed, conceptualising quality as the difference between expectations and perception has an implied assumption that tourists always have expectations, which is not always the case (Fallon and Schofield, 2003; Kozak, 2000). Frequently tourists visit new places of interest and experience new tourism products and it may be unreasonable to expect first time tourists to have any idea what their destination would be like (O'Neill and Palmer, 2003). Undeniably, they may have general expectations, but cannot anticipate the specifics of the destination such as the level of cleanliness (Kozak, 2000).

Additionally, conceptualising quality in tourism in terms of the gap between expectation and perception has a limitation in that tourists may find it difficult to distinguish between expectations and actual performance during or after a holiday (Kozak, 2000; Meyer and Westerbarkey, 1996). One reason for this could be the length of time tourists spend on holiday, which is obviously much longer than a visit to a supermarket or a bank (Neal, 2003; Kozak and Rimmington, 2000; Ryan, 1997). While another reason is that tourists continuously update their expectations before, during and after service consumption and as a result they may find it difficult to clearly distinguish expectations from perceptions (Kozak and Rimmington, 2000; Meyer and Westerbarkey, 1996).

An equally important criticism of the services marketing theory of quality in tourism concerns the relevance of the RATER dimensions in tourism. Many studies (e.g. Table 3.1), employing the SERVQUAL scale have failed to confirm the five RATER dimension within the context of tourism, so it is hardly surprising that the relevance of these dimension has been challenged by many tourism researchers (e.g. Ryan and Cessford, 2003; Ryan, 1999; Johns and Howard, 1998; Ekinci and Riley, 1998). Ryan and Cessford (2003:468), for instance, observed

that, although the 'RATER' dimensions are supposed to represent factors that entail quality in tourism:

... oddly enough, the satisfaction a tourist may gain is when the tangibles are lacking in some part, the reliability is not entirely present and the responsiveness is of one of a shrug of the shoulder.

One of the major criticisms of RATER is that these dimensions are not comprehensive enough to capture the full extent of the meaning of quality within the context of tourism (Augustyn and Seakhoa-King, 2004; Ryan and Cessford, 2003). This argument originates mainly from the view that the RATER dimensions were developed through a conceptualisation of quality which was conducted mainly from a service (intangibles) perspective (Johns and Howard, 1998). As a result, critics (e.g. Augustyn and Seakhoa-King, 2004, Johns and Howard, 1998) argue that the RATER dimensions mostly capture quality of intangibles (services) and neglect the influence of tangibles in service quality perceptions.

The fact that four of the five RATER dimensions are concerned with quality of intangibles is considered evidence of the strong emphasis placed on quality of intangibles at the expense of quality of tangibles in the services marketing theory of quality (Augustyn and Seakhoa-King, 2004). However, it must be noted that the 'RATER' dimensions are a result of extensive research in quality of service encounters typical within the services marketing field (Ryan, 1999). Tourism researchers (Ryan, 1997; 1999) stress that there are fundamental differences between service encounters within the services marketing field and those within the context of tourism and that these difference have implications for how quality is defined within the two fields.

Services encounters within the services marketing field tend to be characterised by frequently purchased services (Snipes *et al.*, 2006). The frequency with which a customer purchases a particular service is known to affect how the customer evaluates the quality of the service encounter (Snipes *et al.*, 2006; Wakefield and Blodgett, 1996). Although several propositions to explain how the frequency with which a customer purchases services affects quality evaluations in service encounters have been made, they all seem to arrive at a similar conclusion.

This conclusion is that, for frequently purchased services, quality tends to be evaluated more on intangible than tangible aspects of the service encounter (Snipes *et al.*, 2006; Wakefield and Blodgett, 1996). One explanation for this relates to the characteristics of services discussed in Chapter Two (Section 2.3.1). Because services are intangible (Reisinger, 2001), the customer (tourist) often finds it difficult to determine the quality of the service encounter prior to purchasing the services (see Chapter Two, Section 2.3.1). As a result, the customer (tourist) is likely to perceive that there is a relatively higher risk that a purchase of a service will turn out to be of poorer quality than the purchase of tangible goods (e.g. Zeithaml and Bitner, 1996; Lovelock, 1991; Zeithaml, 1981). To reduce this risk, customers (tourists) need more clues regarding the quality of services they are about to buy e.g. they may inspect the tangible aspects associated with the service (Zeithaml, 1981).

On the other hand, customers (tourists) who frequently purchase a particular service tend to be more knowledgeable about that service (Goldsmith *et al.*, 1994). Because of prior experience, customers (tourists) who frequently purchase a particular service tend to perceive less risk of the service turning out to be of poor quality. As a result, they may not need the extra information, e.g. that which

is provided by the tangible aspects of the service, in evaluating the quality of the service. It is for this reason that researchers argue (e.g. Wakefield and Blodgett, 1996; Arnould and Price, 1993) that frequently purchased services tend to be evaluated more on intangible aspects of the encounter and less on other quality dimensions (e.g. tangibles).

An alternative explanation for why the quality of frequently purchased services tends to be evaluated more on intangibles than tangibles relates to the duration of the encounter. It is argued (e.g. Ryan, 1997; Wakefield and Blodgett, 1996) that frequently purchased items, such as those in the services marketing field, where RATER dimensions have been developed, tend to be of short duration. This means that the customer of such services spends very little time within the physical surroundings of the service provider (Wakefield and Blodgett, 1996). Research (e.g. Wakefield and Blodgett, 1996; Arnould and Price, 1993) has shown that service encounters of short duration tend to be evaluated more on the intangible rather than tangible aspects of those services.

Service encounters within the context of tourism differ from those in the services marketing field, in terms of both frequency with which they are purchased and their duration (Kozak, 2000). In terms of frequency of purchase; the fact that people take only one or two holidays per annum indicates that services encounters within tourism are mainly characterised by infrequently purchased services (Kozak, 2000). Concerning the duration; tourism service encounters tend to be generally of longer duration e.g. a one-week holiday at a tourism destination (Neal, 2003; Ryan, 1997). Both the lower frequency and the longer duration of the service encounters imply that quality in tourism should be evaluated more on



tangibles than intangibles (Augustyn and Seakhoa-King, 2004; Wakefield and Blodgett, 1996; Arnould and Price, 1993).

Indeed, the significance of tangibles in the evaluation of quality in tourism has been emphasised in more recent studies (e.g. Augustyn and Seakhoa-King, 2004). According to Augustyn and Seakhoa-King (2004), tourism products tend to be characterised by a high proportion of tangible to intangible elements. This implies that while intangibles may be important in quality assessment in tourism, tangible aspects are also equally relevant and may be more important (Augustyn and Seakhoa-King, 2004). As a result, any conceptualisation of quality conducted uniquely from either the intangible or tangible perspective cannot be viewed as adequate (Ryan, 1999).

The need to capture quality of both tangible and intangible aspects in the conceptualisation of quality in tourism is reflected in contributions by researchers from the Nordic School (e.g. Lehtinen and Lehtinen, 1982; Gronroos, 1984) and quality management field (e.g. Crosby, 1979; Deming, 1982; Juran and Gryna, 1988). Nordic School researchers established that both 'technical' (quality of tangibles) and 'functional' (quality of intangibles) aspects of products were equally crucial to a customer's perception of service quality (Chapter Two, Section 2.3.5.2). Researchers from the quality management field also stressed that for any conceptualisation of quality to be meaningful it should incorporate both goods (tangible) and services (intangible) (see Chapter Two, Section 2.2.2).

Another important difference between the fields of tourism and services marketing, which implies that the meaning of quality between the two fields could be different, concerns the significance the customer places on the service

encounter (Williams and Buswell, 2003). Specifically, although tourism encounters can be seen as secondary to other aspects of every day life, they can be very significant and, for some people, more vital (Williams and Buswell, 2003). If someone has waited all year for a two-week holiday, for instance, that service encounter is likely to be a major event for that customer (Williams and Buswell, 2003).

Tourism service encounters are also likely to be more important for other reasons e.g. the high costs usually associated with the purchase of tourism products such as holidays (O'Neill and Palmer, 2003). This means that when tourists arrive at their destinations they may insist that aspects of the product, whether tangible or intangible meet their requirements of quality (O'Neill and Palmer, 2003).

In summary, the discussion so far has centred on the conceptualisation and measurement of quality in tourism in general. The discussion has highlighted that the direct application of the services marketing theory of quality in tourism in general is problematic. In the sections which follow, the discussion is increasingly narrowed to the conceptualisation and measurement of quality of a tourism destination.

### **3.2 Conceptualising the Quality of a Tourism Destination**

Conceptualising quality refers to the process of establishing customers' understanding of the meaning of quality in terms of attributes and dimensions. As Chapter One noted; meaningful quality conceptualisation should capture the customer's understanding of the meaning of quality. In the field of tourism, the tourists are the customers. Consequently, to conceptualise the quality of a tourism destination one must establish tourists' understanding of the meaning of the term

‘quality of a tourism destination’. The reasons for conceptualising the quality of a tourism destination have been briefly highlighted in Chapter One. The intention here is to supplement this initial (Chapter One, Section 1.1) discussion with a more detailed explanation of why it is necessary to conceptualise the quality of a tourism destination.

It was highlighted in Chapter One (Section 1.1) that tourism destinations need to continuously improve quality to succeed if not just to survive. The starting point for any quality improvement is to establish exactly what aspects of quality need to be improved (see Chapter One, Section 1.1). Such knowledge is important because quality can mean different things in different fields (Robledo, 2001). Attributes and dimensions of quality capture what quality means to the customer or tourist in the case of a tourism destination (Chapter Two, Section 2.2.2). It can therefore be argued that the identification of attributes and dimensions of quality of a tourism destination is a pre-requisite step towards efforts to improve the quality of tourism destinations (Chapter One, Section 1.1).

Also, it was noted in Chapter One (Section 1.1.1) that, in order to improve quality, current levels need to be measured so that areas requiring improvement can be identified. In addition, Chapter One highlighted that quality measurement allows levels of quality from different periods to be compared, thereby facilitating progress towards attaining quality goals. But, in order to measure the quality of a tourism destination, one would need to know what exactly to measure. Conceptualising the quality of a tourism destination can be viewed as a means of knowing precisely what needs to be measured in terms of attributes and dimensions.

It can therefore be argued that one of the main reasons for conceptualising the quality of a tourism destination is to provide input, mainly in terms of attributes and dimensions, for the development of a tool for measuring the quality of a tourism destination. In Section 3.1, it was noted that the conceptualisation of quality in tourism in general was informed by the services marketing theory of quality. As part of a continued search for an approach to conceptualising the quality of a tourism destination, the previously posed question as whether the services marketing theory of quality is applicable in tourism in general is narrowed to tourism destination. However, the term 'tourism destination' has been defined variously in tourism literature (Appendix 3.1). Hence, to avoid any confusion it is necessary to first explain what the term 'tourism destination' means in the context of this thesis.

### **3.2.1 Tourism Destination Defined**

Traditionally, tourism destinations have been regarded as geographical areas with well-defined boundaries, such as a country or an island (Hall, 2000). As a result, the term 'tourism destination' has been applied in a variety of spatial scales, ranging from a small individual tourist attraction occupying a few acres, to anything the size of a country or even continent (e.g. Medlik, 1993; Gunn, 1994; Davidson and Maitland, 1997) see Appendix 3.1.

Notably, the spatial size of what is considered a 'tourism destination' seems to depend largely on the researcher's focus of inquiry (Augustyn, 1998). Where the focus of inquiry is at a national level, for instance, the whole country is taken as the 'tourism destination', and where the inquiry is at a local level, a certain geographic area within that country constitutes a 'tourism destination' (Augustyn,

1998). In this thesis, the focus is at the local level (where a destination is a geographic area within a country) for several reasons.

While it is possible to view an entire country as a 'tourism destination', the reality is that tourism activities are nearly always concentrated in certain limited geographic areas within a country (Weiermair, 2000; Davidson and Maitland, 1997). It is in these geographic areas that most tourism businesses such as accommodation establishments, services, entertainment and recreational facilities are located (Eraqi, 2006; Weiermair, 2000; Davidson and Maitland, 1997). Further, it is in these geographic areas that tourists eventually arrive to spend their holidays (Weiermair, 2000; 1997). As a result, it seems logical that quality efforts should be directed at the local level, where they are needed most (Kozak and Remington, 2000).

Murphy *et al.*, (2000) defined a tourism destination as an amalgam of tourism products, available in a certain geographic area within a country, drawing tourists from beyond its boundaries. This definition is appropriate for this thesis for several reasons. By describing a 'tourism destination' as a geographic area that exists inside a country, it can be said that Murphy's *et al.*, (2000) definition implies a local approach to studying tourism destinations and is therefore consistent with the previously noted goal of studying the quality of a tourism destination at local level.

But what constitutes a tourism destination within the context of this thesis can still be confused with terms like 'resort' (to be discussed shortly) which, depending on how it is defined, can have a very similar meaning. When narrowly defined, for instance, a 'resort' is a localised, self-contained tourism complex providing a

variety of recreational facilities in one location (Gunn, 1994). Theme parks, hotels and cruise ships, which are often advertised as self-contained complexes, providing tourism activities under one roof, fit within this narrow definition of 'resort' (Buhalis, 2000; Laws, 1995; Medlik, 1993). This meaning of 'resort' is different from the meaning of 'tourism destination' within the context of this thesis.

However, when defined broadly, the term 'resort' has some similarity with 'tourism destination' as defined within the context of this thesis. For example, a resort has been defined as an established town with a significant range of tourist facilities, or a region within a country in which several holiday centres are located (Medlik, 1993; Laws, 1995). Therefore, it is necessary to specify the characteristics of a tourism destination which help to distinguish a destination from a resort.

Davidson and Maitland (2002) propose a number of characteristics that are useful in distinguishing a tourism destination from a resort. These characteristics are discussed under the following headings:

a) ***The availability of tourist attractions:*** A tourism destination has a wide range of tourism attractions, which are located in different places within the destination area. Tourist attractions are places of interest that can draw tourists to that tourism destination (Kozak and Rimmington, 2000). They are considered one of the main elements of any destination, without which there can be no concept of a tourism destination (Smith, 1994).

The criterion of 'availability of tourist attractions' eliminates resorts, which usually comprise a single tourist attraction e.g. resort hotel (Ekinci *et al.*, 1998) or

casino hotel (e.g. d’Hauteserre, 2000; Roehl, 1999). Murphy’s *et al.*, (2000) definition of a tourism destination, adopted in this thesis, does imply the existence of a number of tourist attractions, in that it describes a tourism destination as an ‘amalgam’ of tourism products.

**b) ‘Availability of a Number of Facilities’:** A tourism destination has a range of facilities located throughout that destination (Davidson and Maitland, 1997). These are elements of a tourism destination that enable tourists to consume the various tourism offerings (e.g. attractions) in the provision of one form of service or another (Buhalis, 2000). Two major categories of tourist facilities have been suggested in tourism literature: these are ‘accessibility-related’ and ‘amenities-related’ facilities (Medlik and Middleton, 1971).

Accessibility-related facilities are facilities which enable tourists to move around within the tourism destination, such as the transportation system. On the other hand, ‘amenities-related facilities’ are the various services that the tourists use whilst at a destination, such as accommodation and catering facilities. Amenities-related facilities also incorporate ancillary services (Buhalis, 2000), which are the various services that tourists use at tourism destinations such as newsagents and telecommunications providers.

The criterion of availability of tourism facilities, located in different areas of the destination, eliminates self-contained tourism complexes such as theme parks which, although consisting of only a handful of facilities housed beneath one roof, do nevertheless often advertise themselves as tourism destinations (Laws, 1995).

**c) ‘Variety of ownership of attractions and facilities’.** As the name implies, this criterion means that tourist facilities and attractions found at a tourism destination

are usually not under the ownership or management of a single proprietor or company, but owned or controlled by different and often unrelated proprietors (Davidson and Maitland, 1997). This criterion differentiates 'tourism destinations' from tourism complexes owned or managed by one company but marketed as 'tourism destinations' and which regard themselves as outright tourism destinations.

*d) 'Availability of Host Community'*. A tourism destination usually has a host community also known as 'local people' who reside within the tourism destination area. This criterion eliminates cruise ships which, though they consider themselves as tourism destinations (Laws, 1995), do not have a host community per se.

### **3.2.2 Services Marketing Theory of Quality and Quality of a Tourism Destination Level**

In Section 3.1, it was noted that the services marketing theory of quality informs how quality is conceptualised and measured in tourism. In this section, the relevance of the services marketing theory of quality as the basis for conceptualising and measuring the quality of a tourism destination is discussed and critiqued.

By definition, a tourism destination is essentially one of many types of tourism products. A tourism product can be viewed from two different levels - the 'specific' and the 'total' levels (Middleton, 1989). At the specific level is the discrete product offered by a single tourism organization such as a sightseeing tour or hotel accommodation (Middleton, 1989), while at the total level is the total product defined as the entire tourism offering consumed by the tourist from the time he or she leaves home to the time he or she returns (Middleton, 1989).



A tourism destination is in many ways similar to a 'total product' as defined by Middleton (1989), but limited to the entire tourism offering consumed by the tourist from the time of arrival at the destination to the time of leaving (e.g. Augustyn, 1998; Buhalis, 2000). As Section 3.1.1 demonstrated, the study of quality in tourism in general has focused 'mainly on conceptualising and measuring the quality of the discrete tourism product as opposed to the quality of a tourism destination as one whole.

This approach can be attributed to the application of services marketing theory of quality in tourism, especially the SERVQUAL scale. Indeed, Ryan (1999) has questioned the manner in which the services marketing theory in general has been applied to tourism. He noted that:

'...attempts at applying services marketing theory in the field of tourism have been directed towards specific components of the industry and not the totality of the holiday experience'. The question that arises is whether the holiday is experienced and assessed as a holistic experience, or as a sequence of events' (Ryan, 1999).

Although Ryan (1999) refers to the measurement of the holiday experience in tourism in general, the same debate can be carried over to the conceptualisation and measurement of the quality of a tourism destination. To paraphrase Ryan's (1999) words – 'do tourists perceive the quality of a tourism destination as an overall evaluation of the destination as one whole, or do they assess it in terms of the sum of the quality produced by the different individual components that make up the destination?' Indeed, it would seem likely that an empirical investigation would be needed to answer this question.

However, the approach to focusing on the quality delivered by individual tourism products as opposed to the quality of a tourism destination as a whole, seems contrary to what is known about how tourists perceive a tourism destination in

general. Many tourism researchers (e.g. Gyimothy, 2000; Woods and Deegan 2003; Go and Gover, 2000) contend that tourists have a holistic view of tourism destinations. Gyimothy (2000), for instance, argues that, in contrast to managers and service quality researchers, tourists perceive a tourism destination as an out of the ordinary, holistic experience or virtual product that only exists as a whole in their minds.

Similarly, Woods and Deegan (2003) observe that, despite the very fragmented nature of the supply side of a tourism destination, tourists view it as one whole product. In addition, Weiermair (2000) observes that, even though tourists experience a multitude of individual service encounters at a tourism destination and are able to evaluate their inherent qualities, what ultimately matters most to them is the total experience within the destination.

Indeed, the views expressed by these researchers (e.g. Gyimothy, 2000; Woods and Deegan, 2003) suggest that perhaps the most appropriate approach to conceptualising the quality of a tourism destination would be to take a holistic approach wherein the whole destination is viewed as a unit. This view is also supported by Postma and Jenkins (1997) who noted that if the goal is to improve quality of a tourism destination as a whole, then the destination should be the starting point of such efforts rather than the tourism organisation.

There is also further evidence to suggest that the services marketing theory of quality could be an inappropriate basis for conceptualising and measuring the quality of a tourism destination. The services marketing theory of quality has been designed with the quality of an individual service organisation in mind (Ryan, 1997; Wakefield and Blodgett, 1996), which in terms of characteristics differs

from an entity such as a tourism destination (Eraqi, 2006). Unlike a single service organisation, a tourism destination comprises a combination of tourism organisations and other stakeholders (Eraqi 2006), all with the potential to influence how tourists perceive the quality of a tourism destination.

For instance, non-service encounter factors such as the host community and weather are known to affect tourists' overall satisfaction with a destination (Kozak and Remington, 2000). Although these factors could affect how tourists conceptualise the quality of a tourism destination, they appear not to have been captured in the RATER dimensions widely adopted in tourism. Therefore, it is possible to suggest that the full complement of dimensions of quality of tourism products such as a tourism destination is yet to be captured.

In addition, as noted previously, the services marketing theory of quality conceptualises and measures service quality as the difference between tourists' expectations and their perceptions of the service they receive from a tourist service provider (Weiermair, 1997). The consumption of a tourism product such as a tourism destination involves encounters with a wide range of organisations that make up a destination (Augustyn, 1998). Given the large volume and the simultaneous consumption that characterises such encounters, it is plausible to suggest that tourists may not remember their expectations and perceptions for each and every encounter. As a result, they may end up forming an overall, or 'Gestalt' (Johns and Tyas, 1997) evaluation of the tourism destination.

More importantly, there seems to be growing evidence to suggest that the approach to conceptualising and measuring quality at tourism destinations based on the services marketing theory of quality (e.g. Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988; 1985)

has not worked. For instance, despite sustained efforts to improve quality at tourism destinations, tourists' complaints regarding the quality of tourism destinations are actually on the increase (Augustyn, 1998).

To summarise, the discussion so far has provided justification for the need to conceptualise the quality of a tourism destination. It has also explained why the widely employed approach, to conceptualise and measure quality tourism based on the services marketing theory of quality, may not be applicable at tourism destination level. In the next section, what the literature suggests concerning how best to approach the conceptualisation of quality of a tourism destination is discussed.

### **3.2.3 An Inductive Approach to Conceptualising Quality of a Tourism Destination**

The approach to conceptualising and measuring quality in tourism, which is based on theories adopted from the services marketing field, seem to resemble what the researcher Bajaria (2001) describes as a 'deductive approach' to quality. In a deductive approach, an organization adopts quality techniques which have been developed and used successfully in other fields (Bajaria, 2001). For example, although the SERVQUAL scale and its associated RATER dimensions were developed in the services marketing field, they have been applied directly in tourism.

While the approach may seem appropriate, i.e. one service field adopting quality techniques developed in another, such direct application of the services marketing theory of quality in a different field may not be the best approach to adopt. The rationale being that despite claims of generic dimensions of quality, evidence suggests that, on the contrary, the dimensions of quality can vary from one field to

another (Kandampully, 2000). As a result, adopting a deductive approach to quality can expose one to the risk of employing quality techniques which may later be found to be inappropriate (Bajaria, 2001). It is mainly for this reason that several scholars (e.g. Reeves and Bednar, 1994; Garvin, 1984; Bajaria, 2001) have stressed the need to base any study of quality on a thorough understanding of what quality means, in the context within which quality is being investigated.

The inductive approach to studying quality proposed by Bajaria (2001) seems appropriate for conceptualising the quality of a tourism destination. According to Bajaria (2001), in cases where quality is studied in a relatively new field, an inductive approach is the best way to proceed. An inductive approach is the opposite of the deductive approach (Bajaria, 2001). In an inductive approach, the first step to studying quality is to establish the customers' (tourists') understanding of the meaning of quality in the particular field in which quality is being studied (Bajaria, 2001). This ensures that the meaning of quality is relevant to the field in which it is being studied (Bajaria, 2001).

Consequently, this thesis proposes to conceptualise the quality of a tourism destination by establishing an understanding of the meaning of the term quality of a tourism destination directly from tourists.

### **3.3 Factors that Could Affect the Tourist's Understanding of the Meaning of Quality of a Tourism Destination**

In this section, factors that are likely to affect tourists' understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination are discussed. It has been demonstrated in some previous studies (Ekinici *et al.*, 2003; Ryan and Cliff 1997; Seakhoa-King, 1997) that demographic factors such as age, income, education, gender and nationality can influence how quality of service is evaluated in general

and in the tourism field in particular. Consequently, it is plausible to suggest that demographic factors are likely to influence tourists' understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination.

However, the study of the effects of demographic factors on service quality conceptualisation and evaluations in general, remains very limited (Santos and Mathews, 2001). This means that, to establish which personal factors could influence tourists' understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination, a review of literature needs to take a broader perspective i.e. incorporating studies in quality conceptualisation and measurement beyond the boundaries of the tourism field. Consequently, an investigation into personal factors that could affect tourist understanding of meaning of quality in tourism has been supplemented with a review of studies on the influence of personal factors on service quality evaluation in general. Factors that could affect tourists' understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination are discussed under the relevant headings.

### ***Tourist Gender***

One factor likely to affect the understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination is the tourist's gender. The effect of gender on service quality evaluation has been demonstrated in a number of tourism studies (e.g. Ekinici *et al.*, 2003; Ryan and Cliff, 1997). For instance, in a study, Ekinici *et al.*, (2003), report that female tourists tended to rate quality of intangibles in accommodation facilities higher than male tourists. Similarly, Ryan and Cliff (1997) report that females had higher service quality expectations for travel agencies than male customers.

Gender differences in service quality evaluation have also been reported in the banking (Stafford, 1996) and health care (e.g. Butler *et al.*, 1996) industries with results suggesting a tendency for higher service quality scores from females compared with males. However, some researchers have established that it is males who tend to rate service quality higher than females, (e.g. Spathis *et al.*, 2004) while others (Soriano, 2002; Seakhoa-King, 1997; Koo *et al.*, 1999) report no gender difference at all in service quality judgements. Spathis *et al.*, (2004) found that male customers rated twenty-nine out of thirty-one attributes of service quality of a bank higher than female customers. Seakhoa-King (1997), on the other hand, found no gender differences in service quality evaluation in the airlines travel sector. Similarly, Soriano (2002) found no significant difference between male and female tourists in how they rated quality in a restaurant.

### ***Tourist Nationality***

Also likely to affect the understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination is the tourist's nationality. Previous studies (e.g. Atilgan *et al.*, 2003; Luk *et al.*, 1992) in quality measurement in tourism have revealed significant differences in the evaluation of quality between tourists of different nationalities. Luk *et al.*, (1992) used the SERVQUAL scale to assess tourists' service quality perceptions and expectations for tour operators. They found that tourists from the Asia-Pacific region had significantly higher expectations for tour operators' service quality than those from Europe-America in four out of five service quality dimensions.

Similarly, Atilgan *et al.*, (2003) found that German and Russian tourists significantly differed on how they perceived the quality of service provided by tour operators. Specifically, these researchers found that while German tourists

rated the dimension 'Empathy' as neutral, the Russians rated it as good. In addition, while Germans rated the dimension 'Assurance' and 'Reliability' as very poor, the Russians, in contrast, rated both the dimensions as excellent. Also, the Germans rated 'Tangibility' as excellent unlike the neutral perception of the Russians. Atilgan *et al.*, (2003) concludes that cultural differences between German and Russian tourists accounted for the dissimilarity in service quality evaluation between the two nationalities.

In a more recent study, Kvist and Klefsjo (2006) established that British and Italian tourists visiting destinations in Sweden differed in the importance they placed on a number of service quality dimensions. They discovered that, while British tourists rated 'Reliability' and 'Responsiveness' as fairly low, the Italians, in contrast, jointly rated 'Reliability' and 'Competence' in first place followed by 'Responsiveness'. Differences in service quality evaluations amongst nationality groups have also been reported in the banking industry. Glaveli *et al.*, (2006) reported differences in service quality evaluation of an international bank amongst customers from five Balkan countries (e.g. Greece, Bulgaria, Albania, Macedonia and Siberia).

### ***Tourist Ethnicity***

Closely related to nationality and culture and likely to affect the understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination is tourists' ethnicity. Ethnicity has been shown to affect tourists' evaluation of quality in the retail (Gogliano and Hathcote, 1994) and airline businesses (Seakhoa-King, 1997). Gogliano and Hathcote (1994) conducted a study aimed at measuring quality of service in a retail apparel speciality store. They established that Caucasians had higher 'gap'



scores between expectations and perceptions for the dimension 'Convenience' than non-white respondents.

Seakhoa-King (1997) found that Chinese, Malay and Indian customers differed in how they rated service quality in the airline travel sector. The customers of Chinese ethnic origin rated 'Reliability' higher than those of Indian origin. In addition, Chinese and Malays rated 'Responsiveness' higher than the Indians (Seakhoa-King, 1997). Indeed, it is such differences in service quality evaluation between customers from different ethnicity that has led some researchers (e.g. Raajpoot, 2004) to conclude that quality dimensions such as RATER can only be generalised within a certain cultural context.

### ***Tourist Age***

The understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination could also be affected by the tourist's age. Indeed, age has been shown to be the determining factor in service quality perception in a number of service settings e.g. the banking industry (Stafford, 1996), motor insurance and airline (Santos and Mathews, 2001) and health care (Butler *et al.*, 1996). Stafford (1996) found that 'Reliability/honesty' was less important to young adults (aged under 35 years), than for those aged 35 years and above.

In the Santos and Mathew (2001) study of the insurance services sector, customers aged between 20-40 years had the highest perception scores for the dimensions 'Accessibility', 'Price/value' and 'Reliability' of any age group. In addition, they ascertained that young (15 to 19 years old) customers rated 'Accessibility', 'Commitment', 'Communication', 'Competence' and 'Reliability' as less important than older customers in the airline industry. Butler *et al.*, (1996)

found that older patients rated quality in hospitals higher than younger patients. However, Butler *et al.*, (1996) did not provide age categories to define what they mean by young or old patients.

Age has also been found to affect a customer's level of information processing (Philip and Sternthal, 1996) which is a necessary condition for evaluation of service quality (Butler *et al.*, 1996). In their study, Philip and Sternthal (1996) found that older customers had difficulty in distinguishing relevant from irrelevant information, especially in new purchasing decisions. However, some researchers (e.g. Neal, 2003) in the tourism field and in the retail service sector (Gogliano and Hathcote, 1994) found that age had no effect on how customers (tourists) evaluated quality.

### ***Length of stay***

It has also been reported that the length of stay, defined as the amount of time tourists spend at a destination and frequently measured in the number of days or nights tourists spend at a site, has an effect on service quality evaluations (Neal, 2003). Neal (2003) divided tourists into two groups; short-term stay - tourists who stayed from one to six nights on their trip; and long term stay - tourists who stayed seven or more nights. Neal (2003) established that long-term visitors were more satisfied with the quality of tourism services than short-term visitors for the following reasons:

If a service system failure occurs during a vacation taken by short-term visitors, a larger portion of the vacation time is affected, and this period is a proportionately long period of time (Neal, 2003). That is to say, if a visitor stays for a month in a hotel and one day a service system failure occurs (e.g. a water pipe break), only

one day out of many (i.e. 1/30th) of the vacation time is affected (Neal, 2003). However, if the vacation lasts only 4 days and the same problems occurs, a larger proportion of the overall vacation is destroyed (i.e. 1/4<sup>th</sup>) thus making a much larger impact on guests' overall perception of the quality of the hotel (Neal, 2003).

In addition, when short term visitors report problems, there is less opportunity for recovery and as a result they may leave with a poor impression of the quality of the service provider (Neal, 2003). Also short term visitors may be harder to impress because they are doing things in a hurry and long stay visitors may have a more enjoyable stay because they tend to be more relaxed (Neal, 2003).

### ***Tourist Income***

The demographic variable 'income' may also affect tourists' understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourist destination. Gogliano and Hathcote (1994) found that higher income respondents (earning \$35000 and more per annum) had greater discrepancies with respect to expectations and perceptions than those of lower income for the dimension 'Reliability'. Santos and Mathew (2001) also reported differences in service quality perception between higher and lower income groups in the airline and restaurant industries.

Specifically, Santos and Mathew (2001) ascertained that higher income (over £30,000 per annum) customers rated 'Competence', 'Efficiency', 'Recovery', and 'Reliability' as more important than lower income groups (under £10,000 per annum) in the airline industry. Butler *et al.*, (1996) found that patients from higher income groups had a lower perception of hospital service quality than those from lower income groups. In the restaurant sector, Santos and Mathew (2001) also

established that customers with income higher than £30,000 per annum perceived the dimensions 'Communication', 'Efficiency', 'Flexibility', 'Recovery', 'Reliability', and 'Security' as more important than did other income groups. However, some studies (e.g. Neal, 2003; Stafford, 1996) could not establish a relationship between service quality evaluation and the socio-economic variable 'income'.

### ***The presence of children in a family***

Many studies (e.g. Connell, 2005; Turley, 2001; Thornton *et al.*, 2000; Ryan, 1992) have shown that the presence of children in a family can affect such decisions as the choice of destination and type of activities undertaken while at the destination. More important to this thesis though is the view that children's satisfaction with the quality of tourism products generates a satisfactory experience for the adults (Ryan, 1992). This implies that the adult tourists' understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination can be affected by whether or not they have children with them when they go on holiday.

### ***Motivation factors***

Some studies (Heung and Cheng, 2000; Kozak, 2000; Ryan, 1997) have suggested tourists' satisfaction with service delivery in tourism in general is dependent on motivation factors surrounding the trip having been fulfilled. Since satisfaction has been shown to be related to quality it seems reasonable to suggest that factors that motivate people to go on holiday could affect their understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination. A review of literature (Kim and Prideaux, 2005; Goossens, 2000; Crompton, 1979) revealed that people travel because they are 'pushed' or 'pulled' into making travel decisions by a number of 'forces' or 'factors'.

'Push factors' are socio-psychological motives; reasons for taking a holiday that mainly originate within an individual (Yoon and Uysal, 2005; Crompton, 1979). 'Pull factors', on the other hand, are motives for taking a holiday aroused by the destination's characteristics rather than emerging exclusively from within the traveller himself (Goossens, 2000; Crompton, 1979). The push factors are linked to the human needs proposed by Maslow (1973). Maslow (1973) has postulated that human beings have seven needs. These needs, arranged in order of importance for the survival of human beings are as follows: at the bottom of Maslow's (1973), hierarchy are physiological needs, next come safety and security, belonging/social affiliation, self esteem, cognitive, aesthetic, and finally self-actualisation. According to Maslow (1973), if any of these needs are not met disequilibrium is created and human beings become motivated to find a solution to restore the balance. Taking a holiday, for instance, is considered one of the many ways people can correct this imbalance (Awaritefe, 2004).

Maslow (1973) maintains that lower level needs are more basic i.e. crucial for survival, and as such human beings seek to satisfy these needs first. This means that, for example, higher level needs such as self-actualisation cannot be achieved unless lower level needs such as hunger and safety have been addressed. However, as lower needs are met, human beings seek to satisfy successively higher needs (Maslow, 1973).

From the preceding discussion it seems plausible to suggest that tourists' understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination may be dependent on what would have motivated them to spend a holiday at a particular destination. Tourist motivation for visiting a destination can be reflected in the activities they conduct at a tourism destination (Ryan 1997). As a result, it is

possible to suggest that tourists who undertake different activities will have a different understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination.

### ***Tourist Personality***

Also capable of influencing tourists' understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination is tourist personality. According to Plog (1973; 2004), tourists can be divided into the following five groups according to personality type: 'psychocentrics', 'near psychocentrics', 'midcentrics', 'near allocentrics' and 'allocentrics'.

Psychocentrics', also known as 'dependables' are tourists who mostly prefer resting and relaxing while on holiday (Plog, 1973; 2004). In addition, they are also likely to spend most of their holiday time in one location and often return to the same spot regularly i.e., they enjoy familiarity. They prefer travelling to domestic as opposed to international destinations. Psychocentrics are found on one extreme end of a tourist personality trait continuum suggested by Plog (1973; 2004).

On the other end of the personality continuum are 'Allocentrics' also known as 'venturers'. The 'allocentrics' group comprises tourists who demonstrate more adventurous behaviour (Plog, 2004). They tend to seek new destinations each year rather than returning to previously visited places i.e. they are novelty seekers. They also prefer travelling around within the destination rather being confined to one place (Plog, 2004, 1991). In addition, 'allocentrics' enjoy travelling to international destinations. They are also, according to Plog (2004), less thrifty, in that they are likely to spend discretionary income more easily than 'psychocentrics'.

Between the two extremes of 'psychocentrics' and 'allocentrics' are Plog's (2004), 'mid-centrics'. Mid-centrics are tourists who are likely to engage in a variety of activities at a destination. For instance, they may sometimes prefer resting and relaxing while at other times they may prefer to be on the go, engaging in more exciting activities. Mid-centrics also like travelling to popular international destinations which have not been spoiled by excessive tourism (Plog, 2004; 1991).

Although Plog's (1973) theory is intended to explain tourist behaviour, some studies (e.g. Baker and Crompton, 2000) suggest that tourists of different personality traits may perceive the satisfaction they receive from tourism service in different ways. As a result, it is possible to suggest that tourists of different personality traits may have a different understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination.

### **3.4 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has discussed the conceptualisation and measurement of quality in tourism in general and at tourism destinations in particular. Section 3.1, highlighted that the conceptualisation and measurement of quality in tourism was informed by the services marketing theory of quality, especially the work of Parasuraman *et al.*, (1988). The evidence being that the definition, dimensions and tool for measuring quality widely employed in tourism were developed in the services marketing field mainly by Parasuraman *et al.*, (1988, 1985).

Section 3.1.1 discussed how the services marketing theory of quality has been applied to tourism and the weaknesses inherent in the approach. It was noted that the SERVQUAL scale and its associated RATER dimensions represent the best

example of how the services marketing theory of quality has been applied to tourism. As a result, it was possible to ascertain whether the services marketing theory of quality is relevant in tourism by looking at studies that have employed the SERVQUAL scale. It was noted that application of the SERVQUAL scale in tourism has continued to produce mixed results both in terms of the number and in terms of the type of dimensions between and within the same service sector. As a result the SERVQUAL scale, and by extension the services marketing theory of quality, faces criticism from tourism researchers.

Section 3.1.2 discussed the major objections to the adoption of the services marketing theory of quality in tourism. Section 3.1.2 highlighted the fact that the criticisms of the services marketing theory of quality in tourism mainly focused on the SERVQUAL scale and the RATER dimensions. In addition, it was stated that criticisms of the SERVQUAL scale in tourism were similar to those in the services marketing field. As a result, Section 3.1.2 focused on stressing those objections to the SERVQUAL scale that were particularly unique to tourism and these are as follows:

Firstly, the conceptualisation and measurement of quality as a gap between expectation and perception in the SERVQUAL scale may be inappropriate for tourism mainly because of problems within the expectation construct. For example, tourists do not always have expectations but, if they do have any, such expectations are considered too inaccurate to be useful for conceptualising and measuring quality in tourism. Secondly, critics view the RATER dimensions as not comprehensive enough to capture the full meaning of quality in tourism. The rationale being that RATER dimensions capture mainly quality of intangibles while ignoring quality of tangibles.



Thirdly, critics argue that there are enough differences in service encounters between the services marketing field, where RATER dimensions were developed, and the tourism field to suggest that the meaning of quality between the two fields is different. The major differences between the fields of services marketing and tourism are in terms of the duration of the service encounter and frequency of purchase of services - both factors that could affect quality assessment.

Section 3.2.1 set the platform for discussing the conceptualisation of quality of a tourism destination by defining what the term tourism destination means. Section 3.2.2 expanded the discussion on the need to conceptualise the quality of a tourism destination initiated in Chapter One by highlighting more reasons. In addition, Section 3.2.2 discussed the relevance of the services marketing theory of quality in attempts to conceptualise and measure the quality of a tourism destination. It was noted that the characteristics of tourism destination and how tourists perceive a destination in general suggests that the services marketing theory of quality might not be an appropriate basis for conceptualising and measuring the quality of a tourism destination.

Section 3.2.2 argued that the study of quality in tourism in general and at tourism destinations follows what could be described as a deductive approach. In the deductive approach, quality tools developed in one field are applied to another. For example, although developed in the services marketing field, the SERVQUAL scale is widely employed in tourism. The major weakness of a deductive approach to quality is that the meaning of quality between the receiving field and the adopting field can be different. This results in the wrong quality tools being employed.

Consequently, Section 3.2.2 has argued that the conceptualisation of quality of a tourism destination needs to take an inductive approach. In an inductive approach, the first step would be to establish the meaning of quality in the field or context in which it is studied. Such an approach would avoid the problems likely to result from a deductive approach to quality widely employed in tourism.

Section 3.3 discussed the main factors that are likely to influence tourists' understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination. These were tourists' personal factors e.g. age, gender, income and nationality. Finally, based on the theoretical foundations set out in this chapter and particularly the discussion in Section 3.3, the following hypotheses regarding tourists' understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination have been developed:

H<sub>1</sub>: There are significant gender differences in understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination.

H<sub>2</sub>: There are significant differences in understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination between tourists who have spent a holiday at a tourism destination with children in the past and tourists who have never spent a holiday at a tourism destination with children.

H<sub>3</sub>: There are significant differences in understanding the meaning of quality of a tourism destination between tourists who last visited a tourism destination within their home country and tourists who last visited a destination outside their home country.

H<sub>4</sub>: There are significant differences in understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination amongst tourists from different age groups.

H<sub>5</sub>: There are significant differences in understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination amongst tourists from different tourism activity groups.

H<sub>6</sub>: There are significant differences in understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination among tourists from different income groups.

H<sub>7</sub>: There are significant differences in understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination between short and long stay tourists

H<sub>8</sub>: There are significant differences in understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination among tourists who last visited a tourism destination less than 6 months ago, 6-12 months ago and more that 12 months ago.

H<sub>9</sub>: There are significant differences in understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination among tourists from different nationalities.

These hypotheses are intended to achieve the objective of establishing whether there are any significant and/or meaningful differences in understanding of the meaning of the term quality of a tourism destination within a group of tourists, given a number of independent variables (Chapter One Table 1.1).

## **Chapter 4 Methodology**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an account of the methodological approach employed to investigate the research problem introduced in Chapter One and discussed in Chapters Two and Three. As noted in Chapter One (Section 1.3) the methodological approach adopted in this thesis can be viewed as comprising two distinct phases. In the first, mainly qualitative phase an exploratory study (Cooper and Schindler, 1998) preceded by a pilot study was conducted (Chapter One, Section 1.3). While in the second, mainly quantitative phase, a descriptive and explanatory study (Cooper and Schindler, 1998) was conducted.

Since both the qualitative and quantitative research approaches were employed in the same research project, the field research can be viewed as having adopted a mixed research methodology design (Tashakkori and Toddle, 1998). To enhance the clarity of presentation in research projects employing mixed research designs, it is recommended that, where possible, the quantitative and qualitative phases are presented separately (Creswell, 1994). As a result, in this methodology chapter, the two research phases are presented separately and in the chronological order in which they were employed in the field research.

It must be noted that although this chapter focuses mainly on explaining the methodology employed in the field research, some results pertaining only to improvements/modifications of questions made after the pilot study are discussed. Results relating to the 'answers', (findings) to the actual questions are not discussed in this chapter.

## 4.2 Research Philosophy

The research philosophies that can be employed to investigate tourist's understanding of the meaning of the term quality of a tourism destination are varied, and currently there is no one agreed best way of conducting this type of research (Amaratunga *et al.*, 2002). According to Eldabi *et al.*, (2002), research philosophies can be grouped into two general categories: positivism and interpretivism, with each representing different, if not competing views regarding how best to conduct research. This implies that a researcher had to choose the research philosophy to adopt from competing alternatives.

Any research philosophy adopted in a study should fit the research problem that the researcher intends to investigate (Phillimore and Goodson, 2004). As a result, when the researcher was faced with the choice of employing either 'positivism' or 'interpretivism' or both philosophies, it was necessary to make an informed decision (Yin, 1994) as to which of the three alternatives to adopt, guided primarily by the research problem needing to be solved. The first stage of the field research has been informed mainly by the research philosophy of interpretivism while the second stage is grounded in the research philosophy of positivism.

The research philosophy of positivism is regarded as the dominant approach in tourism research (Walle, 1997; Riley, 1996). It views reality as singular, 'something out there' and independent of the researcher (Decrop, 1999; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Creswell, 1994). In addition, it regards this reality as something which can be measured objectively e.g. by using a quantitative research instrument (Davies, 2003).

On the other hand, the research philosophy of interpretivism, the application of which in tourism has been relatively limited, but which has been growing rapidly over recent years (Walle, 1997; Riley, 1996), provides a contrasting approach to the research philosophy of positivism. It rejects the idea of a single objectively measurable reality, positing instead the existence of subjective, multiple constructed realities (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Davis, 2003). The individuals involved in the research situation, such as the researcher, the individuals being investigated, and the reader or audience interpreting the research are regarded as the creators of these realities (Creswell, 1994). Interpretivists contend that these multiple realities can only be captured through the employment of relatively less rigid data collection techniques, such as those within a qualitative research approach e.g. the in-depth interview technique (Bernard, 2000).

The research philosophies of positivism and interpretivism also differ in their assumptions about the relationship between reality and the researcher (Creswell, 1994). The positivist researcher keeps a distant and independent relationship from those being researched (Jennings, 2001; Creswell, 1994), enabling him or her to provide an outsider's account, also known as 'etic' (Walle, 1997; Phillimore and Goodson, 2004), of the research process. Such separation between the researcher and those being researched is thought to ensure that the researcher's biases are excluded, and therefore prevented from contaminating the outcomes of an inquiry (Creswell, 1994).

On the other hand, the research philosophy of interpretivism has its roots in *Verstehen* or the empathetic understanding tradition of Max Weber, wherein it is argued that for social scientists to understand the behaviour of individuals and groups, they need to put themselves in the place of the subjects of the inquiry

(Jennings, 2001). Hence, unlike the positivist, the interpretivist researcher endeavours to minimise the distance between himself or herself and those being researched (Creswell, 1994). This means that for an interpretivist researcher the goal is to get as close as possible to the subjects, such that it becomes possible to get inside their minds and see the world from the subject's point of view (Jennings, 2001). As a result, the interpretivist researcher's role in the research process can be described as that of an observer from the inside, also known as 'emic' (Phillimore and Goodson, 2004; Walle, 1997).

The preceding discussion has highlighted the contrasting views regarding the best way of conducting research that the philosophies of positivism and interpretivism can bring to this thesis. Interpretivism provides the philosophical underpinnings for the qualitative approach adopted in the first stage of the field research, while that of the quantitative approach, employed in the second stage, is informed by positivism research philosophy. The next Sections (4.2.1 and 4.2.2) discuss the advantages and disadvantages of employing qualitative and quantitative research approaches.

#### **4.2.1 The Qualitative Approach**

The qualitative approach can be described as a research approach that does not usually rely on numerical evidence to draw conclusions (Finn *et al.*, 2000). Instead, conclusions from a qualitative research approach are drawn from data that are mainly in the form of words or observations, often referred to as 'soft' data (McDowell and MacLean, 1998; Neuman, 1991).

The philosophy of interpretivism, which informs the qualitative research approach, advocates the study of naturally occurring phenomena in a naturally

occurring setting (Amaratunga *et al.*, 2002). As such, qualitative researchers argue that it is not possible to fully assign meaning to a phenomenon (or behaviour) without describing the context and understanding the position of the people who affect, or are affected by the phenomenon (Eldabi *et al.*, 2002). The rationale is based on the understanding that human behaviour is significantly influenced by the setting in which it occurs and therefore it can only be fully understood when studied within these settings (Neuman, 1991; Marshall and Rossman, 1995).

As a result, unlike the quantitative researcher, the qualitative researcher does not attempt to control for bias by manipulating the research setting (Creswell, 1994); instead the qualitative researcher tries to make sense of the situation without imposing pre-existing expectations on the phenomenon or setting under study (Amaratunga *et al.*, 2002).

### ***Advantages of Qualitative Approach***

The qualitative research approach is characterised by a relatively flexible, yet systematic, research design (Gilmore and Carson, 1996). This means that, unlike the quantitative research design, the qualitative design cannot be viewed as a blueprint containing the exact specifications, but rather as a rough sketch, which may change as the research process unfolds (Frankel and Devers, 2002). Such flexibility in a research design implies that a researcher has freedom to experiment with different techniques to determine what works within the context of his/her project (Gilmore and Carson, 1996).

Indeed, freedom to experiment can be a particularly valuable weapon in exploratory studies, which by definition implies that the researcher may not always have the knowledge of what research tools work within the context of his



or her study (Sekaran, 2000) e.g. in terms of what data collection techniques would be appropriate. In such cases, a researcher could begin by piloting a few data collection techniques, on a small scale, to establish what works within the context of a given research project (Gilmore and Carson, 1996; Hartmann and Hedblom, 1979). Once the appropriate data collection techniques have been identified, they could then be employed in the actual research project.

Data collection techniques within the qualitative research approach are open-ended which means that they are well suited for capturing respondents' personal opinions, in their own words, about the issue under investigation (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). This can be particularly useful where the researcher seeks to gain an in-depth understanding of the meaning respondents ascribe to issues that are the focus of an inquiry.

### ***Disadvantages of the Qualitative Approach***

Qualitative research has often been criticised as 'messy', in that it tends not to progress in the relatively linear fashion, with discrete stages, which is common in most quantitative research designs (Phillimore and Goodson, 2004; Allan, 1991). In a sense, this represents the negative side of the relatively flexible research designs associated with qualitative research. However, although it may give the impression of being 'messy', qualitative research is often carefully designed to be systematic enough to guarantee the level of rigour required to investigate a research problem (Allan, 1991).

There is also a long-standing criticism that qualitative research findings are not verifiable. Indeed, verifiability, which entails that empirical investigation should be capable of being replicated by others so that the findings of a study can be

confirmed or refuted, is a central tenet of science (Allan, 1991). Admittedly, it can be difficult to replicate the qualitative studies, at least in the same manner as in quantitative studies, but this should not imply that qualitative studies entirely lack verifiability (Allan, 1991). The qualitative research approach stresses the need for the researcher meticulously to record each step in the research process, which helps to create an audit trail other researchers can use to follow the footsteps of the original researcher if required (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Maykut and Morehouse, 1994).

Some researchers (e.g. Jennings, 2001; Wengraf, 2001) argue that qualitative research has a weakness in that its findings cannot be generalised to the wider population. This criticism may not be truly fair to the qualitative research approach because generalisability of results to the entire population is rarely the aim of the qualitative research approach (de Ruyter and Scholl 1998).

#### **4.2.2 Quantitative Approach**

The quantitative approach is, by definition, an approach that relies mainly on numerical evidence to draw conclusions (Veal, 1997). As a result, it has often been described as ‘hard’ or a ‘number crunching’ research approach (Murphy-Black, 1994:545). Furthermore, because the research philosophy of positivism (Section 4.2) provides the philosophical underpinnings for the quantitative research approach, some researchers (e.g. Amaratunga *et al.*, 2002; Eldabi *et al.*, 2002) have referred to it as the ‘positivist’ approach. A frequently cited characteristic of the quantitative research approach relates to its relatively rigid research design. In a typical quantitative research design, for example, such parameters as concepts, variables and hypotheses tend to be set before the study begins and remain largely fixed through the research process (Creswell, 1994).

### *Advantages of the Quantitative Approach*

In the quantitative approach, the researcher studies a small, but carefully selected, group or subset of the population in such a manner that the knowledge gained is representative of the entire population under study (Bernard, 2000). For example, for a researcher employing the quantitative approach to study a representative sample of tourists, the goal would be to identify relationships that are common to all tourists, and hence provide a general statement or theory about the phenomenon being researched (Finn *et al.*, 2000). This implies that by studying the opinions of a small representative sample, it is possible to make inferences about the views of the entire population from which the sample has been drawn (Sekaran, 2000). Therefore, it can be concluded that the quantitative approach is a cost effective method of conducting research, particularly useful when researching a relatively large population (Cooper and Schindler, 1998), as is often the case in tourism research.

The quantitative approach also has the advantage that it provides the means by which phenomena under study can be measured objectively (Creswell, 1994). For instance, measurement tools such as questionnaires are often used to assess the opinion of tourists over issues that are of interest to the researcher. The accuracy of such a measurement tool is almost guaranteed, since it is possible to test its reliability using objective measures, before conducting the research (Neuman, 1991).

An added advantage of the quantitative approach is that it is considered a relatively impersonal means of conducting research (Cooper and Schindler, 1998). The reason for this is that the quantitative approach is underpinned by the research philosophy of positivism which argues that a researcher can have an independent

relationship with those being researched (Section 4.2). As noted previously, such independence between the researcher and those researched ensures that the researcher's biases are excluded from influencing the outcomes of the research process (Section 4.2).

### ***Disadvantages of the Quantitative Approach***

The quantitative approach has been criticized as a relatively inflexible way of conducting research (Carson *et al.*, 2001). For example, once a quantitative research survey is underway, there is usually very little a researcher can do upon discovering an error in the data collection instrument e.g. that a certain question is ambiguous, or has been misinterpreted (Carson *et al.*, 2001). However, given the rigour and systematic process often involved in questionnaire design (Sekaran, 2000), the chances of a question containing errors going to the final questionnaire tend to be very limited.

The quantitative research approach has also been criticised as a too artificial approach for conducting research (Phillimore and Goodson, 2004). For example, research conducted under a controlled environment, such as in experimental designs, are often criticised for ignoring the context in which the phenomena under investigation take place (Creswell, 1994).

### **4.2.3 Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches**

As highlighted in the preceding two sections, despite the advantages of employing either the qualitative or quantitative research approach, there are also disadvantages associated with each of them. This has given rise to a growing consensus amongst researchers (e.g. McDowell and MacLean, 1998; Davies, 2003) that perhaps the ideal strategy to employ when conducting research is to

combine the qualitative with the quantitative research approach. Such a strategy enables the weakness inherent in one approach to be neutralised by the strengths in the other (Jick, 1979).

For instance, a researcher might employ qualitative methods to explore a relatively new area, producing findings that are rich in detail and internal validity (Patton, 1990). But, depth and internal validity of findings from a qualitative approach are often achieved at the expense of generalisability of the findings to wider population (Patton, 1990). This makes combining the qualitative and quantitative research approaches a viable strategy, as one of the strengths of the quantitative approach is its ability to produce research with generalisable findings (Tashakkori and Toddle, 1998).

However, combining the qualitative and quantitative approaches is not without controversy. Some researchers (e.g. Lincoln and Guba, 1994; Tashakkori and Toddle, 1998) argue that the two approaches are based on incompatible philosophical underpinnings and therefore should not be mixed. While others in support (e.g. Flick, 2002; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Jick, 1979) stress the benefits of combining the two approaches for addressing a research problem.

Support for mixed methods is gaining momentum in tourism research and has received the support of a number of tourism researchers (e.g. Davis, 2003; Mackay and Campbell, 2004). In this thesis, a qualitative research approach was adopted in the first phase (Section 4.3) of the field research. This was followed by a quantitative research approach in the second phase. Therefore, it can be said that the qualitative and quantitative approaches were combined sequentially

(Tashakkori and Toddle, 1998) i.e. one approach (qualitative) informs the other (quantitative).

### **4.3 Stage One – The Qualitative Phase**

As indicated in Section 4.1, in the first stage of the field research, an exploratory study preceded by a pilot study was conducted. The objective of the exploratory study was to explore tourists' understanding of the meaning of the term quality of a tourism destination through establishing the attributes and dimensions of quality of a tourism destination.

#### **4.3.1 Justification of the Qualitative Approach in Stage One**

In Chapter One (Section 1.1.1), it has been argued that no research aimed at establishing tourists' understanding of the meaning of the term quality of a tourism destination when a destination is viewed as a unit, can be found in the literature reviewed by the researcher. Consequently, an exploratory study, which according to Sekaran (2000) is undertaken when little is known about the situation at hand, was viewed as appropriate to attain the objective of the qualitative phase of the field research (Section 4.3).

While exploratory studies can be conducted within both the qualitative and quantitative research approaches (Miles and Huberman, 1994), in this thesis the exploratory study was mainly qualitative. The rationale for this approach is linked to the main goal of the first stage of the field research which was to explore tourists' understanding of the meaning of the term quality of a tourism destination. It is known that quality can mean different things to different people (Chapter Three, Section 3.2.3)

As a result, data collection techniques which would facilitate the capture of each individual tourist's understanding of the meaning of the term quality of a tourism destination are required. Such data collection techniques are available, mainly, within the qualitative research approach e.g. with in-depth interviews or an open-ended questionnaire, respondents' opinions about issues that are a focus of the inquiry can be captured in the words or expressions of the respondents themselves (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994; Patton, 1990).

The appropriateness of the qualitative research approach in an exploratory study is also supported by a number of researchers (e.g. Patton, 1990; Van Maanen, 1979). For instance, Patton (1990) describes qualitative methods as particularly oriented towards exploration and discovery. Similarly, Van Maanen (1979: 9) viewed qualitative methods as:

...an array of interpretative techniques, which seek to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the *meaning*, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world.

Carson *et al.*, (2001) also support this view, stressing that qualitative methods are well suited for achieving substantive meaning and understanding of the phenomena under investigation. Further, as discussed in Section 4.2.1, the flexible research design synonymous with the qualitative approach is compatible with studies that are exploratory in nature, where a researcher may require freedom to experiment with different data collection techniques before establishing the most appropriate one for their study.

#### **4.3.2 Selection of Data Collection Techniques for the Qualitative Phase**

Given the exploratory nature of the qualitative phase, this researcher has needed to ascertain which data collection techniques would be most appropriate within the

context of the field research. As a starting point, previous related studies in particular Minjoon *et al.*, (1998) and Echtner and Ritchie (1993; 1991) were reviewed with the hope of establishing data collection techniques that could be suitable for this exploratory study. This led to the identification of three data collection techniques which could be used in the planned exploratory study, namely; the open-ended questionnaire, the in-depth interview and the focus group.

These three data collection techniques were selected on the basis that they have been employed successfully in previous related studies. In addition, a number of researchers (e.g. Finn *et al.*, 2000, Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996; Krueger, 1994) also recommend the three techniques as particularly appropriate when the intention is to capture informants' answers in their own words. A more extensive discussion on the justification for employing each of the three techniques in the planned exploratory study is provided in Sections 4.3.2.1 to 4.3.2.3.

However, given the evolving nature of the qualitative research design (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994), in the very early stage, the three data collection techniques were viewed as provisional<sup>1</sup>, pending a thorough test of their suitability for the planned exploratory study. The test of their suitability, conducted in the form of a pilot study, is discussed in detail in Section 4.3.4.

#### **4.3.2.1 Justification for Using the Open-ended Questionnaire Technique**

The open-ended questionnaire is a data gathering technique where the respondent is required to answer mainly open-ended questions (Finn *et al.*, 2000). Open-

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<sup>1</sup> This researcher decided that a more informed decision would be made only after a thorough test of the techniques to determine their suitability for the planned exploratory study.



ended questions are questions designed to allow respondents to provide their answers in full i.e. in their own words, without having to fit any categories pre-determined by the researcher (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996).

Consequently, the open-ended questionnaire technique is viewed as having the potential to facilitate the objective of capturing tourists' understanding of the meaning of the term quality of a tourism destination in their own words and provide a chance to explore their understanding of the concept. This is particularly important to this thesis as the technique makes it possible for this researcher to capture not only *what* the term quality of a tourism destination means to tourists, but also hopefully gain insights into reasons why tourists have such an understanding; one of the objective of this thesis (see Chapter One, Section 1.2).

There were also practical advantages for employing the open-ended questionnaire technique, which makes the technique suitable in this thesis. With an open-ended questionnaire respondents can be asked to complete the questionnaire on their own i.e. unaided by a researcher (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996). This can eliminate researcher biases, e.g., interviewer biases, to which other qualitative data gathering techniques, such as the focus group and in-depth interview technique, may be prone (Berg, 1995).

However, a major disadvantage of the open-ended questionnaire technique is that it excludes respondents who can neither read nor write (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996). Although no respondent that could neither read nor write was found in this thesis, a plan to take care of such respondents was made before using it. It was decided that, in such a case, an alternative data collection technique such as the in-depth interview (Section 4.3.2.3), would be employed. Another

disadvantage is that data collection using the open-ended questionnaire technique can also be very time-consuming for respondents to complete (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996).

#### **4.3.2.2 Justification for Using the Focus Groups Technique**

By definition, the focus group technique is a carefully planned group discussion intended to obtain the views of participants on an area of interest to the researcher conducted in a non-threatening environment (Krueger, 1994). The participants for focus groups are selected on the basis that they share certain characteristics relevant to the issues that are of interest to the researcher (Krueger, 1994; Bernard, 2000). Consensus regarding the number of participants that make up a focus group is yet to be reached (Krueger, 1994).

According to Marshall and Rossman (1995), a focus group discussion should be composed of between seven to ten participants on average, while Sekaran (2000) puts the figure at between eight and twelve. However, focus groups consisting of fewer than five and larger than twelve participants are frequently reported in literature, thus suggesting that the question of an optimal focus group size is still open (Marshall and Rossman, 1995).

The decision to include the focus group technique as one of the data collection techniques for the qualitative phase was based on the advantages associated with the technique. For example, the fact that the focus group technique can generate information that enables a researcher to gain familiarisation with a relatively new field of inquiry (Morgan, 1988) was consistent with the exploratory nature of the study planned for the qualitative phase. In addition, the relatively flexible nature of a focus group discussion (Krueger, 1994) suggests that this researcher would

have the freedom to explore unanticipated issues that could arise in the discussion. Further, the fact that there are relatively more participants per focus group than (say) per in-depth interview (Kruger, 1994) could help in increasing the small sample size usually associated with studies employing the qualitative research approach and thus save time (Morgan, 1988).

More importantly, the synergy that is generated between participants in a group, such as a focus group, can increase the amount of information that can be captured (Berg, 1995). As Krueger (1994:54) noted:

‘As participants answer questions, the responses spark new ideas or connections from other participants. Answers provide mental cues that unlock perceptions of the participants, cues that are necessary in order to explore the range of perceptions’

However, a major weakness of the focus group technique is that it can be prone to bias and manipulation, i.e. the danger of the researcher leading participants and encouraging them to respond to his/her own prejudices (Kruger, 1994). This means that participants end up saying what they think the researcher wants to hear (Morgan, 1988). In addition, the focus group technique can create false consensus wherein participants with strong personalities and /or similar views may dominate the discussion, while others may remain silent (Kruger, 1994).

Furthermore, as with all qualitative techniques, it is difficult to make generalisations based on the information gained from focus groups alone. This is not only because of the limited number of participants in a focus group, but also because of the difficulty of getting a truly representative sample (Marshall and Rossman, 1995.). It is also likely that a researcher will have less control when gathering data from a focus group than when gathering from one respondent at a time, for instance in in-depth interviews (Kruger, 1994). This implies that there is

a danger of focus groups being time- wasting as irrelevant issues are discussed (Morgan, 1988).

#### **4.3.2.3 Justification for Using the In-depth Interviews Technique**

The in-depth interview technique is defined variously. Bodgan and Biklen (1982) indicate that an in-depth interview is; a purposeful conversation, usually between two people, that is directed by one in order to get information. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that it is simply conversation with a purpose. The term 'in-depth' means to go into something in detail i.e. to get a more detailed knowledge about something (Wengraf, 2001). Therefore, in-depth interview techniques were seen as having the potential to achieve the objective of exploring, in detail, the tourists' understanding of the meaning of the term quality of a tourism destination (see Section 4.3.).

There are also other characteristics of the in-depth interview techniques which made the technique potentially useful for the qualitative phase of this thesis. Notably, the flexible structure of the in-depth interview technique suggests that this researcher could have the freedom to explore a wide area of interest, thereby maximising the amount and variety of information that could be obtained from each interviewee (Wengraf, 2001). For example, probes (Bernard, 2000) (explained in greater detail in 4.3.5.2), such as 'are there any other points you can think of', could be effective tools for encouraging respondents to raise additional points in in-depth interviews. In addition, the flexible structure of the in-depth interview technique also meant that this researcher could have freedom to explore issues respondents raise in detail e.g. using probes such as 'tell me more about...'  
(Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996).

The in-depth interview technique also has the advantage that the interviewer can clarify issues, which the respondent may not have understood (Wengraf, 2001). In addition, the interviewer has an opportunity to build trust and rapport with the interviewee, making it possible to obtain information the researcher probably would not reveal by any other data collection technique (Adams and Schvaneveldt, 1991). Also, the in-depth interview technique yields a higher percentage of returns than the open-ended questionnaire (Oppenheim, 1992).

The main disadvantage of in-depth interviews is bias (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996). This can arise from the verbal and non-verbal actions and reactions of the interviewer (Jordan and Gibson, 2004). Further, in-depth interviews can be quite time consuming, especially in studies which require very large samples to be interviewed (Jennings, 2001; Wengraf, 2001). Furthermore, where the respondents are geographically highly dispersed, the interviews can be expensive to implement.

### **4.3.3 Designing the Qualitative Data Collection Techniques**

The previous Section (4.3.2) has provided the justification for proposing the use of open-ended questionnaire, focus group and in-depth interview data collection techniques in the planned exploratory study. This section explains how each of the three data collection techniques has been constructed through a two stage process. The first stage (Section 4.3.3.1) focuses mainly on developing and pre-testing the questions used with each of the three proposed data collection techniques, while the second stage (Section 4.3.3.2) is concerned mainly with the construction and testing of the data collection techniques for use in the pilot study.

#### **4.3.3.1 Developing Questions Used with the Data Collection Techniques.**

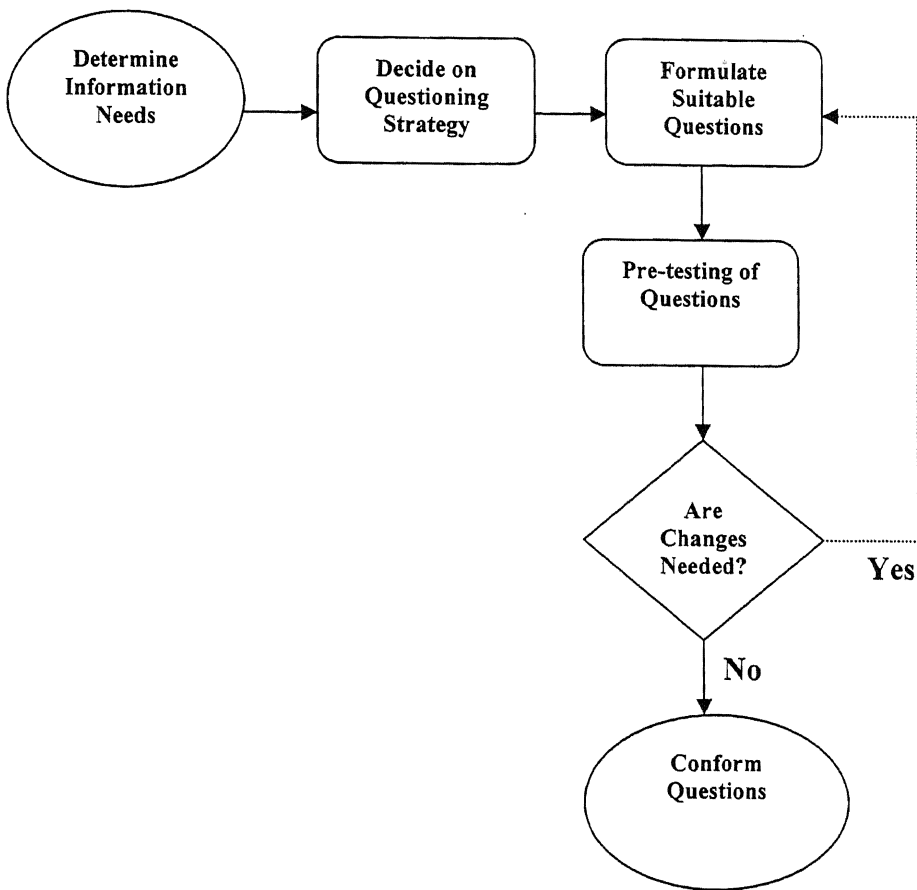
The designing of the data collection techniques commenced with the formulation of questions to be used with the three proposed techniques. Formulating questions is a crucial stage in the research process due to the implications the questions have on the overall findings of a research (Belson, 1986). This is because, the relevance of information collected to solve any given research problem depends largely on the questions asked at the data gathering stage (Fobby, 1993; Belson, 1986). Given the risk of questions containing errors being developed and incorporated in data collection instruments faced by most studies (de Vaus 1996; Fobby, 1993; Belson, 1986), preventative measures to reduce this risk were incorporated in the exploratory study.

Research methodology literature provides valuable strategies for reducing the risk of formulating questions with errors and these strategies are employed in the exploratory study (e.g. Fobby, 1993; Belson, 1986; Sudman and Bradburn, 1982).

These strategies, summarised in Figure 4.1, consist of the following steps:

1. Determining precisely the type of information needed;
2. Determining the Questioning strategy;
3. Formulate suitable Questions;
4. Pre-testing the Questions and revising them where necessary;
5. Confirming Questions.

**Figure 4.1 Steps followed in Developing Questions for the Qualitative Phase of the Study**



*(Based on Fobby, 1993; Belson, 1986; Sudman and Bradburn, 1982)*

**Step one: Determine precisely what information is needed:** As the first step in formulating questions, it is recommended that the exact information required for solving a given research problem be determined (Fobby, 1993; Belson, 1986; Sudman and Bradburn, 1982). A major source of such information is the research problem that needs to be answered. Following the advice of several researchers, in particular Sudman and Bradburn, (1982), the information requirements of the planned exploratory study were obtained through reading and rereading of the research objective of the qualitative phase (Section 4.3). This strategy, of reading and rereading the objective of the exploratory study, was continued at intervals

throughout the various steps of the questions formulation process as it helped to keep the information requirements of the study fresh in the researcher's mind (Sudman and Bradburn, 1982).

***Step two: Decide on Questioning Strategy:*** After establishing the information requirements for the research project, the next step was to decide on the most appropriate questioning strategy (Baleson, 1986). The choices were whether to use open-ended or closed-ended questions or both (Oppenheim, 1992). While open-ended questions allow respondents to formulate their own answers, structured questions provide a number of alternatives from which the respondent selects one or more answers (Patton, 1990; de Vaus, 1996). The open-ended questions are more suited for qualitative studies, as they enable the researcher to explore the views of the respondents (Patton, 1990).

On the other hand, structured questions are more applicable where one is counting things and therefore more appropriate for quantitative studies (Belson, 1986). But the choice of the questioning strategy depends upon the aims of the study (Miller, 1991). In the exploratory study, the strategy of open-ended questions was selected to explore the meaning of the term quality of a tourism destination from the tourists' perspective (Section 4.3). However, it was decided that for monitoring purposes the questionnaire should also contain some structured questions to identify the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the respondents (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996).

The structured questions involved asking objective questions intended to obtain factual data e.g., what is your gender?. Consequently, an appropriate scale was required to accompany each structured question for tourists to use to record their



answers. It was decided to adopt the most widely used scales for questions capturing the respondent profiles, known as the nominal scales (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996). Nominal scales are a type of scale where values assigned to a category are for labelling purposes only e.g. assigning the codes 1 for male and 2 for female (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996).

***Step three: Formulate Suitable Questions:*** The next step in the question formulation process involved turning the information gathered from the previous steps into suitable questions. Extra care was needed here as the majority of the errors in formulating questions are thought to occur at this stage of the process (Belson, 1986). Several researchers (e.g. Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996; Belson, 1986) highlight pitfalls that should be avoided when formulating questions. These were consulted throughout the question formulation process.

The question formulation process resulted in five open-ended questions aimed at exploring the tourists' understanding of the meaning of the term quality of a tourism destination (Appendix 4.1) and six closed-ended questions intended to capture the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the respondents (Appendix 4.2).

***Step four: Pre-tests and Revising the Questions:*** As a general rule, it is suggested that once questions have been formulated, they should be pre-tested (Foddy, 1993). Pre-testing helps to detect question errors, thereby providing a source of information for further improvement of the questions (Foddy, 1993). To enable 'pre-testing' of the questions, an open-ended questionnaire comprising Sections A and B was developed. Section A consists of the 5 open-ended questions aimed at exploring the meaning of the term quality of a tourism destination (Appendix 4.1).

Section B comprises the 7 closed questions (Appendix 4.2) capturing the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of respondents.

Pre-testing of questions is usually conducted with samples of respondents drawn from the target population (Fobby, 1993; Belson, 1986). In this thesis, before conducting the actual pre-tests the questions were initially pre-tested on research students from Bedfordshire Business School. This additional step to the question formulation process proved useful as it resulted in the identification and elimination of a number of errors at a very early stage.

The actual 'pre-test' of questions was conducted with a sample drawn from a targeted population of tourists<sup>2</sup> (Fobby, 1993) at Arndale Shopping Mall in Luton. A total of 20 open-ended questionnaires were distributed to shoppers resting in the walkways of Arndale Shopping Mall in Luton. Since the main objective of the 'pre-test' was to identify and eliminate any errors in the questions, strategies to ensure that this objective would be met were employed (de Vaus, 1996). These were (1) each questionnaire was completed in the presence of the researcher and (2) respondents were encouraged to comment on the relevance and clarity of the questions. Apart from helping the researcher to identify questions containing errors, these strategies also provided the researcher with the opportunity to obtain some first hand comments from the respondents regarding the validity of the questions. This proved useful for improving the questions (Belson, 1986).

Twenty respondents participated in the 'pre-test'. Based on the comments from respondents, as well as studying how the questions were answered, changes were

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<sup>2</sup> Tourists are defined in this thesis as 'visitors' who have stayed overnight at a tourism destination (Augustyn 2002).

made to the length and wording of some open-ended questions to improve clarity (Appendix 4.1). This resulted in 6 open-ended questions aimed at exploring tourists' understanding of the meaning of the term quality of a tourism destination (Appendix 4.1). The 7 closed questions intended to capture socio-economic and demographic characteristics of respondents did not require any changes so were retained (Appendix 4.2).

#### **4.3.3.2 Construction of Qualitative Data Collection Instruments**

The second stage in the designing of the data collection instruments involved the construction and pre-testing of an open-ended questionnaire, a focus group and in-depth interviews. Using the questions developed in Section 4.3.3.1 (Appendix 4.1 and 4.2), the open-ended questionnaire was developed. Guidelines for constructing open-ended questionnaires, such as deciding on the sequencing of the questions and layout of the questionnaire, recommended by a number of researchers (e.g. Oppenheim, 1992; Veal, 1997) were followed. The open-ended questionnaire consisted of Sections A and B. Section A was made up of the 6 open-ended questions (Appendix 4.1) aimed at exploring the perceived meaning of quality of a tourism destination; while Section B comprised 7 closed questions (Appendix 4.2) capturing the respondent's profile.

With regards to the in-depth interviews and the focus group, this researcher planned to use the same questions as in the open-ended questionnaire (Appendix 4.2 and 4.3). To minimise possible problems with the data collection instruments, separate pre-tests were conducted for each technique. Pre-tests for both the open-ended questionnaires and in-depth interview techniques were conducted with small samples ( $n = 5$  for each technique) of conveniently selected tourists at the

Arndale Shopping Mall, Luton. The pre-test demonstrated that there were no problems with the open-ended questionnaires and the interviewing process.

Some researchers (e.g. Krueger, 1994; Morgan, 1997) maintain that the focus group technique does not require pre-testing. Nevertheless, it was decided to conduct a pre-test as a practice session designed to prepare the researcher for the actual focus group. Bedfordshire Business School research students (n =8), who had not participated in the pre-tests of the open-ended questionnaires, took part in the pre-test focus group interview. The focus group lasted for an hour and was tape-recorded. The researcher obtained valuable information from the pre-test focus group meeting. It was noticed that the respondents often spoke to two or three people at the same time, which created a problem when transcribing the focus group interviews. Furthermore, some respondents' contributions could not be heard clearly because they were not speaking sufficiently loudly. The lessons learnt during the pre-test focus group interview were used to improve the planned pilot.

#### **4.3.4 Pilot Study: Qualitative Phase**

The previous Section (4.3.2), has discussed the process by which the open-ended questionnaire, in-depth interviews and focus group, the proposed data gathering methods in the exploratory study for the qualitative phase, were designed. But as Miller (1991) noted, techniques of data collection are effective or powerful data gathering tools if (and only if) they are appropriate within the context of the study in which they are employed.

Given the exploratory nature of the qualitative phase, it was difficult to anticipate whether the three methods of data collection would work in the context of this

thesis. As a result, it was decided to conduct a pilot study, to try out their suitability. For the pilot study to be meaningful, criteria for assessing the suitability of the data collection techniques had to be established ahead of the pilot study. These criteria were (1) 'effectiveness', (2) 'efficiency', (3) 'depth and detail' and (4) the 'uniqueness of data generated' (Patton, 1990).

'Effectiveness' was assessed in terms of the data collection technique's ability to generate the data required for the exploratory study, while 'efficiency' was assessed in terms of the amount of data required for the exploratory study that each technique could generate, per respondent (Patton, 1990). In reference to 'depth and detail', the data collected using each technique was assessed with a view to determine which technique generated data that would be meaningful enough to be useable in the exploratory study (Patton, 1990). Fourthly, the 'uniqueness of the data' generated was assessed in terms of the ability of each technique to generate data that no other technique had generated (Patton, 1990).

In addition to the previously stated objectives, the pilot study, as a small-scale rehearsal of the actual study (Saunders *et al.*, 1997), was also intended to achieve other goals. For example, the researcher intended to establish the time it took to collect data using each of the three data collection instruments. This would be information vital for planning the fieldwork for the planned exploratory study (Saunders *et al.*, 1997).

Furthermore, the pilot test was intended to provide further checks of whether or not the respondents could clearly understand the instructions for completing the questions in the open-ended questionnaire (Sekaran, 2000). Also, the pilot test was to provide an indication of how well the respondents understood the

questions, which could help in identifying and correcting unclear questions (Oppenheim, 1992).

#### **4.3.4.1 Sampling Plan and Procedures for the Pilot study**

Qualitative inquiries have a goal to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomena being studied (Section 4.3.1), and as a result sampling tends to be purposive (Patton, 1990). This means that the selection of subjects is carefully conducted to ensure that individuals who are ‘information rich’ (Patton, 1990) with respect to the purpose of study are included. These are individuals with the potential to provide the greatest insights into the research question (Devers and Frankel, 2000).

‘Information rich’ subjects are usually identified on the basis of meeting certain criteria relevant to the study, predetermined by the researcher (Patton, 1990). As noted in Chapter Three tourists from different demographic backgrounds could have different views with regards to the meaning of the term ‘quality of a tourism destination’. Therefore, to enhance the likelihood of capturing a more comprehensive meaning of the term ‘quality of a tourism destination’ the researcher planned to include respondents from diverse demographic backgrounds in the exploratory study. As a result, socio-demographic characteristics and travel patterns (Appendix 4.3) were the predetermined criteria for selecting respondents in the pilot study.

Selecting subjects on the basis that they meet certain predetermined criteria is a form of purposive sampling known as criterion sampling (Patton, 1990). The exact details of how criterion sampling (Patton, 1990) was employed in selecting

the subjects for the pilot study are provided in Section 4.3.4.2, under the heading ‘Conducting the Fieldwork for the Pilot Study’.

The population for the pilot study was tourists, defined earlier (Section 4.3.3.1) as ‘visitors’ who have stayed overnight at a tourism destination (Augustyn, 2002). Data collection for the pilot study was conducted at various locations, in England and South Africa (Table 4.2), a strategy known as triangulation of places of data collection (Decrop, 1999). This was intended to ensure that in the event that tourists from different locations had differing views regarding the meaning of the term quality of a tourism destination, it would be possible to capture these opinions.

The places for conducting data collection were chosen by means of convenience sampling (Henry, 1990). However, in the case of South Africa, the researcher happened to have been travelling there on holiday and felt that an opportunity to widen the scope of the study by capturing views of tourists in another country should not be missed.

**Table 4.1 Places of Data Collection and Techniques of Data collection Employed**

Data Collection Technique Employed	Places Where Data was Collected	
	England	South Africa
Open ended questionnaires	Weltech Business Centre (Welwyn Garden City Centre). Arndale Shopping Centre (Luton)	Travel Agency, (Sandton City). Shopping Centre (Sandton City)
In-depth interviews	Howard Shopping Centre (Welwyn Garden City Centre).	Shopping Centre, (Sandton City).
Focus group	Bedfordshire University.	

#### **4.3.4.2 Conducting the Fieldwork for the Pilot Study**

This section explains how the open-ended questionnaires, focus group and the in-depth interview techniques were employed in the pilot study. The approach taken to recruit respondents was similar for all three techniques of data collection employed in the pilot study and is explained in Appendix 4.4.

##### **4.3.4.2.1 Data Collection by Using Open-ended Questionnaires**

As part of a planned triangulation of places of data collection (Decrop, 1999) data gathering by means of open-ended questionnaires was conducted at several locations (Table 4.1). Different strategies of distributing the open-ended questionnaires were adopted in the pilot study with the view to identifying a strategy likely to achieve a high response rate. For example, at Weltech Business Centre, Welwyn Garden City (Table 4.1), workers from various companies operating at the business centre were approached and requested to participate in the pilot study, while at the Arndale Shopping Centre, Luton, members of the general public, in walkways of the shopping centre, were approached and asked to participate in the pilot study. In Sandton City (Table 4.1) patrons in restaurants were requested to participate in the pilot study.

An additional strategy of distributing the open-ended questionnaires through hotels and travel agents was also tested in Sandton City. A 'one star' hotel and a small family owned travel agent i.e. with a staff complement of 4, accepted the request and were given some open-ended questionnaires to distribute to their clients. Finally, a small number (n =3) of the questionnaires were distributed on the plane on the way back to England.



In all cases, the recruitment of respondents followed the steps outlined in Appendix 4.4. Once a respondent was recruited, he or she was given an open-ended questionnaire and requested to complete it in the presence of the researcher. As noted previously (Section 4.3.3.1) this enabled the researcher to obtain the respondents' first hand comments about the content of the open-ended questionnaire, which could be useful if further improvements were required. On completion, the open-ended questionnaires were handed back to the researcher. While the response rate for both pilot studies conducted in England was 100%, for Sandton City it was only 40%. This may have been the result of the data collection strategy adopted in Sandton City, where the researcher had little control over the method of distributing the questionnaires.

An examination of the completed open-ended questionnaires revealed that, regardless of the location of the pilot study, the questions designed to explore the meaning of the term quality of a tourism destination, in Section A of the questionnaire (Appendix 4.1) still needed to be further improved. For example, it became apparent that some questions had not been clearly understood by the respondents e.g. 'which factors best describe the quality of a tourism destination?' attracted such answers as 'It depends on the government, what the government thinks a quality destination should be' (Table 4.2).

Furthermore, the strategy of asking similar questions from a different angle by changing the wording of the questions resulted in one of the questions being ignored. For instance, the question; "which factors best describe the 'quality of a tourism destination?'" is similar to another question; 'In your own opinion what factors best describe the quality of a tourism destination?' It was often answered as 'See previous question' (Table 4.2). A summary of the major problems in the

questions used within the open-ended questionnaires technique, identified in the initial stages of the pilot test, is presented in Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2 Problems in Questions used with Open-ended Questionnaires Technique**

Category	Respondent Answer
Evidence of Question Duplication	‘See previous question’ ‘Answers as in the previous question above’ ‘Same factors as in above question’
Respondent Misunderstands the Question	‘We like tourists to visit our tourism destinations because tourists bring lots of money into the country’. It depends on the government, what the government thinks a quality destination should be’.
Respondent lacks Required Knowledge	‘I do not Know’.
Non response	Respondent fails to provide a response

Based on the knowledge gained at this stage of the pilot study, the researcher decided to make improvements to the questions by formulating four new ones (Appendix 4.5). In formulating the four new questions, emphasis was placed on the use of simpler language, consistent with the vocabulary the pilot study had shown tourists to be familiar with. An open-ended questionnaire was then constructed with Section A consisting of the four newly developed open-ended questions (Appendix 4.5). Section B remained the same as in the previous version of the open-ended questionnaire since no problems were found with the questions in this section (Appendix 4.2).

The new open-ended questionnaire was ‘pre-tested’ at the Arndale Shopping Centre (n =10) and found to be well designed and with no problems. This new open-ended questionnaire was then used to gather data for the pilot study at Stansted Airport, England. Forty questionnaires were distributed at Stansted Airport by the researcher, and the response rate was 100%.

#### **4.3.4.2.2 Conducting the In-depth Interview in the Pilot Study**

In the pilot study, data collection by means of the in-depth interview technique was conducted after data gathering using the open-ended questionnaire had been completed. This approach enabled the researcher to use the questions developed for the open-ended questionnaire (Appendix 4.5) as guiding questions for the in-depth interviews. A pilot study of personal in-depth interviews was undertaken using convenience sampling (Patton, 1990). The in-depth interviews were conducted in shopping malls in Sandton City (Table 4.1) between December, 2001 and January, 2002 and at the Howard Shopping Centre in Welwyn Garden City (England) in February, 2002.

Of the 9 in-depth interviews attempted in Sandton City, seven were completed and the other two could not be completed because respondents asked to withdraw during the interview to attend to other issues. Notes were taken manually during all interviews and each interview lasted between sixty to seventy-five minutes. Four in-depth interviews were conducted at the Howard Shopping Centre. With the exception of one, all in-depth interviews conducted were tape-recorded, which reduced the time of conducting the interview to approximately thirty minutes. The respondent's consent was sought before the in-depth interview could be recorded. Only one respondent opted not to be recorded.

The pilot study revealed some problems with the use of the in-depth interview technique. Firstly, it was observed that the taking of notes by the interviewer was neither the most effective nor the most efficient way of conducting the interviews. In particular, this method of recording the interview extended the duration of the interview and some respondents complained that the interviews were too long. Furthermore, taking notes made it difficult for the interviewer to concentrate on

listening to the respondent's answers. Some information could therefore be lost in the process of taking notes and listening at the same time.

Secondly, the comfort of the interviewee during interviews was seen as an issue for concern. For example, it was observed that the interviewees who were sitting comfortably were more cooperative and were more likely to complete the interview. Thirdly, it was concluded that the interviews should be conducted in an environment where there were no competing activities, that would require active participation on the part of the potential respondents to such an extent that the potential respondents would have no time to participate in the study.

#### **4.3.4.2.3 Conducting the Focus Group in the Pilot Study**

A focus group, comprising ten participants, was conducted at Bedfordshire University in February 2002. The participants were drawn from members of the Bedfordshire Business School administrative staff who were approached individually by the researcher. The procedures for conducting focus groups recommended by a number of researchers (e.g. Krueger, 1994; Morgan, 1988) were followed.

Before the start of the focus group session, issues relating to it were explained. The researcher explained to the participants that (1) the focus group session would be tape recorded as a means of gathering data (2) all participants would remain anonymous in the report and that there were no wrong or right answers (3) ideally only one person was to speak at a time and that respondents should speak up at all times and (4) respondents were encouraged to be spontaneous i.e. not to wait to be prompted to speak by the researcher.

The focus group session began with an ice breaking exercise (Krueger, 1994), which involved individuals introducing themselves to the group by giving a brief background about themselves and the department they worked in. Then the researcher, in his capacity as the moderator, explained the purpose of the discussion and initiated discussion by asking one of the questions that had been asked in the open-ended questionnaires (Appendix 4.5). Once the discussion was underway the moderator helped to stimulate the discussion by asking probing questions such as ‘what do others think?’ and ‘Is there anyone who would like to expand on that?’ At the end of the focus group session, which lasted approximately one and a quarter hours, the researcher thanked the participants.

#### **4.3.4.3 Data Analysis for the Pilot Study**

The data gathered in the pilot study was analysed using the ‘constant comparison technique’ developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). The constant comparison is a data analysis technique whereby the data gathered using qualitative data collection techniques, such as the in-depth interviews, is coded into emerging themes (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The data are then repeatedly revised until it is apparent that no new themes are emerging (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The themes are then categorised to form conclusions.

The approach to data analysis used in the pilot study is similar to that employed in the main study i.e. the exploratory study, and is explained in full under the heading ‘Data Analysis for the Qualitative Exploratory study’ (Section 4.3.5.3). The analysis of pilot study data enabled the suitability of the three data gathering techniques for the exploratory study to be assessed.

#### **4.3.4.4 Implications of the Pilot Study to the Exploratory Study**

This section discusses the major implications of the pilot study on the design of the exploratory study conducted in the qualitative phase. The pilot study revealed three major implications for the design of the planned exploratory study which related to (1) The Site for Conducting the Exploratory Study (2) Choice of Data Collection Techniques for the Exploratory Study and 3) Research Strategy for Exploratory Study.

##### ***Site for Conducting the Exploratory Study***

The pilot study revealed that the site where the data had been collected, whether shopping mall, hotel or travel agency, had little, if any, impact on the results of the pilot study. This implied that the strategy of conducting data collection at multi-sites to achieve triangulation of places (Section 4.3.4.1) employed in the pilot study would not be necessary in the exploratory study. However, the site where the data for the pilot study was collected raised issues regarding the accessibility of tourists, which had implications for the response rate (Seakhoa-King, 2002). In particular, the presence of activities, such as shopping, at the data collection site seemed to discourage potential respondents from participating in the pilot study (Seakhoa-King, 2002).

In fact the majority of potential respondents who refused to participate in the pilot study cited the fact that they were either too busy shopping or 'keeping an eye on their children' (Seakhoa-King, 2002). Therefore, from a logistic viewpoint, the place for conducting the exploratory study needed to be carefully selected so as to avoid places with activities that could discourage tourists from participating in the study.

The pilot study also highlighted the need to ensure that the site chosen for conducting data collection for the exploratory study was a place frequented by a wide spectrum of tourists (e.g. tourist from different ethnicity, gender and age group backgrounds). This would allow ease of access to tourists with characteristics required for a respondent for the exploratory study e.g. tourists from a wide cross section of a socio-demographic and economic background (Section 4.3.4.1).

#### ***Choice of Data Collections Techniques for the Exploratory Study***

The in-depth interview was found to be an adequate technique for collecting data in pilot study. As a result, there seemed to be no justification for employing all three proposed data collection techniques in the exploratory study.

#### ***Choice of Questions to be used in the Data Collection Instrument***

The questions ‘in your own opinion, what are the characteristics of a quality tourism destination?’ and ‘in your own opinion, what makes a quality tourism destination?’ showed the most potential to generate the data required to attain the objective of the exploratory study. These two questions were the most appropriate ones to use with the chosen data collection technique; the in-depth interview, in the planned exploratory study.

#### ***Research Strategy for the Exploratory Study***

Two strategies for recording interviews were employed in the pilot study, namely the manual approach, involving the researcher writing down notes during the in-depth interview, and the electronic approach, where the interviews were taped using a tape recorder (Foddy, 1993). Each was found to have its own particular advantages and disadvantages. For example, manually taking notes seemed to

encourage the interviewee to speak more, perhaps because respondents felt that what they were saying was important, since someone else considered it worth writing down. However, it proved to be a relatively slow method of recording in-depth interviews and resulted in respondent fatigue. The tape recorder proved to be an easier, faster and therefore more efficient method of recording interviews (Seakhoa-King, 2002). But interviewees appeared more nervous when the tape recorder was used, particularly in the early stages of the interview, than when the researcher took notes manually.

The implications for the exploratory study were that, although tape recording the interview appeared the better technique, both techniques could be employed in a manner that would utilise the advantages in each method. This meant the tape recorder would be used as the primary method of tape recording the in-depth interview, supplemented by the manual approach of the researcher taking notes. However, strategies for combating nervousness experienced by some respondents at the start of an interview needed to be developed ahead of the exploratory study.

One strategy recommended as effective in such situations, which could be employed in the planned exploratory study, involves developing rapport with the interviewee prior to the start of an interview (e.g. Fontana and Frey, 2000). This usually requires the researcher to engage the respondent in a general discussion before the start of the interview until it is felt that the respondent has become at ease (Fontana and Frey, 2000). Another strategy found to encourage a high response rate in the pilot study, that could yield similar benefit in the exploratory study, is the interviewing of selected respondents on the spot (Seakhoa-King, 2002).



### **4.3.5 Qualitative Exploratory Study**

This section provides an account of how the exploratory study was conducted. Specifically, the sampling procedures, data collection processes, and data analysis techniques employed in the exploratory study are discussed and justified. In addition, the implications of the exploratory study to the subsequent stages of the overall research design are also addressed.

#### **4.3.5.1 Sampling Plan and Procedures for the Exploratory Study**

On the basis of the experience gained from conducting the pilot study, the in-depth interview technique was selected as the technique for collecting data in the exploratory study. In-depth interviews were conducted at Trafalgar Square, a tourist attraction in London, between July, 2002 and August, 2002. Trafalgar Square was selected using the criterion sampling method (Patton, 1990), which meant that the tourist attraction met the required criteria for a place to conduct an exploratory study (as discussed in Section 4.3.4.1.).

An earlier visit to Trafalgar Square to assess its suitability for the field research had revealed that Trafalgar Square is visited by a wide spectrum of tourists from within and outside the United Kingdom. This meant that this researcher would be able to access tourists from diverse backgrounds (e.g. gender age ethnicity), which was one of the suitability criteria for a place to conduct the study. In addition, tourist activities at Trafalgar Square were not likely to discourage tourists from participating in the exploratory study, which was also a criterion.

The population for the exploratory study was tourists (Section 4.3.3.1). The sampling frame for the exploratory study was composed of tourists who were at Trafalgar Square during the period of data collection. Sampling decisions in

qualitative inquiries are often surrounded with controversy regarding what exactly constitutes an adequate sample size (de Ruyter and Scholl, 1998). Although sample sizes of between fifteen to forty (de Ruyter and Scholl, 1998) and thirty to forty interviews (Oppenheim, 1992) have been proposed as adequate, consensus on the exact number of in-depth interviews that one should conduct to investigate a given research problem, is yet to be reached. However, it is widely acknowledged that qualitative researchers tend to work with relatively small samples focusing on depth, as opposed to breadth, of inquiry (Patton, 1990).

A strategy for determining an appropriate sample size in qualitative research suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1967) known as theoretical sampling was employed in the exploratory study. This suggested that the researcher should continue interviewing respondents until a point of 'saturation' is attained i.e. when it becomes apparent that there is no new information being obtained by the interview (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). In the exploratory study, the point of 'saturation' was viewed as attained when forty-one in-depth interviews had been conducted.

#### **4.3.5.2 Field Work for Qualitative Exploratory Study**

The procedures for selecting respondents for the exploratory study were similar to those used in the pilot study (Section 4.3.4.2). However, on the basis of recommendations from the pilot study, some changes were made to the interviewing process. For example, before the interviewing process commenced, the researcher attempted to build a rapport with the interviewees by engaging them in general discussion (Fontana and Frey, 2000). This strategy is recommended for helping to put interviewees, who may be feeling nervous, at ease in preparation for the start of an interview (Fontana and Frey, 2000). Once

the researcher felt that the interviewees were at ease, the interviewing process was started.

The interviewing process began with the researcher initiating discussion by asking the interviewee the question 'In your own opinion, what are the characteristics of a quality tourism destination?' Once the discussion was underway, the researcher relied mainly on the use of probes to stimulate further discussion. Probes are an interviewing tool with two basic functions; (1) to motivate the interviewee to elaborate on or clarify an answer or to explain the reasons behind the answer (Bernard, 2000; Ryan, 2000; Patton, 1990) and (2) to help focus the conversation on the specific topic of interview (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996).

Four different types of probes (Bernard, 2000), which had been used in the pilot study were found useful. These were (1) non-verbal response probes, e.g. 'Uh-uh' which are statements made by the interviewer to indicate to the interviewee that the interviewer is still listening and interested. (2) Reflection probes, which involved the interviewer repeating the last statement made by the interviewee as a question. (3) Probes inviting explanations e.g. 'can you give an example?' 'What do you mean?' or 'could you explain that a little more...' (Ryan, 2000:125). (4) New topic initiating probes e.g. 'Are there any other points you can think of?' With the permission of the interviewee, all interviews were tape recorded. The duration of each interview varied between twenty and forty minutes

#### **4.3.5.3 Data Analysis for the Qualitative Exploratory Study**

The goal in qualitative data analysis is to achieve results that closely reflect the respondents' opinion on a phenomenon, which is the researcher's focus of inquiry (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). To achieve its results, qualitative data analysis uses

inductive logic wherein patterns, themes, categories or relevant variables come from the data itself, rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis (Patton, 1990; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Therefore, the approach to analysing qualitative data can be viewed as having a goal to 'let the data speak for itself' (Jordan and Gibson, 2004), which enhances the ability to obtain results that are grounded in the data.

In the exploratory study, one of the widely used inductive methods for analysing qualitative data, the constant comparison method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), was employed to analyse the in-depth interview data. As noted previously, the constant comparison method was employed to analyse the pilot study data (Section 4.3.4.3), which gave this researcher some experience in using the technique. There were five major steps involved in analysing data using the constant comparison method (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994) as follows:

1. Preparing the Data for Analysis
2. Unitising the Interview Data
3. Developing and Assigning 'Units of Meaning' to Categories
4. Transforming the 'Units of Meaning' to Attributes
5. Refinement of Categories and Attributes

***Step One: Preparing the Interviews Data for Analysis***

The in-depth interviews were transcribed fully by this researcher and the data transcripts appropriately labelled. Labelling involved tagging each data transcript with a unique serial number, written on the top right hand corner of each data transcript, indicating when and where the in-depth interview was conducted, and on what page of the data transcript the interview can be found (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). For example, the labelling tag D1/01/p1 denoted the first in-

depth interview (D1) conducted on the first day (01) of data collection, which can be found on page one (P1) of the transcription text.

Labelling data sources enhances the creation of an audit trail that other researchers can follow if they needed to retrace one's footsteps (McDowell and MacLean, 1998; Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). In turn, creating an audit trail in qualitative data analysis facilitates easy external scrutiny, which enhances the credibility of both the data analysis process itself as well as its results (Dey, 1993). Subsequent stages of the data analysis required that certain sets of the data from transcripts be cut out. As a result, a mechanism to preserve the original transcripts for future reference, which had been tested in the pilot study, was employed. After labelling, the transcripts were photocopied page-by-page and the original transcripts were placed in marked envelopes and stored for safekeeping. Photocopies of the transcripts were then used in subsequent stages of data analysis.

### ***Step Two: Unitisation of Data***

The next step in the data analysis process was to unitise the data (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). This is the process of searching for meaning in the data through identifying '...chunks or units of meaning in the data' (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994:127). In the initial stages of the data analysis process, small 'units of meaning'<sup>3</sup> in the data were identified. These small 'units of meaning' would then form the '...basis for defining larger categories of meaning' (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994: 127) in the subsequent stages of the research. The process of unitisation is consistent with the overall process of analysing qualitative which has often been described as one of:

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<sup>3</sup> 'Units of meaning' are words, phrases, or paragraphs representing a single meaningful idea (Lincoln and Guba 1985).

...culling for meaning from words and actions of the participants in the study, framed by the researcher's focus of inquiry. (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994: 127).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest a number of iterative steps for the unitising interview data, which were used in the exploratory study. These are as follows:

**a) *Familiarization with each interview***: Before the process of unitisation could begin the researcher had to be well acquainted with the data to be analysed. This was achieved through playing back and listening to the interviews tapes and reading the interview transcript three to four times.

**b) *Identification of 'units of meaning' from the data***: Once familiarized with the data, the next step in the unitisation process involved searching for 'units of meaning' in the data set. The data set to be analysed was again meticulously read but this time with a different aim. The aim was to try and identify 'units of meaning'. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), in order to be useful for further analysis each 'unit of meaning' should stand by itself, that is, it must be understandable without additional information.

Once a 'unit of meaning' was identified a line was drawn across the page to separate it from the next 'unit of meaning' (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). A labelling code was placed in the right hand margin, indicating where the 'unit of meaning' was to be found. This code ensured that the 'unit of meaning' could always be traced to its original source to provide the contextual detail that may become necessary as the data analysis proceeds (Hewitt-Taylor, 2001). In addition, the labelling code also served in creating an audit trail previously discussed.

The quality of data analysis, using the constant comparison technique is dependent on the extent to which a repeated, systematic search of the data is conducted (Hammersley, 1981). In exploratory study, this researcher repeatedly searched for 'units of meaning' in the transcripts until no new insights were discovered (Hammersley, 1981).

**C) *Extracting 'units of meaning' from the transcripts:*** Working with copies of unitised transcripts, each 'unit of meaning' was cut out and pasted on a five by eight inches index card; one 'unit of meaning' per index card. The process resulted in a total of 175 index cards, each containing a 'unit of meaning'. At this stage the 'units of meaning' were ready for further analysis.

### ***Step Three: Developing Assigning 'Units of Meaning' to Categories***

The next stage involved developing categories and assigning 'units of meaning' to these categories. To begin this process, this researcher assembled the 175 unitised index cards, paste, several blank index cards and a large sheet of paper, which the researcher pasted to the wall. Then, a number of steps were followed to complete the process of developing categories and the assignment of 'units of meaning' which were as follows:

#### ***a) Development of the first category***

The researcher picked one of the cards containing a 'unit of meaning', read it, and then developed the first higher-level category that summarized the meaning 'unit of meaning' conveyed. Therefore, consistent with the inductive approach to data analysis adopted in the exploratory study, categories were developed, *in vivo*, i.e. from the data itself rather than being predetermined (Goulding, 1999). The first provisional category was written on a blank index card and pasted on the left-hand

side on the large paper. The index card, which had led to the development of the first provisional category, was pasted underneath it.

The remaining unitised cards were reviewed to see if any of them fitted the newly created first category. If a second data card that seemed to fit the first category was found, a decision on whether or not to include it in the first category was made. The decision was based on whether the meaning on this second card 'looks like' or 'feels like' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) the one in the first category. If the second card was found to fit the first category, it was pasted underneath the first card. The process was repeated until a card, which did not fit the first category, was picked. This led to the next step in the data analysis process.

#### ***b) Developing subsequent provisional categories***

When a card was found that did not fit the first category, a new category was developed using the same process that resulted in the development of the first category, outlined above. The new category was written on an index card and pasted to the right of the first category. The unitised card that led to the development of this new category was pasted underneath it. The remaining cards were examined to see if any other card fitted this new category, based on the 'looks like' or 'feels like' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) criteria. If another card, that fitted the new category, was found it was pasted underneath. The process was repeated until all unitised cards were allocated to a category. However, the 'units of meaning' for each provisional category were still, at this point, in 'raw form' i.e. expressed in the words of the interviewee and needed converting into attributes of quality of a tourism destination.



#### ***Step Four: Transforming the ‘units of meaning’ into attributes***

Transforming the ‘units of meaning’ into attributes of quality of a tourism destination involved a systematic process whereby this researcher worked with one category at a time. To create the first attribute, the researcher picked an index card consisting of a ‘unit of meaning’ belonging to a specific category and then read it. Using wording as close as possible to that in the ‘unit of meaning’, the researcher formulated the first attribute of quality of a tourism destination for that particular category dimension. The attribute was typed into a Word document under the specific category to which it belonged.

To develop a second attribute of quality of a tourism destination, the researcher picked a second ‘unit of meaning’ from the same category as the first ‘unit of meaning’, formulated the second attribute, and typed it under the first category where it belonged. This process was repeated until all the index cards falling within a given category had been exhausted, before moving on to the next category. The same process was repeated in transforming all ‘units of meaning’ falling from other categories into attributes of quality of a tourism destination. This process resulted in the initial list of attributes being allocated to respective dimensions, and ready for further analysis.

#### ***Step Five Refinement of Categories and Attributes***

The next stage in the data analysis process involved refining the categories and attributes of quality of a tourism destination. At this stage, the researcher decided to invite two tourism academics, each with a postgraduate degree in tourism and not connected to the study, to a) critique the categories and attributes developed by the researcher and b) suggest, if necessary, the categories or attributes which could be further merged so as to try and eliminate redundancies (Echtner and

Ritchie, 1993). Involving researchers, to critique, comment or make suggestions during qualitative data analysis, is a widely employed strategy (e.g. Echtner and Ritchie, 1993) for bringing external scrutiny to the data analysis process, thus enhancing the validity of the outcomes of the study (Sinkovics *et al.*, 2005; Perreault and Leigh, 1989).

The tourism experts were each given a copy of a list of attributes of quality of a tourism destination, grouped under the categories developed by the researcher. Working separately, the two tourism experts made suggestions regarding categories and attributes they thought could be combined to avoid duplication. On the basis of the two experts' comments, the researcher merged the categories and attributes that seemed too similar to remain discrete and then produced a revised list of the categories and attributes of quality of a tourism destination and gave these to the experts to review again.

The tourism experts made further comments on the revised list of categories and attributes. The researcher revised the list of attributes again. At each stage the researcher discussed with the experts the changes they were recommending. The process was repeated until no further revisions were recommended. The final result was a list of attributes and dimensions of quality of a tourism destination which were then used to inform the second stage of the study; discussed next.

#### **4.4 The Quantitative Phase of the Research**

Section 4.3 has explained how the qualitative research approach was employed in the first stage of the field research to achieve the objective of exploring tourists' understanding of the meaning of the term quality of a tourism destination. The purpose of this section is to explain the methodology employed in the second

stage of the field research where mainly the quantitative research approach was employed. As noted in Section 4.2.3, the qualitative research approach has its limitations. For example, the relatively small size of samples in qualitative studies limits generalisability of research findings (Beard and Olsen, 1999).

However, as explained as Section 4.2.1, the weakness of the qualitative research approach can be overcome when the approach is used in conjunction with the quantitative approach. In this thesis, the findings from the qualitative phase were used to inform the quantitative phase. This provided the researcher with an opportunity for findings from the qualitative research approach to be tested, using a larger and more representative sample of the population of tourists, thus paving the way for more generalisable overall research finding.

#### **4.4.1 The Survey Research Approach in the Quantitative Phase**

The most important purpose of the quantitative phase was to test the results of the qualitative phase with a larger sample and in the process to obtain results that are more generalisable to the wider population of tourists. This researcher decided that this goal could be achieved by adopting the survey research approach. Survey research by definition is an approach to conducting research whereby data is collected from participants about their characteristics, experiences, and opinions with the aim of generalising the findings to a population that the sample is intended to represent (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996). This aim of the survey research approach is consistent with the previously stated goal of the quantitative phase.

A variety of techniques can be used to collect data in a survey research approach e.g. personal and telephone interviews (Finn *et al.*, 2000). In this thesis, the self-

administered (also known as the self-completion) questionnaire technique (Bernard, 2000) was employed. The decision to employ the self-administered questionnaire was largely due to certain strengths inherent in the technique, which made it suitable for the quantitative phase of the study.

In the self-administered questionnaire technique, as the name implies, the respondent is given a questionnaire and is expected to answer it by him or herself i.e. without the help of a researcher (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996). As a result, the self-administered questionnaire technique can be viewed as having the advantage of reducing the researcher's bias over the in-depth interview technique (Oppenheim, 1992). In addition, self-administered questionnaires are regarded as appropriate where a researcher intends to ask relatively long lists of questions (Bernard, 2000). This is particularly the case in this thesis, where the list of questions was likely to be relatively long, given the researcher's intention to survey the opinions of tourists regarding results of the qualitative phase of the study.

Further, with the self-administered questionnaire technique, the researcher can ask certain types of questions which may be difficult to ask otherwise, such as in the in-depth interview (Bernard, 2000). For example, spoken questions involving a long list of response categories, such as those based on the Likert scale (Likert, 1932) can be hard to follow (Bernard, 2000). Furthermore, with the self-administered questionnaire technique a single researcher can gather data from a large, representative sample of respondents at a relatively low cost per datum (de Vaus, 1996). This can be viewed as facilitating the researcher's aim to test the findings from the qualitative phase with a larger sample of tourists.

However, despite the advantages, there are also some disadvantages associated with the self-administered questionnaire technique (de Vaus, 1996). The researcher has no control over how the respondents interpret the questions in the questionnaire, so the questions can be prone to misinterpretation (Oppenheim, 1992). This meant that strategies to reduce the risk of questions being misinterpreted by respondents had to be employed. The commonly used strategy for identifying and rectifying questions in questionnaires, which respondents may have misinterpreted, involves subjecting the questionnaire to pilot testing before it is used in the main study (de Vaus, 1996). This strategy was employed in this thesis (Section 4.4.1.1).

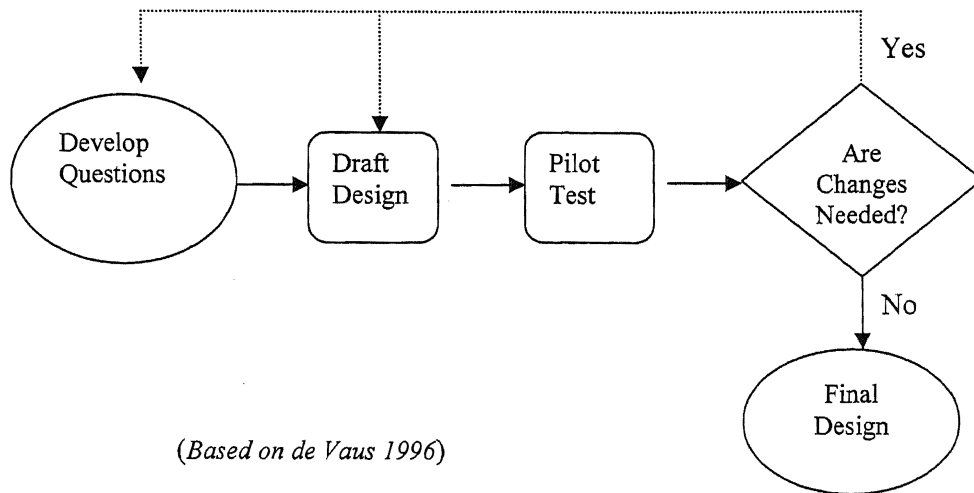
The self-administered questionnaire technique can be prone to a low response rate, particularly where the questionnaire is relatively long and/or where the questionnaire is distributed by post (de Vaus, 1996). Moreover, if the questionnaire is mailed, the researcher cannot be sure that the respondent who received it is the one who will fill it out (Bernard, 2000). The questionnaire used in this thesis was relatively long, which implies it would be prone to the risk of a low response rate. Therefore, strategies to reduce this risk were employed in the main quantitative study (see Section 4.4.1.2).

#### **4.4.1.1 Designing the Self-administered Questionnaire**

The designing of the self-administered questionnaire, employed in the quantitative phase of the study (Appendix 4.6) followed a systematic process involving the following steps (de Vaus, 1996).

- 1. Develop Questions for the Self-administered Questionnaire.**
- 2. Draft Design of the Self-administered Questionnaire.**
- 3. Pilot Testing Self-administered Questionnaire.**
- 4. Final Design of the Self-administered Questionnaire.**

**Figure 4.2 Steps Followed in Designing the Self-Administered: Questionnaire**



These steps are summarised in Figure 4.2 below.

***Step One: Develop Questions for the Self-administered Questionnaire***

As noted previously (Section 4.4.1), to achieve the objectives of the quantitative phase of the study, tourists' opinions regarding the findings of the exploratory study needed to be surveyed. Consequently, the findings of the exploratory study conducted in the qualitative phase of this thesis were used in developing the questions for the self-administered questionnaire.

Specifically, each of the attributes of quality of a tourism destination established in the qualitative phase was converted into scale items for a self-administered questionnaire. Scale items are statements designed to allow respondents to give their opinions about issues which are the subject of a researcher's inquiry (Oppenheim, 1992; de Vaus, 1996). In the self-administered questionnaire the scale items were intended to allow tourists to register their opinions about the extent to which they associate each attribute with quality of a tourism destination. In converting each attribute into a scale item for the self-administered

questionnaire, care was taken to use Basic English language to reduce the risk of the statement being misunderstood (de Vaus, 1996). In addition, effort was also made to keep items short and concise, to reduce the risk of the items being ambiguous or confusing to the respondents (Veal, 1997).

In order for tourists to be able to give their opinions, a measurement scale was needed. There are a variety of scales, allowing respondents to record their opinions about certain items that are of interest to a researcher, which can be adopted in self-administered questionnaire. However, the most widely used are the Likert, Guttman and Thurstone Scales (Judd *et al.*, 1991).

In this thesis, it was decided to adopt the Likert scale (Likert, 1932) for a number of reasons. Likert scales are considered to be more reliable and respondents find them easier to use compared with both the Guttman and Thurstone Scales (Judd *et al.*, 1991). In addition, Judd *et al.*, (1991) maintain that Likert scales can be used to measure multidimensional constructs to which Guttman and Thurstone Scales cannot be applied. Since quality is usually described as a multidimensional construct (e.g. Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985, Gronroos 1983), a Likert scale was viewed as appropriate for this study.

A seven point Likert scale (Likert, 1932), with intervals ranging from 1 =Strongly Disagree to 7 =Strongly Agree, was adopted. Taking the advice of a number of researchers (e.g. Ryan, 1995; Moser and Kalton, 1975), an option of 'No Opinion', denoted by a zero (0), was also provided for respondents who genuinely did not have an opinion. The respondents would indicate their level of agreement or disagreement regarding the extent to which each attribute could be viewed as

attributes of quality of a tourism destination, by circulating any of the response categories from zero to seven.

However, it must be noted that due to the diversity of intervals that can be employed in the Likert scale (e.g. whether to employ five, seven or ten point intervals), there is some debate (e.g. Sekaran, 2000; Moser and Kalton, 1975; Ryan, 1995) regarding the most appropriate number of intervals a researcher should adopt in a questionnaire. Too few intervals are thought to result in respondents answers clustering around the mid point, whereas with too many intervals, it is argued that the meaning a respondent is able to place on each interval decreases as the number of intervals increases (Moser and Kalton, 1975).

However, other researchers (e.g. Sekaran, 2000; Churchill; 1979) argue that a measurement scale can take any form. In practice, Likert scales of between five to seven points are often the norm, although scales of a greater number of points, e.g. 10, can also be employed (Moser and Kalton, 1975). In this thesis, a 7-point scale was adopted, which is widely used in service quality research (e.g. Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988; Saleh and Ryan 1991; Akan, 1995). The 7-point Likert scale is considered to facilitate better discrimination of respondents' views about the items being assessed relative to comparable Likert scales of other intervals (Ryan, 1995).

For structured questions, a nominal scale (Section 4.3.3.1) accompanied each question to allow respondents to record their answers. With regards to open-ended questions, a space was provided for respondents to write their answers.



### ***Step Two: Draft Design of the Self-administered Questionnaire***

A draft version of the self-administered questionnaire, comprising Sections A and B, was then developed. The first part of Section A consisted of an introductory statement, explaining the purpose of the study and also assuring respondents of confidentiality of the study, while the second and larger part of Section A contained the seventy-five scale items derived from the findings of qualitative phase of the study. As noted previously, these seventy-five scale items were designed to capture the respondents' opinion regarding the results of the exploratory study and were measured on the 7-point Likert scale. Section B of the draft self-administered questionnaire comprised questions intended to capture data on the respondents' demographic and socio-economic profile.

### ***Step Three Pilot Testing Self-administered Questionnaire***

The general reasons for conducting a pilot test explained in Section 4.3.4.1 will not be repeated here. However, reasons for conducting a pilot test specific to the quantitative phase are explained in this section. The draft version of the questionnaire was pilot tested at Stansted Airport. The main reason for selecting an airport as a place for conducting the pilot study related to the length of the questionnaire (which the researcher felt was very long).

As noted in Section (4.4.1), long self-administered questionnaires are prone to low response rates and therefore strategies to reduce this risk were required in this thesis. One strategy put in place was to carefully select the site for conducting the pilot study to make sure it would be a place where respondents would be willing to answer a relatively long questionnaire. An airport seemed an attractive place to conduct the pilot study as it offered a potential for a pool of 'captive' respondents

i.e. respondents confined in one place (Echtner and Ritchie, 1993) with ample time to complete the questionnaire.

The pilot study was conducted in the lounge areas of the main terminal buildings of Stansted Airport. The researcher approached potential respondents in the lounge area of the airport and formally introduced himself. After explaining the purposes of the study, the researcher requested the potential respondent to participate in the pilot test. If a respondent agreed to participate in the pilot test, he or she was given a questionnaire to fill in while the researcher waited. The researcher informed the respondents that he was conducting a pilot test. A similar strategy of declaring the initial stage of the pilot test (de Vaus, 1996) had been used successfully at the qualitative phase where the researcher was able to obtain first hand comments about overall design of the open-ended questionnaire (Section 4.3.3.1). As noted in Section 4.3.3.1, such information can be useful for making further improvements to the design of the questionnaire (de Vaus, 1996).

By examining the completed draft version of the self-administered questionnaire, areas requiring further improvement were identified. Specifically, it was noticed that respondents tended to give high scores, e.g. scores of six and above on the seven-point Likert scale, in most questions in Section A. High scores in a questionnaire designed to assess the opinions of respondents on issues which are of interest to the researcher, such as the one developed in the quantitative phase, are not uncommon (Peterson and Wilson, 1992). The high scores are often attributed to a respondent's tendency to concur with a particular position, which is termed acquiescence bias (Zikmund, 1991). 'Acquiescence bias' has been defined as

... the response set that may determine a reply to a question where that reply is, to some extent, independent of the content of the statement' (Ryan, 1995: 153).

Another area of improvement established in the first stage of the pilot test was font size, which some respondents felt was too small and therefore difficult to read.

The researcher decided to conduct a second pilot test in an attempt to rectify the problems identified in the initial pilot test. With regards to acquiescence bias, it has been suggested that the sequencing of questions in a questionnaire can contribute to acquiescence bias (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996). According to Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996), when questions belonging to the same topic are presented together in a questionnaire they can be prone to acquiescence bias. As the example in the Table 4.3 shows, acquiescence bias in this thesis was probably caused by the fact that items belonging to each specific dimension were presented together in the initial version of Section A of the self-administered questionnaire.

**Table 4.3 An Example of Presentation Of Scale Items in the Initial Questionnaire**

**Friendliness of Host Community#**

*Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements. A quality tourism destination is a place:*

1. with local people who are welcoming towards tourists.
2. with local people who know their area well.
3. with local people who are keen to help tourists.

*Note: # All three scale items belong to the dimension 'Friendliness of Host Community'*

Taking the advice of Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996), the presentation of questions in Section A was revised, resulting in the questions from the same dimension being presented randomly throughout Section A, with the intention of

reducing the risk of acquiescence bias. The revised self-administered questionnaire was then printed and ready for the next stage of the pilot test.

The second stage of the pilot test was intended to be a complete simulation of the actual fieldwork and was therefore undeclared (de Vaus, 1996). The process of distributing the questionnaire was similar to that followed in the first stage of the pilot test, with the exception that respondents were not told that the researcher was conducting a pilot study. The researcher distributed 50 questionnaires to tourists at Luton Airport and 50 questionnaires at Stansted Airports. All 100 questionnaires were returned completed.

The data from the pilot test was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 11.5 for Windows, which provided the researcher with an opportunity to plan for data analysis, i.e. to devise a coding scheme for use in data entry and deciding on data analysis techniques ahead of the main fieldwork of the quantitative phase (Saunders *et al.*, 1997).

#### ***Step Four: Final Design of the Self-Administered Questionnaire***

The second stage of the pilot study showed that there were no problems with the self-administered questionnaire, which meant that it could be employed in the actual fieldwork, i.e., the main study conducted in the quantitative phase.

##### **4.4.1.2 Sampling Plan and Procedures for the Quantitative Phase**

The main field research in the quantitative phase was conducted at Luton and Stansted Airports. Before the study, the researcher contacted the management of both airports in writing, seeking permission to conduct the field research. The management of the two airports agreed and the field research was conducted in July and August of 2003. Luton and Stansted Airports were selected as sites for

conducting the field research for two main reasons, which were considered paramount for the success of the field research.

The first related to the length of the self-administered questionnaire designed to collect data in the quantitative phase. With 75 questions in Section A alone, the self-administered questionnaire was too long. As noted in Section (4.4.1), long self-administered questionnaires are frequently prone to a risk of low response rates and therefore strategies to reduce this risk were required in this thesis. One strategy put in place was to try to carefully select a site ensure that the site for conducting the field research was carefully selected so as to include a place where respondents willing to answer a relatively long questionnaire could be found. An earlier pilot test of the questionnaire at Stansted Airport had demonstrated that the airport was an attractive place to conduct the field research as it offered a pool of 'captive' respondents (Section 4.4.1.1).

More importantly, respondents at Stansted Airport showed great enthusiasm (100% response rate) for completing the draft version of the questionnaire during the pilot test. For example, during the pilot test the researcher noticed that some potential respondents were volunteering to participate in the study by asking for the questionnaires. The second reason for selecting an airport as a place for conducting data collection was that it offered a 'neutral' location (i.e. not an actual tourism destination) to conduct the field research thereby avoided contextualising the study. On the basis of the preceding discussion, the selection of Luton and Stansted Airports as sites for conducting the field research was therefore based on criterion sampling (Section 4.3.5.1).

The population for the quantitative phase of the study was tourists (Section 4.3.3.1). The sampling frame comprised people who were at the airports at the time the study was conducted. The process followed in recruiting respondents for the quantitative phase of the study is described in the next section under the heading 'Fieldwork for the Quantitative Phase'. The sampling method employed in recruiting respondents for the field research conducted in the quantitative phase of can be viewed as purposive (Patton, 1990). A major weakness of this sampling approach is that results from the study cannot be easily generalised to the wider population (Patton, 1990).

#### **4.4.1.3 Fieldwork for the Quantitative Phase**

It had been ascertained during the pilot stage that some passengers were waiting for as long as 4 to 6 hours before they could catch a flight. Therefore, the lounge area was a suitable place for conducting the field research because the researcher could find respondents who had ample time and were keen to participate in the study.

Data collection was conducted between 9 am and 4 pm (Monday –Sunday) for a period of one week. Potential respondents who agreed to participate in the field research were handed a pen and a self-administered questionnaire to complete.

The potential respondents were informed that once they had completed the questionnaire they could leave it on the headrest of any of the seats within the terminal building for collection by the researcher. Such a strategy allowed the researcher to continue distributing questionnaires to other tourists and also gave the tourists time to complete the questionnaire which was designed to last about

fifteen to twenty minutes. However, if a tourist declined to participate in the study, the researcher moved on and approached other tourists.

In terms of actual size sample, studies in quality in tourism usually restrict themselves to under 200 respondents (Kozak, 2000). This makes the reliability and the validity of the research questionable (Kozak, 2000). Literature suggests a positive relationship between the number of scale items and the sample size, representing a ratio of at least 1:4 (Tinsley and Tinsley, 1987) or more acceptably 1:10 (Hair *et al.*, 1995; Nunnally, 1967). Therefore, given that there were 75 scale items in the self-administered questionnaire used in the quantitative phase, the target sample was 750 questionnaires i.e. ten times the number of scale items (Hair *et al.*, 1995; Nunnally, 1967).

#### **4.4.1.4 Data Analysis for the Quantitative Phase**

This section describes statistical data analysis techniques used in the quantitative phase of the study. Statistical data analysis techniques belong to two major groupings, namely parametric and non-parametric test (Zikmund, 1991). Parametric tests are regarded as more powerful than non-parametric tests (Tabachnick and Fidell, 1996). They are more sensitive in detecting a relationship or difference between groups than non-parametric tests (Tabachnick and Fidell, 1996). For this reason, it is recommended that where possible parametric tests should be used (Tabachnick and Fidell, 1996).

One of the major differences between parametric and non-parametric tests is that, while parametric tests often require that the data to be analysed meet certain stringent assumptions (described in the discussion that follows), non-parametric tests do not (Zikmund, 1991). There are four main assumptions that need to be

satisfied if one intends to employ parametric tests (Cooper and Schindler, 1998, Zikmund, 1991). First, the observations must be independent of one another. This means that each observation must not be influenced by any other observation. An example of a research situation that may violate this assumption is studying the performance of students working in pairs or small groups. The behaviour of each member of the group influences all other group members, thereby violating the assumption of independence (Pallant, 2001).

Secondly, the sample should be drawn from a normally distributed population (Cooper and Schindler, 1998). However, parametric tests are known to be 'robust' (tolerant) to violations of the assumption of normal distribution (de Vaus, 2002) if the sample size is relatively large i.e. greater than 30 respondents (Stevens, 2002; Finn *et al.*, 2000). In this case, the sample size exceeded 30 respondents, which meant that parametric tests could be employed. Non-parametric tests do not require the data to be normally distributed hence; they are often referred to as 'distribution free' tests (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996).

The third assumption that needs to be satisfied, to make it appropriate for one to employ parametric based data analytical techniques, is that samples are obtained from a population of equal variances (Cooper and Schindler, 1998; Zikmund, 1991). This assumption is commonly known as the 'homogeneity of variances assumption' (Pallant, 2001). It means that the variability of scores for each of the groups is similar (Pallant, 2001). Fourth, the measurement scales to collect the data to be analysed should be 'interval', so that arithmetic operations can be used with them (Cooper and Schindler, 1998). An interval scale is one where both the order and distance between points on a scale can be ascertained (Sekaran, 2000). For example, following a horse race, it is possible to say that Horse 'A' was first



and Horse 'B' was second and in addition, one can also say that Horse 'A' was so many lengths ahead of Horse 'B' (Zikmund, 1991).

There is some debate concerning the use of parametric tests on data collected with self-administered questionnaires using Likert scales, as in this thesis. Some researchers (e.g. de Vaus, 2002; Coolican, 1990) maintain that, Likert scales are ordinal scales, while others (e.g. Sekaran, 2000; Heung and Cheng, 2000) regard them as interval scales. While the debate remains unresolved, in practice data from self-administered questionnaires employing Likert scales (e.g. SERVQUAL scale) are analysed using parametric tests. However, given such controversy, where possible both parametric and non-parametric test - based data analytical techniques were employed. The use of both parametric and non-parametric techniques can also be viewed a part of a wide strategy of triangulation of methods (Section 4.3.4.1). For reasons previously discussed parametric tests were the primary statistical techniques for data analysis on which the interpretation of the results of the quantitative phase were based.

In the main study of the quantitative phase, data collected using self-administered questionnaires were analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows Version 11.5. This researcher inputted the data into a computer and compared groups using either descriptive data analytical techniques or statistical data analytical techniques.

#### **4.4.1.4.1 Descriptive Data Analytical Techniques**

Descriptive data analytical techniques were employed to achieve objectives of establishing which attributes and dimensions identified in the exploratory study tourists most strongly associated with quality of a tourism destination. The most

commonly used descriptive statistics are the mean and standard deviation (Sekaran, 2000). The mean indicates the average score in the data set and the standard deviation is a measure of variability or dispersion in the data set (Cooper and Schindler, 1998).

Mean and standard deviation scores were calculated for each attribute and dimension. Each attribute and dimension was then ranked in descending order based on mean scores values. Based on these mean score rankings it was possible to establish the extent to which tourists associated each attribute and dimension with the quality of a tourism destination. The mean score values were interpreted as follows: the lower the mean score, the less the extent to which tourists were viewed as associating that particular attribute or dimension with quality of a tourism destination. The higher the mean score, the greater the extent to which tourists were considered to associate that particular attribute or dimension with quality of a tourism destination.

#### **4.4.1.4.2 Statistical Data Analytical Techniques for Comparing Groups**

Statistical data analytical techniques for comparing groups were employed to investigate the hypotheses developed in Chapter Three. The main goal for investigating these hypotheses was to establish whether there were any differences in understanding of the meaning of the term quality of a tourism destination within groups of tourists given a number of independent variables. Two types of statistical data analytical techniques for comparing groups were used. They were; a) tests to establish whether groups are significantly different and b) tests to ascertain the 'strength of association' between the dependent and independent variable. The dependent variable was the quality of a tourism destination

(represented by the twelve dimensions), while the independent variables were the tourist demographic factors such as age, gender and ethnicity.

### ***Tests to Establish Whether Groups were Significantly Different***

In statistics, as the name implies, the term 'significant difference' relates to the significance of findings i.e. it occurs when the differences are reliable or when the same answer is likely to be obtained if the research is repeated (Cooper and Schindler, 1998). Depending on the hypothesis being investigated the tests for significant differences used were the *t*-test for independent samples, the Mann-Whitney U test, the one-way between-groups Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and the Kruskal Wallis test.

The *t*-test is one of the most frequently used tests for determining significant differences (Sekaran, 2000). It evaluates the null hypothesis<sup>4</sup> that there is no significant difference between mean score values of two groups at a given probability level. There are several hypotheses where differences between mean score values of two groups were investigated (e.g. differences between male and female tourist mean scores values) see Chapter Three (Section 3.4)

The steps in testing hypotheses using the *t*-test technique were as follows: the main assumption for *t*-tests is that the variances of the groups compared are equal (Cooper and Schindler, 1998). Therefore, for each hypothesised comparison, the analysis first established the validity of assumptions that the variances of the groups being compared were equal. The most commonly used method for this is the Levene's test (Cooper and Schindler, 1998). It assesses the null hypothesis

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<sup>4</sup> In statistics, a null hypothesis is a hypothesis set up and is presumed true until statistical evidence in the form of a hypothesis test indicates otherwise (Sekaran, 2000).

that compared groups variances are equal (Brace *et al.*, 2003). A significant Levene's statistic indicates that groups variances are unequal, while a non-significant value indicates that groups variances are equal (Brace *et al.*, 2003).

SPSS provides *t*-test results for both equal and unequal groups variances (Pallant, 2001). Therefore, where the Levene's statistic was significant *t*-tests results based on assumptions of unequal group variance were used (Brace *et al.*, 2003). On the other hand when Levene's statistic was non-significant *t*-tests results based on assumptions of equal groups variances used (Brace *et al.*, 2003).

As part of the strategy to use a combination of parametric and non-parametric tests, the Mann-Whitney U test, which is regarded as the non-parametric test's equivalent of the *t*-test, was also computed (Pallant, 2001). Unlike the *t*-test which compares group mean score values, the Mann-Whitney U compares median score values (Cooper and Schindler, 1998).

ANOVA is a parametric test used when comparing mean score values of one independent (e.g. age) variable with three or more groups and one dependent continuous variable (Cooper and Schindler, 1998). ANOVA evaluates the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference amongst groups being compared at a given probability level (Cooper and Schindler, 1998). One-way analysis of variance is so called because it compares the variance (variability in scores) between the different groups (believed to be due to the independent variable), with the variability within each of the groups (believed to be due to chance) (Pallant, 2001; Bower, 1997). ANOVA involves calculating an *F*-ratio or *F*-statistic. *F*-statistic, also known as the standard *F*-statistic (Wilcox, 1998) represents the variance between the groups, divided by the variance within the

groups. A significant standard  $F$ -statistic indicates that the null hypothesis that the groups means score values are equal should be rejected (Pallant, 2001).

The steps in testing hypotheses using the ANOVA technique were as follows: as with the  $t$ -test technique, the main assumption for the ANOVA technique is that compared variances are equal (Pallant, 2001). Therefore, for each hypothesised comparison the analysis first established the validity of assumptions that the compared variances were equal. The Levene's test was used to check the validity of this assumption. As noted previously a significant Levene's statistic means that the null hypothesis that compared groups' variances are equal should be rejected. If the variances were found equal the standard  $F$ -statistic was used to test the hypothesis (Field, 2005).

However, if groups' variances are unequal, the standard  $F$ -statistic lacks power and can be prone to giving an incorrect result (Wilcox, 1998; 1987). When groups' variances are unequal SPSS provides an alternative version of the standard  $F$ -statistic known as the Welch's  $F$  (Welch, 1951). Welch's  $F$  is robust to violations of the assumptions that compared groups variances are equal (Field, 2005; Welch, 1951). As a result, when compared groups variances were found to be unequal the Welch's  $F$  was used to test the hypothesis. In addition, as part of a strategy to employ a triangulation of data analytical techniques the nonparametric Kruskal Wallis test was also used in tests for significant differences (Brace *et al.*, 2003). The Kruskal Wallis test is regarded as the nonparametric equivalent of the ANOVA test (Brace *et al.*, 2003). It is used when comparing scores on some continuous variable for three or more groups (Pallant, 2001)

However, ANOVA and Kruskal Wallis tests only indicate whether or not there are significant differences among groups with respect to the hypothesis being tested. They do not indicate where the significant difference(s) lies (Bower, 1997). Statistical tests that enable one to establish precisely which groups significantly differ are known as 'post-hoc' tests (Bower, 1997). There are several 'post-hoc' tests that can be employed in an analysis. However, the choice of the most appropriate 'post-hoc' test to use in an analysis largely depends on whether previously discussed assumptions of equal groups variances have been met (Bower, 1997).

Where the Levene's test indicated that groups variances were equal the Tukey's Honestly Significant Different (HSD) post-hoc tests were used (Cooper and Schindler, 1998). Tukey's HSD test is one of the most commonly conducted post-hoc tests and is regarded as highly reliable (Pallant, 2001; Hair *et al.*, 1995). However, Tukey's HSD test lacks power and is prone to Type One error, i.e. concluding that there are significant differences amongst groups when in fact the difference are not significant, if groups variances are unequal (Stevens, 2002). Therefore, where groups variances were unequal the Tamhane's T2, a more powerful 'post hoc' test (Field, 2005), was used in the analysis.

When multiple statistical tests (e.g. *t*-tests or ANOVA tests) are conducted, they can be prone to Type One error (Pallant, 2001). A widely employed method for controlling for Type One errors involves setting a more stringent probability level, also called the alpha level, for judging statistical significance (Tabachnick and Fidell 1996, Hair *et al.*, 1995). The procedure for achieving this is known as the Bonferroni adjustment (Tabachnick and Fidell, 1996). The Bonferroni adjustment is computed by dividing the number of comparisons the researcher intends to

make by the usually used 0.05 alpha levels (Pallant, 2001). The new alpha level is then used to judge statistical significance (Tabachnick and Fidel, 1996). In this thesis, the dependent variable quality of a tourism destination comprised 12 dimensions. This meant that for each hypothesis tested, 12 comparisons were made. As a result, the Bonferroni adjusted alpha level was 0.004; i.e. 0.05 divided by 12.

### ***Tests Strength of Association Between the Dependent and Independent Variable.***

The *t*-test and the ANOVA test previously discussed can only reveal whether group differences are statistically significant. They do not provide any indication as to the magnitude of the difference (Cohen, 1988). Such information is particularly important given that small differences can be statistically significant, especially where relatively large samples are involved (Tabachnick and Fidel, 1996). According to Pallant (2001), although small differences can be statistically significant they may have no practical or theoretical value. Consequently, where *t*-tests and ANOVA tests detect statistically significant differences it is necessary to conduct additional tests to assess the meaningfulness of such differences (Cohen, 1988).

One way of assessing the meaningfulness of statistically significant findings is to calculate the 'effect size' also known as 'strength of association' (Cohen, 1988; Tabachnick and Fidel, 1996). This is a set of statistics which indicate the relative magnitude of the differences between mean score values. Put differently, 'effect size' statistics describe the '...amount of the total variance in the dependent variable that is predictable from the knowledge of the levels of the independent variable' (Tabachnick and Fidel, 1996:53). There are a number of different 'effect

size' statistics that can be computed. In this thesis one of the most frequently used 'effect size' statistic, eta squared (Cohen, 1988), was employed.

Eta squared ( $\eta^2$ ) represents the proportion of variance of the dependent variable that is explained by the independent variable (Tabachnick and Fidel, 1996). Values of  $\eta^2$  can range from 0 to 1. To interpret eta squared values the following guidelines were used (Pallant, 2001; Cohen, 1988): 0.01 =small effect, 0.06 =moderate effect and 0.14 large effect. The formula for eta squared for *t*-tests is as follows:

$$\text{Eta squared } (\eta^2) = \frac{t^2}{t^2 + (N1 + N2 - 2)}$$

where *t* = *t* value, N1 and N2 =the total number of subjects in the groups

For ANOVA tests, the formula for eta squared is as follows:

$$\text{Eta squared } (\eta^2) = \frac{\text{Sum of Squares between groups}}{\text{Total sum of Squares}}$$

The result of each of the above formulas can be multiplied by 100, which will indicate the % of the total variance in the dependent variable explained by the independent variable (Tabachnick and Fidel, 1996).

#### **4.4.2 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has described the methodology employed to achieve the objectives of this study which are presented in Chapter One (Section 1.3). This thesis employed what can be viewed as mixed methodology research design, in that both qualitative and quantitative research approaches were used at different phases of the research process. In the first, mainly qualitative phase, an exploratory study preceded by a pilot study was conducted. The pilot study aimed to test the



suitability of the open-ended questionnaire, in-depth interview, and focus group techniques for collecting data in the main qualitative exploratory study. For reasons to be discussed in Chapter Five, only the in-depth interview technique was employed to gather data in the main qualitative exploratory study conducted at Trafalgar Square in London. The interview data were analysed using the qualitative data analytical technique known as the 'constant comparison' method.

The primary aim of the mainly quantitative second phase was to apply the findings from the qualitative phase to a larger sample. On the basis of the results from the qualitative phase, it was decided that adopting the survey research approach would be the best means of attaining the aims of the second phase of the thesis. Due to advantages inherent in the self-administered questionnaire the technique was adopted for data gathering in the survey research conducted in the quantitative phase. The self-administered questionnaire consisted mainly of items developed based on the results of qualitative phase of the study along with a number of questions designed to capture socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the respondents. The self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data in the survey research conducted at Stansted and Luton Airports.

The data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 11.5 for Windows. The main data analytical techniques employed were descriptive statistics (e.g. mean) for comparing groups. Two types of statistical data analysis techniques for comparing groups were used; a) tests to establish whether groups were significantly different (t-tests, Mann-Whitney U test, ANOVA tests and Kruskal Wallis) and b) a test to ascertain the strength of association between the dependent and independent variable (Eta squared).

## **Chapter 5 Qualitative Phase Results**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings of the qualitative phase of the research where an exploratory study, preceded by a pilot study, was conducted. The chapter is organised as follows: the initial part (Section 5.2) reports on the findings of the pilot study, and the second part (Section 5.3) presents the results of the exploratory study, which was conducted to achieve the objectives of the qualitative phase of the study. As discussed in Chapter One (Section 1.2), the objective of the qualitative phase was to explore the tourists' understanding of the meaning of the term quality of a tourism destination by establishing the attributes and dimensions of quality of a tourism destination. The last part of this chapter (Section 5.4) provides a summary of the findings of the qualitative phase.

### **5.2 Pilot Study Results**

This section reports on the findings of the pilot study conducted in the qualitative phase of the research. The aim of the pilot study was to test the suitability of the open-ended questionnaire, in-depth interview, and focus group as techniques for collecting data in the exploratory study planned for the subsequent stages of the qualitative phase of the research (Chapter Four, Section 4.3.4).

#### **5.2.1 Respondents' Profile for the Pilot Study**

The total number of respondents who took part in the pilot study was ninety-two. The respondents were nearly evenly balanced with regards to the categories 'Gender' i.e. 45% male and 55% female; and 'Pattern of Travel' where 48% stated that they had visited a tourism destination with children before, while 52% had not. Although the respondents from the age groups '15-24' (22%), '25-34'

(20%), '35-44,' (22%) and '45-54' (24%) were reasonably balanced, there were fewer respondents in the age group 55+ (12%).

A significant number of respondents were well educated, with 30% holding an undergraduate degree and 16% a postgraduate qualification. A small number (12%) of the respondents had primary school level education only, while 23% had attained 'Secondary' school and 18% diploma levels only. While 33% of respondents had a monthly household income of 'less than £2,000', respondents from other income groups were almost evenly balanced i.e. '£2001-£3000' (24%), '£3001-£4000' (22%) and '£4001 and above' (22%).

**Table 5.1 Respondents' Profile for the Pilot Study (N =92)**

Characteristics	Respondents (%)	Characteristics	Respondents (%)
<b>Gender</b>		<b>Pattern of Travel</b>	
Male	41 (45)	Travel with Children? *	
Female	51 (55)	Yes	44 (48)
Total Observations	92 (100)	No	48 (52)
		Total Observations	92 (100)
<b>Age</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Education</b>	
15-24	20 (22)	Primary	12 (13)
25-34	18 (20)	Secondary	21 (23)
35-44	20 (22)	Diploma	17 (18)
45-54	22 (24)	University	28 (30)
55+	11 (12)	University	15 (16)
Total observations	92 (100)	Total Observations	92 (100)
		<b>Monthly Household</b>	<b>%</b>
		Less than £2000	30 (33)
		£2001-£3000	22 (24)
		£3001-£4000	20 (22)
		£4001 +	19 (21)
		Total Observations	92 (100)

*Note: \*Have you ever travelled to a tourism destination and spent a night accompanied by children*

### 5.2.2 The Potential Usefulness of the Data Collection Techniques

The suitability of the open-ended questionnaire, in-depth interview and focus group as techniques for collecting qualitative data in the proposed exploratory

study was assessed based on the four criteria established in Chapter Four (Section 4.3.4). These were (1) the 'effectiveness' of the technique of data collection; (2) the 'efficiency' of the technique; (3) the 'depth and detail' of information that the technique produces and (4) the 'uniqueness' of information gathered (Patton, 1990) see Chapter Four, Section 4.3.4. While the data generated by each technique of data collection is evaluated separately, the results of the pilot study conducted in various places (Chapter Four, Table 4.1) are combined, since there are no significant differences in the results from one place of data gathering to another.

The 'effectiveness' of each data collection technique was assessed in terms of the ability of the technique to generate the type of data that was required to achieve the objectives of the exploratory study (Chapter Four, Section 4.3.4). The amount of relevant data generated from the data collected, using each of the three techniques, was measured in terms of number of 'units of meaning' (Maykut and Morehouse 1994) and is presented in Table 5.2. As the results in Table 5.2 indicate, each data collection technique produced some relevant data, which implies that all techniques were effective. However, the largest amount of relevant data, 104 'units of meaning', was obtained from in-depth interview data (Table 5.2). Second was data collected using the open-ended questionnaire, generating 66 'units of meaning', while focus group data with 11 'units of meaning', generated the least amount of relevant data (Table 5.2). These results clearly indicate that the in-depth interview technique was the most 'effective' technique employed in the pilot study.

**Table 5.2 A Summary of the Results of Data Collection Techniques Used in the Pilot Study**

Technique of Data Collection	No. of respondents	Total units of meaning*	Ratio #
In-depth Interview	11	104	9.45
Focus Group	10	11	1.10
Open-ended Questionnaires	71	56	0.79

*Note: \* Total units of meaning generated from the data collected using each data collection technique*

*: # The number of units of meaning divided by number of respondents*

*Source: based on data in Appendices 5.1 to 5.3*

The ‘efficiency’ of each data collection technique employed in the pilot study was assessed in terms of the amount of relevant data that each technique could generate per respondent (Chapter Four, Section 4.3.4). The data collected using the in-depth interview technique, which generated 9.45 (104/11) ‘units of meaning’ per respondent had the most relevant information per respondent (Table 5.2). Data gathered using the focus group technique with 1.10 (11/10) ‘units of meaning’ per respondent was second, while open-ended questionnaire data with 0.79 (56/71) ‘units of meaning’ per respondent generated the least amount of relevant data per respondent. Therefore, it can be concluded that the in-depth interview technique was the most ‘efficient’ data collection technique employed in the pilot study.

The ‘uniqueness’ of the data generated was assessed in terms of the ability of each data collection technique to generate data that no other technique had generated previously (Chapter Four, Section 4.3.4). A comparison of the ‘units of meaning’ generated by each technique of data collection indicated that the in-depth interviews were the source of most unique data. Indeed, neither the open-ended

questionnaires nor the focus group interview provided any additional information beyond that provided by the in-depth interview.

A summary of the results of the overall evaluation of the pilot study data against the four criteria, namely ‘effectiveness’, ‘depth and detail’, ‘efficiency’, and ‘uniqueness of the data’ is presented in Table 5.3. These results clearly indicate the superiority of the in-depth interview technique over other techniques of collecting qualitative data employed in the pilot study. This can be attributed to some of the strengths inherent in the in-depth interview techniques discussed in Chapter Four, Section 4.3.2.3. For instance, with the in-depth interview technique the researcher is able to probe interviewees to explain their answers (Bernard, 2002), which is not possible with the open-ended questionnaire technique. By providing an explanation, respondents are able to add ‘depth and detail’ to their answers (Patton, 1990). Further, a researcher could probe an interviewee to raise other points by asking them supporting questions such as ‘Are there any other points you can think of?’ This results in respondents raising more points, thereby improving the overall efficiency of the in-depth interview technique.

**Table 5.3 A Comparison of the Data Collection Techniques Based on Set Criteria**

Techniques	Criteria For Assessing the Data Collection Techniques*			
	Effectiveness	Depth and Detail	Efficiency	Uniqueness
In-depth Interview	✓	✓	✓	✓
Focus group	✓	✓		
Open-ended questionnaires	✓			

*Note: \* Criteria for assessing the suitability of the data collection techniques for gathering data in the exploratory study, conducted in the qualitative phase, was established in Chapter Four (Section 4.3.4).*

The use of probes is not exclusive to the in-depth interview technique. Probing also results in some ‘depth and detail’ in data collected through the focus group technique. However, the relatively large size of a focus group means that probing

was not as successful as it had been in the in-depth interviews. More importantly, it was noticed that the ‘depth and detail’ in the focus group technique used in this study, was achieved at the expense of diversity of answers. This is attributed to the fact that participants in the focus group tended to over-elaborate on relatively few points, thereby limiting the diversity of points.

The data from the open-ended questionnaire technique lacked the ‘depth and detail’ required to meet the information needs of the exploratory study (Table 5.3). This can be attributed to the lack of willingness to provide answers in full when completing the open-ended questionnaires demonstrated by respondents during data collection. Specifically, despite instructions for respondents completing open-ended questionnaires to provide full explanations of their answers, they tended to provide mostly bulleted answers, e.g. ‘accommodation’ ‘weather’ or ‘transport’. Such answers were considered too brief to be meaningful or useful for attaining the objectives of the qualitative phase and were therefore discarded. This contributed to the relatively low efficiency score of the open-ended questionnaire technique in comparison to the in-depth interview technique (Table 5.2).

### **5.2.3 The Potential Usefulness of the Open-ended Questions**

The data collected using the open-ended questionnaire technique was analysed separately for each of the open-ended questions in terms of the total ‘units of meaning’ per question and the average ‘units of meaning’ per respondent answering each question. The goal was to determine the most suitable questions to use with the data collection technique in the planned exploratory study. As Table 5.4 shows, all questions were to some extent able to generate data relevant for the qualitative phase.

**Table 5.4 A Summary of the Results of Open-ended Questions Used in the Study**

Questions Used in the Open-ended Questionnaires	No. of respondents	Total units of meaning	Ratio #
In your own opinion, what are the characteristics of a quality tourism destination?	10	14	1.40
In your own opinion, what makes a quality tourism destination?	10	7	0.70
What factors best describe the quality of a tourism destination?	9	6	0.67
In your own opinion, what factors best describe the quality of a tourism destination?	9	6	0.67
In your own opinion, what makes a high quality tourism destination?	10	4	0.40
In your own opinion what makes a low quality tourism destination	10	4	0.40
What does the term quality of a tourism destination mean to you?	31	11	0.35
In your own opinion, what factors would you look at when judging the quality of a tourism destination?	12	4	0.33

*Note: \* Total units of meaning generated from the data collected using each open-ended question*

*Note: # The number of units of meaning divided by number of respondents*

*Source: Author, based on data in Appendix 5.3*

However, two questions 1) 'In your own opinion, what are the characteristics of a quality tourism destination?' with highest 'number of units meaning' (14) and also the highest average total 'units of meaning' per respondent (1.40) and 2) 'In your own opinion, what makes a quality tourism destination?' 7 total 'units of meaning', i.e., an average of 0.70 total 'units of meaning' per respondent can be viewed as relatively more efficient (Table 5.4). These findings indicate that these two questions had shown the most potential to generate the required information and should therefore be used in the main exploratory study. The other questions generated less than 70 'units of meaning' per respondent (Table 5.4).



### **5.3 Findings of the Qualitative Phase Results**

This section presents the results of the main study i.e. the exploratory study conducted in the qualitative phase after the pilot study. The objective of the exploratory study was to explore tourists' understanding of the meaning of the term quality of a tourism destination through establishing the attributes and dimensions of quality of a tourism destination.

#### **5.3.1 Exploratory Respondents Profiles**

Forty-one respondents took part in the exploratory study. The sample was relatively evenly balanced with respect to 'Gender' i.e. male (21) and female (20) and 'Pattern of Travel' - where 20 stated that they had visited a tourism destination with children before, while 21 had not. There were fewer respondents from the 55+ age group (5) in comparison to the age groups '15-24' (9), '25-34' (8), '35-44' (9) and the '45-54' (10). In terms of ethnicity, most interviewees were from the White (26) group in comparison to Asian (7), Black (5) and Mixed Race (3).

As regards to education, most interviewees had an undergraduate degree (11) while the least (5) had 'Primary' school level education only. The income group '£40,000+' (5) and '£30,000-£39,999' (4) had few interviewees. However, interviewees from other income groups i.e. 'under £10,000' (8), '£10,000-£14,999' (7), '£15,000-£19,999' (8), and '£20,000-£29,999' (9) were evenly balanced.

**Table 5.5 Respondents Profile for the Exploratory Qualitative Study (N =41)**

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Respondents (%)</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Respondents (%)</b>
<b>Gender</b>		<b>Pattern of Travel</b>	
Male	21 (51)	Travel with Children? *	
Female	20 (49)	Yes	20 (49)
Total	41 (100)	No	21 (51)
		Total	41 (100)
<b>Age</b>		<b>Education</b>	
15-24	9 (22)	Primary	5 (11)
25-34	8 (20)	Secondary	9 (21)
35-44	9 (22)	Diploma	7 (17)
45-54	10 (24)	University (Undergraduate)	11 (28)
55+	5 (12)	University (Postgraduate)	9 (22)
Total	41 (100)	Total Observations	41 (100)
<b>Ethnicity</b>		<b>Monthly Household Income</b>	
White	26 (63)	Under £10,000	8 (20)
Black	5 (12)	£10,000-£14,999	7 (17)
Asian	7 (17)	£15,000-£19,999	8 (20)
Mixed	3 (8)	£20,000-£29,999	9 (22)
		£30,000-£39,999	5 (12)
		£40,000+	4 (10)
Total	41 (100)	Total Observations	41 (100)

*Note: \* Have you ever travelled to a tourism destination and spent a night accompanied by children*

### 5.3.2 Attributes and Dimensions of Quality of a Tourism Destination

In-depth interview data collected in the exploratory study was analysed using Glaser and Strauss's (1967) constant comparison method. The key results from this analysis are that the notion of quality of a tourism destination comprises 75 attributes, which were categorised into 12 dimensions (Appendix 5.4). A discussion on how the attributes and the dimensions were developed has been provided in Chapter Four. Here, the five main analytical steps are discussed further.

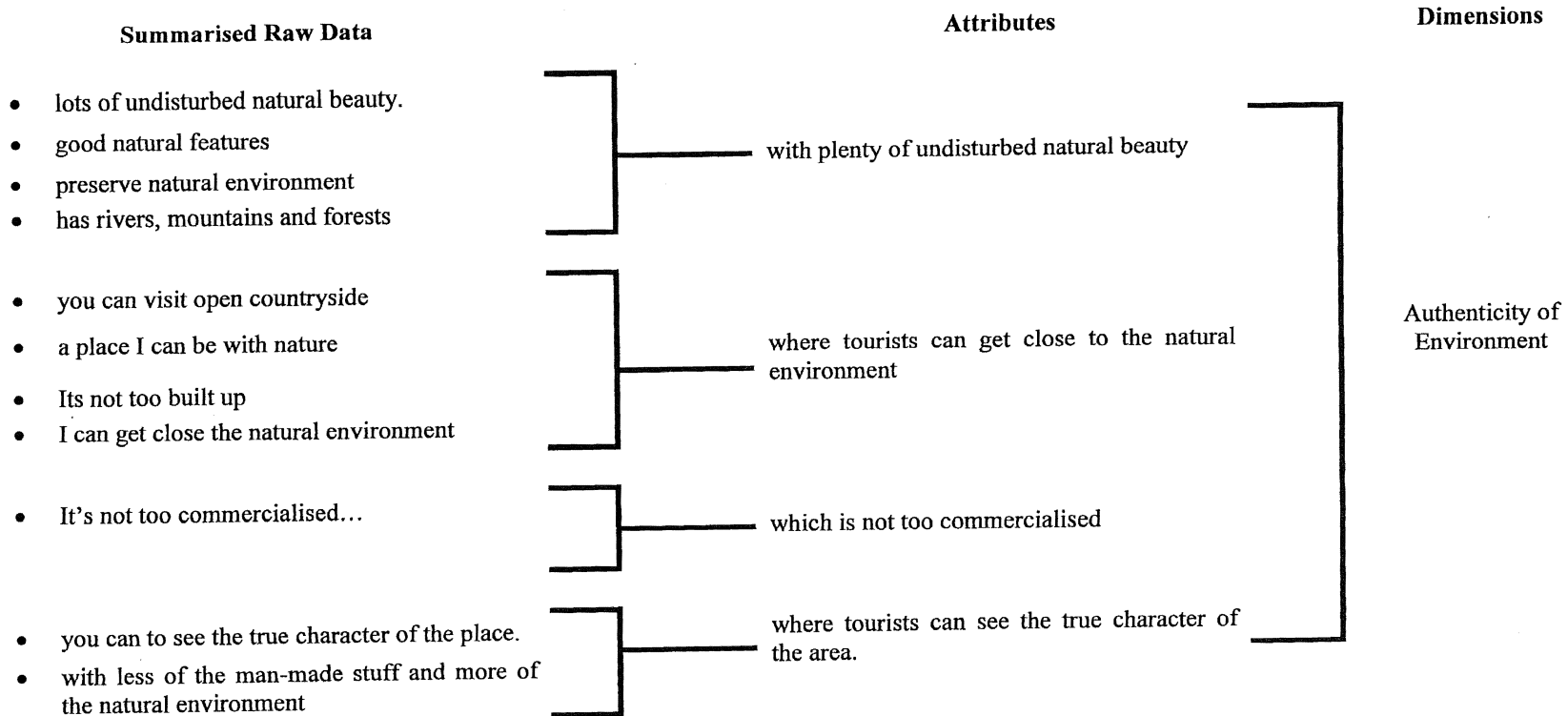
First, this researcher transcribed in-depth interviews and appropriately labelled the data transcripts. Second, the researcher meticulously read each data transcripts in search for meaning. This process, which involves the identification of 'unit of

meaning' in the data transcripts, is known as unitisation (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). Once a 'unit of meaning' was identified a line was drawn across the page to separate it from the next 'unit of meaning' (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). Figure 5.1 presents an example of 'units of meaning' established from the interviewees' data. Each unit of meaning was then cut out and pasted on an index card; one 'unit of meaning' per card. In total 175 index cards, each containing a 'unit of meaning' were produced and ready for the next stage in the data analysis process.

The third stage in the data analysis involved developing categories and assigning 'units of meaning' to them. The researcher picked one of the cards containing a 'unit of meaning', read it, and then developed the first higher-level provisional category or dimension that summarized the meaning conveyed. This first provisional category was written on a blank card and pasted on the left-hand side of a large piece of paper. The index card, which had led to the development of this first provisional category, was pasted underneath it. The remaining unitised cards were reviewed to see if any other card fitted into the newly created first category.

If a second data card that seemed to fit the first category was found, a decision on whether or not to include it the first category was made. This decision was based whether the meaning conveyed by the unit of meaning on this second card 'looks like' or 'feels like' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) that in the first category. If the second card was found to fit the first category, it was pasted underneath the first card. The process was repeated until a card, which did not fit the first category, was picked; and at this point a second provisional category was developed.

**Figure 5.1 Summarised Example of How the Attributes and Dimensions were Developed from Units of Meaning.**



The second provisional was written on an index card and pasted to the right of the first category. The unitised card that led to the development of this second provisional category was pasted underneath it. The remaining cards were again examined to see if any other card fitted any of the two categories based on the 'looks like' or 'feels like' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) criteria. If such a card was found it was pasted underneath the relevant category. The process was repeated until all unitised cards were allocated to a category. This resulted in 175 unitised cards being fitted into 32 provisional categories. With further comparison and merging similar categories, the list of provisional categories was reduced to 18.

Fourth, the researcher converted the 'units of meaning' into attributes of quality of a tourism destination. This involved a systematic process whereby he worked with one category at a time. To create the first attribute, he picked an index card consisting of a 'unit of meaning' belonging to a specific category and then read it. Using wording as close as possible to that in the 'unit of meaning', he formulated the first attribute of quality of a tourism destination for that particular category dimension. To avoid duplication similar 'units of meaning' were combined to form one attribute. Figure 5.1 presents an example of how the attributes were created from the 'units of meaning'. One hundred and two attributes were created for 18 provisional categories and ready for the next step.

Five, at this stage of the data analysis process the focus was on further refining the attributes and the categories. Following advice derived from other related studies (e.g. Echtner and Ritchie, 1993) this researcher decided to involve other researchers in the data analysis. Involving other researchers in the data analysis brings external scrutiny to the data analysis process, which is thought to enhance

the validity of the outcomes of the study (Sinkovics *et al.*, 2005; Perreault and Leigh, 1989). Two tourism academics, each with a postgraduate degree in tourism and not connected to the study were invited to; a) critique the categories and b) recommend, if possible, attributes or dimensions that could be further merged to eliminate redundancies (Echtner and Ritchie, 1993; Perreault and Leigh, 1989). Working separately, the two tourism experts made suggestions regarding categories and attributes they thought could be combined to avoid duplication. The researcher discussed the recommendations with each expert before combining some of the attributes. The process resulted in a much-reduced list of 75 attributes (Appendix 5.4) and 12 dimensions (Table 5.6) previously noted.

**Table 5.6 Summary of Findings from the Fieldwork**

Dimension	Attributes per dimension	Number (%)
Authenticity of Environment	4	27(66)
Security	9	21(51)
Cleanliness and Tidiness	8	19(46)
Affordability	6	18(44)
Availability of Tourist Information	10	17(41)
Weather	3	17(41)
Lack of Crowding	3	17(41)
Friendliness of Host Community	5	16(39)
Relaxing	7	16(39)
Variety of Facilities and Attractions	9	15(37)
Novelty	7	11(27)
Child Friendliness	4	11(27)

*() Represents the % of total interviewees who mentioned an attribute related to that dimension.*

Table 5.6 presents a summary of the key findings from the fieldwork. ‘Units of meaning’ related to the dimension ‘Authenticity of Environment’ were found in interview data from nearly two thirds (66%) of the interviewees (Table 5.7). This makes ‘Authenticity of Environment’ the dimension with the most widely cited

‘units of meaning’ amongst the interviewees. On the other hand, ‘units of meaning’ related to the dimension ‘Child Friendliness’ were found in interview data for approximately a quarter of the interviewees. This makes ‘Child Friendliness’ the dimension with the least widely cited ‘units of meaning’ amongst the interviewees (Table 5.6). The twelve dimensions are explained in more details under the relevant headings in Section 5.3.2.1 through to Section 5.3.2.12.

### 5.3.2.1 Authenticity of Environment

The dimension ‘Authenticity of Environment’ is concerned with the extent to which tourists feel that they experience the real or authentic characteristics of a destination. It is derived from 4 attributes established from the interview data (Table 5.7).

**Table 5.7 Quality Attributes for the Dimension ‘Authenticity of Environment’**

Quality Attributes	Number (%) *
<i>A quality tourism destination is a place:</i>	
where tourists can get close to the natural environment	30 (73)
with plenty of undisturbed natural beauty	29 (71)
which is not too commercialised	29 (71)
where tourists can see the true character of the area.	18 (44)

\* % of tourists who mentioned a statement best described by the attribute

The interview data revealed that natural environment-related factors i.e. both the organic (e.g. forests, grassland) and inorganic (e.g. mountains) were regarded by the tourists as main examples of authentic features of a tourism destination. In fact, nearly three quarters (73%) of the interviewees expressed the view that the quality of a tourism destination is dependent on the extent to which tourists feel they can get close to the natural environment (Table 5.7). One male interviewee’s description of a quality tourism destination captures the views expressed by the majority of these interviewees. He stated:

...a quality tourism destination to me is somewhere I can experience the authentic features of the destination like being in close proximity to the natural environment...

Similarly, approximately seven out of ten (71%) interviewees said that the quality of a tourism destination is determined by how much undisturbed natural beauty it has (Table 5.7). However, a typical complaint from the interviewees was that at some tourism destinations there is very little natural environment to experience. Over half (53%) of the respondents blamed development projects such as the construction of roads, hotels, and theme parks as responsible for destroying the natural environment and consequently the natural beauty of most destinations.

Over two thirds (71%) of the interviewees expressed the view that a judge of the quality of a destination was the degree to which it had been commercialised (Table 5.7). One male interviewee, for instance, commented that:

...a quality tourism destination is a destination that has managed to retain its original characteristics... a destination that has not been taken over by too much commercialisation...

He explained further that a 'too commercialised' destination was one where there was '...a franchised food shop like MacDonal'd's at every corner...'. Nearly half of the interviewees (44%) regarded the quality of a tourism destination to be determined by the degree to which tourists feel they can see the true characteristics of a destination.

### **5.3.2.2 Security**

The dimension 'Security' is derived from 9 attributes established from the interview data (Table 5.8). It refers to the extent to which tourists view a tourism destination as a safe place to visit. 'Security', encompasses two major tourist



safety concerns and these are their personal safety and the safety of their belongings.

**Table 5.8 Quality Attributes for the Dimension ‘Security’**

Quality Attributes	Number (%) *
<i>The tourists viewed a quality tourism destination as a place:</i>	
where tourists feel that they will not face any physical harm with a low crime rate.	33 (80)
free of political unrest.	27 (66)
where tourists feel that they will not get mugged.	25 (61)
where sellers do not over-charge tourists.	25 (61)
where tourists do not face verbal abuse.	21 (51)
where tourists feel that their belongings are safe from theft.	16 (39)
without beggars on the streets.	15 (37)
with a visible police presence to assure the safety of tourists.	13 (32)
	12(29)

\* % of tourists who mentioned a statement best described by the attribute

With regards to personal safety; 4 of the 9 attributes (Table 5.8) established from the interview data are concerned with tourists’ freedom from fear of being physically harmed while holidaying (Table 5.8). Approximately four fifths (80%) of the interviewees described the quality of a tourism destination to be judged by the degree to which tourists feel safe during their visit (Table 5.8). One male interviewee, for instance, described a quality tourism destination as a place where tourists can feel ‘....safe from any form violence....’.

Just under three quarters (71%) regarded a low crime rate to be an attribute of quality of a tourism destination. Just over three fifths (61%) of the interviewees expressed the view that quality was dependent on the degree to which they feel safe from criminality. For example, one female interviewee described a quality tourism destination as a follows

...it’s a destination where I feel safe. Where I don’t feel like I am going to be mugged any time...I won’t be visiting tourism destinations in countries in South America or in Jamaica.... because I believe I will get mugged out there...

Similarly, nearly two thirds (61%) of interviewees regarded the quality of a destination as dependent on the degree to which a destination is free of political unrest (Table 5.8). The majority of the interviewees expressed the view that tourists would not view the quality of a tourism destination positively if the destination were experiencing political unrest. The rationale established from the interview was that politically unstable tourism destinations exposed tourists to serious risk such as the likelihood of 'being killed or kidnapped'. Nearly two fifths (39%) of the interviewees regarded the quality of a tourism destination to be determined by the degree to which it was a place where they would 'not face verbal abuse' (Table 5.8).

Five of the 9 'Security' related attributes are concerned mainly with the safety of tourists' belongings. Just over half (51%) of the interviewees described the quality of a tourism destination to be determined by the degree to which they felt secure in purchasing transactions. The typical response was that dishonest practices such as over-charging by traders at some tourism destinations made tourists feel insecure about payment transactions, especially when using a credit card. The experience of one interviewee captures the general fear expressed by the majority of interviewees regarding purchasing transactions, especially those made using credit cards. He explained that:

.... at some tourism destinations if you make a payment using credit card...you sign for one amount but when the credit card bill arrives after the holiday, there is another higher amount...its just not safe to pay by card....

Nearly two fifths (37%) of the interviewees said the quality of a tourism destination was determined by the degree to which they feel their belongings are safe from theft (Table 5.8). Just over a tenth (13%) of the interviewees felt that the

quality of a tourism destination was determined by the extent to which the destination had a visible police presence to assure the safety of tourists (Table 5.11). The usual explanation from these interviewees was that having a visible police presence at a tourism destination acted as a deterrent to criminals who target tourists. 'You won't see many thieves with the police around ...so it helps a lot having them around...' explained one female interviewee. However, a small minority (3%) of interviewees commented that having a visible police presence actually made them feel unsafe.

The interview data also revealed that a small percentage (12%) of the interviewees described the quality of a tourism destination as dependent on the absence of beggars on the streets of the destination (Table 5.8). The majority of these interviewees stated that they believed that a tourism destination with too many beggars on the street was economically poor and hence likely to be characterised by a high incidence of crime against tourists. 'The moment you see too many beggars on the streets you know that's not a safe place to visit. You are likely to get robbed in those sort places...' explained one female tourist.

### **5.3.2.3 Cleanliness and Tidiness**

Eight attributes established from the interview data, are used in developing the dimension 'Cleanliness and Tidiness' (Table 5.9). This dimension is concerned with the extent to which tourists view a tourism destination as a clean and tidy place.

**Table 5.9 Quality Attributes for the Dimension ‘Cleanliness and Tidiness ’**

<b>Quality Attributes</b>	<b>Number (%) *</b>
<i>A quality tourism destination is a place:</i>	
where the streets are kept clean.	30 (73)
which appears tidy.	28 (68)
where public toilets are kept clean.	22(54)
where the modes of public transport are kept clean.	20 (49)
where attractions are kept clean.	19 (46)
free from graffiti.	13(32)
free from air pollution	12 (29)
free from visual pollution.	4 (10)

*\* % of tourists who mentioned a statement that is best described by the attribute*

A large majority (73%) of the interviewees described the quality of a tourism destination as dependent on the degree to which the streets appear clean (Table 5.9). Typical phrases used by the majority of these interviewees to describe a clean tourism destination were ‘...a place free of litter...’, ‘....a place where bins are not overflowing with rubbish...’ and ‘....a place without rubbish on the streets..’. Moreover, just over two thirds (68%) of the interviewees expressed the view that the quality of a tourism destination could be inferred from its level of tidiness (Table 5.9).

Just above half (54%) of the interviewees stated that they regarded the quality of a tourism destination as dependent on the level of cleanliness of public toilets. The majority of the interviewees, women in particular, said they were unhappy with the state of public toilets at some tourism destinations they had visited in the past. The experience of one female interviewee regarding the state of public toilets at some tourism destinations sums up the general feelings expressed by the majority of female interviewees. She stated:

...at some tourism destinations the toilets are in a bad state, dirty and smelly...you just don't want to breathe when you are in such a toilet....they are terrible...

Nearly half (49%) of the interviewees stated that the quality of a tourism destination was dependent on the level of cleanliness of the local modes of transport. Litter, especially foodstuff discarded in taxis, buses and trains, was the most widely cited form of dirt on public transport amongst the interviewees. A small minority (2%) of these interviewees commented that tourists were likely to view dirty public transport and toilet facilities as an indication of poor level of hygiene standard at a given destination. As one female interview explained;

... The cleanliness of the toilets and buses tells a lot about the standard of hygiene at the destination you will be spending your holidays at. I personally don't like to see dirty places especially toilets, those are the kind of places you end up catching diseases ...

Over two fifth (46%) of the interviewees expressed the view that the quality of a tourism destination was determined by the extent to which they feel 'attractions are kept' clean. Nearly a third (32%) of the interviewees stated that the quality of a tourism destination was dependent on the degree to which the destination was free of graffiti. Most of these interviewees expressed the view that graffiti was a form of dirt, which marred the appearance of tourist attractions and tourism destinations in general: if cleaned, the quality of a destination would be enhanced. The majority of these interviewees singled out tourist attractions located in urban areas; 'inner cities' as one interviewee called them.

Nearly one in three (29%) of the interviewees said that the quality of a destination depended on the extent to which its air was clean i.e. free from pollution. One interviewee's elaboration that a destination with a polluted atmosphere had 'a very bad smell' was shared by the majority of the interviewees. Most of them

attributed pollution at tourism destinations to the practice of discharging chemical waste into the atmosphere, and industrial and sewage waste into rivers and lakes by businesses operating there.

Approximately one tenth (10%) of the interviewees said that the quality of a tourism destination depended on the extent to which a destination is free of atmospheric pollution that can impede their vision. These interviewees explained that at some tourism destinations it is difficult to get a clear view of the scenery as the atmosphere is always obscured by atmospheric pollution.

#### 5.3.2.4 Affordability

‘Affordability’, is concerned with the extent to which tourists feel a destination’s offerings are reasonably priced. The 6 attributes established from the interview data, which were used in developing the dimension ‘Affordability’ are presented in Table 5.10.

**Table 5.10 Quality Attributes for the Dimension ‘Affordability’**

Quality Attributes	Number (%) *
<i>A quality tourism destination is a place:</i>	
with affordable accommodation facilities.	30(73)
with affordable attraction fees.	25(61)
with shopping facilities that sell affordable goods.	20(49)
with affordable public transport fares.	17(41)
with affordable restaurants.	10(24)
where tourist information is available free of charge.	5(12)

\* % of tourists who mentioned a statement that is best described by the attribute

Approximately three quarters (73%) of the interviewees stated that the quality of a tourism destination is dependent on the extent to which they feel a destination offered ‘affordable accommodation’ facilities. A male interviewee, for example, stated that the quality of a tourism destination was likely to be judged positively by tourists if ‘...the destination offered affordable hotels’.

About three out of five (61%) of the interviewees said that the quality of a tourism destination was judged by the degree to which they feel a destination charges 'affordable entrance fees to tourist attractions' (Table 5.10). There was some consensus amongst these interviewees that some tourism destinations were charging exorbitant entrance fees to tourist attractions which results in most tourists visiting these tourism destinations being able to afford only a few of the paying activities. A female interviewee elaborated as follows:

...the place has to be very affordable.... some destination are just too expensive... when you have a family ...and you try to see all attractions you can end up spending a fortune...that's not very right...

Nearly half (49%) of the interviewees expressed the view that the quality of a tourism destination was determined by whether or not the shops at a destination sold affordable goods (Table 5.10). One female interviewee stated that if a destination has shopping facilities that sell affordable goods ' ...I can combine my holiday with my favourite hobby – shopping...'. Further, just over two fifths (41%) of the interviewees expressed the view that the quality of a tourism destination was determined by the extent to which they feel a destination has 'affordable public transport fares' (Table 5.10). Just under a quarter (24%) of the interviewees viewed the quality of a tourism destination as dependent on the extent to which tourists feel the destination 'has affordable restaurants' (Table 5.10).

A small number (12%) of the interviewees regarded the quality of a tourism destination as a function of a destination's ability to provide 'tourists with tourist information free of charge'. As one female tourist commented:

...tourist information is just too expensive at some destinations. You just wish tourist information can be a bit more affordable.... guide books are being sold at unbelievably high prices....personally I think tourist information should be given out free of charge...

The majority of these interviewees expressed the view that, because tourism information such as tourist guidebooks and maps had become very expensive, some tourists were opting to go without such sources of information. These interviewees explained that without such information tourists risked getting lost, which often resulted in frustration and hence a negative view of the quality of a destination.

### 5.3.2.5 Availability of Tourist Information

'Availability of Tourist Information' relates to the extent to which tourists regard a tourism destination as able to meet their information needs. It is derived from 10 attributes presented in Table 5.11.

**Table 5.11 Quality Attributes for the Dimension 'Availability of Tourist Information'**

Quality Attributes	Number (%) *
<i>The tourists viewed a quality tourism destination as a place :</i>	
with clearly marked direction signs to tourist attractions.	25(61)
where tourists can find translators who speak their language	23(56)
with public transport drivers who know the area well.	21(51)
with tour guides who know the area well.	20(49)
with local area maps that can be easily understood by tourists.	17(41)
where tourist information is available in the language that the tourists understand	17(41)
where tourist information is accurate	16(39)
where tourist information is easily available.	15(37)
with local area maps that show all the attractions.	14(34)
with tour guides with a sense of humour.	6(15)

\* % of tourists who mentioned a statement that is best described by the attribute

A small majority (61%) of the interviewees viewed signage i.e. clearly marked and easily visible direction signs to tourist attractions (Table 5.11), as one of the determinants of the quality of a tourism destination. The majority of these



interviewees expressed the view that having clearly marked and easily visible direction signs made it easier for them to find their way round, thereby reducing the risk of getting lost. A female interviewee, for example, stated that without adequate tourist information ‘...you can get lost and end up in areas of the destination not safe, especially for women...’.

The interview data indicates that, to some extent, the language spoken at the destination determines the tourists’ view of the quality of that destination. For instance, approximately three out of five (56%) of the interviewees described the quality of a tourism destination as dependent on the extent to which the destination has translators who speak the language spoken by the tourists (Table 5.11). Most of these interviewees expressed the view that the availability of translators increased the chance of tourists interacting with local people, who can be a valuable source of information. One male tourist described the local people as ‘.... capable of providing eye-witness accounts of certain historical events at the destination...’. He further explained that such information enriched the tourists’ experience and consequently their view of the quality of the destination.

Also related to language used at a tourism destination; just over two fifths (41%) of the interviewees regarded the availability of tourist information in the language tourists can understand (Table 5.11) as an attribute of quality. The interview data indicated that this referred mainly to printed tourist information e.g. local area maps and tourist guidebooks. A minority of these interviewees suggested that such tourist information ‘...should be available in international languages like English and French...’

The ability of public transport drivers, tour guides and local maps to meet the information requirements of tourists were widely cited amongst the interviewees as attributes of quality of a tourism destination. For instance, just over half (51%) the interviewees regarded the availability of public transport drivers who know the area well (Table 5.11) as an attribute of quality. The common explanation for this was that having public transport drivers who are knowledgeable about the destination helped to ensure that tourists would be able to get where they wanted ‘...more quickly and without fear of getting lost...’. A small minority of these interviewees maintained that public transport drivers were often a quicker and better source of information than guidebooks and local maps.

Nearly half (49%) of interviewees stated that they regarded the quality of a tourism destination to be dependent on how many knowledgeable tour guides there are (Table 5.11). One male interviewee complained that some tourism destinations tourists are served by inexperienced tour guides ‘...people who have just completed high school...people who don’t have much clue about the destination...’ which results in a poor quality experience for the tourists.

Approximately two fifths (41%) regarded the availability of local maps that can be easily understood by tourists as an attribute of quality of a tourism destination. The interview data revealed that whether or not local area maps were useful sources of information was dependent on the extent to which they were designed with the user in mind. For example, one interviewee complained that she found ‘...local area maps at some tourism destinations to be too complicated to be useable’. Just under two fifths (39%) of the interviewees expressed the view that the quality of a tourism destination was dependent on the extent to which it has

accurate tourist information (Table 5.11). Most of these interviewees complained that at some tourism destinations the maps and ‘...guidebooks are often outdated...’ and therefore could not be relied upon. A similar number (37%) of interviewees expressed the view that the quality of a tourism destination was dependent on the ease of availability of tourist information (Table 5.11). One female interviewee suggested that ‘...all destinations should have tourist information centres to cater for the information needs of tourists...’.

Further, just over a third (34%) of the interviewees regarded the availability of local area maps that show all the attractions as an attribute of quality of a tourism destination (Table 5.11). Most of these interviewees indicated that the local maps at some tourism destinations were poorly designed in that they missed some of the attractions. One male tourist explained that at some tourism destinations the tourist maps were so inaccurate that ‘...tourists were often surprised to learn about certain key attractions through interacting with the local people at the destination...’. Less than one tenth (15%) of the interviewees expressed the view that the quality of a tourism destination was dependent on the existence of knowledgeable tour guides with a sense of humour.

#### **5.3.2.6 Weather**

The dimension ‘Weather’ is concerned with the extent to which tourists view the climatic conditions at a tourism destination as being suitable for the activity they want to undertake. The 3 attributes used in developing the dimensions ‘Weather’ are presented in Table 5.12.

**Table 5.12 Quality Attributes for the Dimension ‘Weather’**

Quality Attributes	Number (%) *
<i>The tourists viewed a quality tourism destination as a place :</i>	
with weather that is conducive to the activity the tourist wants to pursue.	27 (66)
where if it rains, tourists can undertake other activities that are not affected by rain	18 (44)
which accommodates changes in tourists’ day to day plans	7 (17)

\* % of tourists who mentioned a statement that is best described by the attribute

Approximately two thirds (66%) of the interviewees described the quality of a tourism destination as dependent on the extent to which there is a climate conducive to them pursuing the activity they wish to pursue (Table 5.12). The interview data indicates that most of the tourists would regard the quality of a tourism destination as poor if it had frequent bad weather. The most widely mentioned example of bad weather amongst the interviews was a destination where it rained most of the time.

There was some agreement amongst these interviewees that experiencing bad weather while holidaying at a tourism destination was probably the most unfavourable thing that could happen to a tourist. The typical rationale given for this was that when it rains most of the time, tourists end up mostly indoors doing nothing and getting bored. One interviewee, for instance, described an experience where she had been on a family visit to a destination where ‘... it rained most of the week - we had to stay indoors, getting bored with not much to do...’

The majority of interviewees expressed the opinion that since rainy weather affected most tourist activities, especially outdoor ones, the quality of a tourism destination could best be judged in terms of the extent to which a destination offered activities which are not affected by rainy weather conditions. For instance

just under half (44%) of the interviewees regarded the quality of a destination as dependent on the availability of activities that can be done in the event of rainy weather (Table 5.12).

Nearly a fifth (17%) described quality of a destination to be dependant on the degree of freedom they have to change day-to-day plans (Table 5.12). These interviewees expressed the view that at some destinations tourists had to follow a strictly fixed timetable of what they can do on a given day of the week. In such situations, tourists had very little flexibility to change their plans and therefore felt very restricted. These tourists stated that they needed freedom to change their plans especially in response to changes in the weather.

### 5.3.2.7 Lack of Crowding

'Lack of Crowding' is concerned with the extent to which a destination is free of congestion. It is derived from the 3 attributes of quality of a tourism destination presented in Table 5.13

**Table 5.13 Quality Attributes for the Dimension 'Lack of Crowding'**

Quality Attributes	Number (%) *
<i>The tourists viewed a quality tourism destination as a place :</i>	
without queues to use toilets.	21(51)
without queues to see attractions.	16(39)
that is not overcrowded.	13(32)

\* % of tourists who mentioned a statement best described by the attribute

Just over half (51%) of the interviewees regarded the absence of queues at public toilets as an attribute of quality of a tourism destination (Table 5.13). Most female interviewees expressed the view that congestion at public toilets was more prevalent at female than male toilet facilities. They further stated that this was demonstrated by the queues at female public toilets, which always seemed longer

and more frequent than those at male toilets. One female interviewee complained as follows:

It's the same story at every destination. Long winding queues at women's toilets and hardly any at men's toilets. I don't know why there are never enough toilets for women.

Approximately two out of five (39%) interviewees regarded the absence of queues at tourist attractions as an attribute of quality of a tourism destination (Table 5.13). One male interviewee complained that he had been to a tourism destination where they had spent 'hours in a queue just to see a single attraction'. Another male interviewee commented that spending long periods of time in queues was a major inconvenience for tourists in that '...it reduces the number of attractions one could see per given visit and it is also very tiring...'

The majority of tourists who had spent holidays at a tourism destination with children (49% of total sample) mentioned that long queues at tourist attractions were a major inconvenience, which they resented. Approximately one out of three (32%) of the interviewees described the quality of a tourism destination as dependent on the extent to which a destination is not, on the whole, overcrowded (Table 5.13).

#### **5.3.2.8 Friendliness of Host Community**

'Friendliness of host community,' is concerned with the general attitude of the host community or 'local people' towards tourists. The dimension is developed from 5 attributes of quality of a tourism destination presented in Table 5.14.

**Table 5.14 Quality Attributes for the Dimension 'Friendliness of Host Community'**

Quality Attributes	Number (%) *
<i>The tourists viewed a quality tourism destination as a place:</i>	
with local people who are welcoming towards tourists.	27 (66)
with local people who know their area well.	23 (56)
with local people who are keen to help tourists.	15 (37)
with local people who encourage tourists to participate in local activities.	11(27)
where tourists are not made to feel like a foreigner.	5 (12)

\* % of tourists who mentioned a statement that is best described by the attribute

Approximately two thirds (66%) of the interviewees expressed the view that having local people (host community) who are welcoming towards them was one on the determinants of quality of a tourism destination (Table 5.14). The typical phrases used by interviewees to describe a host community that is welcoming towards tourists, were local people 'who smile', 'who are polite' and 'who greet tourists'. Just about over half (56%) of the interviewees expressed the view that having local people who know their area well contributed positively to tourist perceptions of the quality of a tourism destination (Table 5.14). The general view expressed by these interviewees was that if local people are knowledgeable about their destination area they could be an easily reachable source of information for the tourists.

Nearly two fifths (37%) of the interviewees regarded the presence of local people, who are keen to help tourists, as an attribute of quality of a tourism destination (Table 5.14). The typical description of local people who are keen to help tourists found in the interview data was 'local people who go out of their way to help tourists'. One female interviewee commented that where a tourist appears lost, local people who are keen to help tourists would be those who will '....go and approach the tourists and help them find their way round'. In contrast, she described as unfriendly local people who '...were quick to answer 'don't know'

when tourists ask questions...'. The interviewee further explained that such an attitude gave most tourists the impression that local people either 'couldn't be bothered or didn't care about the needs of the tourists...'

The interview data also revealed that, for some interviewees, the quality of a tourism destination was dependent on how local people interact with tourists i.e. whether or not they make tourists feel part of the host community. For example, over a third (37%) of the respondents expressed the view that the quality of a tourism destination was dependent on the degree to which tourists felt the destination had local people who encouraged tourists to participate in local activities (Table 5.14). Approximately one tenth (12%) of the interviewees stated that the presence of local people who did not make tourists feel like foreigners (Table 5.14) contributed positively to the quality of a tourism destination. One example, found in the interview data regarding local people who made tourists feel like foreigners, was '....local people have a habit of staring at tourists and making them feel like aliens and unwanted....'

### **5.3.2.9 Relaxing**

Seven attributes are used in developing the dimension 'Relaxing' see Table 5.15. This dimension is concerned with the extent to which a destination is viewed by tourists as having an atmosphere that is conducive for relaxation.

Nearly seven out of ten of the interviewees described the quality of a tourism destination to be determined by the extent to which its atmosphere is conducive to tourists having a rest (Table 5.15). Moreover, almost two thirds (61%) of the interviewees described the quality of a tourism destination to be dependent on the extent to which it is free from noise pollution. One male interviewee explained:



..... a quality tourism destination to me is somewhere without noisy drunkard people and all the noise pollution from the traffic... buses, cars and construction sites.... because you can't relax or have a good rest in that kind of environment...

**Table 5.15 Quality Attributes for the Dimension 'Relaxing'**

Quality Attributes	Number (%) *
<i>A quality tourism destination is a place:</i>	
with an atmosphere conducive to tourists having a rest	29 (71)
free from noise pollution.	25 (61)
where tourists feel stress free.	22 (54)
where tourists feel relaxed	13 (32)
with an atmosphere that can bring enjoyment to tourists	12 (29)
where tourists can meet other tourists.	7 (17)
with opportunities to experience romantic encounters.	6(15)

\* % of tourists who mentioned a statement that is best described by the attribute

Just over half (54%) the interviewees regarded the quality of a tourism destination to be dependent on the extent to which it is stress-free (Table 5.15). The majority of the tourists expressed the view that they wanted to go somewhere where they could enjoy a 'stress-free' and 'relaxing' holiday. Nearly one third (32%) of the interviewees viewed the quality of a tourism destination to be determined by the extent to which a destination is a place where tourists can feel relaxed (Table 5.15). For example, a female interviewee commented as follows:

...I go away to relax ....to chill out... to get away from the stress of the 9-5 job. So to me a quality tourism destination would be a place where I can just relax and don't have to worry about any thing...

A similar percentage (29%) expressed the view that the quality of a tourism destination was dependent on the extent to which the destination has an atmosphere that can bring enjoyment to tourists (Table 5.15). For example,

according to another female interviewee a quality tourism destination has ‘...an atmosphere that is relaxing, stress free and brings some enjoyment to tourists...’.

The interviews also revealed that approximately one fifth (17%) of the interviewees regarded the quality of a tourism destination to be dependent on the extent to which it is a place where tourists can relax in the company of other tourists (Table 5.15). One male respondent, for example, described a quality tourism destination as follows:

...for me it’s a place I can find other tourists to just lazy about... and chat with. I mean just lay down by the pool side and have a chat with others is relaxing to me...some tourism destinations can be too lonely and spooky....

Also, nearly one out five (15%) of interviewees regarded the quality of a tourism destination to be determined by the extent to which a tourist has opportunities to experience romantic encounters. One example was a male interviewee who described a quality tourism destination as follows:

...it’s destination I can find some one to relax out with ...you know to just wind down, enjoy some romance...it’s little things like that take the stress of home out of you...

#### **5.3.2.10 Variety of Facilities and Attractions**

‘Variety of Facilities and Attractions’ is concerned with the extent to which a tourism destination has the required assortment of facilities and attractions to meet the diverse needs of tourists. Table 5.16 shows the 9 attributes of quality of a tourism destination used in developing the dimension ‘Variety of Facilities and Attractions’.

**Table 5.16 Quality Attributes for the Dimension ‘Variety of Facilities and Attractions’**

Quality Attributes	Number (%) *
<i>The tourists viewed a quality tourism destination as a place:</i>	
with the required variety of activities for all age groups	26 (63)
with the required variety of night entertainment.	21 (51)
with the required variety of restaurants.	19 (46)
with the required variety of accommodation types.	18 (44)
with the required variety of shopping facilities.	16 (39)
which offers the required variety of cuisine.	11 (27)
with the required variety of modes of transport.	10 (24)
with restaurants that meet dietary requirements of all tourists.	6(15)
with facilities that meet the requirements of disabled persons.	4(10)

\* % of tourists who mentioned a statement that is best described by the attribute

Approximately three out of five (63%) of the interviewees regarded the availability of a variety of activities for all age groups as an attribute of quality of a tourism destination (Table 5.16). Most of the interviewees expressed the opinion that having a variety of activities was particularly important where family holidays were concerned, due to the likelihood of diverse needs from different family members (e.g. age). This view was captured by one male interviewee who stated :

...we always go on holiday as a family ...so to me naturally a quality tourism destination is a place that has a good variety of activities so that everyone can find something they enjoy doing.

Just above over half (51%) of the interviewees stated that they regard the quality of a tourism destination to be dependent on the extent to which a destination offers variety in night entertainment (Table 5.16). One male interviewee, for instance described a quality tourism destination as a place where there is ‘...lots of night life, things like; pubs, discos, beer drinking parties, night clubs.’ However, another interviewee commented that most destinations she had visited in the past did not have much night entertainment for tourists in the age group 55

years and above. She complained that all they had as night entertainment at these destinations was ‘...too many night clubs and discos and not one decent pub...’.

Approximately half (46%) of the interviewees cited the availability of a variety of restaurants as an attribute of the quality of a destination (Table 5.16). One interviewee expressed a view, shared by most these interviewees, she stated that:

...I think to be considered a quality tourism destination the destination has to have a variety of restaurants...you can have Greek restaurants, French restaurant, English restaurant and Italian restaurants at the same destination ...it wouldn't be nice if you just have restaurants from the same country.

Also related to variety in restaurants, just under a third (27%) of the interviewees said that having a restaurant which served a variety of cuisine was an attribute of a quality tourism destination (Table 5.16). One interviewee explained that the restaurants at some tourism destinations were very limited in what they served. He said:

‘...if a restaurant is by the seaside it doesn't mean that it should just serve fish only... you might get some people that don't like fish.... You need a bit of variety on the menu... ’.

Approximately one fifth (15%) of the interviewees mentioned ability of a tourism destination to meet dietary requirements of tourists as an attribute of quality (Table 5.16). These interviewees commented that, at some tourism destinations, tourists with special dietary requirements e.g. those resulting from religious beliefs, often find it difficult to find a restaurant catering to their needs.

Just under a quarter (24%) of the interviewees expressed the view that having a variety of modes of transport enhanced the quality of a tourism destination (Table 5.16). The interviewees regarded variety of modes of transport as providing tourists with a choice and, more importantly, as facilitating quick travel around a

destination. A small minority of the interviewees stated that the quality of a tourism destination was dependent upon the extent to which the destination had facilities for disabled people (Table 5.16).

### 5.3.2.11 Novelty

‘Novelty’, is concerned with the extent to which tourists feel that a tourism destination offers an experience different from other tourism destinations they have visited in the past. The 7 attributes used to develop the dimension ‘Novelty’ are presented in Table 5.17.

**Table 5. 17 Quality Attributes for the Dimension ‘Novelty’**

Quality Attributes	Number (%) *
<i>A quality tourism destination is a place:</i>	
with an opportunity to experience a different culture	27 (66)
that is different from anywhere the tourist has been.	16 (39)
that is different from the tourist’s home area.	12 (29)
with a famous tourist attraction.	8 (20)
which has a ‘special event’ e.g. carnival.	6 (15)
which provides a learning experience for tourists.	4 (10)
with an opportunity to meet people from other ethnic groups.	4 (10)

\* % of tourists who mentioned a statement that is best described by the attribute.

Nearly two thirds (66%) of the interviewees regarded the extent to which a destination has opportunities for tourists to experience a different culture as an attribute of quality of a tourism destination (Table 5.17). The interview data revealed that the majority of these interviewees viewed the culture or lifestyle of the local people, as one of the main sources of an experience that can be viewed as uniquely specific to a tourism destination.

Just under a third (29%) of the interviewees described the quality of a tourism destination to be dependent on the degree to which a destination is different from

the tourist's home area (Table 5.17). For example, one male interviewee commented that:

.... you want to feel that you have gone somewhere when you go on holiday. So the first criterion of a quality tourism destination is that it's a place totally different from home ...in terms of the architecture, the climate... the scenery.... its just different...you don't want a destination that's too similar to home really....'

The interview data indicates that some tourists want to experience something different every time they visit a tourism destination. For example, approximately two fifths (39%) of the interviewees stated that the quality of a tourism destination was dependent on the extent to which a destination can be viewed as different from anywhere the tourist has been in the past (Table 5.17).

Approximately one fifth (20%) of the interviewees regarded having a famous attraction as an attribute of quality of a tourism destination (Table 5.17). These interviewees explained that visiting a famous attraction made them feel special.

As one male interviewee explained:

'...there is something about visiting a famous attraction... it makes you feel special. You can say to you friends, yeah, I have been there. So to be a genuine quality tourism destination it must have a world famous attraction...'

Over one tenth (15%) of the interviewees described the quality of a tourism destination as being dependent on how many special events it has, such as carnivals (Table 5.17). One tourist explained that having a carnival at a tourism destination enhanced the fun tourists could experience. She elaborated:

'....carnivals are really good fun. You can experience the unique life of the destination that you don't get to see every ...so personally a carnival makes a quality tourism destination

Approximately one out of five (10%) of the interviewees regarded the ability of a tourism destination to provide learning experiences as an attribute of quality

(Table 5.17). According to one male interviewee, by just observing the way of life at the destination, tourists can learn many new things which ‘...they can share with their friends when they get back home...’.

A similar number of the interviewees stated that the quality of a tourism destination was also judged by the extent to which it provides opportunities for tourists to meet other ethnic groups (Table 5.17). One interviewee explained that she only met people of other ethnic groups while on holiday. She described meeting other ethnic groups as contributing to making her holiday ‘...a special experience’.

### 5.3.2.12 Child Friendliness

‘Child Friendliness’, is concerned with the extent to which tourists view a destination as catering for the needs of children and their accompanying adults. Four attributes of quality of a tourism destination which are used to develop the dimension ‘Child Friendliness’ are presented in Table 5.18.

**Table 5.18 Quality Attributes for the Dimension ‘Child Friendliness’**

Quality Attributes	Number (%) *
<i>The tourists viewed a quality tourism destination as a place :</i>	
where children can be happy.	13 (32)
with the required variety of activities for children	12 (29)
where children’s favourite restaurants can be found.	11 (27)
with hotels that offer baby-sitting services.	7 (17)

\* % of tourists who mentioned a statement that is best described by the attribute

Nearly one third (32%) of the interviewees expressed the view that the quality of a tourism destination was dependent on the degree to which it pleased children (Table 5.18). Most of the interviewees who had spent holidays at tourism destinations with children said they were mainly concerned with the happiness of their children whenever they visited a tourism destination. As noted in Table 5.18

about half (49%) of the interviewees had spent a holiday at a tourism destination with children. One female interviewee, for example, described her view of a quality tourism destination as follows:

...I want my children to have some fun when we go away. So for me a quality tourism destination a place that brings happiness to my children... if my children are happy then I am happy too...

Approximately one out of three (29%) of the interviewees said that the quality of a tourism destination was determined by the number and variety of activities it provided for children (Table 5.18). Having a variety of activities for children at a tourism destination was described by one of these interviewees as helping to ensure that children '...do not have to do the same thing all the time', which can result in boredom.

Further, just over a quarter (27%) of the interviewees considered the quality of a tourism destination to be dependent on the availability of children's favourite restaurants (Table 5.18). The interview data shows that the most widely mentioned examples of restaurants favoured by children amongst the interviewees were franchised fast food chains such as MacDonald's and Kentucky Fried Chicken.

Nearly one fifth (17%) of the interviewees expressed the view that the quality of a tourism destination was determined by the extent to which it has hotels that offer baby-sitting services (Table 5.18). These interviewees explained that tourists usually reserve the daytime for entertaining their children e.g. showing their children around and helping them participate in the activities offered by the tourism destination. In the evening, most tourists, it seems, prefer to take a break



from their children by going out and experiencing the night entertainment offered at the destination e.g. pubs or casinos. One female interviewee elaborated:

'...I like to go out with my husband in the evening when we are on holiday. When you have kids you can't really go out at night, but if you have people you trust they can look after your kids. You can then go out for a couple of hours. Some hotels have baby-sitting services which is very good, but very few have such services in the night time....so I guess....a quality tourism destination is a destination with hotels that have baby sitting services'

#### **5.4 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has presented the results of the qualitative phase of the research where an exploratory study was conducted, preceded by a pilot study. The first part of this chapter (Section 5.2) has reported the findings of the pilot study, conducted to test the suitability of the open-ended questionnaire, in-depth interview, and focus group interview as techniques for gathering qualitative data in the planned exploratory study. The suitability of each of the three proposed techniques of data collection was assessed based on four criteria that were established ahead of the pilot study (Chapter Four, Section 4.3.4) One of the main findings of the pilot study (Section 5.2) was that employing the in-depth interview technique to gather qualitative data in the exploratory study would suffice. Consequently, no justification was found for employing the focus group and open-ended questionnaire techniques in the exploratory study.

Section 5.3 reported on the findings of the exploratory study conducted in the subsequent stages of the qualitative phase of the research. The objective of the exploratory study was to explore the tourists' understanding of the meaning of the term quality of a tourism destination through establishing the attributes and dimensions of quality of a tourism destination (Section 5.3). A summary of the main findings of the exploratory study is presented in Table 5.19. Twelve

dimensions were established from the interview data (Table 5.19). Table 5.19 also shows the meaning of each dimension which were derived *in vivo* i.e. from the interview data (Chapter Four, Section 4.3.5.3).

**Table 5.19 Dimension of Quality of a Tourism Destination**

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- **Authenticity of Environment:** the extent to which a tourism destination provides tourists with an opportunity to experience an environment that is natural to that destination.
  - **Security:** the extent to which tourists regard a tourism destination as a safe place to visit. It incorporates both the personal safety of tourists and the safety of their belongings.
  - **Affordability:** concerned with the extent to which tourists feel a destination's offerings are reasonably priced.
  - **Cleanliness and Tidiness :** refers to the extent to which the tourists view a tourism destination as a clean and tidy place
  - **Availability of Tourist Information:** refers to the extent to which tourists regard the tourism destination as able to provide tourist information, which meet their needs.
  - **Relaxing:** refers to the extent to which tourists regard a tourism destination as able to provide an atmosphere that is conducive to relax.
  - **Lack of Crowding:** concerned with the extent to which tourists feel that a tourism destination is free of congestion.
  - **Variety of Facilities and Attractions:** refers to the extent to which tourists feel that a tourism destination has the required assortment of tourism products to meet the diverse needs of tourists
  - **Friendliness of Host Community:** concerned with the attitude of the local residents of a tourism destination towards tourists i.e. the extent to which the local residents at a tourism destination are viewed as welcoming by tourists
  - **Weather:** concerned with the extent to which the climatic conditions at a tourism destination are conducive to the activities the tourists intend to pursue.
  - **Novelty:** concerned with the extent to which tourists feel that a tourism destination offers an experience different from other tourism destination they would have visited in the past.
  - **Child Friendliness:** the extent to which tourists view a destination as able to cater for the requirements of children and the accompanying adult tourists
- 

To conclude, the findings of the exploratory study are the results of a rigorous research process using the qualitative approach. However, as noted in Chapter Four, the qualitative research approach has some limitations, particularly that the small sample used in qualitative studies means that findings cannot be easily generalised to the wider population. The quantitative research approach provides

the means by which findings from the exploratory study can be tested with a larger and more representative sample, thereby making the results obtained from a qualitative research approach more generalisable to the wider population.

## **Chapter 6 Quantitative Research Results**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The findings from the first stage of the study, where the qualitative research approach was employed, were presented in Chapter Five. But this qualitative research approach, employed in the first stage of the study, has some limitations. For example, qualitative researchers usually work with relatively small and purposively selected samples (Kruger, 1994) and as a consequence, findings from qualitative studies cannot be generalised to the wider population (Chapter Four, Section 4.2.1). However, when the qualitative research approach is combined with the quantitative research approach in the same research design, some of the weaknesses of the qualitative research approach can be overcome (Chapter Four, Section 4.2.3).

In this thesis the two approaches were combined sequentially (Tashakkori and Teddle, 1998) i.e. the qualitative research approach in the first stage of the study was followed by the quantitative research approach in the second stage (Chapter Four, Section 4.2.3). This allowed the findings from the mainly qualitative first stage of the study to be tested with a larger sample of tourists in the quantitative phase. The purpose of this chapter is to report on the results of the mainly quantitative phase of the study.

### **6.2 Tourist Profile**

In July and August of 2003, this researcher distributed 900 questionnaires - 450 at Stansted Airport and 450 at Luton Airport, England (Chapter Four, Section 4.4.1.3) 876 questionnaires were returned. After vetting and rejecting some of them, 806 (90%) useable questionnaires were retained for analysis. The main

reason for rejecting the questionnaires was incompleteness, particularly in questions aimed at collecting tourists' travel patterns, and their socio-economic and demographic characteristics (Appendix 4.6). Rejecting questionnaires on the grounds of missing data in questionnaire response is a common practice in tourism research (e.g. Akbaba, 2006; Ekinici *et al.*, 1998).

The profile of the respondents is presented in Table 6.1. The gender distribution of the respondents was quite even; 53% male and 47% female. The single largest age group of the respondents was '15-24' (27%), followed by '25-34' (24%), whereas tourists aged 55 years and older made up the smallest group, representing only 13% of the respondents (Table 6.1) Eighteen percent of the respondents were from the '35-44' age group and 16% from the '45-44' age group. With regards to respondents' annual income, the largest group was those with annual income below £10,000 (21%). Fifteen percent of the respondents said their annual income was in the '10,000-£14,999' range, while 16% had an income of '£15,000-£19,999', 17% between '£20,000-£29,999', 17% between '£30,000-£39,999' and 14% over '£40,000 (see Table 6.1).

In terms of the 'Travel Pattern' category, while only 20% of the respondents had previously travelled to a tourism destination accompanied by children, most respondents 80% had not (Table 6.1). In terms of level of education, although most (33%) respondents were in the University (undergraduate) category, the other categories i.e. secondary school and below (24%), Diploma (22%), and University (postgraduate) (21%), were relatively evenly distributed (Table 6.1). With regards to ethnicity, the majority of the respondents were White (85%), with Asian accounting for 6%, Blacks 5% and Others 4%. In terms of the 'Respondent

Origin' category, most respondents were from Europe (81%) while the rest were from Asia (10%), the Americas (5%) and Africa (4%).

**Table 6.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents (N =806).**

Variable	%	Variable	%
Gender		Education Level	
Male	53	Secondary level and low	24
Female	47	Diploma	22
		University (Undergraduate)	33
		University (Postgraduate)	21
<b>Total Observation</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>Total Observation</b>	<b>100</b>
Age		Ethnicity	
15-24	27	White	85
25-34	25	Black	5
35-44	18	Asian	6
45-54	16	Other	4
55+	14		
<b>Total Observation</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>Total Observation</b>	<b>100</b>
Annual Household Income		Respondent Origin	
Under £10,000	21	Americas	5
£10,000-£14,999	15	Asia	10
£15,000-£19,999	16	Africa	4
£20,000-£29,999	17	Europe	81
£30,000-£39,999	17		
£40,000+	14		
<b>Total Observation</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>Total Observation</b>	<b>100</b>
Travel with Children*			
Yes	20		
No	80		
<b>Total Observation</b>	<b>100</b>		

*Note: \* Have you ever travelled to a tourism destination and spent a night accompanied by children*

### 6.3 Attributes Most Associated with Quality of a tourism Destination'

This section presents the results of analysis conducted with the aim of establishing which attributes identified in the exploratory study are most strongly associated by tourists with quality of a tourism destination. To achieve this objective an analysis of mean score values was conducted.

Mean score values for each attribute of quality of a tourism destination were computed and then the attributes were ranked in descending order according to mean values (Table 6.2). The seven-point Likert scale employed in the self-administered questionnaire (Appendix 4.6) was used to guide the interpretation of the results-provided by mean score values ranking (Table 6.2). The lower an attribute's mean score, the less the extent to which tourists were viewed to associate that particular attribute with quality of a tourism destination (Chapter Four, Section 4.4.1.4.1). On the other hand, the higher the mean score, the greater the extent to which tourists were considered to associate that particular attribute with quality of a tourism destination.

The highest mean score was 6 for the attribute 'Where tourists feel that they will not face any physical harm' (Table 6.2). This attribute is one of 9 attributes comprising the dimension 'Security' established in the exploratory study (Chapter Four, Section 5.3.2.2). The lowest mean score was 3.94 for the attribute 'where children's favourite restaurant can be found' (Table 6.2), which belongs to the dimension 'Child Friendliness'.

**Table 6.2 Attributes Mean Rankings for all Tourists**

<b>Attributes of Quality of a Tourism Destination</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>*SD</b>
Tourist will not face any physical harm.	6.00 (1)	1.370
Public toilets are kept clean.	5.97 (2)	1.415
Sellers do not over-charge tourists.	5.96 (3)	1.405
Tourists feel that they will not get mugged.	5.92 (4)	1.465
Tourists' belongings are safe from theft.	5.89 (5)	1.377
Tourists can see the true character of the area.	5.89 (6)	1.289
Tourists feel relaxed.	5.85 (7)	1.358
Attractions are kept clean.	5.83 (8)	1.339
Affordable accommodation facilities.	5.81 (9)	1.279
Can experience a different culture.	5.80 (10)	1.397
Tourists do not face verbal abuse.	5.80 (11)	1.537
An atmosphere that can bring enjoyment to tourists.	5.79 (12)	1.310
Tourist information is available free of charge.	5.76 (13)	1.492
Tourist information is accurate.	5.76 (14)	1.428
A low crime rate.	5.75 (15)	1.459
Affordable public transport fares.	5.74 (16)	1.305
Plenty of undisturbed natural beauty.	5.74 (17)	1.490
Local maps are easy to understand.	5.73 (18)	1.362
Tourists feel stress free.	5.70 (19)	1.501
Facilities that meet the requirements of disabled persons.	5.66 (20)	1.584
Tourist information is easily available.	5.65 (21)	1.382
Public transport drivers who know the area well.	5.59 (22)	1.411
The streets are kept clean.	5.59 (23)	1.496
Free of political unrest.	5.57 (24)	1.621
Appears tidy.	5.55 (25)	1.518
Local people who are welcoming towards tourists.	5.54 (26)	1.515
The required variety of accommodation types.	5.54 (27)	1.388
Information is in the language tourists understand.	5.52 (28)	1.582
Local area maps show all the attractions.	5.51 (29)	1.409
Not too commercialised.	5.50 (30)	1.581
Clearly marked direction signs to tourist attractions.	5.49 (31)	1.582
The modes of public transport are kept clean.	5.48 (32)	1.486
Affordable restaurants.	5.47 (33)	1.372
Free from air pollution.	5.46 (34)	1.505
Tourists can get close to the natural environment.	5.45 (35)	1.465
Affordable attraction fees.	5.44 (36)	1.368
An atmosphere conducive to tourists having a rest.	5.43 (37)	1.481

*Note Table 6.2 Continued on opposite page, \*SD= Standard Deviation*



**Table 6.2 Attributes Mean Rankings for all Tourists**

<b>Attributes of Quality of a Tourism Destination</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>*SD</b>
The required variety of modes of transport.	5.43 (38)	1.395
Has variety of activities for all age groups	5.42 (39)	1.492
That is not overcrowded.	5.39 (40)	1.652
Tour guides know the area well.	5.39 (41)	1.591
Local people who are keen to help tourists.	5.38 (42)	1.398
Free from noise pollution	5.36 (43)	1.544
Has other activities that are not affected by rain	5.32 (44)	1.575
Weather is conducive to tourist activity	5.29 (45)	1.575
Free from visual pollution.	5.27 (46)	1.663
That is different from the tourists' home area.	5.24 (47)	1.589
Without queues to use toilets.	5.24 (48)	1.725
Provides a learning experience for tourists.	5.23 (49)	1.524
Children can be happy.	5.23 (50)	1.679
Variety of restaurants.	5.19 (51)	1.501
Variety of cuisine.	5.18 (52)	1.516
Without queues to see attractions.	5.12 (53)	1.616
Have other ethnic groups.	5.05 (54)	1.580
Shopping facilities that sell affordable goods.	5.05 (55)	1.570
The required variety of night entertainment.	5.02 (56)	1.674
Local people who know their area well.	4.97 (57)	1.663
Without beggars on the streets.	4.96 (58)	1.912
Tourists can participate in local activities.	4.95 (59)	1.586
Has translators who speak the tourist's language	4.91 (60)	1.743
Accommodates changes in tourists' day to day plans	4.91 (61)	1.540
Tourists are not made to feel like foreigners.	4.90 (62)	1.793
A visible police presence to assure the safety of tourist.	4.90 (63)	1.753
The required variety of shopping facilities.	4.81 (64)	1.723
The required variety of activities for children	4.80 (65)	1.746
That is different from any the tourist has been.	4.79 (66)	1.693
Restaurants that meet dietary requirements of all tourists.	4.75 (67)	1.761
Tour guides with a sense of humour.	4.70 (68)	1.770
Free from graffiti.	4.55 (69)	1.985
Opportunities to experience romantic encounters.	4.44 (70)	1.807
Hotels offering baby-sitting services.	4.31 (71)	1.974
A famous tourist attraction.	4.31 (72)	1.850
Tourists can meet other tourists.	4.28 (73)	1.926
Has a 'special event' e.g. carnival.	4.26 (74)	1.781
Children's favourite restaurants can be found	3.94 (75)	1.967

Note : \*SD= Standard Deviation

#### 6.4 Dimensions Most Associated with Quality of a Tourism Destination

To establish which dimensions identified in the exploratory study tourists most strongly associated with quality of a tourism destination, an analysis of means similar to that performed at attribute level was conducted. However, before conducting the analysis of means the reliability of each dimension was checked to establish whether the dimensions could be used in further analysis.

The Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) coefficient (Cronbach, 1951) is the most commonly accepted measure of reliability within the context of a measure's internal consistency (Churchill; 1979; Hair *et al.*, 1992). The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient ranges in values from 0 indicating low reliability, to 1 indicating high reliability (Hair *et al.*, 1992). Nunnally (1967) suggests that Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficients values ranging from 0.50 to 0.60 suffice for the early stages of basic research.

**Table 6.3 Internal Consistency Reliability**

Dimensions of Quality of a Tourism Destination	No. Attributes	Cronbach's $\alpha$
Authenticity of Environment	4	0.71
Security	9	0.87
Cleanliness and Tidiness	7	0.87
Affordability	6	0.79
Availability of Tourist Information	10	0.88
Weather	3	0.67
Lack of Crowding	3	0.68
Friendliness of Host Community	5	0.72
Relaxing	7	0.76
Variety of Facilities and Attractions	9	0.84
Novelty	7	0.70
Child Friendliness	4	0.77

Cronbach's  $\alpha$  values for the twelve dimensions ranged from 0.67 to 0.87, which exceeded the 0.50 threshold suggested by Nunnally (1967) see Table 6.3. Further, Cronbach's alpha values for the twelve dimensions are better than those in some

established quality measurement scales used in tourism (e.g. LODSERV, Knutson *et al.*, 1991). In fact, ten of the twelve dimensions established in the exploratory study had large coefficient alphas ( $>0.70$ ), which is an indication of strong item covariance or homogeneity and adequate sampling of the domain of the construct (Nunnally, 1967). Thus, the dimensions could be used in further analysis (e.g. O'Neill and Palmer, 2003; Lam and Zhang, 1999; Baloglu *et al.*, 1998).

The results of the analysis of dimension mean score values are presented in Table 6.4. 'Authenticity of Environment' (M =5.55 SD =1.159) had the highest mean score (Table 6.4). The dimension 'Security' (M =5.51 SD =1.157) had the second highest mean score while 'Affordability' (M =5.46 SD =1.036) is third place and 'Cleanliness and Tidiness' (M =5.35 SD =1.168) is fourth (Table 6.4).

**Table 6.4 Mean Rankings of Dimensions of Quality of a Tourism Destination**

Dimension of Quality of a Tourism Destination	Mean (Rank)	SD
Authenticity of Environment	5.55 (1)	1.159
Security	5.51 (2)	1.157
Affordability	5.46 (3)	1.036
Cleanliness and Tidiness	5.35 (4)	1.168
Availability of Tourist Information	5.31 (5)	1.107
Relaxing	5.13 (6)	1.094
Lack of Crowding	5.06 (7)	1.441
Variety of Facilities and Attractions	5.05 (8)	1.113
Friendliness of Host Community	4.98 (9)	1.199
Weather	4.91 (10)	1.430
Novelty	4.79 (11)	1.074
Child Friendliness	3.92 (12)	1.831

*Number in brackets () represents the mean rankings, SD =Standard Deviation*

## 6.5 Hypothesis Testing and Analysis.

In this section a number of hypotheses developed in Chapter Three are tested with a view to achieving the objective of establishing whether there are any significant and meaningful differences in understanding of the meaning of the term 'quality

of a tourism destination' within groups of tourists, given a number of independent variables.

The parametric data analysis technique *t*-test for independent samples was used with the hypotheses, which investigated statistically significant differences between mean score values of two groups of tourist (see Chapter Four, Section 4.4.1.4.2). In addition as part of a planned strategy to employ a triangulation of data analytical techniques, the non-parametric data analytical technique Mann-Whitney U test was also used in the analysis (Chapter Four, Section 4.4.1.4). The results of hypotheses tests using the *t*-test and Mann-Whitney U test techniques are reported in Section 6.5.1.

Hypotheses that investigated significant mean score values differences in more than two groups of tourist (e.g. age groups) were investigated using the parametric data analytical technique one way between groups analysis of variance (ANOVA). ANOVA tests were supplemented by the non-parametric Kruskal Wallis test (Chapter Four, Section 4.4.1.4). The results of hypotheses tested using the ANOVA and Kruskal Wallis techniques are reported in Section 6.5.2. For the test of significance, the two-tailed probability was selected since no direction was specified in any of the hypotheses. The alpha level was set at 0.004 throughout this section.

### **6.5.1 Hypothesis Testing and Analysis for Two Group Comparisons**

The results in this section are reported in three steps. In the first step, the results of *t*-tests for independent samples are presented. Negative *t*-values indicate that the mean score value for the variable coded 1 (e.g. male) in SPSS is smaller than that

of the variable coded 2 (e.g. female). In step two the findings from the Mann-Whitney U test are reported.

In the third step, Eta squared ( $\eta^2$ ) results are reported.  $\eta^2$  is one of the frequently used measures of the 'strength of association' between the dependent and independent also known as 'effect size', (see Chapter Four, Section 4.4.1.4). It provides an indication of the meaningfulness of statistically significant differences between groups mean score values detected by data analytical technique such as the *t*-tests.

The computation of  $\eta^2$  was necessary given that small differences between groups mean score values can become statistically significant with large samples (Chapter Four, Section 4.4.1.4). Such small differences, though statistically significant, have little theoretical or practical value (Chapter Four, Section 4.4.1.4). Cohen's (1988) guidelines for interpreting eta squared, where  $\eta^2 = 0.01$  represent a small effect,  $\eta^2 = 0.06$  (moderate) and  $\eta^2 = 0.14$  large, were used.

### 6.5.1.1 Investigating Hypothesis One

**H<sub>1</sub>: There are significant gender differences in understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination.**

T-tests were employed to investigate the null hypothesis that there are no significant gender differences in understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination. T-values were calculated and found significant in 2 out of 12 dimensions at lower than 0.004 level (Table 6.5). These were; 'Affordability'  $t(804) = -3.74, p < 0.004$  and 'Availability of Tourist Information'  $t(804) = -4.54, p < 0.004$  (Table 6.5). Therefore, the null hypothesis was supported for the dimensions 'Authenticity of Environment', 'Security,' 'Cleanliness and Tidiness',

**Table 6.5 Male and Female Tourist Mean Scores Compared**

Dimension of Quality of a Tourism Destination	Male (n =425)		Female (n =381)		T-test for Equality of Means			Eta Squared
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t-value	Degrees of Freedom	Sig. (2-tailed)	
Authenticity of Environment	5.49 (1)	1.187	5.62 (1)	1.125	-1.55	804	0.120	-
Security	5.45 (2)	1.192	5.58 (3)	1.116	-1.56	804	0.118	-
Affordability	5.33 (3)	1.062	5.61 (2)	0.987	-3.74	804	0.000*	0.03
Cleanliness and Tidiness	5.27 (4)	1.212	5.45 (5)	1.111	-2.26	804	0.024	-
Relaxing	5.18 (5)	1.079	5.07 (7)	1.109	1.39	804	0.166	-
Availability of Tourist Information	5.14 (6)	1.129	5.49 (4)	1.053	-4.54	804	0.000*	0.02
Lack of Crowding	5.10 (7)	1.418	5.01 (9)	1.467	0.93	804	0.355	-
Weather	4.96 (8)	1.434	4.87 (11)	1.425	0.89	804	0.373	-
Variety of Facilities and Attractions	4.95 (9)	1.098	5.16 (6)	1.121	-2.66	804	0.008	-
Friendliness of Host Community	4.92 (10)	1.191	5.06 (8)	1.205	-1.68	804	0.093	-
Novelty	4.72 (11)	1.082	4.88 (10)	1.061	-2.15	804	0.032	-
Child Friendliness	3.85 (12)	1.811	4.00 (12)	1.851	-1.21	804	0.228	-

Note: \* significant at 0.004 level, () mean rankings, SD =Standard deviation.

'Relaxing', 'Lack of Crowding', 'Weather', 'Variety of Facilities and Attractions', 'Friendliness of Host Community', 'Novelty' and 'Child Friendliness'. However, for the dimensions 'Affordability' and 'Availability of Tourist Information' the null hypothesis was rejected. Negative  $t$ -values indicate higher mean score values for female than male tourists in the both given dimensions (Table 6.5).

Results of the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test largely supported those of  $t$ -tests.  $Z$ -values were significant at less than 0.004 level for the dimensions 'Availability of Tourist Information',  $z = -4.758, p < 0.004$  and 'Affordability'  $z = -3.86 p < 0.004$ . However,  $z$ -value was also significant for the dimension 'Variety of Facilities and Attractions'  $z = -2.99 p < 0.004$  which was not significant in  $t$ -tests i.e. 'Variety of Facilities and Attractions'  $t(804) = -2.66, p > 0.004$ , (see Appendix 6.1).

Eta squared ( $\eta^2$ ) value for 'Affordability' was 0.02 and 'Availability of Tourist Information' ( $\eta^2$ ) = 0.03. These  $\eta^2$  values indicate that 2% of the variance in 'Affordability' and 3 % in 'Availability of Tourist Information' scores is explained by gender. These  $\eta^2$  values indicate that the magnitude of differences between male and female tourists mean score values is small (Cohen, 1988).

#### 6.5.1.2 Investigating Hypothesis Two

**H2: There are significant differences in understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination between tourists who have spent a holiday at a tourism destination with children in the past and tourists who have never spent a holiday at a tourism destination with children.**

Respondents were divided into two groups, namely 'with children' and 'without children', based on tourists' travel pattern data captured in Section B of the

questionnaire (Appendix 4.6). Children were defined as people below the age of 15 years (ETB *et al.*, 1994). The 'with children' group comprised tourists who had spent a holiday at a tourism destination with children in the past and the 'without children' group was made up of tourists who had never spent a holiday at a tourism destination with children.

T-tests were employed to test the null hypothesis that there were no significant differences in understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination between the 'with children' and 'without children' groups of tourists. T-values were calculated and found significant in 6 out of 12 dimensions at less than 0.004 level (Table 6.6). These were 'Security'  $t(801) = 3.61$   $p < 0.004$ , 'Lack of Crowding'  $t(801) = 4.36$   $p < 0.004$ , 'Relaxing'  $t(801) = 3.98$   $p < 0.004$ , 'Variety of Facilities and Attractions'  $t(801) = 4.27$   $p < 0.004$ , 'Weather'  $t(801) = 3.81$   $p < 0.004$  and 'Child Friendliness'  $t(801) = 5.42$   $p < 0.004$  (Table 6.6).

Therefore, the null hypothesis that there are no significant differences in understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination between the 'with children' and 'without children' groups of tourists was supported in the following dimensions: 'Authenticity of Environment', 'Affordability', 'Cleanliness and Tidiness', 'Availability of Tourist Information', 'Friendliness of Host Community' and 'Novelty'. The null hypothesis was not supported for the dimensions 'Security', 'Lack of Crowding', 'Relaxing', 'Variety of Facilities and Attractions', 'Weather' and 'Child Friendliness'.

Positive  $t$ -values indicate higher mean score values for the 'with children' group of tourists than the 'without children' group. T-values are positive in all



**Table 6.6 Tourists with and without Children Compared**

Dimension of Quality of a Tourism Destination	With Children (n=165)		Without Children (n=641)		T-test for Equality of Means			Eta Squared
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t-value	Degrees of Freedom	Sig. (2-tailed)	
Security	5.80 (1)	1.028	5.44 (2)	1.178	3.61	804	0.000*	0.02
Authenticity of Environment	5.67 (2)	1.070	5.52 (1)	1.180	1.42	804	0.156	-
Affordability	5.60 (3)	0.961	5.43 (3)	1.052	1.97	804	0.049	-
Cleanliness and Tidiness	5.56 (4)	1.042	5.30 (4)	1.193	2.58	804	0.010	-
Lack of Crowding	5.49 (5)	1.317	4.95 (9)	1.452	4.36	804	0.000*	0.02
Availability of Tourist Information	5.47 (6)	1.015	5.27 (5)	1.127	2.04	804	0.042	-
Relaxing	5.42 (7)	0.969	5.05 (7)	1.112	3.98	804	0.000*	0.02
Variety of Facilities and Attractions	5.37 (8)	0.992	4.96 (6)	1.128	4.27	804	0.000*	0.02
Weather	5.29 (9)	1.303	4.82 (10)	1.446	3.81	804	0.000*	0.02
Friendliness of Host Community	5.20 (10)	1.165	4.93 (8)	1.203	2.59	804	0.010	-
Novelty	4.91 (11)	1.030	4.76 (11)	1.084	1.61	804	0.108	-
Child Friendliness	4.60 (12)	1.680	3.75 (12)	1.828	5.42	804	0.000*	0.04

Note: \* significant at 0.004 level, () mean rankings, SD =Standard deviation.

dimensions with significant differences in mean score values, at less than 0.004 level, between 'with children' and 'without children' group of tourists

The Mann-Whitney U test detected significant differences between 'with children' and 'without children' groups of tourists at less than 0.004 level in the same dimensions as did *t*-tests. These were; 'Security'  $z = -3.80, p < 0.004$ , 'Lack of Crowding'  $z = -4.68, p < 0.004$ , 'Relaxing'  $z = -3.90, p < 0.004$ , 'Variety of Facilities and Attractions'  $z = -4.64, p < 0.004$ , 'Weather'  $z = -4.07, p < 0.004$  and 'Child Friendliness'  $z = -5.50, p < 0.004$  see Appendix 6.2.

'Eta squared ( $\eta^2$ ) values were 0.02 for 'Security', 'Lack of Crowding' ( $\eta^2 = 0.02$ ) 'Relaxing' ( $\eta^2 = 0.02$ ), 'Variety of Facilities and Attractions' ( $\eta^2 = 0.02$ ) and 'Weather' ( $\eta^2 = 0.02$ ) see Table 6.6. This indicates that only 2 % of the variance in each of these dimensions is explained by tourists' pattern of travel with specific reference to whether tourists had visited a tourism destination with or without children in the past. For the dimension 'Child Friendliness',  $\eta^2$  was 0.04 see Table 6.6. In Cohen's (1988) terms these  $\eta^2$  values (0.02 and 0.04) indicate that the magnitude of difference in mean score values for these dimensions is small.

### 6.5.1.3 Investigating Hypothesis Three

**H<sub>3</sub>: There are significant differences in understanding the meaning of quality of a tourism destination between tourists who last visited a tourism destination within their home country and tourists who last visited a destination outside their home country.**

The subjects were divided into two groups, namely, the 'domestic' and 'international' groups of tourists based on data obtained from Section B of the questionnaire (Appendix 4.6). The 'domestic' group comprised tourists who had

last visited and stayed overnight at a tourism destination within their home country. The 'international' group consisted of tourists who had last visited and stayed overnight at a tourism destination outside their home country.

The *t*-test was employed to test the null hypothesis that there are no significant differences in understanding the meaning of quality of a tourism destination between the 'domestic' and 'international' groups of tourists. Results of *t*-tests revealed significant mean score values differences in 4 out of 12 dimensions at less than the 0.004 level (Table 6.7). These were; 'Lack of Crowding'  $t(804) = 4.47$   $p < 0.004$ , 'Relaxing'  $t(804) = 3.49$   $p < 0.004$ , 'Variety of Facilities and Attractions'  $t(804) = 3.44$   $p < 0.004$  and 'Weather'  $t(804) = 3.06$   $p < 0.004$ , see Table 6.7.

Therefore, the null hypothesis that there are no significant differences in understanding the meaning of quality of a tourism destination between the 'domestic' and 'international' groups of tourists was supported in the dimensions 'Security', 'Authenticity of Environment', 'Cleanliness and Tidiness', 'Affordability', 'Availability of Tourist Information', 'Friendliness of Host Community', 'Novelty' and 'Child Friendliness'. But for the dimensions 'Lack of Crowding', 'Relaxing', 'Variety of Facilities and Attractions' and 'Weather' the null hypothesis was not supported.

The non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test detected significant mean score differences at less than 0.004 level between the 'Domestic' and 'International' group of tourists in 4 out of 12 dimensions (Appendix 6.3). These dimensions were 'Lack of Crowding'  $z = -4.72$   $p < 0.004$ , 'Relaxing'  $z = -3.46$   $p < 0.004$ ,

**Table 6.7 A Domestic and International Tourists Compared**

Dimension of Quality of a Tourism Destination	Domestic (n =117)		International (n =689)		T-test for Equality of Means			Eta squared
					t-value	Degrees of Freedom	Sig. (2-tailed)	
Security	5.79 (1)	0.930	5.46 (2)	1.186	2.81	804	0.005	-
Authenticity of Environment	5.62 (2)	0.999	5.54 (1)	1.184	0.72	804	0.471	-
Lack of Crowding	5.60 (3)	1.266	4.97 (8)	1.450	4.47	804	0.000*	0.02
Cleanliness and Tidiness	5.59 (4)	0.900	5.31 (4)	1.204	2.33	804	0.020	-
Affordability	5.55 (5)	0.753	5.45 (3)	1.076	1.29	804	0.200	-
Relaxing	5.45 (6)	0.990	5.07 (6)	1.102	3.50	804	0.001*	0.01
Availability of Tourist Information	5.41 (7)	0.977	5.29 (5)	1.127	1.11	804	0.266	-
Variety of Facilities and Attractions	5.37 (8)	0.926	4.99 (7)	1.133	3.44	804	0.001*	0.01
Weather	5.28 (9)	1.257	4.85 (10)	1.448	3.06	804	0.002*	0.01
Friendliness of Host Community	5.13 (10)	1.109	4.96 (9)	1.213	1.42	804	0.156	-
Novelty	4.85 (11)	1.097	4.78 (11)	1.071	0.65	804	0.518	-
Child Friendliness	4.22 (12)	1.714	3.87 (12)	1.846	1.91	804	0.056	-

Note: \* significant at 0.004 level, () mean rankings, SD =Standard deviation.

‘Variety of Facilities and Attractions’  $z = -3.52$   $p < 0.004$  and ‘Weather’  $z = -3.16$   $p < 0.004$ . The results of the Mann-Whitney U test (Appendix 6.3) are similar to those of the  $t$ -test (Table 6.7) previously reported.

Eta squared results indicate 2 % of the variance in ‘Lack of Crowding’ ( $\eta^2 = 0.02$ ) and 1 % in each of the dimensions; ‘Relaxing’ ( $\eta^2 = 0.01$ ), ‘Variety of Facilities and Attractions’ ( $\eta^2 = 0.01$ ) and ‘Weather’ ( $\eta^2 = 0.01$ ). Based on Cohen’s (1988) guidelines, these  $\eta^2$  values indicate that the magnitude of differences in mean score values between the ‘Domestic’ and ‘International’ group of tourists for these dimensions is small (Chapter Four, Section 4.4.1.4.2).

### **6.5.2 Hypothesis Testing and Analysis for more Two Group Comparisons**

This section presents results for hypothesis tests, which considered three or more groups of tourists. The results are presented in four steps. In the first step, results of Levene’s test conducted to check the validity of assumptions of equality of groups variances are reported (Chapter Four, Section 4.4.1.4.2)

In step two, finding of ANOVA test are reported. Here, results of ANOVA tests using the standard  $F$  or Welch’s  $F$ - statistics are presented depending on which of the two statistics was used in the analysis. Results of the Levene’s test for homogeneity of variance determined whether the standard  $F$  or Welch’s  $F$ - statistics in the ANOVA procedure was used in the analysis in step one (Chapter Four, Section 4.4.1.4.2). Further, as part of a strategy to employ a triangulation of data analytical techniques, the results from the nonparametric Kruskal Wallis test are also reported in step two (Chapter Four, Section 4.4.1.4.2).

In the third step in this section,  $\eta^2$  results are reported.  $\eta^2$  is a measure of the 'strength of association' between the dependent variable and the independent variable (Chapter Four, Section 4.4.1.4.2). Hence,  $\eta^2$  provides an indication of the meaningfulness of statistically significant differences between mean score values detected by ANOVA tests and/or Kruskal Wallis in step two. In step four, results of post-hoc tests are presented. Post hoc tests were employed to identify the exact groups with significant mean score values differences detected by ANOVA and Kruskal Wallis tests (Chapter Four, Section 4.4.1.4.2). For reasons explained in Chapter Four (Section 4.4.1.4.2) the Tukey's HSD and the Tamhane's T2 post-hoc tests were used.

#### 6.5.2.1 Investigating Hypothesis Four

**H4: There are significant differences in understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination amongst tourists from different age groups.**

Based on the data obtained from Section B of the questionnaire (Appendix 4.6) the tourists were divided into five age groups, namely, '15-24', '25-34', '35-44', '45-54', '55-64' and '65 +' (ETB *et al.*, 1994). The age group '65 +' had fewer than thirty respondents. To meet the statistical assumptions of normality of samples' distribution (Bhattacharyya and Johnson, 1977) the age group '65+' was combined with the '55-64' and recoded to form the age group '55+'.

Levene's statistic, which is a measure of homogeneity of variance, was computed and found significant for all but two dimensions. These were; 'Security' and 'Authenticity of Environment' (Table 6.8). This means that groups variances were equal in all dimensions but 'Security' and 'Authenticity of Environment'.

**Table 6.8 Test of Homogeneity of Variances for Age Groups**

<b>Dimensions of Quality of a Tourism Destination</b>	<b>Levene's Statistic</b>	<b>df1</b>	<b>df2</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Availability of Tourist Information	1.970	4	801	0.097
Security	4.830	4	801	0.001*
Variety of Facilities and Attractions	1.548	4	801	0.187
Cleanliness and Tidiness	3.021	4	801	0.017
Relaxing	1.281	4	801	0.276
Novelty	1.870	4	801	0.114
Affordability	2.067	4	801	0.083
Friendliness of Host Community	1.055	4	801	0.378
Natural Environment	5.524	4	801	0.000*
Child Friendliness	2.105	4	801	0.078
Lack of Crowding	3.431	4	801	0.009
Weather	1.045	4	801	0.383

Note: \* significant at 0.004 level, *df* = degrees of freedom.

The *F*-scores were calculated for dimensions with equal groups variances as indicated by the Levene's test (Table 6.8). Standard *F*-scores were statistically significant at less than 0.004 level in 4 out of 12 dimensions for the independent variable 'tourist age group' (Table 6.9). These were 'Variety of Facilities and Attractions' [ $F(4, 801) = 4.3$   $p < 0.004$ ], 'Cleanliness and Tidiness' [ $F(4, 801) = 10.8$   $p < 0.004$ ], 'Child Friendliness' [ $F(4, 801) = 4.9$   $p < 0.004$ ] and 'Lack of Crowding' [ $F(4, 801) = 12.9$   $p < 0.004$ ] see Table 6.9; full results are presented in Appendix 6.4.

**Table 6.9 ANOVA tests Based on Standard *F*- statistic – Age Groups**

<b>Dimensions of Quality of a Tourism Destination</b>	<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>df.</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F-statistic</b>	<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>
<b>Variety of Facilities and Attractions</b>					
Between Groups	20.970	4	5.242	4.3	0.002*
Within Groups	976.752	801	1.219		
Total	997.722	805			
<b>Cleanliness and Tidiness</b>					
Between Groups	56.060	4	14.015	10.8	0.000*
Within Groups	1042.123	801	1.301		
Total	1098.183	805			
<b>Child Friendliness</b>					
Between Groups	64.544	4	16.136	4.9	0.001*
Within Groups	2632.828	801	3.287		
Total	2697.372	805			
<b>Lack of Crowding</b>					
Between Groups	100.490	4	25.122	12.9	0.000*
Within Groups	1571.402	801	1.962		
Total	1671.892	805			

*Note: \* significant at less than 0.004 level, df = degrees of freedom.*

The standard *F*-statistics for the dimensions ‘Security’ [ $F(4, 801) = 15.102$   $p < 0.004$ ] and ‘Authenticity of Environment’ [ $F(4, 801) = 8.442$   $p < 0.004$ ] were significant at less than 0.004 level. However, an earlier Levene’s test revealed that these two dimensions violated assumptions of equality of groups variances (Table 6.8). This meant that findings based on the standard *F*-statistic, which is prone to giving an incorrect result when groups variances are unequal (Chapter Four, Section 4.4.1.4.2), could not be trusted for ‘Security’ and ‘Authenticity of Environment’. Consequently, these dimensions ‘were re-tested with the Welch’s *F*-statistic in the ANOVA procedure, which is robust against violations of assumptions of equality of groups variances (see Table 6.10.).



**Table 6.10 ANOVA tests (Using Welch's *F*- statistic)–Age Groups**

Dimensions of Quality of a Tourism Destination	Welch's <i>F</i>	df1	df2	Sig. (2-tailed)
Security	14.2	4	355.961	0.000*
Authenticity of Environment	7.7	4	366.296	0.000*

Note: \* significant at less than 0.004 level, *df* = degrees of freedom.

*P*-values associated with Welch's *F*-statistic were statistically significant for both 'Security' [ $F(4, 355.96) = 4.30 p < 0.004$ ] and 'Authenticity of Environment' [ $F(4, 366.30) = 7.7 p < 0.004$ ], (see Table 6.10.).

Therefore, the null hypothesis that there are no significant differences in understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination amongst tourists from different age groups was supported in some dimensions and not supported in others. In 6 out of 12 dimensions the null hypothesis was not supported ('Variety of Facilities and Attractions', 'Cleanliness and Tidiness', 'Child Friendliness' and 'Lack of Crowding', 'Security' and 'Authenticity of Environment'). In the other 6 dimensions the null hypothesis was supported ('Affordability', 'Relaxing, Availability of Tourist Information', 'Weather', 'Friendliness of Host Community', and 'Novelty').

The results of the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test largely support those of ANOVA tests (Appendix 6.5). The chi-squared ( $\chi^2$ ) values for the dimensions 'Security'  $\chi^2(4) = 71.86 p < 0.004$ , 'Variety of Facilities and Attractions'  $\chi^2(4) = 16.53 p < 0.004$ , 'Cleanliness and Tidiness'  $\chi^2(4) = 45.03 p < 0.004$ , 'Authenticity of Environment'  $\chi^2(4) = 27.60 p < 0.004$ , 'Child Friendliness'  $\chi^2(4) = 19.61 p < 0.004$  and 'Lack of Crowding'  $\chi^2(4) = 47.56 p < 0.004$  were significant at less than 0.004 level, see Appendix 6.5.

**Table 6.11 Effect Size (Age Groups)**

<b>Dimensions of Quality of a Tourism Destination</b>	<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>Eta squared</b>
<b>Variety of Facilities and Attractions</b>		
Between Groups	20.97	
Within Groups	976.752	0.02
Total	997.722	
<b>Cleanliness and Tidiness</b>		
Between Groups	56.06	
Within Groups	1042.123	0.05
Total	1098.183	
<b>Child Friendliness</b>		
Between Groups	64.544	
Within Groups	2632.828	0.02
Total	2697.372	
<b>Lack of Crowding</b>		
Between Groups	100.49	0.06
Within Groups	1571.402	
Total	1671.892	
<b>Security</b>		
Between Groups	75.629	
Within Groups	1002.805	0.07
Total	1078.434	
<b>Authenticity of Environment</b>		
Between Groups	43.759	0.04
Within Groups	1037.964	
Total	1081.723	

Eta squared ( $\eta^2$ ) values indicated a moderate effect for 'Security', ( $\eta^2 = 0.07$ ), 'Lack of Crowding' ( $\eta^2 = 0.06$ ) with tendency towards small in 'Cleanliness and Tidiness' ( $\eta^2 = 0.05$ ), 'Authenticity of Environment' ( $\eta^2 = 0.04$ ), 'Variety of Facilities and Attractions' ( $\eta^2 = 0.02$ ) and 'Child Friendliness' ( $\eta^2 = 0.02$ ) (see Table 6.11.).

### **Identifying Age groups with Significant Mean Score differences**

In summary, the analysis so far has only revealed dimensions with significant mean score differences amongst the various age groups. However, the exact groups where significant differences lie have not been identified. To identify

these, either the Tukey's HSD or the Tamhane's T2 post-hoc test were used (Chapter Four, Section 4.4.1.4.2).

Tukey's HSD test is an appropriate post-hoc technique to use when groups variances are equal (Chapter Four, Section 4.4.1.4.2). Accordingly, the Tukey's HSD test has been used in post-hoc analysis for the dimensions 'Cleanliness and Tidiness', 'Child Friendliness', 'Lack of Crowding' and 'Variety of Facilities and Attractions' which had equal groups variances as indicated by the Levene's test (Table 6.8). For the dimensions 'Security' and 'Authenticity of Environment' which had unequal groups variances (Table 6.8) the Tamhane's T2 test was used in post-hoc analysis. Tamhane's T2 test is robust to violation of assumptions of equal groups variances (Chapter Four, Section 4.4.1.4.2).

For the convenience of presenting results, groups with significant mean score differences are indicated by asterisk (\*). Full Tukey's HSD test results are presented in Appendix 6.6 and for Tamhane's T2 test results see Appendix 6.7. The results of the post-hoc tests for the independent variable age group are as follows:

#### ***Comparing Age group scores for the dimension 'Cleanliness and Tidiness'***

Tukey's HSD test reveals that tourists from the age group '15-24', with the lowest mean (M =5.05), differ significantly from those of the age group '55+', with the highest mean (M =5.79), (see Table 6.12.). In addition, mean scores of tourists from the age group '15-24' (M =5.05) differ significantly from those of age groups '35-44' (M =5.54) and '45-54' (M =5.57). Further, mean score values of tourists from the age group '25-34' (M =5.19) differ significantly from those of age groups '55+' (M =5.79), (see Table 6.12.).

**Table 6.12 Age Groups Scores for ‘Cleanliness and Tidiness’ Compared**

Mean	N	Age	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
5.79	106	55+					
5.57	130	45-54					
5.54	145	35-44					
5.19	204	25-34					**
5.05	221	15-24			*	*	**

Notes: \* $p = 0.001$  for Tukey HSD statistic and is significant at less than 0.004 level

\*\* $p = 0.000$  for Tukey HSD statistic and is significant at less than 0.004 level

### **Comparing Age group scores for the dimension ‘Child Friendliness’,**

Statistically significant differences in mean score values are found between two age groups only for the dimension ‘Child Friendliness’, see Table 6.13. The Tukey’s HSD test reveals that mean score values of tourists from the age group ‘15-24’, with the lowest (M =3.63), differ significantly with those from the age groups ‘35-34’, with the highest mean score (M =4.40) see Table 6.13.

**Table 6.13 Age Groups Scores for ‘Child Friendliness’ Compared**

Mean	N	Age	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
4.40	145	35-44					
4.15	130	45-54					
3.86	204	25-34					
3.71	106	55+					
3.63	221	15-24			*		

Note: \* $p = 0.001$  for Tukey HSD statistic and is significant at less than 0.004 level

### **Comparing Age group scores for the dimension ‘Lack of Crowding’**

Tukey’s HSD test detected statistically significant differences in mean score values between a number of age groups for the dimension ‘Lack of Crowding’. Mean score values of tourists from the age group ‘15-24’, which had the lowest mean (M =4.58) were found to differ significantly from those in the ‘55+’ group with the highest mean score (M =5.58), ‘45-54’ (M =5.32) and ‘35-44’ (M =5.31). Also, tourists from the age group ‘15-24’ (M =4.58) and ‘25-34’ (M =4.96) differ

significantly from those in the age group '55+' (M =5.58) (see Table 6.14.). However, the '15-24' (M =4.58) and '25-34' (M =4.96) age groups do not differ from each other (Table 6.14).

**Table 6.14 Age Groups Scores for 'Lack of Crowding' Compared**

Mean	N	Age	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
5.58	106	55+					
5.32	130	45-54					
5.31	145	35-44					
4.96	204	25-34					**
4.58	221	15-24			*	*	*

Notes: \* $p = 0.000$  for Tukey HSD statistic and is significant at less than 0.004 level

\*\* $p = 0.002$  for Tukey HSD statistic and is significant at less than 0.004 level

### ***Comparing Age group scores for the dimension 'Variety of Facilities and Attractions'***

Tukey's HSD test did not detect any groups with significant mean score differences for the dimension 'Variety of Facilities and Attractions' (Appendix 6.6). But the standard  $F$ -test earlier (Table 6.9) detected significant differences at less than 0.004 level amongst the various age groups for the dimension 'Variety of Facilities and Attractions'. The age groups with significant mean score differences for dimension 'Variety of Facilities and Attractions' were investigated further using  $t$ -tests (Table 6.15.). The  $t$ -test compares two groups at a time and therefore provides an opportunity to conduct a more focused analysis (Pallant, 2001).

**Table 6.15 Age Groups Scores for 'Variety of Facilities and Attractions'**

AGE	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
15-24	221	4.86	1.199	-3.140	364	0.002*
35-44	145	5.23	0.971			

Notes\*  $t$ -test significant  $p < 0.004$ , df degrees of freedom

T-test revealed that mean score values of tourists from the groups '15-24' (M =4.86) differed significantly from those from the '35-44' (M =5.23) age group  $t(364) = -3.140, p < 0.004$  (Table 6.15.).

### ***Comparing Age group scores for the dimension 'Security'***

The dimension 'Security' has unequal group variances - see Table 6.8 for results of tests for homogeneity of variances. As a result, Tamhane's T2 test is used in post-hoc analysis for the dimensions 'Security' (Table 6.16). For detailed results see Appendix 6.7.

**Table 6.16 Age Groups Scores for 'Security' Compared**

Mean	N	Age	15-24	25-34	45-54	35-44	55+
5.94	106	55+					
5.82	145	35-44					
5.68	130	45-54					
5.39	204	25-34				**	**
5.11	221	15-24			*	*	*

Notes: \* $p = 0.000$  for Tamhane's T2 test statistic and is significant at less than 0.004 level  
 \*\* $p = 0.001$  for Tamhane's T2 test statistic and is significant at less than 0.004 level

Tamhane's T2 test indicates that mean score values of tourists from the age '15-25' (M =5.11) differs significantly from those in the age groups '55+' (M =5.94), '45-54,' (M =5.68) and '35-44' (M =5.82), see Table 6.16. Mean score values of the age group '25-34' (M =5.39) differ significantly from those in the age groups '35-44' (M =5.82) and '55+' (M =5.94), see Table 6.16.

### ***Comparing Age group scores for the dimension 'Authenticity of Environment'***

The Levene's test results in Table 6.8 indicate that the dimension 'Authenticity of Environment' violated assumptions of equality of group variances. Consequently, Tamhane's T2 test, which is robust to violations of these assumptions, is used in

post-hoc analysis for the dimension ‘Authenticity of Environment’ (Table 6.17).

For detailed results see Appendix 6.7.

**Table 6.17 Age Groups Scores for ‘Authenticity of Environment’ Compared**

Mean	N	Age	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
5.92	106	55+					
5.72	130	45-54					
5.65	145	35-44					
5.55	204	25-34					
5.22	221	15-24				*	**

Notes: \* $p = 0.001$  for Tamhane’s T2 statistic and is significant at less than 0.004 level

\*\* $p = 0.000$  for Tamhane’s T2 statistic and is significant at less than 0.004 level

Tamhane’s T2 test reveals that tourists in the ‘15-25’ age group have the lowest mean (M =5.22) and differ significantly from the age group ‘55+’ (M =5.92) with the highest mean score (M =5.92) see Table 6.16. Mean score of the ‘15-25’ (M =5.22) and ‘45-54’ (M =5.72) groups also differ significantly (Table 6.17).

### 6.5.2.2 Investigating Hypothesis Five

**H<sub>5</sub>: There are significant differences in understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination amongst tourists from different activity groups.**

The respondents were divided into four groups, according to the main activity they had undertaken at the tourism destination they last visited. These four activity groups were ‘Sightseeing’, ‘Sporting’, ‘Entertainment’, and ‘Culture’. The activity groups were developed *in vivo*, (Goulding, 1999) i.e. from the data provide by respondents to the open-end question: ‘What was the main activity you did while at the destination?’ (Appendix 4.6)

The ‘Sightseeing’ group comprised tourists who stated that the main activity they had undertaken at the destination they last visited involved wandering around seeing places of interest. The ‘Sporting’ group was composed of tourists who

stated that they had engaged mainly in some form of sporting activity e.g. cycling or golf. The ‘Entertainment’ group of tourists was made up of tourists who stated that the main activity they had engaged in at the tourism destination they last visited was sampling the nightlife e.g. frequenting pubs or discothèques, or attending beer drinking parties.

The ‘Culture’ group of tourists was composed of tourists who stated that they had mainly visited places of cultural interest e.g. museums, art galleries, and tribal villages. Levene’s statistics, which assess homogeneity of group variances, are significant for most dimensions with exception of ‘Security’, ‘Variety of Facilities and Attractions’, and ‘Cleanliness and Tidiness’ (Table 6.18). This suggests that group variances for all other dimensions, with the exception of ‘Security’, ‘Variety of Facilities and Attractions’ and ‘Cleanliness and Tidiness’, could be viewed as equal.

**Table 6.18 Test of Homogeneity of Variances for Tourist Activity**

Dimensions of Quality of a Tourism Destination	Levene’s Statistic	df1	df2	Sig. (2-tailed)
Security	6.733	3	785	0.000*
Availability of Tourist Information	4.132	3	785	0.006
Variety of Facilities and Attractions	7.775	3	785	0.000*
Cleanliness and Tidiness	5.467	3	785	0.001*
Relaxing	3.750	3	785	0.011
Novelty	0.479	3	785	0.697
Affordability	4.070	3	785	0.007
Friendliness of Host Community	0.409	3	785	0.747
Authenticity of Environment	2.598	3	785	0.051
Child Friendliness	0.515	3	785	0.672
Lack of Crowding	1.191	3	785	0.312
Weather	0.826	3	785	0.480

Note: \* significant at less than 0.004 level, df = degrees of freedom.



The null hypothesis that there are no significant differences in understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination amongst tourists from different activity groups was investigated using the ANOVA and Kruskal Wallis technique. Standard *F*-scores were calculated for dimensions that met assumptions of equal group variances as indicated by Levene's test in Table 6.18. Standard *F*-scores were statistically significant at less than 0.004 levels in the following dimensions 'Availability of Tourist Information' [ $F(3,785) = 5.17 p < 0.004$ ], 'Relaxing' [ $F(3,785) = 6.12 p < 0.004$ ], 'Affordability' [ $F(3,785) = 6.29 p < 0.004$ ], see Table 6.19. Detailed ANOVA test results are presented in Appendix 6.8

Standard *F*-scores were also significant at less than 0.004 level for the dimensions; 'Security' [ $F(3,785) = 6.88 p < 0.004$ ], 'Variety of Facilities and Attractions' [ $F(3,785) = 9.70 p < 0.004$ ], and 'Cleanliness and Tidiness' [ $F(3,785) = 5.99 p < 0.004$ ], (see Appendix 6.8.) But the Levene's test (Table 6.18) indicates that group variances for these dimensions are unequal.

**Table 6.19 ANOVA test results (using standard F-statistic)- Tourist Activity**

Dimensions of 'Quality of a Tourism	Sum of Squares	df.	Mean Square	F	Sig. (2-tailed)
<b>Availability of Tourist Information</b>					
Between Groups	18.748	3	6.249	5.17	0.002*
Within Groups	948.29	785	1.208		
Total	967.037	788			
<b>Relaxing</b>					
Between Groups	21.725	3	7.242	6.12	0.000*
Within Groups	929.004	785	1.183		
Total	950.729	788			
<b>Affordability</b>					
Between Groups	19.763	3	6.588	6.29	0.000*
Within Groups	821.826	785	1.047		
Total	841.589	788			

Note: \* significant at less than 0.004 level, *df* = degrees of freedom

Therefore, for the dimensions; ‘Security’, ‘Variety of Facilities and Attractions’ and ‘Cleanliness and Tidiness’, the results of the standard  $F$ -statistic, which lacks power when groups variances are unequal, could not be trusted. Consequently, the null hypothesis for this dimension was re-tested with the more powerful Welch’s  $F$ -statistic in the ANOVA procedure (Table 6.19).

**Table 6.20 ANOVA tests (Using Welch’s  $F$ - statistic)– Tourist Activity**

Dimensions of Quality of a Tourism Destination	Welch’s $F$	df1	df2	Sig. (2-tailed)
Security	6.811	3	325.619	0.000*
Variety of Facilities and Attractions	8.532	3	334.114	0.000*
Cleanliness and Tidiness	5.755	3	333.986	0.001*

*Note: \* significant at less than 0.004 level, df = degrees of freedom*

Welch’s  $F$ -statistics were calculated and found statistically significant for all three dimensions i.e. Security [ $F(3, 325.619) = 6.811, p < 0.004$ ], ‘Variety of Facilities and Attractions’ [ $F(3, 334.114) = 8.532, p < 0.004$ ] and ‘Cleanliness and Tidiness’ [ $F(3, 333.986) = 5.755, p < 0.004$ ], see Table 6.20. This means that the null hypothesis that there are no significant differences in understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination amongst tourists from different activity groups has been partially supported. For the dimensions; ‘Availability of Tourist Information’, ‘Relaxing’, ‘Affordability’, ‘Security’, ‘Variety of Facilities and Attractions’ and ‘Cleanliness and Tidiness’ the null hypothesis has not been supported. However, for the dimensions; ‘Novelty’, ‘Friendliness of Host Community’, ‘Authenticity of Environment’, ‘Child Friendliness’, ‘Lack of Crowding’ and ‘Weather’, the null hypothesis is supported.

The results of the non-parametric Kruskal Wallis test indicate that the chi-squared ( $\chi^2$ ) statistic is significant in a number of dimensions (Appendix 6.9). These are; ‘Relaxing’  $\chi^2(3) = 16.32, p < 0.004$ , ‘Affordability’  $\chi^2(3) = 13.79, p < 0.004$ ,

‘Security’  $\chi^2 (3) = 16.39 p < 0.004$ , ‘Variety of Facilities and Attractions’  $\chi^2 (3) = 21.35 p < 0.004$ , (Appendix 6.9). With the exception of the dimensions ‘Availability of Tourist Information’  $\chi^2 (3) = 11.98 p > 0.004$ , and ‘Cleanliness and Tidiness’  $\chi^2 (3) = 12.84 p > 0.004$ , which were not significant at less than 0.004 level, these results largely support those of the parametric ANOVA test in Tables 6.19 and 20.

**Table 6.21 Effect Size for the Independent Variable ‘Tourist Activity’**

<b>Dimensions of Quality of a Tourism Destination</b>	<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>Eta squared</b>
<b>Security</b>		
Between Groups	27.23	0.03
Within Groups	1035.708	
Total	1062.939	
<b>Availability of Tourist Information</b>		
Between Groups	18.748	0.02
Within Groups	948.29	
Total	967.037	
<b>Variety of Facilities and Attractions</b>		
Between Groups	35.133	0.04
Within Groups	947.39	
Total	982.523	
<b>Cleanliness and Tidiness</b>		
Between Groups	23.978	0.02
Within Groups	1047.792	
Total	1071.77	
<b>Relaxing</b>		
Between Groups	21.725	0.02
Within Groups	929.004	
Total	950.729	
<b>Affordability</b>		
Between Groups	19.763	0.02
Within Groups	821.826	
Total	841.589	

The Eta squared ( $\eta^2$ ) values for all dimensions with significant differences at less than 0.004 level are mainly in the range, which according to Cohen (1998), is small i.e. ‘Availability of Tourist Information’ ( $\eta^2 = 0.02$ ), ‘Relaxing’ ( $\eta^2 = 0.02$ ), ‘Affordability’ ( $\eta^2 = 0.02$ ), ‘Security’ ( $\eta^2 = 0.03$ ) and ‘Cleanliness and Tidiness’ ( $\eta^2 = 0.02$ ). Only ‘Variety of Facilities and Attractions’ ( $\eta^2 = 0.04$ ) has an  $\eta^2$  value close to 0.06, which is considered moderate (Table 6.21).

### Identifying ‘Tourist Activity Groups’ with Significant Mean Score differences

Post hoc tests were conducted to establish which tourist activity groups had significant mean score differences. The Tukey’s HSD technique was used in post-hoc analysis where the dimensions data did not violate assumptions of equality of mean score values. These were ‘Affordability’, ‘Relaxing’ and ‘Availability of Tourist Information’. Detailed Tukey’s HSD test results for these dimensions are presented in Appendix 6.10

On the other hand, for reasons previously stated, the Tamhane’s T2 test was used in analysis where the dimensions violate assumptions of equality of groups variances i.e. ‘Security’, ‘Variety of Facilities and Attractions’ and ‘Cleanliness and Tidiness’. Detailed Tamhane’s T2 test results for these dimensions are provided in Appendix 6.11. The results of the Tukey’s HSD and the Tamhane’s T2 tests for the previously noted dimensions are discussed under the relevant heading below.

#### *Comparing the Activity groups scores for the dimension ‘Affordability’*

**Table 6.22 Activity Groups Scores for ‘Affordability’ Compared**

M	N	Activity	Sporting	Culture	Sightseeing	Entertainment
5.65	135	<b>Entertainment</b>				
5.57	310	<b>Sightseeing</b>				
5.47	109	<b>Culture</b>				
5.24	235	<b>Sporting</b>			*	*

Note: \* $p = 0.001$  for Tukey HSD statistic and is significant at less than 0.004 level

Tukey’s HSD test indicated that mean score values of tourists from the ‘Sporting’ group (M =5.24) differed significantly from those in the ‘Sightseeing’ (M =5.57) and ‘Entertainment’ (M =5.65) groups (Table 6.22).

### *Comparing the activity groups scores for the dimension of 'Relaxing'*

Two groups with significant mean score differences were detected using the Tukey's HSD test. The activity group 'Entertainment' (M =5.44), with the highest mean score, was found to differ significantly from the 'Sporting' group (M =5.44), which has the lowest mean score (Table 6.23).

**Table 6.23 Activity Groups Scores for 'Relaxing' Compared**

M	N	Activity	Sporting	Culture	Sightseeing	Entertainment
5.44	135	Entertainment				
5.15	310	Sightseeing				
5.05	109	Culture				
4.95	235	Sporting				*

Note: \* $p=0.000$  for Tukey HSD statistic and is significant at less than 0.004 level

### *Comparing the 'Tourist Activity group' scores for the dimension 'Availability of Tourist Information'*

Tukey's HSD post-hoc tests detected significant difference in mean score values between the tourist activities groups 'Sporting' (M =5.11) and 'Sightseeing' (M =5.44) only (Appendix 6.10.). The mean scores of 'Sightseeing' (M =5.44) and 'Entertainment' (M =5.45) are almost the same. Hence, one would have expected the 'Sporting' group (M =5.11) to also significantly differ from the 'Entertainment' (M =5.45) group, but this is not the case. These two tourist activities groups were re-examined using the t-test technique. As previously (Section 6.5.2.1) noted, the t-test technique compares two mean score values at a time, and as a result offers a more focused analysis (Pallant, 2001).

The results of t-tests in Table 6.24 indicate that there are significant differences between the mean score values of the tourist activities groups 'Sightseeing' (M =5.44) and 'Sporting' (M =5.11),  $t(543)=3.38p<0.004$ . In addition, Table 6.24

**Table 6.24 Activity Groups Scores for ‘Availability of Tourist Information’**

	N	Mean	SD	t-value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Sightseeing	310	5.44	1.041	3.38	543	0.001*
Sporting	235	5.11	1.265			
Entertainment	135	5.45	0.920	3.00	348	0.003*
Sporting	235	5.11	1.265			

Note: \* *t*-value is significant at less than 0.004 level, SD= Standard Deviation

reveals that mean scores values for the tourist activities groups ‘Entertainment’ (M =5.45) and ‘Sporting’ (M =5.11),  $t(348) = 3.00$   $p < 0.004$  significantly differ from each other (see Table 6.24.).

#### ***Comparing the tourist activity groups scores for the dimension ‘Security’***

**Table 6.25 Activity Groups Scores for ‘Security’ Compared**

M	N	Activity	Sporting	Culture	Sightseeing	Entertainment
5.80	135	Entertainment				
5.60	310	Sightseeing				
5.40	109	Culture				
5.28	235	Sporting				*

Notes \* $p = 0.000$  for Tamhane’s T2 statistic is and is significant at less than 0.004 level

For the dimension ‘Security’, the Tamhane’s T2 test reveals significant differences between mean score values of two activity groups only. These are tourists from the activity group ‘Sporting’ (M =5.28), which differ significantly from those in the ‘Entertainment’ (M =5.80) group. These two dimensions (‘Security’ and ‘Sporting’) have the highest and lowest mean score values respectively (Table 6.25).

*Comparing the tourist activity groups scores for the dimension ‘Variety of Facilities and Attractions’*

**Table 6.26 Activity Groups Scores for ‘Variety of Facilities and Attractions’ Compared**

M	N	Activity	Sporting	Culture	Sightseeing	Entertainment
5.32	135	Entertainment				
5.15	310	Sightseeing				
5.04	109	Culture				
4.74	235	Sporting			*	**

\* $p = 0.001$  for Tamhane’s T2 statistic and is significant at less than 0.004 level

\*\* $p = 0.000$  for Tamhane’s T2 statistic and is significant at less than 0.004 level

Tamhane’s T2 test indicated that the mean score values of tourists from the activity group ‘Sporting’ (M =4.74), with the lowest mean score, differ significantly from those in the activity group ‘Entertainment’ (M =5.32), with the highest mean score. In addition, means of the ‘Sporting’ group (M =4.74) differ significantly from the ‘Sightseeing’ (M =5.15) group (Table 6.26).

*Comparing the activity groups scores for the dimension ‘Cleanliness and Tidiness’*

**Table 6.27. Activity Groups Scores for ‘Cleanliness and Tidiness’ Compared**

M	N	Activity	Sporting	Culture	Sightseeing	Entertainment
5.60	135	Entertainment				
5.45	310	Sightseeing				
5.33	109	Culture				
5.12	235	Sporting				*

Significant mean score differences are detected between the tourists activity group ‘Sporting’ (M =5.12) and ‘Entertainment’ (M =5.60) using the Tamhane’s T2 test.

**6.5.2.3 Investigating Hypothesis Six**

**H6: There are significant differences in understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination amongst tourists from different income groups.**

The tourists were divided into six income groups as follows: the ‘under £10,000’, ‘£10,000-£14,999’, ‘£15,000-£19,999’, ‘£20,000-£29,999’, ‘£30,000-£39,999’

and ‘£40,000+’ income groups based on tourists’ demographic data captured in Section B of the questionnaire (Appendix 4.6). The Levene’s tests were conducted first to test the null hypothesis that groups have equal variances. Levene’s statistic, which measures homogeneity of group variances, was significant for all dimensions (Table 6.28). As a result, the null hypothesis is supported for all dimensions. This means that the standard *F*-statistic in the ANOVA procedure could be used in the analysis.

ANOVA tests were conducted to investigate the null hypothesis that there are no significant differences in understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination amongst tourists from different income groups.

**Table 6.28 Test of Homogeneity of Variances for Tourist Income**

Dimensions of Quality of a Tourism Destination	Levene’s Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Security	2.145	5	800	0.058
Availability of Tourist Information	0.431	5	800	0.827
Variety of Facilities and Attractions	0.653	5	800	0.659
Cleanliness and Tidiness	0.500	5	800	0.776
Relaxing	1.541	5	800	0.175
Novelty	1.700	5	800	0.132
Affordability	0.536	5	800	0.749
Friendliness of Host Community	0.956	5	800	0.444
Authenticity of Environment	1.548	5	800	0.172
Child Friendliness	1.024	5	800	0.402
Lack of Crowding	0.221	5	800	0.954
Weather	0.709	5	800	0.616

Note: \* Levene’s statistics not significant at less than 0.004 level, *df* = degrees of freedom.

The standard *F*-statistic was calculated and out of 12 dimensions only ‘Security’ [*F* (5,800) =3.90 *p*<0.004] had statistically significant differences in groups mean score values (see Table 6.29 and Appendix 6.12.). Therefore, the null hypothesis is supported in the dimensions ‘Availability of Tourist Information’,



‘Variety of Facilities and Attractions’, ‘Cleanliness and Tidiness’, ‘Relaxing’, ‘Novelty’, ‘Affordability’, ‘Friendliness of Host Community’, ‘Authenticity of Environment’, ‘Child Friendliness’, ‘Lack of Crowding’ and ‘Weather’. However, for the dimension ‘Security’ the null hypothesis is not supported.

**Table 6.29 ANOVA test results (using standard *F*-statistic) for Tourist Income**

Dimensions of Quality of a Tourism Destination	Sum of Squares	df.	Mean Square	F	Sig. (2-tailed)
<b>Security</b>					
Between Groups	25.666	5	5.133	3.90	0.002*
Within Groups	1052.768	800	1.316		
Total	1078.434	805			

Notes: \* significant at less than 0.004 level, *df* degrees of freedom.

The non-parametric Kruskal Wallis test results (Appendix 6.13) are similar to those of ANOVA see Table 6.29. The chi-squared ( $\chi^2$ ) statistic is significant only for the dimension ‘Security’  $\chi^2(5) = 20.186$   $p < 0.004$  (see Appendix 6.13.)

Eta squared ( $\eta^2$ ) value for ‘Security’ was 0.02 which indicates that 2% of the variability in this dimensions is explained by the independent variable ‘tourist income’ (Table 6.30). According to Cohen (1988) this represents a small difference between the groups’ mean score values (Table 6.30).

**Table 6.30 Effect Size for Tourist Income**

Dimensions of Quality of a Tourism Destination	Sum of Squares	Eta squared
<b>Security</b>		
Between Groups	25.666	0.02
Within Groups	1052.768	
Total	1078.434	

### ***Identifying Income Groups with Significant Mean Score differences***

The ANOVA test reveals that the only dimensions with significant mean score values difference for the independent variable tourists’ activity is ‘Security’ (see Table 6.31.) It was also established in that group, that variances for the dimension

‘Security’ are equal (Table 6.28). As such, it was safe to use the Tukey’s HSD test in post-hoc analysis for the dimension ‘Security’. The results of Tukey’s HSD test in post are presented in Table 6.31. Detailed results are shown in Appendix 6.14.

***Comparing the income group scores for the dimension ‘Security’***

Significant mean score differences for the dimension ‘Security’ are found between mean score values of two income groups only. Tukey’s HSD test reveals that mean score values of tourists from the income group ‘under £10,000’ (M =5.19) differ significantly from those from the income group ‘£40,000+’ (M =5.71). These two income groups have the lowest and highest mean score values respectively.

**Table 6.31 Income Groups Scores for ‘Security’ Compared**

Mean	N	Income Levels	Under £10,000	£10,000-£14,999	£15,000-£19,999	£20,000-£29,999	£30,000-£39,999	£40,000+
5.71	115	£40,000+						
5.62	139	£30,000-£39,999						
5.60	134	£15,000-£19,999						
5.60	126	£20,000-£29,999						
5.46	121	£10,000-£14,999						
5.19	171	Under £10,000						*

Note: \*  $p = 0.003$  for Tukey HSD statistic and is significant at less than 0.004 level

**6.5.3 Results for Other Hypothesis Tests**

Significant differences in groups mean score values were not detected in three other hypotheses tested, see Appendix 6.15. These are:

H<sub>7</sub>: There are significant differences in understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination between short and long stay tourists.

H<sub>8</sub>: There are significant differences in understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination among tourists who last visited a tourism destination less than 6 months ago, 6-12 months ago and more that 12 months ago.

H<sub>9</sub>: There are significant differences in understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination among tourists from different nationalities.

## 6.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has reported results from the quantitative phase of the thesis, where a descriptive explanatory study was conducted. The main goal of the quantitative phase of the study was to test the results from the qualitative phase with a larger and more representative sample, thereby facilitating more generalisable research results. The main results from this chapter were as follows:

Sections 6.3 presented the results of mean score values rankings for the attributes and dimensions of quality of a tourism destination. This analysis was conducted to achieve the objective aimed at establishing which attributes and dimensions tourists strongly associate with the quality of a tourism destination. Section 6.3 revealed that the respondents strongly associate all the attributes and dimensions established at the qualitative phase with the quality of a tourism destination.

Section 6.4 presented the results of tests employed to achieve objective (iv). This objective was aimed at establishing whether there were any significant and meaningful differences in understanding of the meaning of the term 'quality of a tourism destination' within the group of tourists, given a number of independent variables. Nine hypotheses (Chapter Three, Section 3.4) were tested to achieve this objective. Parametric (e. g. ANOVA and t-test) based tests were used as the primarily data analysis techniques in testing these nine hypotheses. However, as part of a wider strategy of employing a triangulation of methods, non-parametric tests (e.g. Mann-Whitney U test and Kruskal-Wallis test) were also employed.

A summary of these results is presented in Table 6.32. As Table 6.32 shows results based on parametric techniques are largely supported by those of non-parametric tests. The key findings are that there were some significant differences in how tourists from different backgrounds viewed some dimensions. However, for the majority of the dimensions there were no significant differences in how tourists from different background viewed them. In addition, where significant differences are found further tests using Eta squared suggest the magnitudes of the difference are mostly in the range many (e.g. Pallant, 2001; Cohen; 1988; Tabachnick and Fidell, 1996) researchers would consider as small. Therefore, on the overall the findings from the hypothesis tests suggest that tourists do not differ in their understanding of the meaning of the term quality of a tourism destination.

**Table 6.32 Summary of Hypothesis Test Results**

Demographic Factors Dimensions of Quality of a Tourism Destination	Gender			'With Children' and 'Without Children'			'Domestic' and 'International' Tourist			Age			Tourist Activity			Income		
	T-values	Mann U	η <sup>2</sup> :	T-values	Mann U	η <sup>2</sup> :	T-tests	Mann U	η <sup>2</sup> :	ANOVA	Kruskal Wallis	η <sup>2</sup> :	ANOVA	Kruskal Wallis	η <sup>2</sup> :	ANOVA	Kruskal Wallis	η <sup>2</sup> :
Authenticity of Environment	-1.55	-1.55	n/a	1.42	-1.29	n/a	0.72	-0.23	n/a	ψ7.7*	27.6*	0.04	3.85	8.9	n/a	1.06	4.16	n/a
Security	-1.56	-1.51	n/a	3.61*	-3.80*	0.02	2.81	-2.49	n/a	ψ14.2*	71.9*	0.07	ψ6.81*	16.4*	0.03	3.90*	20.19*	0.02
Affordability	-3.74*	-3.86*	0.02	1.97	-1.83	n/a	1.29	-0.08	n/a	n/a	0.2	n/a	6.29*	13.8*	0.02	0.80	3.16	n/a
Cleanliness and Tidiness	-2.26	-2.02	0.01	2.58	-2.48*	0.01	2.33	-1.77	n/a	10.8*	45.0*	0.05	ψ5.76	12.8*	0.02	3.06	16.24	n/a
Relaxing	1.39	-1.37	n/a	3.98*	-3.90*	0.02	3.50*	-3.46*	0.01	n/a	8.3	n/a	6.12*	6.3*	0.02	1.45	9.65	n/a
Availability of Tourist Information	-4.54*	-4.76*	0.02	2.04	-1.81	0.01	1.11	-0.81	n/a	n/a	8.2	n/a	5.17*	12.0	0.02	0.84	4.46	n/a
Lack of Crowding	0.93	-0.94	n/a	4.36*	-4.68*	0.02	4.47*	-4.72*	0.02	12.9*	47.6*	0.06	2.93	8.3	n/a	2.54	13.31	n/a
Weather	0.89	-1.22	n/a	3.81*	-4.07*	0.02	3.06*	-3.16*	0.01	n/a	7.0	n/a	2.95	8.5	n/a	0.91	6.38	n/a
Variety of Facilities and Attractions	-2.66	-2.99*	0.01	4.27*	-4.66*	0.02	3.44*	-3.52*	0.01	4.3*	16.5*	0.02	ψ8.53	21.4*	0.04	1.21	6.45	n/a
Friendliness of Host Community	-1.68	-2.07	n/a	2.59	-2.75*	0.01	1.42	-1.15	n/a	n/a	13.5	n/a	1.13	2.8	n/a	1.15	4.82	n/a
Novelty	-2.15	-2.08	n/a	1.61	-1.43	n/a	0.65	-0.79	n/a	n/a	6.4	n/a	1.40	3.3	n/a	2.02	8.58	n/a
Child Friendliness	-1.21	-1.43	n/a	5.42*	-5.50*	0.04	1.91	-1.92	n/a	4.9*	19.6*	0.02	0.87	2.7	n/a	2.31	9.45	n/a

Notes: \*Significant at less than 0.004 level. All ANOVA results are based on standard F-statistic except for those denoted (ψ), which are based on Welch's F-statistic.

## **Chapter 7 Discussion**

### **7.1 Introduction**

Chapters Five and Six presented the findings from the qualitative and quantitative phases of the thesis. In this chapter the results from these two stages of the field research are first summarized and then discussed within the context of this and the prior research examined in Chapters Two and Three. The goal of this discussion is mainly to achieve the following objectives:

- v. To explain why tourists strongly associate dimensions identified in (iii) above (see Chapter, Section 1.2) with the quality of a tourism destination.
- vi. To explain why there are some or no significant and meaningful differences in understanding of the meaning of the term quality of a tourism destination amongst the groups of tourists.
- vii. To compare and/or contrast the dimensions of the quality of a tourism destination established in this thesis with service quality dimensions of specific tourism products found in the literature.

### **7.2 Summary of the Main Findings**

Seventy-five attributes, categorized into 12 higher order dimensions quality of a tourism destination, were established in the qualitative phase (Table 7.1). Each of the 12 dimensions was developed, *in vivo*, i.e. from the interview data rather than being pre-determined before the study (Goulding, 1999). The qualitative data analytical technique of constant comparison (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), explained in Chapter Four, and in particular in Section 4.3.5.3 was used in developing the dimensions.

**Table 7.1 Summary of the Results of the Qualitative and Quantitative Phases**

<b>Dimension of Quality of a Tourism Destination</b>	<b>No. of Attributes/ Dimension</b>	<b>Number (%)*</b>	<b>Mean (Rank)</b>
Authenticity of Environment	4	27(66)	5.55 (1)
Security	9	21(51)	5.51 (2)
Affordability	6	18(44)	5.46 (3)
Cleanliness and Tidiness	8	19(46)	5.35 (4)
Availability of Tourist Information	10	17(41)	5.31 (5)
Relaxing	7	16(39)	5.13 (6)
Lack of Crowding	3	17(41)	5.06 (7)
Variety of Facilities and Attractions	9	15(37)	5.05 (8)
Friendliness of Host Community	5	16(39)	4.98 (9)
Weather	3	17(41)	4.91 (10)
Novelty	7	11(27)	4.79 (11)
Child Friendliness	4	11(27)	3.92 (12)

*Note: \* (%) of tourists who mentioned a statement that belong to the dimension*

In the quantitative phase, the results of the qualitative phase were investigated further with a larger (n = 806) sample. Specifically, a self-administered questionnaire which operationalised the 12 dimensions was developed and used to collect data in the quantitative phase of the research. The data was analysed using statistical techniques available in the quantitative data analytical software SPSS. The two main findings of the quantitative phase are discussed below.

First, the mean score values for each attribute and dimension were above 3.9, where the highest possible score was 7. The mean score values, ranged from 3.94 to 6 for attributes and 3.92 to 5.55 for dimensions, on a 7 point Likert scale. Although there were some variations in mean score values from one dimension to another, the difference between the dimensions with highest and lowest mean score value was only 1.63 (Table 7.1).

The second major finding from the quantitative phase concerns the objective aimed to establish whether there were any significant and meaningful differences in understanding of the meaning of the term 'quality of a tourism destination' within the group of tourists, given a number of independent variables. Nine hypotheses were tested to achieve this objective.

The main hypothesis was as follows:

- H: There are significant differences in understanding the meaning of quality of a tourism destination within the groups of tourists (e.g. age, income, and ethnicity).

Both parametric (e.g. ANOVA and t-tests) and non-parametric (e.g. Kruskal Wallis and Mann Whitney U tests) data analysis techniques were employed in testing the 9 hypotheses. On the whole, the results of parametric tests largely supported those of non-parametric. Some statistically significant differences in mean score values within the various groups of tourists for the 12 dimensions were established in 6 of out the 9 hypotheses tested. However, with large samples small differences can be statistically significant but yet not meaningful (Cohen, 1988). Therefore, further tests to establish the meaningfulness of statistically significant differences in group mean score values were required (Pallant, 2001; Tabachnick and Fidell, 1996).

One way of assessing the meaningfulness of statistically significant differences in group mean score values is to calculate the 'effect size', also known as 'strength of association' (Cohen, 1988). In this thesis, one of the most commonly used measures for 'effect size' - eta squared ( $\eta^2$ ) (Cohen, 1988) was used.  $\eta^2$  results revealed that though some differences in-group mean score values were statistically significant, the magnitude of the differences were too small to be



meaningful. Based on the results of the statistical tests significant differences (e.g. t-test, ANOVA test) and the measure of 'strength of association' ( $\eta^2$ ) this thesis suggests that tourists do not differ in their understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination.

### **7.3 Why Tourists Associated the Twelve Dimensions with Quality of a Tourism Destination.**

The goal of the discussion in this section is to provide possible reasons why the tourists under study strongly associated the twelve dimensions identified in the qualitative phase with quality of a tourism destination. Consequently, possible reasons why they associated each of the twelve dimensions with the quality of a tourism destination are provided under the relevant heading in the discussion that follows.

#### **7.3.1 Reasons Tourists Associated 'Authenticity of Environment' with Quality of a Tourism Destination.**

The dimension 'Authenticity of Environment' is concerned with the extent to which tourists feel they can experience the authentic characteristics of a tourism destination. This refers mainly to features of the natural environment. The findings from the field research suggest the less a tourism destination has been altered from its natural state the greater the likelihood that tourists may experience its natural features. The mean score value for 'Authenticity of Environment' is 5.55 where the highest possible score is 7 (Table 7.1). There are several possible explanations why tourists strongly associate the 'Authenticity of Environment' with the quality of a tourism destination.

The natural environment is regarded by many researchers as the key tourism resource (Gooroochurn and Sugiyarto, 2005; Baddeley, 2004; Mason, 2003;

Lindqvist and Bjork, 2000; Huybers and Bennet, 2000). Lindqvist and Bjork (2000:153), for instance, observe that:

‘In many locations, tourism is founded on the natural beauty of the environment – lack of planning in the development of a tourist area can degrade it to a level at which tourists are no longer inclined to visit. Therefore, environmental considerations are an important quality factor.’

Huybers and Bennet (2000) find that so important is natural environment that some tourists are willing to pay a substantial premium to spend a holiday at a destination with high levels of natural environment quality. Gooroochurn and Sugiyarto (2005) note that the quality of the natural environment is an important asset for a destination, especially in light of an increase in the number of environmentally conscious tourists. According to Madin and Fenton (2004) tourism, which focuses on the natural environment is one of the fastest growing sectors within the tourism industry worldwide. Similarly, Dubois (2005) reports that there is a rapid growth in the number of people amongst the French population engaging in tourism which is primarily based on the natural environment. Hence, it is easy to appreciate why the respondents strongly associate the dimension ‘Authenticity of Environment’ with the quality of a tourism destination.

Alternatively, the fact that respondents strongly associated ‘Authenticity of Environment’ with the quality of a tourism destination could be explained by the fact that this dimension captures factors which seem to correspond with reasons (motives) people go on holiday e.g. the push and pull factors discussed in Chapter

Three (Section 3.3). Regarding push factors; this study was conducted in Europe<sup>5</sup> which, with nearly eighty percent of the population living in cities, is one of the most urbanised continents (Paskaleva-Shapira, 2005). It is therefore likely that a significant percentage of the respondents live or work in built up or urbanised environments.

The need to escape the routine life of home and the urban environment is one of the most commonly mentioned factors that ‘pushes’ or motivates tourists to go and spend a holiday at a tourism destination (Pearce and Lee, 2005; Qu and Pin, 1999). Consequently, the respondents may have viewed a destination offering an authentic experience in the form of unspoilt natural environment as providing an opportunity to escape the kind of environment which characterises their home or place of work (Pearce and Lee, 2005; Qu and Pin, 1999).

Also, the reason respondents strongly associated ‘Authenticity of Environment’ with the quality of a tourism destination could be linked to the growing desire for genuine products or ‘the real thing’ amongst consumers in general (Yeoman *et al.*, 2006). The increased commercialisation of the market place, which has seen consumers being constantly bombarded with fake products, is thought to be fuelling this desire for authentic products amongst consumer including tourists (Yeoman *et al.*, 2006). Therefore respondents’ strong association of ‘Authenticity of Environment’ with the quality of a tourism destination could be a reflection of this desire for a genuine tourist experience at a tourism destination.

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<sup>5</sup> Approximately eighty-one percent of respondents in this thesis were from Europe (Chapter Six, Section 6.2)

### **7.3.2 Reasons Tourists Associated ‘Security’ with Quality of a Tourism Destination.**

The dimension ‘Security’ relates to the extent to which tourists view a destination as a safe place to visit. It was established from the interview data that whether or not tourists regard a destination as safe is dependent largely on the extent to which they feel their needs for ‘personal safety’ and ‘safety of personal belongings’ are met. The mean score value for ‘Security’ is 5.51 where the highest possible score is 7 (Table 7.1).

A theory of motivation proposed by Maslow (1973) could potentially provide a means to understand why respondents strongly associated ‘Security’ with the quality of a tourism destination. ‘Security’ can be viewed as addressing factors which correspond with the human being’s need to feel safe, as proposed by Maslow (1973). Safety needs are found in lower levels of Maslow’s (1973) hierarchy of needs. Maslow (1973) contends that lower level needs in his hierarchy of needs model are more important than those found in the higher levels because they address issues which relate to the survival of human beings (Chapter Three). Indeed, the dimension ‘Security’ addresses issues that threaten the survival of tourists, such as the fear of being physically harmed or killed. For this reason it is hardly surprising that tourists would strongly associate ‘Security’ with the quality of a tourism destination.

That respondents strongly associated ‘Security’ with the quality of a tourism destination can also be viewed as reflecting the growing safety concerns amongst tourists in general which has been highlighted by several researchers (e.g. Mason, 2003; Levant and Gain, 2000). Levantis and Gani (2000), for instance, note that security is now one of the main tourist concerns. Indeed, security has always been

an important issue in tourism. However, high profile crimes against tourists such as the 2002 terrorist attack at Bali, in Indonesia, and at Luxor, Egypt, in 2001 have to some extent kept security as a key concern in tourism (Hitchcock and Putra, 2005; Mawby, 2000).

Certainly, the rapid decline in tourist numbers at destinations that have experienced terrorist attacks remains one of the clearest testimonies of the importance tourists place on safety (Mason, 2003; Mawby, 2000). Mawby (2000) notes that tourist numbers in Egypt and surrounding countries declined drastically following the Luxor bombings. Similarly, a sharp drop in numbers of tourists visiting Bali was reported following the 2002 terrorist attacks (Mason, 2003). More recently, massive cancellation of holidays to Hat Yai, a holiday destination in Thailand, were reported following a series of terrorist bomb attacks in the area (New Straits Times, 2006).

### **7.3.3 Reasons Tourists Associated 'Affordability' with Quality of a Tourism Destination.**

'Affordability' is concerned with the extent to which tourists feel a tourism destination's products are, on the whole, reasonably priced. This finding suggests that the price of tourism products in general is likely to influence how tourists perceived the quality of a tourism destination. The mean score for 'Affordability' is 5.46 (Table 7.1).

The theory of income elasticity of demand could provide some explanation as to why tourists strongly associate the dimension 'Affordability' with the quality of a tourism destination. Income elasticity of demand is a measure of how sensitive or responsive the demand for a product is to changes in disposable income (Sinclair

and Stabler, 1997). Economists posit that demand for most tourism products tends to be income elastic or sensitive to changes in tourists' disposable income (Sinclair and Stabler, 1997). This means that, for example, all other things being equal, a change in tourists' disposable income would most likely result in a more than proportionate change in demand for tourism products (Sinclair and Stabler, 1997).

While there may be many reasons why tourism demand tends to be income elastic, the fact that tourism is a discretionary activity (Pizam and Mansfeld, 1996) is certainly one of the major ones. Because tourism is an optional activity, it can be given up at any time and particularly in times of financial difficulty (Gilbert and Terrata, 2001). Studies (e.g. Mansfeld, 1992; Gilbert and Terrata, 2001) have shown that, in times of economic hardship, taking a holiday is one of the things people are most likely to give up first. For instance, Gilbert and Terrata (2001) report that the number of Japanese people going on holiday declined rapidly during the period Japan experienced economic recession. Given this sensitivity of tourism demand to changes in tourist disposal income, it may be easy to appreciate why respondents strongly associated 'Affordability' with the quality of a tourism destination.

An equally important reason why tourists strongly associated 'Affordability' with the quality of a tourism destination can be related to one particular attribute captured by this dimension. In one 'Affordability-related' attribute, the quality of a tourism destination is described as being dependent on the extent to which the destination has shopping facilities which sell affordable products. Shopping is one of the many tourism activities frequently undertaken by tourists (Wang, 2004;

Heung and Cheng, 2000). In fact, the availability of shopping facilities is one of the main factors that pull tourists to visit a particular tourism destination (Wang, 2004; Reisinger and Turner, 2002). As a result, it seems understandable that tourists would strongly associate the affordable shopping facilities with the quality of a tourism destination.

#### **7.3.4 Reasons Tourists Associated ‘Cleanliness and Tidiness’ with Quality of a Tourism Destination.**

‘Cleanliness and Tidiness’, as the name implies, is concerned with the extent to which tourists regard a destination as a clean and tidy place. The mean score for ‘Cleanliness and Tidiness’ is 5.35 on the 7-point Likert scale (Table 7.1). This indicates that tourists strongly associate this dimension with the quality of a destination. It is possible to suggest reasons why tourists associate ‘Cleanliness and Tidiness’ with quality of a tourism destination. One of the main reasons for this could be the implication that poor hygiene could have on the health of tourists.

The findings from the fieldwork suggest that tourists regarded the cleanliness and tidiness of a tourism destination as an indication of the level of hygiene at the destination. In addition, it is also established from the fieldwork that tourists fear that poor hygiene practices at tourism destination would result in them contracting diseases. Indeed, the risks of tourists contracting diseases at tourism destinations, especially those diseases which are closely linked to poor hygiene practise (e.g. cholera), are reported by many researchers (e.g. Cartwright, 2000; Dawood, 1989). According to these researchers, tourists fear contracting diseases not only because falling ill can disrupt their holidays but also because diseases like cholera can be life threatening.

But the cleanliness of a destination is not only concerned with hygiene related issues. It was also established in the fieldwork that tourists view the cleanliness of a tourism destination as being dependent on the extent to which the air is not polluted. Like hygiene, polluted air at a tourism destination has negative implications for the health of both the host community and visiting tourists (e.g. Shaluf and Ahmadun, 2006; Henderson, 1999; Lew, 1999). Air pollution in the form of haze, for example, has frequently been linked with breathing and other respiratory problems amongst tourists visiting tourism destinations in the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) region (e.g. Shaluf, and Ahmadun, 2006; Henderson, 1999; Lew, 1999). According to Lew (1999), approximately 81,000 haze related doctor visits were reported in Singapore in 1997.

Apart from health problems, Henderson (1999) argues that haze obscures tourists' views. On the worst days, for example, haze can reduce visibility to less than a hundred feet (Lew, 1999). When visibility is poor, tourists are often not able to enjoy the scenic views of a destination (Henderson, 1999). So serious is the problem of air pollution in the form of haze that it can result in tourists cancelling their planned holiday to affected tourism destinations. Henderson (1999) reports that hotel booking fell by between 20-30 % at destinations in some ASEAN countries when the region was affected by haze in August 1996.

Further reasons why tourists associate 'Cleanliness and Tidiness' with the quality of a tourism destination can be found in the previously noted factors that motivate people to go on holiday - in particular the pull factors. A study by Yoon and Uysal (2005) found that the cleanliness of a destination was one of the factors



responsible for pulling or motivating tourists to travel to a specific tourist destination. More recently Jang and Wu (2006) have found that of the many factors that motivate or 'pull' Taiwanese tourists to visit a particular destination 'Standards of hygiene and cleanliness' is one the most important.

### **7.3.5 Reasons Tourists Associated 'Availability of Tourist Information' with the Quality of a Tourism Destination.**

The dimension 'Availability of Tourist Information', as the name implies, refers to the extent to which tourists regard a tourism destination as meeting their information needs. The mean score value for 'Availability of Tourist Information' is 5.31 where the highest possible score is 7 (Table 7.1). The possible reasons why respondents associated 'Availability of Tourist Information' with the quality of a tourism destination are varied.

The respondents may have strongly linked 'Availability of Tourist Information' with the quality of a tourism destination because of the important role tourist information plays in the tourists' decision making process. It is widely acknowledged that tourist information is crucial for tourists' decision-making processes both prior to their visiting a tourism destination and while at the destination (Nishimura *et al.*, 2006; Chen, 2000). Before visiting a destination, tourists will make use of tourist information from various sources (e.g. tourist brochures) to make important decisions such as where and when to visit (Nishimura *et al.*, 2007; Scarles, 2004; Chen, 2000). In addition, tourist information such as that found in brochures can provide tourists with some idea of what they can hope to see at a destination (Nishimura *et al.*, 2007; Edelheim, 2007; Scarles, 2004). More important to this thesis, however, is the role of tourist information once a tourist is at their destination.

Once at a tourism destination, tourists are known to rely on a range of tourist information to make decisions regarding which attraction or which activity to pursue and when to pursue it (Nishimura *et al.*, 2006). In addition, where tourists are visiting new and therefore unfamiliar destinations, tourist information is usually one of the means tourists use to avoid getting lost (Alegre and Juaneda, 2006). Tourist information can also be very useful in providing tourists with a more informed and therefore more enjoyable travel experience. Given these reasons, it seems understandable that tourists would strongly associate the dimension 'Availability of Tourist Information' with the quality of a tourism destination.

#### **7.3.6 Reasons Tourists Associated Relaxing with Quality of a Tourism Destination.**

'Relaxing', as a dimension of quality of a tourism destination, is concerned with the extent to which tourists regard a destination as a relaxing place. The mean score value for 'Relaxing', was 5.13 on the 7-point Likert scale (Table 7.1). It is possible to provide some explanations as to why tourists associated 'Relaxing' with the quality of a tourism destination.

One reason could be that the dimension 'Relaxing' seems to encompass factors which correspond with those that many (e.g. Goossens, 2000 and Pearce and Lee, 2006) researchers regard as reasons for people to go on holiday to a particular destination. In one 'Relaxing' related attribute, for example, the quality of a tourism destination was described as being dependent on the extent to which the destination has an atmosphere conducive to tourists having a rest. The need to have a 'rest' and 'relax' are some of the major factors that motivate or 'push'

tourists to go on holiday (e.g. Pearce and Lee 2006; Goossens, 2000; Ross and Iso-Ahola, 1991; Crompton, 1979).

Pearce and Lee (2006), for instance, have established that out of seventy-four reasons for going on holiday, the need to 'have a rest and relax' was the third most important. Similarly, Gilbert and Terrata (2001) observed in their study that the need for rest was the fourth most frequently mentioned out of thirteen reasons why Japanese tourists travel. Likewise Ryan (1997) found that relaxing was one of the most enjoyed aspects of a holiday.

### **7.3.7 Reasons Tourists Associated 'Lack of Crowding' with Quality of a Tourism Destination.**

'Lack of Crowding', as a dimension of quality of a tourism destination, is concerned with the extent to which tourists feel that a tourism destination is free of congestion. The mean score for 'Lack of Crowding' was 5.06 on the 7-point Likert scale. There are many reasons why tourists strongly associate the dimension 'Lack of Crowding' with the quality of a tourism destination. However, one of the major reasons could be related to problems that can arise out of the fact that at most tourism destinations tourism is a seasonal activity.

Because tourism is mostly a seasonal activity (Mason, 2003) tourist numbers often vary from very low in the off-season to very high during the peak season (Andriotis, 2005; Lim and McAleer, 2001). This sudden influx of tourists during the peak season usually results in a number of problems which include overcrowding (Lim and McAleer, 2001). The problems of overcrowding often manifest themselves in excessively long queues at tourist attractions and public facilities such as toilets (Mason, 2003).

This means that tourists may end up waiting long periods to gain access to key attractions. In turn, due to time constraints, tourists end up visiting fewer attractions which can result in them getting frustrated and dissatisfied with the visit (Mason, 2003). Overcrowding can also result in traffic jams on the roads of a tourism destination, which means that tourists may find it difficult to get around (Mason, 2003, Shailes *et al.*, 2001, Dwyer and Forsyth, 1997).

Further, some researchers suggest that overcrowding at tourism destinations can put service providers under pressure because of having to serve large numbers of tourists over a short period (e.g. Kandampully, 2000). This may result in the delivery of quality of service that fails to satisfy tourists (Kandampully, 2000). Due to these reasons it may be easy to understand why tourists strongly associate the dimensions 'Lack of Crowding' with quality of a tourism destination.

### **7.3.8 Reasons Tourists Associated Variety of Facilities and Attractions with Quality of a Tourism Destination.**

'Variety of Facilities and Attractions', refers to the extent to which a tourism destination has the required assortment of tourism products to meet the diverse needs of tourists. The mean score for 'Variety of Facilities and Attractions' is 5.05 on the 7-point Likert scale. The fact that tourists associate 'Variety of Facilities and Attractions' with the quality of a tourism destination may be a reflection of the diversity of needs amongst tourists.

Tourism destinations attract tourists from different backgrounds (socio-economic and demographic) who may have different needs (Gonzalez and Bello, 2000). People on a family holiday, for instance, are likely to have different accommodation needs in comparison with those travelling as individuals. Hence,

a destination which offers variety in accommodation facilities may stand a better chance of meeting the accommodation needs of tourists from diverse backgrounds.

Similarly, in terms of variety of activities, for many people the possibility of undertaking an activity is one of the major reasons for going on holiday (Dellaert *et al.*, 1998). Given that people often have different preferences with regards to which activity to undertake, it follows that a destination that offers a variety of activities may have a better chance of meeting the activity needs of its visitors. In addition, a study in tourist personality traits by Plog (1973) indicates that some tourists known as 'mid-centrics' enjoy engaging in a variety rather than in single activities on holiday. This implies that some of the respondents who completed the self-administered questionnaire could be described as having 'mid-centric' personalities.

That tourists associated 'Variety of Facilities and Attractions' with the quality of a tourism destination could also be an indication of tourists' need for freedom of choice (Smith, 1994). Freedom of choice refers to the necessity that the tourist should have some acceptable range of options in order for the experience to be satisfactory (Smith, 1994). Without the sense that one can choose one's own activity, it is difficult to fully relax or to appreciate wholeheartedly the experience that can be derived from tourism activities (Smith, 1994). Given these reasons, it seems reasonable that the respondents would strongly associate the dimension 'Variety of Facilities and Attractions' with the quality of a tourism destination.

### **7.3.9 Reasons Tourists Associated Friendliness of Host Community with Quality of a Tourism Destination.**

'Friendliness of the Host Community' is concerned with the attitude of the local residents of a tourism destination towards tourists i.e. the extent to which tourists feel local people at a tourism destination are welcoming. Some of the most widely mentioned indicators of local people who are welcoming towards tourists amongst interviewees were local people 'who smile', 'who are polite,' and 'who greet tourists'. The mean score for 'Variety of Facilities and Attractions', is 5.05 on the 7-point Likert scale.

There are a number of possible reasons why tourists strongly associated the 'Friendliness of the Host Community' with the quality of a tourism destination. One possible explanation is related to the previously noted factors that motivate people to go on holiday. Studies have shown that the prospect of meeting local residents of a tourism destination is one of the main reasons some people go on holiday in the first place (Gilbert and Terrata, 2001). Hence it is plausible to suggest that having local people who are friendly is of crucial importance if encounters between hosts and tourists are to produce enjoyable experiences (Zhang *et al.*, 2006). In addition, having a friendly host community is also essential in that tourists often need to interact with the local people to ensure that their stay at a destination is enjoyable (Chapter Five).

For instance, tourists often turn to local people for directions or to find out more about the history of places of interest at a destination they are visiting (Chapter Five). As the interviews have revealed, such interactions between hosts and tourists is only possible where local people are friendly towards tourists. Further, that respondents associated 'Availability of a Friendly Host Community' with the

quality of a tourism destination can also be related to the fact that having local people who are friendly towards tourists is not always guaranteed.

According to Doxey's (1975) 'index of irritation', the attitude of local people towards tourists can change over time from euphoria, to apathy, then annoyance and finally antagonism. Euphoria is the stage when tourists are welcomed by local residents of a tourism destination. This usually occurs in the early stages when tourism development brings in thrills and enthusiasm to local residents of the destination. However, as tourism becomes more established, apathy, which is characterised by the tourist being taken for granted and only seen as a source of profit taking, sets in. At this stage, any contact between host community and tourists is mainly done on a commercial and formal footing.

The next stage is annoyance. As tourism expansion nears saturation point, the host community will start feeling that they can no longer cope with the number of tourists without having additional facilities. This results in local residents having some misgivings about the local tourist industry. The last stage is antagonism, where residents openly express their irritation with the tourism industry. This is when local residents start viewing tourists as the source of all ills. It is at this point that residents may start to become unfriendly towards tourists.

#### **7.3.10 Reasons Tourists Associated Weather with Quality of a Tourism Destination.**

The dimension 'Weather' is concerned with the extent to which tourists view climatic conditions at a destination as suitable for the activities they intend to pursue during their stay. The mean score for 'Weather' is 4.91 on the 7-point Likert scale. There are several possible reasons why tourists associate 'Weather', with quality of a tourism destination and the major ones are discussed below.

Many researchers (e.g. Awaritefe, 2004, Braun *et al.*, 1999) have highlighted favourable climatic conditions as one of the key attractions for tourists. It is particularly true for destinations where tourist activities are conducted outdoors such as at beach destinations (Thrane, 2005; Braun *et al.*, 1999). For example, tourists are attracted to the Mediterranean coast by regular sunshine, warm temperatures and little rain, escaping from harsher weather conditions and seasons in their home countries (Nicholls, 2006). Indeed, other forms of tourism, such as mountain tourism and winter sports, are also highly dependent on favourable climate and weather conditions, such as adequate snow levels (Yeoman and McMahon-Beattie, 2006).

More specifically, changing weather conditions at a tourism destination can affect tourists' plans daily in terms of the activities they can pursue (Braun *et al.*, 1999). For instance, the interviews have revealed that unsuitable climatic conditions such as rainy weather have the potential to completely disrupt outdoor tourist activities such as sightseeing (Chapter Five). In addition, adverse weather conditions may not only impact on tourists' experience, but also on their health and safety. Extreme climatic events, such as cyclones and hurricanes or flooding, can damage physically the tourism infrastructure and pose a great risk for the safety of both tourists and host communities (Braun *et al.*, 1999).

For these reasons it is understandable that tourists would strongly associate 'Weather' with the quality of a tourism destination. However, it must be noted that the negative effect of unfavourable weather on tourists' perception of the quality of a tourism destination can be reduced if there are other activities at the



destination that are not affected by weather e.g. activities conducted indoors (Chapter Five).

### **7.3.11 Reasons Tourists Associated ‘Novelty’ with Quality of a Tourism Destination.**

‘Novelty’, is concerned with the extent to which tourists feel that a tourism destination offers an experience different from other tourism destinations they had visited in the past. The mean score value for ‘Novelty’ is 4.79 on the 7 point Likert Scale.

The dimension ‘Novelty’ captures factors that correspond with what many researchers regard as reasons why people go on holiday, especially the push factors (Woods and Deegan, 2003; Gilbert and Terrata, 2001; Crompton, 1979). Woods and Deegan (2003) for example, note that tourists go on holiday to experience something different, so delivering quality in tourism should be about bringing out the special, distinctive features and flavours of tourism destinations. Similarly, Gilbert and Terrata (2001) argue that one of the reasons people go on holiday is to search for unique experiences. In addition, Crompton (1979) identifies the search for novelty as one of the main pull factors affecting destination choice.

It is also possible to explain why respondents associated ‘Novelty’, with the quality of a tourism destination using Plog’s (1973) theory, which explains tourists’ behaviour through looking at personality traits. In his categorisation of tourists Plog (2004; 1973) describes some tourists as ‘allocentrics’. This group of tourists are always seeking new experiences. For example, ‘allocentrics’ tend to visit new destinations each year rather than return to previously visited places i.e.

they are novelty seekers (Plog, 2004). Therefore the fact that 'Novelty' was strongly associated by respondents with the quality of a tourism destination could indicate that there were 'allocentrics' amongst the respondents.

### **7.3.12 Reasons Tourists Associated Child Friendliness with Quality of a Tourism Destination.**

'Child Friendliness' is concerned with the extent to which tourists view a tourism destination as catering for the needs of their children. It was established that tourists were likely to view the quality of a tourism destination favourably if they regarded the destination as friendly towards children. 'Child Friendliness' is ranked last and has a mean score for the 3.92 on the 7-point Likert scale (Table 7.1). The reasons tourists strongly associate this dimension with the quality of a tourism destination are varied. The main ones are as follows.

One could be related to the presence in the sample of tourists who had spent a holiday at a tourism destination with children. Ryan (1992) argues that the presence of children influences how accompanying adult tourists view the quality of tourism products in general. He further notes that children's satisfaction with the quality of tourism products generates a satisfactory experience for accompanying adult tourists. Approximately one fifth (20%) of the respondents who completed the self-administered questionnaire in this thesis stated that they had spent a holiday at a tourism destination with children in the past. It seems reasonable to suggest that this group of tourists would strongly associate the dimension 'Child Friendliness' with the quality of a tourism destination.

It was also established during interviews that, for the majority of tourists who had spent a holiday at a tourism destination with children, a main concern is the

happiness of their children. Therefore in light of the preceding discussion as well as because of the results of interviews it is reasonable to say that a positive response from tourists who had spent a holiday at a tourism destination with children contributes to the dimension 'Child Friendliness' being associated with the quality of a tourism destination.

#### **7.4 Dimensions of Quality of a Tourism Destination Compared**

The discussion in this section compares and contrasts the dimensions established in the fieldwork with dimensions of quality of service for specific tourism products found in the literature. As noted previously, 12 dimensions of quality of a tourism destination have been established. These are: 'Security', 'Affordability', 'Availability of Tourist Information', 'Friendliness of Host Community', 'Cleanliness and Tidiness', 'Authenticity of Environment', 'Relaxing and Socializing', 'Lack of Crowding', 'Variety of Facilities and Attractions', 'Weather', 'Novelty' and 'Child Friendliness'. There follows a comparison between each of these twelve dimensions and dimensions of quality of service for specific tourism products found in the literature.

Some of the most widely used dimensions of quality in tourism are those developed by Parasuraman *et al.*, (1988; 1985). In their early work on conceptualising service quality, Parasuraman *et al.*, (1985) explicitly identify 'Security' as one of the ten original dimensions of service quality in the services marketing context. Parasuraman *et al.*, (1985) defines 'Security' as the customer's freedom from danger, risk, or doubts. Although this definition of 'Security' (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985) appears to have some similarities with the previously

noted definition of 'Security' within the context of quality of a tourism destination, there are some differences.

One of the major differences between the two dimensions concerns the breadth of attributes which comprise each of the two dimensions. 'Security' seems to comprise attributes of quality that are narrow in focus in that they address mainly safety concerns of the customer during a service encounter e.g. feeling safe when withdrawing cash from a teller machine (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). In contrast, 'Security' as a dimension of quality of a tourism destination incorporates attributes outside the service encounter. In one 'Security' related attribute, for instance, the quality of a tourism destination was described as dependent on the degree to which a destination was free of political unrest.

In their later work on quality conceptualisation, Parasuraman *et al.*, (1988) incorporate 'Security' (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985) into the supposedly broader dimension of service quality they call 'Assurance'. Parasuraman *et al.*, (1988) define 'Assurance' as the knowledge of the service personnel and their ability to convey trust and confidence during a service transaction which again can be viewed as comparable to 'Security' as defined in this thesis. However, if 'Assurance' also views tourists' perception of quality as mainly derived from the extent to which they are made to feel safe during a service encounter, this would mean that there are some differences between the two dimensions in terms of breadth.

Within the context of tourism, some studies (e.g. Lam and Zhang, 1999; Qu and Tsang, 1998) which draw from Parasuraman's *et al.*, (1988) work, identify security-related factors as attributes of service quality for specific tourism

products such as travel agents and hotels. Lam and Zhang (1999), for instance, identify 'feeling safe in a transaction with the agent' as an attribute of service quality in a travel agent business.

Similarly, Qu and Tsang (1998) have established 'security of room' as an attribute of quality of service in hotels. More recently, Nadiri and Hussain (2005) have identified feeling safe in a transaction with a hotel as an attribute of service quality in hotel business. Nevertheless, like Parasuraman *et al.*, (1988), security-related attributes of service quality established by these researchers relate mainly to the safety of the tourists during transactions with a tourism organisation.

However, a study by Lindqvist and Bjork (2000), which is not based on Parasuraman's *et al.*, (1988) conceptualisation of quality, identifies 'General Personal Safety' as a dimension of quality specific to tourists aged 55 years and older, which has some similarity with 'Security' as identified in this thesis. These researchers define 'General Personal Safety' as a mature tourist's perception of safety from external threats such as crime and violence. But, while Lindqvist and Bjork's (2000) study identifies safety as a dimension of quality for the mature tourists, this thesis indicates that safety is equally relevant across all age groups.

With regards to the dimension 'Cleanliness and Tidiness', a study by Johnston (1995) which was based on Parasuraman's *et al.*, (1985; 1988) work identifies 'Cleanliness and Tidiness' as a dimension of service quality within the service-marketing context. 'Cleanliness and Tidiness' (Johnston, 1995) has some similarity with 'Tangibility' (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985) in that both dimensions regard service quality as dependent on the appearance of a service provider itself

i.e. the neatness and tidiness in appearance of physical facilities and employees of a service organisation.

By way of contrast, 'Cleanliness and Tidiness', established in this thesis, comprises attributes which suggest that the quality of a tourism destination is a function of factors beyond the bounds of a single tourism organisation. The extent to which a tourism destination's roads appear clean and tidy, for example, is one of the attributes which make up 'Cleanliness and Tidiness' as a dimension of quality of a tourism destination. Clearly, this attribute is not directly linked to the appearance of a specific service organisation per se.

Specific to tourism, some studies (e.g. Lam and Zhang, 1999; Qu and Tsang, 1998) identify attributes with some similarity to those that make up 'Cleanliness and Tidiness' as a dimension of quality of a tourism dimension. Qu and Tsang (1998), for instance, have established that 'cleanliness of rooms' is an attribute of service quality in a hotel. However, since these studies (including Johnston, 1995) draw mainly from Parasuraman *et al.*, (1985, 1988), quality is mainly viewed as dependent on the degree of cleanliness and tidiness of the service provider itself. Hence, in terms of breadth, there are some differences between the findings of this thesis and those from previous related studies.

The dimension of quality of a tourism destination 'Availability of Tourist Information' has some similarities with 'Communication', a service quality dimension developed by Parasuraman *et al.*, (1985). The reason is that in both dimensions quality is viewed as dependent on how well the service provider's message is understood by the customers.

However, the main difference between the two is that 'Communication' emphasises the 'achieving of a fit' between the vocabulary an organisation uses to convey its messages and the intended recipient, as the key to attaining service quality. An example of this might be an organisation's ability to vary its vocabulary to suit the customer's needs, such as '...increasing the level of sophistication with the well educated customer and speaking simply and plainly with a novice' (Parasuraman *et al.*, (1985:47).

In 'Availability of Tourist Information', on the other hand, the quality of a tourism destination is viewed as not only achieved by the suitability of the vocabulary used in communicating with the tourists, but also by the appropriateness of the language itself. This means that the language should be that which is understood by the tourists e.g. where tourists who speak English only are visiting a Chinese speaking tourism destination, tourist information should be made available in English at the destination.

The dimension 'Friendliness of the Host Community' established in this thesis has some similarities with services quality dimensions found in previous related studies. It is particularly comparable to the dimensions 'Friendliness' (Johnston *et al.*, 1995) and 'Courtesy' (Parasuraman, 1988; 1985) in that in these dimensions quality is viewed as dependent on the degree of friendliness extended to the customer (tourist). However, there are differences over the matter of exactly whose 'friendliness' contributes to a customer's perception of quality.

Johnston *et al.*, (1995) define 'Friendliness' as the warmth and personal approachability of the service provider's contact staff. Similarly Parasuraman *et al.*, (1985) define 'Courtesy' as the extent to which customer contact personnel of

a service provider are courteous. This suggests that both Johnston *et al.*, (1995) and Parasuraman *et al.*, (1985) view the friendliness of employees of a service organization itself, i.e. people who are likely to be directly involved in the delivery of a tourism organisation's services, as mostly driving customers' perception of quality of service.

However, the findings of this thesis suggest that it is mainly the friendliness of the host community, i.e. people who are not directly involved in the delivery of a tourism organisation's products, which determine the quality of a tourism destination. This contrast with most studies of quality in tourism where, as in the services marketing context, quality is seen as deriving mostly from the friendliness a service provider's employees show to the tourists. For example, a number of studies in tourism (e.g. Akan, 1995; Mei, *et al.*, 1999, Jago and Deery, 2002) identify 'Friendliness and courtesy of staff' as an attribute of service quality in hotels. The reason for this is that most studies of quality in tourism draw mainly from the work of Parasuraman (1988, 1985) which, as previously noted, views quality of services as mostly driven by the friendliness which a service provider's employees show to the tourist.

'Affordability', as a dimension of quality of a tourism destination, is concerned with the extent to which tourists feel a destination's offerings are reasonably priced. 'Affordability' is not amongst the RATER (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988) widely used in tourism. However, the dimension of quality of service in hotels 'Price and value' identified by Qu and Tsang (1998) has some similarity with 'Affordability' in that in both dimensions quality is linked to the price of a product.



The dimension 'Weather' regards the quality of a tourism destination as dependent on the extent to which a destination has favourable weather conditions for the activities tourists want to pursue. The weather at a tourism destination can vary from day to day, leaving tourists unsure of what weather to expect (Braun *et al.*, 1999). So it is reasonable to suggest that a more reliable weather pattern at a tourism destination would enhance the quality of that destination in the eyes of tourists. For this reason the dimension 'Weather' has some similarities with the service and product quality dimension of 'Reliability' (Garvin, 1988; Parasuraman, 1988).

With regards to the quality management field, Garvin (1988) proposed eight dimensions of product quality. These are: 'Performance', 'Features' 'Aesthetics', 'Durability', 'Reliability', 'Conformance', and 'Serviceability' and 'Perceived Quality'. There are both similarities and differences between Garvin's (1988) eight product quality dimensions and the twelve dimensions of quality of a tourism destination established in the fieldwork for this thesis.

For instance, as previously demonstrated, the dimension 'Weather' established in this thesis, is comparable to 'Reliability' (Garvin, 1988). 'Friendliness of the Host Community' has some similarities with Garvin's (1988) 'Serviceability' which regards product quality as being dependent on, amongst other factors, the courtesy shown to a customer when a product that has broken down is being repaired. But like 'Courtesy' (Parasuraman, 1985), 'Serviceability' (Garvin, 1988) is concerned mainly with friendliness shown to the customer during a service encounter. Therefore, 'Serviceability' (Garvin, 1988) does not fully compare with 'Friendliness of the Host Community' especially in terms of breadth or scope.

'Cleanliness and Tidiness' and 'Authenticity of Environment' established in this thesis appear to share some similarities with Garvin's (1988) 'Aesthetics', 'Performance', 'Features' and 'Durability'. These dimensions seem to share a common theme that quality can be judged on the basis of a product's appearance e.g. how the product looks, feels, sounds or tastes. However, while, Garvin (1988) believes that 'Performance', 'Features' and 'Durability' can be assessed objectively, 'Cleanliness and Tidiness' and 'Authenticity of Environment' can only be measured subjectively.

With reference to 'Security', although this dimension does not appear to have been captured in the eight product quality dimensions proposed by Garvin (1988), researchers in quality management (e.g. Taguchi, 1986) are aware of the link between safety and quality perception issues. Taguchi (1986) for instance, defines quality as the 'loss imparted' to a society from the time a product is shipped. He cites the dangers a product can present to the customer as an example of 'loss' to society from the time a product is shipped (Chapter Two).

'Affordability' is also not amongst the eight dimensions of product quality proposed by Garvin (1988). But the relationship between price and quality is widely acknowledged in the quality management field. Juran and Gryna (1988), for instance, argue that a quality product is one that is both fit for purpose and affordable i.e. available at a price a customer could afford to pay. Similarly, Feigenbaum (1951) contends that quality can only mean 'best' under certain conditions and these are the actual use and selling price of the product (Chapter Two).

The dimension 'Conformance' (Garvin, 1988) is not easily comparable with the twelve dimensions of quality of a tourism destination established in this thesis. Conformance suggests that quality is judged objectively by comparing some pre-established standard with performance (Garvin, 1988). On the other hand, the twelve dimensions established in this thesis suggest that quality is judged subjectively by tourists. Garvin (1988) acknowledges this view in the dimensions 'Perceived Quality'.

### **7.5 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has discussed the findings of this thesis in light of the literature reviewed in Chapters Two and Three and the wider context. It has been established that although the findings of this thesis may appear similar to dimensions of quality of service widely used in tourism, there are some differences. One of the major differences is that, unlike dimensions from previous related studies, the dimensions of quality of a tourism destination established in this thesis incorporate attributes that are not specific to a single organisation. Similar differences have also been established between dimensions of quality in the quality management field and the 12 established in this thesis.

This suggests that the notion of quality of a tourism destination is a much broader concept than that of service quality widely used in tourism and that of product quality from the quality management field. The results of the hypothesis tests reveal that there are no significant differences in understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination within groups of tourists.

## **Chapter 8 Summary and Conclusions**

### **8.1 Introduction**

Chapter Eight summarises the main findings of the study, provides important conclusions and draws out implications for the designing of a tool for measuring the quality of a tourism destination. In addition, it highlights the main contribution to knowledge, acknowledges any limitations, and makes recommendations for further research.

### **8.2 Research Objectives**

Before presenting the summary and conclusions, it is initially appropriate to re-state the objectives previously presented in Chapter One:

- i. To explore the understanding of the meaning of the term quality of a tourism destination amongst tourists by establishing the attributes and dimensions of quality of a tourism destination.
- ii. To establish which attributes tourists most strongly associate with the quality of a tourism destination.
- iii. To establish which dimensions tourists most strongly associate with the quality of a tourism destination.
- iv. To establish whether there are any significant and meaningful differences in understanding of the meaning of the term 'quality of a tourism destination' within a group of tourists, given a number of independent variables.
- v. To explain why tourists strongly associate dimensions identified in (iii) above with the quality of a tourism destination.
- vi. To explain why there are, or are not, significant and meaningful differences in understanding of the meaning of the term quality of a tourism destination between groups of tourists as found in this study (objective iv).
- vii. To compare and/or contrast the attributes and dimensions of the 'quality of tourism destination' with service quality dimensions of specific tourism products found in the literature.

- viii. To specify the implications of this study for the development of a new technique for measuring the quality of a tourism destination.

### **8.3 Recap of the Key Literature**

Chapter One asserted that continuous improvement of quality is crucial for the success, if not the survival, of tourism destinations. It was also noted that no tool adequate for measuring the quality of a tourism destination has yet been developed. The first step in developing such a tool would be to conceptualise the notion of quality of a tourism destination. To this end, this thesis was aimed at conceptualising the quality of a tourism destination through establishing the attributes and dimensions of quality of a tourism destination as well as specifying the implications for the development of a new technique for measuring quality of a tourism destination.

The literature review chapters have investigated how quality has been conceptualised and measured in previous related studies with the goal of establishing how best to conceptualise the quality of a tourism destination. Chapter Two has argued that the term quality is commonly defined as 'conformance to customer requirements' (Oakland, 1993) within the quality management field. In addition, Chapter Two has shown that many researchers in the quality management field (e.g. Arnheiter and Harren, 2006; Evans and Lindsay, 2002; Garvin, 1988) regard quality as comprising eight main dimensions, or product characteristics, that customers can use to infer quality. In summary, the eight dimensions (Garvin, 1988) indicate that quality could be inferred from both the tangible and intangible characteristics of a product (Arnheiter and Harren, 2006; Evans and Lindsay, 2002).

On the other hand Chapter Two has shown that in the services marketing field quality is commonly defined as the discrepancy or 'gap' between expected and perceived service (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985; 1988). Here quality is viewed as comprising five main dimensions which are: 'Reliability', 'Assurance', 'Tangibility', 'Empathy, and 'Responsiveness' (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988) which are commonly known by the acronym RATER (Tenner and DeToro, 1992). These dimensions (RATER) form the basis for measuring quality using a tool known as the SERVQUAL scale developed by Parasuraman *et al.*, (1988).

Chapter Two has highlighted the fact that, despite wide usage, the SERVQUAL scale (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985; 1988) faces fierce criticism from many service quality researchers (e.g. Raajpoot, 2004; Devlin *et al.*, 2002; Cronin and Taylor, 1994; 1992). Cronin and Taylor (1994; 1992), for example, describe as 'flawed' the approach to measuring quality by computing the gap between expectations and perceptions in the SERVQUAL scale. Devlin *et al.*, (2002) argue that the meaning of 'expectations' is still vague. In addition, several researchers (e.g. Babakus and Mangold, 1992; Carman, 1990) have challenged the relevance of RATER dimensions within the services marketing field.

Chapter Two also compares and contrasts the approaches to conceptualising and measuring quality in the fields of quality management and services marketing. In summary, the chapter notes that while both fields regard quality measurement as a prerequisite step to quality improvement, they differ in the way they approach it. In the quality management field, quality measurement takes place within the organisation and mainly involves the use of an objective tool. In contrast, quality measurement in the services marketing field mainly involves capturing the

subjective views of customers regarding the level of quality they feel a service provider has given them.

Chapter Three has investigated the conceptualisation and measurement of quality in tourism. It argues that the study of quality in tourism has been mainly informed by the services marketing theory of quality especially the work of Parasuraman *et al.*, (1988; 1985). Despite being frequently applied, the services marketing theory of quality faces criticism from several tourism researchers (Augustyn and Seakhoa-King, 2004; O'Neill and Palmer, 2003; Ekinici and Riley, 1998). In summary, these critics argue that the mixed results from the application of the SERVQUAL scale in tourism, is sufficient evidence that the services marketing theory of quality may be inapplicable in tourism.

Chapter Three has also demonstrated that the services marketing theory of quality might not be applicable at the tourism destination level, primarily because this theory was developed with a single service organisation (e.g. a hotel) in mind. (Ryan, 1997; Wakefield and Blodgett, 1996). However, a tourism destination comprises a number of tourism organisations (Eraqi, 2006; Murphy *et al.*, 2000). Chapter Three noted that it was not known how tourists conceptualise the quality of complex tourism products such as a tourism destination. The last part of Chapter Three discusses personal background factors (e.g. age, income and ethnicity) that could influence how tourists conceptualise the quality of a tourism destination. The discussion in Chapter Three has resulted in nine hypotheses being developed.

To conclude, Chapter Three has argued that the services marketing field approach to quality, widely employed in tourism, is not adequate for conceptualising quality

in the context of a tourism destination. Consequently, it recommends further research to establish a clearer understanding of how tourists conceptualise the quality of a tourism destination. It is suggested that findings from such research could be helpful in designing a tool for measuring the quality of a tourism destination.

#### **8.4 Summary of Key Findings and Conclusions**

This section presents a summary of the main findings from the two research phases conducted in this thesis. Section 8.4.1 focuses on key findings from the qualitative phase while Section 8.4.2 presents the main results from the quantitative phase.

##### **8.4.1 Findings of the Qualitative and Theoretical Perspectives**

It would appear that there are a number of key issues from the findings of the field research, which ought to be further highlighted as they provide a contrasting view to the dominant approach to conceptualising quality in the tourism field. The first issue concerns the finding regarding the meaning of quality in tourism, which is part of the broader aim of this thesis.

It was argued consistently in Chapter Seven that the dimensions established in the field research seem to be closely linked with what many researchers (e.g. Awaritefe, 2004; Woods and Deegan, 2003; Gilbert and Terrata, 2001; Braun *et al.*, 1999; Crompton, 1979) regard as factors that motivate people to go on holiday i.e. the push and pull factors. In addition, Chapter Seven has demonstrated that some of the dimensions established in the field research correspond with human needs as suggested by Maslow (1973). These findings suggest that the meaning of quality in tourism is linked to tourists' feelings of whether their experience at a



tourism destination meets their needs. In addition, the findings also suggest that quality in tourism is linked to tourist motivations for travel.

Indeed, as Chapter Three has highlighted, tourism is about fulfilling people's needs and motivations for spending a holiday at a destination (Goossens, 2000; Gnoth, 1997; Mansfeld, 1992; Crompton, 1979). Hence, it seems theoretically sound that the meaning of quality in tourism would be closely linked with the very reasons why tourists spend a holiday at a tourism destination i.e. to fulfil their needs and motivations for travel.

Gnoth (1997) argues that once people are motivated to go on holiday they develop 'expectations' about the tourism destination they intend to visit. Many researchers (e.g. Weiermair, 1997; Bojanic and Rosen, 1994) are of the opinion that 'expectations' determine how people perceive the quality of tourism products they consume at a tourism destination. As a result, the definition of quality as the difference or 'gap' between expectations and perceptions (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988), and the expectancy disconfirmation theory (Oliver, 1980) on which this definition is based, should be useful in the tourism field. However, as has been argued in Chapter Three, defining quality in the tourism field as the 'gap' between expectations and perceptions is problematic on two main accounts.

First, previous research (e.g. Kozak, 2000; O'Neill and Palmer, 2003), reviewed in Chapter Three, has revealed that people do not always have expectations about the destinations they intend to visit, as Gnoth (1997) suggests. This is especially true where tourists are visiting a new destination (O'Neill and Palmer, 2003). Second, while there may be a link between expectations and perceptions of quality (Gnoth, 1997; Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988), a causal relationship between the

two, in the direction of expectations being met leading to customers (tourists) feeling that quality has been attained, is not guaranteed (Kozak, 2000; Barsky, 1992). LaTour and Pleat, (1979), for instance, have established that customers (tourists) can be satisfied with the quality of a service they have received even though it did not meet their expectations (Chapter Two).

If customers (tourists) can still be satisfied with the quality of a service when their expectations have not been met, then clearly there is more to quality than just meeting or exceeding customer expectations. Put differently, it demonstrates that expectations may not be the only variable on which customers (tourists) base their interpretation of the meaning of quality. Indeed, as the findings from the field research demonstrated, there are other variables, and perhaps more important ones such as needs and motivations, which influence tourists' interpretation of the meaning of quality. The implication is that the definition of quality in tourism should be sufficiently comprehensive to incorporate not just the notion of expectations but also those of needs and motivations for travel.

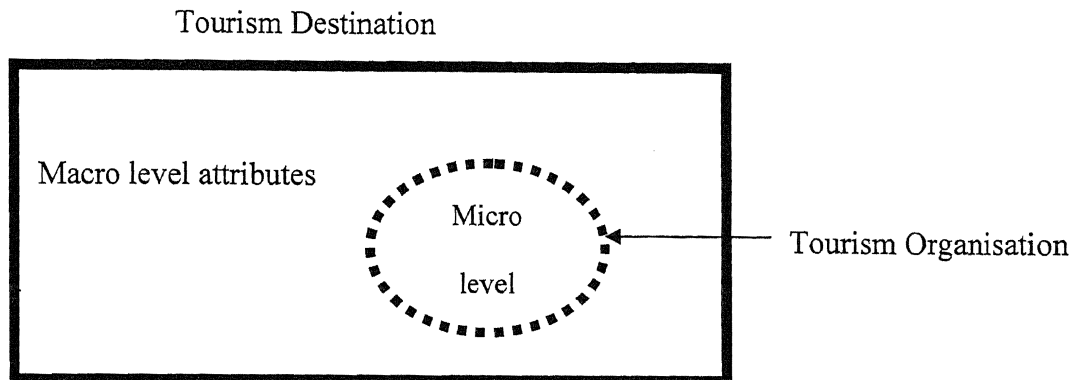
Here the traditional definition of quality as 'conformance to customer requirements' (Oakland, 1993) within the quality management field could be useful in the tourism field. However the problem is that the review of previous literature in Chapter One has revealed that in most studies the term 'customer requirements' is only vaguely defined, if at all. A definition by the International Organisation for Standards (ISO, 2000), however, provides some indication of what the term 'customer requirements' means. ISO (2000) views meeting customer requirements as fundamental to the success of quality management. It defines a requirement as; a '...need, expectation, or obligation...' ISO (2000:7).

Although this seemingly loose usage of the words ‘requirement’, ‘need’ and ‘expectation’ could give the misleading impression that they are synonyms, it does nevertheless suggest that ‘customer requirements’ is an all-embracing term which captures both the notions of expectation and need.

A key feature in the ISO view of quality is that conforming to customer requirements is not only a prerequisite to success of quality management but also necessary for compliance with the law. Indeed, the findings from the field research capture factors which are concerned not only with meeting customer requirements but also government or legislative requirements. For example, factors concerning the safety of tourists addressed by the dimensions ‘Security’ and those regarding the health and safety of tourists covered by the dimension ‘Cleanliness and Tidiness’ also fall under government or legislative requirements.

A second and yet equally important issue regarding the findings from the qualitative phase concerns the ‘breadth’ or ‘scope’ of the established attributes of quality of a tourism destination. A close scrutiny of the findings of the field research suggests that these attributes fall into two main groups. First is a group of attributes that are relatively narrow in focus i.e. more specific to a tourism organisation, such as ‘a destination with clean transport facilities’ which belongs to the dimension ‘Cleanliness and Tidiness’ and ‘a destination with affordable accommodation facilities’ which is part of ‘Affordability’. This researcher has termed this group of attributes ‘micro-level attributes’ because of their narrowness in scope (Figure 8.1).

**Figure 8.1 Macro and Micro level Attributes of Quality of a Tourism Destination**



The second group comprises attributes that are relatively broad in focus, in that they describe the quality of a tourism destination as dependent on factors external to a specific organisation. For example, the attributes ‘a destination with plenty of undisturbed natural beauty’, which belongs to the dimension ‘Authenticity of Environment’, and ‘a destination with weather that is conducive to the activity the tourist wants to pursue’ which is part of the dimension ‘Weather’ are concerned with the quality of features outside the boundaries of a single organisation. This researcher has termed this group of attributes ‘macro-level attributes’ because of their broadness in scope (Figure 8.1).

At the dimension level, it would appear that most of the dimensions established in the field research comprise a combination of micro- and macro-level attributes (Table 8.1). For example, in the dimension ‘Cleanliness and Tidiness’ while the attribute ‘a destination with clean transport facilities’ addresses quality at the micro level, the attribute ‘where the streets are kept clean’ is more concerned with quality at the macro level.

**Table 8.1 Classification of Quality Dimensions on the Basis Micro and Macro Attributes level**

	Dimension	Micro Level Attributes	Macro Level Attributes
Dimensions of Quality of a Tourism Destination	Authenticity of Environment		✓
	Security	✓	✓
	Affordability	✓	
	Cleanliness and Tidiness	✓	✓
	Availability of Tourist Information		✓
	Relaxing		✓
	Lack of Crowding	✓	✓
	Variety of Facilities and Attractions	✓	✓
	Friendliness of Host Community	✓	✓
	Weather		✓
	Novelty	✓	✓
	Child Friendliness	✓	✓
Dimensions of Service Quality.	Tangibility	✓	
	Reliability	✓	
	Responsiveness	✓	
	Assurance	✓	
	Empathy	✓	
Dimension of Product Quality	Performance	✓	
	Features	✓	
	Reliability	✓	
	Conformance	✓	
	Durability	✓	
	Serviceability	✓	
	Aesthetics	✓	
	Perceived quality	✓	

In contrast, dimensions of quality of service established by Parasuraman (1988), and widely used in tourism, consist mainly of micro-level attributes (Table 8.1). The same can also be said of product quality dimensions proposed by Garvin (1988), which seem to address quality mainly at the micro level. Indeed, as the

literature review chapters have highlighted, the conceptualisation of quality by Parasuraman *et al.*, (1988) and other researchers (e.g. Nowacki, 2005; Getty and Getty, 2003; Juwaheer and Ross, 2003; Frochot and Hughes, 2000) in the tourism field focuses on a very narrow service encounter involving a single organisation at a time. Hence it is not surprising that dimensions of quality established by these researchers comprise mainly what can be described as micro-level attributes.

A third finding from the field research, which merits further discussion, concerns the distinction between the notion of quality and that of customer satisfaction. It was noted in Chapter Two that, although there is some consensus that the two notions differ in terms of 'breadth' and 'specificity', researchers disagree about which of the two is broad and which specific. Some researchers (e.g. Anderson and Fornell, 1994; Baker and Hubbert, 1994; Taylor and Baker, 1994) contend that service quality is the 'specific' notion while customer satisfaction is the 'broad' one. These researchers argue that this was evident because service quality judgements tend to be based on attributes specific to a service, whereas dissatisfaction or satisfaction judgements can result from any factors, whether service related or not (Bou-Llusar *et al.*, 2001) see Chapter Two.

The results of the field research indicate that in assessing the quality of a tourism destination, tourists use both attributes specific to an organisation (micro-level attributes) and those outside the boundaries of a single organisation (macro-level attributes). This finding offers support to researchers who argue that quality can be assessed both at the specific and at the general level (e.g. Tian-Cole and Crompton, 2003; Weiermair, 2000; Ekinici and Riley, 1998).

#### **8.4.2 Results of the Quantitative Phase and Theoretical Perspectives**

Of the major findings of the quantitative phase, two need to be discussed further as they seem have some theoretical implications. The first concerns the objective of investigating whether there were any differences in the understanding of the meaning of the term quality of a tourism destination within a group of tourists, given a number of independent variables.

Previous related studies (Kvist and Klefsjo, 2006; Atilgan *et al.*, 2003; Ryan and Cliff, 1997; Soriano, 2002; Koo *et al.*, 1999) have suggested that tourists from different backgrounds (based on variables such as age, income) differ in their understanding of the meaning of the term quality (Chapter Three). Initial results based on statistical tests for significant difference (e.g. ANOVA and T-tests) appear to support those of previous related studies e.g. mean score values of female and male tourists have been found to differ significantly in some dimensions.

However, small differences in mean score values within groups of tourists can be statistically significant and yet be of no practical or theoretical value (Cohen 1988) (see Chapter Four). This suggests that any conclusions drawn on the basis of statistical tests for significant difference alone may be premature (Cohen 1988). The advice drawn from literature (e.g. Tabachnick and Fidel, 1996; Cohen 1988), is that any statistically significant differences should be investigated further to established whether or not they are meaningful before any conclusion can be drawn from them. Surprisingly, although researchers are aware of this approach to data analysis, a review of literature (e.g. Kvist and Klefsjo, 2006; Ekinici *et al.*, 2003; Ryan and Cliff, 1997) reveals that further tests to investigate the

meaningfulness of statistically significant differences in mean score values are seldom reported.

In this thesis, one of the most frequently used measures for the 'strength of association' between the independent and dependent variable, (eta squared-  $\eta^2$ ), has been used to establish the meaningfulness of statistically significant differences within groups' mean score values (Pallant, 2001). This additional step has revealed that though statistically significant, the magnitude of the differences in mean score values are mostly too small to be meaningful. Informed by results from tests of both significant differences (e.g. t-tests and ANOVA tests) and measures of 'strength of association' ( $\eta^2$ ), this researcher has been able to draw the conclusion that demographic factors had only a small role in tourists' understanding of the meaning of quality as it applied to a tourism destination. This finding seems to question the value of capturing tourists' personal data in quality measurement.

The second important finding of the quantitative phase relates to the objective aimed of comparing and/or contrasting the attributes and dimensions of the quality of a tourism destination with service quality dimensions of specific tourism products found in the literature. It has been noted that although the dimensions established in this thesis appear similar to those of services (Nowacki, 2005; Akbaba, 2006; Bojanic and Rosen, 1994; Saleh and Ryan, 1991) and products quality (Brucks *et al.*, 2000; Garvin, 1987), there are also many differences. As a result, it is reasonable to suggest that the notion of quality of a tourism destination is different from that of quality of service developed in the



service-marketing field but widely employed in tourism and that of product quality from the quality management field.

### **8.5 Limitations of the Study**

This thesis has provided some valuable insight into how tourists conceptualise the quality of a tourism destination. However, there are some limitations to consider while drawing conclusions from the results of this thesis. Data collection for the quantitative phase of this thesis was conducted at two airports (Luton and Stansted). An airport may not be the best place to conduct the quantitative phase of this thesis for a number of reasons which are discussed below.

First, conducting the study at an airport selects tourists who mainly fly when they go on holidays and as a result, this thesis may have ignored the views of tourists who do not fly. Second, airports are mainly used by tourists who go on holidays at tourism destinations abroad. Hence, by collecting data at an airport, this thesis may also have ignored the views of domestic tourists and these tend to be far more numerous than international tourists.

Third, by conducting the study at an airport, it may appear that this thesis has captured the views of mainly affluent tourists i.e. those who can afford to fly, thereby excluding tourists who cannot afford to fly. This limitation could be offset by the fact that the two airports (i.e. Luton and Stansted) where data collection for the quantitative phase was conducted are mostly operated by low cost airlines. As a result, it is possible that air travel at these airports is affordable to tourists from most income backgrounds. In fact, the largest number of tourists who completed the questionnaire come from lower income groups.

Nevertheless, the limitation associated with conducting the quantitative phase of this thesis at an airport suggests the results might have been different if the quantitative phase of the study had been conducted at a different site. While this point may have some merit, attention must also be drawn to the fact that this thesis has employed a triangulation of methods which has seen findings from the qualitative phase being used to inform the quantitative phase. The qualitative phase was conducted at a tourist attraction. It is possible this difference in the sites where data was collected, between the qualitative and quantitative phases, could counteract some of the limitations of the quantitative phase having been conducted at an airport.

Other than the limitations regarding the place of data collection, there is also a shortcoming regarding the sampling method employed to recruit respondents for the field research conducted in the quantitative phase. The sampling method was mainly purposive (Patton, 1980). Although this approach is consistent with the exploratory (Sekaran, 2000) nature of the study conducted in this thesis, it implies that the results cannot be easily generalised to the wider population.

## **8.6 Summary of Contribution to Knowledge**

In this section, the main contributions which this thesis has made to current knowledge are discussed in more detail. First, by uncovering the attributes and dimensions of quality of a tourism destination, this thesis can be viewed as having contributed to current understanding with regards to how tourists conceptualise the notion of quality of a tourism destination. Chapter One highlighted that such knowledge was lacking and, as a result, hindered the development of a tool for measuring the quality of a tourism destination. Quality measurement is considered

(e.g. Ryan and Cliff, 1997; De Keyser and Vanhove, 1997) a prerequisite step in efforts to improve quality.

Second, the differences in how quality is conceptualised and measured between the fields of tourism and services marketing have been discussed. It has been noted that dimensions of quality most widely used in tourism were developed in the services marketing field. However, when dimensions of service quality from the services marketing field are compared with those established in the field work, it is observed that despite appearing similar there are some fundamental differences. One of the major differences between dimensions of service quality and those of quality of a tourism destination relates to the 'scope' or 'breadth' of attributes they incorporate.

It was demonstrated in the fieldwork that dimensions of quality of a tourism destination comprise both attributes specific to tourism products (micro-level attributes) and those relatively broad in focus (macro-level attributes) i.e. concerned with the quality of features of a tourism destination which are external to a specific organisation. In contrast, service quality dimensions (e.g. RATER) appear to comprise mainly attributes specific to a tourism product (micro-level attributes). Therefore, this thesis suggests that there are some differences in meaning between the notion of quality of a tourism destination and that of quality of service widely employed in tourism.

While this finding is not a surprise in itself, especially given that the meaning of quality is known to differ from one field to another, it does highlight the dangers of any one field relying on the quality attributes and dimensions developed in another, in case they should be found to be not entirely applicable. Indeed, quality

management experts (e.g. Crosby, 1979; Deming, 1982; Juran and Gryna, 1988) warn that employing inappropriate quality attributes and dimensions can result in many quality problems e.g. it can lead to bad quality practices being encouraged and a poor allocation of resources.

The distinction between macro- and micro-level attributes of quality of a tourism destination also implies that, though the quality efforts of an individual tourism organisation can improve the quality of that individual organisation, they may not be adequate for the whole tourism destination. This thesis suggests that, if the goal is to improve the quality of the destination as a whole, then the starting point should not be the single organisation but the destination as a whole. This implies that tourism organisations operating at a given tourism destination need to cooperate in order to tackle quality problems that are beyond the scope of one organisation. For instance, they could pool their resources to solve problems such as crime and litter on the streets of the destination.

Third, the findings from the fieldwork have contributed to current knowledge with regards to the role of demographic factors such as age, income, and ethnicity on tourists' understanding of the meaning of quality. Unlike previous related studies (e.g. Kvist and Klefsjo, 2006; Atilgan *et al.*, 2003; Soriano, 2002; Koo *et al.*, 1999) this thesis has established that tourists' personal background characteristics appear to have little, if any, role in their understanding of the meaning of quality.

Fourth, the popular approach to conceptualising quality in tourism, as highlighted in Chapter Three, focuses mainly on the quality delivered by individual organisations as opposed to the quality delivered by the destination as a whole. Therefore, by conceptualising the quality of a tourism destination when a

destination is viewed as one whole, this thesis can be viewed as having provided an alternative approach to studying quality in tourism. One of the major outcomes of this change in approach is that this thesis has been able to uncover quality dimensions not formerly known in tourism e.g. 'Weather' and 'Relaxing' although well known in other tourism studies. Such information can be viewed as important for designing strategies to deliver the quality that meets tourists' needs at tourism destinations.

Fifth, this thesis employed a methodological approach not frequently used in tourism research. Initially, a triangulation (Decrop, 1999) of three data collection techniques was proposed for gathering data in the qualitative phase of the study in this thesis, based on a review of literature from previous related studies (e.g. Ryan and Cessford, 2003; Ryan, 2000; Minjoon *et al.*, 1998; Echtner and Ritchie 1993; 1991). Instead of the usual approach of proceeding to employ the three approaches in the main study, the three techniques were subjected to a pre-test, in the form of a pilot study, to determine the suitability of each technique for gathering qualitative data for this thesis. The criteria used in assessing the techniques were (1) the 'effectiveness' of a technique of data collection, (2) the 'efficiency' of the technique, (3) the 'depth and detail' of information that the technique produces and (4) the 'uniqueness of information' gathered (Patton, 1990).

'Effectiveness' was assessed in terms of the data collection technique's ability to generate the data required for the exploratory study (Patton, 1990). 'Efficiency' has been assessed in terms of the amount of data required for the exploratory study that each data collection technique could generate per respondent (Patton,

1990). In reference to 'depth and detail', the data collected using each technique has been assessed with a view to determining which technique generated data that were sufficiently comprehensively explained as to be meaningful and useable in the exploratory study. Lastly, the 'uniqueness' of the data generated was assessed in terms of the ability of each technique to generate additional data that no other technique had generated (Patton, 1990).

The in-depth interview technique, which emerged as the most suitable of the data collection techniques based on the criteria previously noted, was used to gather data in the qualitative phase of this thesis. The results of the qualitative phase were used in the design of the self-administered questionnaire employed in the field research conducted in the quantitative phase of this thesis. This approach, where results from the qualitative phase are used to inform the design of a research instrument for the quantitative phase of study, is still relatively unusual in tourism research.

### **8.7 Implications of the Findings of this Study to Designing a Tool for Measuring the Quality of a Tourism Destination**

The goal of this section is to achieve the objective of specifying implications of the findings of this thesis for the development of a new technique for measuring quality of a tourism destination. The main implications for the development of a tool for measuring the quality of a tourism destination are as follows:

1.) It was noted in Section 8.4.1 that the findings from the field research suggest that quality in tourism is best defined as 'conformance to tourist requirements'. This definition is a modified version of the 'conformance to customer requirements' definition of quality within the quality management field (Oakland,

1993). Based on the definition of quality as ‘conformance to tourist requirements’ and the attributes established in the field research, it should be possible to develop a tool for measuring the quality of a tourism destination. The tool could take the form of a self-administered questionnaire (Chapter Three).

Specifically, one section of the self-administered questionnaire should operationalise the attributes established in the field research. This means that each attribute included in the scale should be converted into a scale statement designed to assess the extent to which tourists feel their requirements with respect to that attribute have been met. A 7-point Likert Type (Likert, 1932) scale similar to the one employed in this thesis (Appendix 4.6) should accompany each questionnaire statement so that respondents can record their level of agreement or disagreement with the statement. This approach to measuring quality differs from that in the SERVQUAL scale (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988), which is the most frequently employed tool for measuring quality in tourism (Weiermair, 1997), in a major way.

The underlying principle in the SERVQUAL scale is that people reach their quality decision by comparing their perceptions of the service they would have received with their prior expectations (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988). As a result, one half of the SERVQUAL scale is designed to capture tourist expectations prior to receiving a service and the other their perceptions of the service they would have received from a tourist service provider (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988). Assessing quality using the SERVQUAL scale involves computing the difference or ‘gap’ between tourist expectations and their perception of the service they would have

received from a tourist service provider. This approach to measuring quality has been shown to be problematic.

For instance, differences scores are known to be notoriously unreliable, even when the scales from which they are derived are highly reliable (Iacobucci *et al.*, 1994; Buttle, 1994), see Chapter Two. In addition, the dynamic nature of expectation makes it an unreliable comparison standard against which to assess actual performance when reaching a quality decision (Kozak, 2000), see Chapter Three. Moreover, in the case of tourism, expectations may be non-existent thereby making their usefulness in quality measurement debateable (Kozak, 2000) (Chapter Three).

On the other hand, in the approach to measuring the quality of tourism destination suggested in this thesis, the tourist indicates the extent to which he or she feels his or her requirements have been met. The tourist bases his or her decision not on prior expectations but on assessment of actual performance of the tourism products at a tourism destination. In other words, the tool suggested in this thesis evaluates the extent tourists feel their experience at tourism destination meets their requirements. This means that the approach suggested in this thesis utilises a one format self-administered questionnaire only, rather than the two (i.e. expectations minus perceptions) in Parasuraman's *et al.*, (1988) SERVQUAL scale. A major advantage of this proposed approach to measuring the quality is that it avoids some of the weaknesses of the SERVQUAL scale e.g. the previously noted problem with assessing quality by calculating the 'gap' between tourist expectations and their perception scores.



In addition, a study by Cronin and Taylor (1992) demonstrates that a one-format approach to measuring quality is superior to the gap method in the SERVQUAL scale. It also results in a shorter quality measurement tool which has the advantage of reducing respondent fatigue.

2.) Tourists' requirements are not static, which means that over time both the dimensions and attributes established in the field research may change. Hence, to be meaningful in the long run, the proposed tool for measuring the quality of a tourism destination would need to be periodically updated. This means that an approach for capturing tourists' changing requirements would need to be incorporated in the proposed tool. Currently, no mechanism for capturing tourists' changing requirements has been incorporated in the mostly widely used tools for measuring quality in tourism - the SERVQUAL scale.

One approach would be to include some qualitative question(s), similar to those used in the qualitative phase of this thesis, in the proposed tool for measuring the quality of a tourism destination. The purpose of the qualitative questions would mainly be to capture tourists' own understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination in their own words. The answers to the qualitative questions would then be analysed and the findings used to periodically update the proposed tool for measuring the quality of a tourism destination.

3.) Chapter One has noted that the purpose of measuring quality is to identify areas where quality improvement is required. This raises the question of whether a dimension of quality that is measurable, but cannot be improved, should be incorporated in a quality measurement tool. For instance, although it may be possible to measure 'Weather' - one of the dimensions established in the field

research - it would not be possible to improve the weather conditions at a tourism destination. This means that in developing a tool for measuring the quality of a tourism destination proposed in (1) the merits and demerits of including the less controllable dimensions need to be carefully thought through.

4.) In the quantitative phase it was established that although there were statistically significant differences in mean scores values within tourist groups (e.g. gender and age), the magnitude of the differences are, according to Cohen's (1988) guidelines, too small to be of any practical or theoretical value. This finding casts doubt on whether the additional work of comparing tourist demographics groups and developing separate theories for groups with statistically significant differences in means score values is worthwhile.

More importantly, the finding raises the question as to whether it is at all necessary to include questions capturing tourists' personal factors in the proposed tool for measuring the quality of a tourism destination. If the findings of this thesis are confirmed by other studies, then including questions capturing personal factors in the proposed tool for measuring the quality of a tourism destination may not be necessary. This could be helpful in reducing the length of the questionnaire, which is a persistent problem in the design of questionnaires for measuring quality in general (Truong and Foster, 2006).

## **8.8 Suggestions for Future Research**

This thesis raises a number of implications for future research. These are discussed below. First, the quantitative phase of this thesis was conducted at an airport. As discussion in Section 8.5 highlighted, there are some limitations in the choice of an airport as a site for data collection. Accordingly, a similar study

could be conducted at a location which is not an airport such as tourism destination. This may help resolve some of the questions which are beyond the scope of this thesis such as ‘Could the results of this thesis have been different if the data collection in the quantitative phase had been conducted at another location which is not an airport?’

Second, contrary to previous related studies (e.g. Kvist and Klefsjo, 2006; Ekinici *et al.*, 2003; Atilgan *et al.*, 2003), this thesis suggests that tourists’ background characteristics (age, income) have only a small, if any, influence on tourists’ understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination. There is a need for research to further investigate the influence of personal factors on tourists’ assessment of quality in tourism in general and at tourism destinations in particular.

Third, most of the dimensions established in the fieldwork seem closely linked with factors that many (e.g. Woods and Deegan, 2003; Gilbert and Terrata, 2001; Crompton, 1979) researchers consider factors that motivate tourists to spend a holiday at a destination. Hence there is a need to investigate further whether the quality of a tourism destination can be assessed in terms of the extent to which tourists feel that their motivations for going on holiday at a tourism destination have been met.

In conclusion, this thesis has employed two major theories of quality. These are quality as ‘conformance to customer requirements’ from the quality management field (e.g. Oakland, 1993; Crosby, 1984) and quality as ‘the gap between expectations and perceptions’ from the services marketing field (e.g. Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985; 1988). Both theories are to some extent useful in the tourism field.

However, the findings from the fieldwork suggest that quality as ‘conformance to customer requirements’ from the quality management field (e.g. Oakland, 1993, Crosby, 1984) which has not be widely employed in tourism (Hope, 1997) is more useful.

A major piece of future research is to measure the quality of a tourism destination using a tool to be developed based on the findings of this thesis i.e. the attributes and dimensions of the notion of quality of a tourism destination established in the field work. Churchill (1995; 1979) and indeed other researchers (e.g. Rahman, 2002; Hinkin, 1995) consider attributes as one of the key in puts in the process of developing a tool to measure a notion or concept. The reason is that attributes form the basis for developing scale items which captures the notion the tool is intended to measure(e.g. Rahman, 2002; Hinkin, 1995) Therefore, this thesis can be viewed as having has set the ground for further research aimed at developing a tool for measuring the quality of a tourism destination.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 3.1 Selected Examples of Definitions of a Tourism Destination

Source	Definitions of a Tourism Destination
Gunn (1994)	A geographic area containing a critical mass of development that satisfies traveller objectives.
Ritchie (1993)	A package of tourism facilities and services, which like any other product, is composed of a number of multi-dimensional attributes.
Buhalis (2000)	Destinations are amalgams of tourism products, offering an integrated experience to consumers.
Hu and Ritchie (1993)	A tourism destination is a package of tourism facilities and services, which, like any other consumer product or service, is composed of a number of multidimensional attributes that together determine its attractiveness to a particular individual in a given choice situation.
Medlik (1993)	Country, region, town, or other areas visited by tourist.
Leiper (1995)	Destinations are places towards which people travel and where they choose to stay for a while in order to experience certain features or characteristics—a perceived attraction of some sort.

**Appendix 4.1 Early Versions of the Questionnaire for the Exploratory Study -  
Section A**

**Table 1.**

Original questions (Version 1 of Section A) <sup>a</sup>	Question formulated after the pre-tests in England <sup>b</sup> (Version 2 of Section A)
A	B
What aspects of a tourism destination contribute to the quality of a destination?	In your own opinion, what factors would you look at when judging the quality of a tourism destination?
	What factors best describe the quality of a tourism destination?
What do you understand by the term 'quality of a tourism destination'?	
What things should be done by managers of tourism destination to improve the quality of the destination?	What things should a tourism destination managers do to improve the quality of the destination?
When referring to "tourism destination" in your response, what have you had in mind?	In answering the questions above what did you have in mind as a tourism destination?
If you were asked to judge the quality of a tourism destination, what features would you look at?	What is a tourism destination?
	In your own opinion what factors best describe the quality of a tourism destination?

<sup>a</sup> These questions were pre-tested at a large shopping center in England

<sup>b</sup> These questions were used in the first pilot tests at various locations in England and in South Africa



**Appendix 4.2 Early Version of the Questionnaire for the Exploratory Study -  
Section B**

**1 What is your nationality? .....**

**2 What is your sex? (*Please Tick*)**

**3 Which of these age groups do you fall in? (*Please Tick*)**

**4 What is your net household monthly income? (*Please Tick*)**

**5 What was the last level you completed in your formal education? (*Please tick*)**

**6 Please name the tourism destinations, which you visited and stayed overnight as a paying guest in the past two years (*Please write in the space provided, please continue at the back if necessary*)**

**Domestic.....**

**Abroad.....**

**7 Do you have children between the ages of 3 to 12 years? (*Please tick*)**

**8 If you have answered 'Yes', above, do you travel with your children when are going on holiday? (*Please tick*)**

### Appendix 4.3 The Filter Questions used in the Exploratory Study

Did you visit a tourist destination and stay overnight as a paying guest in the past 2 years?

What is your sex?

What is your net household monthly income?

What was the last level you completed in your formal education?

Which of these age groups do you represent?

Do you have children between the ages of 3 to 12 years?

If you have answered 'Yes', above, do you travel with your children when are going on holiday?

What is your nationality?

			Yes	No	
			Male	Female	
	<£2000	£2001-£3000	£3001-£4000	>? £4001	
Primary	Secondary	Diploma	University (under-graduate)	University (post-graduate)	
	20-29	30-39	40-49	<50	
			Yes	No	
			Yes	No	N/A

**Appendix 4.4 The First Versions of Section A of the Questionnaire used in Pilot Test B<sup>6</sup>**

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In your own opinion, what makes a high quality tourism destination?

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In your own opinion, what are the characteristics of a quality tourism destination?

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In your own opinion, what makes a quality tourism destination?

---

In your own opinion what makes a low quality tourism destination

---

In answering the question above, what did you have in mind as a tourism destination?

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*Number of respondents 40*

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<sup>6</sup> All tests were conducted at an international airport in England. Each questionnaire was answered by 10 respondents

## **Appendix 4.5 Recruiting Respondents for the Pilot Study**

The steps taken to recruit respondents were similar for all three techniques of data collection employed in the pilot study. These were as follows:

**Step One:** The researcher approached a potential respondent and formally introduced himself, followed by an explanation of the aims of the pilot study. In addition, the potential respondent was also informed of the confidentiality of the results of the pilot study. The potential respondent was then requested to participate in the pilot study.

**Step Two:** If a potential respondent accepted the invitation to participate in the pilot study, he or she was asked some filter questions (Appendix 4.3) to establish his or her suitability as respondents for the pilot study. Specifically, these filter questions (Appendix 4.3) were intended to determine whether or not the potential respondent qualified to be a 'tourist' as defined in this thesis (Section 4.3.3.1). In addition, the filter questions were also intended to ensure the participation of respondents from diverse demographic, economic, and social backgrounds in the pilot study (Section 4.3.4.1). If a potential respondent met the criteria for selection, he or she was selected for the pilot study.

**Step three:** If a potential respondent was selected for in-depth interview, then an in-depth interview was conducted on the spot. If the volunteering respondent was selected for the open-ended questionnaires, then the open-ended questionnaire was also administered on the spot. However, if a respondent was selected for the focus group, the volunteering respondent was given an appointment to attend a focus group session. This consisted of the date, place and time when the focus group would be conducted. Details of how each of the data collection techniques was employed in the pilot study are explained under the relevant headings below.

Appendix 4.6 Research Questionnaire



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**Quality of a Tourism Destination**

This survey is part of a study which intends to capture your meaning of the term **'quality of a tourism destination'**. Below are statements that may describe the quality of a tourism destination. The statements were established from recent interviews with tourists. Please indicate the extent to which **you agree** with each statement by circling one of the seven numbers next to each statement. If you **strongly disagree** with the statement, **circle 1**. If you **strongly agree** with the statement, **circle 7**. If you **have no opinion** on the statement, **circle 0**. There are no right or wrong answers; all we are interested in is your honest opinion

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>		<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>No Opinion</b>
1	2 3 4 5 6	7	0

A 'quality tourism destination' is a place									
1	where tourist information is accurate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
2	with facilities that meet the requirements of disabled persons.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
3	where tourist information is available in the language that the tourists understand	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
4	which appears tidy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
5	with restaurants that meet dietary requirements of all tourists.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
6	where tourist can find translators who speak the language they understand	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
7	where attractions are kept clean	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
8	where sellers do not overcharge tourists.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
9	with the required variety of accommodations type.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
10	where tourist information is easily available.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
11	free of political unrest.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
12	free from noise pollution	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0

## Appendix 4.6: Research Questionnaire (Continued)

Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree	No Opinion
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0

<i>A 'quality tourism destination' is a place</i>									
13	with affordable restaurants.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
14	with the required variety of modes of transport.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
15	with public transport drivers who know the area well.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
16	with a low crime rate.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
17	free from air pollution	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
18	with affordable public transport fares.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
19	with the required variety of night entertainment.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
20	with tour guides with a sense of humour.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
21	with a visible police presence to assure the safety of tourists.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
22	where tourists are not made to feel like a foreigner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
23	free from visual pollution.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
24	with shopping facilities that sell affordable goods.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
25	with the required variety of restaurants.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
26	that is different from the tourist home area.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
27	with tour guides who know the area well.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
28	where tourists feel that their belongings are safe from theft.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
29	with the required variety of activities for children	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
30	with local people who encourage tourists to participate in local activities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
31	where public toilets are kept clean.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
32	without queues to use toilets.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
33	with affordable attraction fees.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
34	which offers the required variety of cuisine.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
35	that is different from anywhere the tourist has been.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
36	with local area maps that show all the attractions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
37	where tourists feel that they will not face any physical harm	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
38	where children can be happy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
39	with local people who are keen to help tourists.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0

**Appendix 4.6: Research Questionnaire (Continued)**

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>						<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>No Opinion</b>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0

<i>A 'quality tourism destination' is a place</i>									
40	where the streets are kept clean.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
41	where tourist can see the true character of the area.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
42	without queues to see attractions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
43	with opportunities to experience romantic encounters.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
44	where tourists feel relaxed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
45	with affordable accommodation facilities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
46	with the required variety of activities for all age groups e.g. walking, sightseeing.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
47	with an opportunity to meet people from other ethnic groups.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
48	with a famous tourist attraction.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
49	where tourists can get close to the natural environment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
50	with local area maps that can be easily understood by tourists.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
51	where tourists do not face verbal abuse.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
52	which accommodates changes in tourists day to day plans	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
53	where children's favourite restaurants can be found	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
54	with local people who know their area well.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
55	free from graffiti.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
56	without beggars on the streets.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
57	which is not too commercialised	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
58	that is not overcrowded.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
59	where tourists can meet other tourists.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
60	where tourists feel stress free.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
61	with an atmosphere that can bring enjoyment to tourists.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
62	with an atmosphere conducive for tourists to have a rest.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
63	which provides a learning experience for tourists.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
64	where tourist information is available free of charge.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
65	with the required variety of shopping facilities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
66	with an opportunity to experience a different culture.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0

**Appendix 4.6: Research Questionnaire (Continued)**

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>							<b>Strongly Agree</b>		<b>No Opinion</b>	
1		2	3	4	5	6	7		0	

<i>A 'quality tourism destination' is a place</i>										
67	which has a 'special event' e.g. carnival.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		0
68	with plenty of undisturbed natural beauty.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		0
69	with clearly marked direction signs to tourist attractions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
70	where tourists feel that they will not get mugged.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
71	where if it rains, tourists can undertake other activities that are not affected by rain	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		0
72	with weather that is conducive for the activity the tourists want to pursue.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		0
73	with hotels that offer baby sitting services.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		0
74	with local people who are welcoming towards tourists.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		0
75	where the modes of public transport are kept clean.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		0



## Appendix 4.6: Research Questionnaire (Continued)

SECTION A: For the purpose of classification, I would be grateful if you could complete the following questions about yourself

Please name a holiday destination you last visited and stayed overnight and the country where the destination is located. (Write your answer in the appropriate spaces below)

Holiday destination \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_

How many nights did you stay at the destination?-----

How long ago did you visit the destination? (Write your answer, in months, in the appropriate spaces below)

-----months

Is the holiday destination you named in question (1) above domestic or abroad (Please indicate with a tick) ?

Domestic (a place within your home country)

Abroad (a place outside your home country)

5. What was the main activity you did while at the destination e.g. walking, sightseeing. (Write your answer in the appropriate spaces below)

-----  
Do you have children aged 14 years and under?

Yes  No

If you have answered yes in question 6 above, please state how many of your children fall into the following age groups

0-4  6-14

If you have answered yes in question 6 above, do you travel with your children when you go on holiday?  
Never  Seldom  Often  Always

## Appendix 4.6: Research Questionnaire (*Continued*)

**Section B: For the purpose of classification, I would be grateful if you could complete the following questions about yourself.**

1. What is your nationality -----
2. What is your sex? (*Please Tick*). Male  Female
3. Which of these age groups do you fall in? (*Please Tick*)  
 15-24  25-34  35-44  45-54  55-64  65+
4. What is your gross household annual income (*in UK £*) ? (*Please tick*)  
 Under £10,000  £ 10,000 -£14,999  £ 15,000-£19,999  
 £20,000- £29,999  £ 30,000- £39,999  £40,000 and above
5. What was the last level you completed in your formal education? (*Please tick*)  
 Primary  Secondary  Diploma  University (undergraduate)  
 University (postgraduate)
6. What is your ethnicity (*Please tick*) ?  
White  Black  Asian  Mixed  Other (*specify*) -----

Thank you

## **Appendix 5.1 Pilot Study: In-depth Interviews Results**

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### *The respondents viewed a quality tourism destination as follows:*

The local people are hospitable towards tourist  
The local people are friendly and helpful to tourist  
Local people are friendly, they smile and say hello  
Destination has lots of activities for children to enjoy  
Destination is children friendly  
Destination has games for children  
Political climate at the tourism destination is stable  
Tourists are not afraid of being kidnapped or taken hostage at the destination  
Tourists are not afraid of being mugged at the destination  
Destination offers security for tourists' personal belongings from theft  
Tourist feel that they can use their credit cards without fear of fraud  
Destination has good police service to deter criminals  
A destination that is safe on the overall  
Destination is free from crime  
Place should be able to make tourist feel safe  
Destination has shopping facilities that sell cheap goods  
All the destination offerings are cheap  
Tourists feel that they get value for money at the destination  
Destination has highly affordable accommodation  
Destination has cheap taxi service  
Destination has good transport infrastructure  
Hotels provide shuttle buses to important tourist attractions  
A place good natural environment  
Buses and trains should run on time to avoid disruption of tourist plans  
Place should have good transport throughout the day  
A place with good choice of modes of transport  
Plenty of attractions  
It is about the state or standard of the things that are offered at the destination  
Everything offered at the destination is of the standard required by tourists  
Everything offered at the destination is of high standard  
Hotels have to be of good standard  
Destination has everything that makes the tourist relax  
Destination has everything that makes me forget about my problems  
Destination should be able to provide a good relaxing environment  
Destination should be quiet and peaceful to allow tourist to relax  
All the activities offered at the destination are very good  
Everything at the destination well presented  
A place where my holiday goes smoothly without unnecessary problem  
Destination has everything that contributes to the tourist enjoyment of the place  
Place has ability to bring happiness to tourist  
Destination is clean  
Destination has rubbish bins easily accessible to tourist  
Just how clean the destination is, everything, including the environment  
Destination looks hygienic  
Destination has clean toilets  
Destination roads are clean  
Destination is free from pollution  
Whole entire surrounding of the place should be clean  
Place makes my children happy  
I like a place that can make me forget about my job  
Somewhere I can just break away from the misery life of home  
A place where I can forget about bills, television and neighbours  
A place that gives me a few moments to daydream  
A place I go to get away from the boredom of home  
A place I can get an opportunity to socialise

## **Appendix 5.1 Pilot Study: In-depth Interviews Results**

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*The respondents viewed a quality tourism destination as follows:*

A place I can experience the local people's culture  
A place I can mingle with the local people  
A place where I do not have to worry about anything  
A place where my needs are taken care of  
A destination with variety and caters for everyone's needs  
If the destination has facilities that can meet all your needs  
It must be able to provide you with more enjoyment than you would get at home  
The destination has things that will make tourists happy all the time e.g. attractions.  
Destination that guarantees you total enjoyment and a chance to just relax  
Everything is very good e.g. the beaches and , the sea,  
It is everything, it is the transport, it is the people and that is what you pay for  
This means that everything at the destination takes care of my worries and troubles  
A place where the weather is sunny throughout my stay at the destination  
A place where the weather is nice and warm  
Some nice decent place in a sunshine zone is more than enough  
A lot of variety of food is good  
Good restaurants for me to have breakfast or a late dinner  
More the variety in activities the less you are likely going to get bored  
More the variety of things to do as an individual, the better  
A place where there is a good variety of attractions that cater for all age groups  
Place has a little bit of everything, that is man made and natural attractions  
Lots of different things to do for everybody, I mean the family  
The destination has cheap hotels  
If a destination has cultures to discover, the greater the enjoyment  
A place you can experience the culture of the local people  
A place were I can see something different  
A place easily available tourists of information such as guide maps  
If there is a tourism information office then you can just pop in and get all the directions  
Place has clearly marked street signs  
Place has roads signs in a language understood by tourists  
Roads to tourists attractions clearly marked  
Local people at the destination speak the language understood by tourists  
Place provides an opportunity to party all night  
A place tourists are free to do what they want without bothering about time  
Places where I can afford to live a carefree life  
A place that allows me to have fun without worrying about what my parents will say  
A place where I have the freedom to do things I want to do  
A place that offers good affordable accommodation  
I would like the accommodation to cater for my needs such as nice comfortable beds  
Destination has people to keep me company  
Destination is free thieves  
Place has no litter in buses  
Place has shopping facilities which offer a good variety of commodities  
A place that can bring me the enjoyment that I do not have at home would be very nice  
Everything at the destination makes you very happy and you feel relaxed  
Place has clean toilets and places to change baby nappies  
A place where the toilets are easy to find  
A destination that provides quietness and is safe, is very good  
Freedom to do a variety of things without worrying about anything

---

*No of respondents 11 104 unit of meaning Ratio 9.45*

## Appendix 5.2 Pilot Study: Focus Group Results

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### Focus group participants described a quality tourism destination as:

A place you go to for a holiday and come back relaxed

A place where you are guaranteed of warmth and sunshine

A place where you can see something different and lots of variety

A place with a good variety of attractions

A place with friendly the local people

A place with local people smile at tourists

A place that is child friendly

where my children can enjoy themselves

where the waiters speak English

Good road signage

---

*No of respondents 10 Total 'units of meaning' 11 Ratio 1.40*

### Appendix 5.3 Pilot Study: Open-ended Questionnaires Results

Column One	Column Two
<b>What does the term quality of a tourism destination mean to you?</b>	<b>In your own opinion, what are the characteristics of a quality tourism destination?</b>
<i>Units of Meaning</i>	<i>Units of Meaning</i>
Safe place	Clean well presented apartments
Standard of attractions	Easy access to local traditional areas
Standard of food	Good hotels
All round standard of the place	Good food
A place with lots of entertainment for children	Not too crowded out of season
Friendly local people	Variety of restaurants
Good accommodation	Interesting places to visit
Good food	Good Transport
The of enjoyment level I receive	Nice clean place
Being able to enjoy a holiday	Friendly local people
Enjoyable and pleasurable place	Offers lots of activities
	Has a bit of everything culture, sea, sun
	Good sunny weather
	Lots of activities for children
<i>Total units of meaning 11, No of respondents 31, Ratio #: 0.35</i>	<i>Total units of meaning 14, No of respondents 10, Ratio #: 1.40</i>
Column Three	Column Four
<b>In your own opinion, what makes a high quality tourism destination?</b>	<b>What factors best describe the quality of a tourism destination?</b>
<i>Units of Meaning</i>	<i>Units of Meaning</i>
Lot of activities	Cleanliness of the destination
Meeting local people	Friendliness of the staff
Not too much noise	Plenty of sunshine
Friendly, bilingual people	Enjoyment
	Natives are friendly
	The place has activities for children that are good
<i>Total units of meaning 4, No of respondents 10, Ratio #: 0.40</i>	<i>Total units of meaning 6, No of respondents 9, Ratio #: 0.67</i>
Column Five	Column Six
<b>In your own opinion, what factors best describe the quality of a tourism destination?</b>	<b>In your own opinion, what factors would you look at when judging the quality of a tourism destination?</b>
<i>Units of Meaning</i>	<i>Units of Meaning</i>
Sunny weather	Friendly local people
Good Accommodation	Good transport
Easy to get around the place	Ability to accommodate children
Good activities for children	Ability to offer services or experiences that are inexpensive
Friendly local people	
Political stability, must be nice and peaceful for all to enjoy	
<i>Total units of meaning 6, No of respondents 9, Ratio #: 0.67</i>	<i>Total units of meaning 4, No of respondents 12, Ratio #: 0.33</i>

### Appendix 5.3 Pilot Study: Open-ended Questionnaires Results

Column Seven	Column Eight
In your own opinion, what makes a quality tourism destination?	In your own opinion what makes a low quality tourism destination
<i>Units of Meaning</i>	<i>Units of Meaning</i>
Plenty of sunshine	Unfriendly staff
Local people who are happy to have tourists	Lots of party life and noise
Good standard of accommodation	Hotels of bad standard
Safety while visiting	Bad public transport
Wide selection of attractions	
Reasonably accessible	
Good weather	
<i>Total units of meaning 7, No of respondents 10, Ratio #: 0.70</i>	<i>Total units of meaning 4, No of respondents 10, Ratio #: 0.40</i>

## Appendix 5.4 Attributes and Dimensions of Quality of a Tourism Destination

Attributes	Dimensions
<p><i>A 'quality tourism destination' is a place:</i>            which is not too commercialised.            where tourists can get close to the natural environment.            where tourist can see the true character of the area.            with plenty of undisturbed natural beauty.</p>	Authenticity of Environment
<p>where children's favourite restaurants can be found.            with hotels that offering baby sitting services.            where children can be happy.            with the required variety of activities for children.</p>	Child Friendliness
<p>where the modes of public transport are kept clean.            free from graffiti.            where the streets are kept clean.            where public toilets are kept clean.            free from visual pollution.            free from air pollution.            where attractions are kept clean.            which appears tidy.</p>	Cleanliness and Tidiness
<p>that is not overcrowded.            without queues to see attractions.            without queues to use toilets.</p>	Lack of Crowding
<p>where tourist information is available free of charge.            with affordable accommodation facilities.            with affordable attraction fees.            with shopping facilities that sell affordable goods.            with affordable public transport fares.            with affordable restaurants.</p>	Affordability
<p>with local people who are welcoming towards tourists.            with local people who know their area well.            with local people who are keen to help tourists.            with local people who encourage tourists to participate in local activities.            where tourists are not made to feel like a foreigner.</p>	Friendly Host Community
<p>with local area maps that can be easily understood by tourists.            with local area maps that show all the attractions.            with tour guides who know the area well.            with tour guides with a sense of humour.            with public transport drivers who know the area well.            where tourist information is easily available.            with clearly marked direction signs to tourist attractions.            where tourist can find translators who speak the language they understand.            where tourist information is available in the language that the tourists understand.            where tourist information is accurate.</p>	Availability of Tourist Information



## Appendix 5.4 Attributes and Dimensions of Quality of a Tourism Destination

Attributes	Dimensions
<p>without beggars on the streets.            where tourists do not face verbal abuse.            where tourists feel that they will not face any physical harm.            where tourists feel that their belongings are safe from theft.            with a visible police presence to assure the safety of tourist.            where tourists feel that they will not get mugged.            with a low crime rate.            free of political unrest.            where sellers do not over charged tourists.</p>	<p>Security</p>
<p>with an atmosphere conducive for tourists to have a rest.            with an atmosphere that can bring enjoyment to tourists.            where tourist feel stress free.            where tourists can meet other tourists.            where tourists feel relaxed.            with opportunities to experience romantic encounters.            free from noise pollution</p>	<p>Relaxing</p>
<p>with an opportunity to experience a different culture.            which provides a learning experience for tourists.            with a famous tourist attraction.            With an opportunity to meet people from other ethnic groups.            that is different from anywhere the tourist has been.            that is different from the tourist home area.            which has a 'special event' e.g. carnival.</p>	<p>Novelty</p>
<p>with the required variety of shopping facilities.            with the required variety of activities for all age groups e.g. walking.            which offers the required variety of cuisine.            with the required variety of restaurants.            with the required variety of night entertainment.            with the required variety of modes of transport.            with the required variety of accommodations type.            with restaurants that meet dietary requirements of all tourists.            with facilities that meet the requirements of disabled persons.</p>	<p>Variety of Facilities and Attractions</p>
<p>which accommodates changes in tourists day to day plans.            with weather that is conducive for the activity the tourists wants to pursue.            where if it rains, tourists can undertake other activities that are not affected by rain.</p>	<p>Weather</p>

**Appendix 6.1 Mann-Whitney U Tests Results - Gender**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Mann-Whitney U</b>	<b>Z</b>	<b>Sig.(2-tailed)</b>
Authenticity of Environment	75,873.500	-1.547	0.122
Security	75,995.000	-1.506	0.132
Affordability	68,252.500	-3.858	0.000*
Cleanliness and Tidiness	74,310.500	-2.017	0.044
Relaxing	76,438.000	-1.373	0.170
Availability of Tourist Information	65,270.000	-4.758	0.000*
Lack of Crowding	77,887.000	-0.935	0.350
Weather	76,954.000	-1.219	0.223
Variety of Facilities and Attractions	71,090.000	-2.994	0.003*
Friendliness of Host Community	74,147.500	-2.068	0.039
Novelty	74,092.000	-2.084	0.037
Child Friendliness	76,242.500	-1.432	0.152

*Note: \* significant at less than 0.004 level, df = degrees of freedom*

**Appendix 6.2 Mann-Whitney U Test Results - 'With and 'Without Children' Groups**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Mann-Whitney U</b>	<b>Z</b>	<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>
Authenticity of Environment	49,448.500	-1.292	0.196
Security	42,743.500	-3.804	0.000*
Affordability	48,014.500	-1.828	0.068
Cleanliness and Tidiness	46,308.000	-2.467	0.014
Relaxing	42,483.000	-3.903	0.000*
Availability of Tourist Information	48,063.500	-1.808	0.071
Lack of Crowding	40,456.500	-4.675	0.000*
Weather	42,079.500	-4.065	0.000*
Variety of Offering	40,528.000	-4.635	0.000*
Friendliness of Host Community	45,554.000	-2.752	0.006
Novelty	49,067.000	-1.432	0.152
Child Friendliness	38,229.500	-5.500	0.000*

*Note: \* significant at less than 0.004 level, df = degrees of freedom*

**Appendix 6.3 A Mann-Whitney U Results - 'Domestic' and 'International' Groups**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Mann-Whitney U</b>	<b>Z</b>	<b>Sig.(2-tailed)</b>
Authenticity of Environment	39,769.000	-0.232	0.817
Security	34,506.500	-2.493	0.013
Affordability	40,113.000	-0.083	0.934
Cleanliness and Tidiness	36,179.000	-1.774	0.076
Relaxing	32,264.000	-3.458	0.001*
Availability of Tourist Information	38,421.500	-0.810	0.418
Lack of Crowding	29,353.500	-4.720	0.000*
Weather	32,978.000	-3.159	0.002*
Variety of Facilities and Attractions	32,110.000	-3.523	0.000*
Friendliness of Host Community	37,643.500	-1.146	0.252
Novelty	38,470.000	-0.790	0.430
Child Friendliness	35,853.000	-1.915	0.056

*Note: \* significant at less than 0.004 level, df = degrees of freedom*

### Appendix 6.4 ANOVA Test Results - Tourist Age

Dimension		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.(2-tailed)
Availability of Tourist Information	Between Groups	13.011	4	3.253	2.676	0.031
	Within Groups	973.749	801	1.216		
	Total	986.760	805			
Variety of Attractions and Facilities	Between Groups	20.970	4	5.242	4.299	0.002*
	Within Groups	976.752	801	1.219		
	Total	997.722	805			
Cleanliness and Tidiness	Between Groups	56.060	4	14.015	10.772	0000*
	Within Groups	1042.123	801	1.301		
	Total	1098.183	805			
Relaxing	Between Groups	13.091	4	3.273	2.759	0.027
	Within Groups	950.195	801	1.186		
	Total	963.286	805			
Novelty	Between Groups	9.537	4	2.384	2.076	0.082
	Within Groups	919.760	801	1.148		
	Total	929.296	805			
Affordability	Between Groups	6.378	4	1.595	1.490	0203
	Within Groups	857.076	801	1.070		
	Total	863.454	805			
Friendliness of Host Community	Between Groups	16.124	4	4.031	2.829	0024
	Within Groups	1141.479	801	1.425		
	Total	1157.603	805			
Child Friendliness	Between Groups	64.544	4	16.136	4.909	0001*
	Within Groups	2632.828	801	3.287		
	Total	2697.372	805			
Lack of Crowding	Between Groups	100.490	4	25.122	12.806	0.000*
	Within Groups	1571.402	801	1.962		
	Total	1671.892	805			
Weather	Between Groups	13.747	4	3.437	1.687	0.151
	Within Groups	1631.454	801	2.037		
	Total	1645.201	805			

Note: \* significant at less than 0.004 level, df = degrees of freedom

**Appendix 6.5 Kruskal-Wallis Test Results - Tourist Age**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Chi-Square</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Sig</b>
Availability of Tourist Information	8.180	4	0.085
Security	71.857	4	0.000*
Variety of Attractions and Facilities	16.530	4	0.002*
Cleanliness and Tidiness and Tidiness	45.030	4	0.000*
Relaxing	8.315	4	0.081
Novelty	6.417	4	0.170
Affordability	0.245	4	0.374
Friendliness of Host Community	13.479	4	0.009
Authenticity of Environment	27.603	4	0.000*
Child Friendliness	19.612	4	0.001*
Lack of Crowding	47.558	4	0.000*
Weather	6.988	4	0.137

*Note: \* significant at less than 0.004 level, df = degrees of freedom*

### Appendix 6.6 Tukey HSD Test Results - Tourist Age

Dependent Variable	(I) AGE2	(J) AGE2	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.(2-tailed)
Availability of Tourist Information	1 15-24	2 25-34	-.13	.107	.767
		3 35-44	-.28	.118	.129
		4 45-54	-.20	.122	.494
		5 55+	-.38	.130	.033
	2 25-34	1 15-24	.13	.107	.767
		3 35-44	-.15	.120	.710
		4 45-54	-.07	.124	.980
		5 55+	-.25	.132	.319
	3 35-44	1 15-24	.28	.118	.129
		2 25-34	.15	.120	.710
		4 45-54	.08	.133	.973
		5 55+	-.10	.141	.957
	4 45-54	1 15-24	.20	.122	.494
		2 25-34	.07	.124	.980
		3 35-44	-.08	.133	.973
		5 55+	-.18	.144	.722
	5 55+	1 15-24	.38	.130	.033
		2 25-34	.25	.132	.319
		3 35-44	.10	.141	.957
		4 45-54	.18	.144	.722
Variety of Facilities and Attractions	1 15-24	2 25-34	-.09	.107	.915
		3 35-44	-.37	.118	.014
		4 45-54	-.30	.122	.097
		5 55+	-.39	.130	.021
	2 25-34	1 15-24	.09	.107	.915
		3 35-44	-.28	.120	.128
		4 45-54	-.21	.124	.432
		5 55+	-.30	.132	.146
	3 35-44	1 15-24	.37	.118	.014
		2 25-34	.28	.120	.128
		4 45-54	.07	.133	.983
		5 55+	-.02	.141	1.000
	4 45-54	1 15-24	.30	.122	.097
		2 25-34	.21	.124	.432
		3 35-44	-.07	.133	.983
		5 55+	-.09	.145	.968
	5 55+	1 15-24	.39	.130	.021
		2 25-34	.30	.132	.146
		3 35-44	.02	.141	1.000
		4 45-54	.09	.145	.968
Cleanliness and Tidiness	1 15-24	2 25-34	-.13	.111	.750
		3 35-44	-.48(*)	.122	.001
		4 45-54	-.51(*)	.126	.001
		5 55+	-.73(*)	.135	.000

Appendix 6.6 Tukey HSD Test Results - Tourist Age

Dependent Variable	(I) AGE2	(J) AGE2	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.(2-tailed)	
	2 25-34	1 15-24	.13	.111	.750	
		3 35-44	-.35	.124	.039	
		4 45-54	-.38	.128	.026	
		5 55+	-.60(*)	.137	.000	
	3 35-44	1 15-24	.48(*)	.122	.001	
		2 25-34	.35	.124	.039	
		4 45-54	-.03	.138	1.000	
		5 55+	-.25	.146	.427	
	4 45-54	1 15-24	.51(*)	.126	.001	
		2 25-34	.38	.128	.026	
		3 35-44	.03	.138	1.000	
		5 55+	-.22	.149	.579	
	5 55+	1 15-24	.73(*)	.135	.000	
		2 25-34	.60(*)	.137	.000	
		3 35-44	.25	.146	.427	
		4 45-54	.22	.149	.579	
	Relaxing	1 15-24	2 25-34	-.20	.106	.340
			3 35-44	-.29	.116	.092
			4 45-54	-.22	.120	.366
			5 55+	-.37	.129	.032
2 25-34		1 15-24	.20	.106	.340	
		3 35-44	-.09	.118	.932	
		4 45-54	-.02	.122	1.000	
		5 55+	-.18	.130	.660	
3 35-44		1 15-24	.29	.116	.092	
		2 25-34	.09	.118	.932	
		4 45-54	.07	.132	.982	
		5 55+	-.08	.139	.977	
4 45-54		1 15-24	.22	.120	.366	
		2 25-34	.02	.122	1.000	
		3 35-44	-.07	.132	.982	
		5 55+	-.15	.143	.815	
5 55+		1 15-24	.37	.129	.032	
		2 25-34	.18	.130	.660	
		3 35-44	.08	.139	.977	
		4 45-54	.15	.143	.815	
Novelty	1 15-24	2 25-34	-.25	.104	.105	
		3 35-44	-.24	.115	.239	
		4 45-54	-.25	.118	.217	
		5 55+	-.12	.127	.885	
	2 25-34	1 15-24	.25	.104	.105	
		3 35-44	.02	.116	1.000	
		4 45-54	.00	.120	1.000	
		5 55+	.14	.128	.825	
	3 35-44	1 15-24	.24	.115	.239	
		2 25-34	-.02	.116	1.000	



**Appendix 6.6 Tukey HSD Test Results - Tourist Age**

Dependent Variable	(I) AGE2	(J) AGE2	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.(2-tailed)
		4 45-54	-.01	.129	1.000
		5 55+	.12	.137	0.911
	4 45-54	1 15-24	.25	.118	0.217
		2 25-34	.00	.120	1.000
		3 35-44	.01	.129	1.000
		5 55+	.13	.140	0.880
	5 55+	1 15-24	.12	.127	0.885
		2 25-34	-.14	.128	0.825
		3 35-44	-.12	.137	0.911
		4 45-54	-.13	.140	0.880
<b>Affordability</b>	1 15-24	2 25-34	-.09	.100	.903
		3 35-44	-.16	.111	.602
		4 45-54	-.18	.114	.540
		5 55+	-.27	.122	.176
	2 25-34	1 15-24	.09	.100	.903
		3 35-44	-.07	.112	.970
		4 45-54	-.09	.116	.945
		5 55+	-.18	.124	.585
	3 35-44	1 15-24	.16	.111	.602
		2 25-34	.07	.112	.970
		4 45-54	-.02	.125	1.000
		5 55+	-.11	.132	.918
	4 45-54	1 15-24	.18	.114	.540
		2 25-34	.09	.116	.945
		3 35-44	.02	.125	1.000
		5 55+	-.09	.135	.956
	5 55+	1 15-24	.27	.122	.176
		2 25-34	.18	.124	.585
		3 35-44	.11	.132	.918
		4 45-54	.09	.135	.956
<b>Friendliness of Host Community</b>	1 15-24	2 25-34	-.14	.116	.751
		3 35-44	-.33	.128	.067
		4 45-54	-.24	.132	.373
		5 55+	-.39	.141	.045
	2 25-34	1 15-24	.14	.116	.751
		3 35-44	-.20	.130	.557
		4 45-54	-.10	.134	.948
		5 55+	-.25	.143	.395
	3 35-44	1 15-24	.33	.128	.067
		2 25-34	.20	.130	.557
		4 45-54	.10	.144	.962
		5 55+	-.06	.153	.996
	4 45-54	1 15-24	.24	.132	.373
		2 25-34	0.10	0.134	0.948
		3 35-44	-0.10	0.144	0.962
		5 55+	-0.15	0.156	0.863

### Appendix 6.6 Tukey HSD Test Results - Tourist Age

Dependent Variable	(I) AGE2	(J) AGE2	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig. (2-tailed)
	5 55+	1 15-24	0.39	0.141	0.045
		2 25-34	0.25	0.143	0.395
		3 35-44	0.06	0.153	0.996
		4 45-54	0.15	0.156	0.863
Child Friendliness	1 15-24	2 25-34	-0.23	0.176	0.678
		3 35-44	-0.77(*)	0.194	0.001
		4 45-54	-0.52	0.200	0.074
		5 55+	-0.08	0.214	0.997
	2 25-34	1 15-24	0.23	0.176	0.678
		3 35-44	-0.54	0.197	0.050
		4 45-54	-0.29	0.203	0.626
		5 55+	0.16	0.217	0.951
	3 35-44	1 15-24	0.77(*)	0.194	0.001
		2 25-34	0.54	0.197	0.050
		4 45-54	0.25	0.219	0.775
		5 55+	0.70	.232	0.023
	4 45-54	1 15-24	0.52	0.200	0.074
		2 25-34	0.29	0.203	0.626
		3 35-44	-0.25	0.219	0.775
		5 55+	0.44	0.237	0.336
	5 55+	1 15-24	0.08	0.214	0.997
		2 25-34	-0.16	0.217	0.951
		3 35-44	-0.70	0.232	0.023
		4 45-54	-0.44	0.237	0.336
Lack of Crowding	1 15-24	2 25-34	-0.38	0.136	0.042
		3 35-44	-0.73(*)	0.150	0.000
		4 45-54	-0.74(*)	0.155	0.000
		5 55+	-1.01(*)	0.165	0.000
	2 25-34	1 15-24	0.38	0.136	0.042
		3 35-44	-0.36	0.152	0.135
		4 45-54	-0.36	0.157	0.154
		5 55+	-0.63(*)	0.168	0.002
	3 35-44	1 15-24	0.73(*)	0.150	0.000
		2 25-34	0.36	0.152	0.135
		4 45-54	0.00	0.169	1.000
		5 55+	-0.27	0.179	0.549
	4 45-54	1 15-24	0.74(*)	0.155	0.000
		2 25-34	0.36	0.157	0.154
		3 35-44	0.00	0.169	1.000
		5 55+	-0.27	0.183	0.582
	5 55+	1 15-24	1.01(*)	0.165	0.000
		2 25-34	0.63(*)	0.168	0.002
		3 35-44	0.27	0.179	0.549
		4 45-54	0.27	0.183	0.582
Weather	1 15-24	2 25-34	-0.16	0.139	0.767
		3 35-44	-0.36	0.153	0.123

### Appendix 6.6 Tukey HSD Test Results - Tourist Age

Dependent Variable	(I) AGE2	(J) AGE2	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.(2-tailed)
		4 45-54	-0.10	0.158	0.965
		5 55+	-0.29	0.169	0.429
2 25-34	1 15-24		0.16	0.139	0.767
		3 35-44	-0.20	0.155	0.698
		4 45-54	0.06	0.160	0.996
		5 55+	-0.13	0.171	0.948
3 35-44	1 15-24		0.36	0.153	0.123
		2 25-34	0.20	0.155	0.698
		4 45-54	0.26	0.172	0.563
		5 55+	0.07	0.182	0.994
4 45-54	1 15-24		0.10	0.158	0.965
		2 25-34	-0.06	0.160	0.996
		3 35-44	-0.26	0.172	0.563
		5 55+	-0.18	0.187	0.861
5 55+	1 15-24		0.29	0.169	0.429
		2 25-34	0.13	0.171	0.948
		3 35-44	-0.07	0.182	0.994
		4 45-54	0.18	0.187	0.861

Note: \* significant at less than 0.004 level.

**Appendix 6.7 Tamhane's T2 Test Results - Tourist Age**

Quality Dimensions	(I) AGE2	(J) AGE2	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.(2-tailed)
Security	15-24	2 25-34	-0.28	0.111	.122
		3 35-44	-0.71(*)	0.115	.000
		4 45-54	-0.57(*)	0.130	0.000
		5 55+	-0.83(*)	0.145	0.000
	25-34	1 15-24	0.28	0.111	0.122
		3 35-44	-0.43(*)	0.105	0.001
		4 45-54	-0.29	0.122	0.154
		5 55+	-0.55(*)	0.138	0.001
	35-44	1 15-24	0.71(*)	0.115	0.000
		2 25-34	0.43(*)	0.105	0.001
		4 45-54	0.14	0.125	0.956
		5 55+	-0.12	0.141	0.993
	45-54	1 15-24	0.57(*)	0.130	0.000
		2 25-34	0.29	0.122	0.154
		3 35-44	-0.14	0.125	0.956
		5 55+	-0.26	0.154	0.623
	55+	1 15-24	0.83(*)	0.145	0.000
		2 25-34	0.55(*)	0.138	0.001
		3 35-44	0.12	0.141	0.993
		4 45-54	0.26	0.154	0.623
Authenticity of Environment	15-24	2 25-34	-0.33	0.121	0.063
		3 35-44	-0.43(*)	0.121	0.004
		4 45-54	-0.50(*)	0.130	0.001
		5 55+	-0.70(*)	0.133	0.000
	25-34	1 15-24	0.33	0.121	0.063
		3 35-44	-0.10	0.111	0.988
		4 45-54	-0.17	0.121	0.838
		5 55+	-0.37	0.124	0.032
	35-44	1 15-24	0.43(*)	0.121	0.004
		2 25-34	0.10	0.111	.988
		4 45-54	-0.07	0.121	1.000
		5 55+	-0.27	0.124	0.286
	45-54	1 15-24	0.50(*)	0.130	0.001
		2 25-34	0.17	0.121	0.838
		3 35-44	0.07	0.121	1.000
		5 55+	-0.20	0.133	0.763
	55+	1 15-24	0.70(*)	0.133	0.000
		2 25-34	0.37	0.124	0.032
		3 35-44	0.27	0.124	0.286
		4 45-54	0.20	0.133	0.763

Note: \* significant at 0.004 level, df = degrees of freedom.

### Appendix 6.8 ANOVA Test Results - Tourist Activity

Dimensions		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.(2-tailed)
Security	Between Groups	27.230	3	9.077	6.880	0.000*
	Within Groups	1,035.708	785	1.319		
	Total	1,062.939	788			
Availability of Tourist Information	Between Groups	18.748	3	6.249	5.173	0.002*
	Within Groups	948.290	785	1.208		
	Total	967.037	788			
Variety of Attractions and Facilities	Between Groups	35.133	3	11.711	9.704	0.000*
	Within Groups	947.390	785	1.207		
	Total	982.523	788			
Cleanliness and Tidiness	Between Groups	23.978	3	7.993	5.988	0.000*
	Within Groups	1,047.792	785	1.335		
	Total	1,071.770	788			
Relaxing	Between Groups	21.725	3	7.242	6.119	0.000*
	Within Groups	929.004	785	1.183		
	Total	950.729	788			
Novelty	Between Groups	4.814	3	1.605	1.395	0.243
	Within Groups	902.756	785	1.150		
	Total	907.570	788			
Affordability	Between Groups	19.763	3	6.588	6.292	0.000*
	Within Groups	821.826	785	1.047		
	Total	841.589	788			
Friendliness of Host Community	Between Groups	4.912	3	1.637	1.131	0.336
	Within Groups	1,136.425	785	1.448		
	Total	1,141.338	788			
Authenticity of Environment	Between Groups	15.512	3	5.171	3.848	0.009
	Within Groups	1,054.821	785	1.344		
	Total	1,070.333	788			
Child Friendliness	Between Groups	8.828	3	2.943	0.872	0.455
	Within Groups	2,647.671	785	3.373		
	Total	2,656.499	788			
Lack of Crowding	Between Groups	17.947	3	5.982	2.929	0.033
	Within Groups	1,603.062	785	2.042		
	Total	1,621.009	788			
Weather	Between Groups	18.050	3	6.017	2.949	0.032
	Within Groups	1,601.582	785	2.040		
	Total	1,619.632	788			

Note: \* significant at 0.004 level, df = degrees of freedom

**Appendix 6.9 Kruskal Wallis Test - Tourist Activity**

<b>Dimensions of Quality of a Tourism Destination</b>	<b>Chi-Square</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Availability of Tourist Information	11.984	3	0.007
Security	16.394	3	0.001*
Variety of Facilities and Attractions	21.350	3	0.000*
Cleanliness and Tidiness	12.838	3	0.005
Relaxing	16.324	3	0.001*
Novelty	3.294	3	0.349
Affordability	13.791	3	0.003*
Friendliness of Host Community	2.752	3	0.431
Authenticity of Environment	8.944	3	0.030
Child Friendliness	2.689	3	0.442
Lack of Crowding	8.346	3	0.039
Weather	8.533	3	0.036

*Note: \* significant at 0.004 level, df = degrees of freedom.*

**Appendix 6.10 Tukey HSD Test Results - Tourist Activity**

Dependent Variable	(I) ACTIV2	(J) ACTIV2	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Availability of Tourist Information	Sightseeing	Sporting	0.33(*)	0.095	0.003
		Entertainment	-0.01	0.113	1.000
		Cultural	0.23	0.122	0.245
	Sporting	Sightseeing	-0.33(*)	0.095	0.003
		Entertainment	-0.34	0.119	0.020
		Cultural	-0.11	0.127	0.837
	Entertainment	Sightseeing	0.01	0.113	1.000
		Sporting	0.34	0.119	0.020
		Cultural	0.24	0.142	0.336
	Cultural	Sightseeing	-0.23	0.122	0.245
		Sporting	0.11	0.127	0.837
		Entertainment	-0.24	0.142	0.336
Relaxing	Sightseeing	Sporting	0.20	0.094	0.145
		Entertainment	-0.29	0.112	0.044
		Cultural	0.10	0.121	0.855
	Sporting	Sightseeing	-0.20	0.094	0.145
		Entertainment	-0.49(*)	0.117	0.000
		Cultural	-0.10	0.126	0.845
	Entertainment	Sightseeing	0.29	0.112	0.044
		Sporting	0.49(*)	0.117	0.000
		Cultural	0.39	0.140	0.028
	Cultural	Sightseeing	-0.10	0.121	0.855
		Sporting	0.10	0.126	0.845
		Entertainment	-0.39	0.140	0.028
Novelty	Sightseeing	Sporting	0.16	0.093	0.329
		Entertainment	0.01	0.111	1.000
		Cultural	0.16	0.119	0.515
	Sporting	Sightseeing	-0.16	0.093	0.329
		Entertainment	-0.15	0.116	0.562
		Cultural	0.01	0.124	1.000
	Entertainment	Sightseeing	-0.01	0.111	1.000
		Sporting	0.15	0.116	0.562
		Cultural	0.16	0.138	0.661
	Cultural	Sightseeing	-0.16	0.119	0.515
		Sporting	-0.01	0.124	1.000
		Entertainment	-0.16	0.138	0.661
Affordability	Sightseeing	Sporting	0.33(*)	0.088	0.001
		Entertainment	-0.08	0.106	0.880
		Cultural	0.10	0.114	0.807
	Sporting	Sightseeing	-0.33(*)	0.088	0.001
		Entertainment	-0.41(*)	0.110	0.001
		Cultural	-0.23	0.119	0.221
	Entertainment	Sightseeing	0.08	0.106	0.880
Sporting		0.41(*)	0.110	0.001	

**Appendix 6.10 Tukey HSD Test Results - Tourist Activity**

<b>Dependent Variable</b>	<b>(I) ACTIV2</b>	<b>(J) ACTIV2</b>	<b>Mean Difference (I-J)</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
<b>Friendliness of Host Community</b>	Cultural	Cultural	0.18	0.132	0.520
		Sightseeing	-0.10	0.114	0.807
		Sporting	0.23	0.119	0.221
		Entertainment	-0.18	0.132	0.520
	Sightseeing	Sporting	0.10	0.104	0.750
		Entertainment	-0.10	0.124	0.850
		Cultural	0.13	0.134	0.774
	Sporting	Sightseeing	-0.10	0.104	0.750
		Entertainment	-0.20	0.130	0.394
		Cultural	0.02	0.139	0.998
	Entertainment	Sightseeing	0.10	0.124	0.850
		Sporting	0.20	0.130	0.394
		Cultural	0.23	0.155	0.453
Cultural	Sightseeing	-0.13	0.134	0.774	
	Sporting	-0.02	0.139	0.998	
	Entertainment	-0.23	0.155	0.453	
<b>Authenticity of Environment</b>	Sightseeing	Sporting	0.02	0.100	0.999
		Entertainment	0.00	0.120	1.000
		Cultural	0.41	0.129	0.008
	Sporting	Sightseeing	-0.02	0.100	0.999
		Entertainment	-0.01	0.125	1.000
		Cultural	0.40	0.134	0.017
	Entertainment	Sightseeing	0.00	0.120	1.000
		Sporting	0.01	0.125	1.000
		Cultural	0.41	0.149	0.032
	Cultural	Sightseeing	-0.41	0.129	0.008
		Sporting	-0.40	0.134	0.017
		Entertainment	-0.41	0.149	0.032
<b>Child Friendliness</b>	Sightseeing	Sporting	0.17	0.159	0.702
		Entertainment	-0.11	0.189	0.931
		Cultural	0.14	0.205	0.896
	Sporting	Sightseeing	-0.17	0.159	0.702
		Entertainment	-0.29	0.198	0.475
		Cultural	-0.03	0.213	0.999
	Entertainment	Sightseeing	0.11	0.189	0.931
		Sporting	0.29	0.198	0.475
		Cultural	0.26	0.236	0.696
	Cultural	Sightseeing	-0.14	0.205	0.896
		Sporting	0.03	0.213	0.999
		Entertainment	-0.26	0.236	0.696
<b>Lack of Crowding</b>	Sightseeing	Sporting	0.05	0.124	0.977
		Entertainment	-0.25	0.147	0.334
		Cultural	0.29	0.159	.263
	Sporting	Sightseeing	-0.05	0.124	0.977
		Entertainment	-0.30	0.154	0.215



**Appendix 6.10 Tukey HSD Test Results - Tourist Activity**

<b>Dependent Variable</b>	<b>(I) ACTIV2</b>	<b>(J) ACTIV2</b>	<b>Mean Difference (I-J)</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>Sig.</b>		
	Entertainment	Cultural	0.24	0.166	0.470		
		Sightseeing	0.25	0.147	0.334		
		Sporting	.30	0.154	0.215		
	Cultural	Cultural	0.54	0.184	0.019		
		Sightseeing	-0.29	0.159	0.263		
		Sporting	-0.24	0.166	0.470		
		Entertainment	-0.54	0.184	0.019		
		<b>Weather</b>	Sightseeing	Sporting	0.17	0.124	0.491
				Entertainment	-0.22	0.147	0.437
Cultural	0.23			0.159	0.454		
Sporting	Sightseeing		-0.17	0.124	0.491		
	Entertainment		-0.40	0.154	0.051		
	Cultural		0.06	0.166	0.984		
Entertainment	Sightseeing		0.22	0.147	0.437		
	Sporting		0.40	0.154	0.051		
	Cultural		0.46	0.184	0.064		
Cultural	Sightseeing	-0.23	0.159	0.454			
	Sporting	-0.06	0.166	0.984			
	Entertainment	-0.46	0.184	0.064			

### Appendix 6.11 Tamhane's T2 Test - Tourist Activity

Dependent Variable	(I) ACTIV2	(J) ACTIV2	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Security	1 Sightseeing	2 Sporting	0.32	0.105	0.015
		3 Entertainment	-0.20	0.104	0.297
		7 Cultural	0.19	0.130	0.586
	2 Sporting	1 Sightseeing	-0.32	0.105	0.015
		3 Entertainment	-0.52(*)	0.121	0.000
		7 Cultural	-0.13	0.144	0.946
	3 Entertainment	1 Sightseeing	0.20	0.104	0.297
		2 Sporting	.52(*)	0.121	0.000
		7 Cultural	0.39	0.143	0.039
	7 Cultural	1 Sightseeing	-0.19	0.130	0.586
		2 Sporting	0.13	0.144	0.946
		3 Entertainment	-0.39	0.143	0.039
Variety of Attractions and Facilities	1 Sightseeing	2 Sporting	0.41(*)	0.103	0.001
		3 Entertainment	-0.17	0.099	0.454
		7 Cultural	0.11	0.111	0.893
	2 Sporting	1 Sightseeing	-0.41(*)	0.103	0.001
		3 Entertainment	-0.58(*)	0.118	0.000
		7 Cultural	-0.30	0.128	0.120
	3 Entertainment	1 Sightseeing	0.17	0.099	0.454
		2 Sporting	0.58(*)	0.118	0.000
		7 Cultural	0.28	0.125	0.149
	7 Cultural	1 Sightseeing	-0.11	0.111	0.893
		2 Sporting	0.30	0.128	0.120
		3 Entertainment	-0.28	0.125	0.149
Cleanliness and Tidiness	1 Sightseeing	2 Sporting	0.33	0.107	0.015
		3 Entertainment	-0.16	0.103	0.557
		7 Cultural	0.11	0.123	0.933
	2 Sporting	1 Sightseeing	-0.33	0.107	0.015
		3 Entertainment	-0.48(*)	0.120	0.000
		7 Cultural	-0.21	0.138	0.543
	3 Entertainment	1 Sightseeing	0.16	0.103	0.557
		2 Sporting	0.48(*)	0.120	0.000
		7 Cultural	0.27	0.134	0.246
	7 Cultural	1 Sightseeing	-.11	0.123	0.933
		2 Sporting	.21	0.138	0.543
		3 Entertainment	-.27	0.134	0.246

Note: \* significant at 0.004 level, df = degrees of freedom.

### Appendix 6.12 ANOVA Test Results - Tourist Income

Dimensions of Quality of a Tourism Destination	Sum of Squares	df.	Mean Square	F	Sig.(2-tailed)
<b>Security</b>					
Between Groups	25.666	5	5.133	3.901	0.002*
Within Groups	1052.768	800	1.316		
Total	1078.434	805			
<b>Availability of Tourist Information</b>					
Between Groups	5.145	5	1.029	.839	0.522
Within Groups	981.615	800	1.227		
Total	986.760	805			
<b>Variety of Facilities and Attractions</b>					
Between Groups	7.464	5	1.493	1.206	0.304
Within Groups	990.258	800	1.238		
Total	997.722	805			
<b>Cleanliness and Tidiness</b>					
Between Groups	20.634	5	4.127	3.064	0.010
Within Groups	1077.549	800	1.347		
Total	1098.183	805			
<b>Relaxing</b>					
Between Groups	8.653	5	1.731	1.450	0.204
Within Groups	954.633	800	1.193		
Total	963.286	805			
<b>Novelty</b>					
Between Groups	11.568	5	2.314	2.017	0.074
Within Groups	917.728	800	1.147		
Total	929.296	805			
<b>Affordability</b>					
Between Groups	4.301	5	.860	.801	0.549
Within Groups	859.153	800	1.074		
Total	863.454	805			
<b>Friendliness of Host Community</b>					
Between Groups	8.278	5	1.656	1.152	0.331
Within Groups	1149.325	800	1.437		
Total	1157.603	805			
<b>Authenticity of Environment</b>					
Between Groups	6.749	5	1.350	1.005	0.414
Within Groups	1074.973	800	1.344		
Total	1081.723	805			
<b>Child Friendliness</b>					
Between Groups	38.391	5	7.678	2.310	0.042
Within Groups	2658.981	800	3.324		
Total	2697.372	805			
<b>Lack of Crowding</b>					
Between Groups	26.103	5	5.221	2.538	0.027
Within Groups	1645.789	800	2.057		
Total	1671.892	805			
<b>Weather</b>					
Between Groups	9.256	5	1.851	.905	0.477
Within Groups	1635.944	800	2.045		
Total	1645.201	805			

Note: \* significant at 0.004 level, df = degrees of freedom.

**Appendix 6.13 Kruskal-Wallis Test Results - Tourist Income**

<b>Dimensions of Quality of a Tourism Destination</b>	<b>Chi-Square</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Sig.(2-tailed)</b>
Availability of Tourist Information	4.456	5	0.486
Security	20.186	5	0.001 <sup>#</sup>
Variety of Facilities and Attractions	6.452	5	0.265
Cleanliness and Tidiness	16.239	5	0.006
Relaxing	9.653	5	0.086
Novelty	8.580	5	0.127
Affordability	3.164	5	0.675
Friendliness of Host Community	4.816	5	0.439
Authenticity of Environment	4.155	5	0.527
Child Friendliness	9.452	5	0.092
Lack of Crowding	13.313	5	0.021
Weather	6.384	5	0.271

*Note: \* significant at 0.004 level, df = degrees of freedom.*

### Appendix 6.14 Tukey HSD - Tourist Income

Dependent Variable	Tourist Income	(J) INCOME	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.(2-tailed)
Security	1 Under £10,000	£10,000-£14,999	-0.26	0.136	0.384
		£15,000-£19,999	-0.41	0.135	0.029
		£20,000-£29,999	-0.40	0.132	0.029
		£30,000-£39,999	-0.42	0.131	0.016
		£40,000 above	-.51(*)	0.138	0.003
	2 £10,000-£14,999	Under £10,000	0.26	0.136	0.384
		£15,000-£19,999	-0.15	0.146	0.914
		£20,000-£29,999	-0.14	0.144	0.927
		£30,000-£39,999	-0.16	0.143	0.871
		£40,000 above	-0.25	0.149	0.546
	3 £15,000-£19,999	Under £10,000	0.41	0.135	0.029
		£10,000-£14,999	0.15	0.146	0.914
		£20,000-£29,999	0.01	0.142	1.000
		£30,000-£39,999	-0.01	0.141	1.000
		£40,000 above	-0.10	0.148	0.982
	4 £20,000-£29,999	Under £10,000	0.40	0.132	0.029
		£10,000-£14,999	0.14	0.144	0.927
		£15,000-£19,999	-0.01	0.142	1.000
		£30,000-£39,999	-0.02	0.139	1.000
		£40,000 above	-0.11	0.146	0.974
	5 £30,000-£39,999	Under £10,000	0.42	0.131	0.016
		£10,000-£14,999	0.16	0.143	0.871
		£15,000-£19,999	0.01	0.141	1.000
		£20,000-£29,999	0.02	0.139	1.000
		£40,000 above	-0.09	0.145	0.989
	6 £40,000+	Under £10,000	0.51(*)	0.138	0.003
		£10,000-£14,999	0.25	0.149	0.546
		£15,000-£19,999	0.10	0.148	0.982
£20,000-£29,999		0.11	0.146	.974	
£30,000-£39,999		0.09	0.145	0.989	

Note: \* significant at less than 0.004 level.

**Appendix 6.15 Summary of Hypotheses Test Results**

Demographic Factors  Dimensions of Quality of a Tourism Destination	#Short and Long Holiday				ΩTime Lapse Since Last Holiday				ΦTourist Origin			
	T-test		Mann-Whitney U		ANOVA		Kruskal-Wallis		ANOVA		Kruskal-Wallis	
	T-values	Sig.	z.	Sig.	F	Sig.	χ2	Sig.	F	P	χ2.	Sig.
Authenticity of Environment	-0.886	0.376	-1.002	0.317	0.713	0.491	2.745	0.253	2.480	0.084	3.904	0.142
Security	-1.753	0.080	-1.682	0.093	0.844	0.430	1.943	0.379	0.564	0.569	0.946	0.623
Affordability	-0.813	0.417	-0.797	0.425	1.249	0.287	2.667	0.264	0.534	0.587	1.824	0.402
Cleanliness and Tidiness	-1.588	0.113	-1.335	0.182	2.517	0.081	9.662	0.008	0.201	0.818	0.820	0.664
Availability of Tourist Information	-0.362	0.718	-0.320	0.749	1.269	0.282	3.793	0.150	0.029	0.972	0.183	0.912
Relaxing	-1.287	0.200	-0.848	0.396	0.604	0.547	1.107	0.575	1.628	0.197	3.546	0.170
Lack of Crowding	-0.851	0.396	-1.203	0.229	0.178	0.837	0.182	0.913	0.574	0.564	1.095	0.578
Variety of Facilities and Attractions	-0.403	0.687	-0.797	0.632	1.427	0.241	3.618	0.164	0.570	0.566	2.729	0.255
Weather	-1.825	0.070	-1.418	0.156	0.703	0.496	0.983	0.612	1.933	0.145	2.465	0.292
Friendliness of Host Community	-0.315	0.753	-0.381	0.704	1.543	0.214	3.404	0.182	0.003	0.997	0.111	0.946
Novelty	-0.508	0.612	-0.448	0.654	0.425	0.654	0.951	0.622	1.974	0.140	4.851	0.088
Child Friendliness	-1.207	0.228	-1.311	0.190	0.247	0.781	0.101	0.951	0.832	0.435	1.784	0.410

Notes: P-values are not significant at less than 0.004 level,

<sup>#</sup>H<sub>7</sub>: There are significant differences in understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination between short and long stay tourists.

<sup>Ω</sup>H<sub>8</sub>: There are significant differences in understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination among tourists who last visited a tourism destination less than 6 months ago, 6-12 months ago and more that 12 months ago

<sup>Φ</sup>H<sub>9</sub>: There are significant differences in understanding of the meaning of quality of a tourism destination among tourists from different nationalities.