THE EFFECT OF PERCEIVED QUALITY ON VISITOR SATISFACTION AND LOYALTY TO WADI EL- HITAN PROTECTED AREA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to assess the effect of perceived quality of Wadi El- Hitan Protected Area's on visitor satisfaction and loyalty. The dimensions of perceived quality, satisfaction and loyalty were measured. The quantitative study depended on a questionnaire distributed to visitors of Wadi El Hitan. A sample of 200 visitors were selected and surveyed through questionnaires. Descriptive statistics were calculated for all dimensions of the research to determine the level of perceived quality after visiting, the level of satisfaction and loyalty for Egyptians and foreigners. Moreover, in SPSS, Pearson correlation was applied to inspect the relationship between perceived quality and visitor satisfaction. On the other hand, it applied to the perceived quality and visitor loyalty to Wadi El-Hitan. Moreover, t-test was calculated to know the differences between the Egyptians and foreigners about the dimensions of the research. The findings revealed that there is a strong correlation between perceived quality and visitor satisfaction and loyalty for Egyptians. Furthermore, there are differences between visitors answers regarding the perceived quality, satisfaction, and loyalty according to their nationality.

KEYWORDS: Perceived quality, Visitor Satisfaction, Loyalty, Wadi El-Hitan.

INTRODUCTION

Perceived quality refers to the customer's perception of the overall quality of a product or service compared to alternatives. Perceived quality is based on customer experiences and feelings. On the other hand, perceived quality is customer evaluation of the added value of a service or product (Andervazh, et al., 2016). Visitor satisfaction was defined as the overall consumer's evaluation based on the consumer's total purchase and experience with a product or service (Chinomona, 2013).

Many studies explain that there is a positive relationship perceived quality by customers and loyalty to the product. Moreover, perceived quality has a significant impact on tourist loyalty (Valle et al., 2006; Chi et al., 2009; Ahmed et al., 2012; Todor, 2014; Andervazh et al., 2016). Therefore, this research is important as it aims to determine the perceived quality of service in Wadi El-Hitan protected area and its effect of on visitors' satisfaction and loyalty to the area.

The area of Wadi El-Hitan, was declared by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site in 2005. The fossils of whales and other marine organisms in Wadi El-Hitan date back 40 million years (Paleczny et al., 2007; Ministry of Environment, 2018).

PROBLEM OF THE RESEARCH

The fossil remains in Wadi El-Hitan are potentially vulnerable to visitor pressure through collecting, vehicle traffic, large numbers of visitors, lack of quality of service and poor facilities. In the longer term, it may be degraded by the wind if not conserved in museums (UNESCO, 2005; Paleczny et al., 2007; Ministry of Environment, 2018).

Previous researches has examined the relationship between consumer satisfaction and consumer loyalty. Moreover, they clarified the effect of perceived quality on satisfaction and loyalty. On the other hand, the impact of perceived quality on visitor loyalty is still not being studied (Nam et al., 2011; Todor, 2014; Andervazh et al., 2016). But there has been only limited investigation into measuring the effect of perceived service quality on visitor satisfaction and loyalty in protected areas, especially in Egypt. Therefore, this research tried to measure the relationship between these factors in the Wadi El- Hitan protected area.

OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

There are five objectives of the research as follows:

1- Measuring the perceived quality of the Wadi El- Hitan protected area by visitors.
2- Evaluating the level of visitors' satisfaction from visiting Wadi El-Hitan.

3- Identifying the level of loyalty to Wadi El-Hitan protected area.

4- Determining the relationship between perceived quality and visitor satisfaction in Wadi El-Hitan.

5- Clarifying the effect of perceived quality on visitor loyalty of Wadi El-Hitan protected area.

6- Clarifying if there are differences between Egyptians and foreigners visitors in assessing the dimensions of the research.

QUESTIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The questions of the research are as follows:

1- What is the level of perceived quality by visitors of the visit to Wadi El-Hitan?
2- To what extent are the visitors satisfied with their visit to Wadi El-Hitan?
3- To what extent are the visitors loyal to Wadi El-Hitan protected area?

4- What is the relation between the perceived quality of Wadi El-Hitan and visitors' satisfaction?
5- Is there a strong relationship between the perceived quality of Wadi El-Hitan and visitors' loyalty?

6- Are there differences between Egyptians and foreigners visitors in assessing the dimensions of the research?

LITERATURE REVIEW

PERCEPTION OF SERVICE QUALITY

Perceived quality refers to the customer's perception of the overall quality of a product or service compared to alternatives. Perceived quality is based on customer experiences and feelings. When customers understand a product to be of excellent quality, they are more likely to buy the product compared to other products. On the other hand, perceived quality is customer evaluation of the added value of a service or product (Andervazh, et al., 2016).

Perception of quality is one of the core determinants of product buying and success. It is the customers' own perception of the service or product. This means the difference between what the customer expects from the product and what they actually receive. It is generally based on some dimensions about the product's performance (Kandasamy, 2014; Ullah et al., 2016).

The issue of measuring service quality has received attention in recent years in the tourism and recreation literature (Hudson et al., 2003). SERVQUAL represents service quality and it requires respondents to answer questions about their expectations and perceptions. The authors capture these criteria using a scale composed of 22 items designed to cover five dimensions reflecting service quality. The dimensions are: assurance, empathy, reliability, responsiveness, and tangibles (Parasuraman et al., 1994).

Daniel and Berinyuy (2010) and Qadri (2015) stated that service quality is the most important factor for the success of any organization. Service quality is a comparison of perception with expectations. Quality has five dimensions as follows:

- **Assurance** means knowledge of competence, courtesy of staff, respect of customers, trust and confidence, safety and security, creditability

- **Empathy** means giving caring, individualized attention to customers and understanding their needs and wants. It also means allowing customers easy access to the staff of the organization and their service and information. Furthermore, it entails employees communicating clearly and appropriately to their customer.

- **Responsiveness** willingness to help customers and provide prompt service, willingness to sort out the problem and help, providing a better complaint handling service, providing flexible service to the customers.

- **Reliability** has the ability to provide the promised service regularly, consistently, timely and accurately to consumers.

- **Tangibility** is defined as visual appeal, physical facilities, equipment, employees, and communication materials.

Primarily, the SERVQUAL model was developed to know how customers rate the services offered to them. Although SERVQUAL represents a general measurement instrument for service industries, it should be adapted to the specific features of each service for which the research is conducted (Daniel and Berinyuy, 2010).

VISITOR SATISFACTION

Satisfaction was defined as the psychological outcome that emerges from experiencing the service. Satisfaction occurs when a product's performance meets the purchaser's expectations before and during the trip. People go on holiday to satisfy one or several of their needs. The positive

attitude toward evaluating consumption experiences with a certain product or service is called satisfaction. Customer satisfaction is the precursor of loyalty (Prebensen, 2004; He et al., 2012; Hood, 2015).

Visitor satisfaction was defined as the overall consumer's evaluation based on the consumer's total purchase and experience with a product or service (Chinomona, 2013). Customer satisfaction is becoming the guiding principle for establishing and developing marketing techniques. It should be considered as a means of improving the company's performance. Satisfied customers have a higher chance of repurchasing the same product (Awan and Rehman, 2014).

Both Ahmed et al. (2014), Hood (2015) illustrated that visitor satisfaction can be measured by the following dimensions:

- Overall you are satisfied with specific experience with the product.
- You are satisfied with my decision to purchase from this product.
- Delivers what was product.
- you consider this product a good buy.
- you got more than my money's worth.
- You make sense to use this product instead of another one.
- You prefer to use this product even if it has same features as another.
- You prefer to use this product even if another has better features.
- This product is the best.

VISITOR LOYALTY

Managing customer relationships and increasing customer loyalty has been a topic of strategic importance for organizations. Tourist loyalty has been studied since the 1990s (Zhang et al., 2014). A successful marketing strategy must focus on winning new tourists and developing the loyalty of current tourists (Campo´ n et al., 2013). Retention and maintenance of existing customers costs less than gaining new customers. The level of loyalty can be reflected in the customers' behavioral intention to revisit the destination and their intention to recommend the experience to friends and relatives (Zhang et al., 2014).

Valle et al. (2006) illustrated that marketing of products and services measured loyalty by repeated sales or by recommendation to other consumers. Travel destinations can also be perceived as products that can be revisited and recommended to friends and family who are potential

tourists. According to Saeed et al. (2013), loyal customers increase the profits of companies as they are willing to:

- Purchase more and pay out money on products and services of high quality.
- Recommend products and services to others.
- Give companies sincere suggestions.

Visitor loyalty refers to a consumer's preference to buy a particular product and the repeated purchase of a product from a familiar supplier. It occurs when consumers perceive that the product offers the right product features, images, or level of quality at the right price. Visitor loyalty may occur due to a long history of using a product and trust that has developed as a consequence of that usage. Visitor loyalty achieves more profitability and competitive advantages for companies (Ishak and Abd Ghani, 2013; Ahmed et al., 2014; Hood, 2015).

Both Ahmed et al. (2014), and Hood (2015) measured the visitor loyalty by the following dimensions:

- You enjoy visiting the destination.
- The destination would be your preferred choice for a vacation.
- Overall you are loyal to this destination.
- You would advise friends to visit this destination.
- Destination provides more benefits.
- You will visit this destination in the future.
- You regularly visit this destination.
- You usually use this product.
- The product would be your first choice.
- You will not buy other products if the same product is available.
- You recommend this product to someone who seeks your advice.
- You say positive things about this product to other people.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEIVED QUALITY, SATISFACTION AND LOYALTY

Moreover, the perception of quality leads to visitor loyalty (Todor, 2014). perceived quality will affect customer satisfaction and trust with the product, which leads to an increase in loyalty to the product (Andervazh et al., 2016).

Valle et al. (2006) clarified that customer loyalty could be recognized as an extension of customer satisfaction. Generally, customer loyalty leads to continuous purchasing of the product and thus generates profits for the

company. According to Prebensen (2004), satisfied tourists recommend the product to others (word of mouth), and they tend to re-buy the product.

The results of Chi et al. (2009) and Ahmed et al. (2012) research, indicated that there is a positive relationship between the perceived quality by customers, and loyalty to the product. Moreover, perceived quality have a significant impact on loyalty to product. On the other hand, they discovered if the link between perceived quality and satisfaction becomes consistent, then it is best for loyalty to product.

Numerous researchers have investigated the relationship between perceived service quality and customer satisfaction. They concluded that perceived service quality has more influence over customer satisfaction than perceived price. It is expected that there will be a positive relationship between the perceived quality of a product and consumer satisfaction (Kandasamy, 2014).

EL- FAYOUM GOVERNORATE

Fayoum governorate is a green natural oasis situated in the Western Desert in the west southern part of Cairo Governorate, 90 kilometers away. It is one of the northen Upper Egypt governorates. Fayoum is considered one of the most important destinations as it includes the three agricultural, coastal, and desert environments that represent the tourist attractions. Pre-historic civilizations like the Pharonic, Greek, Roman, Coptic, and Islamic civilizations emerged there. Fayoum Governorate has two protected areas: Karoun and Wadi Hitan (Fayoum Governorate and Ministry of Environment, 2008).

A protected area is defined by IUCN, International Union for Conservation of Nature (2008) as "a clearly defined geographical space, recognized, dedicated, and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values."

Egypt has 30 protected areas in different governorates (Central Department of Protected Areas, Nature Protection Sector, 2017). This study was applied on the Wadi El- Hitan protected area in El-Fayoum Governorate.

WADI EL- HITAN PROTECTED AREA

Wadi Al-Hitan (Whale Valley) lies within the Fayoum governorate and forms part of the Wadi El-Rayan Protected Area (WRPA). It is located 150 km south-southwest of Cairo and 80 km west of Faiyum City. The area of Wadi El-Hitan was declared by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site in 2005. The fossils of Wadi El-Hitan date back to 40 million years. This area

is an open museum and consists of petrified primitive whale skeletons, shark teeth, shells, and other sea animals (Paleczny et al., 2007; Ministry of Environment, 2018).

FOSSILS IN WADI EL-HITAN

The area includes fossils of ancient whales from the earliest and now extinct (the Archaeoceti or archaeocetes). The whale fossils of Wadi Al-Hitan represent one of the iconic stories of evolution: the emergence of whales as modern ocean-going mammals from a previous life as land-based animals. The natural values of Wadi Al-Hitan as a beautiful desert landscape are fragile. These fossil remains are potentially vulnerable to visitor pressure or natural erosion by the wind. The area exceeds the values of other comparable sites in terms of the number, concentration, and quality of its fossils, and their accessibility in an attractive and protected landscape (UNECO, 2005).

The valley contains about 400 rare fossils of whales. The presence of fossils of other early animals such as sharks, shark teeth, crocodiles, sawfish, turtles and rays found at Wadi El-Hitan makes it possible to reconstruct the surrounding environmental and ecological conditions of the time, adding to its justification to be cited as a world Heritage site. No other place in the world yields the number, concentration and quality of such fossils, as is their accessibility and setting in an attractive and protected landscape. Wadi El-Hitan museum is located in north-west of Wadi El-Rayan. There are 406 skeleton of primitive kind of whales in addition to the huge skeleton of the whale called the Lizard which was discovered in 2005 (Fayoum Governorate, 2021).

NATURE IN WADI EL-HITAN

Wadi El-Hitan is home to 15 species of desert plants and about 15 types of wild mammals including the North African jackal, red fox, Egyptian mongoose, African wildcat, and dorcas gazelle. The valley is located behind a mountain, known as Garet Gohannam, (gara) means hill or mountain and Garet Gohannam means the mountain of hell. In the light of the setting sun, the mountain seems ablaze with an eerie red light drawing a fascinating scene (Fayoum Governorate, 2021).

THE SERVICES AND FACILITIES IN WADI AL-HITAN

According to United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO (2005), there are many facilities and services provided to tourists as follows:

- Access: the official access to the Wadi El-Hitan site is through the main gate of the WRPA (Wadi El- Rayan Protected area). The existing track, which has been demarcated from the main road to Wadi El-Hitan, will be modified so as to start from the Main Gate outpost. A guiding/security service is offered to legal visitors.

- Ticketing: A new ticketing system will be established which differentiates between nationals and foreigners and with a specific additional fee levied for visiting the open air museum in Wadi El-Hitan.

- Open-air museum: The open-air museum is established over a 1-2 km radius core area of the Wadi El-Hitan fossil site. It will feature state of the art interpretation facilities and displays on the unique geology and palaeontology of the site and several professionally prepared skeletons. Vehicular access will be strictly reduced.

- Camping: camping service with basic facilities was provided in Wadi El-Hetan. Camping activities include learning about the history of the region, psychological serenity, astronomy and observing stars. Camping in Wadi El-Hitan requires a license from the Ministry of Environment and the Sector of Protected Areas.

- Ecotourism services: Services will be provided by licensing private sector initiatives in the following areas: (1) guided trekking tours; (2) camel rides either in Wadi Al- Hitan or along the ancient caravan trails approaching the Fayoum depression (3) a Bedouin-style eco-lodge offering the "deep desert experience" will be established.

Wadi El-Hitan was selected in this study as it is one of the most important sites in Egypt and in the world as it demonstrates one of the iconic changes that make up the record of life on Earth: the evolution of whales (UNESCO, 2005). The distance between Wadi El-Hitan and Cairo provides many opportunities for national and international tourism (Paleczny et al., 2007).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To achieve the objectives of the research, both primary and secondary data were used. Primary data depended on a quantitative approach that was based on a questionnaire. The questions are clear so the participants understood in the same way. The current study aims to measure the relationship between the perceived quality and visitor satisfaction and loyalty to the Wadi El-Hitan protected area in El-Fayoum Governorate.

THE POPULATION AND THE SAMPLE

This research was applied in Wadi El-Hitan protected area. The number of visitors to Wadi El- Hitan protected area in 2019 was 27.600 visitor including 22.000 Egyptians and 5.600 foreigners (Protected areas Bureau in El- Fayoum Governorate, 2020). The research depended on random sample of 240 visitors but only 200 were valid to analysis. The collected questionnaires included 150 Egyptian visitors and 50 foreign visitors.

DESIGNING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

This research depended on the quantitative approach. The data collection tool for this research was a questionnaire. The questionnaire was closed ended and was segmented into three sections. The first section included the demographic data. The second part included data related visiting Wadi El-Hitan. The third section captured the responses of visitors to the variables selected for this study. These variables are perceived quality, visitor satisfaction, and loyalty to Wadi El-Hitan. The research used the five dimensions of SERVQUAL (Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy) to measure the perceived service quality. The dimensions of SERVQUAL were extracted from Parasuraman et al. (1994); Daniel and Berinyuy (2010); and Qadri (2015). The model of SERVQUAL was adapted to match the Wadi El-Hitan protected area and was named as RESERVEQUAL. The dimensions of RESERVEQUAL are subdivided into 25 statements, which were directed to measure service quality in the Wadi El-Hitan protected area. Moreover, visitor satisfaction and loyalty measures depended on Ahmed et al. (2014) and Hood (2015).

The responses of visitors to the selected variables related to this study were measured using the Likert scale. The scale was five points and it ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

DATA COLLECTING AND ANALYSIS

In this study, 240 questionnaires were distributed to visitors and 210 questionnaires were collected from the selected sample. Ten questionnaires were not valid and 200 questionnaires were valid to be analyzed. The questionnaires were distributed from April to July 2021.

The responses were analyzed by SPSS Version 22. In SPSS, a reliability assessment was conducted to access the internal consistency of the adapted questionnaire. Frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviation were calculated for demographic data of Egyptians and foreigners. Frequencies and percentages for the data of visiting Wadi El-Hitan. Furthermore, the mean and standard deviation were calculated for the dimensions of the questionnaire for Egyptians and foreigners.

Moreover, in SPSS, Pearson correlation was applied to inspect the relationship between perceived quality and visitor satisfaction. On the other hand, it measures the relationship between the perceived quality and visitor loyalty to Wadi El-Hitan. Furthermore, a T-test was computed to determine the differences between the Egyptians and foreigners in their responses to the research dimensions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After analyzing the questionnaires that were directed to visitors in Wadi El- Hitan, the following results were extracted:

Table 1: Reliability of research dimensions

N of items	Cronbach's Alpha
44	.94

Table 1 shows the internal reliability of the dimensions, which was measured by Cronbach's alpha. The estimated value of Cronbach alpha for the items of the research was higher than 0.7, which indicates that the current study variables are reliable and there is internal consistency between them.

Table 2: Nationalities of respondents

Nationality	Freq.	%
Foreigners	50	25%
Egyptians	150	75%
Total	**200**	

According to table 2, 75% of respondents were Egyptian tourists and 25% were foreigners. This agreed with the number of visitors to the Wadi El-Hetan protected area in 2019, which was 22.000 Egyptians and 5.600 foreigners. Therefore, the number of Egyptian tourists in the sample of the current research was greater than the number of foreigners.

Table 3: Gender of respondents

Gender	Foreign tourists		Egyptian tourists	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Male	5	10%	112	74.7%
Female	45	90%	38	25.3%
Total	**50**	**100.0%**	**150**	**100.0%**

Table 3 shows the gender categories of the sample. As related to foreign tourists, 10% were males and 90% were females. Of Egyptian tourists, 74.7% were males and 25.3% were females.

Table 4: Age groups of respondents

Age	Foreign tourists		Egyptian tourists	
	Freq.	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**
Less than 21	--	--	21	14%
21- 40	35	70%	96	64%
41-60	15	30%	29	19.3%
More than 61	--	--	4	2.7%
Total	**50**	**100.0%**	**150**	**100.0%**

Table 4 clarifies the age categories of the respondents. The majority of foreign tourists (70%) were between 21- 40 years old. A large percent of Egyptian tourists (64%) were also between 21- 40 years old. This may be due to this age category like adventure and recreation tourism, which was provided in the Wadi El-Hitan protected area.

Table 5: Educational level of respondents

Educational level	Foreign tourists		Egyptian tourists	
	Freq.	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**
High school	10	20%	24	16%
university	25	50%	47	31.3%
Bachelor degree	15	30%	67	44.7%
Master/PhD degree	--	--	12	8%
Total	50	100.0%	150	100.0%

Table 5 illustrates the educational level of the selected sample of visitors. As related to foreign tourists, 50 % of the respondents were in a university and 30% has a bachelor degree. On the other hand, a large percentage of Egyptians (44.7%) have bachelor degree and 31.3% are in a university. This may be related to the large percentage of respondents who were aged between 21-40.

Table 6: Data related visiting Wadi El-Hitan

		Foreign tourists		Egyptian tourists	
		Freq.	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**
1. Familiarity	I've never heard of it	25	50%	6	4%
	I've heard of it, but this is the first time I visit it	25	50%	63	42%
	I visit Wadi El-Hitan occasionally	--	--	23	15.3%
	I visit Wadi El-Hitan regularly	--	--	58	38.7%
2. Attractions of Wadi El Hitan that visitor prefer	Fossil remains of whales and other marine organisms	45	90%	122	81.3%
	Desert plants	25	50%	29	19.3%
	Sand dunes	20	40%	71	47.3%
	Local people in the area	15	30%	26	17.3%
	Watching stars	15	15%	52	34.7%
3. Tools of getting information	Relatives and friends	15	30%	69	46%
	Advertising	10	-	6	4%
	Travel agency	20	40%	30	20%
	Online search	20	40%	86	57.3%
4. Motivations of visiting	Recreational	45	90%	110	73.3%
	Educational	5	10%	40	26.7%

The finding from the answers of the respondents in table 6 revealed that half of the foreign tourists didn't hear about Wadi El-Hitan and half of them heard about the protected area but this was their first time visiting it. On the other hand, 42% of Egyptians heard about the protected area but this was their first time visiting it and 38.7% visited Wadi El-Hitan regularly. This may be due to a lack of marketing campaigns for Wadi El-Hitan.

In questions numbers 2 and 3 in table 6, respondents can choose more than one answer. So, the frequencies and percentages in the table are for respondents who choose "yes" in their answers. The most attractive resources in the Wadi El-Hitan for Egyptians and foreigners are the fossil remains of whales and other marine organisms and sand dunes. The most

common tools which help foreign tourists have information about the protected area are online search and travel agencies with the same percentage of 40%, followed by relatives and friends, with a percentage of 30%. As related to Egyptians, they first depended on online search (57.3%), followed by relatives and friends (46%). This means that online marketing is very important as most tourists know about the protected area through online search. Moreover, online marketing helps to raise awareness of visitors to Wadi El-Hitan and attract more visitors. Finally, the majority of Egyptians and foreigners (73.3% and 90%, respectively) visit Wadi El-Hitan for recreational activities.

This result agreed with IUCN (2012) clarified that protected areas provide great opportunities for connecting people. So, the idea of a global awareness campaign for the protected areas was developed to reach out to new customers. Moreover, this campaign aimed to explain the importance of natural resources to tourists and local people.

Table 7: The perceived quality of visiting Wadi El- Hitan for Foreigners

The perceived quality	Foreign tourists		
	Mean	**Std. Deviation**	**attitude**
Tangibility			
Visually attractive fossil remains of whales and other marine organisms	4.60	.494	Strongly agree
Whale fossils are of great historical value	4.80	.404	Strongly agree
The sand dunes are enjoyable	4.80	.404	Strongly agree
The desert plants around the area are attractive	4.50	.814	Strongly agree
Local people in the area are cooperative	4.70	.462	Strongly agree
Camping services are good and suitable	4.30	.909	agree
Good appearance and uniform of the employees	4.70	.462	Strongly agree
Reliability			
Service offered as promised and accurate	4.70	.462	Strongly agree
Continued			

Table 7: continued			
Employees offer service on time	4.70	.462	Strongly agree
Employees are never too busy	4.70	.462	Strongly agree
When the visitor has a problem, employees show a sincere interest to solve it	4.70	.462	Strongly agree
Responsiveness and access			
Employees are willing to help the visitor	4.80	.404	strongly agree
Employees are capable to response to emergency situations	4.30	.788	Strongly agree
Access to the protected area is available	4.50	.814	strongly agree
Parking is available	4.50	.814	strongly agree
It is easy to have useful information about the protected area during visit	4.80	.404	strongly agree
Clean and well-maintained toilets are available	4.60	.494	strongly agree
Ticket price is keeping with the historical value of the protected area	3.20	.335	neutral
Assurance			
Employees treat visitors well and courteous	4.70	.462	strongly agree
Employees have sufficient knowledge to provide information about the area	4.50	.505	strongly agree
I feeling safe during practicing different activities	4.90	.303	strongly agree
Empathy			
Employees provide individual attention	4.60	.494	strongly agree
Employees understand specific needs of visitors	4.50	.505	strongly agree
Visit hours are flexible and convenient	4.80	.404	Strongly agree
Total mean	**4.68**		**Strongly agree**

Table 7 measures the perceived quality after visiting Wadi El-Hitan. The variables of perceived quality are tangibility, reliability, responsiveness and access, assurance, and empathy. As related to tangibility, the foreigners strongly agreed to all items. They agreed that camping services are good and suitable. Which means that camping services need to be improved more.

The findings of reliability revealed that the respondents strongly agreed with all items by the mean score which is 4.70. As related to responsiveness and access, the highest mean score were the items " employees are willing to help visitors" and " It is easy to have useful information about the protected area during visit" with the same mean score 4.80. while the less mean score was 3.20 for the item "ticket price is in keeping with the historical value of the protected area". The data collected related to assurance clarified that the highest mean score was the item "employees treat visitors well and courteously" with a mean score 4.70. While the less mean score was the item "employees have sufficient information about the area" (4.50).

As related to empathy, the foreigners strongly agreed on all items. The total mean of perceived quality in Wadi El-Hitan for Egyptians was 4.87, which means that the foreigners were satisfied with the quality of visiting Wadi El-Hitan. This result agreed with Daniel and Berinyuy (2010) and Qadri (2015), who stated that service quality is the most important factor for the success of any organization.

Table 8: The perceived quality of visiting Wadi El- Hitan for Egyptians

The perceived quality	Egyptian tourists		
	Mean	Std. Deviation	attitude
Tangibility			
Visually attractive fossil remains of whales and other marine organisms	4.18	.724	agree
Whale fossils are of great historical value	4.59	.519	Strongly agree
The sand dunes are enjoyable	4.18	.867	agree
The desert plants around the area are attractive	3.65	.996	agree
Local people in the area are cooperative	3.91	1.009	agree
Camping services are good and suitable	3.87	.994	agree
Good appearance and uniform of the employees	3.87	1.072	agree
			Continued

Table 8: continued			
Reliability			
Service offered as promised and accurate	3.78	1.054	agree
Employees offer service on time	3.84	.969	agree
Employees are never too busy	3.65	.912	agree
When the visitor has a problem, employees show a sincere interest to solve it	3.91	1.055	agree
Responsiveness and access			
Employees are willing to help the visitor	4.14	.827	agree
Employees are capable to response to emergency situations	3.60	.859	agree
Access to the protected area is available	3.34	1.157	agree
Parking is available	4.09	.854	agree
It is easy to have useful information about the protected area during visit	3.69	1.146	agree
Clean and well-maintained toilets are available	3.62	1.196	agree
Ticket price is keeping with the historical value of the protected area	3.14	1.401	neutral
Assurance			
Employees treat visitors well and courteous	4.04	.957	agree
Employees have sufficient knowledge to provide information about the area	3.91	.948	agree
I feeling safe during practicing different activities	4.01	1.009	agree
Empathy			
Employees provide individual attention	3.72	.983	agree
Employees understand specific needs of visitors	3.69	1.112	agree
Visit hours are flexible and convenient	3.59	1.068	agree
Total mean	**3.83**		**agree**

Table 8 measures the perceived quality after visiting Wadi El-Hitan. The variables of perceived quality are tangibility, reliability, responsiveness and access, assurance and empathy. As related to tangibility, the visitors in the sample strongly agreed that whale fossils are of great historical value by a mean score 4.59. Moreover, they agreed about the other items of tangibility. The highest mean score was the items "the fossil remains of

whales are visually attractive" and "the sand dunes are enjoyable" with the same mean score 4.18. While the less common item was "the desert plants around the area are attractive" by a mean score 3.56.

The findings of reliability revealed that the respondents agreed with all items by a mean that ranged from 3.65 to 3.91. As related to responsiveness and access, the respondents agreed that " employees are willing to help visitors" and "parking is available" by a mean score of 4.14, 4.09 respectively. Moreover, their answers were neutral to the item "ticket price is in keeping with the historical value of the protected area" by a mean score of 3.14. this may be due to low entry fees to the protected area of Wadi El-Hitan.

The data collected related to assurance clarified that the highest mean score was the item that employees treat visitors well and courteously (4.04). while the less mean score was the item "employees have sufficient information about the area" (3.91).

As related to empathy, the visitors in the sample agreed on all items. The total mean of perceived quality in Wadi El-Hitan for Egyptians was 3.83, which means that the Egyptians agreed and were satisfied with the quality of visiting the protected area. This result agreed with Andervazh et al. (2016), who explained that perceived quality will affect customer satisfaction and trust with the product, which leads to an increase in loyalty to the product.

The results in tables 7 and 8 help in answering the First question of the research that focuses on the perceived quality after visiting Wadi El–Hitan.

Table 9: The satisfaction level of visiting Wadi El- Hitan for Foreigners

Visitor satisfaction	Mean	Std. Deviation	Attitude
You are satisfied with your decision to visit Wadi El-Hitan	4.70	.462	strongly agree
You are satisfied with your experience after visiting the area	4.70	.462	strongly agree
Wadi El-Hitan is the best rather than other protected areas	4.50	.677	Strongly agree
Total mean	**4.63**		**Strongly agree**

Table 9 explains that the foreigners were very satisfied with their decision to visit Wadi El-Hitan and with their experience after visiting the area. Moreover, they strongly agreed that Wadi El-Hitan is the best option rather than other protected areas. The total mean level of satisfaction was 4.63, which means that the foreigners were satisfied with their visit to Wadi El-Hitan.

Table 10: The satisfaction level of visiting Wadi El- Hitan for Egyptians

Visitor satisfaction	Mean	Std. Deviation	Attitude
You are satisfied with your decision to visit Wadi El-Hitan	4.20	.998	strongly agree
You are satisfied with your experience after visiting the area	4.08	.862	agree
Wadi El-Hitan is the best rather than other protected areas	3.60	.1.146	agree
Total mean	**3.96**		**agree**

Table 10 explains that the Egyptians were very satisfied with their decision to visit Wadi El-Hitan. Moreover, they agreed that Wadi El-Hitan is the best option rather than other protected areas and with their experience after visiting the area. The total mean level of satisfaction was 3.96, which means that the Egyptians were satisfied with their visit to Wadi El-Hitan.

The results in tables 9 and 10 help in answering the second question of the research that focuses on the level of visitor satisfaction about Wadi El–Hitan.

Table 11: The loyalty level of foreigners to Wadi El-Hitan protected area

Visitor loyalty	Mean	Std. Deviation	Attitude
I would advise friends and relatives to visit this protected area	4.70	.462	strongly agree
I will visit Wadi El- Hitan in the future	4.40	.925	Strongly agree
Total mean	**4.55**		**Strongly agree**

In table 11, the level of loyalty to the Wadi El-Hitan protected area was revealed. The foreigners strongly agreed that they would advise friends and relatives to visit this protected area (mean= 4.70). Moreover, they strongly agreed that they would visit Wadi El- Hitan in the future (mean= 4.40). The total mean is 4.55, which means that the level of loyalty to Wadi El-Hitan is high. This result agreed with Prebensen (2004), who clarified that satisfied tourists recommend product to others (word of mouth), and they tend to re-buy the product.

Table 12: The loyalty level of Egyptians to Wadi El-Hitan protected area

Visitor loyalty	Mean	Std. Deviation	Attitude
I would advise friends and relatives to visit this protected area	4.23	.846	strongly agree
I will visit Wadi El- Hitan in the future	4.05	1.103	agree
Total mean	**4.14**		**Agree**

Table 12 explains the level of loyalty of Egyptians to the Wadi El-Hitan protected area. The respondents strongly agreed that they would advise friends and relatives to visit this protected area (mean= 4.23). Moreover, they agreed that they would visit Wadi El-Hitan in the future (mean= 4.05). The total mean is 4.14, which means that the Egyptians have a high loyalty to Wadi El-Hitan. This result agreed with Valle et al. (2006), who explained that customer loyalty could be recognized as an extension of customer satisfaction. This agreed with the results in table 10 in the current research.

The results in tables 11 and 12 help in answering the third question of the research that focuses on the level of visitor loyalty to Wadi El–Hitan.

Table 13: Correlation between the perceived quality and visitor satisfaction

Correlations				
Nation			Quality	Satisfaction
Egyptians	**Quality**	Pearson Correlation	1	.805[**]
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
		N	150	150
	Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.805[**]	1
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
		N	150	150
foreigners	**Quality**	Pearson Correlation	1	-.224-
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.118
		N	50	50
	Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	-.224-	1
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.118	
		N	50	50
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed).				

Table 13 illustrates the relationship between the perceived quality after visiting and the level of satisfaction for Egyptians and foreigners. The Pearson correlation value for Egyptians is .805[**], which is close to 1, indicating a perfect correlation. Thus, when the perceived quality increases, the level of satisfaction also increases. The correlation between the perceived quality and satisfaction level is a strong one, as the significance value is .000.

This result agreed with Kandasamy (2014) and Andervazh et al. (2016), who illustrated that there is a positive relation between the perceived quality of a product and consumer satisfaction. As related to foreigners, there was no relationship between perceived quality and the level of satisfaction. This is obvious as the Pearson correlation value is .224 and the significance value is .118. This means that the level of service quality doesn't affect the satisfaction level of foreigners. This may be due to the foreigners who came to enjoy the protected area, as Wadi El-Hitan and its resources are unique to them and do not exist in their country. So the level of service quality did not affect their level of satisfaction.

The previous results answer the fourth question of the research that focuses on the relation between the perceived quality and visitor satisfaction about Wadi El –Hitan.

Table 14: Correlation between the perceived quality and visitor loyalty to Wadi El- Hitan

Correlations			Quality	Loyalty
Nation			**Quality**	**Loyalty**
Egyptians	**Quality**	Pearson Correlation	1	.684**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
		N	150	150
	Loyalty	Pearson Correlation	.684**	1
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
		N	150	150
foreigners	**Quality**	Pearson Correlation	1	-.136-
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.348
		N	50	50
	Loyalty	Pearson Correlation	-.136-	1
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.348	
		N	50	50
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

The relationship between the perceived quality and the level of loyalty to Wadi El- Hitan was clarified in table 14. For Egyptians, the correlation value is .684**, which explains that the higher the perceived quality during visiting Wadi El-Hitan, the greater the level of loyalty is. Moreover, it is a strong correlation, as the significance value is .000. This finding reveals that perceived quality will affect satisfaction and trust with the product, which leads to an increase in loyalty to the product as clarified by Andervazh et al. (2016). This result agreed with Chi et al. (2009) and Ahmed et al. (2012) research, which indicated that there is a positive relationship between the perceived quality by customers and loyalty to the product.

As related to foreigners, there was no relationship between the perceived quality and the level of loyalty to Wadi El-Hitan. The correlation value is.136, and the significance value is .348. This result related to the result for foreigners in table 13, which indicated that there was no relationship between the perceived quality and the level of satisfaction for Wadi El-Hitan.

The previous results answer the fifth question of the research, which focuses on the relationship between the perceived quality and loyalty to Wadi El-Hitan.

Table 15: T- Test between Egyptians and Foreigners regarding to the dimensions of the research

Dimensions	Egyptians		Foreigners		df=198			
	Mean	Std. deviation	Mean	Std. deviation	F	Sig.	T	Sig.
Perceived quality	3.83	.679	4.68	.316	27.67	.000	11.92	.000
Visitor satisfaction	3.96	.898	4.63	.462	15.47	.000	6.80	.000
Visitor loyalty	4.14	.914	4.55	.694	1.003	.318	3.29	.004

The T-test clarified that there are significant differences between the answers of visitors in the perceived quality of the visit, level of satisfaction, and level of loyalty to Wadi El- Hitan according to nationality as shown in table 15. It is obvious that the significance values of perceived quality, satisfaction, and loyalty are 0.000 and .004. This means that there are differences between the Egyptians and foreigners in answering questions about these variables. Moreover, it is clear from the mean differences that the perceived quality, satisfaction level, and level of loyalty for foreigners are higher than for Egyptians.

The previous results answer the sixth question of the research, which tries to know the differences between Egyptians and foreigners in answering about the three dimensions of the research.

The suggestions of visitors to improve the quality of services in Wadi El- Hitan

The respondents suggested items to improve the quality of visiting Wadi El- Hitan as follows:
1- providing attention to the road leading to the protected area.
2- caring with the toilets.
3- paying attention to astronomical observations of the stars activity in Wadi El-Hitan and providing the necessary equipment for stargazing.
4- improving the quality of the cafeteria and the place of rest.
5- increasing the number of visiting hours at the closed museum in Wadi El-Hitan.

6- providing an ambulance within the protected areas and training staff on first aid.

7- providing protection tools while skiing on sand dunes.

CONCLUSION

Perceived quality refers to the customer's perception of the overall quality of a product or service compared to alternatives. On the other hand, Visitor satisfaction was overall consumer's evaluation based on the consumer's total purchase and experience with a product or service. The area of Wadi El-Hitan, was subsequently designated by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site in 2005.

To achieve the objectives of the research, both primary and secondary data were used. Primary data depended on a quantitative approach that was based on a questionnaire. The majority of foreigners and Egyptians were between 21- 40 years old. This may be due to this age category like adventure and recreational tourism, which was provided in the Wadi El-Hitan protected area. A large percentage of foreigners and Egyptians didn't hear about Wadi El-Hitan or heard about the protected area but this was their first time visiting it. This may be due to a lack of marketing campaigns for Wadi El-Hitan.

The most attractive resources in the Wadi El-Hitan for Egyptians and foreigners are the fossil remains of whales and other marine organisms and sand dunes. The most common tool which help foreigners and Egyptians have information about the protected area is online search. This means that online marketing is very important as most tourists know about the protected area through online search. Moreover, online marketing helps to raise awareness of visitors to Wadi El-Hitan and attract more visitors. Finally, the majority of Egyptians and foreigners visit Wadi El-Hitan for recreational activities.

Foreigners and Egyptians were satisfied with the quality of visiting the protected area. The Foreigners and Egyptians have a high loyalty to Wadi El-Hitan. There was a relationship between perceived quality and the level of satisfaction and a relationship between perceived quality and loyalty for Egyptians. On the other hand, there was no relationship between perceived quality and satisfaction and no relationship between perceived quality and loyalty for foreigners. This means that the level of service quality doesn't affect the satisfaction level or loyalty of foreigners. This may be due to the foreigners who came to enjoy the protected area, as Wadi El-Hitan and its resources are unique to them and do not exist in their country. So the level of service quality did not affect their level of satisfaction.

There are differences between the Egyptians and foreigners in answering questions about the variables (perceived quality, satisfaction and loyalty). Moreover, it is clear from the mean differences that the perceived quality, satisfaction level, and level of loyalty for foreigners are higher than for Egyptians.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS DIRECTED TO THE MANAGEMENT AND THE STAFF OF WADI EL- HITAN

1- Increasing the awareness campaigns of wadi El- Hitan (schools, universities, visitors, staff, local community) in order to learn more about this protected area and how to conserve its resources.

2- Providing attention to the road that lead to the protected area, the toilets, cafeteria, rest area and first aid services.

3- Communicating with the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities to intensify promotional campaigns for the Wadi Al-Hitan. These campaigns increase awareness of the area and its resources and how to conserve them.

4- Translating the documentary film about whale fossils into more than one language.

5- Putting signs that include regulations for visitors to enjoy the attractions while conserving them during their visit, as most visitors go to Wadi El-Hitan for recreation. Furthermore, preparing other signs involve cultural and historical information about the fossils and other resources in Wadi El-Hitan.

6- Providing protection tools while skiing on sand dunes.

7- Paying attention to astronomical observations of the stars activity in Wadi El-Hitan and providing the necessary equipment for stargazing.

8- Recycling the area's wastes will help to reduce the environmental pollution.

RECOMMENDATIONS DIRECTED TO MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT

1- Increasing the entry ticket price to keep with the historical and worldwide importance of Wadi El-Hitan.

2- Establishing an eco-hotel in Wadi El-Hitan and spending its revenues on the development of the road, services, staff training courses, and maintaining resources.

3- Providing staff with courses in environmental guiding and conserving resources is important as they have an important role in educating visitors about Wadi El-Hitan and protecting the environment.

4- Encouraging the preparation of scientific research in the field of fossils from Wadi El-Hitan to support the management of the site. Moreover, the research will support the geological aspect of Fayoum governorate.

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