# Service Quality and its Impact on Tourist Satisfaction

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**Abstract**
This study aims to assess tourists' perceptions towards quality tourism services provided at Petra historical site, and to measure tourist satisfaction by examining the impact of quality tourism product on overall tourist satisfaction. In this study, four hypotheses were developed are proposed a study model. The empirical data were collected from tourists via a survey that yielded 180 usable questionnaires, these data were analysed using a series of multiple regressions to determine the relationship between service quality and tourist satisfaction. The findings confirmed that service quality directly impacted tourist satisfaction throughout destination facilities, destination accessibility and destination attraction. As a result, this study argued that there is a significant impact of the service quality on tourist satisfaction, and therefore service quality plays an important role in tourism by increasing the level of tourist satisfaction. The results in this study supported the evidence that there are positive impacts of components of tourism product on tourist satisfaction. This study provided some theoretical and managerial implications based on the findings to academicians and tourism sector, the researcher presented recommendations for further studies and he discussed the main limitations in this study.
**Keywords**: *Service Quality; Tourist Satisfaction; Tourism; Petra and Jordan.*

## Introduction

Tourism is one of the top and fastest growing sectors in the world; it plays a very important role in the economy and stimulated the growth of other economy (Osman and Sentosa, 2013). The Travel and Tourism industry has outperformed the global economy in 2012, it growing faster than manufacturing, retail, financial services and communications. The industry has grown its total contribution to GDP by 3% and increased the number of jobs by five million to 260 million, and therefore one in 11 of all jobs in the world are now supported by Travel and Tourism. More than 10% of all new jobs created in 2012 were from the industry. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council's economic research, in 2012, Travel and Tourism's total economic contribution was US$6.6 trillion in GDP. This contribution represents 9% of total GDP (WTTC, 2013).

In Jordan, tourism plays an important role in the national economy and contributes highly to the country's GDP compared with the other sectors. Tourism's contribution to the Jordanian economy was estimated to be US$3.4 billion and accounts for approximately 12.4 per cent of the country's GDP in 2010. It provides the Jordanian economy with hard currency and creates new jobs. The tourism sector is a promising sector in Jordan due to

Jordan being considered as an attractive country for tourists in the world for reasons such as the diversity of nature, the deep-rooted cultural heritage, and the country's political stability. In addition, Petra became one of the "Seven Wonders of the World" in 2007, and that attracts more tourists from around the world. Jordan had been visited by more than 8.25 million tourists in 2010 which an increase of 16.5% from 2009 which was about 7.08 million tourists. The tourism statistics between 2006 and 2010 indicate that the tourism sector in Jordan is growing rapidly. Hence, the tourism income in 2010 has increased by 65% from 2006 which was about US$2.06 billion (Jordanian Ministry of Tourism, 2013). Jordan is a destination with many iconic tourist attractions, such as Petra, Wadi Rum, Jerash, and the Dead Sea. Tourism is of vital importance to the national economy of Jordan. It is the Kingdom's largest export sector, its second largest private sector employer, and it's second highest producer of foreign exchange (Othman, 2010).

Service quality is considered as a standard used to assess the effectiveness of a particular leisure service agency, including the tourism service sector (Godbey, 1997), and therefore the quality of service involved with tourism plays an important role in the process of delivery (Wyllie, 2000). Further, the quality of service influenced customers' image that had an effect on the process from expected quality to perceived quality (Prabaharan et al., 2008). Customer satisfaction can also be defined as satisfaction based on an outcome or a process (Vavra, 1997).Tourism is arguably one of the largest self-initiated commercial interventions to create happiness on the entire planet (Pearce, 2007). Happiness is directly related to satisfaction, and therefore overall happiness is highly linked to satisfaction in leisure travel sector (Glatzer, 2000). The majority of tourists have experiences with destinations, and their perceptions are influenced by comparisons among facilities, attractions, and service standards (Laws, 1995). The study will present and test three main dimensions of factors affecting tourist satisfaction, and they are: destination facilities, destination accessibility and destination attraction. The purpose of this paper is to measure the quality of tourism services and its impact on tourist satisfaction in Petra.

**Literature review**

❖ *Service Quality*

Service quality is defined as what the customer gets out and is willing to pay for" rather than "what the supplier puts in (Ducker, 1991). In some earlier studies, service quality has been defined to the extent where the service fulfils the needs or expectation of the customers (Lewis and Mitchell, 1990; Dotchin and Oakland, 1994). While Zeithaml et al. (1996) has conceptualized service quality as the overall impression of customers towards the service weakness or supremacy. Therefore service quality frequently has been conceptualized as the difference between the perceived services expected performance and perceived service actual performance (Bloemer et al., 1999; Kara et al., 2005).

Parasuraman et al. (1988) introduced the SERVQUAL model to measure service quality including 22 items in five dimensions: reliability, tangible, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. These dimensions have specific service characteristic link to the expectation of customers. The SERVQUAL scale was developed in the marketing

context and this was supported by the Marketing Science Institute (Parasuraman et al., 1986). Even though this model as an instrument has been used in various studies in across industries, the SERVQUAL has received many criticisms from other scholars (e.g., Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Brown et al., 1993). However, there are many researchers opposed the use of SERVQUAL to measure service quality due to the industry characteristics differences. Other previous researches confirmed that SERVQUAL instrument is applicable in tourism industry (Fick and Ritchie, 1991; Yuan et al., 2005; Shaikh and Khan, 2011).

Medlik and Middleton (1973) noted that 'the tourist product is to be considered as an amalgam of three main components of attractions, facilities at the destination and accessibility of the destination'. In other words, the tourist product is 'not as airline seat or a hotel bed, or relaxing on a sunny beach… but rather an amalgam of many components, or a package'. While, Middleton and Clarke (2001) indicated that there are five main components in the overall product, and they are: destination attractions and environment, destination facilities and services, accessibility of the destination, images of the destination, and Price to the consumer.

### 1. Destination attractions and environment

These are the component elements within the destination that largely determine tourists' choice and influence their motivations to visit that destination. They include: *Natural attractions*: landscape, seascape, beaches, climate, flora and fauna and other geographical features of the destination and its natural resources. *Built attractions*: buildings and tourism infrastructure including historic and modern architecture; monuments; promenades, parks and gardens, convention centres, marinas, ski slopes, industrial archaeology, managed visitor attractions generally, golf courses, speciality shops and themed retail area. *Cultural attractions*: history and folklore, religion and art, theatre, music, dance and other entertainment, and museums. *Social attractions*: way of life and customs of resident or host population, language and opportunities for social encounters.

### 2. Destination facilities and services

These are the component elements located in the destination, which make it possible for visitors to stay and to enjoy in that destination. They include: *Accommodation unit*: hotels, holiday villages, apartments, villas, campsites, caravan parks, hostels, condominiums, farms, guesthouses. *Restaurants, bars and café's*: ranging from fast-food through to luxury restaurants. *Transport at the destination*: taxis, coaches, car rental, cycle hire. *Sports/interest activity*: ski schools, sailing schools, golf clubs and spectator stadiums; centres for pursuit of arts and crafts and nature studies. *Other facilities*: language schools, health clubs. Retail outlets: shops, travel agents, souvenirs, camping supplies. *Other services*: information services, equipment rental, tourism police.

### 3. Accessibility of the destination

These are the component elements including private and public transport aspects of the product that determine the cost, speed and convenience with which a traveller may leave his place of residence and reach a chosen destination. They include: *Infrastructure*: of roads, car parking, airports, railways, seaports, inland waterways and marinas.

*Equipment*: size, speed and range of public transport vehicles. *Operational factors*: routes operated, frequency of services, prices charged and road tolls levied. *Government regulations*: the range of regulatory controls over transport operations (Middleton and Hawkins, 1998).

A study conducted by Karim and Geng-Qing Chi (2010), they confirmed that destinations' food image influenced travellers' visit intention positively. While Awaritefe (2004) found that the most prominent motivations for tourism destinations choice in a third world country are: self-actualization in an appreciative, educational or cultural context and leisure/recreational pursuits. Attractiveness of destination, quality services, facilities/amenities, favourable location and accessibility of centres also emerged as important considerations in tourist destination choice.

### 4. Images of the destination

The destination image is a relatively recent addition to the field of tourism research (Abu Ali and Howaidee, 2012). The image of tourist destinations is an element of major importance (Hunt, 1975; Chon, 1991; Echtner and Ritchie, 1991; Gartner, 1996; Buhalis, 2000; Laws et al., 2002; Tasci and Gartner, 2007), ultimately influencing the final choice or behavioural intention (Chen and Tsai, 2007). However, pioneering studies on the image of tourist destinations, dating from the 1970s and also the 1980s present some theoretical and conceptual limitations (Fakeye and Crompton, 1991; Echtner and Richie, 1993; Gartner, 1993; Gallarza et al., 2002). However, several studies have illustrated that destination images do, indeed, influence tourist behaviour (Hunt, 1975; Pearce, 1982).

Lawson and Baud Bovy (1977) define the concept of destination image as the expression of all objective knowledge, prejudices, imagination and emotional thoughts of an individual or group about a particular location. Other authors define the image as the sum of all beliefs, ideas and impressions that people associate with a destination (Crompton, 1979). Bigné et al. (2001) define destination image as the subjective interpretation of reality by the tourist. Therefore, the image tourists have of a destination is largely subjective because it is based on the perceptions each tourist has of all of the destinations they have been to or have heard of (San Martín and Rodriguez, 2008). In other words, the destination image is evaluated by the attributes of its resources and attractions (Stabler, 1995) which motivate tourists to visit that destination (Alhemoud and Armstrong, 1996, Schneider and Sönmez, 1999; Gallarza et al., 2002; Beerli and Martín, 2004).

Those destinations with strong, positive images are more likely to be considered and chosen in the travel decision process (Goodrich, 1978; Woodside and Lysonski, 1989). As a result, destination image has an important role for travel decisions (Schmoll, 1977; Moutinho, 1984; Woodside and Lysonski, 1989).

### 5. *Price to the consumer*

The tourism product is made up of all the tourism destination specific and non-specific goods and services that are demanded during one day of holiday, its quantity is measured through the number of overnight stays and its value is the daily price of the holiday. The demand function is known with certainty, choosing the daily price is equivalent to

choosing tourism expenditure. The market value of the holiday is determined by its price. Thus, price coordination by means of a destination management and coordination provided by a tour operator supplying an all-inclusive holiday. The coordination of prices provided by the destination management allows setting a more efficient daily price for the tourism product, thus leading to an increase in overall tourism expenditure (Andergassen et al, 2013).

❖ *Customer Satisfaction*

Customer satisfaction is defined as satisfaction based on an outcome that characterizes satisfaction as the end-state resulting from the experience of consumption, or a process that emphasizing the perceptual, evaluative and psychological processes contributing to customer satisfaction (Varvara, 1997). This definition, assessment of satisfaction is made during the service delivery process. Customer satisfaction can also be defined as feeling of the post utilization that the consumers experience from their purchase (Westbrook and Oliver, 1991; Um et al., 2006). It is the feeling of happiness or unhappiness as a result of comparing the perceived performance of services or products with the expected performance. If the perceived performance does not meet the expected performance, then the customer will feel disappointed or dissatisfied (Kotler, 2008). A consumer is deemed to be satisfied upon the experience weighted sum total produce a feeling of enjoyment when compared with the expectation (Choi and Chu, 2001).

In tourism studies, customer satisfaction is the visitor's state of emotion after they experiencing their tour (Baker and Crompton, 2000; Sanchez et al., 2006). Customer satisfaction is one the most areas being researched in many tourism studies due to its importance in determining the success and the continued existence of the tourism business (Gursoy et al., 2007). Destination holiday's customer satisfaction is the extent of overall enjoyment that the tourists feel, the result that the tour experience able to fulfil the tourists' desires, expectation, needs and wants from the tour (Chen and Tsai, 2007).

❖ *Relationship between Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction*

Several studies have investigated the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction. For example, Gounaris et al. (2003) revealed that service quality has significant impact and positive relationship with customer satisfaction in Greek retailing industry. A study conducted by Jay and Hsin (2007), which aimed to understand the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction in various hotels in Murtinos. The study found that the image of the hotel affected by the existence of service and customer satisfaction that support for the favourite image created by the hotel through the improvement of service quality and customer satisfaction.

Jamal and Anatassiadou (2007) confirmed that service quality is positively related to bank's customer satisfaction in Greece. Another study was conducted by Hossain and Leo (2008), they revealed that service quality is a strong antecedent and significantly related to customer satisfaction in banking industry in Qatar. Similarly, Chen and Lee (2008) confirmed that service quality has a positive influence with customer satisfaction in non vessel owners and shippers in Taiwan. Akbar and Parvez (2009) revealed that service quality has strong influence and significantly and positively related to customer

satisfaction in private telecommunication company operating in Bangladesh. Munusamy et al., (2010) found that four elements of service quality, including assurance, tangibles, empathy and responsiveness have positive relationship with customer satisfaction, while one element 'reliability' has negative relationship with customer satisfaction in banking industry in Malaysia. While in the tourism industry, Osman and Sentosa (2013) studied the impact of service quality on customer satisfaction in Malaysian rural tourism; they found that service quality has significant impact and positive relationship with customer satisfaction.

In the Jordanian tourism industry, Abu Ali and Howaidee (2012) conducted a study to investigate the causal relationships among the components of tourism product and overall tourist satisfaction in Jerash, Jordan. The study supported that destination facilities and accessibility and attraction directly influenced tourist satisfaction, it was also confirmed that there is a significant impact of the service quality on tourist satisfaction Jerash as one of the major tourism destinations in Jordan. While Abu Alroub et al. (2012) investigated the impact of service quality on customer satisfaction in the tourist restaurants in Amman, Jordan. Their study clarified that there is a significant relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction in tourist restaurants.

The review of the literature indicated that the number of empirical studies in tourism is very limited. However, to date, there has been no serious effort to critically examine the impact of service quality on tourist satisfaction in Petra. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the quality of overall tourism product and its impacts on tourist satisfaction in Petra.

In this study, three main destination dimensions have been selected as factors that could affect tourist satisfaction as shown in Figure 1. In view of that this study hypothesizes:

*H1: There is a positive relationship between service quality and tourist satisfaction.*

*H1a: There is a positive relationship between the destination facilities (restaurant, souvenir, tour guide) and tourist satisfaction.*

*H1b: There is a positive relationship between the destination accessibility (maps, parking, toilet) and tourist satisfaction.*

*H1c: There is a positive relationship between the destination attractions (museum) and tourist satisfaction.*

Figure 1: Proposed Model and Hypothesis
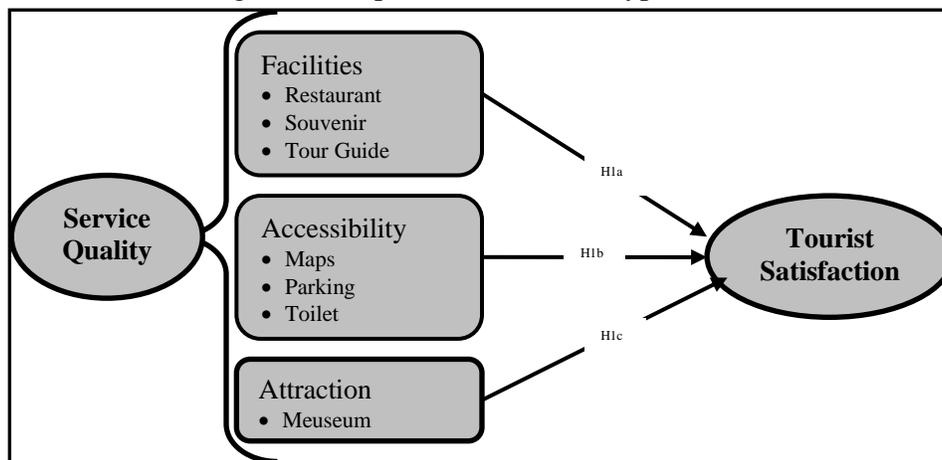
**Method**

The study's questionnaire consisted of two parts, and they are: tourist satisfaction, and service quality including, destination attractions; destination facilities; and accessibility of the destination. Using 5-point Likert-type scale, the questionnaire was developed based on employed validated scales from the existing literature, which consists of 34 items as the following:

1. Destination facilities were measured with 21 items.
2. Destination accessibility was measured with 7 items.
3. Destination attractions were measured with 2 items.
4. Tourist satisfaction was measured with 4 items

A total number of 250 questionnaires were distributed to tourists at Petra; the data were collected at tourist centre in Petra from October 2012 until January 2013. This study yielded 180 usable questionnaires which were processed and analysed by using the statistical software package of SPSS-18 to prove the proposed model.

**Findings**

An internal consistency test was conducted in regard to the whole data of participants for each variable in the study's questionnaire.

Table 1: Internal Consistency of Study's Questionnaire

| Variable | No. of Items | Cronbach's Alpha |
|---|---|---|
| Destination facilities | 21 | .949 |
| Destination accessibility | 7 | .881 |
| Destination attractions | 2 | .706 |
| Tourist satisfaction | 4 | .781 |
| The whole questionnaire | 34 | .962 |

The results indicated that a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was $\alpha = .949$ for destination facilities, $\alpha = .881$ for destination accessibility, $\alpha = .706$ for destination attractions, and $\alpha = .781$ for tourist satisfaction as shown in Table 1. The scales in instrument had an acceptable internal consistency because Cronbach's Alpha scores were above the recommended 0.6 level (De Vellis, 1991). Therefore, the high Cronbach's Alpha coefficient in this study represents a high consistency and reliability among statements in questionnaire.

A total number of tourists participated in this study was 180 as shown in Table 2. Most tourists (52.2%) were females. The majority of tourists (54.4%) age between 31-50 years. But most of tourists (45%) were Bachelor degree holders. Most tourists (51.1%) were people who worked in private sector. Monthly income for the most of tourist (52.3%) was more than $1001. American tourists (30%) were the most people visiting Petra, followed by European tourists (26.1%), while African people (4.4%) were the less.

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Participated Tourists

| Variable | Category | Frequency | Percentage % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 79 | 49.9% |
| | Female | 94 | 52.2% |
| | Unknown | 7 | 3.9% |
| Age | 20-30 years | 46 | 25.6% |
| | 31-40 years | 49 | 27.2% |
| | 41-50 years | 49 | 27.2% |
| | 51 years and above | 28 | 15.6% |
| | Unknown | 8 | 4.4% |
| Education | High school | 15 | 8.3% |
| | Diploma | 42 | 23.3% |
| | Bachelor | 81 | 45% |
| | High education | 38 | 21.1% |
| | Unknown | 4 | 2.2% |
| Job | Public sector | 48 | 26.7% |
| | Privet sector | 92 | 51.1% |
| | Non | 28 | 15.6% |
| | Unknown | 12 | 6.7% |
| Monthly Income | Under $ 500 | 24 | 13.3% |
| | $501-$1000 | 49 | 27.2% |
| | $1001 - $ 1500 | 39 | 21.2% |
| | $ 1501 and above | 55 | 30.6% |
| | Unknown | 13 | 7.2% |
| Nationality | African | 8 | 4.4% |
| | American | 54 | 30% |
| | Arabian | 17 | 9.4% |
| | Australian | 16 | 8.9% |
| | Asian | 28 | 15.6% |
| | European | 47 | 26.1% |
| | Unknown | 10 | 5.6% |

The values of means and standard deviations for each variable in the study's questionnaire are presented in Table 3. The tourism facilities was the highest mean (3.68) indicating its importance from the point of view of the sample individuals while the Accessibility was the least mean (3.46) indicating less importance upon the sample individuals. The tourist satisfaction (as dependent variable) was expressed by a mean of (3.66) and is considered as a very good satisfaction.

Table 3: Means and Standard Deviations for the Study' Variables

| Service Quality | Mean | SD | Order |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Destination Facilities  (restaurant, souvenir and tour guide) | 3.68 | .89 | 1 |
| 2. Destination Attraction (museum) | 3.57 | 1.01 | 2 |
| 3. Destination Accessibility (maps, parking and toilet) | 3.46 | .85 | 3 |
| **Dependent Variable** | **Mean** | **SD** | |
| Tourist Satisfaction | 3.66 | .86 | |

The current study tested the main hypothesis and its sub-hypotheses by using a linear regression analysis. The results of correlation analysis revealed that there were very high significant correlations between all variables of this study, since the significant level was (P<.05). Hence, a linear regression model was necessary to conduct in order to indicate the impact of service quality on tourist satisfaction as dependent variable.

   *H1a: There is a positive relationship between the destination facilities (restaurant, souvenir, tour guide) and tourist satisfaction.*

Destination facilities were proposed to have a positive relationship with tourist satisfaction in this study. This sub-hypothesis was tested by using a liner regression analysis as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Linear Regression for Impact of Destination Facilities on Tourist Satisfaction

| Independent Variable | Dependent Variable: Tourist Satisfaction | | | | | | Hypothesis decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | R | R² | F | β | t | Sig. | |
| Destination Facilities | .739 | .546 | 206.499 | .739 | 14.37** | .000 | Accept |

Table 4 shows that destination facilities (restaurant, souvenir and tour guide) are a significant predicator of tourist satisfaction. The regression results indicated that destination facilities had a positive relationship with tourist satisfaction (β =.739, P=.000). More specifically, destination facilities explain (R²) 54.6% of the variance in tourist satisfaction, this means destination facilities are a moderate predictor in tourist satisfaction. Consequently, the overall statistical results confirmed that relationship, and therefore hypothesis 1a is accepted.

 H1b: There is a positive relationship between the destination accessibility (maps, parking, toilet) and tourist satisfaction.

In this study, destination accessibility was proposed to have a positive relationship with tourist satisfaction. A liner regression analysis was conducted to test this sub-hypothesis, and the results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Linear Regression for Impact of Destination Accessibility on Tourist Satisfaction

| Independent Variable | Dependent Variable: Tourist Satisfaction | | | | | | Hypothesis decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | R | R² | F | β | t | Sig. | |
| Destination Accessibility | .755 | .57 | 227.855 | .755 | 15.09** | .000 | Accept |

The regression results showed that destination accessibility(maps, parking, toilet) is a good significant predicator of tourist satisfaction as shown in Table 5, destination accessibility is positively related to tourist satisfaction (β = .755, P=.000). More specifically, destination accessibility explains (R²) 57 % of the variance in tourist satisfaction. However, the overall statistical results indicated that destination accessibility positively influenced tourist satisfaction. Accordingly, hypothesis 1b is accepted.

 H1c: There is a positive relationship between the destination attractions (museum) and tourist satisfaction.

In this study, destination attractions were proposed to have a positive relationship with tourist satisfaction. This sub-hypothesis was tested by a liner regression analysis, and the results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Linear Regression for Impact of Destination Attraction on Tourist Satisfaction

| Independent Variable | Dependent Variable: Tourist Satisfaction | | | | | | Hypothesis decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | R | R² | F | β | t | Sig. | |
| Destination Attraction | .561 | .314 | 73.844 | .561 | 8.593** | .000 | Accept |

As Table 6 shows, destination attractions (museum) are moderately positively related to tourist satisfaction (β =.561, P=.000). The regression results showed that destination attractions is a significant predicator of tourist satisfaction, more specifically, destination attractions explain (R²) 31.4% of the variance in tourist satisfaction. However, the overall

statistical results indicated that destination attractions positively impacted tourist satisfaction. Thus, hypothesis 1c is accepted

*H1: There is a positive relationship between service quality and tourist satisfaction.*

The above results indicated that all sub-hypotheses of hypothesis 1 are accepted and supported in this study. Consequently, hypothesis 1 was proposed to be accepted in this study. This hypothesis was tested by a liner regression analysis as shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Linear Regression for Impact of Service Quality on Tourist Satisfaction

| Independent Variable | Dependent Variable: Tourist Satisfaction | | | | | | Hypothesis decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | R | R² | F | β | t | Sig. | |
| Service Quality | .780 | .608 | 266.712 | .780 | 16.331** | .000 | Accept |

The regression results showed that service quality (destination facilities, destination accessibility, destination attraction) is a good significant predicator of tourist satisfaction as shown in Table 7, service quality is positively related to tourist satisfaction ($\beta = .78$, P=.000). More specifically, service quality explains ($R^2$) 60.8 % of the variance in tourist satisfaction. However, the overall statistical results indicated that service quality positively influenced tourist satisfaction. As a result, hypothesis 1 (study hypothesis) is accepted which confirmed the positive relationship between service quality and tourist satisfaction.

The study findings concluded that service quality (destination facilities, destination accessibility, destination attractions) has great effect on overall tourist satisfaction. This study confirmed that service quality has a positive relationship with tourist satisfaction. These results suggest that tourist satisfaction can be enhanced by raising the level of service quality throughout destination facilities, destination accessibility and destination attractions. It was also found that tourists in Petra are moderately satisfied with the level of tourism services. Similarly, this study confirmed the results of Abu Ali and Howaidee (2012), who found that destination facilities and accessibility and attraction have significant positive impacts on tourist satisfaction in Jerash as one of the major tourism destinations in Jordan. The current study highlights the importance of service quality and its impact on tourist satisfaction in Petra.

## CONCLUSION

The study's results are considered to be valuable to destination management, tourism organisations and business in Petra in evaluating the level of their current services. Therefore, this study suggests that the quality of tourism services has a positive impact on the level of tourist satisfaction by enhancing destination facilitates, destination accessibility and destination attractions. For further research, another study can be conducted among other tourist groups in other destinations in order to confirm the study's survey.

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