PERCEIVED RELATIONSHIP QUALITY OF DESTINATION MARKETING ORGANISATIONS IN KERALA

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ABSTRACT

Relationship quality is an emerging concept for destination marketers to retain the tourists in a highly volatile and competitive tourism marketplace. The study illustrates the relationship quality perceptions of tourists by using the modified constructs of the RELQUAL scale (Carmen Lages, Cristiana Raquel Lages, Luis Filipe Lages, 2005). Thus, the purpose of the paper is to propose a model illustrating interactions between the dimensions of relationship quality and assessing the extent of relationship quality of Destination Marketing Organisations in Kerala perceived by both foreign and domestic tourists. Mann Whitney U test is applied to draw inference about the significance of the difference in the perception of foreign and domestic tourists about the six dimensions of relationship quality of DMOs viz. Trust, Commitment, Cooperation, Information and communication, tourist loyalty and guest orientation. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) has been used for exemplifying the proposed model. Trust is found to be the most important factor of relationship quality of DMO perceived by the tourists.

KEYWORDS: *Relationship Quality, Tourist Loyalty, Tourist Satisfaction, Destination Marketing*

INTRODUCTION

The concept of relationship quality speaks about the matter of strong bond relationships, how well the DMOs and tourists get on, and how satisfied they are in the mutual relationships and dealings. This concept of relationship quality is described as a bunch of certain attributes viz. trust, commitment, cooperation, information and communication, tourist loyalty and guest orientation (Carmen Lages, Cristiana Raquel Lages, Luis Filipe Lages, 2005). It discloses a better quality of the relationship, which results in a greater quantity of information sharing, communication quality, long-term orientation, as well as satisfaction with the relationship. In a highly competitive hospitality sector, losing clients is critical and costly. Therefore, DMOs are to be keen in creating and maintaining loyal customers through building strategic, enduring mutually beneficial relationships. In the case of DMOs, maintain a relationship is substantial to its survival and growth. Understanding of present conditions of dimensions of relationship quality and tourists' perception of these dimensions is highly beneficial for retention planning and further strategic formulation. The degree of relationship quality maintained by DMOs should be known for deciding upon the approaches to keep close contact with the clients for future business. The relationship quality leads to tourist loyalty (Alwie, 2010; Vilte Auruskeviciene, 2010; Raemah Abdullah Hashim, 2011; & Huang, 2012) and the loyalty results in repeat purchase intentions.

DMOs in Kerala frames strategic planning for destination marketing and research. They undertake professional services and initiatives for trade associations, advertising, promotional activities, hosting familiarization tours and sponsoring other hospitality services. DMOs provide space for arranging conference and seminars, provide consistent information to tourists, collecting feedback and statistics for monitoring and evaluations. They maintain in-depth knowledge of local areas, their tourism potentials and possibilities and provide highly specialized help for effective marketing of such events, products and services. The plans for designing packages and formulating marketing strategies are done based on the awareness of the concerned destinations. The products and services of Tour Operators, Hotels, Resorts, Restaurants, Travel Agencies, Tourist Taxi, Conference Venues, Homestays, themed events and festivals and excursions are clubbed together to arrange professional touring experience to tourists. The DMOs offer many services in destinations including meet and greet tourists, transportation services, hotel accommodation, restaurant services, sightseeing, entertainments, arranging conferences, seminars and other tourism activities in highly professional way. DMOs are also responsible for meeting any tourist-oriented services. As part of customer orientation, it is required to provide a 24x7 hub for disseminating tourism information, promotional initiatives and destination marketing and management. It is for assisting tourists to plan their tour activities in an optimal manner in all sorts. They can depend on digital applications and maps to create a unique experience of accessing, promoting and protecting the peculiarities of tourism destinations in Kerala. The keys for the success of destination marketing are attaining as many tourists as possible, extensive tourist retention practices, adoption of interactive social media for marketing and branding, easy site navigability, highly quality services and contents, direct and indirect selling of products and services, customization of tour packages and preparation of itineraries, performance appraisal and evaluations, dissemination of genuine information to the interested parties electronically.

It is seen that DMOs play a vital role in the marketing of tourism products and hospitality services of Kerala. However, tourists' preference of destinations, yielding favorable behavioral intentions and the way destination and country image building might be greatly influenced by the relationship quality of destination marketers at the destinations. Those who have a more positive image of particular destinations are more likely to form the better quality of relationships with those destinations (Suh-hee Choi, 2017).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Relationship quality is a vital concept in relationship marketing. It has an important impact on the customer's future interactions and dealings in the service industry and results in a long -lasting influence on customer's continuance intention (Shabbir, 2007). A good relationship quality is a predictor of establishing an intention of a long-term relationship. Frequency and feedback communications do not affect relationship quality whereas strong expertise, power, and willingness can enhance relationship quality (Sanghyun Lee, 2001). Destination marketer's attributes, guest orientation, mutual disclosure, and home-like atmosphere create greater relationship quality, which resulted in greater repeat patronage and positive word-of-mouth recommendation and word-of-mouth has a higher influence on relationship quality than does repeat patronage (Cheng, 2004). RELQUAL, a highly beneficial scale to assess the relationship quality among service providers. A better quality of the relationship results in a greater amount of information sharing, communication quality, long-term orientation, as well as satisfaction with the relationship (Carmen Lagesa, 2005). Strong relationship quality prevents customers from reacting when the firm has little control or responsibility for the service failure (Fisher, 2006).

Tourist's satisfaction is the key variable in the relationship quality and relationship quality strategies lead to higher customer satisfaction and loyalty in different customer segments. Social value, trust and commitment, strongest behavioral component and action tendency involve in dedicating effort to maintain the relationship in the long term (Miguel A. Moliner, 2007 & Huang, 2012). The incentives, service quality, ease of purchasing and usefulness influence purchase intention through the mediation of relationship quality (Chou-Kang Chiu, 2007). High relationship quality leads to higher customer loyalty. Customer orientation, mutual disclosure, employees' expertise, effective communication, likability and core service delivery affect relationship quality (Chang, 2008). Interpersonal factors like closeness, communication, communication quality and special care and firm factors like commitment, trust and satisfaction have significant effect on relationship quality and the relationship quality, functional quality trust, and commitment has a strong influence on customer loyalty (Alwie, 2010, Vilte Auruskeviciene, 2010, Raemah Abdullah Hashim, 2011 & Huang, 2012). Technical quality, communication effectiveness, social benefits and special treatment benefits do not have a significant impact on customer loyalty (Vilte Auruskeviciene, 2010). Mutual disclosure, service providers' attributes and relational orientations have the effect on quality relationships between employees and customers and customer orientation was as the least important quality relationship factor (Seyed Alireza Mousavi, 2011). Commitment, customer satisfaction, interpersonal communication, conflict resolution, socialization, benefits and information dissemination are important in building customer loyalty. Consistency in service and the latest information might be useful in building trust (Raemah Abdullah Hashim, 2011). Intimacy, trust and self-connection effect customization and relational-commitment have a positive effect on satisfaction and recommendation behavior (Huseyin Kose, 2013). Customer satisfaction is considered as an indication of the quality of the relationship and an antecedent of both trust and commitment (Yan Feng, 2013). Relationship quality dimensions such as commitment lead to long-term relationship and investment into retaining the relationship (Hopenienė, 2016). Relationship quality becomes an intervening variable in the way destination and country image building which yields favourable behavioral intentions to purchase. (Suh-hee Choi, 2017).

RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

The main objectives of this research are to assess the extent of relationship quality of Destination Marketing Organizations in Kerala Tourism Industry, perceived by the tourists who availed the services of these organizations, and to validate a model explaining the relationship quality of these organizations in tourism industry. A descriptive research design is formulated to empirically address the research problem. Primary data were collected from a sample of 178 foreign and 170 domestic tourists selected by using accidental sampling method. Descriptive statistics, Mann Whitney U Test and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) are applied for inferential analysis of the primary data collected.

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Perception of the tourists on the dimensions of relationship quality is assessed by using a five-point Likert type scale with the help of descriptive statistics and mean percent score analysis. The Mann-Whitney U Test is used for drawing inference about the significance of the difference between the perception of foreign and domestic tourists on the dimensions of RELQUAL of DMOs in Kerala.

Trust

It is observed that the tourists are having a favorable opinion about the various elements of trust, the RELQUAL dimension. DMOs keep promises to their tourists always [MPS: 76.8]. Honesty and credibility in all dealings help the organization in maintaining a long-term deep relationship with the tourists. The tourists are highly satisfied with the honesty and credibility of the destination marketing organizations [MPS: 80.6]. They show a keen interest in the successful completion of the tour to Kerala (MPS: 81.6). Trustworthiness in dealing is perceived as a crucial element in building trust between DMOs and tourists [MPS: 82.2]. Intimacy with tourist builds confidence and openness in the minds of tourists [MPS: 80.8]. The study confirms the high degree of reliability of DMOs in all dealings [MPS: 83.0]. Maintaining consistency in quality of services is comparatively a difficult task and may be inclined by many factors. The descriptive statistics [MPS: 82.6] describe that the DMOs are able to maintain consistency to a large extent. Mann-Whitney U test result draws that there is a significant difference in the perception of foreign and domestic tourists regarding DMOs initiatives to keep promises [U: 12554, Zcal: -3.1, p: .002], honesty and credibility in dealings [U: 12913, Zcal: -2.6, p: .008] and genuine interest in completing the tour programme [U: 13232, Zcal: -2.2, p: .027] and there is no significance difference in perception regarding trustworthiness [U: 13525, Zcal: -1.9, p: .056], keeping intimacy [U: 15004, Zcal: -.15, p: .880], reliability [U: 14243, Zcal: -1.0, p: .288] and consistency [U: 13463, Zcal: -1.9, p: .050].

Table 1: Relationship Quality Perceived by Foreign & Domestic Tourists

	Trust				IC1	Sharing of Information	12222	-3.3	.001
No	Dimensions	**U**	**Z_{cal}**	**p**	IC2	Availability	12746	-2.8	.005
T1	Promises	12554	-3.1	.002	IC3	Time to communicate	12591	-3.0	.003
T2	Honesty & Credibility	12913	-2.6	.008	IC4	Format for communication	12847	-2.7	.006
T3	Interest	13232	-2.2	.027	IC5	Constant contacts	14119	-1.2	.224
T4	Trustworthiness	13525	-1.9	.056	C6	Information of new services	13085	-2.4	.014
T5	Intimacy	15004	-.15	.880		**LOYALTY**			
T6	Reliability	14243	-1.	.288	**No**	**Dimensions**	**U**	**Z_{cal}**	**p**
T7	Consistency	13463	-1.9	.050	L1	More dealings in future	14129	-1.1	.232
	COMMITMENT				L2	First choice	12796	-2.6	.008
o	**Dimensions**	**U**	**Z_{cal}**	**p**	L3	Price sensitivity	12157	-3.2	.001
C1	Lasting relationship	14424	-.84	.398	L4	Positive word of mouth	14406	-.85	.391
C2	Spending more	14162	-1.1	.254	L5	Recommendation	14243	-1.0	.291
C3	Frictionless support	12918	-2.6	.009	L6	Better service in future	14707	-.49	.623
C4	Alternative services	14733	-.53	.593	**ORIENTATION**				
	COOPERATION				**No**	**Dimensions**	**U**	**Z_{cal}**	**p**
No	**Dimensios**	**U**	**Z_{cal}**	**p**	O1	Understanding needs	11595	-4.2	.000
CO1	Informaton f changes	8363	-7.7	.000	O2	Courteous deal	15045	-.09	.922
CO2	Joint responsibility	11218	-4.5	.000	O3	Resolve complaints	14841	-.33	.739
CO3	Treat problems jointly	9322	-6.6	.000	O4	Equal considerations	13783	-1.5	.126
C04	Scope for new deals	9328	-6.5	.000	O5	Help to decision making	14284	-1.0	.296
INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION					O6	Devoting special time	15011	-.14	.885
No	**Dimensions**	**U**	**Z_{cal}**	**p**	**U: Mann Whitney U, p: p – Value**				

Source: Primary data

COMMITMENT

Tourists are highly agreed that DMOs are showing a keen interest in maintaining a long-lasting relationship with tourists [MPS: 75.0]. Willingness is the most important factor to improve relationship quality (Sanghyun Lee 2001). The descriptives [MPS: 75.8] shows that the DMOs are exceedingly willing to spend more resources to keep relationships

with the tourists. Frictionless cooperation shows the smoothness in cooperating with tourists to complete the itinerary or package [MPS: 74.6]. Committed DMOs provide alternative products and service to their clients according to their needs and wants which advocates the flexibility in handling packages and tourists in very customized manner. The result of the analysis [MPS:79.8] gives a positive response from the tourists that they are satisfied with the interest of the organization in providing alternatives to their clients. The test of significance says that there is a significant difference in the perception of foreign and domestic tourists regarding DMOs' initiatives to provide frictionless cooperation [U: 12918, Zcal: -2.6, p: .009], and there is no significance difference in perception regarding maintenance of long-lasting relationship [U: 14424, Zcal: -.84, p: .398], spending more than usual [U: 14162, Zcal: -1.1, p: .254] and alternative services [U: 14733, Zcal: -.53, p: .593].

COOPERATION

It is seen that the DMOs provide proper information about the events, incidents, or changes that may affect the tour in Kerala for their tourists (MPS: 77.4). The tourists view that the completion of a tour is not an individual responsibility of the DMOs, rather it is a joint responsibility of DMOs and tourists (MPS: 76.6). The tourists would like to treat and solve the problems jointly by discussion (MPS: 73.4). Anything happened unexpectedly to breach the contract between the DMO and their client; the tourists are ready to work out a fresh deal [MPS: 75.6]. The perception of foreign and domestic tourists is significantly different regarding the elements of the dimension cooperation of DMOs.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

Tourists have agreed upon that DMOs openly share communication without hesitation [MPS:77]. Availability of the organization through electronic and telecommunication mediums is inevitable throughout the tour programme. The study depicts that the tourists are satisfied with the availability of the staff of the organization through electronic and other communications media for helping the tourists to complete their programme successfully [MPS: 88]. The tourists consider that their DMOs have sufficient time for communicating with their clients [MPS: 80.8]. DMOs follow a complete, accurate and well-structured format for communicating with their clients [MPS: 79]. It can avoid the possibility of misunderstandings between them. Once the tourists go for sightseeing or any other out-door activity, the staff of the DMOs constantly tries to contact with their clients for catering them in all sorts. Moreover, after the tour, the staff may go for follow up contacts [MPS: 78.2]. The tourists are satisfied with information dissemination of the DMOs regarding the new services or packages offered by them [MPS: 80.4]. The Mann-Whitney U Test inferred that there is significant difference in the perception of foreign and domestic tourists regarding DMOs willingness to share important information [U: 12222, Zcal: -3.3, p: .001], availability as and when the tourists want to contact [U: 12746, Zcal: -2.8, p: .005], keeping time to communicate with tourists [U: 12591, Zcal: -3.0, p: .003], structured format for communication [U: 12847, Zcal: -2.7, p: .006] and inclination to provide information about new services offered by DMOs [U: 13085, Zcal: -2.4, p: .014]. However, there is no significant difference in the opinion for foreign and domestic tourists about the constant contacts of DMOs with tourists [U: 14119, Zcal: -1.2, p:.224].

LOYALTY

It is noted that the tourists wish to do more dealings with their DMOs in the future [MPS: 80.8]. The majority of the tourists are of the opinion that they select their DMO as the first choice in destination management in repeat visits [MPS: 73]. It is interestingly noted that the tourists are very price sensitive. The tourists are not so ready to avail the services of a particular DMO irrespective of the price and competitiveness [MPS: 64.4]. They are not ready to consume the services of a particular DMO if its prices are more than the other similar DMOs. The tourists are willing to say positive things about their DMOs [MPS: 79.8] and are ready to recommend the services to their dear and near ones [MPS: 81]. Moreover, the tourists believe that their DMOs can do things better in future [MPS: 79.8]. In order to test the perception difference among foreign and domestic tourists on the loyalty towards DMOs, a non-parametric independent sample test is applied. The inferences states that the foreign and domestic tourists are different only on price sensitivity [U: 12157, Zcal: -3.2, p:.001] and willingness to select their DMO as the first choice in repeat visits [U: 12796, Zcal: -2.6, p:.008]. In all other elements of loyalty, they keep a similar opinion.

GUEST ORIENTATION

The tourists opined that employees of the DMOs are able to understand changes in the needs of the tourist [MPS: 78.4], willing to deal with an enquiry or any complaints courteously and expeditiously [MPS: 80.4]. The tourists are satisfied with the employees' initiatives to resolve complaints even though they are not their direct responsibility [MPS: 77.2]. The statistics say that the DMOs treat tourists equally for a particular service [MPS: 75]. The employees of the DMOs provide a great help to the tourists to take appropriate decisions with regard to their tour in Kerala [MPS: 81.4]. It is noted that employees devote special time for tourists to cater their requirements [MPS: 78.4]. The inferential statistics shows that foreign and domestic tourists are keeping the same level of perception towards the guest orientation activities viz. courteous dealings with enquiry and complaints [U: 15045, Zcal: -.09, p:.922], attitude of employees to resolve complaints even though these are not in his or her direct responsibility [U: 14841, Zcal: -.33, p:.739], employees' impartial treatment of guests [U: 13783, Zcal: -1.5, p:.126], helping mentality of employees to take appropriate decision with regard to tour programme [U: 14284, Zcal: -1.0, p:.296] and devoting of special time for tourists [U: 15011, Zcal: -1.4, p:.885] except the DMOs' way of understanding the needs and wants of tourists [U: 11595, Zcal: -4.2, p:.000]. The perception towards guest orientations tries to state that both foreign and domestic tourists do consider it important and expect a whole-hearted support in this regard.
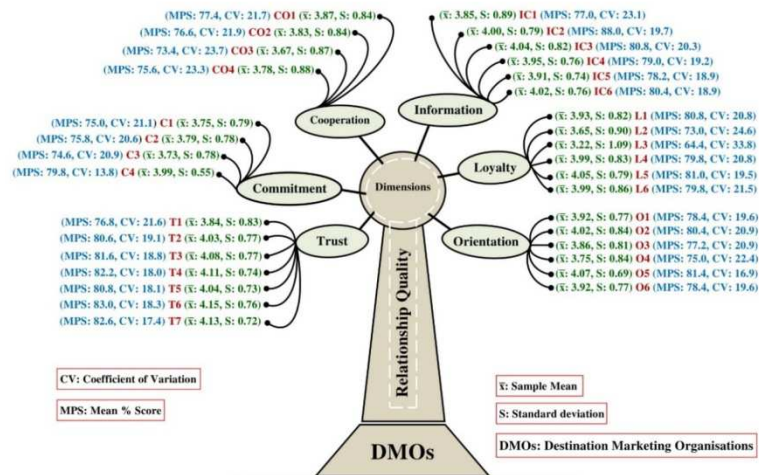
Figure 1: Descriptive Tree of Relationship Quality

STRUCTURAL MODEL OF PERCEIVED RELATIONSHIP QUALITY

The Structural Equation Modelling has been used to estimate the inter-related dependence relationships and causal processes in order to enable better conceptualization of the theoretical framework of the research. A Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was done to link the observed variables to their causal latent variable. In order to satisfy the validity procedure of the measurement model, item, construct, convergent and discriminant validity tests were carried out for establishing acceptable levels of goodness-of–fit.

ITEM VALIDITY

It is assumed that if the loadings in the regression weights are greater than 0.5, then an item or statement keeps the item validity. The regression weights, of the observed variables of the constructs Trust [F1], Commitment [F2], Cooperation [F3], Information and Communication [F4], Loyalty [F5] and Orientation [F6] are found greater than 0.5 and the sig. value is less than α 0.05 and Critical Ratio [CR] is greater than 1.96 in all cases. Therefore, each observed variables in each construct maintain item validity.

Table 2: Regression Weights – Test of Item Validity

Trust [F1]						Commitment [F2]					
OV	LV	E	SE	CR(Z=E/SE)	p	OV	LV	E	SE	CR(Z=E/SE)	p
T1	F1	1.000	-	-	-	C1	F2	1.000	-	-	-
T2	F1	1.010	.049	20.594	***	C2	F2	0.982	.051	19.069	***
T3	F1	1.086	.061	17.845	***	C3	F2	1.185	.094	12.631	***
T4	F1	1.141	.065	17.693	***	C4	F2	0.561	.062	09.019	***
T5	F1	1.100	.064	17.161	***	Information & Communication [F4]					
T6	F1	1.084	.067	16.269	***	IC1	F4	1.000	-	-	-
T7	F1	0.981	.068	14.428	***	IC2	F4	1.100	.054	20.237	***
Cooperation [F3]						IC3	F4	1.116	.071	15.692	***
CO1	F3	1.000	-	-	-	IC4	F4	0.990	.075	13.113	***
CO2	F3	1.111	.053	21.118	***	IC5	F4	0.803	.067	11.976	***
CO3	F3	.876	.059	14.857	***	IC6	F4	0.827	.074	11.183	***
CO4	F3	1.088	.059	18.532	***	Orientation [F6]					
Loyalty [F5]						O1	F6	1.000			
L1	F5	1.000				O2	F6	1.174	.057	20.712	***

**Table 2: Contd.,**
L2	F5	1.302	.130	10.003	***	O3	F6	1.118	.054	20.709	***
L3	F5	.874	.136	06.446	***	O4	F6	.872	.072	12.119	***
L4	F5	1.517	.124	12.246	***	O5	F6	.921	.057	16.251	***
L5	F5	1.545	.140	11.006	***	O6	F6	.863	.059	14.711	***
L6	F5	1.531	.136	11.243	***		*E = Estimate, OV= Observed Variable*
*LV = Latent variable, SE = Standard Error, CR = Critical Ratio, p = p value*

Source: primary data

CONSTRUCT VALIDITY

Construct validity is checked in order to test whether the scale measures the constructs in the study adequately. The composite reliability determines the construct validity. The composite reliability value ranges from 0-1 and where all path loadings from construct to measures are expected to be strong if it is greater than 0.70 and reliable if it is greater than 0.6. Composite reliabilities of the constructs Trust [0.9687], Commitment [0.8926], Cooperation [0.9282], Information and Communication [0.9412], Loyalty [0.8938] and Orientation [0.9479] have a value greater than 0.70 which indicates that there is high level of internal consistency i.e. construct validity.

$$\text{Composite reliability} = \frac{(\sum\lambda)^2}{(\sum\lambda)^2 + \sum\delta}$$ where λ = Standardized Factor Loadings δ= Measurement Error

Table 3: Construct Validity (Composite Reliability)

	**Trust [F1]**		**Commitment [F2]**
OV	**LV**	**Λ**	**δ**	**SE**	**CR**	**p**	**OV**	**LV**	**λ**	**δ**	**SE**	**CR**	**p**
T1	F1	.732	.323	.026	12.232	***	C1	F2	.714	.304	.032	9.585	***
T2	F1	.806	.205	.020	10.201	***	C2	F2	.710	.300	.028	10.621	***
T3	F1	.864	.149	.015	9.624	***	C3	F2	.850	.170	.028	6.152	***
T4	F1	.934	.071	.010	6.877	***	C4	F2	.574	.202	.018	11.279	***
T5	F1	.914	.089	.012	7.546	***		Composite Reliability = **0.8926**
T6	F1	.871	.138	.015	9.135	***		**Information & Communication [F4]**
T7	F1	.827	.165	.017	9.808	***	**OV**	**LV**	**λ**	**δ**	**SE**	**CR**	**p**
	Composite Reliability = **0.9687**	IC1	F4	.723	.383	.034	11.289	***
	**Cooperation [F3]**	IC2	F4	.901	.118	.014	08.454	***
OV	**LV**	**λ**	**δ**	**SE**	**CR**	**p**	IC3	F4	.883	.147	.015	09.664	***
CO1	F3	.838	.211	.020	10.378	***	IC4	F4	.837	.176	.016	10.760	***
CO2	F3	.931	.094	.019	5.071	***	IC5	F4	.698	.285	.026	10.861	***
CO3	F3	.708	.379	.032	11.889	***	IC6	F4	.701	.297	.026	11.263	***
CO4	F3	.873	.184	.027	6.816	***		Composite Reliability = **0.9412**
	Composite Reliability = **0.9282**		**Orientation [F6]**
	**Loyalty [F5]**	**OV**	**LV**	**λ**	**δ**	**SE**	**CR**	**p**
OV	**LV**	**λ**	**δ**	**SE**	**CR**	**p**	O1	F6	.826	.191	.017	11.237	***
L1	F5	.591	.438	.037	11.727	***	O2	F6	.899	.134	.016	8.343	***
L2	F5	.697	.420	.034	12.521	***	O3	F6	.885	.142	.014	10.320	***
L3	F5	.387	1.016	.078	13.060	***	O4	F6	.663	.397	.037	10.854	***
L4	F5	.890	.141	.014	9.783	***	O5	F6	.851	.132	.015	8.838	***
L5	F5	.949	.062	.011	5.811	***	O6	F6	.716	.290	.025	11.666	***
L6	F5	.859	.195	.018	10.920	***		Composite Reliability = **0.9479**
Composite Reliability = **0.8938**

Source: primary data

$$\textbf{Trust} = \frac{(5.948)^2}{(5.948)^2+1.14} = 0.9687, \ \textbf{Commitment} = \frac{(2.848)^2}{(2.848)^2+0.976} = 0.8926, \ \textbf{Cooperation} = \frac{(3.35)^2}{(3.35)^2+0.868} = 0.9282,$$

$$\textbf{Information \& Communication} = \frac{(4.743)^2}{(4.743)^2+1.406} = 0.9412, \ \textbf{Loyalty} = \frac{(4.373)^2}{(4.373)^2+2.272} = 0.8938, \ \textbf{Orientation} =$$

$$\frac{(4.84)^2}{(4.84)^2+1.286} = 0.9479.$$

CONVERGENT VALIDITY

The convergent validity is established when each observed variable correlates strongly with its construct. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is used to measure the validity of each construct and it must exceed the variance due to the error. The value of AVE ranges from 0-1. The convergent validity is assumed if the AVE is greater than 0.50. The convergent validity shall not be established when there are high error estimates [δ].

$AVE = \frac{(\sum \lambda^2)}{n}$ where λ = Standardized Factor Loadings **n** = No.of Observed Variables

Table 4:Convergent Validity (AVE)

Trust [F1]				Commitment [F2]			Cooperation [F3]		
OV	**λ**	**λ²**		**OV**	**λ**	**λ²**	**OV**	**λ**	**λ²**
T1	.732	0.535824		C1	.714	0.509796	CO1	.838	0.702244
T2	.806	0.649636		C2	.710	0.504100	CO2	.931	0.866761
T3	.864	0.746496		C3	.850	0.722500	CO3	.708	0.501264
T4	.934	0.872356		C4	.574	0.329476	CO4	.873	0.762129
T5	.914	0.835396	AVE = 0.7264	**AVE = 0.5164**			**AVE = 0.7081**		
T6	.871	0.758641		Loyalty [F5]			Orientation [F6]		
T7	.827	0.683929		**OV**	**λ**	**λ²**	**OV**	**λ**	**λ²**
Information & Communication [F4]				L1	.591	0.349281	O1	.826	0.682276
OV	**λ**	**λ²**		L2	.697	0.485809	O2	.899	0.808201
IC1	.723	0.522729		L3	.387	0.149769	O3	.885	0.783225
IC2	.901	0.811801	AVE = .6322	L4	.890	0.7921	O4	.663	0.439569
IC3	.883	0.779689		L5	.949	0.90060	O5	.851	0.724201
IC4	.837	0.700569		L6	.859	0.73788	O6	.716	0.512656
IC5	.698	0.487204		**AVE = 0.5692**			**AVE = 0.6583**		
IC6	.701	0.491401							

Source: Primary Data

Trust = AVE $= \frac{(\sum \lambda^2)}{n} = \frac{5.082278}{7} = 0.7264$, Commitment = AVE $= \frac{(\sum \lambda^2)}{n} = \frac{2.065872}{4} = 0.5164$, Cooperation = AVE $= \frac{(\sum \lambda^2)}{n} = \frac{2.832398}{4} = 0.7081$, Information and Communication = AVE $= \frac{(\sum \lambda^2)}{n} = \frac{3.793393}{6} = 0.6322$, Loyalty = AVE $= \frac{(\sum \lambda^2)}{n} = \frac{3.415441}{6} = 0.5692$, Orientation = AVE $= \frac{(\sum \lambda^2)}{n} = \frac{3.950128}{6} = 0.6583$.

The AVE of Trust (0.7264), Commitment (0.5164), Cooperation (0.7081), Information and Communication (0.6322) Loyalty (0.5692) and Orientation (0.6583) satisfied the criteria of the convergent validity as its loadings were greater than 0.50. Therefore, there is sufficient evidence to confirm the convergent validity of the model.

DISCRIMINANT VALIDITY

Table 5: Discriminant Validity (Msv)

LV	r	(MSV) r^2	AVE		LV	r	(MSV) r^2	AVE	
F1 - F2	.628	0.394384	0.7264	0.5164	F3 - F4	.710	0.5041	0.7081	0.6322
F1 - F3	.467	0.218089	0.7264	0.7081	F3 - F5	.372	0.138384	0.7081	0.5692
F1 - F4	.662	0.438244	0.7264	0.6322	F3 - F6	.571	0.326041	0.7081	0.6583
F1 - F5	.409	0.167281	0.7264	0.5692	F4 - F5	.528	0.278784	0.6322	0.5692
F1 - F6	.664	0.440896	0.7264	0.6583	F4 - F6	.767	0.588289	0.6322	0.6583
F2 - F3	.744	0.553536	0.5164	0.7081	F5 - F6	.631	0.398161	0.5692	0.6583
F2 - F4	.660	0.4356	0.5164	0.6322	LV = Latent Variable (Constructs)				
F2 - F5	.382	0.145924	0.5164	0.5692	r = Correlation (Estimate), MSV = r^2				
F2 - F6	.656	0.430336	0.5164	0.6583	Discriminant Validity = If AVE > MSV				

Source: Primary Data

The discriminant validity refers to the extent to which the constructs distinct. It provides empirical evidences that a construct is unique and captures some phenomena that other constructs do not. The discriminant validity is tested by comparing Maximum Shared Variance (MSV) with AVE for each construct. MSV shows the square of inter-correlation between two constructs. If MSV is less than AVE, the discriminant validity is confirmed. All the MSVs or squared correlation of one construct with other factors are less than the respective AVE of the respective constructs except in case of the constructs Commitment and Cooperation. Therefore, it is assumed that there is discriminant validity in the model.

MODEL EVALUATION

The model fitting process is done to determine the goodness-of fit between the hypothesized model and the sample data. It indicates how well the model reproduces the observed covariance matrix among the indicator items. The model fit relates the theory to reality by assessing the similarity of the theory to reality.

Table 6: Model Summary

RMR	GFI	AGFI	NFI	RFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
.046	.711	.632	.811	.774	.842	.809	.840	.090

Source: Primary data

Root Mean Square Residual (RMR): It characterizes the average residual value derived from the filling of the variance-covariance matrix for the hypothesized model. The smaller the RMR is, the better. An RMR of zero indicates a perfect fit. The value of RMR .046 indicates a good fit.**The Goodness of Fit Index (GFI):** The GFI is the standardized fit index. GFI is less than or equal to 1. A GFI value of 1 indicates a perfect fit and values close to zero indicate very poor fit. GFI > .90 may indicate good fit. The model has the GFI 0.711 which indicates that it is comparatively good fitted.
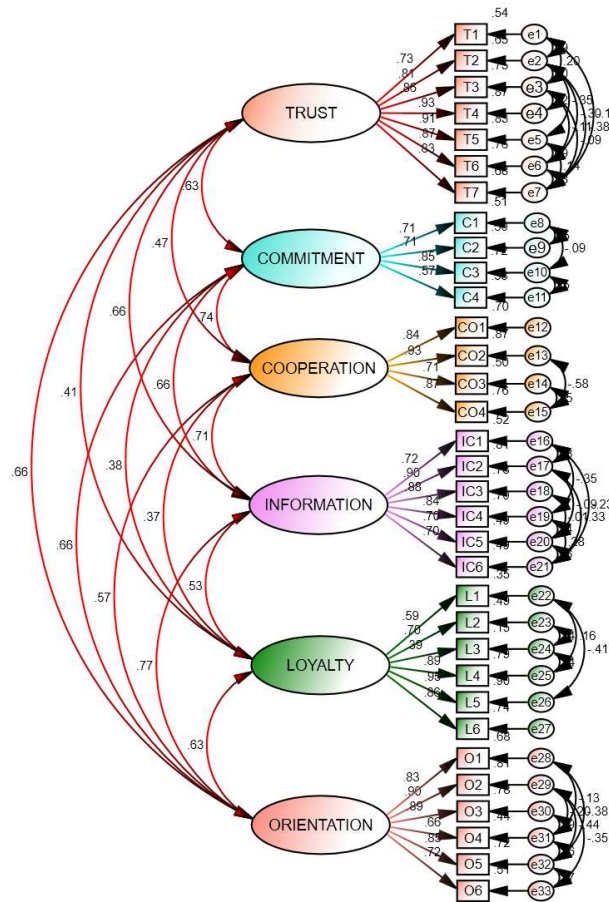
Figure 2: Structural Equation Model of Relationship Quality

The Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI): It corrects the GFI, which is affected by the number of variables of each construct. Theoretically, the value ranges from 0 (poor fit) to 1 (perfect fit), considered good when it is greater than 0.90. The AGFI value of the model 0.632 indicates a moderate fit. **Normed Fit Index (NFI):** It is a ratio of the CMIN value of Independence model minus the CMIN value of default model and CMIN value of Independence model. It ranges in between 0 and 1. A Normed fit index of one indicates perfect fit. The value 0.811 indicates that the model has a good fit. **Relative Fit Index (RFI):** It represents a derivative of the NFI. Its values range from 0 to 1. RFI values close to 1 indicate a very good fit. The value 0.774 indicates that the model has a moderately good fit. **Incremental fit index (IFI):** It is also known as Bollen's IFI. Values that exceed .90 are regarded as good, although this index can exceed 1. The model has IFI value of 0.842 which considered as satisfactory. **Tucker Lewis index (TLI):** The TLI value ranges from 0 to 1. A value which is close to 1 indicates a very good fit. The value of the model 0.809 shows a satisfactory level of fit. **Comparative Fit Index (CFI):** It is an incremental fit index which is an improved version of the NFI. Its values lie in between 0 to 1. The higher values indicating better fit. The value 0.840 indicates that the model has a good fit. **Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA):** Attempts to correct for the tendency of the goodness of fit test statistic to reject models with a large sample or a large number of observed variables. Lower RMSEA values indicate a better fit. The RMSEA value of 0.090 indicates a reasonable error of approximation of the model.

Table 7: Overall Measurement Model Fitness

CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
2109.492			
12232.471 (Independence model)	441	.05	4.78

Source: Primary Data

In Structural Equation Modelling a relatively small chi-square value supports the proposed theoretical model being tested. In this model, the value is 2109.492 (Default Model CMIN) and is small when compared to the CMIN value of the independence model (12232.471). Hence the Chi-square value is good. The Normed Chi-square value is recommended as a better-fit metric. If this metric does not exceed five for models with the good fit. For the Model, it is 4.78 (CMIN = 2109.492, DF = 441) which suggests moderate model fit. Hence, the hypothesized model fits moderately with the observed data.

RELATIONSHIP QUALITY
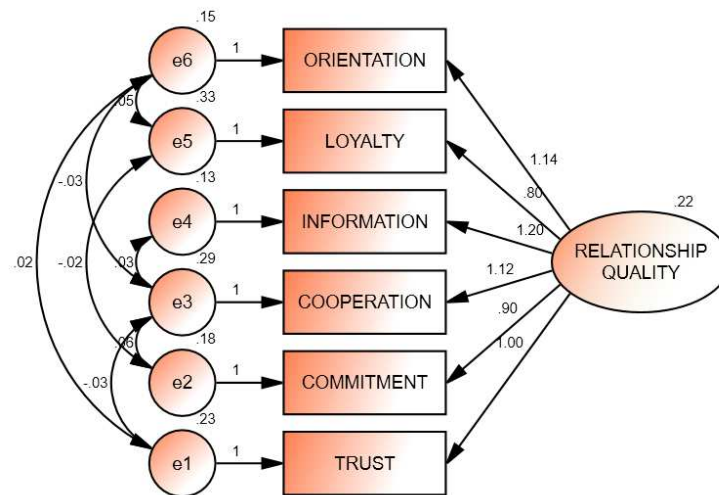
Figure 3: Measurement Model of Relationship Quality

Table 8: Validation of Measurement Model

Factors	Construct	λ	δ	λ²	CR	AVE
Trust		.703	.225	0.494209		
Commitment		.702	.183	0.492804		
Cooperation	Relationship Quality	.696	.295	0.484416	$\frac{(\sum\lambda)^2}{(\sum\lambda)^2+\sum\delta}$	$\frac{(\sum\lambda^2)}{n}$
Information		.843	.129	0.710649		
Loyalty		.547	.326	0.299209		
Orientation		.814	.146	0.662596	**0.9343**	**0.524**
Total		**4.305**	**1.304**	**3.143883**		

Source: Primary Data

Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of the Measurement model of relationship quality are computed in order to validate the model. The CR value of 0.9343 shows the construct validity which is higher than the accepted level of internal consistency (0.70) that the six factors of relationship quality are valid. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) has been used to measure the validity of the construct. The AVE of the construct relationship quality

(0.524) satisfied the criteria of the convergent validity as its loading is greater than 0.50. It is evident from the tests that relationship quality is predicted by six strong variables viz. Trust, commitment, cooperation, information and communication, loyalty and guest orientation by the Destination Marketing Organisations in Kerala.

CONCLUSIONS

Relationship quality of DMOs helps them to maintain a close-knit relation with the clients. It is highly useful in creating a trustworthy, committed, cooperative and loyal customer through effective communication and orientation. Trust is considered as the most crucial factor for relationship quality of destination marketers in Kerala followed by information and communication provided to the tourists. Foreign and domestic tourists do keep a distinct opinion regarding promises, honesty and credibility, interest in successful completion of tour, frictionless support by the staff, elements of cooperation by the employees, time-bound sharing of information about new services, accuracy and structure of communication, price sensitivity and ability of DMOs to understand needs of the clients. All the dimensions of relationship quality are valid in terms of the item, construct, convergent and discriminant validities. The hypothesized model shows a moderately good fit as the indicators satisfy the rule of thumb. Therefore, the constructs of RELQUAL scale is valid to predict the relationship quality. The application of the scale with certain additions to the elements of each factor was successful in determining the relationship quality of DMOs in Kerala.

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