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## Research Article

### A Gap Analysis of Tourists' Expectations and Satisfaction Using the SERVQUAL Model on a Farm Tourism in Bulacan, Philippines

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#### ABSTRACT

The main purpose of the study is to analyze the gap of tourists' expectations and satisfaction on a Farm Tourism in Bulacan using the five dimensions of SERVQUAL. The 219 respondents were tourists of the farm and they were conveniently selected. Data were further subjected to ANOVA and T – test analysis via SPSS. Findings revealed that the majority of the respondents belong to the Gen Z individuals. With a gap of 0.15, it was determined that the farm tourism site provides the appropriate level of quality service in terms of tangibility, responsiveness, reliability, assurance, and empathy. The result shows that farm tourism manages to exceed the set expectation level of the tourist in their service quality based on gap from their satisfaction level. Moreover, the tourist gap was significantly equal for both male and female respondents. The total satisfaction is significantly higher compared to their total expectation with a mean difference of 0.16 in favor of the satisfaction level. The null hypothesis was rejected and concluded the gap between tourist' expectation and satisfaction on the farm tourism service quality when they are grouped according to profile are significantly equal.

**Keywords:** *Farm Tourism, Tourism, Tourist Expectation, Tourist Satisfaction, Service Quality, SERVQUAL*

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#### Introduction

"Tourism is a dynamic and competitive industry that requires adapting to changing needs and desires as the customers' satisfaction, safety and enjoyment are the main focus of the tourism business." (Sofronov, 2018). Tourist products can be synonymous to the total travel experience including the tangible and

intangible components of the trip (Koutoulas, 2015).

According to Sharafuddin, several forms of tourism are identified like the Adventure Tourism, Eco-tourism, Medical Tourism, Cultural tourism, Wellness tourism, Leisure Tourism, Business Tourism, Cruise Tourism, Sports

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Tourism, and Educational Tourism (Sharafudin, 2015). In addition, Risteski claimed that public space travel—better known as space tourism - will be the tourism of the future (Risteski & Dimoska, 2010). Similarly, Chande and Ketan identified Agro-tourism as a farm-based business that is the new face of tourism. This emerging sector, the farm or agritourism industry, caught the interests of the Filipino businessmen (Chande, 2019).

However, several issues arise to the expectation versus the satisfaction level offered by farm tourism destinations. Malkanthi and Routray described that certain attributes emerged with high indifference levels, followed by satisfaction level and minimally dissatisfaction level (Malkanthi & Routray, 2012). On the other hand, this suggests that satisfaction is not only affected by service quality but also by external factors (Cho et al., 2014).

Aquino administration has approved the Republic Act 10816 of 2016 which aims in providing for the development and promotion of Farm Tourism in the Philippines. To date, the first accredited farm tourism in Bulacan was declared in 2016. As a result, the Bulacan with its Provincial History, Arts, Culture and Tourism Office initiated the “1st Gawad Singkaban 2018” to refine of the province’s tourism industry. It launched a recognition of excellence to hospitality-based businesses. One of the awards was the “Natatanging Agri-Tourism Site” awarded to Duran Farm in San Ildefonso, Bulacan (2019) and Lucky Mountains Dragon Fruit Farm in Angat (2018).

The emergence of farm tourism in local and international settings brought awareness to tourists and farm owners. Thereby, capturing interests of researchers and scholars to conduct studies. Recent studies like Rotherham aimed to highlight the importance of rural recreation, sport, leisure, and tourism to local economies and to communities and their sustainability (Rotherham, 2017). While other researches revealed the strategies of farmers in diversifying into farm tourism like in the studies of Garro, Talbot and Brandth, and Pandey on the other hand aims to promote the concept of farm tourism (Garrod, 2011; Talbot, 2013; Brandth, 2011; Maharjan et al., 2007).

The main model for this study is the Service Quality (SERVQUAL) proposed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (Parasuraman et al., 1985). This model contains five dimensions namely: tangibility, responsiveness, reliability, assurance, and empathy. The respondent is then surveyed prior to the entrance of the establishment, which is the expectation part. After experience of the service, the same respondent is asked the same questions indicating its satisfaction level.

A few studies regarding farm tourism have utilized this model of study. First, Myronov assessed the rural tourism services market in the Transcarpathian region of Ukraine. The study has found that rural tourist households were able to provide the needs of the tourist and most importantly the need for safety and security (Kudla & Myronov, 2020).

In a second study by Mulyo et. Al., they have discovered that service of Agrotourism in Kampong Kopi Banaran in Indonesia was unsatisfactory based on the SERVQUAL model. There is a need to improve the service quality based on the science and technology of the site to assimilate understanding of the environment and its processes (Mulyo et al., 2021).

### Objectives of the Study

The research focused on the gap analysis of tourists' expectations and satisfaction on farm tourism in Bulacan. It sought to answer the questions including:

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of gender and age?
2. How may the gap between the tourists' expectations and satisfaction of the farm tourism service quality were assessed in terms of the following dimensions: tangibility, responsiveness, reliability, assurance, and empathy?
3. Is there a significant difference on the gap of tourists' expectations and satisfaction on farm tourism service quality when they are grouped according to profile?
4. Is there a significant difference between the tourist expected service quality and their level of satisfaction in terms of the five SERVQUAL dimensions?
5. What sustainability action plan may be for the enhancement of farm tourism business

operations based on the SERVQUAL model featuring the TRRAE dimensions?

### Hypothesis of the Study

The following hypothesis was tested at  $\alpha = .05$  level of significance:

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant difference on the gap between tourist' expectation and satisfaction on the farm tourism service quality when they are grouped according to profile.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant difference on the gap between tourist' expectation and satisfaction on the farm tourism service quality when they are grouped according to profile.

### Significance of the Study

1. **Farm Tourism Owners** may open new business opportunities of sales increase should there be volume of interested individuals to visit their farms when the service quality is mastered.
2. **Farmers for Farm Tourism** are presented new opportunities for skills development aside from farming.
3. **Government Agencies, the Concerned Municipalities and the Regional Tourism offices** may realize programs regarding countryside development for economic growth.
4. **Teachers, Students, and Educational Institutions** may become the springboard in curriculum enhancement emphasizing on the elements and the dimensions of service quality model utilized. Service quality practices can be duplicated in the actual workplace.

### Scope and Limitations

The focus of the study was the gap analysis of tourists' expectations and satisfaction on farm tourism in Bulacan. The gap analysis of tourists' expectations and satisfaction on farm tourism in Bulacan were assessed in terms of tangibility, responsiveness, reliability, assurance and, empathy in the farm tourism services. As such, there are certain aspects of the farm tourism experience that is left out because of the generality of SERVQUAL. The model is indeed a popular choice for measuring service quality in business enterprises and academic

fields. However, its universality makes the concept vague and difficult to interpret.

The data gathered was limited to the responses of tourists visiting the DOT accredited Duran farm in Brgy. Basuit, San Ildefonso, Bulacan. Only this farm tourism location was included because the farm already suffices the required number of responses for the research.

### Methodology

The comparative research method of research was utilized in the study to compare the tourists' expectations on the quality of services in relation to their perceived satisfaction on the quality of actual farm tourism services between the gender and age group of the tourist. The following statistical methods were used.

1. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)
2. Independent Sample T-Test
3. Paired Sample T-Test

The researcher came to visit the farm tourism site and personally distributed the questionnaire with the attached letter to the respondents. The questionnaire was handed over to the respondent upon entry to the farm tourism to assess the expectation on the quality of service.

After the farm tourism guided tour, the respondent answered the second part of the questionnaire which was about the assessment on the customer's satisfaction on the quality of service provided by the farm tourism site.

According to Hamburg (1974), as cited in Raosoft Inc. (2004), two-hundred (200) respondents was the result of the sample from the 415 monthly tourists that the farm accommodated. The monthly tourist arrival was provided by the personnel of the farm tourism site, the Duran Farm. The sample computation was provided with the given parameters of 5% error and a 50% response distribution.

### Instrument of the Study

The study utilized the SERVQUAL model on the gap analysis of tourists' expectations and satisfaction on farm tourism in Bulacan. Upon the request of the researcher from the authors of the SERVQUAL instrument, Dr. A. Parasuraman has granted permission to use

the SERVQUAL instrument for this research stating,

"On behalf of my co-authors Drs. Berry and Zeithaml, and myself, I am pleased to grant you that permission with the understanding that you will appropriately cite our SERVQUAL work in all written and oral presentations of your findings."

### **Setting of the Study**

The setting of the study was limited to tourists visiting the DOT accredited Duran farm in Brgy. Basuit, San Ildefonso, Bulacan. Only this farm tourism location was included because the farm already suffices the required number of responses for the research.

## **Results**

### **Demographic Profile of the Respondents**

The result shows that the number of males is close to the number of female respondents and it safe to conclude that there is an equal perspective between gender regarding the result of the study. The result also shows that majority of the tourist belong to the Generation Z, and only few of the tourist belongs to the Millennials and Generation X.

### **Tourists' Gap on Expectation and Satisfaction Level on the Quality of the Farm Tourism Services**

Overall, the result of the study shows that there is a positive gap of 0.15 between the satisfaction and expectation level of the tourist regarding the quality of service the farm tourism provided during their visit. Based on the result it is safe to mention that farm tourism in Bulacan manage to provide their tourist the appropriate level quality services in terms of tangibility, responsiveness, reliability, assurance, and empathy.

### **Significant Difference on the Gap of Tourists' Expectations and Satisfaction on Farm Tourism Service Quality according to their Profile.**

### **Comparative Analysis on Gaps between Satisfaction and Expectation Level Based on Gender**

All of the result are statistically not significant, therefore it is safe to conclude that there is the computed gap between the satisfaction level and the expectation level among the male and female tourist are significantly equal.

### **Comparative Analysis on Gaps between Satisfaction and Expectation Level Based on Age Group**

Result of the study shows that there is a need to improve tangible aspects of farm tourism based on the evaluation made by tourist belongs to 30-35 years old and tourist belong to 42-47 years old. In addition, their also a need to improve the aspect of responsiveness of the farm tourism employee based on the evaluation made by the tourist within 24-29 years old and tourist under 36-41 years old. Furthermore, the result of the study also shows that there is a need to improve in the reliability of the employee based on the evaluation made by the tourist within 30-35 years old. The result also shows that there is a need to improve in the aspect of assurance based on the evaluation made by the tourist aged 30-35 years old. And lastly, the result shows that there is a need to improve in the aspect of empathy based on evaluation made by tourist aged 30-47 years old. Looking at the overall result, it shows that there is a need to improve in the quality of service based on the evaluation made by the tourist aged 42-47 years old.

In addition, the result of the study also shows that there is a need to improve in the quality of service based on the evaluation made by the tourist aged 42-47 years old.

### **Comparison of Overall Expectation and Satisfaction Level**

Overall, the tourist total satisfaction is significantly higher compared to their total expectation with a mean difference of 0.16. The tourist in farm tourism set an extremely high standard regarding their expectation, however, their standards manage to be provided by the farm tourism of Bulacan.

All indicators have a verbal interpretation of Very Great Extent and Extremely Impressive and Excellent for Expectation and Satisfaction, respectively.

*Table 1: Summary of Gap Analysis between Tourists' Expectation*

Indicators	Mean (Expectation)
Tangibles	4.46
Responsiveness	4.54
Reliability	4.38
Assurance	4.50
Empathy	4.50
Weighted Mean	4.43

Among the five SERVQUAL indicators, responsiveness has the highest mean of 4.54 indicating that the respondents are expecting a prompt service and there is a willingness from the staff to address inquiries during their stay in the site. It is important to note that all five indicators have a high mean which corresponds to a strong agreement to the sentiment.

*Table 2: Summary of Gap Analysis between Tourists' Satisfaction*

Indicators	Mean (Expectation)
Tangibles	4.54
Responsiveness	4.60
Reliability	4.53
Assurance	4.64
Empathy	4.60
Weighted Mean	4.58

Based on Table 2, assurance was rated the highest for tourist satisfaction. This implies that tourists felt safe and secured in their transactions while at the destination. They also were satisfied with the answers provided by the farm tourism site. Similar to Table 1, all indicators had high means that exhibit strong agreement.

*Table 3: Summary of Gap Analysis between Tourists' Expectation and Satisfaction*

Indicators	Gap (E-S)
Tangibles	0.08
Responsiveness	0.06
Reliability	0.15
Assurance	0.14
Empathy	0.10
Weighted Mean	0.15

From table 3, the gap between the expectation and satisfaction are presented. All results are above the 0.05 significance level, meaning that there is no significant difference between the two aspects of Service Quality. Therefore, tourists have equal expectation and satisfaction levels, and that set expectations were met by the farm tourist site.

## Discussion. Conclusion

From the findings presented, the following conclusions may be drawn:

1. Result of the study shows that both male and female are visiting farm tourism and majority of them belong to the Generation Z individuals.

2. The result shows that farm tourism manages to exceed the set expectation level of the tourist in their service quality based on gap from their satisfaction level.
3. The result shows that male and female tourists have equal overall satisfaction in the quality of service in farm tourism in Bulacan.
4. The null hypothesis is rejected and concluded the gap between tourist' expectation and satisfaction on the farm tourism service quality when they are grouped according to profile are significantly equal.
5. The proposed sustainability action plan included on its goals and measures all the 5 dimensions of the SERVQUAL model.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are set forth.

1. The farm tourism needs to innovate and to design flexible activities that cater to the preferences of tourists of all ages. However, it would be helpful to promote the farm to other age groups besides Gen Zs.
2. The farm tourism operator should examine the tourist behaviour and personality away from gendered perspective and adjust the amenities aptly.
3. Use a different set of question for the expectation and satisfaction of the tourist regarding the farm tourism could further enhanced the result of the study.
4. Result of the study could further be enhanced if every facility will be evaluated by the tourist regarding their satisfaction.
5. More research shall be conducted with other farm tourism sites to lessen the gap in this field of study.
6. Philippines, as an agricultural country, should appoint a member of the Department of Tourism that is dedicated in promoting and revolutionizing farm tourism businesses.

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