

INFLUENCE OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION ON SERVICE QUALITY AND TRUST RELATIONSHIP IN MALAYSIAN RURAL TOURISM

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to develop a mediating effect understanding of customer satisfaction on service quality and trust relationship in Malaysia rural tourism. The model was developed and later tested by adopting the partial Least Square (PLS) procedure on data collected from a survey that yielded 295 usable questionnaires. The findings showed that service quality enhances satisfaction in Malaysia rural tourism. It was also revealed that satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between service quality and trust. In future more research needs to be carried out to explore the role of satisfaction in Malaysia rural tourism industry. It is important to do the study utilizing experimental design by capturing longitudinal data in Malaysia rural tourism industry using robust measures. The findings imply that the relationship between satisfaction and profitability may reside in satisfaction's influence on trust, and that satisfaction plays a crucial function within the Malaysia rural tourism industry. This research is one of the first known attempts to use PLS to test a mediation effect.

Keywords: Service quality, customer satisfaction, trust, rural tourism, Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

In today global economy, tourism is the one of the fastest growing sectors and need to give serious attention. A strong growth catalyst that can generate higher multiplier effect, tourism plays a very important role in the economy and stimulated the growth of other economy. In Malaysia, tourism is the third largest industry in term of foreign exchange earnings after manufacturing and palm oil sector. Tourism sector contributes about 7.9 percent to the GDP of Malaysia suggesting that the industry which is consider still new but yet offer so much good potential for further and future growth. In 2011, the global tourism and travel sector is projected to generate USD 7 trillion in economic activities and this will offer more than 260 million jobs opportunity (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2003). In 2012, Malaysia had been visited by 25.03 million tourists which an increase of 1.3 percent from 2011 which was about 24.71 million tourists. This has generated receipt from RM58.3 billion in 2011 to RM60.6 billion in 2012 (Tourism Malaysia Annual Report, 2012). In tourism industry, tourist's is very important to ensure the customer will visit again the tourism attraction after they experience it the first time. The concept of trust usually is to describe the relationship between the trustor who places the trust and the trustee who is the being trusted. Trust has been described based on the service provider characteristics. Customers usually establish the trust belief based on their perception on competency, benevolence, and integrity of the service provider (Mayer et al., 1995). Trust represents the actual customer's belief in receiving the service promised by the provider and a demonstration of the confidence of the customer in exchange of partner reliability and integrity (Morgan and Hunt, 1994).

Before customer decides to utilize the service provided by the service provider, it is necessary for the customer to have certain amount of trust in service provider's reliability and integrity to perform the expected task (Doney and Cannon, 1997). From business perspective, trust is deemed as one of the most vital antecedents in ensuring the steady and mutual relationship. Many studies have established that trust is very important in order to build and maintain the long term relationships (Rousseau et. al, 1998; Singh and Sirdeshmukh, 2000). In Malaysia an increased tendency in urban people to choose rural zones for their holiday destination can be observed. The expansion of rural tourism is a trend that is common to most countries in Southeast Asia. However, rural tourism in Malaysia has only experienced considerable growth over the last 20 years, much later than in most of Southeast Asia. The development of rural tourism has been widely explored by researchers for many years, an interest which has been motivated by the recognition of the importance of this activity for rural areas (i.e., Frochot, 2005; Gilbert, 1989; Greffe, 1994;

Page and Getz, 1997; Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997), and as a diversification possibility for declining mass tourism destinations (Sharpley, 2002). Like urban or seaside tourism, the appeal of rural tourism also lies in the range and quality of attractions and facilities. Many rural tourism operators concern with whether tourists who were visited their tourism spot have trust in the facilities and services offered. Since the rural tourism sector nowadays becomes very competitive, there is a need to gain tourists trust from visitors in respect of facilities and services offered. By gaining tourist trust, it will allow rural tourism operators in Malaysia to experience sustainable rural tourism and eventually increase their revenue from rural tourism activities. The purpose of this paper is to show the link of service quality and customer satisfaction on trust in Malaysia rural tourism market and to test the conceptual research model that connects service quality, customer satisfaction and trust.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Underpinning

Expectation Disconfirmation theory suggested that individuals foresee there will be a certain level of service when they involve in a purchase transaction (Oliver 1977 and Oliver 1980). When customer get into the actual service, they will have a convincing perception with regards to the service performance they are involving. There will be some degree of positive and negative disconfirmation to develop when pre and post purchase anticipations are evaluated which in turn will influence the overall satisfaction. Positive disconfirmation will occur when the service performance is above the service expectation where it will lead to the higher satisfaction. On the other hand, the negative disconfirmation will occur when the service performance is below from the service expectation where it will result a lower satisfaction of the customer. This theory is very well known in the area of marketing and lately has become much admired in other academically domains such as information systems and electronic commerce (Bhattacharjee 2001; Bhattacharjee and Khalifa 2002). Customer satisfaction is one of the most crucial factors for banking services provider. However, banks are keener in the results of customer satisfaction. Oliver and his co-researchers (Oliver and Swan, 1989a; Oliver, 1993) improve the original of expectancy disconfirmation by including performance, affect and equity as the factors determine customer satisfaction and repurchase intention. Disconfirmation the extent to which performance exceeds, equals, or become short of an individual's expectations which will produce positive, zero, and negative disconfirmation, respectively (Oliver and Swan, 1989). Previous research has identified that it is necessary for each performance dimension to have equivalent individual judgments of disconfirmation.

Service Quality

Since Parasuraman et al. (1988) initiate the using of SERVQUAL with 22 item scale to measure service quality, the model has been frequently use in across industries. Gowan et al. (2001), Straughan and Cooper (2002) and Zhao et al. (2002) applied the SERVQUAL model as a measurement to gauge the service quality provided by the service provider. However, there are many researchers opposed the use of SERVQUAL to measure service quality due to the industry characteristics differences. Therefore service quality frequently has been conceptualized as the difference between the perceived services expected performance and perceived service actual performance (Bloemer et al., 1999; Kara et al., 2005). This view also accepted by other researchers with regards to the definition of service quality (Grönroos, 2001; Parasuraman et al., 1988). In some earlier studies, service quality has been defined to the extent where the service fulfills the needs or expectation of the customers (Lewis and Mitchell, 1990; Dotchin and Oakland, 1994). Zeithaml et al. (1996) has conceptualized service quality as the overall impression of customers towards the service weakness or supremacy. Service quality frequently relies on SERVQUAL instrument to gauge the service quality provided to the customers. The SERVQUAL scale was developed in the marketing context and this was supported by the Marketing Science Institute (Parasuraman et al., 1986). Previous research confirms that SERVQUAL instrument is applicable in tourism industry (Yuan et al., 2005; Sohail et al., 2007; Shaikh and Khan, 2011). Parasuraman et al. (1988) stated the five dimensions of service quality are reliability, responsiveness, tangible, assurance and empathy. These dimensions have specific service characteristic link to the expectation of customers.

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is one the most areas being researched in many tourism studies due to its importance in determining the success and the continued existence of the tourism business (Gursoy et al., 2007). Customer satisfaction conceptually has been defined as feeling of the post utilization that the consumers experience from their purchase (Westbrook and Oliver, 1991; Um et al., 2006). Opposite to cognitive focus of perceptions, customer satisfaction is deemed as affective response to a products or services (Yuan et al., 2005). A consumer is deemed to be satisfied upon the experience weighted sum total produce a feeling of enjoyment when compared with the expectation (Choi and Chu, 2001). In tourism studies, customer satisfaction is the visitor's state of emotion after they experiencing their tour (Baker and Crompton, 2000; Sanchez et al., 2006). Destination holiday's customer satisfaction is the extent of overall enjoyment that the tourists feel, the result that the tour experience able to fulfill the tourists' desires, expectation, needs and wants from the tour (Chen and Tsai, 2007). Taylor et al., (2004) pointed out that customer satisfaction has a direct influence on customer loyalty. Kotler (2008) describes customer satisfaction is the feeling of happiness or unhappiness as a result of comparing the perceived performance of services or products with the expected performance. If the perceived performance does not meet the expected performance, then the customer will feel disappointed or dissatisfied. Homburg et al. (2008) suggested that customer satisfaction has been a crucial issue in marketing field in the past decades since satisfied customers are able to offer to the company such as customer loyalty and continuous profitability.

Trust

In the current study, trust has been defined as a tourists' willingness to rely on tourist attraction operator's ability to deliver what has been promised and meet or exceed the expectation of the tourists which has been built around of the knowledge about the tourist attraction. A trusted tourist attraction has a strong advantage over the other tourist attraction which is an alternative in the tourist's decision making process. In tourism studies, Loureiro and Gonzalez (2008) showed empirical evidence that tourists' trust has a strong influence on their loyalty toward rural lodging. According to Lau and Lee, (1999) if one party has trust in another party, it will produce positive behavioral intentions towards the other party. Trust has influence on credibility and credibility will eventually has impact on the customer's long-term orientation by decreasing the risk perception linked to the opportunistic behavior of the business (Erdem et al., 2002; Ganesan, 1994). To be specific, trust minimizes customer's uncertainty feelings where customer feels at risk because they know that they can rely on the service provider (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). San Martin Gutierrez (2000) describes trust the emotional security that made one party to think that another party is responsible and concern about it. This gives the understanding that the former is ready to be at risk to the actions of the second party regardless its ability to control the later.

RESEARCH MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

Research Model

Tourist attraction operators are keen to know how service quality can lead to customer satisfaction and eventually create trust for the tourists. The research applies the research model by a few authors mostly Parasuraman et. al (1985), Zeithaml and Bitner (2008) and Morgan and Hunt (1994). The conceptual model of this study is illustrated in Figure 1.

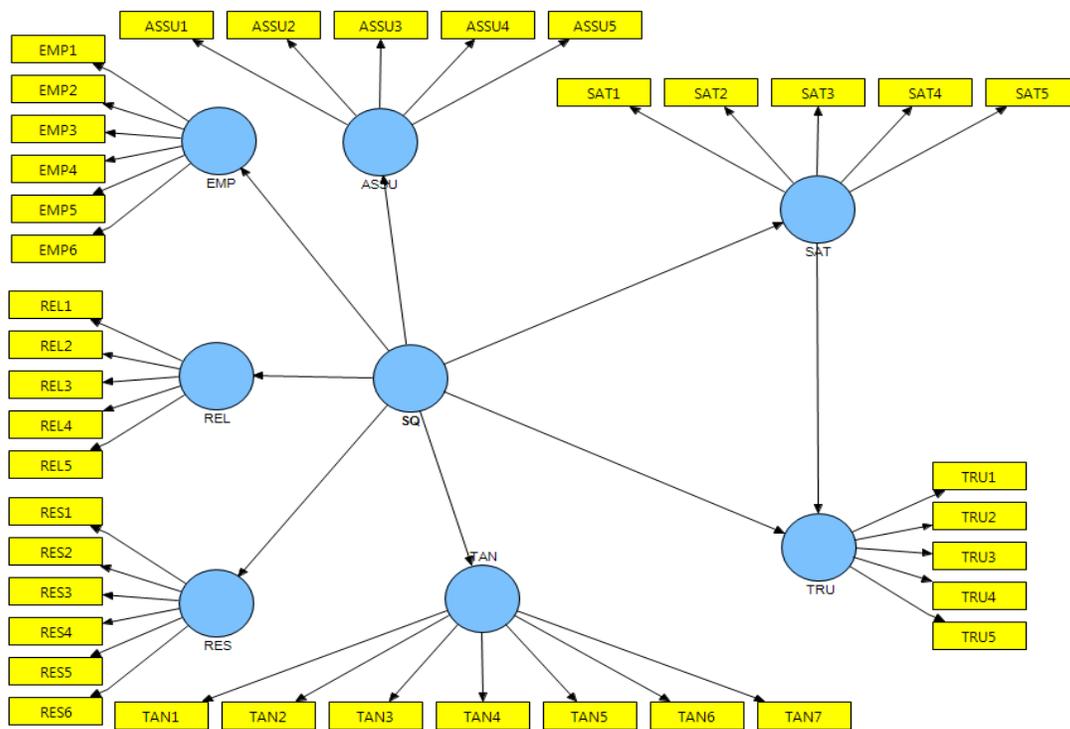
Proposed hypotheses

Over the past there are greater emphasis has been placed on service quality and customer satisfaction in business and academic world as well. Akbar and Parvez (2009) found that service quality has strong influence and significantly and positively related to customer satisfaction in their study on 304 customers of a major private telecommunication company operating in Bangladesh. Hossain and Leo (2008) in their study revealed that service quality is a strong antecedent and significantly related to customer satisfaction in their study of banking industry in Qatar. Munusamy et al., (2010) studied the banking industry in Malaysia In their research they found that Assurance has positive relationship but it has no significant effect on

customer satisfaction. Reliability has negative relationship but it has no significant effect on customer satisfaction. Tangibles have positive relationship and have significant impact on customer satisfaction. Empathy has positive relationship but it has no significant effect on customer satisfaction. Responsiveness has positive relationship but no significant impact on customer satisfaction. Jamal and Anatassiadou (2007) conducted the study on 200 bank customers in Greece relating to service quality and customer satisfaction. The result showed that reliability, tangibility and empathy are positively related to customer satisfaction. Chen and Lee (2008) in their study on 261 non vessel owners and shippers in Taiwan found that service quality has a positive influence with customer satisfaction in International Logistic provider. Gounaris et al. (2003) in their study on 240 online shoppers in Greece retailing industry revealed that service quality has significant impact and positive relationship with customer satisfaction. Therefore, we hypothesize

Hypotheses 1: There is a relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction in Malaysian rural tourism

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework



The elements of quality in service are expected to affect trust directly. This is because the elements of service represent trust cue that convey the trustworthiness of the bank and the system. Gefen and Straub, (2006) studied different determinants effect on trust and show that the service quality has a positive influence on customer trust. Radwan, AL-Dwairi, Mumtaz and Kamala, (2009) adopted integrity, ability, and quality services as attributes of service quality in vendor business and demonstrated that service quality has a significant effect on customer trust. Zha, Ju and Wang (2006) in their study in e-commerce industry in China showed in their research that dimensions service quality dimensions are significant predictive of trust. Su and Fan (2011) in their study on rural tourism in China, found that service quality plays an important role and has a significant influence on trust. Alrubaie and Al'kaidaa (2011) in their

research on healthcare patient in healthcare industry found that service quality provided by the hospital in Jordan has a strong influence in determining patients trust in healthcare industry. In view of that we hypothesize:

Hypotheses 2: There is a relationship between service quality and trust Malaysian rural tourism

Trust is known as future attitude where a state of mind will go beyond the previous experience. There are numbers of researches have been done and advocated that customer satisfaction is the critical factor in developing customer trust. Kantsperger and Huntz (2010) in their study on 357 E-services customer in Malaysia and Qatar E-Commerce have revealed that customer satisfaction is the main antecedent to trust and positively and significantly correlated. Yeh and Li (2009) in their study have also found a similar result where in their study on 212 m-commerce customers in Taiwan revealed that customer satisfaction has a stronger impact on trust and significantly and positively correlated. Ribbink, Riel and Semeijin (2005) in their study on 350 online customers in Europe e-commerce industry have found that customer satisfaction has greater influence on trust and significantly and positively related to trust. Sahadev and Purani (2008) in their study on 184 University students online customer in e-commerce (India) have found that customer satisfaction has a strong influence on trust and significantly and positively correlated. Edwin, Nic and Christo (2011) studied the B2B financial services in South Africa concur the above findings where they found that customer satisfaction has a positive and significant influence on trust. Yeh and Li (2009), in their study on m-commerce customer in Taiwan found that satisfaction has a positive and significant influence on trust. Jose (2011) found in his study on internet user in internet industry in Spain that customer satisfaction has a significant and positive influence on customer trust. Edwin et al., 2011 in their study on financial service customer in financial service industry in South Africa found that customer satisfaction is a strong predictor on customer trust where the relationship is significantly and positive correlated. Therefore, we hypothesize:

Hypotheses 3: There is a relationship between customer satisfaction and trust Malaysian rural tourism

Many studies had indicated that service quality is antecedent to the broader idea of customer satisfaction (Gotlieb et al., 1994; Buttle, 1996; Zeithaml and Bitner, 1996; Lee et al., 2000). Eisingerich and Bell, (2007) found that perceived service quality had a significant effect on customer loyalty and trust, and trust had a significant effect on customer repurchase intentions. However, the causality relationship between trust and satisfaction seems no to be very clear in the literature. Zanzo et al., (2003) found that, satisfaction acts as an antecedent to trust, and trust as an antecedent to affective commitment. Moreover, trust and affective commitment directly affect loyalty to the supplier as well. There are some researchers disputed the relationship between perceived service quality and satisfaction (Ting, 2004). In view of that, we hypothesize:

Hypotheses 4: There is an indirect relationship between service quality, customer satisfaction and trust Malaysian rural tourism

METHODOLOGY

Survey Instrument

A total of 41 observed variables constitute the measurement of exogenous independent variable of service quality dimensions of responsiveness (8 items), tangible (7 items), empathy (6 items), assurance (5 items) and reliability (5 items) adapted and altered from Parasuraman et. al (1985) and customer satisfaction (5 items). The endogenous of trust consists of 5 items. The scaling applied in this study is the 5-point Likert scale of 1-strongly agree, 2-agree, 3-neutral, 4-disagree and 5-strongly disagree. The demographics variables questioned are gender, age, status, place of origin, race, occupation, annual income, and education background of the respondents.

Sample

Local and foreign tourists who have visited the rural tourism spot in Malaysia at least once were the main respondents. A total of 410 rural tourism spot tourists were requested to complete a questionnaire that contained measures of the construct. The questionnaires were distributed to the respondents by using simple random sampling technique. Out of the 410 distributed questionnaires, 329 were returned. This made up the response rate of 80.24 percent. In view of that, the rate of response is sufficient for SEM analysis. After the elimination of the outliers, 295 of the questionnaires were ready for analysis.

Data Analysis

Partial Least Squares (PLS) (Chin, 1998a, b, 2001) was adopted to assess the models. PLS is a second generation structural equation modeling (SEM) technique developed by Wold (1982). It works fine with structural equation models that have latent variables and a series of cause-and-effect relationships (Gustafsson and Johnson, 2004). PLS has three main advantages over other SEM techniques that make it suitable to this study. First, in PLS, constructs may be gauged by only one item whereas in covariance-based techniques, minimum of four questions per construct are required. Second, in many marketing studies, data tend to be distributed non-normally (it is noted that mostly ten-item scales were employed to reduce a negative impact of non-normality), and PLS does not need any normality assumptions and handles non-normal distributions relatively well. Third, PLS accounts for measurement error and should offer more accurate estimates of interaction effects such as mediation (Chin, 1998a). PLS provides challenges and opportunities for the mediation effects study. However, it is particularly suitable to the study of mediation. Mediation effects are the outcome of two relationships; between the independent variable and the mediator, and between the mediator and the dependent variable. The product of two normally distributed variables is always skewed (Bollen and Stine, 1990, Lockwood and Mackinnon, 1998), but PLS does not depend on normality assumptions. PLS adopts bootstrapping to assess the significance of relationships so it works better with non-normal data (Efron, 1988). Therefore, PLS may do well in assessing mediation effects. On the other hand, there are no official rules providing instructions on how to use PLS to assess mediation. There are, however, general suggestions for evaluating mediation that can be classified into three general approaches (Mackinnon et al., 2002). The first method, known as the causal steps approach, is based on the works of Judd and Kenny (1981) and Baron and Kenny (1986). Investigation on the ISI Web of Science citation database indicates that Baron and Kenny's paper has been cited over 8,120 times that enhance credibility to this method. The second approach, known as the difference in coefficients method, evaluates regression coefficients prior and after the mediating variable is incorporated. The third technique is drawn as the product of coefficients comprising paths in a path model approach. The first approach utilizes regression analysis.

PLS works well with the casual steps approach that depends on regression analysis. The path coefficients created by PLS give a sign of relationships and can be utilized similarly to the usual regression coefficients (Gefen et al., 2000). First, a direct linkage must be established between the independent and dependent variable to ensure there is a relationship to be mediated. Second, a direct relationship must be established between the independent and mediator variable. Third, the mediator must be shown to be related to the dependent variable. Finally, the relationship between the independent and dependent variables must reduce significantly when the mediator is added. The relationships between the independent and dependent variables as well as the independent and mediating variables should be theoretically based and supported by the previous literature. These four steps will be emulated in this study using PLS. To evaluate the indirect effects significance, it is important to explicitly model the two paths both directed in and out of the mediating construct. It is suggested that for evaluating the significance of indirect paths in a PLS structural model, the application of the same bootstrapping procedure as done elsewhere with path analysis. The two step bootstrapping technique for testing mediation is as follows:

1. Apply the specific model in question with both direct and indirect paths included and execute N bootstrap re-sampling and explicitly compute the product of direct paths that form the indirect path being assessed.

2. Approximate the significance adopting either percentile bootstrap or bias corrected bootstrap which has been shown to have the least biased confidence intervals, greatest power to detect non-zero effects and contrasts, and the most accurate overall Type I error (Williams and MacKinnon 2008).

Therefore, for the purpose of assessing the significance of the mediating effect based on the above procedure, the PROCESS application developed by Hayes, A. F. (2012) was adopted. The application was embedded in SPSS ver. 18

RESULTS

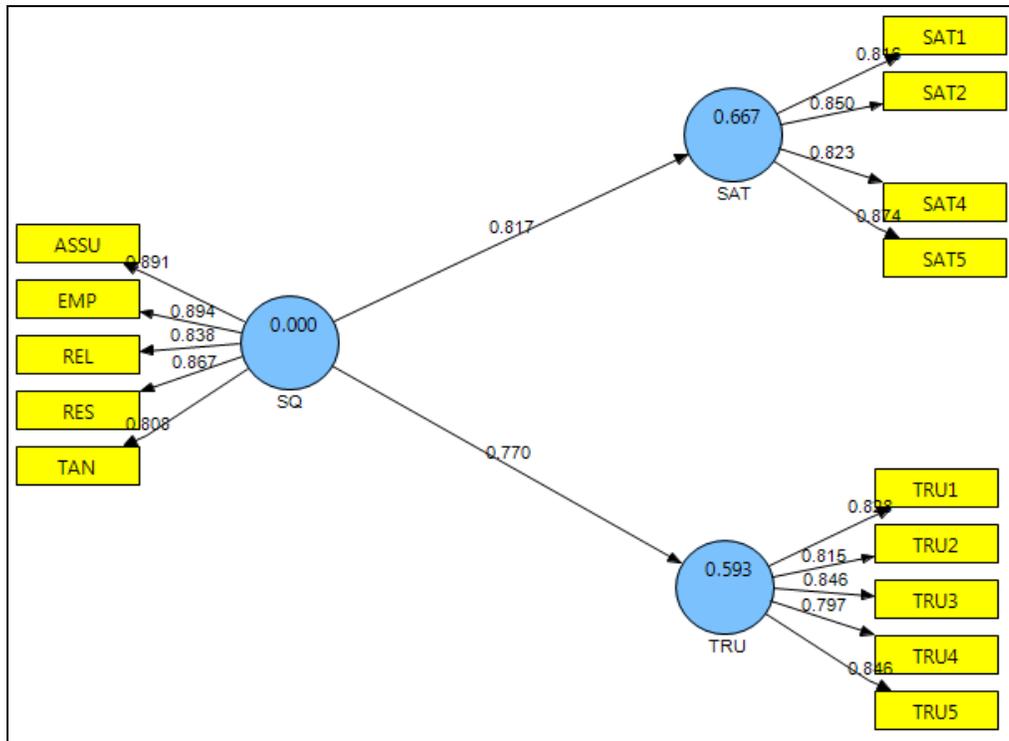
Construct Validity, Dimensionality and Reliability

In order to evaluate the construct’s validity, dimensionality and reliability, all constructs were analyzed. For each construct, the average variance extracted (AVE), the AVE square root, composite reliability; R Square, Cronbach’s Alpha and communality were computed. Construct validity was acquired by first evaluating Cronbach’s Alpha for individual construct. The results are shown in Table 1. All constructs achieved a higher Cronbach’s Alpha than recommended 0.7 (Hair et al., 2005). After that, all constructs were evaluated and processed within the model by using PLS evaluation to get each construct’s AVE, composite reliability and communality. All the constructs accured greater than the minimum required for each parameter. (Chin 1998; Stan and Saporta, 2005). After that, based on Geffen and Staub (2005), individual construct had its AVE square root extracted to evaluate construct dimensionality. The results obtained used as a reference when the entire construct correlated and each correlation weight within the two constructs has to be smaller that the AVE square root as shown in Table 1. Only one correlation achieved a value higher than AVE’s square root (Service Quality and Satisfaction). To improve and refine the model, the correlation higher than the AVE’s square root was evaluated and assessed to correlate the items of the construct. After evaluating and analyzing the construct indicator correlations, a highly correlated indicator was deleted (item SAT 3) and a newly calculated AVE was performed. Eventually, all construct correlation demonstrated the lower than the new AVE’s square root after the process of refining the model and all parameters (AVE, composite reliability, Cronbach’s Alpha, and communality) achieved satisfactory indices. The results are revealed in Table 1.

Table 1: Construct Reliability and Validity

	AVE	AVE SQUARE ROOT	CR	R SQUARE	CROMBACH’S ALPHA	COMMUNALITY
SAT	0.668	0.841	0.906	0.666	0.861	0.707
SQ	0.740	0.860	0.934		0.911	0.740
TRU	0.683	0.683	0.915	0.619	0.833	0.683
Variable Correlation Matrix based on AVE Square Root.						
Constructs	SAT	SQ	TRU			
SAT	0.841					
SQ	0.834	0.860				
TRU	0.300	0.769	0.683			

Figure 2: Direct Path Coefficient and R²



Model Analysis

Firstly, the first model was presented with direct path from service quality to satisfaction and trust. Both links were significant at the 0.000 level with the path coefficients of 0.81 and 0.77 respectively. At this point no indirect effect was hypothesized or evaluated. Refer to Table 2. Then, the second model was presented with satisfaction plays a mediating role between service quality and trust (refer to Table 3). The two distinct models were made based on Barron and Kenny (1986) four-step technique to assess the mediating effect. The two models had:

- 1) a direct path from service quality to satisfaction
- 2) a direct path from service quality to trust
- 3) a direct path from satisfaction to trust
- 4) a direct path from service quality to trust, and an indirect path from service quality to satisfaction and then from satisfaction to trust.

Mediation is said to be existed when the direct path coefficient between the independent variable and dependent variable is decreases when the indirect path through the mediator is established in the model. The direct path is assessed without the intervention of mediator and with the intervention of mediator. The direct path standardized beta was 0.77 and change to 0.50 after the introduction of satisfaction as a mediator. The amount of the decrease of the relationship between service quality and trust accounted by the mediator was 0.27 which represent 35.06 percent of the direct effect. .The mediation effect significance was measured by using PROCESS by Hayes, A. F. (2012) with the application of bootstrapping technique where the specific model in question with both direct and indirect paths included and execute N bootstrap re-sampling and explicitly compute the product of direct paths that form the indirect path being

assessed. Then, the significance of the mediating effect can be ascertained by observing either percentile bootstrap or bias corrected bootstrap which has been shown to have the least biased confidence intervals, greatest power to detect nonzero effects and contrasts, and the most accurate overall Type I error (Williams and MacKinnon 2008) . The result extracted from PROCESS shows that the indirect effect of service quality to trust with the present of satisfaction as a mediating factor is significant at $p < .000$ where the lower level confidence level (LLCL) is 0.114 and upper level confidence level (ULCL) is 0.406 (Table 3). The indirect effect is significantly different from zero at $p < .000$ (two tailed). With 95% confidence that, because zero is *not* within this interval, zero is not likely a value for the indirect effect of service quality on trust. The true indirect effect is estimated lies between 0.114 and 0.406. Therefore, the indirect path service quality to satisfaction and from satisfaction to trust was $0.816 * 0.330 = 0.269$. The confidence interval level provided by PROSESS was between 0.114 and 0.406, $p < .000$. This shows that the partial mediation effect present. All the hypotheses are supported (Table 4).

Figure 3: Indirect Path Coefficient and R²

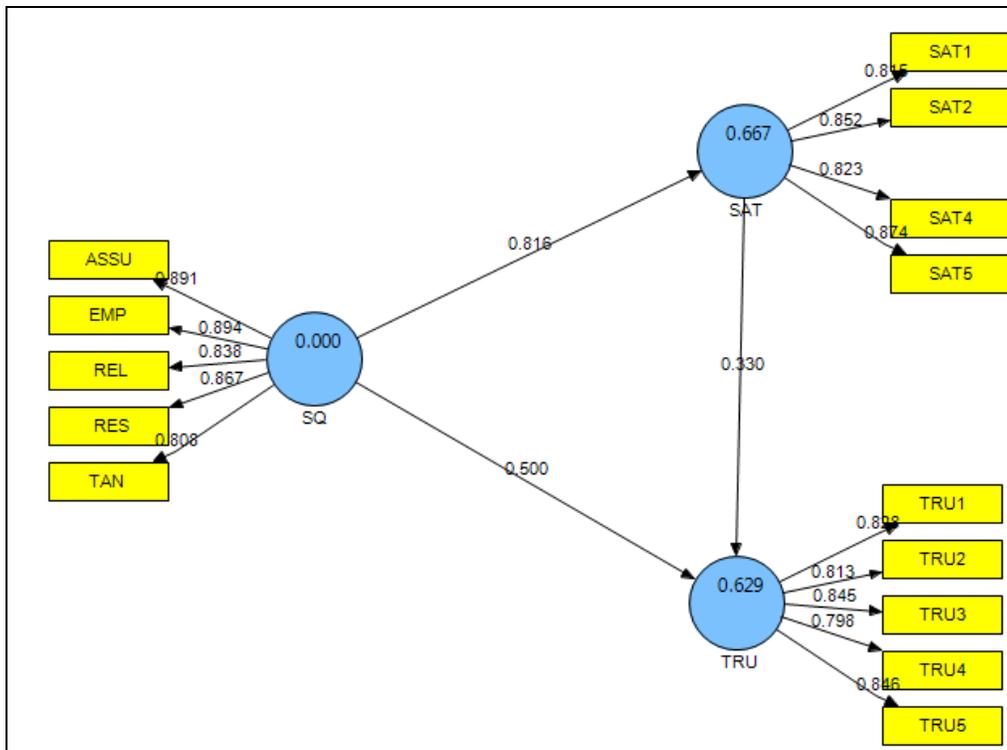


Table 2: Path Coefficients Service Quality to Satisfaction and Service Quality to Trust

	Beta	t-value
SQ – SAT	0.81	20.04
SQ – TRU	0.77	18.37
Path Coefficients Service Quality to Satisfaction, Service Quality to Trust and Sat to Trust		
	Path Coefficient	t-value
SQ – SAT	0.81	20.30
SQ – TRU	0.50	4.25
SAT – TRU	0.33	2.39

t-values are significant at $p < 0.0000$

Table 3: Direct Effect Service Quality on Trust

Effect	SE	t-value	p-value
0.561	0.070	8.001	0.0000

Table 4: Indirect Effect Service Quality on Trust

Indirect SAT	Effect	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
	0.259	0.072	0.114	0.406

Table 4: Hypotheses Result

	Hypothesizes Relationship	Path Coefficient	p-value	Conclusion
H1	There is a positive relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction	0.81	0.00	Supported
H2	There is a positive relationship between service quality and trust	0.50	0.00	Supported
H3	There is a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and trust	0.33	0.00	Supported
H4	There is a positive indirect relationship between service quality, customer satisfaction and trust	0.27	0.00	Supported

DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

Research Conclusion

The main purpose of this research is to establish an understanding of the mediating effect of customer satisfaction on service quality and customer trust relationship in Malaysia rural tourism industry. This research is to develop probable causal relationship among the variables which are service quality, customer satisfaction and customer trust. Based on this, a review from the previous study in the area of service quality, customer satisfaction and customer trust was performed. From the initial findings of academic studies, the model was constructed and it's found that customer satisfaction has a positive and significant direct effect on trust. Also from the same model, it was found that customer satisfaction has a positive and significant direct effect on customer loyalty. Then, the mediating relationship was introduced in the model where customer satisfaction was introduced as a mediator in service quality and customer trust relationship. Theoretically, it is not easy to justify the superiority of any model, so empirical testing was performed. This study proposed model to empirically test and to confirm that are positive direct relationship among service quality, customer satisfaction and customer trust. In order to achieve this objective, the PLS technique data analysis was adopted. There are a few points that need to be observed. Firstly, the most accepted relationship between service quality and satisfaction is authenticated. The path coefficient of direct relationship between the service quality and satisfaction is 0.817 and is significant. Secondly, the most accepted theory that link service quality and customer trust also well supported with the path coefficient of direct relationship between service quality and customer trust is 0.770 and is significant. Thirdly, this research is to empirically analyze the proposed mediating effect of customer satisfaction on service quality and trust relationship. The amount of the relationship between customer satisfaction and customer trust accounted by the mediator was $(0.707-0.500) = 0.270$, which represents 35.06 percent of the direct effect. In view of that, it is concluded that customer satisfaction is partially mediates the relationship between service

quality and customer trust. Based on the above findings, it is concluded that customer satisfaction plays a role as mediator and has mediating affect on service quality and customer trust relationship in Malaysia rural tourism industry.

Practical Implications

The practical implications that can be drawn are, first is to improve service quality of rural tourism spots. As the research revealed, service quality has direct effect on trust mediated by tourist satisfaction, and then on tourist trust. Secondly, is that rural tourism spots should put in place good customer relationship with tourists, execute customer relationship management and create tourist's satisfaction. Research demonstrates that rural tourist satisfaction leads to customer trust. Thirdly, is that tourist satisfaction should be paid attention to by rural tourism operators. Research signifies that rural tourist satisfaction is the most indirect and important antecedent to trust. Satisfied rural tourists not only will revisit and be low probability to look alternatives, but also have word-of-mouth recommendations, which means that satisfied customers are absolutely have trust on service quality of rural tourist areas and helpful with new market development.

Research Limitations and Directions for Future Research

As an exploratory study, this paper instituted the service quality on rural tourist trust influential mechanism model, and performed scientific and systemic empirical research, and made firm conclusions, while it has some shortcomings due to research funding and ability. In view of that, some future directions should be carried out. Firstly, with regards to research samples, this study only chose rural tourist in Klang Valley areas as respondents. And this study is lacking in discussions on that whether the geographical factors, as a mediating variable, will have impact on rural tourist trust. Secondly, on the sampling time and space, they study only acquired the latitudinal data belonging to static research. Nevertheless, if we desire to institute the causal relationships between variables, it's better to make a follow-up examination to collect longitudinal data to analyses. In view of the above limitations, on one hand, further research may be performed on cleansing our scale to get better internal validity. On other hand, the survey should be done on different types and timings to obtain the generic model to improve the external validity.

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