

The Effects of Travel Service Quality on Organization Perceived Value, Satisfaction and Word-Of-Mouth—A study in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

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Abstract

As company tours have become more popular and received much attention in Vietnam, it is a favorable chance for travel companies and agencies to gain more customers and profits. This study was carried out to investigate the effects of travel service quality, using SERVPERF assessment procedure, on word-of-mouth (WOM) behaviors of the whole organization through the mediation of perceived value and satisfaction, so that further recommendations would be suggested for tourism companies to improve their services. Quantitative approach was applied with questionnaire directly delivered to 300 small to medium-sized companies in Ho Chi Minh City which annually book tours for their staff. Although all variables were positively correlated, only four quality aspects (Empathy, Responsiveness, Tangibles, Assurance) had significant effects on other dependent variables; in particular, empathy was proven to have the most powerful impact on WOM with both direct and indirect effects. Guidelines for travel agencies were recommended; especially, activities which prioritized customers' needs and fulfilled their requests were most emphasized.

Keywords: travel agency, SERVPERF, service quality, organization perceived value, organization satisfaction, organization word-of-mouth

1. Introduction

An important customer sector in all industries, including tourism, is companies or organizations. It is not only due to the greater number in quantity of customers compared to individual, family and group tours, but also their potential demand. M.I.C.E (Meeting, Incentive, Conference, and Event) tourism has been an important segment of the world's travel industry (Weber, 2001) and well-developed in Vietnam recently. According to Vietnam National Administration of Tourism (2015), there had been a difficult time from June 2014 to June 2015, when the number of international tourists coming to Vietnam continuously declined and tourism industry, generally, faced many challenges. However, M.I.C.E tended to grow quite well. Both international and domestic markets increased from 15 to more than 20 percent; especially, more domestic companies started to combine different purposes to organize a tour other than just relaxation, such as reward, conference, training, teambuilding and customer gratitude. M.I.C.E activities draw much attention from the community as well as bring a remarkable amount of revenue to both tourism companies and Vietnam tourism industry. Therefore, considering organizations as the main objective consuming this tour type, tourism companies must pay attention to serve their demand.

Among choices, people tend to select a service provider that is recommended by other users since WOM was suggested to be a powerful communication channel, which even had stronger influence on customers' decision than traditional advertising (Bansal & Voyer, 2000). In this context, the receiver and communicator are both organizations rather than individuals, so the benefits from WOM effect exaggerate. A review of literature revealed that service quality was an antecedent of satisfaction (Bigné et al., 2003), which in turn, significantly affects tourists' willingness to recommend (Mohamad et al., 2014). Indeed, apart from the necessity to survive the harsh competition among many tourism companies in Ho Chi Minh City, it is important that all these companies must always improve their services if they desire to win customer satisfaction and expand market shares. In addition, there were scholars who claimed the chain effect of "Service

Quality-Value-Satisfaction-WOM” (Abdalla et al., 2014) and “Experience Quality-Perceived Value-Satisfaction-Behavioral Intentions” (Chen C. & Chen, F., 2010). Since WOM can be partially explained by these antecedents, service quality, perceived value and satisfaction can be put into tests to further investigate the total effect on recommendation intention. Therefore, this research embraces the question that to what extent service quality of travel companies in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, has an effect on organization WOM, through the chain effect of Quality-Perceived Value-Satisfaction-WOM.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Service Quality

Service quality has been proven to be a significant predictor of customer satisfaction, loyalty and behavior intentions (Lam et al., 2004; Baumann et al., 2007; Lee et al., 2011). The concept definition is developed based on two main measurement approaches: performance only and expectation-performance gap. It was broadly defined by Zeithaml (1988) as consumers’ decisions regarding the superiority or excellence of a product or service. On the other hand, Mackay and Crompton (1990) explained it as “the relationship between what customers’ desire from a service and what they perceive that they receive”.

Up to now, measuring service quality is an issue that gives rise to endless controversy since many methods have been introduced and revised but there has been no one-fit-all approach without criticism. Generally, two main research instruments used in quality measurement are Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) and SERVQUAL. However, there have been problems with the reliability and validity of IPA due to its way of measurement (Oh, 2001) while SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al., 1988) is still more preferred as a reliable predictor of overall service quality (Khan, 2003). Also supporting SERVQUAL, Bigne et al. (2003) proved the validity and reliability of its scale in tourism industry, especially by testing service quality received from travel agencies. This measurement scale captures five criteria, which are *Reliability* (the guarantee to perform service faithfully and accurately), *Assurance* (employees’ ability to bring trust and confidence), *Tangibles* (the presence of physical facilities, equipment, materials and employees’ appearance), *Empathy* (actions of care and attention to customers) and *Responsiveness* (the willingness of employees to help customers by providing prompt services). Since SERVQUAL measures the gap between expectation and performance, Gronroos (1993) criticized its accuracy such as personal bias and expectation measurement errors. Cronin and Taylor (1992) introduced the performance only method (SERVPERF) which was based on the same scale of SERVQUAL but without a separated expectation measurement. A study by Phong and Thuy (2008) suggested that SERVPERF worked more effectively than SERVQUAL in investigating customers’ perception in Vietnam context and another by Johns et al. (2004) proved its efficiency in measuring travel agency’s service quality.

2.2 Perceived Value

Perceived value is a difficult concept to define and measure (Zeithaml, 1988). It was initially defined as “the consumer’s overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given” (Zeithaml, 1988, p. 14). According to the author, consumers can perceive value as low price, needs for the product or the quality and benefit in relation to costs. In addition, Cronin et al. (2000) stated that “what is sacrificed” may include both monetary (price) and non-monetary (time, effort and opportunity cost). Therefore, value perceived by an organization can be considered as the companies’ perception towards total expenditures in exchange for the benefits that their employees received from the trip.

According to Bosque and Martin (2008), exceeding value (real value > expectation) will lead to higher satisfaction. Indeed, perceived value was proven to have direct positive effect on customer satisfaction in many service industries (Eggert & Ulaga, 2002; McDougall & Levesque, 2000). Additionally, satisfaction was found to be a mediator between the perceived value and loyalty; in other words, the path “Perceived value-Satisfaction-Loyalty” was supported (Gallarza et al., 2013).

2.3 Customer Satisfaction

Most studies agreed that good service quality led to higher customer satisfaction (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Parasuraman et al., 1988). In addition, customer satisfaction has been a familiar concept appearing in almost all studies toward customer behavior. In tourism context, satisfaction was considered as a main direct factor of loyalty (Salleh et al., 2014; Gallarza et al., 2013); in particular, customers who were satisfied with the tour would repurchase (He & Song, 2009) or/and recommend it to others (Chen C. & Chen F., 2010).

According to the summary of twenty “satisfaction” definitions by Giese and Cote (2000, pp. 5-8), it can be seen that “consumers”, “evaluation”, “post-purchase” and “affective/emotion/feeling” were repeated key words, which suggested that satisfaction was generally the customers’ post-purchase evaluation involving consumption

emotions. Furthermore, satisfaction can be measured by either tour's attributes or the comparison between pre-purchase expectations and post-purchase judgments (Oliver, 1980). Adapted to this context, organization satisfaction was measured as the companies' common evaluations toward many aspects of the tour as well as whether they were satisfied with their overall trip.

2.4 Word-Of-Mouth

WOM has been known for many years as a major force in business, which influences what people know, feel and do (Buttle, 1998) as well as helps a firm generate more profit. Kumar et al. (2007) stated that most valuable customers were best marketers for a brand, who could spread WOM and bring in the most potential new customers. In the early time, WOM was defined in the marketing context as oral, person to person communication between a receiver and a communicator whom the receiver perceives as non-commercial concerning a brand, product or service (Arndt, 1967).

Indeed, WOM has a stronger power to impact on consumers compared with other communication channels (Bansal & Voyer, 2000), while consumers tend to rely on others' advice to make purchase decisions (Cheema & Kaikati, 2010). Furthermore, WOM is also perceived as a reliable source since Bansal and Voyer (2000) found out that people who often perceive risk and were not confident in their knowledge tend to search for more WOM information. Particularly, Kurtz and Clow (1998) claimed that WOM communication was the strongest source that consumers relied on to form their expectation of a product/service, which plays an important role in satisfaction measurement (Oliver, 1980). It can be concluded that being able to control and motivate WOM would be a huge advantage for any firms to gain sales.

3. Model Hypotheses

For further analysis, this study hypothesized that:

H1. Responsiveness, tangibles, empathy, reliability and assurance directly affect perceived value.

H2. Responsiveness, tangibles, empathy, reliability, assurance and perceived value directly affect organization satisfaction.

H3. Responsiveness, tangibles, empathy, reliability, assurance, perceived value and organization satisfaction directly affect organization word-of-mouth.

H4. The effect of independent variables (responsiveness, tangibles, empathy, reliability and assurance) on organization word-of-mouth is mediated by perceived value and organization satisfaction.

4. Methodology

Quantitative approach was applied to find out the effect of service quality on perceived value, satisfaction and eventually WOM, as well as confirm the use of SERVPERF scale in testing model. Surveys were sent directly to representatives who are in charge of tour arrangement of small and middle organizations in Ho Chi Minh City. The unit of analysis in this research is organization so these respondents, who make decision on choosing which travel vendor to organize the tour for their companies. In total, 300 responses were collected. Factor analysis and multiple regressions were carried out using SPSS version 20.0.

4.1 Measurement Scale

Questions in the survey were designed as statements with five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagreed) to 5 (strongly agreed). Most items were based on the literature reviews and adapted to the research context. Particularly, five independent variables of quality were adopted from Parasuraman et al. (1988); WOM was adjusted from Harrison-Walker (2001); PERSEQUA and ORGSATIS were adapted from He and Song (2009).

4.2 Factor Analysis and Reliability

The Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was applied for both groups of independent and dependent variables; later, Cronbach's Alpha was computed to ensure reliability. The group of five dependent factors (Table 1) accounted for 66.57 percent of the total variance with KMO value of .749, indicating the suitability of the data for principal component analysis (Pallant, 2005) and Bartlett's test of sphericity value was significant ($p = .000$), showing sufficient correlation between variables for further tests. Cronbach's Alpha ranged from .634 to .721, suggesting good reliability.

Table 1. Summary of independent variables with reliability coefficients

Variables	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha (N = 300)
1. Responsiveness (RESPO)	3	.721
2. Tangibles (TAGI)	3	.680
3. Empathy (EMPA)	3	.659
4. Reliability (RELI)	2	.697
5. Assurance (ASSU)	2	.634

Similarly, Table 2 showed the factor analysis of three dependent variables. Two mediators perceived value, organization satisfaction and one final dependent variable WOM were all satisfied with total variance explained of 60.758 percent. KMO value was .807 and Barlett's test of sphericity reached significant level of $p = .000$. All three factors had good value of Cronbach's Alpha ($\alpha > .7$), which implied enough reliability of the measurement scale (Nunnally, 1978). Thus, all factors mentioned in the research model were meaningful and reliable to continue further analysis.

Table 2. Summary of dependent variables with reliability coefficients

Variables	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha (N = 300)
1. Perceived Value (PERVA)	2	.723
2. Organization Satisfaction (ORGSATIS)	4	.785
3. Word-of-Mouth (WOM)	5	.765

5. Research Findings

5.1 The Profile of Participants in the Research

From Table 3, the majority of respondents were female, namely 62.3% compared to 37.7% of male. More than three quarters are of the age over 30, especially the group between 31 and 40, which accounted for 54.3%. For education level, most participants got college or university degree (88.3%), while just a small number graduated from high school (6.3%) or continued higher study (5.3%). They were working for different types of company, ranging from private companies with the largest proportion (42.3%), followed by foreign companies (35%) and lastly, companies belonging to the government (22.7%), which ensure the results can be applied to multiple kinds of organization. More than 80% of these companies planned 1 to 5 tours per year for internal staff and external customers; the rest organized more than 5 times per year. This figure indicates a great potential for tourism companies to target organizations as their frequent customers.

Table 3. Demographics of participants

		Frequency (N)	Valid (%)
Gender	Male	113	37.7
	Female	187	62.3
	Total	300	100.0
Age	18-25	27	9.0
	26-30	42	14.0
	31-40	163	54.3
	41-60	68	22.7
	Total	300	100.0
Education	High School	19	6.3
	College	91	30.3
	University	174	58.0
	Master Degree	16	5.3
	Total	300	100.0
Company type	Private Company	127	42.3
	Company belong to Government	68	22.7
	Foreign Company	105	35.0
	Total	300	100.0
	Number of tour(s) in the company	1-5	244
More than 5		56	18.7
Total		300	100.0

5.2 Relationship between Service Quality, Perceived Value, Satisfaction and WOM

In Table 4, all variables are correlated with significant level ($p < .05$). The strongest relationship was between PERVA and ORGSATIS ($r = .409$), implying the more value customers perceived, the higher their satisfaction level would be, and the weakest was between assurance and empathy ($r = .167$). All variables have positive correlation with WOM; especially, WOM is most highly correlated with two mediators: ORGSATIS ($r = .371$) and PERVA ($r = .331$). The five independent variables were also positively correlated with two mediators, ranging from $r = .187$ (PERVA and RELI) to $r = .408$ (PERVA and RESPO). These correlations suggested the expectation that a good quality tour would increase organizations' perception of value; as they realized the amount of value received, they would be more satisfied and more likely to introduce the service to others.

Table 4. Pearson correlations between variables of the research model

	WOW	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. RESPO	.300	1.000						
2. TAGI	.188	.350	1.000					
3. EMPA	.277	.243	.228	1.000				
4. RELI	.224	.267	.237	.290	1.000			
5. ASSU	.252	.370	.243	.167	.242	1.000		
6. PERVA	.331	.408	.291	.258	.187	.299	1.000	
7. ORGSATIS	.371	.291	.271	.261	.254	.332	.409	1.000
Mean	3.42	4.01	4.03	3.82	3.92	4.03	3.94	3.89
SD	.60	.65	.62	.58	.75	.67	.77	.58

Note. All correlations are significant at the .05 level.

5.3 Testing Hypotheses

To test four groups of hypotheses, firstly, three times of multiple regression were performed for H1, H2 and H3 between five quality factors and each dependent variable in turn. Finally, path analysis was applied to achieve indirect and total effect on WOM (H4).

5.3.1 Factors Directly Affecting Perceived Value

In Table 5, among five independent variables, only RELI did not significantly affect PERVA ($p > .05$). The other four, including RESPO ($B = .328, p < .05$), TAGI ($B = .158, p < .05$), EMPA ($B = .182, p < .05$) and ASSU ($B = .161, p < .05$) had a positive effect on PERVA. This can be argued that when an organization well perceived the willingness to help, quality of physical facilities, care, attention and credibility of a tourism service provider, their perception of value would be more positive.

Table 5. Effect coefficients between IVs and PERVA

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	.600		1.562	.119
1. RESPO	.328	.276	4.701	.000
2. TAGI	.158	.127	2.254	.025
3. EMPA	.182	.136	2.478	.014
4. RELI	.010	.010	.184	.854
5. ASSU	.161	.141	2.504	.013

Note. Dependent Variable: PERVA: Perceived Value.

-Predictors: responsiveness, tangibles, empathy, reliability, assurance.

-ANOVA: $F(5, 294) = 17.412, \text{Sig.} = .000, p < .05$.

-Model summary: $R^2 = .228$.

5.3.2 Factors Directly Affecting Organization Satisfaction

From the result of coefficients showed in Table 6, ASSU is the single explanatory factor that significantly affected ORGSATIS ($B = .150, p < .05$), implying the ability of tourism employees to bring trust and confidence could satisfy the organization. Furthermore, the mediator PERVA also had a moderate effect on ORGSATIS (B

= .203, $p < .05$), suggesting that the more value a tourism service was perceived, the higher the organization satisfaction would be.

Table 6. Effect coefficients between IVs, PERVA and ORGSATIS

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	1.330		4.699	.000
1. RESPO	.028	.031	.521	.603
2. TAGI	.084	.091	1.629	.104
3. EMPA	.104	.104	1.914	.057
4. RELI	.077	.101	1.840	.067
5. ASSU	.150	.175	3.136	.002
6. PERVA	.203	.272	4.735	.000

Note. Dependent Variable: ORGSATIS: Organization Satisfaction.

-Predictors: responsiveness, tangibles, empathy, reliability, assurance, perceived value.

-ANOVA: $F(6, 293) = 16.783$, Sig. = .000, $p < .05$.

-Model summary: $R^2 = .256$.

5.3.3 Factors Directly Affecting Organization Word-Of-Mouth

Finally, Table 7 displayed the significant effects of EMPA, PERVA and ORGSATIS on WOM ($B = .136$, $p < .05$; $B = .105$, $p < .05$ and $B = .221$, $p < .05$, respectively). This meant when the tourism company understood customers' needs and prioritized their benefits, they would tell others more good things about that company. Also, as they perceived more value and satisfaction was higher, they would likely share their impressions and recommend the service to others.

Table 7. Effect coefficients between IVs, PERVA, ORGSATIS and WOM

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	.829		2.669	.008
1. RESPO	.103	.113	1.836	.067
2. TAGI	-.009	-.009	-.160	.873
3. EMPA	.136	.132	2.343	.020
4. RELI	.050	.063	1.111	.267
5. ASSU	.057	.064	1.107	.269
6. PERVA	.105	.136	2.226	.027
7. ORGSATIS	.221	.214	3.579	.000

Note. Dependent Variable: WOW: Organization Word-of-Mouth.

-Predictors: responsiveness, tangibles, empathy, reliability, assurance, perceived value, organization satisfaction.

-ANOVA: $F(7, 292) = 11.978$, Sig. = .000, $p < .05$.

-Model summary: $R^2 = .223$.

5.3.4 Indirect Effects on Organization Word-Of-Mouth

The findings from multiple regression analysis were summarized in Figure 1. According to Preacher and Hayes (2008), the indirect effect of an independent variable on another dependent one through the intervention of a third variable can be calculated by the product of independent variable's effect on the intervening variable and intervening variable's effect on the dependent variable. In this case, PERVAL and ORGSATIS played the role of intervening variables; particularly, ORGSATIS mediated between PERVAL and WOM. They both directly affected WOM so any explanatory factors which had an effect on these variables also had an indirect effect on WOM. Four factors, namely EMPA, RESPO, TAGI, and ASSU had direct effect on PERVA while ORGSATIS was only affected by ASSU. From the path analysis, indirect effects of EMPA, RESPO, TAGI, ASSU and PERVA on WOM were (.027), (.049), (.024), (.057) and (.045) respectively.

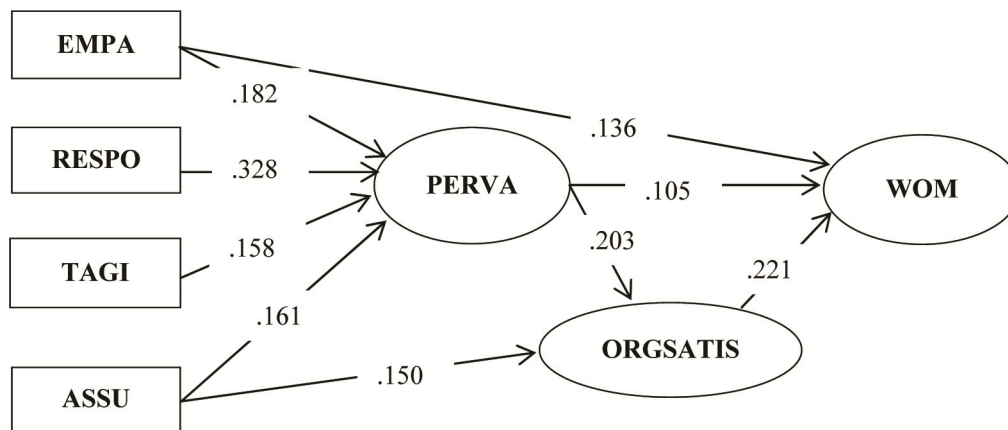


Figure 1. Path coefficients of hypothesis testing

Note. All coefficients in the model are significant at 95% confidence level.

5.3.5 Total Causal Effects on Organization Word-Of-Mouth

According to the results in Table 8, ORGSATIS had the highest total effect on WOM with $B = .221$; this could be considered as a low effect (De Vaus, 2002). The second rank belonged to EMPA ($B = .163$), which was also the one with highest value among five explanatory factors. PERVA was ranked at third ($B = .150$), followed by ASSU ($B = .057$) and RESPO ($B = .049$). The last one was TAGI with the lowest effect on WOM ($\beta = .024$); however this effect was considered very small.

Table 8. Direct, indirect and total causal effects on WOM

Variables	Direct	Indirect		Total
		PERVA	ORGSATIS	
1. EMPA	.136	.019	.008	.163
2. RESPO	---	.034	.015	.049
3. TAGI	---	.017	.007	.024
4. ASSU	---	.017	.040	.057
5. PERVA	.105	---	.045	.150
6. ORGSATIS	.221	---	---	.221
Total	.462	.087	.115	.664

6. Discussion and Conclusion

6.1 Discussions of the Findings

Although the scale of SERVQUAL/SERVPERF has been widely used in testing service quality as well as its relationship with customer satisfaction and behaviors in different sectors such as hotels, restaurants and banks (Minh et al., 2015; Ramseook-Munhurrun, 2012; Krishnamurthy et al., 2010), few studies aimed at travel companies/agencies (Shahin & Janatyan, 2011), especially in Vietnam context. While some of the findings were in line with previous research, others were quite different, especially in comparison to those conducted in different tourism sectors due to the unique characteristics of each one. However, the results generally supported the chain effect “Service quality—Perceived value—Satisfaction—Word-of-Mouth” as proven by other scholars (Gallarza & Saura, 2006).

Among explanatory variables, EMPA was the one with the highest total causal effect on WOM as well as the only which directly motivated customers to share their experience with others. This result supported the study of Moisescu and Gica (2014) that compared to other quality dimensions, EMPA had a significantly larger effect on customers making positive recommendations. It was emphasized that the importance of customer-oriented services, which asked employees to put their customers’ concerns on top, would directly lead to positive WOM about the travel agents (Macintosh, 2007). Also, EMPA was noticed as a significant antecedent of WOM in other service industries such as healthcare (Chaniotakis & Lymperopoulos, 2009), which stressed the role of building customer-employee relationships based on empathy in shaping recommendation behaviors.

The second most important aspect of quality is the ability to give customers an assurance. According to Lovelock (1983), travel companies could be classified as “services directed toward people”, which meant customers would physically participate in the process so it is essential to gain their confidence. In a study of Chowdhary and Prakash (2007), they also confirmed that services provided for people (customers) rather than their possessions (e.g., repair shops, laundry and dry cleaning) often asked for more assurance and this is consistent with this research’s findings. ASSU not only affected WOM through PERVA, but also directly led to ORGSATIS, implying the more courteous and reliable the organizations perceived from employees, the higher satisfaction level it would be and the higher possibility that they would talk about them.

For RESPO, there have been controversial findings about its importance from customers’ perspective. This research gave the same conclusion with others that it was not a vital factor in shaping customers’ behaviors. Chowdhary and Prakash (2007) found that RESPO was considered as a less important dimension in all industries, which was probably due to customers’ reception of what is more valuable: quickness or quality. On the other hand, Moisescu and Gica (2014) claimed that staff’s ability to react quickly to customers’ problems would most likely make them spread WOM information. This disparity may be linked to the difference between two units of analysis. In this context, customers were organizations rather than individuals so as long as all members in the organization were carefully taken care and services were consistently provided, a prompt response might not be required. Nevertheless, RESPO had the highest coefficient on PERVA so to some extent, customers would feel more positive with a quicker service which the whole group would not have to suffer from a long wait.

The results that TAGI directly affected PERVA and had an indirect impact on WOM were consistent with other research. In a study of Sanchez et al. (2006), the offices and installations were put in tests under terms of functional value of travel agency. They were found to positively affect PERVA of the purchase as well as be significantly correlated with satisfaction and loyalty. In fact, the finding that TAGI carried the lowest coefficient and it only indirectly affected WOM through PERVA might be understandable as physical facilities/equipment were claimed to be less needed for intangible services (Chowdhary & Prakash, 2007). People can be attracted by the company’s appearance and advertising but they will not directly satisfy with the services nor perform WOM activities.

Last but not least, it can be obviously learnt from these results that the level of travel quality would predict whether customers are willing to recommend; yet, the service performance itself is not as important as how much the organization members would perceive. As PERVA and ORGSATIS were the major force of WOM, activities which aimed at enhancing customers’ feeling and satisfying their needs were highly appreciated. The more customers feel positive towards the tour and consider it as a right decision, the more likelihood they would recommend others to try.

6.2 Limitations and Implications for Future Research

Even though the research was successful in examining the total effects of service quality on WOM behavior and pointing out specific aspects where companies must focus on, there are still some limitations and suggestions for further improvement. Firstly, in this study, WOM was explained by investigating quality perceptions towards the services provided by the travel company only; in other words, quality dimensions of the trip were not taken into account. Indeed, customers' intention and action to spread WOM information do not solely depend on how the company provides services; experience from the trip contributes much to their behavior. Furthermore, as Kouthouris and Alexandris (2005) argued in their research, some outdoor service quality could mostly be perceived in relation to emotions from the participation (e.g., fun, enjoyment) so tour-related issues are equally important. In order to capture the full picture of customers' behavior, beside SERVPERF items, it is recommended that "trip attributes" such as tour programs, attractions, weather, accommodations, activities, safety (Jin et al., 2014) be added to the questionnaire.

Secondly, the current research applied quantitative only and the survey adopted all items from SERVPERF to test quality so recommendations given to managers would be limited in this boundary. It is suggested that an open-ended question be included in future study to figure out more practical comments about service quality of travel agencies in Vietnam. In that case, not only travel companies have a deeper understanding of organizations' perception, a revised scale for measuring service quality in this sector may be proposed.

Thirdly, as it is obvious that the sample size was limited (300 respondents) and the research was only conducted in HCMC, Vietnam so it might not be considered as representatives for the whole population. To some extent, the results best serve tourism companies which target small and medium-sized organizations as their frequent customers. However, repeated tests with a larger sample size and wider research area are encouraged to confirm the result as well as make generalization to the whole industry.

Lastly, the research was conducted on tours in general. Since different types of company tour such as incentive, conference, training, and teambuilding and customer gratitude are organized for different purposes and have distinctive requirements, tourism employees should also adjust their manners and vary skills to meet the demand. It is recommended to study a specific tour type separately in order to give more appropriate advices on improvement.

6.3 Recommendations for Travel Agencies

Based on the results from this research, some suggestions for tourism companies to motivate WOM activities through enhancing service quality, perceived value and satisfaction can be given. In terms of offices and facilities, they should be paid enough attention since these are first impressions of customers' before any employees show up. Notwithstanding, it may not necessary to be well-designed nor have modern equipment since the office is not where customers enjoy the service they paid for. Instead, this is where customers receive information and deal the contract so convenience should be among top concerns. The place should be neat and logically arranged to show profession and bring best comfort to both parties. Furthermore, valuable awards, certificates, which are vital to help gain customers' initial trust, and memorable brochures, advertisements also need to be displayed where customers can easily see and be attracted.

In addition, giving a prompt service and responding quickly to customers' requests would make them pleased with their purchase. Travel agencies should ensure that employees are always available to answer and support customers in time, especially when problems occur. However, speed must accompany with accuracy and guarantee. This requires employees to be skillful and have experience facing common situations so training is extremely important to improve their performance. Companies should provide courses which are not only about how to do the basic job, but also about appropriate attitudes to help convince customers about the assurance. Although a favorable company's image and detailed contract are foundations for customers' confidence, how professionally employees behave would instill reliable in them and contribute to their overall satisfaction.

Above all, paying enough attention to each customer and showing that the organization's requirements are being satisfied play crucial roles in leading to WOM behavior. There are no standard for customer attention; in other words, no specific list of actions would guide employees to understand their customers. It must be the skill and manner which help staff be flexible in dealing with problems and fulfilling customers' requests. What organizations look for is the feeling that all members are cared and their benefits are always prioritized. Therefore, travel company managers should consider hiring staff whose characteristics are enthusiastic, subtle and caring to be responsible for working directly with customers. Besides, it is also necessary for companies to learn more about the common needs, perspectives, attitudes, behaviors of organizations when they search for a tour in order to provide employees with specialist knowledge for better services.

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