PERCEPTIONS OF SERVICE QUALITY AMONG MANAGERS AND CUSTOMERS OF ACCOMMDATION ESTABLISMENTS IN THE CAPPACOCIA REGION

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PREFACE

This study examines and compares the service quality perceptions of customers and managers in accommodation establishments located in the Cappadocia region, an area that has become increasingly competitive in recent years. Existing research on service quality measurement in hospitality businesses has predominantly focused on customer perceptions, while managerial perspectives have largely been overlooked. A review of the relevant literature further indicates that only a limited number of studies have simultaneously evaluated service quality from both customer and manager viewpoints.

Against this background, the present study analyzes service quality in accommodation establishments in Cappadocia by incorporating the perspectives of both hotel managers and customers. The study is structured into three main parts. The first two sections are based on an examination of secondary data and provide the theoretical and conceptual framework of the research. The final section presents the findings of the field study.

The results of the empirical analysis indicate that service quality management practices in Cappadocia's accommodation establishments are generally insufficient. Furthermore, the findings reveal statistically significant differences between managers' and customers' perceptions of service quality.

This book is derived from the master's thesis prepared by Mehmet Umur under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Kurtuluş Karamustafa at the Department of Business Administration, Institute of Social Sciences, Erciyes University, on July 12, 2011.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The service sector has experienced significant growth in recent years, particularly in terms of employment opportunities and its broader economic contributions. Among all economic sectors, services have continued to gain increasing importance over time. Within the service sector, tourism stands out due to its substantial levels of investment, employment creation, and value added. As customer expectations regarding quality have evolved and become more sophisticated, service quality has emerged as an indispensable competitive factor and a strategic concept in the tourism industry, especially for hotel businesses.

In an environment characterized by intense competition, hotel establishments are compelled to adopt a quality-oriented approach that aligns with customer expectations. Delivering services that meet or exceed a certain quality standard has become crucial for both the success and long-term sustainability of these businesses. Moreover, when hotel managers' perceptions of service quality are consistent with those of their customers, establishments are likely to gain a competitive advantage over their rivals.

For a hotel seeking to improve service quality, it is essential first to identify its existing level of service quality in terms of how effectively it delivers the standards it has defined to its customers. Subsequently, if discrepancies exist between the service quality perceptions of hotel managers and those of guests staying at the establishment, these gaps must be clearly identified. Determining the necessary measures to reduce or eliminate such differences constitutes a critical step in enhancing overall service quality performance.

The Cappadocia region, which constitutes the empirical setting of this study, is one of the most important tourist destinations in Central Anatolia. According to accommodation statistics reported by the Governorship of Nevşehir, a total of 2,139,427 visitors stayed in accommodation facilities in the province of Nevşehir in 2008 (Nevşehir Governorship, 2011). The increase in tourist arrivals has been accompanied by a corresponding rise in tourism revenues in the

region. Considering the growing significance of tourism in Cappadocia, this study is expected to provide valuable and up-to-date insights into service quality for hotel establishments operating in the region.

Existing studies on service quality in hotel businesses have predominantly addressed the concept from the perspective of customers as service recipients (Akan, 1995; Gabby and O'Neill, 1996; Akbaba, 2006; Marković and Raspor, 2010). In contrast, research that simultaneously considers the perspectives of both service providers (managers) and service recipients (customers) remains relatively limited (Varinli, 1995; Yılmaz, 2007; Juwaheer, 2004). Accordingly, the present study is intended to contribute to the literature by addressing this gap through a comparative evaluation of service quality perceptions.

The primary objectives of the study are twofold: first, to assess the differences in service quality perceptions between hotel managers and customers staying at accommodation establishments in the Cappadocia region; and second, to examine whether these perceptions vary according to selected demographic characteristics of both tourists and managers. A study conducted within the context of Cappadocia is considered significant in several respects. It provides up-to-date empirical evidence for the existing literature, offers practical guidance and recommendations for tourism practitioners, contributes insights for policymakers and planners at the macro level, and presents a comprehensive perspective for scholars conducting research in this field.

The first part of the study introduces the conceptual framework that underpins the empirical analysis. This section is organized into three main themes: accommodation establishments, services, and service quality. The discussion on accommodation establishments addresses their definitions, key characteristics, and classification. The second theme focuses on the concept of service, examining its definition, distinctive features, and classification. The third theme elaborates on the concepts of quality and service quality, which form the theoretical foundation of the study.

The second part of the study aims to establish a theoretical basis to guide the empirical investigation. Within this context, particular emphasis is placed on the importance of measuring quality in service businesses. Special attention is given to the SERVQUAL model (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, 1985), which is widely used as a foundational framework for service quality measurement in hospitality research. In addition to SERVQUAL, Grönroos's (1984) service quality model and other service quality models developed over time are briefly reviewed. The final section of this part presents an overview of empirical studies that have employed the SERVQUAL technique specifically within hotel establishments, along with a discussion of their key findings.

The final part of the study comprises the empirical application. This section presents the field study designed to evaluate the service quality perceptions of customers and managers in hotel establishments, based on insights derived from the literature review. The main objective of this section is to analyze and interpret the findings obtained from a questionnaire-based field survey. Accordingly, issues such as the purpose and significance of the field study, its methodology, scope, and measurement instruments are outlined. The data are then analyzed using descriptive statistics, following procedures to ensure validity and reliability. Service quality perceptions are evaluated in relation to the demographic characteristics of both customers and managers. In addition, independent-sample t-tests are conducted to identify differences between customer and managerial perceptions. The findings generated through these analyses are expected to offer practical implications and guidance for hospitality practitioners.

CHAPTER 1

FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS: ACCOMMODATION ESTABLISHMENTS, SERVICES, AND SERVICE QUALITY

This chapter is of particular importance as it introduces the fundamental concepts that constitute the theoretical framework underpinning the empirical part of the study. The discussion primarily focuses on accommodation establishments and hotel businesses, with special emphasis on the concepts of service, quality, and service quality. These concepts form the conceptual basis necessary for understanding service quality perceptions in hospitality businesses.

1.1. Accommodation Establishments

Accommodation establishments are economic entities that produce and market goods and services designed to satisfy the travel and accommodation needs arising from temporary displacement, along with related subsidiary needs (Öğüt, Güleş, & Çetinkaya, 2003). Individuals who temporarily leave their place of permanent residence for various reasons primarily require accommodation and food and beverage services (Olalı & Korzay, 1993). Accordingly, accommodation establishments are tourism businesses that provide lodging and food and beverage services as core offerings, complemented by supporting services such as recreational activities aimed at rest and entertainment (Karamustafa, Güllü, Acar et al., 2010).

In contemporary tourism markets, many accommodation establishments offering professional lodging services also meet a wide range of additional guest needs, including dining and various auxiliary services. Among these establishments, hotel businesses occupy a particularly significant position. Consequently, numerous definitions have been proposed in the literature to conceptualize hotel and accommodation establishments.

Accommodation establishments can be defined as commercial enterprises operating according to specific standards, primarily intended to provide temporary lodging and secondarily food and beverage services to non-residents or guests whose permanent place of residence is located elsewhere (Barutçugil, 1992). A more comprehensive definition characterizes accommodation establishments as enterprises that offer temporary lodging and, to a certain extent, food and beverage services to individuals in exchange for payment. These establishments are regulated from an economic, social, and legal perspective and are distinguished by their physical structure, technical features, comfort and maintenance conditions, as well as intangible factors such as the service quality delivered by employees (Oral, 2005).

1.1.1. Definition and Characteristics of Hotel Establishments

Hotel establishments occupy a central position among accommodation businesses within the tourism industry. According to the Regulation on the Certification and Qualifications of Tourism Facilities (Decision No. 2005/8948), hotels are defined as establishments whose primary function is to meet customers' accommodation needs and which may also include auxiliary and complementary units providing food and beverage, sports, and entertainment services (Official Gazette, 2005).

Olalı and Korzay (1993) define hotels as regulated economic and social enterprises that professionally provide temporary accommodation and, to a certain extent, food services. These enterprises are characterized not only by their physical structure, technical equipment, comfort, and maintenance conditions, but also by intangible factors such as social value and the quality of service delivered by personnel. Due to the diversity of tourists in terms of nationality, culture, language, religion, financial capacity, travel motivations, and personal preferences, it is difficult to formulate a single, universally accepted definition of hotel establishments. Consequently, the literature contains numerous definitions reflecting different perspectives (Olalı & Korzay, 1993).

In its simplest form, a hotel may be described as an establishment organized according to certain standards to provide temporary accommodation for individuals traveling away from their permanent place of residence. The International Tourism Academy defines a hotel as an enterprise where travelers can stay for a fee and continuously meet their food and beverage needs throughout their journey (Şener, 2007). A more comprehensive definition describes hotels as establishments designed to meet travelers' needs—primarily accommodation, as well as food and beverage and entertainment—through standardized architectural designs, operational practices, staffing structures, and regulated customer relations (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2011).

Based on these definitions, the general characteristics of hotel establishments can be summarized as follows:

Time Sensitivity: Hotel establishments are highly sensitive to time, a characteristic closely related to the perishability of services. An unsold hotel room represents a direct loss for the establishment. Since hotel services cannot be stored or inventoried, they must be sold at the moment they are produced.

Labor-Intensive Structure: Hotel businesses are inherently labor-intensive enterprises. Complete automation in hotel operations is difficult to achieve. Although certain accommodation facilities—such as automated motels operating with card-based systems—have reduced direct human interaction, extending such practices across the entire accommodation sector remains challenging. Human labor plays a crucial role in both service delivery and the execution of managerial functions, as well as in ensuring guests' psychological satisfaction (Karamustafa, Güllü, Acar et al., 2010).

Need for Close Cooperation Among Staff: Hotel establishments consist of highly interdependent departments, making close cooperation and mutual assistance among employees essential. Effective service delivery depends on coordinated efforts across functional units within the organization.

Continuous Service Provision: Hotels provide services on a twenty-four-hour basis. Although certain individual services operate within specific time frames—such as breakfast or dinner hours—

accommodation services themselves cannot be restricted to a limited period. Continuous and meticulous employee performance is therefore required to ensure guest comfort and satisfaction (Karamustafa, Güllü, Acar et al., 2010).

Dynamic Nature of Hotel Management: Hotel management operates within an industry characterized by constant change in terms of technology, consumer expectations, and managerial approaches. As a result, hotel establishments must continuously improve their services and physical infrastructure to remain competitive (Okumuş, 1992).

High Seasonality: Seasonality is a prominent feature of the tourism sector, as demand fluctuates significantly throughout the year due to institutional, natural, and social factors. Tourist movements tend to intensify during certain periods and decline sharply during others. Accommodation establishments are generally adversely affected by such seasonal demand variations (Karamustafa, Güllü, Acar et al., 2010).

Capital-Intensive Investment Structure: Establishing and operating a hotel requires substantial capital investment, a large portion of which is tied to fixed assets prior to the commencement of operations. This investment structure increases depreciation costs and limits liquidity, posing significant financial challenges for hotel businesses (Şener, 2007).

1.1.2. Classification of Hotel Establishments

Hotel establishments may be classified according to a variety of criteria, each reflecting different operational, structural, and managerial characteristics. Among the most commonly used classification approaches are those based on size (small, medium-sized, and large hotels); legal status (tourism-certified and non-tourism-certified hotels); duration of operation (year-round and seasonal hotels); ownership structure (private, public, and mixed-ownership hotels); location (urban, mountain, coastal, and thermal hotels); and proximity to transportation facilities (airport, railway station, and port hotels). Although the scope of the present study does not directly encompass all of these hotel types, each category is

briefly discussed in this section in order to provide a comprehensive conceptual background (Şener, 2007).

Both in Türkiye and internationally, hotel classification has been addressed in a largely consistent manner by numerous scholars. In general, hotel establishments may be classified according to several fundamental dimensions (see Table 1.1): (a) the type of accommodation needs they serve; (b) the duration of their operational activities; (c) their geographical location; (d) their size; (e) the range of services offered; (f) the pricing level applied; and (g) their legal and institutional characteristics (Karamustafa, Güllü, Acar et al., 2010).

Table 1.1 Classification of Hotel Establishments

Classification Criterion	**Types of Hotel Establishments**
According to the type of accommodation needs served	Thermal hotels; Resort hotels; Convention and congress hotels; City hotels; Highway hotels (motels); Airport hotels and hotels located near airports; Mountain lodges (auberges); Ski resort hotels
According to duration of operation	Year-round hotels; Seasonal hotels
According to size	Small hotels (fewer than 100 rooms); Medium-sized hotels (100–300 rooms); Large hotels (more than 300 rooms)
According to ownership and management structure	Independently operated hotels; Chain-affiliated hotels; Franchise-operated hotels; Hotels operated under management contracts; Leased hotels; Hotels affiliated with reservation networks; Hotels involved in strategic alliances
According to pricing level	Hotels targeting low-income segments; Hotels targeting middle-income segments; Hotels targeting high-income segments
According to legal status *(may vary by country)*	In Türkiye: Municipality-certified hotels; Tourism operation-certified hotels

Source: Karamustafa, Güllü, Acar et al. (2010, p. 7).

1.1.2.1. Classification from a Legal Perspective

The legal classification of hotels, along with the representation of their assigned categories through standardized symbols, constitutes an administrative decision indicating the category to which a hotel belongs in accordance with norms established in advance by public authorities (Olalı & Korzay, 1993). Numerous systems are used worldwide for the legal classification of hotels; however, the most widely adopted framework is the system developed by the World Tourism Organization. This system is implemented through standardized evaluation forms, which are generally categorized into two groups: official evaluation forms and independent evaluation forms.

In Türkiye, the legal classification of hotel establishments and the determination of their qualifications are carried out by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Under this system, hotels are divided into two main categories: tourism operation–certified hotels (licensed establishments) and non-certified hotels, commonly referred to as non-tourism or municipality-certified hotels (Oral, 2005).

According to the Regulation on the Certification and Qualifications of Tourism Facilities (Decision No. 2005/8948), tourism operation–certified hotels are classified into five categories based on a star-rating system: (a) one-star hotels, (b) two-star hotels, (c) three-star hotels, (d) four-star hotels, and (e) five-star hotels (Official Gazette, 2005). For this purpose, the Ministry prepares detailed evaluation forms in which specific criteria are assigned weighted scores. The final classification is determined by calculating the average scores awarded by the authorized evaluation committee members.

Hotels that do not possess a tourism operation certificate fall into the category of non-certified hotels. These establishments are classified according to standards determined by local authorities. In practice, such hotels are generally categorized as first-class, second-class, or third-class hotels (Şener, 1993).

1.1.2.2. Classification by Scale

A variety of size-related criteria may be employed in the classification of hotel establishments. Among the most important of

these criteria are the amount of initial capital invested, the number of employees, the total wage expenditure, the physical area encompassing all operational units of the hotel, and the overall organizational boundaries of the establishment (Olalı & Korzay, 1993).

Nevertheless, since the size of hotels and other accommodation establishments is most commonly expressed in terms of capacity, the number of rooms or beds has become the most frequently used criterion in scale-based classifications. Consequently, hotels are typically categorized according to their room or bed capacity when classified by size (Maviş, 2006).

Classification by Scale

In classifications based on scale, hotel establishments are generally grouped as large hotels, medium- and small-sized hotels, and very small hotel establishments.

Large Hotel Establishments

The main characteristics of large hotel establishments can be summarized as follows (Şener, 2007):

A minimum of 100 rooms, which generally corresponds to an accommodation capacity of at least 160 beds.

An employment structure consistent with international standards, typically requiring approximately 1.1 employees per room and a minimum workforce of 110 employees.

A high level of capital investment, including substantial expenditures on technical infrastructure and equipment.

The allocation of more than 500 square meters of shared guest areas, excluding restaurants and banquet halls.

Historically, the number of large hotel establishments has increased in parallel with rising personal incomes, the expansion of transportation networks, and the development of social and economic regulations. Large hotels are most commonly associated with chain hotel operations. Four principal models of chain hotel formation can be identified. The first involves multiple hotels owned by a single individual, such as the Stadler Hotel Chain. The second model consists of chain hotels established through the construction or acquisition of multiple properties by commercial companies or

legal entities; examples in Türkiye have included the Tusan Hotels Chain and the Emek İnşaat Hotels Chain. The third model comprises cartel-type hotel organizations, such as the Swiss Hotel Association (Schweizer Hotelier-Verein). The final model includes hotel chains formed through franchising systems, exemplified by hotels affiliated with internationally recognized organizations such as the Master Hosts Association (Olalı & Korzay, 1993).

In addition to accommodation services, large hotel establishments typically provide a wide range of complementary services, including food and beverage, entertainment, leisure, and retail facilities. In Türkiye, hotels with four- and five-star ratings are generally regarded as large-scale hotel establishments in terms of room and bed capacity.

Medium- and Small-Sized Hotel Establishments

Although no universally accepted distinction exists within the hospitality industry, hotels employing approximately 50–100 staff members and offering 60–100 rooms are generally classified as medium-sized hotels. Small hotels, by contrast, typically employ 30–50 staff members and operate with 10–50 rooms. In three-star hotel establishments, the primary objective is to meet guests' accommodation and food and beverage needs (Şener, 2007). Some three-star hotels also offer limited leisure amenities, such as swimming pools or cafeterias.

Small hotel establishments began to develop globally alongside the expansion of road transportation networks. These establishments can be founded with relatively modest capital investment and operational effort, making them particularly suitable for regions where tourism activities are less developed (Olalı & Korzay, 1993). In the context of Türkiye, hotels rated three stars or lower are generally considered medium- or small-sized establishments.

Very Small Hotel Establishments

Very small hotel establishments are defined as businesses in which accommodation services are not provided on a continuous basis, services are generally delivered by one to five individuals, and capacity typically allows for the accommodation of between two and twenty guests. These establishments play an important role in

increasing accommodation capacity in large cities and gain significance by extending tourism services to locations that might otherwise be regarded as minor or peripheral destinations (Olalı & Korzay, 1993).

1.1.2.3. Classification According to Duration of Operation

From the perspective of operational duration, hotel establishments may be classified into two main categories: year-round hotels and seasonal hotels (Şener, 2007; Kozak, 2002).

Year-Round Hotels

Year-round hotels are establishments that operate continuously throughout the year. City hotels and other hotels located in areas where climatic conditions and business environments permit uninterrupted operation are typically included in this category.

Seasonal Hotels

Seasonal hotels operate only during specific periods of the year and remain closed during off-season months. The prevalence and operational patterns of such hotels vary significantly across countries and regions.

1.1.2.4. Classification According to Ownership Structure

Based on ownership principles, hotel establishments may be classified into three main groups (Şener, 2007):

Privately Owned Hotels

These are hotels whose assets are entirely owned by private individuals or private-sector entities.

Mixed-Ownership Hotels

In these establishments, capital investment is shared between the private sector and public institutions.

Publicly Owned Hotels

Publicly owned hotels are establishments whose assets are fully owned by public institutions. Such institutions may establish and operate hotel businesses within the limits permitted by their founding legislation. Examples in Türkiye include enterprises affiliated with Turban Inc., the Social Security Institution, the

General Directorate of Foundations, municipalities, and provincial special administrations.

1.1.2.5. Classification According to the Type of Accommodation Needs Served

When classified according to the type of accommodation needs they address, hotel establishments may be grouped into four main categories (Şener, 2007).

City Hotels

City hotels are located in urban centers and primarily serve business travelers, as well as domestic and international visitors who stay for short periods to conduct professional or administrative activities.

Coastal Hotels

Coastal hotels cater to guests seeking extended leisure vacations, offering opportunities for relaxation, entertainment, seaside activities, and close interaction with natural environments.

Mountain Hotels

Mountain hotels are accommodation establishments catering to guests who seek opportunities for skiing and mountaineering, as well as those wishing to relax and spend their holidays in close contact with nature (Kozak, Çakıcı, Kozak et al., 2002).

Thermal Hotels

Thermal hotels are establishments where guests stay in order to benefit from thermal springs and mineral waters for therapeutic and wellness purposes (Olalı & Korzay, 1993).

1.1.2.6. Classification According to Proximity to Transportation Facilities

Hotels may also be classified based on their relationship with transportation infrastructure (Şener, 2007).

Airport Hotels

Airport hotels are establishments located in or near major international airports, primarily serving transit passengers, airline crews, and short-stay business travelers (Kozak, Çakıcı, Kozak et al., 2002).

Station Hotels

Station hotels are typically situated near bus terminals or railway stations in large cities and cater to travelers requiring short-term accommodation.

Port Hotels

Port hotels are relatively uncommon establishments located in major port cities and primarily serve passengers traveling by sea (Kozak, Çakıcı, Kozak et al., 2002).

Highway Junction Hotels

These hotels are located at major highway intersections and have become increasingly common in recent years, particularly in Türkiye, due to the expansion of road transportation networks.

1.1.3. Definitions and Characteristics of Other Accommodation Establishments

Although hotels constitute the most prominent category among accommodation establishments, tourism legislation also recognizes a wide range of other accommodation types. According to the Regulation on the Qualifications of Tourism Investments and Operations, accommodation establishments other than hotels—including motels, holiday villages, pensions, campgrounds, apartment hotels, hostels, thermal tourism facilities, health and rehabilitation facilities, golf facilities, mountain lodges, sports and hunting facilities, rural tourism facilities, and floating facilities—are defined as follows (Official Gazette, 2000):

Motels

Motels are accommodation facilities with a minimum of ten rooms, constructed outside urban areas along highways or in their immediate vicinity. They are designed to meet the accommodation, food and beverage, and parking needs of travelers using motor vehicles.

Holiday Villages

Holiday villages are accommodation facilities consisting of low-rise buildings (generally no more than two floors) arranged in a dispersed settlement pattern within natural surroundings. In addition to providing comfortable accommodation, they offer a variety of

sports, entertainment, and retail services. According to the relevant regulation, holiday villages must have a minimum of sixty rooms. In sloped terrains, a third floor may be constructed provided it benefits from natural light and does not fall below ground level. Special attention is given to environmental landscaping and the preservation of natural and local values.

Pensions (Guesthouses)

Pensions are simply managed accommodation facilities planned and constructed specifically for lodging purposes. They allow guests to prepare their own meals and must have at least five rooms in accordance with tourism regulations.

Campgrounds (Camping Sites)

Campgrounds are facilities established along highways, near city entrances, or in areas of natural beauty such as seasides, lakes, or mountainous regions. They enable tourists to meet their accommodation, food and beverage, recreation, and sports needs largely through their own means and must comprise at least thirty units.

Apartment Hotels (Apart Hotels)

Apartment hotels are accommodation facilities constructed and furnished as independent apartment blocks or villa-type units suitable for residential use. They are equipped to allow guests to prepare their own meals and are operated as hotels. Apartment hotels may be part of a certified hotel, holiday village, or tourism complex, or they may operate independently as "stand-alone apartment hotels," provided they consist of at least ten units and comply with zoning and planning regulations.

Hostels

Hostels are accommodation facilities primarily serving youth tourism. They must have at least ten rooms and provide either food and beverage services or facilities that allow guests to prepare their own meals.

Thermal Tourism Facilities

Thermal tourism facilities are establishments where one or more health-oriented applications—such as the use of mineralized thermal waters, drinking waters, sea water, mud treatments, inhalation

therapies, massage, or physical therapy—are administered under medical supervision. These facilities may be developed and certified in conjunction with accommodation establishments.

Health, Rehabilitation, and Care Facilities

These facilities operate within certified accommodation establishments and are designed to provide healthy living services in natural environments. They offer specialized services such as healthcare, rehabilitation, nutrition, and elderly care, delivered by qualified professional staff across designated units.

Golf Facilities

Golf facilities consist of courses designed in accordance with international standards for golf, along with practice areas, clubhouses, and auxiliary units supporting golf-related activities.

Mountain Lodges, Sports, and Hunting Facilities

These establishments must be constructed in locations appropriate to their intended purpose and must meet at least the minimum standards of one-star hotel establishments as defined by tourism regulations.

Rural Tourism Facilities

Rural tourism facilities are accommodation establishments with a minimum of five rooms, developed in rural areas designated by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. They may involve the renovation of existing village or farm houses or the construction of new units based on approved architectural models. These facilities emphasize environmental sustainability, the protection of ecosystems and wildlife, and the promotion of local cultural values such as traditional cuisine and handicrafts.

Floating Facilities

Floating facilities are maritime structures capable of self-propulsion or being towed by tugboats. They are certified as seaworthy and authorized to provide accommodation, food and beverages, and/or entertainment services for tourism purposes within territorial waters or ports, subject to renewal under relevant maritime regulations.

1.2. Service

1.2.1. Historical Development and Definition of Service

The concept of service was first addressed systematically in the eighteenth century by French philosophers, who defined services broadly as all economic activities outside agriculture (Çakır, 1998). In general, as a country's economy develops and its level of industrialization increases, the importance and share of services also expand—often at a faster pace than industrial growth itself (Mucuk, 1998). For this reason, the historical development of services should be examined within the broader context of socio-economic development.

From the 1970s onward, services began to attract increasing scholarly attention. During this period, services were conceptualized as fundamentally distinct from tangible goods, and it was widely acknowledged that they require different marketing strategies (Cowell, 1993). While numerous new services were introduced to the market, the number of firms operating in service markets also increased significantly. Considering the rapid growth and expansion of the service sector worldwide—particularly in developed and industrialized economies—the growing academic and managerial interest in service marketing in recent decades can be regarded as a natural outcome of these structural changes (Gümüşoğlu, Pırnar, Akan et al., 2007).

A clearer understanding of the historical development of services can be achieved by examining societies according to their levels of economic development (Karamustafa, 2011). In this framework, societies are commonly categorized into three stages: (a) pre-industrial, (b) industrial, and (c) post-industrial societies. In pre-industrial societies, economic activity is primarily based on agriculture and animal husbandry, supplemented by fishing, forestry, and mining. Production in this stage relies largely on human labor rather than automation, mechanization, or mass production.

In industrial societies, social and economic development is characterized by mechanization, automation, and mass production. In both pre-industrial and early industrial societies, economic

activities are not predominantly service-oriented in the contemporary sense. In contrast, post-industrial societies are marked by a shift toward service-based production, where services constitute the core of economic activity (Fitzsimmons & Fitzsimmons, 2008). Historically, numerous definitions of service have been proposed in the literature, reflecting the evolving nature of the concept and its growing significance in modern economies. Selected definitions of service are presented in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2 Historical Definitions of Service

Period / School of Thought	Conceptualization of Service
Physiocrats (1750s)	All economic activities other than agricultural production
Adam Smith (1723–1790)	All activities that do not result in a tangible (touchable) product
J. B. Say (1767–1832)	All non-manufacturing activities that add utility to products
Western Countries (1925–1960)	Services that do not lead to a physical transformation of a good
Contemporary View	An activity that does not result in a physical change in a good

Source: Cowell (1993, p. 21).

As noted above, developed countries that have completed their industrial transformation are widely characterized as post-industrial societies, in which economic activities are predominantly service-oriented. For example, in a highly developed economy such as the United States, approximately 76% of Gross National Product is generated by the service sector, whereas this figure is around 60% in developing economies such as Brazil and approximately 35% in China (UNWTO, 2011). In Türkiye, the share of the service sector in the national economy is estimated at 65.5% (CIA, 2011).

Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons (2007) argue that in industrial societies, living standards are defined largely by the quantity of goods owned by individuals, whereas in post-industrial societies, living standards are increasingly measured by access to services such

as healthcare, education, and leisure. Indeed, contemporary discussions of quality of life typically emphasize the extent to which individuals benefit from services including health, education, tourism, and other cultural activities. In general, as national economies develop and industrialization levels increase, the importance and share of services grow rapidly—often at a faster rate than industrial production itself (Mucuk, 1994).

Despite the growing importance of services in modern economies, defining the concept of service has become increasingly complex (Mucuk, 1998). One reason for this difficulty lies in distinguishing between services that are offered as complementary elements enhancing the competitiveness or customer satisfaction of physical goods and services that are provided independently of tangible products while still generating value for customers. Another challenge arises from the difficulty of clearly articulating the differences between the utility derived from physical goods and that derived from services (İslamoğlu, Candan, Hacıefendioğlu et al., 2006).

Fundamentally, services are difficult to define because they differ substantially from physical goods. Services are intangible products that cannot be seen or touched; they are exchanged directly between the provider and the user, cannot be transported or stored, and are inherently perishable in nature (Mucuk, 1998; Hsu & Powers, 2002). Although defining services is challenging, the literature offers several influential conceptualizations. One definition that emphasizes the interactional dimension of services describes them as activities or a series of activities—often, though not necessarily, intangible—that occur through interactions between customers and service personnel and/or the physical resources, goods, or systems of the service provider, and that are delivered as solutions to customer problems (Öztürk, 2009). These interactions may occur directly between customers and service employees or indirectly through the physical environment and resources in which the service is delivered.

The American Marketing Association (AMA) defines services as "activities, benefits, or satisfactions that are offered for sale or

provided in connection with the sale of goods" (AMA, 2011). Similarly, Addy (2010) conceptualizes services as a series of offerings designed to satisfy specific needs through the use of resources such as people, objects, and tools, following a defined delivery process. According to Odabaşı and Oyman (2002), services are actions that satisfy customer needs and desires when sold independently of physical products. Oluç (2006) further defines services as activities that create customer satisfaction without relying exclusively on either tangible or intangible elements. Taken together, these definitions suggest that contemporary conceptualizations of service encompass offerings that may include both tangible and intangible components.

1.2.2. Characteristics of Services

Services differ from physical goods not only in their inherent nature but also in their marketing characteristics. Various scholars have identified these differences, particularly in relation to issues such as intangibility, inseparability, heterogeneity, and perishability. Öztürk (2009) and Rızaoğlu (2004) summarize these distinctions as presented in Table 1.3. The key characteristics of services can therefore be outlined as follows.

Table 1.3 Differences Between Physical Goods and Services

Physical Goods	**Services**
Tangible	Intangible
Homogeneous	Heterogeneous
Production and distribution are separated from consumption	Production and consumption occur simultaneously
A thing (an object)	An activity or a process
Core value is produced in the factory	Core value is created through interactions between the provider and the customer
Customers usually do not participate in the production process	Customers participate in the production process
Can be stored	Cannot be stored
Ownership can be transferred	Ownership cannot be transferred

Source: Öztürk (2009, p. 18); Rızaoğlu (2004, pp. 21–26).

It is widely acknowledged that services are distinguished from tangible goods by four fundamental characteristics (İslamoğlu, 2008). These characteristics are discussed below.

1.2.2.1. Intangibility

Services lack physical form; they cannot be touched, seen, tasted, heard, or smelled, and therefore possess an inherently intangible nature. In short, services are intangible products. While services themselves cannot be physically handled, the tangible elements that represent them—such as facilities, equipment, or personnel—may be observed. For this reason, services cannot be displayed in the same manner as physical goods (İslamoğlu, 2008).

Customers' perceptions of service quality are shaped less by the core service itself and more by tangible cues and price signals associated with the service offering (Bebko, 2000). Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) emphasize that services are not produced like physical goods, as they come into existence through performance rather than manufacturing. For example, even if the food served in a restaurant is of high quality, an unattractive or unclean service environment may lead to negative customer perceptions. Due to the intangible nature of services, customers generally lack the opportunity to evaluate, test, or inspect services prior to purchase in the same way they can with physical goods (Hsu & Powers, 2002).

1.2.2.2. Heterogeneity

Because services are highly dependent on human involvement and relatively less dependent on technology, standardizing them and delivering them consistently is considerably more difficult than in the case of physical goods (İslamoğlu, Candan, Hacıefendioğlu et al., 2006). Services received by individuals at different times and in different contexts cannot be expected to be perceived at the same level, as perceptions are influenced by customers' emotional and psychological states.

Given that both service providers and service recipients are human, variability in service delivery is inevitable, and services therefore cannot be considered homogeneous. For instance, the dining

experience of an individual may differ significantly depending on whether the individual is in a positive or negative emotional state at the time of consumption. Yükselen (2006) conceptualizes this characteristic as heterogeneity, noting that service experiences lack consistency and precision because each customer interprets and experiences the service uniquely. Consequently, service businesses must make a deliberate and continuous effort to deliver services consistently in order to maintain high levels of perceived quality.

1.2.2.3. Simultaneity (Inseparability)

Services are produced, delivered, and consumed simultaneously. As a result, a direct interaction exists between the service provider and the customer during the consumption process. The behavior of the service provider therefore becomes an integral component of the service itself. Customers often interact not only with service personnel but also with other customers during service delivery, thereby influencing one another's experiences.

The simultaneous nature of service production and consumption can be further elaborated as follows (Öztürk, 2009):

Customers are present during the service production process and directly witness the service delivery.

Other customers who are waiting to receive the service also observe the production process.

Centralized and mass production of services, as is common with physical goods, is often difficult or impossible.

Because customers frequently participate in the service production process, production and consumption are generally inseparable and occur concurrently.

1.2.2.4. Perishability

Services cannot be stored and sold at a later time in the way physical goods can. For example, if forty hotel rooms remain unsold on a given day, they cannot be carried over and sold as eighty rooms on the following day. Similarly, an airline cannot add unsold seats from

one flight to the capacity of a subsequent flight. This characteristic highlights the perishable and non-storable nature of services.

During service delivery, close interaction occurs between the service provider and the customer, creating a direct link between service performance and organizational profitability. Armstrong and Kotler (2000) describe this linkage as a service–profit chain consisting of the following elements:

Internal service quality, achieved through the recruitment, training, and support of high-quality personnel;

Satisfied and productive employees;

Effective and efficient service delivery;

Satisfied and loyal customers; and

Profitability and organizational growth.

In short, services must be consumed at the moment they are produced; unlike physical goods, they cannot be purchased, stored, and consumed at a later time (Yüksel & Yüksel-Mermod, 2004).

In summary, the defining characteristics of services are generally grouped into four categories: intangibility, heterogeneity, simultaneity, and perishability. In addition to these core features, other characteristics have also been proposed in the literature. İslamoğlu (2008) identifies additional attributes such as the difficulty of advertising and visual representation, postponability, and indivisibility. Öztürk (2009) further emphasizes aspects such as ownership, the nature of buyer–seller relationships, the central role of human factors, the complexity of marketing systems, market volatility, and the extent to which many services are subject to government regulation.

1.2.3. Classification of Services

The conceptual difficulties encountered in defining services are also reflected in efforts to classify them. Services encompass a broad and highly heterogeneous range of activities, making classification inherently complex (Tütüncü, 2009). Although classification is essential for understanding and managing service industries, it remains challenging due to the diversity of service offerings. For instance, it is not feasible to analyze an international banking chain,

a hair salon, and a medical practice within a single homogeneous service category.

Nevertheless, classifications based on shared characteristics of services can be valuable for managerial decision-making (Öztürk, 2009). Services may be classified according to various criteria, including the mode of service delivery, the degree of customization, the level of discretion exercised by service personnel, the nature of the relationship between service providers and customers, the balance between service supply and demand, and the structure of service processes (Lovelock, 1983). These classification approaches are examined in detail under the following subheadings.

1.2.3.1. Classification of Services According to the Mode of Service Delivery

Services may be classified according to the manner in which they are delivered to customers. In some cases, services are delivered directly to the customer's location, such as home or workplace food delivery services. In other cases, services—such as gardening, pest control, insurance services purchased online, or banking services conducted via digital platforms—are delivered through electronic channels or physical documents sent by post.

Conversely, certain services require customers to travel to the service delivery location. Hairdressing, dry cleaning, restaurant services, and hotel services are typical examples in which the service is produced and consumed at the service provider's premises. Furthermore, while some services are available throughout the year, others are limited to specific periods of the day, week, month, or year. Services may also differ in terms of spatial availability: some are offered at a single location, whereas others are delivered through multiple service outlets. For example, services such as hairdressing, theater performances, and gardening are typically offered at single service locations, whereas telephone services, fast-food restaurant chains, and similar businesses operate through multiple service delivery points (Karamustafa, 2011).

Based on the mode of service delivery, three primary ways of delivering services to customers can be identified (see Table 1.4):

(1) services where customers travel to the service location,
(2) services where the service provider travels to the customer's location, and
(3) services delivered through virtual or electronic channels.

Table 1.4 Classification of Services According to the Mode of Service Delivery

Mode of Service Delivery	**Single Location**	**Multiple Locations**
Customer travels to the service location	Theater; Hairdressing; Hotel services	Urban transportation services; Fast-food restaurant chains; Chain hotels
Service provider travels to the customer's location	Gardening; Pest control; Taxi services	Postal delivery services; Emergency roadside assistance (towing services)
Service delivered through virtual channels	Credit card services; Closed-circuit television broadcasting	Broadcasting networks; Internet services; Telephone services

Source: Lovelock (1983, p. 18), cited in Karamustafa (2011).

1.2.3.2. Classification of Services According to the Degree of Customization and the Level of Employee Discretion

Services may also be classified according to the extent to which they can be customized to meet individual customer needs and the degree of discretion exercised by service personnel during service delivery. This classification highlights the relationship between personalization and employee initiative in meeting customer expectations.

Table 1.5 Classification of Services According to Customization and Employee Discretion

Employee Discretion in Meeting Customer Needs	High Customization	Low Customization
High	Legal services; Beauty centers; Healthcare services; Architectural design; Taxi services; Real estate brokerage; Plumbing services; Private tutoring	Hairdressing; Mass education; Preventive healthcare
Low	Telephone services; Hotel services; Luxury restaurants; Retail banking; Insurance services	Public transportation; Routine equipment repair; Fast-food service establishments; Spectator sports events

Source: Lovelock (1983, p. 15), cited in Karamustafa (2011).

Despite the importance of establishing certain standards in the delivery of customized services that meet customer expectations, it is not always possible to ensure identical standards in every service encounter. As illustrated in Table 1.5, although standardized procedures are often defined and implemented in service delivery, the inherently human nature of both service providers and service recipients makes complete standardization difficult. This limitation directly reflects the heterogeneity characteristic of services discussed earlier.

1.2.3.3. Classification of Services According to the Type of Relationship Between Service Provider and Customer

When services are classified based on the type of relationship between the service provider and the customer, two main dimensions emerge: the continuity of service delivery and whether the relationship requires membership. As shown in Table 1.6, services may be delivered on a continuous basis or at intermittent intervals,

and the relationship between the service organization and the customer may or may not be based on membership.

Table 1.6 Classification of Services According to the Type of Relationship

Relationship Between Service Organization and Customer	**Membership Required**	**No Membership Required**
Continuous service delivery	Insurance; Telephone subscription; School enrollment; Banking services	Radio broadcasting; Police services; Highways
Intermittent service delivery	Monthly public transportation cards; Theater subscriptions	Car rental services; Postal services; Toll roads; Fast-food service establishments

Source: Lovelock (1983, p. 13), cited in Karamustafa (2011).

Some services are continuous and involve long-term, membership-based relationships between the service provider and the customer, whereas others are delivered on a one-time or periodic basis without requiring any formal membership.

1.2.3.4. Classification of Services According to Service Supply and Demand

Services may also be classified according to the nature of service supply and demand, particularly in terms of whether service capacity is constrained or unconstrained. As illustrated in Table 1.7, service capacity may be considered unconstrained in sectors such as electricity, natural gas, and telecommunications, whereas it is constrained in services such as accounting, taxation, passenger transportation, and hotel services.

Table 1.7. Classification of Services According to Service Supply and Demand

Service Capacity	High Demand Fluctuations	Low Demand Fluctuations
Unconstrained capacity	Electricity; Natural gas; Telephone services; Maternity hospitals; Police; Fire services	Insurance; Legal services; Banking; Laundry and dry-cleaning services
Constrained capacity	Accounting and taxation services; Passenger transportation; Hotels; Food and beverage services; Theater performances	Services similar to those listed in the second cell when sufficient service capacity cannot be provided

Source: Lovelock (1983, p. 17), cited in Karamustafa (2011).

In hotel food and beverage services, for example, demand may peak at specific times of the day, days of the week, or seasons of the year, making it difficult for service providers to rapidly increase capacity. By contrast, demand for services such as insurance or legal consultancy tends to be more stable. While some services experience sharp and sudden demand fluctuations, others display relatively steady demand patterns (Karamustafa, 2011).

1.2.3.5. Classification of Services According to Service Processes

Services may also be classified according to their processes, based on whether service inputs are tangible or intangible and whether the service is directed toward people or property. As shown in Table 1.8, healthcare and passenger transportation are people-processing services with tangible inputs directed at individuals. Services such as freight transportation, maintenance, and repair involve tangible inputs but are classified as possession-processing services. Public relations, advertising, and arts and entertainment services are categorized as mental stimulus–processing services with intangible inputs, while accounting and banking services represent

information-processing services with intangible inputs (Lovelock, 1983).

Table 1.8 Classification of Services According to Service Processes

Service Inputs	People (People-Processing)	Property (Possession-Processing)
Tangible	Services directed at people: Healthcare; Passenger transportation; Beauty centers; Fitness centers; Hotels; Restaurants; Hairdressing	Services directed at physical property: Freight transportation; Maintenance and repair; Cleaning services; Laundry and dry cleaning; Landscaping and gardening
Intangible	Mental stimulus–processing services: Public relations and advertising; Arts and entertainment; Radio and television broadcasting; Management consultancy; Education; Information services; Concerts; Psychotherapy; Religion	Information-processing services directed at intangible property: Accounting; Banking; Data processing and transfer; Insurance; Legal services; Programming; Research; Investment advisory services; Software consultancy

Source: Lovelock (1983, p. 12), cited in Karamustafa (2011).

Kotler (1984) proposes an alternative classification of services based on four key criteria (as cited in Tütüncü, 2009):

1. **According to organizational objectives:**

- Profit-oriented services (e.g., entertainment services provided by the private sector)
- Non-profit services (e.g., public services)

2. **According to customer presence during production:**

- Services requiring customer presence during production (e.g., medical services)

- Services not requiring customer presence during production (e.g., dry cleaning)

3. **According to reliance on people or equipment:**

- People-based services:
  - Professional services relying on skilled labor (e.g., consultancy)
  - Trade-based services (e.g., maintenance and repair)
  - Services relying on semi-skilled labor (e.g., concierge services)
- Equipment-based services:
  - Services requiring skilled labor to operate equipment (e.g., computer maintenance)
  - Fully automated services (e.g., car washing services)
  - Services requiring minimal labor (e.g., taxi services)

4. **According to target markets:**

- Services directed toward personal needs
- Services directed toward business needs

Many service classifications have been adapted from frameworks originally developed for physical goods (Cowell, 1993). Beyond the approaches discussed above, various alternative perspectives have been proposed. One such approach classifies services into three groups based on whether they are offered independently or in conjunction with goods (Cemalcılar, 1993):

- Services offered independently of goods as intangible benefits (e.g., insurance and legal services).
- Services that support the use of tangible goods (e.g., transportation and entertainment services).
- Services purchased together with goods as complementary intangible activities (e.g., credit services, maintenance, and sales training).

Mucuk (1998) further categorizes services into three main groups along a continuum ranging from less intangible to more intangible services. These categories are discussed in the following section.

According to Mucuk's (1998) classification, services may be grouped into three main categories along a continuum ranging from less intangible to more intangible services:

Product-Related Services

These services are offered in conjunction with a physical product and serve either a descriptive function or as complementary elements that provide competitive advantage. Examples include warranties, maintenance and repair services, spare parts supply, installation, and assembly services.

Equipment-Based Services

These services require the use of specific equipment or machinery in the service delivery process. Examples include services provided through vending machines, car-wash facilities, dry-cleaning machines, taxi services, bus or airline transportation, and aircraft maintenance.

People-Based Services

People-based services are delivered primarily through human labor and expertise. These include professional services such as security services, childcare services, medical services, legal consultancy, and accounting or financial advisory services.

An alternative classification developed by Browning and Singelman (1975) categorizes services as follows (as cited in Karahan, 2006):

- **Distributive Services:** Services related to transportation, storage, and communication.

- **Producer Services:** Services provided to organizations engaged in physical production.

- **Social Services:** Services delivered collectively to individuals, such as education, services offered by associations and foundations, and religious services.
- **Personal Services:** Services provided directly to individuals on a one-to-one basis.

1.2.4. Service as a Product

Products are defined as bundles of tangible (physical goods) and intangible (services) elements that satisfy customers' physiological, social, and psychological needs or address perceived deficiencies (Altunışık, Özdemir, & Torlak, 2006). As discussed earlier, services may consist entirely of intangible elements or may function as complementary components that support physical products (see Figure 1.1).

When services associated with tangible products and those offered independently of physical goods are considered together, the breadth of activities encompassed by the service concept becomes evident. The potential for improving service quality appears virtually limitless, as does the scope for developing new types of services. Consequently, unlike physical goods, services offer extensive opportunities for differentiation, innovation, and value creation (Karahan, 2006).

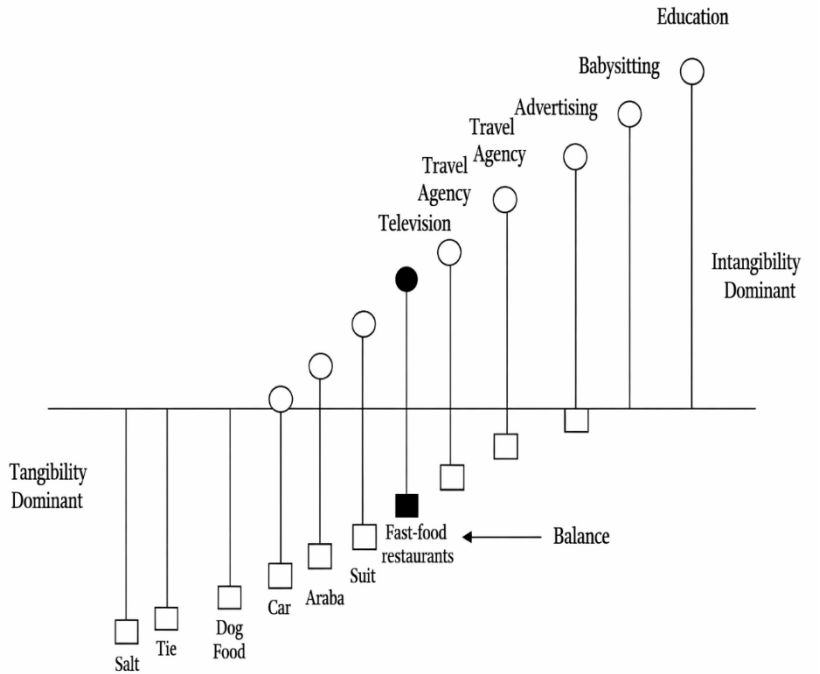

Figure 1.1: Products According to Tangibility/Intangibility Levels

Source: Rushton and Carson, 1989: 23–44.

As with physical products, services can also be conceptualized at three distinct levels: the core service, the tangible service, and the augmented service. As illustrated in Figure 1.2, services may therefore be defined and analyzed through these three dimensions (İslamoğlu, Candan, Hacıefendioğlu et al., 2006).

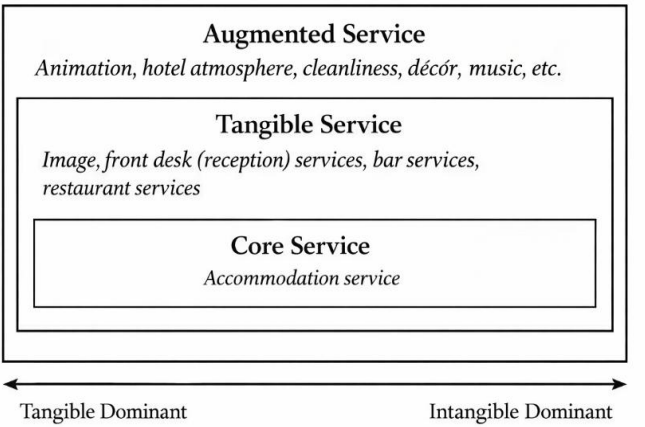

Figure 1.2. The Service Concept in Accommodation Establishments

Source: İslamoğlu, Candan, Haciefendioğlu et al. (2006, p. 18).

Shostack (1977) contributed to a clearer identification of the tangible and intangible elements involved in service delivery through the Molecular Model he developed (see Figure 1.3).

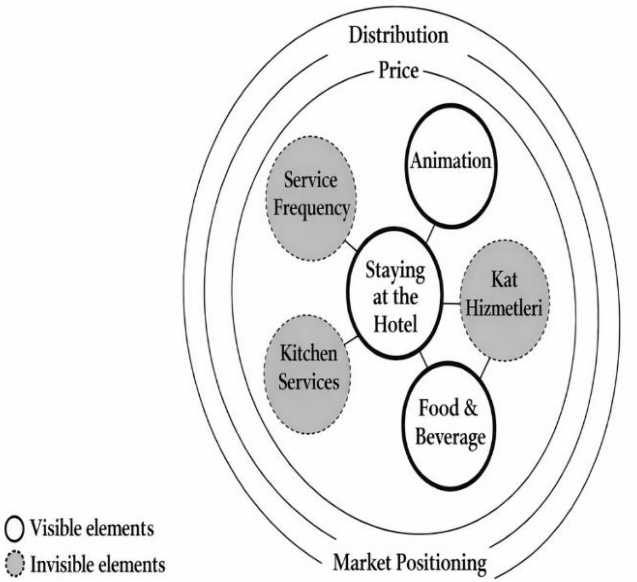

Figure 1.3: Shostack's Molecular Model: Hotels

Source: Adapted from Shostack, 1977: 76.

At the center of the model lies the **core benefit**, which directly addresses the fundamental customer need. The remaining service attributes are positioned around this core benefit and are linked to it as either **visible** or **invisible elements**. These elements include service frequency, animation, housekeeping services, food and beverage services, kitchen services, and the act of staying at the hotel itself. The model is further surrounded by **price**, **distribution**, and **market positioning** (communication messages).

The molecular model emphasizes that, similar to chemical reactions, a change in any single element has the potential to influence and transform the entire service offering. In this sense, service delivery is conceptualized as an integrated system in which all components interact dynamically.

In contrast, the **Flower of Service Model** developed by Lovelock and Wright (2002) presents the value added by supplementary service elements that surround the core service within a visual framework (see Figure 1.4). In this model, eight clusters of supplementary services are depicted as petals encircling the center of a flower, which represents the core service. For this reason, the combination of the core service and its supporting services is collectively referred to as the *flower of service*.

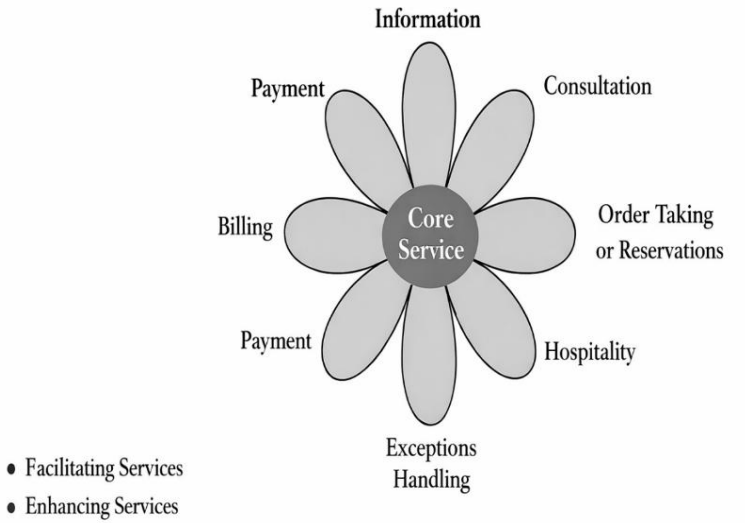

Figure 1.4: *The Flower of Service:* Supporting Services *Surrounding the Core Service*

Source: Adapted from Lovelock and Wright, 2002: 143, adapted by Karamustafa, 2011.

In the model, **facilitating services** are positioned as those that enable or simplify the use of the core service and support the service delivery process, whereas **enhancing services** are defined as

services that add greater value for customers who consume the service (Karamustafa, 2011).

Facilitating services include elements such as **information provision**, **order taking or reservation**, **billing**, and **payment**, all of which are essential for accessing and using the core service. Enhancing services, on the other hand, consist of value-adding components such as **hospitality (welcoming)**, **consultation**, **safekeeping and security (protection of customer belongings)**, and **handling exceptions**, which contribute to a richer and more satisfying service experience.

At the center of the model lies the **core service**, which represents the fundamental benefit sought by the customer. The Flower of Service Model visually emphasizes that the perceived quality of a service does not depend solely on the core service itself, but rather on the integrated performance of both facilitating and enhancing service elements surrounding it.

1.3. SERVICE QUALITY

This section addresses the concepts of **quality** and **service quality**.

1.3.1. The Concept of Quality and Its Historical Development

The earliest recorded references to quality date back to 2150 BC. Article 229 of the famous **Code of Hammurabi** states that if a builder constructs a house that is not sufficiently strong and the house collapses, causing the death of the owner, the builder shall be put to death. This provision demonstrates that concerns related to quality—albeit in a rudimentary form—emerged in ancient times and have continued to evolve up to the present day (Şimşek, 2004).

The term *quality* originates from the Latin word *qualis*, meaning "of what kind" or "how constituted" (Erkan, Üçok Alakavuk, & Tosun, 2008). Fundamentally, the concept of quality aims to define what a product or service truly is. In everyday usage, quality generally refers to superiority and excellence, indicating that the product or service in question possesses desirable attributes (Şimşek, 2004).

While quality was traditionally associated with product durability and longevity, following the Industrial Revolution it came to be

defined in terms of conformity to standards and freedom from defects (Özalp, Şahin, & Berberoğlu et al., 2006). From a contemporary perspective, quality may also be expressed as the **performance gap between expectations and actual experience** (İslamoğlu, Candan, & Hacıefendioğlu et al., 2006). Accordingly, quality is not an objective property of a product or service, but rather what customers **perceive** it to be (Hsu & Powers, 2002).

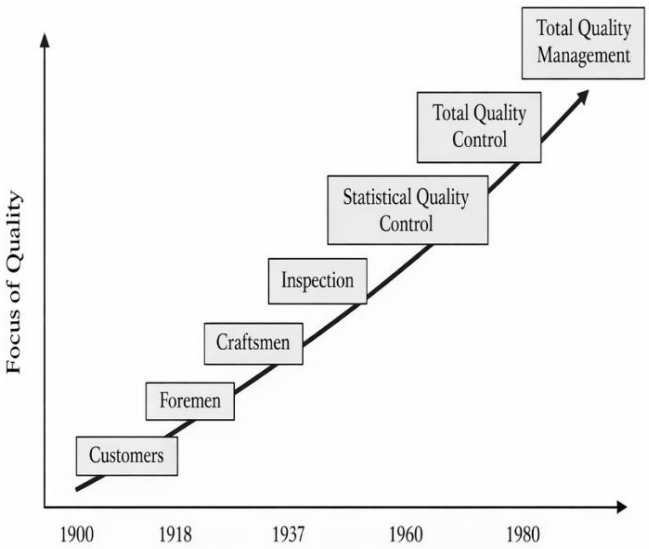

Figure 1.5. The Historical Development of Quality

Source: Adapted from Şimşek (2004, p. 17).

As illustrated in **Figure 1.5**, the focus of quality has evolved considerably over time. In the early 1900s, quality was primarily associated with **customers and guilds**. This focus later shifted to **foremen**, followed by **inspection** practices. Subsequently, quality management evolved through **statistical quality control** and **total**

quality control, eventually culminating in **total quality management** in the later years.

The concept of quality has been defined in numerous ways over time. Şimşek (2004) summarizes some of the most widely used definitions as follows: quality is the value of a product or service; conformity to predetermined specifications; fitness for needs; fitness for use; avoidance of defects; and meeting or exceeding customer expectations.

Scholars who have made significant contributions to the study of quality have offered varying perspectives. Crosby (1979) defines quality as conformance to requirements, while Juran (1988) conceptualizes quality as fitness for use. Deming (1960) emphasizes quality as the ability to meet both current and future customer needs. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) describe quality as the comparison between expectations and perceived performance. Similarly, quality has been defined as the totality of characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs (Odabaşı & Oyman, 2002; Şimşek, 2004).

Quality may also be expressed as the degree to which a product or service is capable of meeting customer expectations while remaining aligned with organizational objectives. However, in today's highly competitive environment—characterized by rising education levels and increasingly informed customers—such a definition may at times prove insufficient. Consequently, a more appropriate approach is to define quality not merely as meeting customer expectations, but as delivering satisfaction that exceeds those expectations (Taner, 1997).

From a technical perspective, Varinli and Çatı (2008) suggest that quality has two fundamental meanings: first, the degree to which a product or service succeeds in meeting stated or potential needs; and second, the absence of defects in a product or service.

Each dimension of quality is distinct and independent. A product may perform well in one quality dimension while performing poorly in another, and these evaluations may vary across different products. One of the most comprehensive examinations of perceived quality

was conducted by Garvin (1988), who identified eight dimensions through which customers evaluate quality:

Reliability refers to the extent to which a product performs its intended functions consistently throughout its lifespan.

Conformance indicates the degree to which a product's design and operating characteristics meet predetermined standards.

Performance relates to the primary operating characteristics of a product, such as speed and comfort in automobiles or sound and image quality in televisions.

Perceived Quality reflects customers' judgments based on indirect indicators when full information about product attributes is unavailable.

Aesthetics concerns the sensory characteristics of a product that appeal to customers' five senses.

Durability refers to the length of a product's usable life.

Features represent supplementary characteristics that enhance the product's basic function.

Serviceability encompasses attributes such as speed, responsiveness, courtesy, competence, and ease of repair.

The preceding discussion outlines the dimensions of quality primarily in relation to physical products. More specific dimensions related to services are examined in detail in the section on **Dimensions of Service Quality**. Nevertheless, it can be argued that many of the dimensions identified above are also applicable to services.

1.3.2. The Concept of Total Quality and Its General Principles

Total Quality (TQ) refers to the systematic approach through which management practices, human resources, work processes, and product quality are collectively addressed to meet customer requirements, with the participation of all employees and the alignment of goals and values (Şimşek, 2004).

The foundations of what is now known as **Total Quality Management (TQM)** were laid by Feigenbaum, who introduced the concept of **Total Quality Control** in his 1957 publication, emphasizing the involvement of all organizational departments—

such as marketing, sales, design, and production—in quality-related activities (Oral, 2005).

At the core of this approach lies the principle of continuous improvement, which rejects the notion of viewing any process as complete or final. TQM prioritizes customer satisfaction over short-term profit, recognizing that sustained customer satisfaction leads to long-term profitability. Accordingly, TQM is a comprehensive system that integrates philosophy, teamwork, and processes to achieve organizational objectives by creating satisfied customers and motivated employees (Şimşek, 2004).

Figure 1.6. The Development of Total Quality Management

Source: Oral (2005, p. 329).

Organizations that adopt **Total Quality Management (TQM)** should take the following principles into consideration (Kaufman & Zahn, 1993, cited in Özdemir, 1995):

a) Directing the organization's attention toward **customer needs and expectations**,
b) Ensuring that **top management acts as a role model** in delivering quality products and services across all organizational processes,
c) Providing organizational members with opportunities for **training, development, and renewal** so that they can deliver the highest level of service,
d) Establishing **systematic improvement and renewal processes** for all employees in order to ensure continuous development and progress, and
e) Adopting a **human-centered management approach**.

The primary objective of **Total Quality Management (TQM)** is to increase both internal and external customer satisfaction while utilizing minimal resources. From this perspective, the fundamental values and principles of quality management can be summarized as follows (Tütüncü, 2009):

a) Customer orientation,
b) Continuous improvement,
c) Leadership,
d) Process orientation,
e) Involvement of top management,
f) Fact-based decision making,
g) Participation of all employees,
h) A preventive approach, and
i) Becoming a learning organization.

When TQM is considered within the context of accommodation establishments in the tourism sector, it may be described as a management approach that aims to meet employee and guest expectations at the highest possible level, emphasizes employee empowerment through information sharing and delegation of authority, and promotes continuous improvement of all processes through teamwork. This characteristic distinguishes TQM from other management approaches. In hotel operations, TQM represents a modern management philosophy based on the continuous review and improvement of service outcomes, achieved through full employee participation, with the objectives of enhancing guest

satisfaction and fostering guest loyalty. It prioritizes guest expectations and interests and emphasizes that quality is created during the service delivery process itself (Şener, 2007).

The Deming Cycle in Total Quality Management (PDCA Cycle)

The **Deming Cycle** is a method that assists management in stabilizing processes and embedding the idea that improvement efforts are never-ending within an organization. The cycle consists of four main stages (Şimşek, 2004):

a) Planning,
b) Implementation (Doing),
c) Checking, and
d) Corrective Action (Acting)

The Deming Cycle is based on the recognition that process-related problems arise from gaps between customer requirements and product or service quality. The greater the gap between customer expectations and actual quality, the higher the level of customer dissatisfaction; however, this also indicates a greater opportunity for improvement. When the gap is relatively small, improvement opportunities may be more limited. Nevertheless, continuously reducing the gap between customer requirements and process performance remains economically beneficial and strategically essential (Şimşek, 2004).

1.3.3. The Concept of Service Quality

The intangible nature of services makes it difficult to deliver them in uniform or identical standards and to apply quality control principles in the same manner as for physical products. Because services are consumed at the moment they are produced, service quality is generally determined not prior to delivery, but through the subjective evaluations formed by customers based on their expectations and perceptions during consumption (Gürbüz & Ergülen, 2008).

Service quality reflects customers' long-term perceptions resulting from cumulative performance evaluations. It may therefore be defined as the attitudinal outcome of customers' overall assessments of service performance over time (Reid & Bojanic, 2006).

Service quality is influenced by all individuals who interact with customers. For instance, if an employee provides service below established standards or fails to satisfy the customer, a negative quality perception is likely to emerge. For this reason, it is essential to thoroughly understand the service delivery process that shapes customer perceptions of quality (Reid & Bojanic, 2006; Hoffman & Bateson, 2006).

At its core, service quality is evaluated by comparing perceived performance with expected performance. Expectations play a critical role in shaping service quality perceptions, as a service that one customer perceives as poor may be perceived as satisfactory by another. Consequently, perceived service quality varies according to individual expectations and personal characteristics (Yılmaz, Ersoy, & Argan, 2006).

Kandampully, Mok, and Sparks (2001) argue that although service organizations are aware of the need for quality improvement and understand the structure of service quality programs, service quality remains a fundamental challenge due to several factors:

a) Managers may prioritize short-term rewards over long-term organizational goals due to incentive systems designed around short-term outcomes.

b) Many organizations offer a wide range of services, often under budget constraints, which can prevent any single service from being delivered at an optimal quality level.

c) Existing systems may be inefficient or ineffective, making it difficult for employees to manage customer-related problems when they arise.

d) Service offerings may involve a mix of highly skilled, semi-skilled, and low-skilled activities; organizations with limited budgets providing diverse services may struggle to achieve high service quality.

e) Employees may perceive certain tasks as outside their responsibilities and may avoid assisting customers or supporting colleagues who are addressing customer issues. Addressing this problem requires a fundamental cultural change, beginning with top management.

f) Employees may adopt negative attitudes toward customers, and service improvement programs may be difficult to implement consistently due to rigid work schedules and operational constraints. It should be reiterated that defining service quality precisely remains challenging. As previously noted, quality definitions developed for physical products cannot be directly applied to services. In service organizations, the quality of services is determined primarily by customers rather than by producers, and services gain approval only to the extent that they meet or exceed customer expectations (Karahan, 2006).

1.3.4. Dimensions of Service Quality

Grönroos (1984) conceptualizes service quality as consisting of three components: **technical quality**, **functional quality**, and **corporate image quality**. Technical quality relates to service outcomes, functional quality concerns the service delivery process, and corporate image quality reflects the overall image of the service provider.

Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) initially identified ten dimensions of service quality:

- **Reliability:** Consistency between promises and actual performance; the ability to perform services dependably and accurately.
- **Responsiveness:** Willingness and readiness to provide prompt service.
- **Competence:** Possession of the necessary skills and knowledge to perform the service effectively.
- **Access:** Ease of contact and approachability of service providers.
- **Courtesy:** Politeness, respectfulness, and consideration shown by service personnel.
- **Communication:** Keeping customers informed in a language they understand and listening to their needs.

- **Credibility:** Trustworthiness, honesty, and the fulfillment of promises made.
- **Security:** Freedom from danger, risk, and doubt during service delivery.
- **Understanding the Customer:** Efforts to understand customer needs, including anticipating needs before they are explicitly expressed.
- **Tangibles:** Physical evidence of the service, including facilities, equipment, personnel appearance, and communication materials.

These dimensions form the foundation of later service quality measurement models and are examined in greater detail in subsequent sections.

Table 1.9. Consolidated Service Quality Dimensions

	Tangibles	Reliability	Responsiv	Assurance	Empathy
Physical Appearance	■				
Reliability		■			
Responsiveness			■		
Competence				■	
Courtesy				■	
Credibility				■	
Security				■	
Access					■
Communication					■
Understanding the Customer					■

Source: Alparslan & Karabatı, 1996: 5.

Subsequently, Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988, p. 23), based on the results of their statistical analyses, observed that there were noteworthy correlations among certain dimensions. As a result,

they reorganized the ten service quality dimensions into five broader dimensions. As shown in the table, the dimensions of **tangibles**, **reliability**, and **responsiveness** remained unchanged, while the dimensions of **competence**, **courtesy**, **credibility**, and **security** were combined under the dimension labeled **assurance**. Similarly, the dimensions of **access**, **communication**, and **understanding the customer** were consolidated under the dimension referred to as **empathy**. Consequently, five fundamental service quality dimensions were obtained (Table 1.9).

In order to provide a foundation for the empirical part of the study, the following chapter will focus on the measurement of service quality and related concepts.

CHAPTER TWO

MEASUREMENT OF SERVICE QUALITY AND SERVICE QUALITY MODELS

The main purpose of this chapter is to establish the theoretical framework that will guide the empirical part of the thesis. Within this scope, the importance of measuring quality for service businesses is first addressed. In addition, particular emphasis is placed on the **SERVQUAL technique**, which is one of the most frequently used tools in service quality measurement and constitutes the foundation of the Service Quality Model. Alongside **Grönroos's (1984) Service Quality Model**, other service quality models developed to date are also briefly explained. In the final part of the chapter, studies conducted—especially in hotel businesses—using the SERVQUAL technique to measure service quality and the findings obtained from these studies are presented.

2.1. MEASUREMENT OF SERVICE QUALITY

It is not possible for service businesses to improve service quality without measuring it (Nakip, Varinli & Güllü, 2006, p. 374). The improvement and controllability of intangible services can only be achieved through measurability criteria (Teas, 1994, p. 132). Although many models have been developed to measure service quality and determine its dimensions (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1985; Haywood-Farmer, 1988; Brogowicz, Delene & Lyth, 1990; Bolton & Drew, 1991; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Mattsson, 1992; Berkley & Gupta, 1994; Dabholkar, 1996; Spreng & Mackoy, 1996; Philip & Hazlett, 1997; Sweeney, Soutar & Johnson, 1997; Oh, 1999; Dabholkar, Shepherd & Thorpe, 2000; Frost & Kumar, 2000; Soteriou & Stavrinides, 2000; Broderick & Vachirapornpuk, 2002; Zhu, Wymer & Chen, 2002; Santos, 2003), measuring services—due to their intangible nature—remains highly challenging.

In the case of physical products, customers can form an opinion about product quality prior to purchase. In contrast, in the service

sector, quality indicators can only be perceived during or after service delivery, and this perception takes the form of experiential quality. Therefore, service quality cannot be measured solely through tangible and physical variables as in product quality. Consequently, service quality in the service sector is primarily determined based on customer perceptions. Within this context, due to the variability characteristic of services, perceived service quality may differ from one individual to another. Customers' demographic, psychographic, socio-cultural, and behavioral characteristics constitute the main reasons for such differences. In particular, variations in customers' education, culture, income, and socio-cultural levels significantly affect their perception of service quality (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1985; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Philip & Hazlett, 1997).

Perceived service quality is defined as the result of customers' comparison between their expectations prior to receiving the service (expected service) and their actual service experience (perceived service or perceived performance). It is evaluated as the direction and magnitude of the gap between customer expectations and perceived performance. In the service quality literature, "expectations" refer to customers' desires regarding a service (Saat, 1995, p. 28; Devebakan & Aksaraylı, 2003, p. 39; Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1988; Bulgan, 2002, p. 6).

Service quality should be evaluated by considering three distinct dimensions (Grönroos, 1984, pp. 38–39; Karatepe, 1997, p. 89; Okumuş & Asil, 2007, p. 13):

a) **Technical Quality**: Refers to the quality dimension of the physical outputs delivered to customers during service provision.
b) **Functional Quality**: Refers to the manner in which the service is delivered to customers.
c) **Corporate Image**: The image created by service businesses through traditional marketing activities is evaluated by customers as a holistic combination of technical and functional quality.

While determining and measuring quality and performance indicators is relatively easy in manufacturing businesses, it is considerably more difficult in service businesses. This difficulty arises because the benefits provided by services are hard to evaluate using quantitative criteria. For this reason, scales based on perception levels have generally been developed. The most widely used scale in measuring service quality is the **SERVQUAL method**, developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985). This scale is designed to measure customers' expectations of service and their perceived service performance. Moreover, since it enables the identification of customer expectations and perceptions, it facilitates information sharing between customers and management.

Service quality varies depending on when, where, and how the service is delivered. It may change according to the customer's current situation, as well as the service provider's conditions and strategies (Karahan, 2000, p. 51).

2.2. SERVICE QUALITY MODELS

Several models have been developed to transform service quality from an abstract concept into measurable values. In this study, the most well-known models—**Grönroos's (1984) Service Quality Model** and **Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry's (1985) SERVQUAL Model**—are examined in detail. Additionally, other service quality models developed based on these foundational models are also briefly discussed.

2.2.1. Grönroos's Service Quality Model

Christian Grönroos (1984) developed a model that evaluates service quality by comparing customers' service perceptions with their service expectations. The model places customer perception at its center and assumes a positive relationship between what customers expect from a service and what they experience. Expected service is shaped by marketing communication, corporate image, word-of-mouth communication, and customer needs.

Table 2.1. Grönroos's Quality Concept

Quality Dimensions	Technical Quality	Functional Quality
Potential Quality (Expected Quality)	Building and room facilities, technical equipment, staff training	Configuration of tangible production factors, staff reputation, appearance and personality, references, pricing
Process Quality (Experienced Quality)	Technical competence, service delivery flow, service duration	Staff mood, behavior and attitude during service delivery, organizational atmosphere, service culture, accessibility
Outcome Quality (Delivered Quality)	Functional (operational) reliability, service outcomes	Explanation of the service, customer satisfaction, follow-up communication, handling time and manner of complaints

Source: Yüksel, 2002, p. 41.

Grönroos (1984) conceptualized service quality in terms of **technical quality** and **functional quality** (design, production, delivery, and interactions). Technical quality focuses on outcomes and can be evaluated objectively based on customers' assessments of the quality of what they receive from the service. Functional quality, on the other hand, focuses on the process and reflects customers' subjective evaluations of how the service is delivered.

The objective quality of products or outcomes alone is not sufficient to define customers' perceptions of overall service quality. The transfer of technical quality into functional quality plays a crucial role in shaping customers' perceptions of service quality. Together, technical and functional quality contribute to the formation of the firm's image. According to Grönroos, corporate image may itself serve as a quality indicator, influencing not only customer expectations but also perceived service quality beyond the actual levels of technical and functional quality delivered. When customers

hold a positive image of the firm, they are more likely to experience satisfaction with the service. Conversely, when customers are influenced by a negative corporate image, they may remain dissatisfied even if both types of quality are delivered at a high level (Bulgan, 2002, p. 8).

In service encounters, a series of interactions—either satisfying or dissatisfying—generally takes place between the service provider and the customer. Customers are not only concerned with what they receive at the end of the production process, but also with the process itself. How technical quality is delivered significantly influences customers' perceptions of the service they receive (Varinli, 1995, p. 95). The manner in which service personnel perform their duties, what they say, and how they act all shape customers' evaluations of the service. The way customers experience the simultaneous production and consumption process constitutes the functional dimension of service quality. While technical quality answers the question of *what* is delivered to the customer, functional quality addresses *how* it is delivered. Functional quality is therefore perceived subjectively.

The aspects that clarify how technical quality is transformed into service delivery include the following (Yüksel, 2002, p. 41):

a) The nature of customer interaction, including employees' willingness to serve, waiting time, courtesy, ability to inspire trust, and emotional sensitivity; b) Employees' appearance and dress (visual impression); c) The environmental conditions of the service setting.

In general, technical quality is a necessary condition for the positive perception of overall quality. However, competitors are often capable of delivering similar levels of technical quality. Functional quality, by contrast, enables firms to differentiate themselves from competitors and achieve competitive advantage. It offers greater opportunities for service differentiation and innovative solutions and is more difficult to imitate.

As illustrated in Figure 2.1, perceived service quality emerges as a result of customers' evaluations of both technical and functional dimensions. When perceived service is compared with expected

service, overall service quality is formed. In some cases, perceived service quality incorporates a third dimension, namely corporate image (Varinli, 1995, p. 96). Grönroos (1984) emphasizes that corporate image acts as a filter in the perception of quality. Image is particularly important in services and may influence perceived quality in various ways. When a service provider holds a positive image in the minds of customers, minor failures tend to be forgiven. However, frequent failures may damage the firm's image. If a service organization already has a negative image, the impact of any failure is likely to be perceived as more severe compared to other situations (Öztürk, 1998, p. 139).

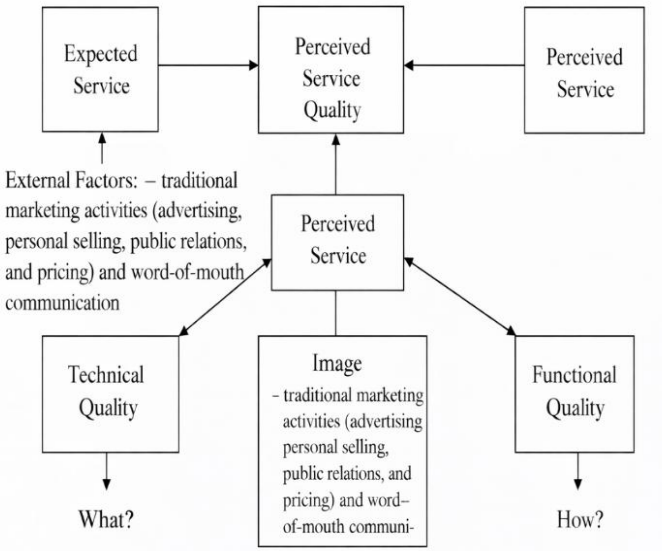

Figure 2.1. Grönroos's Service Quality Model

Source: Nitin; Deshmukh; Vrat, 2005: 916.

As a result, when customers consume a service, they evaluate what they receive and how they receive it. During this evaluation process, customers are also influenced by the overall image of the service firm. According to the model, when customers decide on the quality

of a service, they take into account the physical elements offered together with the service, the conditions required for service delivery, and the intangible aspects of the service. A high level of functional quality may cause minor deficiencies in technical quality to be tolerated and may compensate for shortcomings in technical performance. However, if a service has an adequate level of technical quality but an insufficient level of functional quality, customer dissatisfaction is generally likely to occur regardless of the technical performance level (Öztürk, 1998, p. 139).

2.2.2. SERVQUAL Model

The SERVQUAL scale is a measurement tool used to assess service quality in any service application across the dimensions of tangibles, empathy, reliability, assurance, and responsiveness (prompt service). The SERVQUAL scale was developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry in 1985 and was subsequently revised by the same authors in 1988, 1991, and 1994. Recognizing the level of service quality is of vital importance for service organizations. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) initiated a research program to develop a service quality measurement scale. This program initially began with in-depth interviews conducted with managers of firms operating in four nationally recognized service categories. These four service categories consisted of repair and maintenance, telephone services, retail banking, and credit card services. At the end of the interviews, three customer target groups were identified for each category (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985, p. 42).

As a result of both the interviews and the findings obtained from the target group research, Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) identified ten general dimensions that illustrate the distinction between customer expectations and perceptions and that customers use to evaluate service quality. These dimensions were defined as tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, competence, courtesy, credibility, security, accessibility, communication, and understanding the customer. The ten dimensions identified in the study formed a foundational framework.

Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) subsequently conducted another quantitative study to develop a scale for measuring customers' perceptions of service quality. This quantitative study was designed to include customers from five different sectors. These sectors were product repair and maintenance, banking services, telephone services, securities brokerage, and credit card services. In this study, Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry defined the SERVQUAL scale and presented its final form. Initially consisting of 97 statements and 10 dimensions, the scale was revised twice and ultimately reduced to 22 expectation and perception measurement statements across five dimensions. These dimensions are as follows:

Tangibles: This dimension refers to the physical appearance of equipment, communication materials, personnel, and service facilities.

Reliability: This dimension refers to faultlessness, dependability, and keeping promises.

Responsiveness: This dimension refers to willingness and helpfulness in providing timely and prompt service.

Assurance: This dimension refers to employees' knowledge, courtesy, and their ability to inspire trust and confidence in customers.

Empathy: This dimension refers to employees' ability to place themselves in customers' positions and provide individualized attention.

As a result of these studies, a questionnaire design consisting of 22 items and five dimensions was developed. Respondents were asked to rate these items using a seven-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree).

In 1991, Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry published an article presenting modifications to the SERVQUAL scale developed in 1988. In this article, nine of the 22 statements in the original scale were expressed negatively. The purpose of this was to assess respondents' attention and determine how carefully they read the statements. These nine statements were later rephrased using positive wording.

When a gap exists between customer expectations and perceptions, the service provided is considered to be of poor quality. For this reason, this model is also referred to as the "Gap Model." The model identifies five gaps that hinder the satisfactory delivery of services. These gaps are as follows (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988, p. 23):

Gap 1: This gap is defined as the discrepancy between customer expectations and management's perceptions of those expectations. This quality gap may arise from an incomplete or inaccurate identification of the target group's quality expectations. This gap occurs when the organization does not fully understand what customers want or their quality priorities, resulting in the inability to deliver the service customers truly desire. The organization directs service quality based on its own assumptions about customer expectations.

Gap 2: This gap refers to the discrepancy between management's perceptions and service quality specifications. It emerges during the process of designing services that meet customer expectations and indicates that merely knowing customer needs and desires is insufficient. Management may respond appropriately to customer demands but may fail to establish specific performance standards. As a result, defined and controllable quality standards may not be established. If service managers are unable to translate customer expectations into service quality standards, service quality will again be negatively affected. Organizations' focus on short-term financial goals often prevents them from establishing standards that ensure customer satisfaction (Öztürk, 1998, p. 143).

Gap 3: This gap refers to the discrepancy between service quality specifications and the actual service delivered. It represents the gap between defined quality standards and their implementation. Even if service quality standards are defined flawlessly and are suitable for implementation, the organization's existing capabilities may be insufficient to deliver that quality. If the organization does not provide the necessary human, system, and technological resources to meet established standards, those standards may become ineffective. Inadequate training, insufficiently motivated personnel,

or a policy of operating with understaffed teams also contribute to poor service quality. For example, hotel management may establish a standard requiring all incoming calls to be answered within five seconds; however, it may fail to employ a sufficient number of staff to achieve this standard.

Gap 4: This gap is defined as the discrepancy between service delivery and what is promised to customers. Messages communicated to customers through external communications and promotional activities such as advertising influence customers at this stage. This gap arises when organizations make promises through communication tools that exceed what they can actually deliver, resulting in a mismatch between customer expectations and organizational promises. Customers whose expectation levels have been raised may perceive an otherwise acceptable performance level as poor quality due to exaggerated promises (Öztürk, 1998, p. 143).

Gap 5: This gap refers to the discrepancy between perceived service and expected service. At the core of this customer-oriented model lies the difference between perceived and expected service quality. Customers expect various benefits from a service, and these expectations may vary from person to person. However, firms can influence customer expectations by addressing the first four gaps. The service will be considered high quality to the extent that it meets customer expectations. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) argued that customers' judgments of quality are determined by the fifth gap and that the first four gaps function as determinants of the fifth gap. They further suggested that any failure occurring in any of these gaps would negatively affect service quality.

According to the model, for a service to be considered high quality, there should be no discrepancy between expectations and perceptions; ideally, perceptions should exceed expectations. A negative discrepancy between expectations and perceptions indicates low service quality. Organizations seeking to improve service quality should carefully analyze these gaps and strive to eliminate them.

The SERVQUAL Model is illustrated in the following figure (Figure 2.2). The model consists of two sections: the customer and the

service provider. The gaps occurring within the service provider section may either favorably or unfavorably affect customers' perceptions of service quality; thus, both the direction and magnitude of each gap can influence overall service quality.

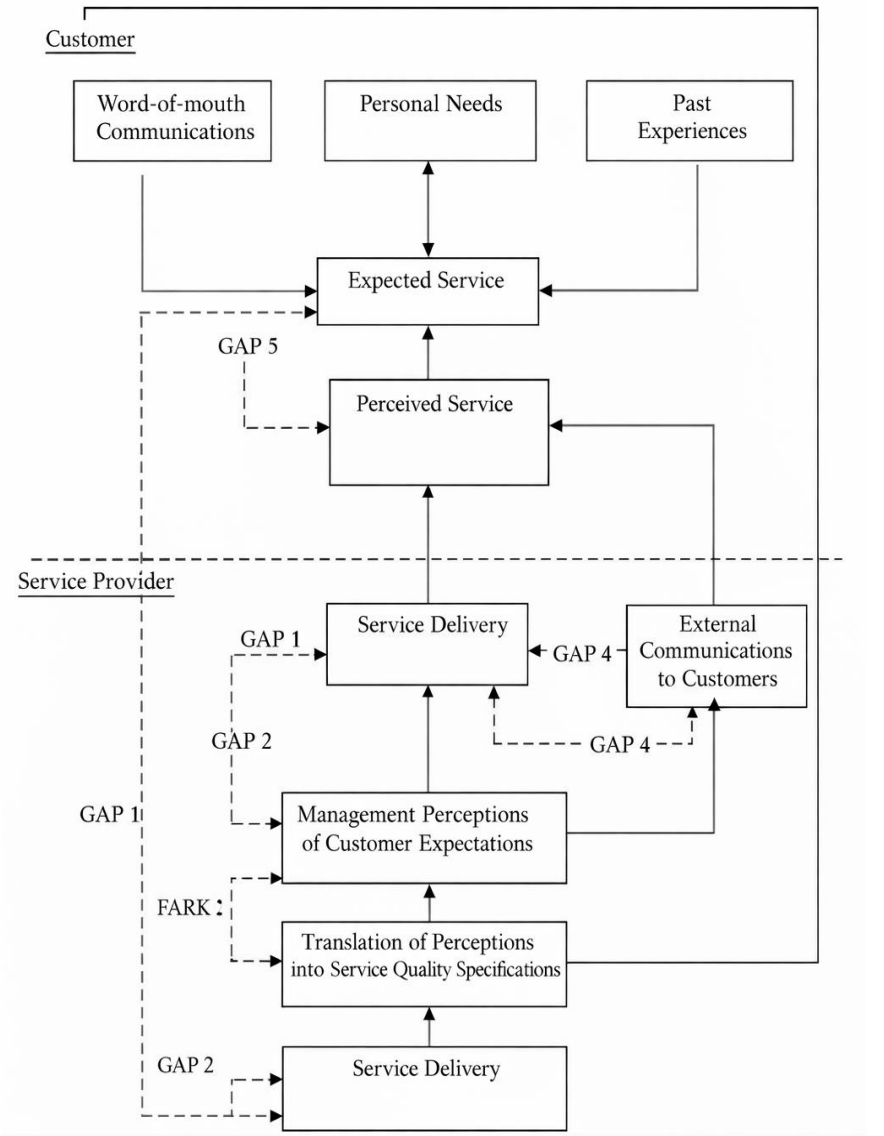

Figure 2.2. The SERVQUAL Model

Source: Parasuraman; Zeithaml; Berry, 1985: 44.

2.2.3. Service Quality Gap Model (SERVQUAL)

In conclusion, when the customer consumes a service, they evaluates what they receive and how they receive it. During this evaluation, the customer is also influenced by the overall image of the service firm. According to the model, while making a judgment about service quality, the customer takes into account the physical variables offered together with the service, the conditions required for service delivery, and the intangible aspects of the service. A high level of functional quality may lead customers to tolerate minor deficiencies in technical quality and can compensate for performance shortcomings in technical quality. However, if the technical quality of a service is at an acceptable level but its functional quality is inadequate, customer dissatisfaction may generally arise regardless of the technical performance's ability to satisfy the customer (Öztürk, 1998, p. 139).

The SERVQUAL scale is a measurement instrument used to assess service quality in any service application through the dimensions of tangibles, empathy, reliability, assurance, and responsiveness (prompt service). The SERVQUAL scale was developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry in 1985 and was subsequently revised by the same authors in 1988, 1991, and 1994. For service businesses, becoming aware of the level of service quality is of vital importance. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) initiated a research program to develop a service quality measurement scale. This program began with in-depth interviews conducted with managers of firms operating in four nationally recognized service categories. These service categories consisted of repair and maintenance services, telephone services, retail banking services, and credit card services. At the end of the interviews, three customer target groups were identified for each category (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985, p. 42).

As a result of both the interviews and the findings obtained from the target group research, Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) identified ten general dimensions used by customers to evaluate service quality, reflecting the distinction between customer expectations and perceptions. These dimensions were defined as

tangibles, reliability, responsiveness (willingness), competence, courtesy, credibility, security, accessibility, communication, and understanding the customer. The ten dimensions identified through the research formed the foundation of the model.

Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) later conducted a quantitative study to develop a scale measuring customers' perceptions of service quality. This quantitative study was designed to include customers from five different sectors: product repair and maintenance, banking services, telephone services, securities brokerage, and credit card services. In this study, Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry defined the SERVQUAL scale and presented its final form. Initially consisting of 97 items and ten dimensions, the scale was revised twice and ultimately reduced to 22 expectation and perception measurement items grouped under five dimensions. These dimensions are:

Tangibles: Refers to the physical appearance of equipment, communication materials, personnel, and service facilities.

Reliability: Refers to performing the promised service dependably and accurately, including trustworthiness and keeping promises.

Responsiveness: Refers to willingness and readiness to provide prompt service and help customers.

Assurance: Refers to employees' knowledge and courtesy and their ability to inspire trust and confidence in customers.

Empathy: Refers to providing caring and individualized attention to customers.

As a result of these studies, a questionnaire consisting of 22 items and five dimensions was developed. Respondents were asked to rate these items using a seven-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree). In 1991, Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry published an article presenting revisions to the SERVQUAL scale developed in 1988. In this article, nine of the 22 items were expressed in a negative form to assess respondents' attentiveness and determine how carefully they read the statements. These nine items were later rephrased positively.

When a gap exists between customer expectations and perceptions, the service is considered to be of poor quality. For this reason, the

model is also referred to as the "Gap Model." The model identifies five gaps that hinder the satisfactory delivery of services (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988, p. 23):

Gap 1 is defined as the gap between customer expectations and management's perceptions of those expectations. This quality gap may arise due to the insufficient or incorrect identification of the target group's quality requirements. It may result from management's lack of understanding of what customers truly want or prioritize in terms of quality, leading to the failure to deliver the desired service. Management may guide service quality based on its own assumptions regarding customer expectations.

Gap 2 refers to the gap between management perceptions and service quality specifications. This gap occurs during the stage of designing services that meet customer expectations and indicates that understanding customer needs alone is insufficient. Management may respond appropriately to customer demands but may fail to establish specific performance standards. As a result, clearly defined and controllable quality standards may not be implemented. If service managers are unable to translate customer expectations into service quality standards, service quality will be negatively affected. The tendency of businesses to pursue short-term financial goals often prevents them from establishing standards that ensure customer satisfaction (Öztürk, 1998, p. 143).

Gap 3 is defined as the gap between service quality specifications and the service actually delivered. This gap reflects the discrepancy between defined quality standards and their implementation. Even if service quality standards are clearly defined, the organization may lack the capacity to achieve them. If the business does not provide the necessary human, system, and technological resources to meet established standards, these standards may become ineffective. Inadequately trained or poorly motivated employees, as well as policies of operating with insufficient staff, are among the causes of poor service quality. For example, hotel management may set a standard of answering all incoming calls within five seconds but may fail to employ sufficient staff to meet this standard.

Gap 4 refers to the gap between service delivery and what is promised to customers. Promotional activities such as external communications and advertising influence customers at this stage. This gap arises when service businesses make promises that exceed their actual capabilities, resulting in a mismatch between customer expectations and organizational commitments. Elevated customer expectations may lead customers to perceive a normally acceptable performance level as poor quality due to excessive promises (Öztürk, 1998, p. 143).

Gap 5 is defined as the gap between perceived service and expected service. At the core of this customer-oriented model lies the difference between perceived and expected service quality. Customers expect various benefits from a service, which may vary from person to person. However, firms can shape customer expectations by addressing the first four gaps. Service quality is achieved to the extent that delivered services meet customer expectations. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) argue that customers' judgments of service quality are determined by the fifth gap and that the first four gaps function as determinants of the fifth gap. Any deficiency occurring in these gaps will negatively affect service quality.

According to the model, for a service to be considered high quality, there should be no gap between expectations and perceptions; ideally, perceptions should exceed expectations. A negative gap between expectations and perceptions indicates poor quality. Businesses aiming to improve service quality should analyze these gaps carefully and strive to eliminate them. The SERVQUAL Model is illustrated in Figure 2.2. The model consists of two sections: the customer and the service provider. The gaps occurring in the service provider section may influence customer perceptions of service quality either positively or negatively; thus, the direction and magnitude of each gap have an impact on perceived service quality.

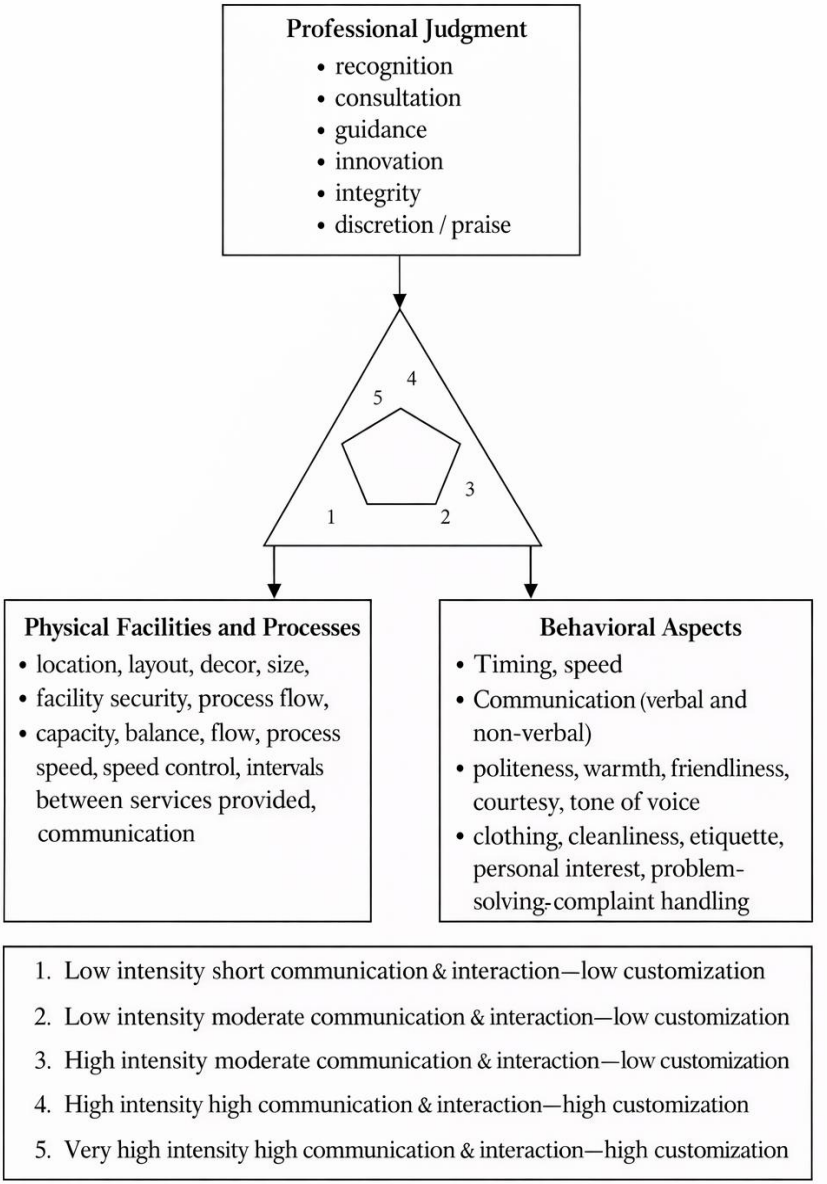

Figure 2.3. Service Quality Management Model (1988)

Source: Seth and Deshmukh, 2004: 921.

2.2.3.1. Service Quality Synthesis Model (1990)

In the model developed by Brogowicz, Delene, and Lyth (1990), it is argued that a service quality gap may arise if a customer has not previously experienced the service and has learned about it only through word-of-mouth communication, advertising, or other media channels. Therefore, it is necessary to integrate not only the service quality perceptions held by potential customers but also the perceptions arising from the service quality experiences of existing customers. The model identifies key variables such as planning, implementation, and control that must be systematically taken into account by management (Kılıç & Eleren, 2009, p. 94). In this way, differences in service quality can be minimized. The model requires empirical validation. The purpose of this model is to define service quality within the framework of planning, implementation, and control, as well as traditional management dimensions. The Synthesized Service Quality Model considers three factors: company image, external influences, and traditional marketing activities as factors affecting expectations of technical and functional quality (Deshmukh & Vrat, 2004, p. 920).

2.2.3.2. Bolton and Drew's Service Quality Model (1991)

In their 1991 study, Bolton and Drew stated that customer attitudes are largely influenced and shaped by expectations. Customer attitudes were accepted as a determinant of whether customers would be satisfied with the service they encounter. It was argued that in subsequent purchases, attitudes shaped by prior expectations, along with experienced levels of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, would be influential (Bolton & Drew, 1991, pp. 1–9).

2.2.3.3. Performance-Based Service Quality Model (SERVPERF) (1992)

In 1992, Cronin and Taylor developed a new model to measure service quality that is similar to the SERVQUAL model in many respects. In this model, it is stated that quality can be measured not by expectations but solely by customer perceptions. In the model they named SERVPERF, unlike SERVQUAL, evaluation is based on

service performance (Cronin & Taylor, 1992, p. 57). They examined SERVQUAL and SERVPERF across four different service types. They argued that the positive difference between customer expectations and the service received, as explained in the SERVQUAL model, is not sufficient to determine service quality, meaning that this measure does not yield definitive results for every service. They claimed that the SERVPERF model they developed is more effective than SERVQUAL. While the SERVQUAL model evaluates service quality by comparing customer expectations with perceived service to determine whether expectations are met, the SERVPERF model incorporates the importance given to firm performance into the evaluation (Fogarty & Forlin, 2000, pp. 4–5).

Service Quality = f(Performance)

Service performance refers to the manner in which the service is delivered and the impact it leaves on individuals. Cronin and Taylor (1992, p. 58) made use of service quality determinants similar to those used in the SERVQUAL model; however, they employed service performance as the variable in measuring quality.

2.2.3.4. Ideal Value Service Quality Model (1992)

In the model developed by Mattson (1992), it is suggested that experiences should be compared with expected ideal standards. Very few scales were used to measure customer satisfaction and value. In most studies conducted on service quality, it is believed that "expectations normally possess the desired characteristics as standards for evaluation." However, this issue needs to be examined in light of experienced, ideal, desired, and minimum tolerable standards. The model argues that service quality value is an outcome of the satisfaction process. This value-based service quality model does not compare experience with perceived ideal standards; rather, it proposes perceived ideal standards. Figure 2.4 shows that first a negative disconfirmation occurs at the "conscious value" level, followed by satisfaction at a "high" attitudinal level. This negative disconfirmation suggests that greater cognitive processes should be devoted to the fundamental determinants of customer satisfaction, which are the most important determinants of customer satisfaction.

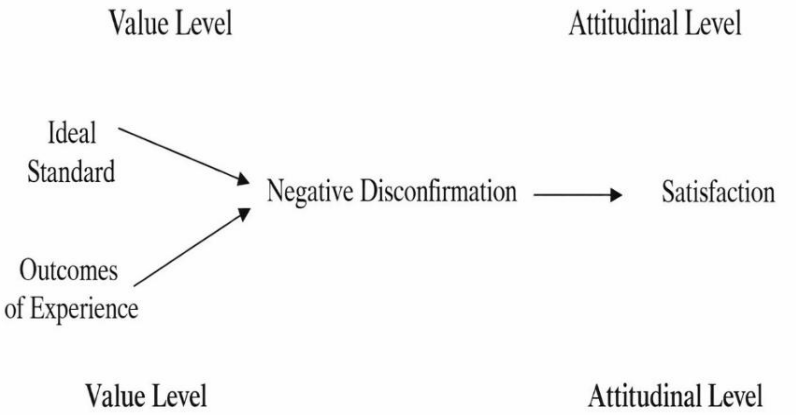

Figure 2.4. Ideal Value Service Quality Model

Source: Deshmukh and Vrat, 2004: 920

2.2.3.5. Information Technologies (IT) Alignment Model (1994)

In the service quality model developed by Berkley and Gupta (1994), in the information technology (IT) sector, efficiency improvements can generally be targeted with a certain degree of attention in order to enhance customer services and long-term customer effectiveness. In the IT Alignment Model (Figure 2.5), the information strategies of the service and the organization are linked to each other. The model defines how information technologies can be used to improve customer services across the main dimensions of service quality. The model only demonstrates the impact of information technologies on service quality and does not provide measurement methods.

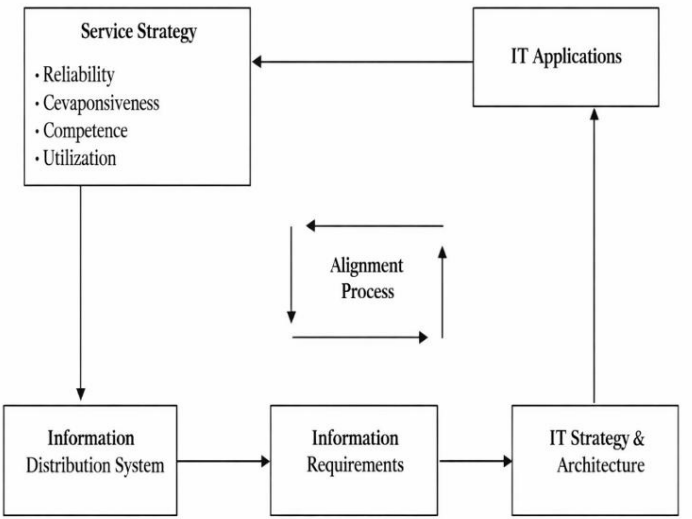

Figure 2.5. Information Technologies (IT) Alignment Model

Source: Deshmukh and Vrat, 2004: 923

2.2.3.6. Attribute and Overall Affect Model (1996)

For technology-based self-service operations, two alternative models have been proposed (Deshmukh and Vrat, 2004, 924). Self-service has become increasingly popular due to the high labor costs of service delivery. The **Attribute Model** (Figure 2.6(a)) is related to customers' expectations of such an option. It is based on a cognitive approach to decision-making, in which a compensation process is used to evaluate technology-related attributes in sequence in order to form customers' service quality expectations for the self-service option.

The **Overall Affect Model** (Figure 2.6(b)) is based on customers' emotions regarding the use of technology. Customers' approaches to deciding on overall service quality tendencies based on their

expectations of technology-based self-service quality may rest on an emotional foundation. Various criticisms of the model exist, particularly regarding the fact that factors such as demographic characteristics, price, and the physical environment are not taken into consideration (Kılıç and Eleren, 2009, 94).

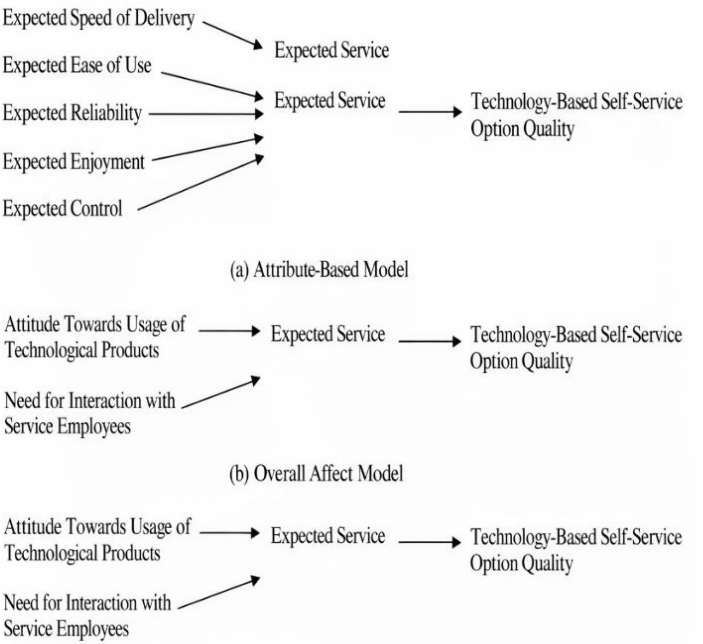

Figure 2.6. Attribute and Overall Affect Model

Source: Deshmukh and Vrat, 2004: 924.

2.2.3.7. Axis, Core, and Peripheral Attributes (ACP) Service Quality Model (1997)

Philip and Hazlett (1997, 272–273) developed a model with a hierarchical structure based on three main classes, namely axis, core, and peripheral attributes. According to this model (Figure 2.7), each service overlaps in three levels within areas that include the concepts and many fundamental dimensions that have been used to define

service quality to date. These levels are classified as key (output), core, and peripheral (which together represent inputs and processes). This model presents the general framework of service quality calculations for all service sectors in an effective and simple manner.

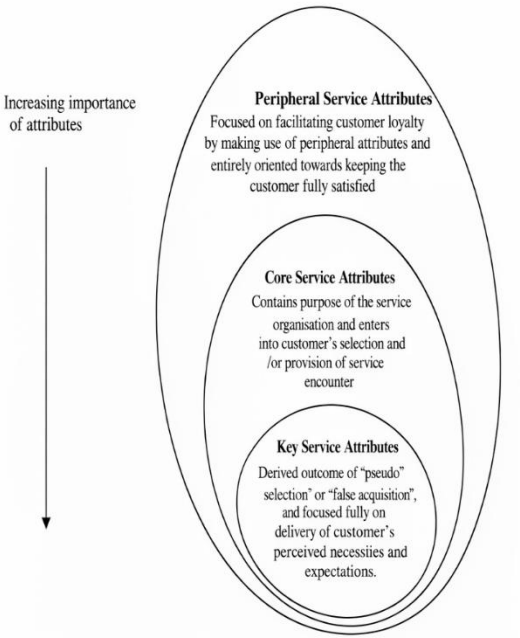

Figure 2.7. Axis, Core, and Peripheral Attributes (ACP) Service Quality Model

Source: Philip and Hazlett, 1997: 274.

2.2.3.8. Service Quality, Customer Value, and Customer Satisfaction Model (1999)

Oh (1999, 71–73) proposed an integrated model (Figure 2.8) for service quality, customer value, and customer satisfaction. The proposed model primarily focuses on the pre-purchase decision-making process. The arrows in the model indicate causal directions. The model includes key variables such as perceptions, service quality, customer satisfaction, customer value, and purchase intentions. Consequently, word-of-mouth communication intention

is conceptualized as a direct or combined function of perceptions, value, satisfaction, and repurchase intention.
The model demonstrates that customer value plays an important role in the customer's pre-purchase decision-making process. In this respect, it serves as a precursor to customer satisfaction and repurchase intention.

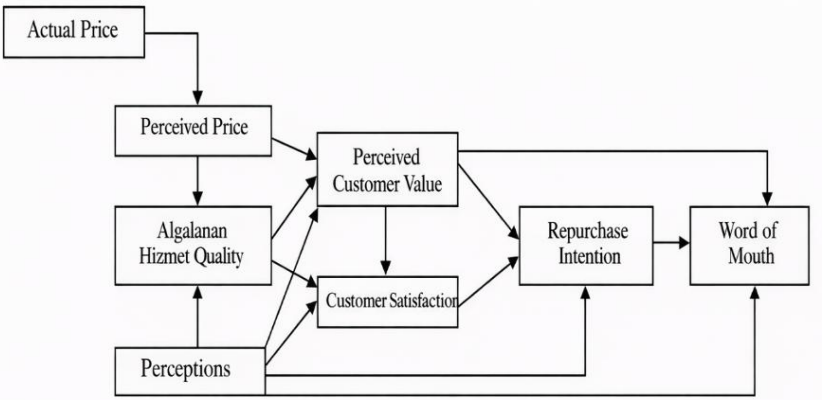

Figure 2.8. Service Quality, Customer Value, and Customer Satisfaction Model

Source: Oh, 1999: 72.

2.2.3.9. Internal Service Quality Model (INTSERVQUAL) (2000)

Frost and Kumar (2000, 366–367) developed an internal service quality model based on Parasuraman's (1985) GAP Model. The model (Figure 2.9) evaluates the dimensions that determine internal service quality and the relationships between them, focusing on the

service quality between internal customers (employees) and internal suppliers (support staff) within a large service organization.
Internal Gap 1 reveals the difference between the expectations of employees (internal customers) and the perceptions of support staff (internal suppliers). Internal Gap 2 reveals the difference between service quality specifications and the services offered through the internal service performance gap. Internal Gap 3, on the other hand, focuses on employees (internal customers). This gap primarily addresses the difference between employee expectations and the service quality perceptions of support staff (internal suppliers) (Frost and Kumar, 2000, 366).

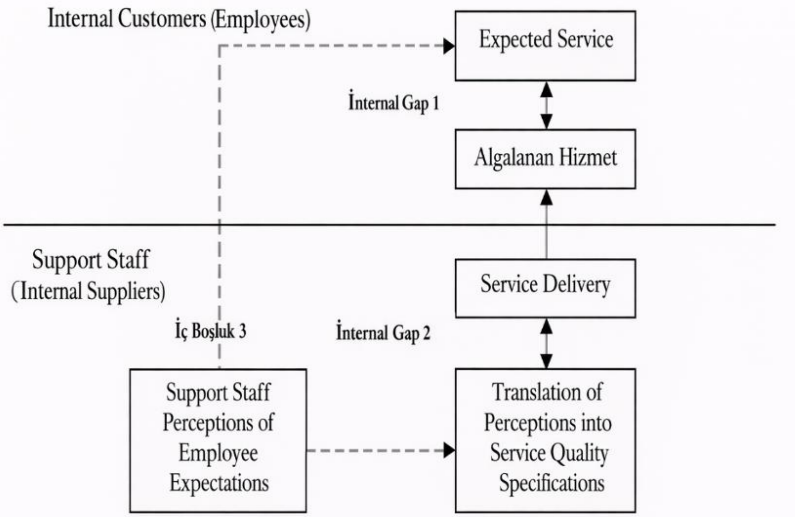

Figure 2.9. Internal Service Quality Model (INTSERVQUAL)

Source: Frost and Kumar, 2000: 366.

2.2.3.10. Information Technology–Based Model (2002)

The model developed by Zhu, Wymer, and Chen (2002, 81) emphasizes the importance of information technology (IT)–based service options. Service providers use IT to reduce costs and to create value-added services for their customers. The model (Figure 2.10) proposes linking traditional service dimensions with customers' perceptions of IT-based service options. It attempts to examine the relationship between IT-based services and customers' perceptions of service quality.

The structure of IT-based services is related to service quality measured by SERVQUAL (Parasuraman; Zeithaml; Berry, 1988; 1991). This model focuses on establishing relationships among service dimensions measured by SERVQUAL, the structures through which IT-based service quality is delivered, traditional service options, experiences in using IT-based services, and perceived IT policies. The effects on perceived service quality and customer satisfaction are also indicated.

Information technologies can help service providers achieve high levels of customer satisfaction. Customer evaluations of IT-based services are influenced by preferred traditional services and past experiences; therefore, in this model, service quality measurement cannot be conducted in a fully reliable manner (Kılıç and Eleren, 2009, 94).

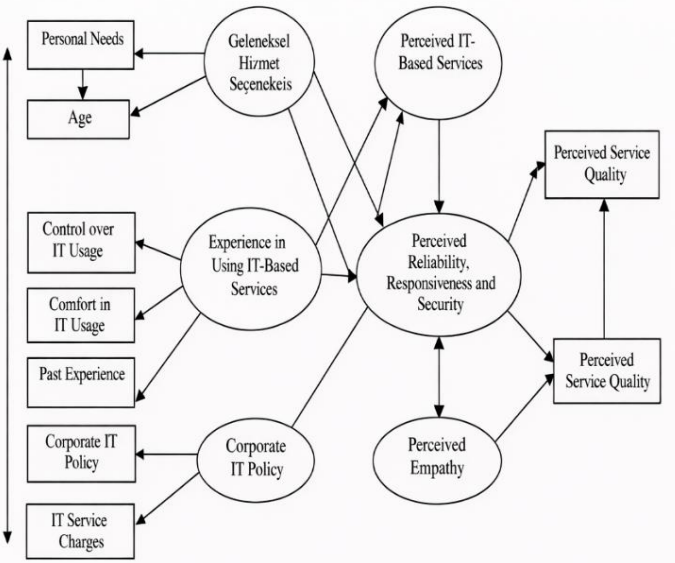

Figure 2.10. Information Technology–Based Model

Source: Zhu, Wymer, Chen, 2002: 85.

2.2.3.11. E-Service Quality Model (2003)

Santos (2003, 235) defined service quality as one of the main factors determining the success or failure of electronic commerce. E-service can be defined as the service role of the cyber environment.

This study presents a conceptual model for e-service quality together with its factors (Figure 2.11). In the e-service quality model, incubative and active dimensions are proposed in order to increase hit rates, stickiness, and customer retention. The incubative dimension includes appropriate website design, how customers can easily access and use the website, and the attractiveness of the site. The active dimension includes good support, fast access, and assistance provided to customers for website use.

This study proposes a conceptual e-service quality model with its own indicators. It is an exploratory study. It does not present a specific measurement scale and does not involve a statistical application (Kılıç and Eleren, 2009, 94).

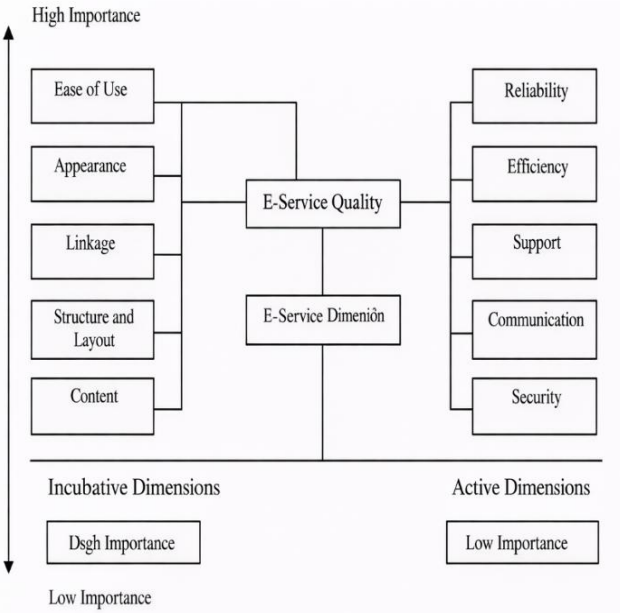

Figure 2.11. E-Service Quality Model

Source: Adapted from Santos, 2003: 239.

2.2.3.12. E-S-QUAL Model (2005)

Various studies and applications have been conducted over time to adapt the SERVQUAL scale developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry into a tool for measuring electronic service quality. The scale, referred to as e-SQ and adapted from the SERVQUAL method to measure electronic service quality, has been revised several times (Parasuraman; Zeithaml; Malhotra, 2005, 214). As a result, the scale

suitable for measuring electronic service quality was divided into two parts: the core scale (E-S-QUAL) and the recovery scale (E-RecS-QUAL). Accordingly, the dimensions of the first part were identified as efficiency, system availability, fulfillment, and privacy. The dimensions of the second part were identified as responsiveness, compensation, and contact (Soydal, 2008, 34–35).

2.2.4. General Evaluation of Service Quality Models

Many models have been proposed and studied by researchers for measuring service quality (Kılıç and Eleren, 2009, 96). These models have been discussed in the previous section. However, these models have generally been based on the SERVQUAL technique. In recent years, a notable concentration of studies on service quality in the tourism sector has been observed, and it is seen that the SERVQUAL Model is generally used in these service quality studies. Despite all criticisms, studies on measuring service quality using the SERVQUAL method continue to maintain their validity both in academic circles and in practice (Caruana; Ewing; Ramaseshan, 2000, 57).

2.2.5. SERVQUAL Applications in Hotel Enterprises

There are many domestic and international publications on the measurement of service quality. In recent years, studies focusing on measuring service quality using the SERVQUAL scale have frequently appeared in the national and international literature. In this section of the study, some of the SERVQUAL applications implemented in hotel enterprises are summarized.

Saleh and Ryan (1991), in their study, attempted to apply the SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry to the hospitality sector. The model was reorganized by using five dimensions of service components that create satisfaction in the hospitality sector. In the study, the gaps between the perceptions of customers and hotel management regarding hotel attributes, and the gaps between employees' expectations and perceptions regarding the services provided, were examined. It is argued that the source of these gaps arises from dissatisfaction with the services delivered.

Akan (1995) measured the importance levels of SERVQUAL dimensions in four- and five-star hotels in Türkiye. In the study, seven dimensions were defined. These are: courtesy and competence of personnel, communication and behavior, physical attributes, recognizing and understanding customers, sensitivity and service speed, problem solving, and accuracy in hotel reservations.

Gabby and O'Neill conducted two consecutive studies in 1996 and 1997 to measure the relationship between quality and customer expectations in hotel enterprises in Northern Ireland. Using the SERVQUAL scale, they measured customer expectations in several hotels in the tourism sector in Northern Ireland. In the first part of the two-stage study, a case study was conducted on two different hotels implementing total quality management, and the SERVQUAL scores were comparatively evaluated with certain characteristics of the hotels. In the second part, the gaps between customer expectations and perceptions were examined.

Juwaheer (2004) investigated the perceptions of foreign tourists in hotels in Mauritius. An adapted SERVQUAL scale was used in the study through factor analysis. Nine hotel factors were identified from 39 hotel attributes, the satisfaction levels of foreign tourists were determined, and the overall state of service quality provided in hotels was examined.

The objectives of Akbaba's (2006) study were to measure customers' perceptions of service quality in city hotels, to examine whether service quality dimensions including SERVQUAL could be applied in an international environment, to investigate whether it was necessary to add any dimension to the service quality structure, and to measure the importance of each dimension for customers in city hotels. Although some dimensions and statements different from SERVQUAL were identified, the findings confirmed the five dimensions of SERVQUAL. In the study, these five service quality dimensions emerged as "tangibles," "competence in service delivery," "understanding and caring," "security," and "availability." As indicated by the findings, while the expectations of business travelers were highest in the "availability" dimension, the others followed in order as "security," "tangibles," "competence in service

delivery," and "understanding and caring." The study also stated that although SERVQUAL is a very useful scale for measuring service quality, it may be necessary to adapt it according to the context in which it is applied, taking cultural differences into account.

According to the results of the service quality measurement study conducted by Eleren and Kılıç (2007) in thermal hotel enterprises using the same measurement model, although customers' perception levels were high, their expectations were also high, which led SERVQUAL scores to be negative.

Marković and Raspor (2010) conducted a study to measure customers' perceptions of service quality in the Croatian hotel industry. The study aimed to evaluate perceived service quality attributes of hotels and to determine the factor structure of service quality. An adapted SERVQUAL scale was used to evaluate service quality perceptions from the perspectives of domestic and foreign tourists. Data were collected through surveys administered in 15 hotels in the Opatija Riviera (Croatia). Descriptive statistical analysis, exploratory factor analysis, and reliability analysis were performed. The research results show that hotel guests have quite high expectations regarding service quality. "Reliability," "empathy and employee competence," "accessibility," and "tangibles" emerged as key factors that best explain customers' expectations of hotel service quality.

CHAPTER THREE

A STUDY AIMED AT EVALUATING CUSTOMER AND MANAGER PERCEPTIONS OF SERVICE QUALITY IN HOTEL ENTERPRISES

In the first two chapters of the study, secondary data obtained through a literature review were evaluated. In this chapter, the results of the applied research conducted to evaluate customer and manager perceptions of service quality in hotel enterprises, prepared in light of the findings obtained from the literature review, are presented. In this context, the findings obtained from the questionnaire-based field research were analyzed and evaluated. For this purpose, after addressing issues such as the aim, importance, method, scope, and content of the measurement tools of the field research, evaluations were made within the framework of descriptive statistics. The data were prepared for analysis and subjected to validity and reliability tests. A t-test was applied to analyze differences between customer and manager data, and the results obtained from the statistical analyses were evaluated and interpreted. This chapter is divided into two parts: the research methodology and the analysis of the findings obtained from the research.

3.1. Research Methodology

In this section, the purpose, importance, variables, and hypotheses of the research; its population and sample; scope and limitations; the process of collecting primary data from tourists and managers; and the statistical analysis techniques used in the study are explained.

3.1.1. Purpose and Importance of the Research

As revealed in the literature review of the study, there are many studies conducted to measure service quality in hotel enterprises, and it is observed that the number of these studies has increased in recent years (Saleh and Ryan, 1991; Gabby and O'Neill, 1996; Gabby and O'Neill, 1997; Juwaheer, 2004; Eleren and Kılıç, 2007; Markovic and Raspor, 2010). Studies on measuring service quality in hotel

enterprises have mostly focused on customer expectations and perceptions, while the views and opinions of managers of service-providing enterprises have not received sufficient attention. In fact, one of the most important reasons for the gap between the service expected by customers and the service provided to them arises from managers' misperceptions regarding customer expectations and how these expectations are met. Therefore, examining managers' evaluations of service quality is also of great importance. The number of studies that examine service quality evaluations of hotel managers and customers together is quite limited (Coyle and Dale, 1993; Varinli, 1995; Ingram and Doskalakis, 1999; Tsang and Qu, 2000; Akbaba, 2006). Studies conducted in the Cappadocia Region regarding service quality perceptions of customers and managers in hotel enterprises are almost nonexistent (Varinli, 1995). A study using up-to-date data may provide significant contributions due to possible changes in customer and manager perceptions.

The purpose of the research, as stated in the introduction, is to: (a) identify differences in service quality perceptions between customers staying in hotel enterprises and managers working in hotel enterprises in the Cappadocia Region, and (b) examine whether service quality perceptions differ according to certain demographic characteristics. Such a study conducted in the context of Cappadocia is important in terms of (a) providing up-to-date data on the subject, (b) offering guiding information and recommendations to tourism sector managers, (c) providing information to planners and policymakers related to the tourism sector at the macro level, and (d) offering comprehensive information to researchers studying the subject.

3.1.2. Research Variables and Hypotheses

The research includes demographic characteristics as independent variables. The dependent variables consist of service quality perceptions of customers staying in hotel enterprises and managers managing hotel enterprises.

Within the scope of the research, the following main hypotheses were tested:

Hypothesis 1: Service quality dimensions differ significantly according to certain demographic characteristics of managers.
Hypothesis 2: Service quality dimensions differ significantly according to certain demographic characteristics of tourists.
Hypothesis 3: Managers' and customers' perceptions of service quality dimensions differ significantly.

3.1.3. Scope and Limitations of the Research

The scope of the research is outlined below:
a) The research is limited to measuring service quality perceptions of customers staying in hotel enterprises in the Cappadocia Region and hotel managers in this region. Although the Cappadocia Region includes the provinces of Aksaray, Kayseri, Nevşehir, and Niğde, the research is limited to the area known as "Rocky Cappadocia," which includes the city center of Nevşehir and its surroundings such as Göreme, Ürgüp, Uçhisar, Avanos, Derinkuyu, Kaymaklı, and Ihlara.
b) The concept of service quality was questioned in relation to hotel performance for customers and in relation to expectations connected to promises regarding services offered at the hotel for managers.
c) The primary data collection period of the study was carried out between September and November 2010. Therefore, changes in customer perceptions occurring afterward may not have been sufficiently reflected in the research findings.
d) The statements used to measure service quality perceptions in the research questionnaire were limited to 25 items.
On the other hand, the limitations of the study can be listed as follows:
a) Incompletely filled questionnaires were excluded from the study.
b) The questionnaire forms prepared for domestic and foreign customers were available only in English and Turkish, which made it difficult to administer the questionnaire to customers who did not know English or Turkish.
c) Due to time and financial constraints, the data collection period and data collection area were limited.
d) Because many hotel managers and customers did not accept participation in the survey, or because survey forms left at hotels

were returned blank despite multiple visits, the study was limited to hotel enterprises that supported this research.

3.1.4. Population and Sample of the Research

The population of the research consists of domestic and foreign customers visiting Cappadocia and hotel managers in the region. According to accommodation statistics by province published by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism for 2008, 2,139,427 customers stayed in Nevşehir province (Nevşehir Governorship Website, 2011).

Due to the difficulty of obtaining a complete list of all customers visiting Cappadocia and the impossibility of reaching identified individuals during the survey implementation process even if such a list were obtained, probability sampling methods could not be used. Considering constraints such as time and financial resources, convenience sampling, a non-probability sampling technique, was preferred. In this sampling method, elements included in the sample are determined through non-random methods (Taşkın; Akat; Erol, 2010, 15). Therefore, generalizing results statistically from studies based on non-random samples can be quite difficult (Karamustafa and Yıldırım, 2007, 66). However, as in this study, when there is no precise information regarding the elements and size of the population, convenience sampling can be used to make certain estimations about the current situation based on data obtained from a specific sample, even if it is not statistically random (Robson, 2002, 48). Convenience sampling is the quickest and most economical way to obtain data (Nakip, 2003, 183).

To determine the sample size, the simple random sampling size formula below was used (Yazıcıoğlu and Erdoğan, 2004, 48):

$n = t^2 \cdot p \cdot q / d^2$

where:

n = sample size,

p = probability of occurrence of the event,

q = probability of non-occurrence of the event,

t = theoretical value from the t-table at a given significance level,

d = accepted sampling error (±) based on the frequency of occurrence of the event.
Considering commonly accepted probability values (p = 0.5 and q = 0.5) (Yazıcıoğlu and Erdoğan, 2004, 50), at a 95% confidence level and ±0.05 margin of error:
$n = (1.96)^2 \times (0.5) \times (0.5) / (0.05)^2 = 384.$
Based on these values and considering the temporal and financial limitations of the research, a sample size of 400 was assumed to be achievable. To account for the possibility of incomplete or incorrectly filled questionnaires, 20% more questionnaires than the targeted sample size were distributed, resulting in a total of 480 questionnaires administered to customers aged 18 and over.
The number of questionnaires administered to managers was determined based on information obtained from the Nevşehir Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism. According to this information, it was determined that 266 managers at the level of chef and above were working in hotels in Nevşehir province, and efforts were made to reach all of these managers.
The "drop and collect survey" technique was used by distributing a certain number of questionnaires to hotels operating in the Cappadocia Region, to customers staying in these hotels, and to hotel managers, to be collected later. This technique was preferred because it allows participants to complete questionnaires at a convenient time rather than according to the researcher's schedule and provides time and cost savings for the researcher (Walker, 1976, 284). The questionnaires were administered between September and November 2010.

3.1.5. Primary Data Collection Instrument

This study was conducted using a questionnaire developed based on relevant studies in the literature. As a data collection method, questionnaires are highly effective in collecting information related to stimuli, reflections, attitudes, thoughts, and experiences arising from behaviors of individuals that cannot be observed by others (Özoğlu, 1992, 321). In developing the questionnaire, the SERVQUAL scale adapted for the hospitality sector by Akbaba

(2006) from the SERVQUAL scale developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) was used. Akbaba (2006) used a 29-item scale adapted from SERVQUAL in the hospitality sector, and following factor analysis, a five-dimensional scale consisting of 25 items was formed. The questionnaire translated into Turkish for domestic customers was reviewed by English language instructors, and grammatical errors were corrected. The questionnaire consists of two sections.

In the first section, a total of 25 statements aimed at measuring customers' and managers' perceptions of service quality in hotel enterprises were included. A five-point Likert-type scale was used to measure participants' levels of agreement with these statements. The scale points are: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree.

In the second section, questions aimed at determining demographic and travel characteristics were included for customers, while demographic and general information about the enterprise was included for managers.

3.1.6. Analysis of Primary Data

Of the questionnaires administered and collected during the specified period, 31 were excluded from analysis due to various deficiencies. Thus, the targeted sample size was fully achieved with 509 usable questionnaires (406 customers and 103 managers). For data analysis, SPSS 17.0, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, which is widely used today, was employed. Descriptive statistical techniques were generally used to evaluate the findings of the study. Initially, measures of central tendency were examined. Since the five-point Likert scale used in data collection provides non-parametric data and the distribution of the data was found to be non-symmetric when examining measures of central tendency, non-parametric tests were used in the analysis.

To evaluate whether service quality dimensions (dependent variables) of customers staying in hotel enterprises and managers working in hotel enterprises differed significantly according to certain demographic characteristics (independent variables), non-

parametric tests were applied. Given that independent variables were nominal (categorical) and dependent variables were ordinal (ranked), and that ordinal data exhibited non-symmetric distributions, the Mann–Whitney U test was used when examining differences between dependent variables and independent variables with two categories, and the Kruskal–Wallis H test was used when examining differences among independent variables with more than two categories (Karamustafa, Güllü, Acar et al., 2010, 106). Additionally, a t-test was applied to compare service quality perceptions of managers and customers.

3.2. Research Findings and Interpretation

In this section, the results of the analysis of data related to service quality perceptions of customers staying in hotel enterprises in Cappadocia and managers working in these hotel enterprises are presented in tables, summarized, and interpreted. In reporting the analysis results, distributions of participating customers and managers according to demographic characteristics are first presented using frequencies and percentage values. Subsequently, measures of central tendency for each of the 25 statements developed to measure service quality are provided, and evaluations of the statements are made based on arithmetic mean values. Then, evaluations regarding whether the five dimensions used in the scale differ according to customers, managers, and certain demographic characteristics are presented, followed by the results obtained from the t-test.

3.2.1. Demographic Characteristics of the Customers Who Responded to the Survey

Information on the demographic characteristics of the customers who responded to the survey is presented below.

Table 3.1. Demographic Characteristics of Survey Respondents (Customers)

Category	Group	n	%
Gender	Male	157	38.7
	Female	249	61.3
Nationality	Domestic	218	53.7
	Foreign	188	46.3
Age Group	26–33	27	6.7
	34–41	136	33.5
	42–49	148	36.5
	50–57	35	8.6
	58–65	20	4.9
	66 and over	40	9.9
Education Level	Primary education	5	1.2
	High school	20	4.9
	Associate degree	60	14.8
	Bachelor's degree	281	69.2
	Master's degree	15	3.7
	Doctorate	20	4.9
	Missing value	5	1.2
Travel Type	Independent	32	7.9
	Package tour	212	52.2
	Special interest tours	162	39.9

Table 3.1 presents information on the gender of the customers who responded to the survey. Accordingly, **61.3%** of the respondents are female and **38.7%** are male. It is observed that the majority of the respondents are women. In terms of nationality, **53.7%** of the respondents are domestic customers, while **46.3%** are foreign customers.

When the age groups of the respondents are examined, it is understood that the majority of the customers fall within the **42–49 age group (36.5%)** and the **34–41 age group (33.5%)**, and that these two age groups together account for **70%** of the total. This indicates that the respondents generally belong to the middle-age category.

An examination of the educational status of the respondents shows that **69.2%** of the customers are university (bachelor's degree) graduates, constituting the dominant group. Finally, when the travel types of the respondents are considered, it is observed that customers participating in **package tours** constitute the majority with a rate of **52.2%**.

3.2.2. Demographic Characteristics of the Managers Responding to the Survey

Information regarding the demographic characteristics of the managers who responded to the survey is presented in **Table 3.2**.

Table 3.2. Demographic Characteristics of Managers Responding to the Survey

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	79	76.7
	Female	20	19.4
	Missing	4	3.9
Age Group	18–27	25	24.3
	28–37	54	52.4
	38–47	24	23.3
Education Level	High School	40	38.8
	Associate Degree	25	24.3
	Bachelor's Degree	33	32.0
	Missing	5	4.9
Position in the Hotel	Accounting Manager	13	12.6
	Restaurant Manager	16	15.5
	Sales and Marketing Manager	8	7.8
	Security Chief	4	3.9
	General Manager	4	3.9
	Housekeeping Manager	12	11.7
	Front Office Manager	12	11.7
	Middle-Level Manager	5	4.9
	Missing	29	28.2
Hotel Category	1–3 Star	45	43.7
	4–5 Star	21	20.4
	Special License	37	35.9

According to the information presented in Table 3.2 regarding the gender of the managers who responded to the survey, 76.7% of the respondents are male and 19.4% are female. This indicates that the majority of the managers participating in the survey are male. When the age distribution of the managers is examined, it is observed that the largest proportion of respondents falls within the 28–37 age

group, accounting for 52.4%. An analysis of the educational background of the managers shows that the highest proportions consist of high school graduates (38.8%) and bachelor's degree holders (32.0%). With respect to managerial positions within the hotel, restaurant managers constitute the largest group, with a share of 15.5%. Finally, it is observed that 43.7% of the managers participating in the survey are employed in 1–2–3 star hotels. When the length of service of the managers in their current hotels is examined, it is noteworthy that the highest proportion, 36.9%, consists of managers who have been working for between 1 and 5 years. Additionally, it is once again observed that 43.7% of the participating managers are employed in 1–2–3 star hotels.

3.2.3. Measures of Central Tendency of Customers' Service Quality Perception Statements

In this section of the study, an attempt has been made to determine the degree to which customers agree with the service quality statements presented in Table 3.3.

Overall, it is observed that there is a high level of agreement with some statements, while others receive relatively low levels of agreement. When the mean values are taken into consideration, the statements with the highest levels of customer agreement can be listed as follows: *"Food and beverage services in the hotel are provided in a hygienic, adequate, and appropriate manner"* (3.74), *"Hotel staff can be reached whenever they are needed"* (3.70), *"The hotel provides the services it promises on time"* (3.68), *"Hotel staff are always willing to serve customers"* (3.67), *"Hotel staff provide services on time"* (3.67), and *"Hotel staff always display a sincere attitude and behavior toward customers"* (3.66). These statements emerge as the most prominent in terms of customers' levels of agreement.

Table 3.3. Measures of Central Tendency for Customers' Service Quality Perception Statements

Service Quality Statements	n	Median	Mode	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Rank
The hotel has sufficient physical facilities.	406	3	2	2.80	1.000	21
The hotel has a modern appearance.	406	3	2	2.70	0.905	22
Hotel rooms have comfortable and usable furniture and equipment such as beds, wardrobes, and armchairs.	401	3	3	3.04	0.924	20
The hotel has an orderly, spacious, and tidy layout.	406	3	3	3.09	0.842	19
Materials used in the hotel service are sufficient and appropriate.	406	4	4	3.49	0.806	17
Food and beverage services in the hotel are hygienic, sufficient, and appropriate.	406	4	4	3.74	0.666	1
The hotel provides time-saving service.	406	4	4	3.66	0.707	7
The hotel keeps its promises.	406	4	4	3.62	0.679	8
Hotel staff provide services on time.	406	4	4	3.67	0.738	5
Hotel staff are always willing to help customers.	406	4	4	3.68	0.735	3
Hotel staff are always available to serve customers.	406	4	4	3.67	0.738	4
Hotel staff are accessible whenever they are needed.	401	4	4	3.70	0.736	2
The hotel is always willing to help customers.	406	4	4	3.61	0.750	11
The hotel provides flexible services to meet customer demands.	406	4	4	3.61	0.716	10
All types of services are delivered in a timely manner.	406	4	4	3.61	0.782	12
Hotel staff provide adequate support regarding shopping, places to visit, and entertainment.	406	3	4	3.21	0.893	18
Hotel staff always display sincere attitudes and behaviors toward customers.	406	4	4	3.66	0.768	6
Hotel staff have sufficient knowledge to answer customers' questions.	406	4	4	3.60	0.781	14
Hotel staff show sincere interest in customers.	406	4	4	3.55	0.786	16
The hotel takes special care of customers' needs.	401	4	4	3.61	0.767	13

Service Quality Statements	n	Median	Mode	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Rank
The hotel understands customers' specific requests.	406	4	4	3.62	0.763	9
The hotel creates a sense of trust in customers.	401	4	4	3.60	0.784	15
The hotel's location is sufficiently accessible.	401	3	4	2.62	0.903	24
The hotel is physically accessible.	406	3	4	2.67	0.850	23
Hotel services are easy to reach.	406	3	4	2.57	0.755	25

Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

In contrast, from the customers' perspective, the statements with low levels of agreement include: "it is easy to obtain information about the hotel's services and facilities (2.57)", "the knowledge and skills of the hotel staff are sufficient (2.62)", "the hotel is physically easy to access (2.67)", "the hotel has modern-looking equipment (2.71)", "the hotel's service units have sufficient capacity (2.80)", and "the furniture used in the hotel (such as beds and chairs) and the rooms are comfortable and suitable for use (3.04)". These statements are identified as those with relatively low participation levels. In this context, customers staying in hotels in the province of Nevşehir stated most strongly that food and beverages are hygienic, sufficient, and appropriate, that staff are accessible whenever needed, that promised services are delivered, that staff are willing to provide service, and that services are provided on time.

3.2.4. Measures of Central Tendency of Managers' Service Quality Perception Statements

As shown in Table 3.4, when the mean values are taken into consideration, the statements with the highest level of agreement among managers are as follows: "food and beverage services in the hotel are provided in a hygienic, sufficient, and appropriate manner (4.60)", "the service hours of hotel facilities are suitable to meet the needs of all customers (4.59)", "the hotel delivers the services it promises (4.55)", "the hotel is physically easy to access (4.53)", "the hotel is able to resolve guest complaints and compensate for possible material losses incurred by guests (4.51)", and "the hotel is able to

provide services consistently (3.66)". These statements stand out as those with the highest degree of agreement among managers.

Table 3.4. Measures of Central Tendency for Managers' Service Quality Perception Statements

Service Quality Statements	n	Median	Mode	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Rank
The hotel's service units have sufficient capacity.	103	4	4	4.06	0.888	22
The hotel has modern-looking equipment.	103	3	4	3.05	0.998	25
Furniture (such as beds and chairs) and rooms used in the hotel are comfortable and suitable for use.	103	3	4	3.35	1.008	24
Vehicles and equipment used in the hotel operate regularly without any malfunctions.	103	4	5	4.16	0.780	19
Materials used in the hotel for service are sufficient and appropriate.	103	5	5	4.36	0.792	10
Food and beverage services in the hotel are hygienic, sufficient, and appropriately provided.	103	5	5	4.60	0.566	1
The hotel provides the service it promises.	103	5	5	4.55	0.572	3
The hotel provides the promised service accurately.	103	4	4	3.84	1.202	23
Hotel staff provide services on time.	103	4	4	4.23	0.597	14
The hotel is able to fully deliver the promised service on time.	103	4	4	4.44	0.499	7
Hotel staff are always willing to serve customers.	103	4	4	4.18	0.724	16
Hotel staff can be reached whenever they are needed.	103	4	4	4.21	0.571	15
The hotel can compensate customers for possible material damages.	103	5	5	4.51	0.502	5
The hotel can provide flexibility in services according to customer demands.	103	4	4	4.15	0.622	20
The hotel provides services consistently.	103	5	5	4.51	0.591	6
Hotel staff can recommend nearby shopping, entertainment, and sightseeing locations.	103	4	5	4.17	1.061	18
Hotel staff always show sincere attitudes and behaviors toward customers.	103	4	4	4.26	0.803	13
Hotel staff have the ability to understand customers' needs.	103	4	4	4.27	0.674	12
Hotel staff show sensitivity that makes customers feel special.	103	4	5	4.18	0.763	17
The operating hours of hotel facilities are suitable to meet all customers' needs.	103	5	5	4.59	0.493	2

Service Quality Statements	n	Median	Mode	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Rank
The hotel provides a physically safe environment for customers.	103	4	4	4.40	0.567	9
The hotel creates a sense of trust among customers.	103	4	4	4.27	0.613	11
Hotel staff are knowledgeable.	103	4	4	4.11	0.661	21
The hotel is physically easy to access.	103	5	5	4.53	0.574	4
It is easy to obtain information about the hotel's services and facilities.	103	5	5	4.44	0.637	8

Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

In contrast, the statements perceived as less important from the managers' perspective include: "the hotel has modern-looking equipment (3.05)," "the furniture (such as beds and chairs) and rooms used in the hotel are comfortable and suitable for use (3.35)," "the hotel provides the promised service correctly the first time (3.84)," "the hotel's service units have sufficient capacity (4.06)," "the hotel staff's knowledge and skills are sufficient (4.11)," and "the hotel is able to provide flexibility in its services according to customer demands (4.15)." These statements emerge as those with relatively lower levels of agreement.

In this context, customers staying at hotels in Nevşehir stated most strongly that food and beverage services are hygienic, sufficient, and appropriate; that the operating hours of hotel facilities are suitable to meet the needs of all customers; that the hotel delivers the services it promises; that the hotel is easily accessible; that the hotel is able to resolve customer complaints and compensate for possible material damages incurred by guests; and that the hotel provides services in a consistent manner.

3.2.5. Measures of Central Tendency of Service Quality Dimensions

Table 3.5. Measures of Central Tendency of Service Quality Dimensions

Group	Dimension	n	Median	Mode	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Rank
Managers	Tangibles	103	3.83	5	3.93	0.836	5
	Service Supply Adequacy	103	4.42	5	4.28	0.768	3
	Understanding & Empathy	103	4.25	4	4.21	0.794	4
	Assurance	103	4.50	4	4.34	0.840	2
	Convenience	103	4.66	4	4.49	0.999	1
Customers	Tangibles	401	3.16	3.33	3.15	0.693	4
	Service Supply Adequacy	401	4.00	4.00	3.67	0.658	1
	Understanding & Empathy	406	3.60	4.00	3.53	0.662	2
	Assurance	401	3.50	3.50	3.36	0.707	3
	Convenience	406	3.00	2.67	2.95	0.667	5

Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

In Table 3.5, the measures of central tendency of the responses given by customers and managers according to service quality dimensions are presented.

Accordingly, the arithmetic mean of the responses given to the *tangibles* dimension is 3.15 for customers and 3.93 for managers; the arithmetic mean of the responses given to the *service adequacy* dimension is 3.67 for customers and 4.28 for managers; the arithmetic mean of the responses given to the *understanding and caring* dimension is 3.53 for customers and 4.21 for managers; the arithmetic mean of the responses given to the *assurance* dimension is 3.36 for customers and 4.34 for managers; and the arithmetic mean of the responses given to the *convenience* dimension is measured as 2.95 for customers and 4.49 for managers.

3.2.6. Reliability and Validity Analyses of the Scale

The reliability and internal consistency of the scale used in the study were evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient and item–total score correlation. The basic assumption underlying internal consistency is that each measurement instrument consists of empirically independent units designed to achieve a specific purpose (to form a whole), and that these units have known and equal weights within the whole (Olpak & Çakmak, 2009, p. 149).

3.2.6.1. Reliability Analysis of the Service Quality Dimensions Perceived by Customers

A reliability analysis was conducted to determine the overall reliability of the scale consisting of 25 statements, which was used to measure the service quality perceptions of customers staying in hotel enterprises. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient was calculated as 0.974. This is a very high value and indicates that the scale used is reliable, since the lower acceptable limit for the reliability coefficient is generally accepted as 0.70 (Kusluvan & Eren, 2008, p. 182).

In item selection, an acceptable correlation coefficient is recommended to be greater than 0.25 (Karamustafa, Güllü, Acar et al., 2010, p. 102). In this study, the item–total score correlation coefficients, which indicate the degree to which the items forming the scale are related to the overall scale, were found to be statistically significant and ranged between 0.304 and 0.692.

In addition, reliability analyses were conducted separately for each of the five dimensions constituting the service quality scale applied to customers, in order to determine the reliability coefficients of each dimension (see Table 3.6).

Table 3.6. Reliability Analysis of the Service Quality Dimensions Perceived by Customers

Items (Statements)	Item–Total Correlation (r)	Cronbach's Alpha of Dimensions
Dimension 1: Tangibles		0.763
The hotel's service units have sufficient capacity.	0.715	
The hotel has modern-looking equipment.	0.798	
Furniture used in the hotel (such as beds and chairs) and rooms are comfortable and suitable for use.	0.793	
Tools and equipment used in the hotel operate properly without any malfunction.	0.701	
Materials related to hotel services are sufficient and appropriate.	0.709	
Food and beverage services in the hotel are hygienic, sufficient, and appropriately provided.	0.647	
Dimension 2: Service Supply Adequacy		0.964
The hotel delivers the service it promises.	0.790	
The hotel performs the promised service correctly the first time.	0.798	
Hotel staff provide services on time.	0.950	
The hotel fully delivers the service it promises within the promised time.	0.954	
Hotel staff are always willing to serve customers.	0.906	
Hotel staff can be reached whenever needed.	0.874	
The hotel delivers services consistently.	0.833	
Dimension 3: Understanding and Caring		0.893
The hotel can provide flexibility in its services according to customer demand.	0.814	
Hotel staff can provide information about nearby shopping areas, museums, and places to visit.	0.508	
Hotel staff always display sincere attitudes and behaviors toward customers.	0.848	
Hotel staff have sufficient ability to understand guests' needs.	0.796	
Hotel staff show personal attention that makes customers feel special.	0.784	
Dimension 4: Assurance		0.904
Hotel service hours are suitable to meet the needs of all customers.	0.843	
The hotel provides a safe physical environment for customers.	0.911	
Hotel staff instill a sense of trust in customers.	0.889	

Items (Statements)	Item–Total Correlation (r)	Cronbach's Alpha of Dimensions
Hotel staff have sufficient knowledge and skills.	0.552	
Dimension 5: Convenience		0.805
The hotel can resolve customer complaints and possible material damages to guests.	0.432	
The hotel is physically easy to access.	0.774	
It is easy to obtain information about the hotel's services and facilities.	0.797	

As can be seen in Table 3.6, the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of the six statements related to the dimension labeled as "tangibles" was calculated as 0.897; the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of the seven statements related to the dimension labeled as "service supply adequacy" was calculated as 0.964; the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of the five statements related to the dimension labeled as "understanding and caring" was calculated as 0.816; the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of the four statements related to the dimension labeled as "assurance" was calculated as 0.904; and the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of the three statements related to the dimension labeled as "convenience" was calculated as 0.805.

The item–total score correlation coefficients, which indicate the degree to which the statements constituting the scale are related to the overall scale, were found to be statistically significant and ranged between 0.432 and 0.954, as also shown in Table 3.6.

3.2.6.2. Reliability Analysis of Perceived Service Quality Dimensions of Managers

As can be seen in Table 3.7, the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of the six statements related to the dimension labeled as **"tangibles"** was calculated as **0.763**; the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of the seven statements related to the dimension labeled as **"service supply adequacy"** was calculated as **0.660**; the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of the five statements related to the dimension labeled as **"understanding and caring"** was calculated as **0.886**; the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of the four statements related to the dimension labeled as

"assurance" was calculated as **0.765**; and the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of the three statements related to the dimension labeled as **"convenience"** was calculated as **0.695**.
The item–total score correlation coefficients, which indicate the degree to which the statements constituting the scale are related to the overall scale, were also found to be statistically significant and ranged between **0.310 and 0.905**, as shown in Table 3.7.

3.2.7. Comparison of Service Quality Dimensions According to Managers' Demographic Characteristics

In order to evaluate whether the evaluation levels of service quality dimensions (dependent variables) of the respondents differ significantly according to certain demographic characteristics (independent variables), the **Mann–Whitney U test** and the **Kruskal–Wallis H test** were applied.

3.2.7.1. Comparison of Service Quality Dimensions According to Managers' Gender

In order to compare managers' service quality dimensions according to gender, the following research hypothesis (H1a) was tested by applying the **Mann–Whitney U test**.
H0: Service quality dimensions do not show a significant difference according to managers' gender.
H1a: Service quality dimensions show a significant difference according to managers' gender.

Table 3.8. Comparison of Service Quality Dimensions by Gender (Managers) (Mann–Whitney U Test Results)

Dimensions	Gender	Mean Rank	Mann–Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	p
Physical Attributes	Male	53.14	542.000	752.000	-2.202	0.028
	Female	37.60				
Service Supply Adequacy	Male	53.34	526.000	736.000	-2.327	0.020
	Female	36.80				
Convenience	Male	53.16	540.000	750.000	-2.269	0.023
	Female	37.50				

Notes: The test was conducted at the 95% confidence level, and the results are statistically significant at the 95% significance level. Only the dimensions showing statistically significant differences are presented in the table.

As a result of the Mann–Whitney U test applied, statistically significant differences were found in the specified dimensions according to the gender of the managers who responded to the survey. As shown in Table 3.8, male managers demonstrated higher levels of agreement than female managers in the dimensions of "physical attributes," "service supply adequacy," and "convenience."

3.2.7.2. Comparison of Service Quality Dimensions According to Managers' Age Groups

In order to compare service quality dimensions according to managers' age groups, the following research hypothesis (H1b) was tested using the Kruskal–Wallis H test.

H0: Service quality dimensions do not differ significantly according to managers' age groups.

H1b: Service quality dimensions differ significantly according to managers' age groups.

Table 3.9. Comparison of Service Quality Dimensions According to Age Groups (Managers)

Dimensions	28–37	38–47	48–57	χ^2	df	p
Service Supply Adequacy	39.64	46.20	77.92	24.872	2	0.001
Understanding and Importance	50.04	47.24	64.75	6.021	2	0.049
Assurance	50.84	45.54	67.75	9.559	2	0.008
Convenience	40.12	49.61	69.75	13.922	2	0.001

Notes: The test was conducted at the 95% confidence level, and the results were found to be statistically significant. Only dimensions showing statistically significant differences are included in the table.

As a result of the Kruskal–Wallis H test, statistically significant differences were found in the dimensions shown in Table 3.9 according to managers' age groups. The highest difference was observed in the "assurance" dimension among managers aged 26–37, in the "convenience" dimension among managers aged 38–47, and in the "service supply adequacy" dimension among managers aged 48–57.

3.2.7.3. Comparison of Service Quality Dimensions According to Managers' Education Level

To compare service quality dimensions according to managers' education level, the following research hypothesis (H1c) was tested using the Kruskal–Wallis H test.

H0: Service quality dimensions do not differ significantly according to managers' education level.

H1c: Service quality dimensions differ significantly according to managers' education level.

Table 3.10. Comparison of Service Quality Dimensions According to Education Level (Managers)

Dimensions	Secondary Education	Associate Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Other	χ^2	df	p
Physical Attributes	41.90	43.56	63.21	—	12.111	2	0.002

Notes: The test was conducted at the 95% confidence level, and the results were found to be statistically significant. Only dimensions showing statistically significant differences are included in the table.

The results of the Kruskal–Wallis H test revealed statistically significant differences in the "physical attributes" dimension according to managers' education level. Participants holding a bachelor's degree perceived the physical attributes dimension more strongly than participants with other education levels.

3.2.7.4. Comparison of Service Quality Dimensions According to Managers' Position in the Hotel

To compare service quality dimensions according to managers' position in the hotel, the following research hypothesis (H1d) was tested using the Kruskal–Wallis H test.

H0: Service quality dimensions do not differ significantly according to managers' position in the hotel.

H1d: Service quality dimensions differ significantly according to managers' position in the hotel.

Table 3.11. Comparison of Service Quality Dimensions According to Managers' Position in the Hotel

Position	Physical Attributes	Service Supply Adequacy	Convenience
Accounting Manager	39.00	30.15	47.38
Restaurant Manager	29.25	45.50	43.00
Sales and Marketing Manager	64.50	64.50	60.00
Security Chief	39.50	68.50	60.00
General Manager	58.50	38.00	29.00
Housekeeping Manager	12.00	23.83	28.33
Front Office Manager	43.17	26.00	12.50
Mid-Level Manager	46.00	23.00	29.00
χ^2	39.458	36.205	40.820
df	7	7	7
p	0.001	0.001	0.001

Notes: The test was conducted at the 95% confidence level, and the results were found to be statistically significant. Only dimensions showing statistically significant differences are included in the table.

According to the results, sales and marketing managers exhibited the highest perceptions in the physical attributes dimension, security chiefs in the service supply adequacy dimension, and both security chiefs and sales and marketing managers in the convenience dimension.

3.2.7.5. Comparison of Service Quality Dimensions According to Hotel Class (Managers)

To compare service quality dimensions according to the hotel class where managers work, the following research hypothesis (H1e) was tested using the Kruskal–Wallis H test.

H0: Service quality dimensions do not differ significantly according to hotel class.

H1e: Service quality dimensions differ significantly according to hotel class.

Table 3.12. Comparison of Service Quality Dimensions According to Hotel Class (Managers)

Dimensions	1–2–3 Star	4–5 Star	Boutique	χ^2	df	p
Physical Attributes	36.22	72.14	59.76	25.474	2	0.001
Understanding and Importance	36.87	59.52	66.14	21.783	2	0.001

Managers working in 4–5 star hotels had the highest perceptions in the physical attributes dimension, while managers working in boutique hotels had the highest perceptions in the understanding and importance dimension.

3.2.8. Comparison of Service Quality Dimensions According to Customers' Demographic Characteristics

To determine whether customers' evaluations of service quality dimensions differed significantly according to demographic characteristics, the Mann–Whitney U test and the Kruskal–Wallis H test were applied.

3.2.9. Comparison of Service Quality Dimensions Between Managers and Customers

To compare managers' and customers' perceptions of service quality dimensions, the following research hypothesis (H3) was tested using the t-test.

H0: There is no significant difference between managers' and customers' perceptions of service quality dimensions.
H3: There is a significant difference between managers' and customers' perceptions of service quality dimensions.

Table 3.17. Comparison of Service Quality Dimensions Between Customers and Managers (t-test)

Dimensions	Customer Mean	Manager Mean	t-value	Significance
Physical Attributes	3.15	3.93	1.86	0.001
Service Supply Adequacy	3.65	4.28	14.39	0.001
Understanding and Importance	3.53	4.21	0.83	0.001
Assurance	3.36	4.34	4.65	0.001
Convenience	2.95	4.49	3.48	0.001

Scale values: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Partly Agree / Partly Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

The t-test results revealed a statistically significant difference between managers' and customers' perceptions of service quality in hotel enterprises in the Cappadocia Region. The largest difference (1.54) was observed in the convenience dimension, while the smallest difference (0.63) occurred in the service supply adequacy dimension.

As a result of the t-test analysis, it was determined that there is a statistically significant difference between managers' and customers' perceptions of service quality in hotel enterprises located in the Cappadocia Region. The largest difference among service quality dimensions (1.54) was observed in the "convenience" dimension. The smallest difference (0.63) was found in the "service supply adequacy" dimension (Table 3.17).

Based on these findings, it can be stated that managers place the greatest emphasis on the "convenience" dimension among service quality dimensions. Therefore, it can be suggested that customer-oriented efforts should be increased to improve service quality related to this dimension. Although the differences in the remaining four dimensions appear to be relatively smaller, perceptual differences exist across all dimensions.

In order to determine which individual service quality statements exhibit the greatest differences between managers' and customers'

perceptions, a t-test was applied to each statement. The results are presented in Table 3.18.

Table 3.18. Comparison of Service Quality Perception Statements Between Customers and Managers Using the t-Test

Variables	Customer Mean	Manager Mean	t-value	Significance Level
1. The hotel's service units have sufficient capacity.	2.80	4.06	7.692	0.001
2. The hotel has modern-looking equipment.	2.70	3.05	2.180	0.003
3. The equipment and tools used in the hotel operate regularly without any malfunction.	3.09	4.16	0.978	0.001
4. The materials related to the service in the hotel are sufficient and appropriate.	3.49	4.36	0.090	0.001
5. Food and beverage services in the hotel are hygienic, adequate, and provided appropriately.	3.74	4.60	0.156	0.001
6. The hotel provides the service it promises.	3.66	4.55	0.364	0.001
7. Hotel staff provide the service on time.	3.67	4.23	2.045	0.001
8. The hotel is able to provide the promised service exactly on time.	3.68	4.44	1.505	0.001
9. Hotel staff are always willing to serve customers.	3.67	4.18	0.880	0.001
10. Hotel staff can be reached whenever needed.	3.70	4.21	3.912	0.001
11. The hotel can resolve guest complaints and potential material damages that may occur to guests.	3.61	4.51	7.029	0.001
12. The hotel can provide flexibility in its services according to customer demand.	3.61	4.15	4.988	0.001
13. The hotel can provide service consistently.	3.61	4.51	2.047	0.001
14. Hotel staff can provide information about shopping areas, museums, and places to visit in the vicinity of the hotel.	3.21	4.17	1.257	0.001
15. Hotel staff always display a sincere attitude and behavior toward customers.	3.66	4.26	2.665	0.001
16. Hotel staff have sufficient competence to understand guests' needs.	3.60	4.27	0.027	0.001
17. Hotel staff show sensitivity in a way that makes customers feel special.	3.55	4.18	0.650	0.001
18. The service hours of the hotel facilities are suitable to meet the needs of all customers.	3.61	4.59	2.168	0.001

Variables	Customer Mean	Manager Mean	t-value	Significance Level
19. The hotel's physical environment provides a safe environment for customers.	3.62	4.40	0.238	0.001
20. Hotel staff inspire a sense of trust in customers.	2.57	4.27	0.922	0.001
21. The knowledge and skills of hotel staff are sufficient.	3.60	4.11	12.279	0.001
22. The hotel is easy to access physically.	2.67	4.53	6.387	0.001
23. It is easy to gather information about the hotel's services and facilities	2.62	4.44	0.124	0.001

Scale values: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Partly Agree / Partly Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree. *Note 1:* The test was conducted at the 95% confidence level, and the results were found to be statistically significant at the 95% probability level. *Note 2:* The table includes only the results for statements showing statistically significant differences.

The largest difference between managers' and customers' perceptions of service quality was observed in the statement **"The hotel is easy to access physically."**, with a difference of **1.86**. The second largest difference (**1.82**) occurred in the statement **"It is easy to gather information about the hotel's services and facilities."** The third largest difference (**1.70**) was found in the statement **"Hotel staff inspire a sense of trust in customers."** (Table 3.18).

Other statements with relatively high differences were, respectively, **"The hotel's service units have sufficient capacity," "The equipment and tools used in the hotel operate regularly without any malfunction,"** and **"Hotel staff can provide information about shopping areas, museums, and places to visit in the vicinity of the hotel."**

The smallest difference (**0.35**) between managers' and customers' perceptions of service quality was observed in the statement **"The hotel has modern-looking equipment."** Other statements showing relatively small differences were **"The knowledge and skills of hotel staff are sufficient," "Hotel staff can be reached whenever needed," "Hotel staff are always willing to serve customers,"** and **"The hotel can provide flexibility in its services according to customer demand."** Therefore, the alternative hypothesis **"There is a statistically significant difference between managers' and**

customers' perceptions of service quality dimensions (H3)" was accepted.

Table 3.19. Acceptance or Rejection of Alternative Hypotheses

Alternative Hypotheses	Accepted	Rejected
H1a: Service quality dimensions differ significantly according to managers' gender.	✓	
H1b: Service quality dimensions differ significantly according to managers' age groups.	✓	
H1c: Service quality dimensions differ significantly according to managers' education level.	✓	
H1d: Service quality dimensions differ significantly according to managers' position in the hotel.	✓	
H1e: Service quality dimensions differ significantly according to the class of the hotel where managers work.	✓	
H2a: Service quality dimensions differ significantly according to customers' gender.	✓	
H2b: Service quality dimensions differ significantly according to customers' age groups.	✓	
H2c: Service quality dimensions differ significantly according to customers' education level.	✓	
H2d: Service quality dimensions differ significantly according to customers' travel type.	✓	
H3: Service quality dimensions differ significantly between managers' and customers' perceptions.	✓	

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the present study, (a) the differences in service quality perceptions between customers staying in hotel establishments and hotel managers in the Cappadocia Region were evaluated, and (b) whether service quality perceptions differ according to certain demographic characteristics of tourists and managers was examined.

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, secondary data were obtained through a literature review focusing on (a) service, service quality, and hotel establishments, and (b) service quality measurement and service quality models.

In the first chapter of the study, the concepts forming the theoretical framework for the empirical part were explained. This chapter consisted of three sections: accommodation establishments, service, and service quality. In the section on accommodation establishments, the definition, characteristics, and classification of accommodation businesses were discussed. The second section addressed the definition, characteristics, and classification of services. In the third section, concepts related to quality and service quality were examined.

The second chapter aimed to establish the theoretical foundation guiding the empirical part of the thesis. Within this framework, the importance of quality measurement for service businesses was first emphasized. In addition, particular emphasis was placed on the SERVQUAL Model (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985), which is one of the most widely used models for measuring service quality and forms the basis of many service quality studies. Furthermore, Grönroos's (1984) Service Quality Model and other service quality models developed up to the present were briefly explained. In the final part of the chapter, previous studies conducted in hotel establishments using the SERVQUAL technique and the findings obtained from these studies were reviewed.

In the empirical part of the study, a questionnaire was developed and administered to customers staying in hotel establishments in the Cappadocia Region and to managers working in hotels operating in the region, in order to obtain primary data and determine the current

situation. The questionnaires were applied using the drop-and-collect technique between September and November 2010. In the evaluation of the collected questionnaires, frequency and percentage distributions as well as measures of central tendency such as arithmetic mean, median, and mode were first examined separately for customers and managers. Since the distributions of the central tendency measures were not symmetric (non-normal), non-parametric tests—namely the Mann–Whitney U test and the Kruskal–Wallis H test—were applied to the data.

Based on the analyses conducted using the research data, the statements showing the largest differences between managers' and customers' perceptions among the 25 statements used in the study were identified as follows:

(1) the hotel is easy to access physically,

(2) it is easy to obtain information about the hotel's services and facilities,

(3) hotel staff inspire a sense of trust in customers,

(4) the hotel's service units do not have sufficient capacity, and

(5) the equipment and tools used in the hotel operate regularly without any malfunction.

Conversely, the statements with the smallest differences between managers' and customers' perceptions were, respectively:

(1) the hotel has modern-looking equipment,

(2) hotel staff are always willing to serve customers,

(3) hotel staff can be reached whenever needed,

(4) the knowledge and skills of hotel staff are sufficient, and

(5) the hotel can provide flexibility in its services according to customer demand.

In order to improve service quality, it would be beneficial for hotel managers to focus particularly on improving physical accessibility, providing clearer and more accessible information about hotel services and facilities, enhancing customers' sense of trust in hotel staff, increasing the capacity of service units, and ensuring the smooth operation of equipment and tools. In addition, greater effort should be devoted to communicating these improvements to target markets through external communication channels.

Among the service quality dimensions examined in the study, the dimension with the highest arithmetic mean for customers was "service delivery adequacy," while for managers the dimension with the highest arithmetic mean was "convenience." The analyses using the Mann–Whitney U and Kruskal–Wallis H tests showed that service quality dimensions differed significantly according to managers' demographic characteristics such as gender, age, education level, position in the hotel, and the class of the hotel in which they worked. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis stating that "service quality dimensions differ significantly according to certain demographic characteristics of managers (H1)" was accepted.

Similarly, the analyses revealed that service quality dimensions differed significantly according to customers' demographic characteristics such as gender, age, education level, and travel type. Accordingly, the alternative hypothesis stating that "service quality dimensions differ significantly according to certain demographic characteristics of customers (H2)" was also accepted.

Finally, a t-test was conducted to examine whether there were significant differences between managers' and customers' perceptions of service quality dimensions. The results indicated significant differences across all dimensions—namely physical features, service delivery adequacy, understanding and empathy, assurance, and convenience. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis stating that "there is a significant difference between managers' and customers' perceptions of service quality dimensions (H3)" was accepted.

The finding that significant differences exist between the demographic characteristics of customers and managers and their perceptions of service quality is consistent with the results of previous studies (Markovic & Raspor, 2010; Yılmaz, 2007). Moreover, the t-test results showing significant differences between customers' and managers' service quality perceptions are in line with earlier research indicating similar discrepancies (Juwaheer, 2004; Akbaba, 2006; Kılıç & Eleren, 2010).

Overall, it was observed that customers' perceptions of service quality in the hotels included in the study were lower than those of

managers. To address this gap, managers should prioritize improvement efforts in the dimensions of convenience, assurance, physical features, understanding and empathy, and service delivery adequacy. Measures such as providing technical and interpersonal training for employees, improving physical facilities, and emphasizing customer-oriented practices are likely to enhance customer satisfaction and service quality.

According to the study results, hotel establishments operating in the Cappadocia Region should particularly focus on improvements in the dimensions of convenience and assurance. By reassessing their workforce in both quantitative and qualitative terms and implementing continuous training-based development programs, hotels may improve customer evaluations of service quality dimensions. In addition, conducting service quality measurements at regular intervals would allow businesses to monitor improvements over time.

The findings of this study should be interpreted within the scope and limitations stated. Future studies may reduce social desirability bias by incorporating a social desirability scale into questionnaires administered to managers or by clearly explaining to respondents that there are no right or wrong answers and that actual conditions—not ideal ones—should be reported. Furthermore, similar studies may be conducted in different tourist destinations to enable broader comparisons and generalizations.

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