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The asymmetric effect of all-inclusive holiday service quality attributes on tourist satisfaction

Abstract

All-inclusive holidays have regained popularity among budget-conscious holidaymakers amidst inflation and living cost crisis. Following the pandemic, tourists are now staying at the hotel more and venture out less, which further makes all-inclusive holidays more popular than ever. With the increasing popularity of all-inclusive holidays, knowledge expansion of this tourism segment is necessary. This study extends the under-developed all-inclusive holiday literature by exploring service quality attributes of all-inclusive holidays and evaluating their asymmetric effect on tourist satisfaction. Suggestions on prioritizing service quality attributes for improvement are expected to support industry practitioners in managing service quality and satisfaction strategically.

Keywords

All-inclusive holidays, package tourism, asymmetric effect, service quality attributes, tourist satisfaction

Introduction

The tourism industry has been one of the most hard-hit by the COVID-19 pandemic as evidenced in the massive loss of \$935 billion in revenue within the first 10 months alone (Madden, 2021). While the industry is on the road to recovery, it is currently facing the challenges of higher taxes, energy bills and living cost crisis. Travel industry research reveals that one in three holidaymakers will cut holiday spending in 2023 in the wake of soaring inflation and living costs (Topham, 2022). Though such challenges are likely to delay the industry recovery post-COVID-19, there is light at the end of the tunnel.

The living cost crisis has fueled the demand for all-inclusive holidays. Barrhead Travel, a UK online travel agent revealed on the first Saturday of January 2023 that “all-inclusive holidays are the most type of holidays for summer 2023, accounting for more than 25% of bookings” (McConnell, 2023). EasyJet Holidays also reported that some 70% of their bookings are for all-inclusive holidays (Lancefield, 2022). The popularity of all-inclusive holidays can be ascribed to the fact that this travel model empowers tourists to better control the total cost of their holiday (Bui, 2022). As the name implies, an all-inclusive holiday (usually) includes everything from travel, accommodation, meals to entertainment bundled in a single pre-paid package (Bui, 2022). Holidaymakers can accordingly manage their budget and have no or few unexpected charges at check out. Indeed, 77% of holidaymakers believe that an all-inclusive holiday is the least stressful way to travel (Fox, 2022).

While regaining popularity is obviously beneficial to thriving all-inclusive tourism, it is challenging for this segment to retain customers. Staff deficiency (Bilgili et al., 2016), a lack of close supervision in service quality standards (Ozturk et al., 2019) and provision of low-quality food and beverage services to reduce costs (Okumus et al., 2020) have been on-going issues in the management of all-inclusive holidays. Those service quality issues will adversely affect the healthy growth of all-inclusive holidays in the long run as service quality is a critical determinant of all-inclusive holiday choice (Cetinsoz and Artuger, 2014; Wong

and Kwong, 2004), and of all-inclusive holiday satisfaction (Ozturk et al., 2019; Yolal et al., 2017). Therefore, research is needed to support all-inclusive holiday service providers in minimizing the satisfaction-hampering impact of such service quality issues while maximizing profitability.

To support industry practitioners in better managing the service quality of all-inclusive holidays without compromising financial yields, an examination of the asymmetric effect of service quality attributes on tourist satisfaction in this tourism segment is critical. According to the three-factor theory, attributes fall into either the basic factors, the performance factors or the excitement factors (Matzler and Sauerwein, 2002). The basic factors are composed of dissatisfaction-causing attributes on their absence without inducing satisfaction on their presence. The performance factors include attributes triggering dissatisfaction if not fulfilled and satisfaction if delivered. The excitement factors are characterized by attributes increasing customer satisfaction if delivered without causing dissatisfaction on their absence. Accordingly, different product or service attributes exert differential effects on the overall product or service satisfaction (Matzler and Sauerwein, 2002). Some product or service attributes only induce satisfaction while some others only trigger dissatisfaction (Fuller et al., 2006). Therefore, an understanding of the asymmetries between attribute performance and overall satisfaction is beneficial to the management in better decisions on product and/or service improvement (Fuller and Matzler, 2008). However, no research has attempted to examine the asymmetries between attribute performance and tourist satisfaction in all-inclusive holidays to date.

Given the paucity of all-inclusive knowledge and the on-going issues and challenges in managing service quality, the research makes an original contribution by being the first to examine the asymmetric effect of service quality attributes on tourist satisfaction in all-inclusive holidays. The research aimed to (1) empirically identify service quality attributes of all-inclusive holidays and (2) evaluate the asymmetric effect of the attributes on tourist satisfaction. To that end, this study adopted the three-factor theory and a mixed methods approach. A netnographic study was first conducted to qualitatively identify service quality dimensions and attributes of all-inclusive holidays. An online survey was then launched to quantitatively validate the attributes and examine their asymmetric effect on tourist satisfaction by penalty-reward contrast analysis (PRCA), impact range performance analysis (IRPA) and impact asymmetry analysis (IAA).

Literature review

Asymmetric effect of attribute performance on customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is a vital ingredient for such key aspects of a business's success as favorable words of mouth (Luo and Homburg, 2007) and positive economic returns (Adinegara et al., 2017). In acknowledgement of customer satisfaction as the lifeblood of every business, the interdisciplinary literature has seen extensive scholarly approaches to theorize the concept such as the expectancy-disconfirmation (Oliver, 1977, 1980), the comparison level (LaTour and Peat, 1979; Thibault and Kelly, 1959) and the value-percept

disparity (Westbrook and Reilly, 1983). However, those theories commonly consider customer satisfaction as an outcome of a symmetric influence of attribute performance.

The expectancy-disconfirmation theory, for example, suggests that if attribute performance meets or exceeds customer expectations, customers will be satisfied. In contrast, if performance falls short of expectations, a negative disconfirmation will trigger customer dissatisfaction. Grounded on such “traditional” view, many studies (Kartika et al., 2020; Qu and Ping, 1999; Rao and Sahu, 2013) have investigated the attribute performance and customer satisfaction in a symmetric manner. Qu and Ping (1999), for example, symmetrically assess the service performance of cruise travel on Hong Kong tourists. The scholars find that the high performance of food and beverage facilities and quality, and staff induces satisfaction while the low performance of attractiveness, variety and organization of entertainment, sport/fitness, shopping and childcare facilities, and seating space in food and beverage outlets triggers dissatisfaction among the travelers.

The symmetric assumption of attribute performance–satisfaction effect; however, has been challenged by the exploration of asymmetries. Many studies (Mersha and Adhlaka, 1992; Mikulic and Prebezac, 2008; Slevitch and Oh, 2010) indicate that the relationship between attribute performance and customer satisfaction is nonlinear or asymmetric. Mersha and Adhlaka (1992), for example, find that staff indifference is ranked very high as an attribute of poor quality; however, staff enthusiasm or helpfulness is ranked low as an attribute of good quality. This indicates that the presence of staff enthusiasm/helpfulness (i.e., the absence of staff indifference) does not necessarily lead to or increase satisfaction. An investment in improving the staff enthusiasm/helpfulness is, accordingly, neither cost-effective nor efficient in increasing overall customer satisfaction for industry practitioners. The findings apparently challenge the “traditional” view of symmetric performance–satisfaction relationship. An understanding of the asymmetric relationship between attribute performance and customer satisfaction is, therefore, of paramount importance in securing the profit-satisfaction link.

To facilitate the understanding of attribute performance and customer satisfaction, the three-factor theory of customer satisfaction was developed. The three-factor theory is rooted in Kano et al.’s (1984) theory of attractive quality which includes five-factor categories of attractive, must-be, one-dimensional, indifferent and reverse quality attributes (Fuller and Matzler, 2008). According to the theory, attractive quality attributes are satisfiers when they are present, without causing dissatisfaction on their absence. Must-be quality attributes are dissatisfiers when they are absent, without inducing satisfaction when they are present. Reverse quality attributes are, in contrast, either dissatisfiers when they are present or satisfiers when they are absent. One-dimensional quality attributes can be either satisfiers on their presence or dissatisfiers on their absence. Indifferent quality attributes are, in contrast, neither satisfiers nor dissatisfiers regardless of their presence and/or performance. Among those five factors, the attractive, must-be and one-dimensional are more widely acknowledged and applied than the indifferent and reverse quality attributes. This can be ascribed to the disconfirmation of those attributes by some prior studies. Ting and Chen (2002), for example, find no reverse quality attributes in their study. In a similar vein, Tan

and Shen (2000) exclude indifferent and reverse factors due to their inapplicability to their research approach and to the fact that indifferent factors exert no impact on customer (dis)satisfaction. As a result, the three factors of attractive, must-be and one-dimensional quality attributes are commonly highlighted as the most salient in the theory of attractive quality (Matzler et al., 1996; Shahin et al., 2013).

The salient three-factor structure of attractive, must-be and one-dimensional quality attributes in Kano et al.'s (1984) model has been tailored and further explored. Matzler and Sauerwein (2002), for example, propose basic factors (i.e., must-be attributes), performance factors (one-dimensional attributes) and excitement factors (i.e., attractive attributes). This approach has typically been adopted and adapted (Albayrak, 2018; Fuller and Matzler, 2008, Mikulic and Prebezac, 2008). Fuller and Matzler (2008), for example, refer to basic factors, performance factors and excitement factors as dissatisfiers, hybrids and satisfiers, respectively. Mikulic and Prebezac (2008) similarly refer to performance factors as hybrids and notably further subdivide basic factors into dissatisfiers and frustrators, and excitement factors into satisfiers and delighters. Dissatisfiers, frustrators, hybrids, satisfiers and delighters are demonstrated based on the studies by Mikulic and Prebezac (2008) and Fuller and Matzler (2008) as follows.

Dissatisfiers and frustrators (i.e., extreme dissatisfiers) are basic factors which are minimum requirements taken for granted by customers. If they are absent or their performance is poor, customers are dissatisfied. However, if they are present or their performance is high, customers are not necessarily satisfied. Dissatisfiers and frustrators, accordingly, relate to overall customer satisfaction in a negative asymmetry. Hybrids are performance factors which connect with overall customer satisfaction in a positive and symmetric relationship. They are usually expected by customers, and trigger (dis)satisfaction if they are (not) fulfilled. Satisfiers and delighters (i.e., extreme satisfiers) are excitement factors which exhibit a positive asymmetric relationship with overall customer satisfaction. They are attractive attributes that customers do not usually expect in advance and induce satisfaction if delivered but do not cause dissatisfaction if absent.

Mikulic and Prebezac's (2008) attribute classification approach has been widely adopted by tourism and hospitality studies (Coghlan, 2012, Pratt et al., 2020). Consistent with such previous studies, the current research adopts Mikulic and Prebezac's (2008) approach to evaluate the asymmetric effect of all-inclusive holiday service quality attributes on tourist satisfaction by identifying dissatisfiers, frustrators, hybrids, satisfiers and delighters.

Service quality attributes in the context of all-inclusive holidays

To accurately articulate the service quality attributes in the context of all-inclusive holidays, it is critical to reflect on the all-inclusive concept, and typical services of this tourism segment. Morrison (1989, p. 260) defines the all-inclusive concept in tourism as “a generic term for packages that include all or nearly all the elements that travelers require for their trips, including airfare, lodging, ground transportation, meals, recreation and entertainment, taxes and gratuities.” The definition indicates that the all-inclusive concept represents package tourism and points to such typical services of all-inclusive holidays as transport, accommodation, meals and entertainment. Some studies on Asian tourism markets such as Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan (e.g., Chen et al., 2019; McKercher and Wong,

2013) commonly refer to the all-inclusive concept as escorted outbound multi-destination package tours which essentially include such services as tour guiding and attractions. However, several others (e.g., Aguilo and Rossello, 2012; Jayawardena, 2002; Oviedo-Garcia et al., 2018) consistently claim that the all-inclusive mechanism encourages people to spend most of their time within the accommodation premises to get the money worth out of the holiday. This highlights the importance of lodging-related service quality attributes on customer satisfaction with all-inclusive holidays and suggests that such services as attractions, and tour guiding/escort services are not typically included in an all-inclusive package.

In the light of the all-inclusive concept, and the importance of lodging-relevant service quality attributes in customer satisfaction with all-inclusive holidays, the literature review on the service quality attributes in the context of lodging and package tours was reviewed (Table 1). The review shows that in the lodging context, previous studies commonly shed light on service attributes relevant to staff, food and beverage, physical environment, room and leisure facilities (Alexandris et al., 2006; Amin et al., 2013; Juwaheer, 2004; Wu and Ko, 2013). In the package tours context, service attributes related to hotel/accommodation, transportation, tour guide/leader, shopping arrangements, attractions, leisure activities, food and beverage/catering services were featured (Caber and Albayrak, 2018; Chan et al., 2015, 2018; Jin et al., 2014; Lin and Kuo, 2019; Wang et al., 2000, 2007, 2013). Such service attributes uncovered by previous relevant studies formed, to some extent, the basis for the identification of service quality attributes of all-inclusive holidays by the current research.

Study 1: exploring all-inclusive holiday service quality

Data collection

In order to examine the asymmetric effect of service quality attributes on tourist satisfaction in all-inclusive holidays, the service quality attributes must be identified. However, no prior studies have empirically explored the all-inclusive holiday service quality attributes. Therefore, a qualitative approach of netnography was first conducted to empirically explore the service quality attributes of all-inclusive holidays. Netnography was employed as it grants the researcher access to online customer posts on public forums or websites (Nelson and Otnes, 2005). Accordingly, TripAdvisor, the largest global online travel community (Mate et al., 2019), was employed as the data collection platform. The employment of TripAdvisor was premised on its merit as a valid and credible source of data for tourism and hospitality research (Stoleriu et al., 2019).

To collect relevant reviews, the key word *all-inclusive* was inputted in the search field on TripAdvisor homepage. Three criteria were also applied to collect relevant reviews. First, only reviews in English were included to ensure the comprehension of the content by the researchers. Second, only reviews posted within 6 months from the date of stay were collected to minimize the memory effect. Third, reviews must be between 2021 and 2022 for a contemporary picture of all-inclusive service quality. 250 valid TripAdvisor reviews on all-

inclusive holidays were collected in February 2022. The collected reviews were analyzed by two experienced researchers with the assistance of the qualitative data analysis tool of NVivo.

Results of study 1

The analysis revealed 25 service quality attributes of all-inclusive holidays which were categorized into 7 categories, including staff, physical environment, food and beverage, room, transport, entertainment and value-added services. An inter-coder reliability check was conducted in SPSS to measure the level of (dis)agreement between the coders. The resulting Kappa coefficient of 0.71 ($p < .001$) indicated a statistically significant intercoder reliability. The results of dimensions and (sub)attributes ([Table 2](#)) importantly drove the development of the survey questionnaire in Study 2.

Study 2: evaluating asymmetric effect of all-inclusive holiday service quality attributes on tourist satisfaction

Questionnaire development

The set of all-inclusive holiday service quality attributes was initially generated from the results of Study 1 ([Table 2](#)). The results of Study 1 were compared with the measurements by relevant previous studies on the service quality in the contexts of lodging and package tours ([Table 1](#)) to better decide on the inclusion of measurement items. 91 items were generated and evaluated on relevance and applicability by a panel of six academics from Sheffield Hallam University, University of Surrey, The Ohio State University, Hong Kong Baptist University, Fernando Pessoa University and Edith Cowan University. Sixty-six measurement items were retained for the main survey. Two attention checks were added to the questionnaire to retain more credible responses ([Kung et al., 2018](#); [Ladini, 2022](#)). One instructional manipulation check (“All meals were served a la carte [please tick 1 – strongly disagree]”) was included in the measurement scale of food and beverage. One nonsensical measurement item (“I was seated next to the pilot during the flight to the destination”) was added to the measurement scale of transport.

The questionnaire was structured into three main sections. Section 1 included general and relevant multiple-choice questions about the most recent all-inclusive holidays. Section 2 was composed of eight seven-point Likert scales in which respondents were asked to rate the performance of staff, physical environment, food and beverage, room, entertainment, transport, value-added services attributes, overall service quality and overall satisfaction. The questionnaire was concluded with the demographic questions in Section 3.

Data collection

The survey was distributed on the online panel platform of Prolific as its participant recruitment, and obligations are transparent ([Palan and Schitter, 2018](#)). Prolific provides a higher quality of respondents’ comprehension, attention and honesty than MTurk ([Eyal et al., 2021](#)). Such online panels as Prolific are more efficient in recruiting knowledgeable and viewpoint-oriented samples than face-to-face surveys ([Duffy et al., 2005](#)).

A total of 650 valid responses were obtained in March 2022 from those who have been on an all-inclusive holiday entirely organized by a tour operator between 2020 and 2022 and passed the attention checks. An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to examine the dimensionality of all-inclusive holiday service quality. PRCA, IRPA and IAA were then conducted to evaluate the asymmetric effect of all-inclusive holiday service quality attributes on tourist satisfaction.

Results of study 2

Survey participants

A slightly larger proportion of female respondents (52.9%) participated in the survey compared to their male counterparts (47.1%) (Table 3). The participants of both genders were overwhelmingly Caucasian/white, accounting for 64.2%. In terms of age, 68% of those aged between 25 and 44 made up more than half of the survey population, in which those aged between 25 and 34 and between 34 and 44 occupied 35.5% and 32.5%, respectively. Many respondents are married, accounting for 35.8%.

Popular destinations for all-inclusive holidays were also uncovered. Although no destination emerged as an overwhelmingly popular all-inclusive holiday spot, the Canary Islands and Greece appeared more attractive to the respondents than the other places as 14.6% and 11.5% of participants reported that their most recent all-inclusive holiday was in those two destinations, respectively. Noticeably, nearly half of the respondents (49.5%) spent 7 days or less in such destinations, and only 7.2% reported that their most recent all-inclusive holiday was 15 days or more.

Exploratory factor analysis

EFA should be performed to minimize the effect of multicollinearity and inter-variable correlations when conducting IRPA and IAA in the subsequent stages (Back, 2012). Therefore, EFA was performed using principal components extraction with direct oblimin rotation. As shown in Table 4, the EFA revealed fifty-five items under nine factors (staff, arrival and departure personal touch, transport, food and beverage, entertainment, room, physical environment, location and COVID-19 services) were retained. The nine factors explained 70.25% of the variance and showed good reliability as evidenced in Cronbach's alpha coefficient exceeding the threshold of 0.7 (DeVaus, 2002).

Asymmetric effect of all-inclusive holiday service quality attributes on tourist satisfaction and discussion

In the first step, PRCA was performed using dummy variables and multiple regressions. The first set of dummy variables was created by coding the lowest performance attributes as 1 and the others as 0. The second set of dummy variables was generated by coding the highest performance attributes 1 and the others as 0. The two sets of dummy variables (i.e., the independent variables) were then regressed on overall satisfaction (i.e., the dependent

variable). Regression coefficients for the first set and the second set of dummy variables were penalty indices (PI) and reward indices (RI), respectively.

In the second step, IRPA was performed. The absolute values of PI and RI were totaled to arrive at the impact range (IR) of an attribute on tourist satisfaction. Their satisfaction-generating potential (SGP) and dissatisfaction-generating potential (DGP) were subsequently calculated by dividing their RI and PI by their IR respectively.

In the third step, IAA was conducted. The DGP of attributes was subtracted from their SGP to derive impact asymmetry indices (IA). Based on the obtained IA indices, service quality attributes were classified into five categories, namely Frustrators ($IA < -0.4$), Dissatisfiers ($-0.1 > IA \geq -0.4$), Hybrids ($0.1 \geq IR \geq -0.1$), Satisfiers ($0.4 \geq IA > 0.1$), Delighters ($IA > 0.4$) (Mikulic and Prebezac, 2008). Briefly, the following equations were applied.

$$IR = |RI| + |PI| \quad SGP = |RI| / IR \quad DGP = |PI| / IR \quad IA = SGP - DGP$$

Findings (Table 5) illuminated asymmetries in the effect of service quality attributes on tourist satisfaction. In the dimension of staff, all staff conduct- and problem-solving-related attributes were characterized by negative asymmetries as they were either classified as frustrators or dissatisfiers. Staff expertise-related attributes had notably both symmetric and asymmetric effects on tourist satisfaction. Symmetric effect was evidenced in the hybrid attribute of *service efficiency*. Asymmetric effect was shown in the classification of *service knowledge* and *extra cost clarification* as frustrators and satisfiers respectively. Accordingly, it is prominent that while most staff attributes exhibited negative asymmetries, the attribute *extra cost clarification* showcased positive effects on satisfaction. The negative effects of the staff conduct-, problem-solving- and expertise-relevant dissatisfiers and frustrators signified the need to maintain their performance at standardized levels to prevent dissatisfaction. The positive effects of *extra cost clarification* confirmed the significance of cost transparency in satisfaction posited by previous studies in the tourism industry in general (Mattila and Choi, 2005) and in the bundled vacation packages in specific (Tanford et al., 2011).

Symmetric and asymmetric effects on tourist satisfaction with all-inclusive holidays were similarly found in the dimension of COVID-19 services. Symmetric effect was displayed in hybrid attribute of *COVID tests*. Asymmetric effect was attested in the findings of the satisfier *COVID procedures*, and the delighter *COVID supplies*. The positive effects of COVID-19 services on satisfaction highlighted the importance of health and safety measures which significantly influence the post-COVID recovery of the hospitality industry (Jimenez-Medina et al., 2022). Therefore, health and safety measures should not only be a contemporary response to any particular pandemic but a strategic move for hotels to satisfy and delight customers and to build a positive and resilient brand image in the long run.

In the dimension of arrival and departure personal touch, *on-arrival offerings* (satisfier) and *luggage assistance* and *post-checkout service allowance* (delighters) indicated positive asymmetries while the frustrators *late checkout facilities* and *post-checkout buggy*

service illuminated negative asymmetries. While previous studies ([Padma and Ahn, 2020](#)) merely focused on check-in and check-out as on-arrival and departure services, the current research covered a more comprehensive range of critical services on arrival and departure. The positive and negative effects of those services on satisfaction emphasized the important role of personal touch in tourist experience. Although the convenience and efficiency of self-check-in kiosks and non-contact services in the tourism industry are acknowledged ([Moon et al., 2021](#)), the current study posits that arrival and departure personal touch is necessary to create travellers' memorable first and last impressions.

The attributes in the dimension of location exhibited both positive and negative asymmetries as evidenced in the findings of the satisfier *central area accessibility*, and the frustrator *convenient location*. This showed that while the attribute of *convenient location* is taken for granted, the other attribute of *central area accessibility* is unexpected and highly appreciated by customers if the service is offered. The findings on the asymmetric effects of location on all-inclusive holiday satisfaction emphasized the importance of location in this tourism segment. It is worthwhile for those who create and sell all-inclusive holiday packages to reconsider the role of their all-inclusive hotel/resort partners' location. This is premised on the previous research findings that all-inclusive holiday organizers tend to downplay the location of all-inclusive resorts ([Wall-Reinius et al., 2019](#)).

In the dimension of transport, flight efficiency and transfer efficiency attributes fell into either positive or negative asymmetries. While *seats* (delighter), *flight punctuality* (delighter) and *airport check-in* (delighter) exerted positive asymmetric effect on satisfaction; *legroom* (dissatisfier), *flight schedule* (dissatisfier), *on-board services* (frustrator) and *luggage handling* (frustrator) showed negative asymmetries. The findings of both positive and negative effects of transport attributes in all-inclusive holiday satisfaction offered valuable insight to the management of this tourism segment, especially to tour operators. Transport services can be out of direct control by all-inclusive holiday tour operators as they may outsource transportation services to third-party providers and may arrange, for example, shuttle services, for transfers between the airport and the accommodation. However, in light of the current research's findings on the importance of transport service quality in overall tourist satisfaction with all-inclusive holidays, tour operators must be alert to the critical role of cooperating with reliable transport providers for well-organized transport services if transport is included in a prepaid all-inclusive holiday package.

In the dimension of room, *comfort* showcased positive effect on satisfaction as shown in the identification of *decoration* (i.e., visual comfort) and *temperature* (i.e., thermal comfort) as delighters and satisfiers respectively. In contrast, *size* was reflective of negative asymmetries, except for *bathroom size* which was found to be a delighter. The other attributes of *cleanliness* (frustrator) and *bedding quality* (frustrator) also fell into negative asymmetries. Compared to [Ozturk et al.'s \(2019\)](#) all-inclusive holiday study in which only room cleanliness was covered, the current research offered a more holistic insight into important room attributes that were found to be influential to overall satisfaction positively and negatively. Moreover, the findings of positive asymmetries of the attributes could support the

management in their service quality improvement. Accordingly, such negative attributes as cleanliness and bedding quality need more attention, especially when their performance falls low, than such positive attributes as decoration or temperature.

In the dimension of food and beverage, all attributes were identified as either frustrators or dissatisfiers. This indicated that food and beverage-related attributes were all strongly associated with negative asymmetries. Similarly, all attributes (either dissatisfiers or frustrators) in the dimension of entertainment and in the dimension of physical environment had negative asymmetric effect on tourist satisfaction. The sole negative asymmetries of food and beverage, and entertainment services reflected that those services are considered fundamental requirements by tourists. This can be attributed to the fact that “all the package tours presented to the market are very similar. Itineraries offered by travel agencies possess high degrees of similarity with reference to entertainment and food” (Wong and Kwong, 2004, p. 582). As those services are basic components of different types of holiday packages, it is critical for all-inclusive holiday service providers to maintain a satisfactory level of quality and quantity to prevent dissatisfaction.

Conclusion and implications

Conclusion

Service quality and tourist satisfaction have generally been well-researched. However, knowledge about those important research arenas in the particular context of all-inclusive tourism is sparse. To extend and advance knowledge of service quality and satisfaction in this tourism segment, the current research was conducted to evaluate the asymmetric effect of all-inclusive holiday service quality attributes on satisfaction.

By applying the three-factor theory of customer satisfaction, the service quality attributes were classified into basic factors (i.e., factors with negative asymmetries), performance factors (i.e., factors with symmetries) and excitement factors (i.e., factors with positive asymmetries). The three-factor theory was further extended to five categories of frustrators and dissatisfiers (basic factors), hybrids (performance factors) and satisfiers and delighters (excitement factors) to better delineate the asymmetric effect of service quality attributes on tourist satisfaction in all-inclusive holidays.

The illuminated asymmetric effect of the all-inclusive holiday service quality attributes on satisfaction by the current research challenges the traditional view of linear effects by previous studies on all-inclusive holidays (Ozdemir et al., 2012; Ozturk et al., 2019). The findings also lend empirical support to the asymmetric relationships between attribute-level performance and satisfaction claimed by prior academics (Anderson and Sullivan, 1993; Oliva et al., 1992).

This study was aimed at further developing knowledge of all-inclusive tourism and supporting industry practitioners in improving the segment's service quality and satisfaction without compromising profitability. To that end, the theoretical and practical implications are discussed below.

Theoretical implications

The service quality of all-inclusive holidays remains untapped. Service quality has simply identified as one of the selection criteria for all-inclusive holidays among tourists (e.g., [Cetinsoz and Artuger, 2014](#); [Wong and Kwong, 2004](#)), and a determinant of tourist satisfaction with all-inclusive resorts (e.g., [Ozturk et al., 2019](#); [Yolal et al., 2017](#)). No studies have focused on exploring the service quality dimensions and attributes of all-inclusive holidays. The current study filled the knowledge gap through a netnographic approach. Seven service quality dimensions and twenty-five attributes were identified, including staff (expertise, conduct, problem-solving, communication, availability), physical environment (ambient conditions, public area cleanliness, design), food and beverage (labeling, hygiene, variety, sensory appeal), room (maintenance, size, comfort, amenities), entertainment (availability of activities, leisure facilities quality, attractiveness of activities), transport (flight efficiency, transfer efficiency) and value-added services (on-arrival personal touch, COVID-19 services, location, (post)check-out support).

Very few studies ([Cetinsoz and Artuger, 2014](#); [Wong and Kwong, 2004](#); [Yolal et al., 2017](#)) have, to some extent, covered all-inclusive holiday service quality. Those studies; however, were conducted in a piecemeal manner, covering either all-inclusive travel agencies' service quality or all-inclusive resorts' service quality. More specifically, scholars ([Cetinsoz and Artuger, 2014](#); [Wong and Kwong, 2004](#)) merely point to service quality of travel agencies as an antecedent of all-inclusive tour selection. The service quality of travel agencies who provide all-inclusive tours was not explored and/or measured. [Yolal et al. \(2017\)](#) better measured the service quality of all-inclusive resorts; however, the adoption of SERVQUAL exposes certain shortcomings as its dimensions are not generic for universal across-discipline application ([Amin et al., 2013](#)). The scholars also grounded the generation of measurement items in each dimension on [Parasuraman et al.'s \(1991\)](#) scale rather than on the all-inclusive tourist perspective. Therefore, the study's generated knowledge of all-inclusive resorts service quality is distanced from what contemporary tourists perceive.

The foregoing shortcomings in the extant all-inclusive tourism service quality have been addressed by the current study. By covering both services by hoteliers (Staff, Physical environment, Food and beverage, Room, Entertainment, Value-added services) and tour operators (Transport, Value-added services), this study creates a more holistic picture of all-inclusive holiday service quality. Compared to [Yolal et al.'s \(2017\)](#) study in which the service quality of all-inclusive resorts was measured by SERVQUAL, the service quality dimensions and attributes identified in the current study are more germane to all-inclusive holidays as they were identified and refined from the customer perspective. As such, the current study not only adds new knowledge to the extant service quality literature and to the current scholarship on all-inclusive tourism, but also creates fundamentals for future studies if testing the relationship between service quality of all-inclusive tourism and, for example, tourist loyalty or behavioral intentions is of interest.

Very few previous studies ([Ozdemir et al., 2012](#); [Ozturk et al., 2019](#)) have studied satisfaction in all-inclusive holidays. Such studies mainly focused on satisfying attributes. Hybrid and dissatisfying attributes have been overlooked. Moreover, satisfaction-influencing attributes in all-inclusive holidays have merely been adopted from the literature. The

application of those attributes to studying all-inclusive tourists is therefore questionable. Such drawbacks of previous studies have been addressed by the current research through an empirical identification of not only satisfying attributes but also hybrids and dissatisfying ones. The identification of satisfiers, delighters, hybrids, dissatisfiers and frustrators by the current study provides a more comprehensive picture of tourist satisfaction in all-inclusive holidays. The extant literature on tourist satisfaction in all-inclusive holidays is accordingly advanced.

The asymmetric effect of service quality attributes on tourist satisfaction with all inclusive holidays has not been evaluated by any previous studies. By filling the gap, the research revisits the conventional linear approach to the effect of service quality on satisfaction by the extant all-inclusive holiday literature (e.g., [Ozturk et al., 2019](#); [Yolal et al., 2017](#)) and advances knowledge on the effect of service quality attributes on satisfaction the context of all-inclusive holidays.

This study contributes to the discourse on analytical approaches to the asymmetric effect of attributes on satisfaction and to the prioritization of attributes. To evaluate the asymmetric effect of attributes on satisfaction, previous studies have applied the critical incident technique ([Holloway and Beatty, 2008](#)), the analysis of complaints and compliments ([Friman and Edvardsson, 2003](#)) and the importance grid ([Smith and Costello, 2009](#)). To suggest the priorities of attributes for improvement, the extant literature has seen the adoption of the importance-performance analysis ([Lai and Hitchcock, 2015](#)) and the analytic hierarchy process ([Zhou et al., 2015](#)). Instead of taking two different approaches, this study lends support to the applicability and effectiveness of the PRCA, IRPA and IAA in studying the asymmetric effect of (service) attributes on satisfaction and prioritizing the attributes by future service studies in their attempts to advance service quality and satisfaction knowledge in different industries.

Practical implications

The identification of satisfiers, delighters, hybrids, dissatisfiers and frustrators offered industry practitioners a better understanding of the non-linear effect of all-inclusive holiday service quality attributes on tourist satisfaction. The understanding that not every service is critical to tourist satisfaction even in case of improved performance will support industry practitioners in a better decision on their investment. For instance, the dissatisfiers *food variety*, *range of drinks*, *presentation*, *freshness* and *tableware cleanliness* performed above average. There would be no need to put extra effort in improving their performance. If the performance decreases and improvement is needed, the high-impact *food variety*, and *range of drinks* should be given a higher priority than the medium-impact *tableware cleanliness* and the low-impact *presentation* and *freshness*.

The study found that the service quality attributes in the dimensions of staff, physical environment, food and beverage, room and entertainment primarily displayed negative asymmetric effects on tourist satisfaction as evidenced in the overwhelming number of dissatisfiers and frustrators ([Table 5](#)). This indicates the attributes in those service dimensions are generally taken for granted by customers. Customers are dissatisfied if the performance of

dissatisfiers, and frustrators is low. Immediate attention is therefore needed by the management. In light of the findings, the poorly performed dissatisfiers (*effective solutions to problems, food taste, daily food diversification, tableware cleanliness, entertainment availability, operating time, entertainment volume*) and frustrators (*music, entertainment activity diversification and attractiveness*) all need to be improved.

The study also found that transport-relevant and value-added services-relevant attributes fundamentally showcased positive asymmetries as manifested in 9 out of 13 satisfiers and delighters (Table 5). Customers are likely to be satisfied with the attributes in these service dimensions even if the performance of those satisfiers and delighters are poor. Resources should be allocated to improve the dissatisfiers (*flight schedule, airplane legroom*) and frustrators (*on-board services, late checkout facilities, post-checkout buggy service*).

Generally, industry practitioners are recommended to manage the frustrators, dissatisfiers and hybrids in each service dimension attentively for the success of all-inclusive holidays because dissatisfaction is triggered on their poor performance (Fuller and Matzler, 2008). The service quality attributes in the dimensions of staff, physical environment, food and beverage, room and entertainment should be paid more attention than those related to transport and value-added services. If the performance of the frustrators, dissatisfiers and hybrids is in line with standard levels, resources could be allocated to the satisfiers and delighters to delight customers.

Limitations and suggestions for future studies

Certain limitations must be acknowledged as an essential part of any research endeavor to open opportunities for future studies. First, the identification of service quality attributes of all-inclusive holidays was grounded on TripAdvisor reviews. The generalization of the qualitative findings of this study is limited to the online communities. This is also the limitation associated with the Prolific-based survey. Future research should include offline populations or both online and offline populations, which potentially reveal a more comprehensive picture of attribute asymmetries. Findings comparison and contrast between this study and future research can be conducted to contribute more interesting insights to the literature and provide diverse implications for industry practitioners.

Second, service quality attributes of all-inclusive holidays were identified from the customer perspective only. The exclusion of such other stakeholders as hoteliers, and tour operators may have omitted valuable insights into the service quality attributes of all-inclusive holidays. Future studies are encouraged to include a more diverse range of participants when revisiting the asymmetric effect of service quality attributes on tourist satisfaction in all-inclusive holidays after a few years to keep up with the dynamics of service quality attributes (Falk et al., 2010; Nilsson-Witell and Fundin, 2005).

The study took COVID-19 service attributes into account to reflect the contemporary service landscape. In the next few years, those attributes are potentially inapplicable. A re-evaluation of the asymmetric effect of service quality attributes on tourist satisfaction with all-inclusive holidays in a few years will importantly keep both academics and practitioners updated on the dynamic pace of change in the role of service quality attributes in tourist

satisfaction. Furthermore, transportation can be external all-inclusive holiday tour operators if they need to outsource flight and transfer services to a third-party provider due to, for example, resource constraints. While tour operators might not have direct control over transport quality, transport attributes were found to have both positive and negative effects on overall satisfaction with all-inclusive holidays. Therefore, it is worthwhile for future studies to further investigate the impact of transport services on satisfaction in all-inclusive holidays to better understand the role of this component. If the impact of transport service in all-inclusive holidays is further delineated, tour operators can be better supported in their holiday package design and/or transport services arrangement.

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