

ASSESSMENTS AS REGARD OF SERVICE QUALITY OF TOURISTIC CONSUMERS WHO PARTICIPATE IN EQUESTRIAN TREKKING ACTIVITIES: AN APPLICATION IN CORE CAPPADOCIA, TURKEY

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Abstract: In this study, based on the Servqual Scale a questionnaire consisting of 4 sections and 48 questions was applied in order to determine the service quality evaluations of domestic and foreign tourist consumers participating in equestrian trekking activities in Nevşehir. The study was limited to the local and foreign tourists visiting the equestrian trekking enterprises in Nevşehir. The survey was carried out with 350 people and T test ANOVA and LSD analyses were conducted. The findings of the study showed that the average score of domestic and foreign tourist about physical properties is very close to each other and domestic tourists have positive but foreign tourists have negative evaluations on reliability. In terms of willingness, the evaluations of domestic and foreign tourists are quite high. The general evaluations were negative in terms of assurance. In terms of empathy, the evaluations of both domestic and foreign tourists are positive. In addition, the differences between the evaluations of domestic and foreign tourists on the quality of service in terms of their demographic characteristics were examined. The findings of the study will be used in the enterprises performing equestrian trekking activities so the visitors will be more satisfied with the services provided, the satisfaction level and consequently, the number of devoted customers will increase.

Key words: Equestrian Trekking, Horse, Touristic Consumer, Service Quality, Nevşehir

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INTRODUCTION

Horses, from the first ages of history in the life of humankind have served many different purposes. Initially, fed as prey animals, horses have served as an indispensable element in individual and community life through history since people began to recognize and took advantage of their different characteristics (Ünver, 2006, p.10).

In the past, horse riding had a great importance for travel and transportation. Unfortunately, nowadays in the concept of modern tourism with the foundation of space tourism, it cannot find the enough value it deserves. When the literature is reviewed, no studies were found except for the studies of Güngör (2016), Genç & Şengül (2016) and Tucker & Emge (2010) which refer to equestrian trekking in Cappadocia which means 'Land of Beautiful Horses' in Persian language. Of these studies, Güngör's work is directly related to the equestrian trekking in the scope of alternative tourism diversity. The other two studies just mention that equestrian trekking was carried out in Cappadocia.

The cultural and scientific values of Anatolia, which has a history of 6000 years of horse and equestrian history, unfortunately, cannot be sustained today in a way that is appropriate to its history. The Turks are the first who discovered horses on earth and trained them to use in the life of humankind. However, as in many other fields, the ignoring of science in equestrian sport has led to the need for support from European countries in the implementation of equestrian culture. In order to reach the deserved place on the international platform, there is a need to support the equestrian sport, which has been tried to be developed by local facilities with a large number of scientific research (Ünver, 2003, p. 82). Equestrian trekking which is one of the mentioned in many tourism types such as ecotourism (Hacıoğlu & Avcıkurt, 2011, p.129; Belber, 2018, p.76), rural tourism (Çimen & Abacı, 2012, p. 3), adventure tourism (Swarbrooke, et al., 2003, p.105), nature tourism (Kiper & Yılmaz, 2008, p.166), sustainable tourism (Pickel-Chevalier, 2015 p.110-134) and alternative tourism (Oruç, 2004, p.35), has become a recreationally preferred activity thanks to the riding disciplines developed within many years.

The region Cappadocia includes Nevşehir, Aksaray, Niğde, Kırşehir and Kayseri provinces. The region known as Core Cappadocia with the most observable area of the fairy chimneys consists of Uchisar, Göreme, Avanos, Ürgüp, Derinkuyu, Kaymaklı, Ihlara and its surroundings (Ahiler Kalkınma Ajansı ahika.gov.tr, p. 17).

Equestrian trekking is a new and less known form of recreation than other tourism activities. However, it has an increasing growth potential. With the increase of the demand, an increase in the number of enterprises that organized equestrian trekking in the Core Cappadocia region was observed. The fact that the same improvement in service quality was not seen despite the increasing numbers triggered this study. It was thought that improving the quality of service would have a significant impact on both customer satisfaction and increasing the number of incoming tourists. In this context, the study aimed to determine the service quality assessments of the tourists about enterprises in question and suggestions were made in this direction. Thanks to the enterprises that will operate in accordance with the mentioned suggestions, it is believed that the Cappadocia region will benefit both economically and ecologically.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, within the scope of touristic product diversification and sustainable tourism, the sector has been into different quest. Equestrian sport is one of the product diversification efforts in tourism (Aydoğdu & Tanrısever, 2015). Held in the regions where historical and natural beauties are located, daily or several-day excursion programs are called equestrian trekking (Batman & Eraslan, 2007, p.203).

Because of attraction, eligibility and satisfactory income, the number of enterprises organizing equestrian trekking in the Cappadocia region, known as the Land of Beautiful Horses, has increased significantly. Due to the increase of entrepreneurs and demands, different studies have been carried out in the literature, which deals with the issue in terms of socio - economic, cultural and service quality.

In a recreational sense, riding has a long history. This background has formed a significant number of different and well-known riding disciplines, such as dressage, jump shows, endurance, equestrian therapies, cross-country, horse races and western style riding (Ollenburg, 2005). Equestrian tourism has ancient roots in travel on horseback while at the same time constituting a thoroughly modern phenomenon which reflects intriguing trends of postindustrial society (Notzke, 2017, p. 3). Today the recreational use of horses is predominant in the industrialised societies.

In societies where the horse is no longer needed for labour, the cultural aspect of breeding, training and the recreational use of horses as a relationship between human and horse becomes even more pronounced (Helgadóttir, 2006). Equestrian tourism, as a form of broadly understood active tourism and a form of qualified tourism, is practised in free time of tourists for the purpose of exploring the country or region (Jasiński et al., 2006). Horse tourism is the most inclusive term, and refers to any form of tourism where the horse is an element of the tourism experience (Buchmann, 2017).

Outdoor recreation activities such as hiking, walking, paddling, bird watching and horseback riding are key travel motivators, occur in a variety of settings, are intricately linked to the tourism development process, and are often developed by entrepreneurs within the community (Kline et al., 2015). Knowing whether the guest likes to be treated as a customer or as a travelling companion and knowing which method adds more value to the experience of the guest, is important. Therefore, it is interesting that operators in horse-based tourism in Iceland seem to have more interest in horses and the desires of the guests than in running a profitable business (Helgadottir & Sigurðardottir, 2004).

Equestrian tourism has, in most cases, developed from an operator's passion for horses and is identified as a lifestyle industry; whereas developing a business is defined as a long-term process – including hard work and long working hours – while some operators find it hard to distinguish between their hobby and livelihood (Helgadóttir & Sigurðardóttir, 2008; Sigurðardóttir, 2015). The development of outdoor riding has also led to it becoming more professional in the field of tourism. First, the FFE created the label 'Equestrian Tourism Center', which aims to give credibility to companies, which link this activity to a high-quality welcome and choice of horses (Pickel-Chevalier, 2015).

The quality of service is the feeling that the customers have after purchasing service and implies whether or not they are satisfied with the service. Therefore, the concept of service quality can be described as the needs and expectations of the customer, the features of the service and the degree of which the service have these characteristics (Özveren, 2010). According to the model developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, service quality is based on the comparison of customer expectations and perceptions. If the expected service is more than the perceived service, the quality of perceived quality will be low. If the expected service is equal to the perceived service, the perceived quality will be satisfactory. If the expected service is lower than the perceived service, the perceived quality will be high, which will ensure that the quality is ideal (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Servqual service quality scale, developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, and frequently used in the literature was used in the study with 5 factors as "Physical Specifications", "Reliability", "Willingness", "Assurance" and "Emphaty" was utilized.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Problem statement of the study is “Are domestic and foreign tourists visiting the enterprises that perform equestrian trekking activities in Nevşehir sufficiently satisfied with the quality of service of these enterprises?” The aim of this study is to determine the evaluations of the quality of service of domestic and foreign tourists attending equestrian trekking activities in Nevşehir. Furthermore, based on the results of the research, it is aimed to make suggestions on what can be done to ensure that the domestic and foreign tourists visiting the enterprises that perform equestrian trekking activities in Nevşehir will be more satisfied with the quality of the services offered by these enterprises.

The hypotheses for the purpose of the research are expressed as follows:

H₁: There is a difference between domestic and foreign tourists in evaluating the service quality of the enterprises where equestrian trekking activities are carried out.

H₂: According to the demographic characteristics of the local tourists, there are differences between the evaluations of the service quality elements of the enterprises where equestrian trekking activities are carried out.

H₃: According to the demographic characteristics of foreign tourists, there is a difference between the evaluations of the service quality elements of the enterprises where equestrian trekking activities are carried out.

The study was limited to the domestic and foreign tourists visiting the equestrian trekking enterprises in Nevşehir between the dates of 01.01.2018-01.09.2018.

The study was collected using face-to-face survey method that one of the primary data collection methods. The previous academic studies related to the evaluation of the service quality were examined and the questions and expressions to be used in the research were formed. Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988, p. 39-40)'s studies and questionnaires were evaluated within the scope of the study and the scale was adapted for the study. The questionnaire used in the research consists of two parts. In the first part, there are questions about the demographic characteristics of the participants and in the second part there are 24 expressions about the quality of service. These statements are rated as “1: Strongly Disagree... 5: Strongly Agree”.

The data obtained from the collected questionnaire forms were analyzed by SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) for Windows 23.0. In order to evaluate the questions about demographic characteristics, frequency distributions were examined. Likert-scale expressions were grouped according to service quality assessment dimensions in the studies of Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988, p.23) averages were taken. Then, ANOVA analysis and T test were used for the demographic characteristics of the participants. The results were interpreted and recommendations were made.

In this study, Nevşehir was chosen as the application area in order to obtain suitable data. The population of the research is composed of domestic and foreign tourists visiting the enterprises that carry out equestrian trekking in Nevşehir by September 2018. In order to determine the average number of domestic and foreign tourists who are interested in equestrian trekking in Nevşehir, operating on equestrian trekking enterprises were interviewed face to face. All of these enterprises gave information about their average number of tourists per year. Within the framework of this information, it is determined that about 1200 tourists visited the enterprises for equestrian trekking. At this point, because of the cost, time constraints and unwillingness of people to answer questionnaires, it was preferred to choose a sample to represent the population. As a sampling method, the non-probability sampling method was used. The aim of this method is to include anyone who wants to participate in the sample (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2015, p. 130).

The number of samples was calculated by the following formula (Yamane, 2001, 116 – 117):

$$n = \frac{N \cdot z^2 \cdot p \cdot q}{(N - 1) \cdot d^2 + z^2 \cdot p \cdot q}$$

N: population size

n: sample size

z: standard normal distribution table value for the desired reliability level

d: degree of accuracy

p: the proportion of individuals with the desired feature in the population (p + q = 1)

$$n = \frac{1200 \cdot 1,96^2 \cdot 0,5 \cdot 0,5}{(1200 - 1) \cdot 0,05^2 + 1,96^2 \cdot 0,5 \cdot 0,5} = \frac{1152,48}{3,9579931,7079} = 291,18 = 291$$

Due to the possibility of incorrect and incomplete answers to the questionnaires, more questionnaires were applied than the number calculated by the formula.

Because of the survey conducted with randomly selected 350 people from the population of the study, inconsistent and incomplete questionnaires were removed and the remaining 323 questionnaires were analysed.

RESULTS

The difference between service quality assessments of domestic and foreign tourists was determined by taking the means of service quality assessment and T-Test and ANOVA analyses were used to determine whether there is a significant difference between them in terms of their demographic characteristics. LSD analysis was used to determine which variables caused the differences. To examine whether the data set used in the study shows normal distribution or not, standard deviation has been tested with the values of skewness, kurtosis and it is shown in Table 1. The standard deviation of a normally distributed data set is expected to be close to 1, and the skewness and kurtosis values are expected to be between -1 and +1 (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2015, p. 207–208).

At the end of the analyse, the kurtosis and skewness values were between -1 and +1 and the standard deviation was close to 1. In addition, "interval scales" are the rating scales which subjective properties are measured. The distance is normally defined as one scale unit for adjacent levels. For example, "a coffee brand rated 3 in taste" is one unit away from "a coffee brand which rated 4". In this case, equal intervals exist between the level descriptors (Burns & Bush, 2014, 177-179). For these reasons, ANOVA analysis and T test were used from parametric tests in this study.

Table 1. Normality Distribution

Evaluation Elements of Service Quality	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Physical Specifications	,64732	-,469	,437
Reliability	,84651	-,861	,392
Willingness	,81691	-,885	,397
Assurance	,68267	,093	-,685
Empathy	,78533	-,731	-,161

Table 2. Reliability Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	,867	
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	3909,405
	df	276
	Sig.	,000

In order to measure the reliability of the scale used in the study, reliability analysis was performed and is shown in Table 2.

The reliability coefficient should be 0.70 and above (Cronbach Alpha (0.70) <x) (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2015, p. 317). The reliability coefficient of the scale was estimated as (Cronbach Alpha) 0,867 and was interpreted to have a valid reliability level. Table 3 shows the demographic distributions of domestic and foreign tourists.

Table 3. Demographic Distribution of Domestic and Foreign Tourists

Domestic Tourists			Foreign Tourists			
	f	%		f	%	
Male	91	52,9	Gender	Male	74	49
Female	81	47,1		Female	77	51
15-25	46	26,7	Age	15-25	28	18,5
26-35	68	39,5		26-35	78	51,7
36-45	33	19,2		36-45	34	22,5
46-55	16	9,3		46-55	7	4,6
56 and older	9	5,2		56 and older	4	2,6
Single	106	61,6	Marital Status	Single	94	62,3
Married	66	38,4		Married	57	37,7
0	111	64,5	Number of Children	0	95	62,9
1	24	14		1	25	16,6
2	17	9,9		2	22	14,6
3	15	8,7		3	8	5,3
4 or above	5	2,9		4 or above	1	0,7
Primary School	6	3,5	Education Level	Primary School	2	1,3
High School	54	31,4		High School	22	14,6
Undergraduate	90	52,3		Undergraduate	109	72,2
Postgraduate	22	12,8		Postgraduate	18	11,9
Worker	47	27,3	Occupation	Worker	42	27,8
Civil Servant	36	20,9		Civil Servant	42	27,8
Retired	12	7		Retired	5	3,3
Student	39	22,7		Student	35	23,2
University	8	4,7		University Teacher	7	4,6
Tradesman	12	7		Tradesman	13	8,6
Housewife	9	5,2		Housewife	4	2,6
Others	9	5,2		Others	3	2
Less than	52	30,2	Monthly Income	Less than 2000\$	36	23,8
2000-3000TL	59	34,3		2000-3000\$	48	31,8
3001-4000 TL	42	24,4		3001-4000\$	48	31,8
4001-5000TL	12	7		4001-5000\$	16	10,6
5001-6000TL	7	4,1		5001-6000\$	3	2
Total	172	100	Total	151	100	

The majority of the domestic tourists (52.9%) are male and the foreign tourists (51.9%) are female. The majority of domestic tourists (39.5%) and foreign tourists (51.7%) are between 26 and 35 years old. The majority of domestic tourists (61.6%) and foreign tourists (62.3%) are single. The majority of the domestic tourists (64.5%) and foreign tourists (62.9%) do not have children. Domestic (52.3%) and foreign tourists (72.2%) are

undergraduates. The majority of the domestic tourists are workers (27.3%), the majority of foreign tourists are workers (27.8%) and civil servants (27.8%). For the determination of monthly income; In the questionnaire forms TL and \$ options are used for domestic and foreign tourists, respectively. The majority of the domestic tourists have income between 2000-3000TL (34.3%) and the majority of foreign tourists have income between 2000-4000 \$ (63.6%). Table 4 shows the distribution of local and foreign tourists by region.

Table 4. Residence of Domestic and Foreign Tourists

Domestic Tourists			Residence	Foreign Tourists		
Regions	f	%		Continents	f	%
Central Anatolia	60	34,9	Residence	Europe	63	41,7
Aegean	34	19,8		Asia	55	36,4
Mediterranean	28	16,3		America	33	21,9
Marmara	18	10,5		Total	151	100
The Blacksea	11	6,4				
SoutheasternAnatolia	11	6,4				
Eastern Anatolia	10	5,7				
Total	172	100				

When Table 4 is examined; domestic tourists are mostly from Central Anatolia (34.9%), Aegean (19.8%) and Mediterranean (16.3%) regions, and foreign tourists are from Europe (41.7%) and Asia (36.4%).

Table 5. Evaluations and Means of Service Quality Elements of Domestic and Foreign Tourists

Evaluation Elements of Service Quality	Expressions	Means of Domestic Tourists	Means of Foreign Tourists
Physical Specifications	There are suitable horses for riders of different ages.	2,8488	3,1240
	There are suitable horses for riders of different riding levels.	2,8430	
	Instructors (trainers) and side walkers are presentable.	4,1802	
	Horses are sleek.	3,0349	
	Physical environment is satisfactory (restroom, protective materials for riders' safety etc.).	1,9186	
	Behaviors of other customers are suitable to the ambience.	3,9186	
Reliability	The number of horses is enough.	3,3968	3,1450
	Tour route is safe.	3,7199	
	The staff gives informative instructions to riders sufficiently.	3,9868	
	Insurance services for activities are enough.	1,4768	
Willingness	The number of instructors and side walker is enough.	3,5668	3,6328
	Waiting time is short for horse-riding trip.	2,6742	
	Attitudes and behaviors of employees are satisfactory.	4,1228	
	The staff is polite to the riders.	4,1674	

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Assurance	Horse equipment (saddle, bridle, rein, etc) is in good condition.	3	2,4507	2,6425	2,3765
	Horses are quiet.	3,2305		3,3311	
	First aid facilities are enough.	2,0123		2,1121	
	Business certifications and staffs certifications are in a place that everyone can see.	1,5602		1,4205	
Empathy	Price and service quality is consistent.	3,0165	3,2239	4,3728	3,6185
	The prices of other goods and services (food & beverage, souvenirs etc.) are satisfactory, too.	3,0491		4,0020	
	Registration desk, lobby and food & beverage services are enough.	3,4244		3,4238	
	Parking area is enough.	4,0116		4,2649	
	Transportation is easy.	4,2093		4,2914	
	There are disabled facilities.	1,6325		1,3563	

The expressions used in the evaluation of the service quality and the elements formed by these expressions and the average of these elements are shown in Table 5. When Table 5 is examined, both domestic and foreign tourists' views on physical properties are positive, domestic tourists are more positive about reliability, foreign tourists are more positive about their willingness, assurance in both groups is negative of foreign tourists were more positive in terms of empathy.

ANOVA analysis and T test were used to determine the differences between the evaluations, in terms of the demographic characteristics of the quality of service of domestic and foreign tourists. According to ANOVA analysis and T test results, no difference was found between domestic and foreign tourists in terms of gender, marital status, age and number of children. In terms of educational level of domestic tourists, there is no difference. However, there is a difference for foreign tourists.

Table 6. Differences Among Foreign Tourists' Assessment
of Service Quality Elements in terms of Their Educational Levels

Evaluation Elements of Service Quality	Education Levels		Mean Difference	Standard Error	df	F	Sig.
Willingness	Undergraduate	Primary School	-1,35436	,51076	3	8,88	,000
		High School	-,72936	,16730			
Empathy	Undergraduate	Primary School	-1,35474	,46259	3	7,276	,000
		High School	-,52898	,15152			
	Postgraduate	Primary School	-1,00926	,48320			
		High School	-,87446	,13091			

When Table 6 is examined, according to their educational status of foreign tourists there are differences about willingness and empathy. The average scores of primary and high school graduates for willingness is higher than the average scores of undergraduate. For empathy, the average scores of primary and high school graduates is higher than those of undergraduate and postgraduates. When Table 7 is examined, there is a difference between tradesmen and civil servants, students, university teachers and housewives for willingness. For empathy; differences were found between workers and civil servants, retirees, students, university teachers and tradesmen.

When Table 8 is examined, for assurance there are differences between workers and civil servants and university teachers; between students and civil servants and university

teachers; between housewives and civil servants and university teachers in the element of assurance. For empathy; there is a difference between civil servants and workers and students; between retirees and workers; between university teachers and workers, students and housewives; between tradesmen and workers.

Table 7. Differences among Domestic Tourists' Assessment of Service Quality Elements in terms of Their Occupations

Evaluation Elements of Service Quality	Occupation	Mean Difference	Standard Error	df	F	p	
Willingness	Tradesman	Civil Servant	-,54167	,27076	7	2,882	,007
		Student	-,75160	,26814			
		University Teacher	-,75000	,37075			
		Housewife	-,96528	,35818			
Empathy	Worker	Civil Servant	-,70144	,17648	7	4,566	,000
		Retired	-1,08570	,25771			
		Student	-,57501	,17259			
		University Teacher	-,65514	,30475			
		Tradesman	-,76625	,25771			

Table 8. Differences Among Foreign Tourists' Assessment of Service Quality Elements in terms of Their Occupations

Evaluation Elements of Service Quality	Occupation	Mean Difference	Standard Error	df	F	p	
Assurance	Worker	Civil Servant	,60000	,14563	7	4,737	,000
		University Teacher	,68095	,27245			
	Student	Civil Servant	,66762	,15274			
		University Teacher	,74857	,27631			
	Housewife	Civil Servant	,87619	,34920			
		University Teacher	,95714	,41829			
Empathy	Civil Servant	Worker	,64683	,13839			
		Student	,38651	,14515			
	Retired	Worker	,65079	,30003			
	University Teacher	Worker	,93651	,25891			
		Student	,67619	,26258			
		Housewife	,91071	,39750			
	Tradesman	Worker	,56105	,20128			

When Table 9 is examined, for assurance there is a difference between domestic tourists with an income of 4001-5000 TL and those with lower income. For empathy, there is a difference between domestic tourists with an income of 3001-4000TL and those with lower income. When Table 10 is examined, for assurance, there is a difference between foreign tourists with an income of \$ 2,000 and less and those with an income of 2000-3000 \$ and 3001-4000 \$. When Table 11 is examined, for assurance, there is a difference between tourists coming from the Black Sea and tourists from Mediterranean, Central Anatolia, Aegean and South Eastern Anatolia; and tourists coming from the Eastern Anatolia and tourists from Mediterranean. For empathy, there is a difference between the tourists coming from Mediterranean and tourists from Marmara and Black Sea and between the tourists coming from Eastern Anatolia and the tourists from Mediterranean, Central Anatolia, Aegean and Southeast Anatolia. When Table 12 is examined, for assurance and empathy, there is a difference between tourists coming from America and tourists from Europe and Asia.

Table 9. Differences among Domestic Tourists' Assessment of Service Quality Elements in terms of Their Monthly Income

Evaluation Elements of Service Quality	Monthly Income		Mean Difference	Standard Error	df	F	p
Assurance	4001-5000 TL	Less than 2000TL	-,30641	,13146	4	2,828	,026
		2000-3000TL	-,27740	,12793			
		3001-4000TL	-,53333	,20742			
Empathy	3001-4000 TL	Less than 2000TL	-,47466	,17260	4	3,187	,015
		2000-3000TL	-,55724	,16796			

Table 10. Differences among Foreign Tourists' Assessment of Service Quality Elements in terms of Their Monthly Income

Evaluation Elements of Service Quality	Monthly Income		Mean Difference	Standard Error	df	F	p
Assurance	Less than 2000\$	2000-3000\$,47778	,15314	4	4,157	,003
		3001-4000\$,56111	,15314			

Table 11. Differences among Domestic Tourists' Assessment of Service Quality Elements in terms of Their Residence

Evaluation Elements of Service Quality	Residence		Mean Difference	Standard Error	df	Sig	F
Assurance	The Blacksea	Mediterranean	,69740	,22519	6	2,297	,037
		Central Anatolia	,46788	,20757			
		Aegean	,50749	,21952			
		Southeastern Anatolia	,63636	,26985			
	East Anatolia	Mediterranean	,58286	,23314			
Empathy	Mediterranean	Marmara Region	,55026	,25024	6	2,722	,015
		Black Sea	,60498	,29475			
	East Anatolia	Mediterranean	,97619	,30515			
		Central Anatolia	,85556	,28292			
		Aegean	,77941	,29798			
		Southeastern Anatolia	,81061	,36192			

Table 12. Differences among Foreign Tourists' Assessment of Service Quality Elements in terms of Their Residence

Evaluation Elements of Service Quality	Residence		Mean Difference	Standard Error	df	F	Sig.
Assurance	America	Europe	,40317	,15242	2	3,966	,021
		Asian	,38061	,15619			
Empathy	America	Europe	,52886	,14176			
		Asian	,46566	,14526			

CONCLUSION

The study examined whether or not domestic and foreign tourists visiting the enterprises performing equestrian trekking activities are sufficiently satisfied with the service quality of these enterprises. In addition, based on the results of the research, it was aimed to make suggestions about what can be done to ensure that the domestic and foreign tourists visiting the enterprises that carry out equestrian trekking activities in Nevşehir will be more satisfied with the quality of the services offered by these enterprises. The scope of

the study was composed of 323 domestic and foreign tourists visiting the enterprises engaged in equestrian trekking in Nevşehir. Means scores were compared to determine whether there is any difference between domestic and foreign tourists in the evaluation of the service quality of the enterprises where equestrian trekking activities are performed. T test and ANOVA analysis were used to determine whether there is any difference between the evaluations of the service quality elements in terms of demographic characteristics of domestic and foreign tourists. LSD analysis was used to determine which variables caused differences. When the differences between “service quality assessments of domestic and foreign tourists are examined;

- It was observed that the averages of domestic and foreign tourists were very close to each other in terms of physical properties. Considering the expressions of physical features, because expressions of characteristics do not vary from person to person, it is thought that there is no difference between domestic and foreign tourists. The average value above 3 shows that tourists find businesses satisfactory in terms of physical properties. Therefore, the continuation of such practices would be beneficial for customer satisfaction.

- It has been determined that the evaluations of the domestic tourists in terms of reliability are in a positive way while the evaluations of the foreign tourists are in a negative way. It is seen that the average of the foreign tourists' expressions is very low, especially in terms of insurance and informative instructions. Regarding informative instructions, foreign language knowledge of employees is thought to be insufficient. Therefore, it is clear that care should be taken to ensure that insurance is provided for services and that foreign language knowledge of employees should be increased.

- The evaluations of domestic and foreign tourists about willingness are quite high, however, it was observed that the evaluations of foreign tourists were more positive. The reason for this difference is thought to be more care for foreign tourists by enterprises. Although the positive situation of the enterprises continues, it is thought that providing equal and high quality service without making any distinction between domestic and foreign tourists will give more results that are positive.

- It was observed that the general evaluations of the two groups about assurance are negative. However, when the averages of the statements are examined, it is found that the average of horse equipment materials and horses being quiet in nature were very high and the averages of the first aid and operating certificates were quite low. These statements are also caused by the decrease in the general average. Therefore, it is considered that the establishment of the enterprises' documents at the points that everyone can see and increasing the facilities for first aid will bring positive results in the service quality evaluations.

- In terms of empathy, the evaluations of domestic and foreign tourists were positive but the evaluations of foreign tourists were found to be more positive. When the expressions of empathy are examined, it is seen that the averages of the two expressions related to pricing are significantly different between the domestic and foreign tourists. Therefore, this difference is thought to be caused by the gap in monthly income. Although it is not possible to reduce prices according to domestic tourists, it may be beneficial to apply campaign prices in low season as in accommodation facilities. The averages of facilities for disabled people were very low in two tourist groups. In face-to-face interviews with enterprises, it is learned that there were no facilities in many enterprises. These arrangements are important in terms of both ethics and business success.

ANOVA analysis and T-test were conducted in order to determine the differences between the evaluations of the domestic and foreign tourists according to their

demographic characteristics. The level of education affects people's knowledge of their environment and the outside world, expectations and issues of interest (Rızaoğlu, 2003, p. 139). While there was no difference between the domestic tourists in the study about education, there was a difference in willingness and empathy among foreign tourists. The average of primary and high school graduates about willingness is higher than the average of undergraduates; For empathy, it was determined that the average of primary and high school graduates was higher than those of undergraduates and postgraduates. This difference may stem from the fact that people's expectations increased as their education levels increased. Therefore, it may be possible to say that their evaluations are more negative than tourists with low education level.

In order to change this situation, the service quality should be increased. In the analysis made on domestic tourists in relation to the occupation; for willingness, there was a difference between tradesmen and civil servants, students, university teachers and housewives; for empathy, there was a difference between workers and civil servants, retirees, students, university teachers and tradesmen. In the analysis made on foreign tourists, for assurance, the difference was seen between workers and civil servants and university teachers. Between students and civil servants and university teachers, between housewives and civil servants and university teachers. For empathy, it was seen that there was a difference between workers and students, between university teachers and workers, between university teachers and workers and students and housewives, and between tradesmen and workers. Occupations, life styles, types of products and services they will buy (Meydan Uygur, 2007, p. 174; Rızaoğlu, 2003, p. 139) affect the quality assessment of the services purchased. In the analysis on monthly income of domestic tourists; it is determined that there is a difference between tourists who have an income of 4001-5000TL and others with the lower income for assurance. For empathy, there was a difference between those with income of 3001-4000TL and those with lower income. For assurance of foreign tourists, there is a difference between tourists who have an income of less than \$ 2000 and those with an income of both \$2001 -3000 and \$3001 -4000.

It is normal for consumers with different levels of income to have different service quality expectations and assessments. It is natural that high-income tourists have higher expectations when considering the possibility of more equestrian trekking activities compared to low-income tourists. In this context, it is possible to say that providing services according to income levels and service quality expectations of the incoming tourists will increase their satisfaction levels.

The country or region of residence affects the attitudes and behaviours of consumers (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2004, p. 143). When the differences between the domestic tourists in terms of service quality are examined according to their residence; for assurance, the differences are observed between tourists coming from the Black Sea and those coming from the Mediterranean, Central Anatolia, the Aegean and Southeastern between tourists from the Eastern Anatolia and those coming from the Mediterranean. For empathy, the differences are between tourists coming from the Mediterranean Sea and those coming from Marmara and Black Sea; between the tourists coming from Eastern Anatolia and those from Mediterranean, Central Anatolia, Aegean and Southeast Anatolia. Cultural differences among people living in different regions of Turkey, differences in ways of life, differences about climate and eating habits are effective in their evaluations of service quality.

For example, people living in Black Sea Region are fast, short-tempered, overhasty and they are accustomed to rain, mud and horse-riding. However, it is difficult to observe the same habits in Aegean, Mediterranean, Central Anatolia and Eastern people.

There are also serious differences between the Eastern people and the Mediterranean people. These differences can also be seen in the assessment of service quality. For foreign tourists; It was determined that there is a difference between tourists coming from America and tourists from Europe and Asia about assurance and empathy. Differences among continents are normal and reasonable in that there are differences among regions within a country. For this reason, it is clear that the determination of the characteristics and expectations of the tourists in terms of their residence is important for customer satisfaction and loyalty. The use of the findings, comments and suggestions of the study in the enterprises performing equestrian trekking activities may enable that the visitors to be more satisfied with the services provided and as a result, the satisfaction level and the number of devoted customers will increase. Education and training of employees are essential in equestrian tourism to ensure quality and customer satisfaction, as well as the safety of horses and guests (Sigurðardóttir & Helgadóttir, 2015a). Satisfaction questionnaires posted online by Cavaliers du Monde tour operator suggest that clients consider the main criteria that determine the success of a trip are 'the personality and the qualifications of the guide'. Of course, the beauty of the landscape and local cultural and historical heritage are also key factors, but no more so than the quality of the animals, the equipment and the support provided (Pickel-Chevalier, 2015, p.126-127). Therefore, it is believed that the increase in the profitability of the enterprises will increase the economy and the tax revenues of the state will be affected positively by the situation. Moreover, thanks to these activities with high service quality, it will be possible to contribute to both local and international promotion.

In addition, it is known that one of the activities that cause the least harm to nature is the equestrian trekking among the touristic activities in Nevşehir (hot air balloon tours, ATV tours, regional tours with buses). For this reason, it is believed that the increase in service quality of the enterprises carrying out equestrian trekking will benefit from both economic and ecological aspects.

It is thought that this study will guide the future studies.

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