

Perceived Service Quality Gap in Eco-hotels in Sri Lanka

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Eco-hotels are constantly challenged with elevating service quality to ensure customer satisfaction to remain sustainable. In Sri Lankan context, reviews by eco-tourists indicate discontent. Since the customer expectation and perception of eco-hotels is underexplored in Sri Lanka, this study attempts to identify if a disparity between customers' expectation and perception of services of Sri Lankan eco-hotels, exists. The ECOSERV dimensions are assessed against customer 'Expectation' and 'Perception' which are the variable for identifying Customer Service Gap in the Gap Theory by Parasuraman. Primary research focused on international and local visitors to four eco-hotels in Sri Lanka and a quantitative analysis on their expectation and perception of service quality. The results conclude that there is indeed a negative gap between customer expectation and customer perception of service quality of eco-hotels in Sri Lanka. Customers' expectations of ECOSERV variables are not met. Additionally, the study revealed that the eco concept has been misinterpreted by most eco-hotels in Sri Lanka, requiring further research. Implementation of more renewable technologies, enhance local engagement, and more market research are recommended to enhance the sustainability of eco-hotels. The study benefits eco-hotels with the knowledge gained and highlights eco-tangibles as the ECOSERV element to improve for higher eco-customer satisfaction.

Keywords: *Customer satisfaction, Eco-hotels, ECOSERV, Eco-tourism, Service quality*

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