Recognizing the increasing gap between what is researched in academic community and what is practiced in industry, this series aims to bring together academic and industry leaders in their respective fields to discuss, exchange, and debate issues critical to the advancement of tourism. The book series intends to not only create a platform for academics and practitioners to share theories and practices with each other, but more importantly, to serve as a collaborative venue for meaningful synthesis.

Each volume will feature a distinct theme by focusing on a current or upcoming niche or “hot” topic. It shows how theories and practices inform each other; how both have evolved, advanced, and been applied; and how industry best practices have benefited from, and contributed to, theoretical developments. Volume editors have both strong academic credentials and significant consulting or other industry engagement experiences. Chapter contributors will be identified through professional conferences and trade conventions. In general, the book series seeks a synergy of how concepts can inform actions, and vice versa. The book series will inspire a new generation of researchers who can translate academic discoveries to deliverable results valuable to practitioners.
Quality Services and Experiences in Hospitality and Tourism

EDITORS

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INTRODUCTION
Integrating Experiences in the Study of Service Quality

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The initial impetus for this book was inspired by the outcome from the Isfahan Conference on Service Quality in Hospitality and Tourism: Experiencing Persian Heritage, which was held in Isfahan, Iran, July 16–17, 2016. A cursory review of the individual presentations at the two-day event suggested that, while some remained within the confinement of the concept of service quality in either the European or the American schools, others were breaking away from it. A closer examination of the conference proceedings revealed that collectively they could not be described simply as an incremental accumulation of knowledge about service quality as applied to hospitality and tourism. Rather, there emerged a pattern of discoveries that was beyond the academic realm of service quality in general, as well as its applications in hospitality and tourism.

Service quality gained popularity as a marketing concept along with the transition from the dichotomy of product vs service to the continuum of product and service that began in the early 1980s and subsequently spread across economic sectors of all kinds. The gaps model of service quality and its measurement scale of SERVQUAL originated by Parasuraman, Berry,
and Zeithaml (1985, 1988) are considered the foundation on which the studies of service quality have been conducted, including those in the hospitality and tourism literature that adopted or adapted the scale for hotels, restaurants, and retail travel services (Cai, 2010). Although the original model and scale were subsequently revised with various iterations, their initial propositions remain that (1) customers evaluate the quality of service provided by an organization by making a comparison between their expectations and perceptions along the five dimensions of tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy; and (2) the organization should strive to maximize the quality by exceeding customer expectations. About the latter, one of their extended models included a variety of factors, internal to an organization, that affect the level of service quality delivered to the customer (Grapentine, 1998).

To the extent that the 1980s’ concept of service quality may still be applicable to a hospitality and tourism organization in the global society of the twenty-first century, its limitation is evident in the rise of the experience economy and from the development of knowledge advanced by the study of consumer experiences and branding. Modifying Pine and Gilmore’s (1999) taxonomy of economic progression, Cai and Hobson (2004) illustrated a four-state continuum that progressively consists of the commodity, product, service, and brand in the hotel industry. Transposing the four states on a rational-emotional ladder in the minds of hotel guests, they argued that, as consumers’ decisionmaking becomes increasingly emotional, hotel companies should move from the state of service to that of the brand. The nature and key attribute of the brand are being memorable and personal, instead of being intangible and customized in service. The emphasis is thus on personal vs customized. The roles of seller and buyer in the state of the brand are, respectively, host and guest, as compared to those of provider and customer in the state of service. The brand [co-]creates an experience that is revealed over duration instead of a service that is delivering on demand. The proceedings from the 2016 Isfahan Conference offered fresh evidence that today’s hospitality and tourism marketplace is characterized more by the state of a brand than that of service. The study of it would benefit from the explicit consideration of both services and experiences and the quality thereof. Such study would be timely as well, thanks to the scarce literature on quality experiences in hospitality and tourism, albeit few outside of the field (Fernandes & Cruz, 2016).

The book draws several of its contributions from the speakers at the Isfahan Conference. The regional focus of the conference is augmented with contributions from scholars elsewhere, resulting in a more diverse and
global context. Apart from the introductory and concluding texts, the book consists of 15 chapters delineated in three parts. Part I, *Destinations in Iran, Hong Kong, and the United States*, is mostly set in Iran and empirically examines the quality of tourism destination services and education for different tourist segments including those defined by cultural uniqueness. Leading this first part is the contribution from Pooya Alaeddini and Dordaneh Davari, “Targeting Purposes of Visit: Quality Experience as Demanded.” This chapter takes a basic yet strategic approach toward the quality of destination services and tourist experiences based on purposes of visit. From 16 categories of purposes, eight are identified and applied to Iran. Examples of the strategic action plan are provided to illustrate how Iran as a destination can attract potential tourists by responding and fulfilling their wishes associated with each purpose of visit. Chapter 2, “Teaching Tourism Service Quality in Iran,” by Siamak Seyfi, Adel Nikjoo, and Pooya Alaeddini, is also set in Iran and highlights the strategic importance of human resources development in assuring quality services and developing experiences. With the backdrop of Iran becoming an emerging destination, the authors identify several gaps in the quality of tourism education in its second most populous city, Mashhad, and call for the stakeholders to collaborate on addressing them.

Mashhad is again the destination setting for Chapter 3 by Mohamad Sharifi-Tehrani and Kourosh Esfandiar. “Risk Perception and Tourism Experiences among Pilgrims” studies Iran’s domestic religious tourists and finds that their perceived risk of the destination is associated with the quality of past visits, nonvictimization experience, and destination loyalty. The relationships between the quality of destination services and culturally segmented source markets are examined in Chapter 4, “Culture and Service Quality: Case of Hong Kong.” Bona Kim, Lingxu Zhou, and Anyu Li focus on expectation-performance gap and find that tourists from Mainland China whose cultural difference is small are less satisfied with the quality of services in Hong Kong, whereas tourists from Western source markets with a large cultural difference are more satisfied. In Chapter 5, “Quality Experiences of China’s Family Tourists in the United States,” Yunzi Zhang and Liping Cai examine family tourism. This investigation reveals that traditional Chinese values assist family members to navigate the multigenerational relationships and to construct a quality experience with the destination attributes.

Part II of the book, *Tourists at the Core*, focuses on the quality of experiences from the perspectives of tourists. It features innovative concepts, which are mostly illustrated empirically. This part begins with the contribution by
Gianna Moscardo, “Tourist Experience Design: A Storytelling Framework.” It describes a comprehensive storytelling framework and a set of principles for the design of tourist experiences. These are applied to the Australian destination of Magnetic Island to demonstrate how tourists’ experiences may be framed as stories of their own. The chapter illustrates that destination organizations do not provide experiences but rather offer opportunities for tourists to co-create the experiences of their own. Such co-creation is instrumental for both tourist satisfaction and the success of the destination. Co-creation of experiences is also a subject of Chapters 7 and 8. In “Social Network Sites and Virtual Tourism Experience,” Seyedeh Fatemeh Mostafavi Shirazi present four propositions on the role of social network sites and how the sites can provide opportunities for tourists to virtually experience destinations prior to their potential journeys. Virtual experience is also discussed in the following chapter, albeit in the context of post-visit interactions between event attendees and event managers. In “Horseracing Event Experience and Social Media,” Chloe Downes, Roya Rahimi, and Peter Robinson investigate the role of social media in enhancing the interactions. They find that the most popular place for event attendees to leave feedback is on social media. Yet, none of the managers interviewed in their study had used social media to gain feedback. The quality of the interactions, or the lack thereof, diminishes the opportunities of co-creating experiences.

Chapter 9, “Experiences of the Plural Tourist: A Perspective of French Sociology,” is by Christophe Guibert. His contribution features the verbatim narratives of experiences by four French tourists as empirical cases. A sociological analysis is conducted on the textual data to examine the reasons why individual tourists might get involved in one or more types of tourism activities as a measure of their social status and to understand their experiences and social characteristics. His sociological approach to studying tourists’ experiences and their social characteristics leads to the proposition of the concept of the plural tourist. In Chapter 10, “Emotional Outcomes of Dining-Away-From-Home Experiences,” Saerom Wang and Liping Cai focus on one specific type of experience of tourists and present six propositions on the relationship between their emotional outcomes and each of the six factors. They are expectations of culinary experience, appraisal of the intrinsic qualities of food, evaluation of contextual cues, appraisal of overall culinary experiences, neophobic level of individuals, and post-ingestive effect. Underlining these propositions is the important linkage between the emotional outcomes from one particular experience and the quality of overall tourist experiences.
Part III of the book, *Hotels, Conferences, and Big Data*, features five contributions that are concerned with the quality of services of hotels and conference facilities. In Chapter 11, Shiva Hashemi, Azizan Marzuki, and Shaian Kiumarsi examine the impacts of conference quality on behavioral intentions and perceived value of international attendees in Malaysia. They find positive and significant effects on the former by the quality dimensions of venue facilities, professional education, and social network and on the latter by the dimensions of accessibility, professional education, and social network. As the central contribution of their study, perceived value is found to have a mediating role in the relationship between venue facilities and behavioral intention. Quality services and experiences at luxury hotels are the foci of three chapters in Part III. Chapter 12, “Service Experiences at Luxury Hotels: Business Travelers’ Perspective,” is contributed by Ruiyu Feng, Yao-Chin Wang, and Bill Ryan. They identify the service experiences of business travelers as consisting of the three constructs of service: surprise, recovery, and sweetness, and posit that emotional value from the experiences can enhance their attitude of gratitude and result in their willingness to pay a price premium. They further propose a conceptual framework that integrates the three constructs of service experiences and a value–attitude–behavioral model. Luxury hotels are also the subject in Chapter 13 by Amelia Tomašević. “Luxury Hotels: Concept and New Trends” relates the concept of luxury to hotels and discusses the global trends and attributes of luxury hotels in the two categories of tangibles and intangibles.

In Chapter 14, “Big Data and Service Quality: Barcelona’s Hospitality Industry,” Ainhoa Serna, Antònia Casellas, Grant Saff, and Jon Kepa Gerrikoagotia explore how the analysis of user-generated content from the travel site of TripAdvisor can provide insights on the service quality of hotels in Barcelona, Spain. Their findings illustrate that the site provides user-generated content which can be dissected to measure the five dimensions of the classic SERVQUAL model and thus represents an innovative way to considerably advance the ability to study the service quality in the hotel sector.

Online travel agents are the subject of Chapter 15 in Part III. In “A Hotel Classification Framework for Quality Service,” Tahir Sufi and Narges Shojaie challenged the conventional hotel classification systems as not representing real guest expectation and serving as indicators of price rather than quality. These systems, which are not consistent within or among themselves and do not consider service aspects directly associated with customer satisfaction are therefore losing relevance, especially when
online travel agents are using innovative methods to evaluate tourist satisfaction with hotels. By analyzing five popular hotel classification systems and incorporating academic literature and innovative attributes of online travel agents, the chapter proposes a new framework to classify hotels on the basis of nine criteria which can serve as quality indicators of hotel services and reflect customers’ satisfaction with their hotel experiences.

The collection of these 15 contributions presents the latest theories and practices on quality services and experiences in hospitality and tourism. It offers a conceptual discourse, empirical evidence, application of existing and emerging concepts and theories, and implications of practical findings. As such, the collection shares new knowledge by connecting scholarly works and real-world cases. It also sheds light on the perspectives of both providers and recipients of quality services, as well as the actors of quality experiences, across a wide spectrum of hospitality and tourism sectors.