

## **Analysis of the Quality Service: a study between the customer and the tour guide perceptions on regional tours of SESC-Santa Catarina, Brasil**

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### **Abstract**

For meeting the demand of tourism and ensuring excellence in service, the labor market requires a skilled and innovative workforce. Considering this need, the aim of this work was to analyze the quality perceived by costumers regarding the services provided by tour guides in the SESC - SC regional itineraries, through statistical inferences. Questionnaires were applied to clients and tour guides, resulting in a sample of 180 cases in the first group and 09 cases in the second. This scientific research was methodologically devised as a quantitative, applied, and descriptive approach to the subject. The technical procedures used were the bibliographic research, followed by a survey, in accordance with the SERVPERF model. It was possible to verify, through statistical analysis, that the work of this professional results in satisfaction with the service quality. Moreover, the opinions of customers and guides are relatively similar, indicating absence of gaps between perceptions.

**Keywords:** Tourism, Tour Guide, Quality of service, Customer satisfaction.

### **Resumo**

#### **Análise da Qualidade do Serviço: um estudo entre a percepção do cliente e do guia em roteiros regionais do SESC - Santa Catarina, Brasil**

Para atender a demanda da atividade turística e garantir a excelência no serviço, o mercado de trabalho tem exigido uma mão de obra qualificada e inovadora. Tendo em vista essa necessidade, o objetivo deste trabalho foi analisar a qualidade percebida pelos clientes em relação aos serviços prestados pelos guias de turismo, em roteiros regionais do SESC - SC por meio de inferências estatísticas. Questionários foram aplicados a clientes e guias de turismo, resultando em uma amostragem de 180 casos com o primeiro grupo e de 09 casos com o segundo. O delineamento metodológico da pesquisa se caracteriza como científico, de abordagem quantitativa, de natureza aplicada e descritiva. Os procedimentos técnicos utilizados foram a pesquisa bibliográfica, seguida de um

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*survey*, estabelecida segundo o modelo SERVPERF. Por meio de análise estatística foi possível verificar que a prestação do serviço oferecido por este profissional resulta em satisfação com a qualidade de serviço, e que a percepção de cliente e guia são relativamente semelhantes, indicando inexistência de lacunas (gaps) entre as percepções.

**Palavras-chave:** Turismo; Guia de Turismo; Qualidade de serviço; Satisfação dos clientes.

## Resumen

### **Análisis de la calidad del servicio: un estudio entre la percepción del cliente y el guía en rutas regionales de SESC-Santa Catarina, Brasil**

Para satisfacer la demanda de la actividad turística y garantizar la excelencia en el servicio, el mercado de trabajo ha requerido una mano de obra calificada e innovadora. En vista de esta necesidad, el objetivo de este trabajo fue analizar la calidad percibida por los clientes en relación a los servicios prestados por guías de turismo, en rutas regionales de SESC-SC por medio de inferencias estadísticas. Se aplicaron cuestionarios a los clientes y guías de turismo, resultando en 180 casos de muestra con el primer grupo y 09 casos con el segundo. La delineación metodológica de la investigación se caracteriza como aproximación científica, cuantitativa de carácter aplicado y descriptivo. Los procedimientos técnicos utilizados fueron la literatura, seguido de una *survey*, establecida según el modelo SERVPERF. A través del análisis estadístico fue posible verificar que el servicio brindado por este profesional resulta en satisfacción con la calidad del servicio, y que la percepción del guía y del cliente son relativamente similares, lo que indica la ausencia de brechas entre las percepciones.

**Palabras clave:** Turismo; Guía de turismo; Calidad del servicio; Satisfacción del cliente.

## INTRODUCTION

Brazil, with its continental dimension, features wide ethnic, cultural, human, and landscape diversity, which arouse interest in a growing number of people who seek to know and live multiple experiences in part of their free time. Given such real and latent demand, the aim is to meet the personal desire of the consumer who uses material and subjective enjoyment as a guideline for choosing tourism destinations (BENI, 2006).

Given this context, and with increasingly demanding consumers, more attention to the service quality is required. Thus, the management of quality as a competitive strategy is a paramount requirement for the tourist sector and a differential in the service provision. Paladini (1998) emphasizes the need for commitment of all employees in the company organizational chart so the quality management is progressively developed. Silva (2006) also mentions that the concept of total quality is not static and should be updated to keep up with changes in the needs and preferences of customers.

Sarmiento and Costa (2011) explain that perception is not only a response to senses and external stimuli, but also a critical activity. However, Téboul (1999) mentions that the best way to know the customer opinion on service quality is quantifying the service performance, thus making tangible the perception of what is intangible.

Therefore, planned activities start to include the presence of a tour guide, an important agent in the daily exercise of tourist activity, who should present professional competencies and abilities to ensure costumers' safety and

satisfaction. The guide is the human element, the interpreter, and the administrator of itinerary and program (technical, artistic, socio-cultural, and patrimonial) of destinations offered by tourism agencies (CANANI, 1999). More than informing, the tour guide should provide a quality service to assure customers' safety and satisfaction, establishing the link between those who consume and those who offer the tourist experience (GONZALEZ; MARTINEZ, 2010).

The contemporary tour guide has a many-face role that consists of several distinct and complex functions (RABOTÍC, 2010). El-Sharkawy (2015) notes that the tour guide has the role of a motivator, as well as the responsibility to promote a receptive and welcoming environment, providing sufficient information for a good customer service.

Aiming to evaluate the customers' satisfaction and the quality they perceived, the article applies the service quality evaluation model SERVPERF (Cronin & Taylor, 1992), based on the SERVQUAL model (Parasuraman et al, 1985). The method to achieve such purpose was the evaluation of the customers' perception regarding the quality of the Tour Guides' service provision; the Guides' perception concerning the service provided; and the comparison of these perceptions (customers and Tour Guides) considering possible gaps in the service quality.

We considered the domestic tourism, focusing on the one promoted by the National Department of the Social Service of Commerce (SESC), whose scope of practice extends throughout the national territory. It is composed of Regional Departments (RD), including the unit SESC Prainha, in Florianópolis, Santa Catarina, which offers a wide range of education, health, culture, recreation, and Social Tourism services.

Therefore, "customer", in this study, is the tourist/wayfarer in the emissive mode of tourism offered by SESC; the "tour guides" are those providing service within the state of Santa Catarina. However, it is important to emphasize that the Guide's activity largely occurs in offsets, destinations, and attractions visited, which are part of the service provided by the professional.

Given this context of analysis, the following section, which consists of a literature review, mainly discusses social tourism, tour guides, the excellence of tourist services, and the SERVPERF model. Subsequently, the methodological design is presented, as well as the study results and the conclusions arising from them.

## **SOCIAL TOURISM**

Social tourism as a commercial modality, that is, involving tourist business (packages, lodging, food) is already a reality for low-income consumers. However, unlike in most countries of Europe and Latin America, the initiatives developed in Brazil by public agencies are still incipient, restricted to some social welfare-oriented institutions, among which the Social Service of Commerce (SESC) is highlighted. (FALCÃO, 2006).

Considering South America, Abítia (2006, p. 151) mentions that "usually there is not sufficient offers that include social aspects to publics of our interest, nor effective instruments of public support". He emphasizes, nevertheless, the important role of associations, even though there are only a few private companies that share the commitments and principles of social tourism. Along these lines,

Beni (2006) affirms that only with a State intervention with non-profit and no investment recovery objectives – a non-existent policy in Brazil – the popular classes will be met in the tourist practice.

The SESC – Social Service of Commerce, a pioneer in the development of Social Tourism in the country, created in 1946 by commerce entrepreneurs, “is a non-profit entity that develops activities related to the well-being of commerce workers and their dependents” (SESC, 2007).

These activities include the provision of tourist services to its members. Developed within Regional Departments, the emissive tourism is the main Social Tourism modality of SESC. By programming tours and excursions to various regions in the state and in other several tourist regions of the country with affordable prices, this program aims at the democratization of access to tourism. It primarily aims lower income people of all age groups, both from the group of commerce workers or not, with affordable prices, provided that the offer will not harm its internal demand (SESC, 2007).

Such connotation meets the ideas mentioned by Falcão (2006, p. 2), who reports that “social tourism values are expressed through affordable prices, animation, cultural encounters, solidary and participative dimensions, educational activities, and the development of communities”.

SESC follows the concept of the Bureau International Tourisme Social - BITS, currently named International Organization of Social Tourism (OITS), to define the guidelines for its Social Tourism program. Created in 1963 and linked to the World Organization of Tourism, it comprises independent institutions and private organizations that perform activities to develop social tourism (CADERNOS SESC, 2011).

The BITS states that Social Tourism is the “set of relations and phenomena from the participation in tourism of less favored social strata, which is enabled or facilitated by well-defined social measures that involve a predominance of the idea of service and not profit” (BITS, 1996, s/p).

This is consistent with the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (UNWTO, 1999, p.12), which, in its article 70 - Right to Tourism, states that “Social Tourism, and in particular associative tourism, which facilitates widespread access to leisure, travel and holidays, should be developed with the support of the public authorities”.

In planned activities of tours and excursions, there is invariably the figure of the Tour Guide, who runs the whole itinerary and program provided on the trip, in a direct contact with customers. Next, a brief introduction of the Tourist Guide, a professional who has an important role in the tourist system.

## **TOUR GUIDE**

According to the World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations, the tour guide is “the person who guides visitors in their language of choice and interprets the cultural and natural heritage of an area, and that usually has a specific qualification issued and/or recognized by the competent authority” (WORLD FEDERATION OF TOURIST GUIDES ASSOCIATION, 2003).

The Guide should be understanding, demonstrate behavioral, cognitive, and affective skills, be sensible to the need of others and do not judge people,

thus increasing visitors' satisfaction (FOWLER; WEERAKIT, 2013). He is the protagonist of a complex process and, sometimes, represents the decisive factor for a successful or unsuccessful trip (NASCIMENTO et al, 2014).

The tourist literature has widely acknowledged that "the quality of the tour guide's service is a critical factor to achieve tourist satisfaction, influencing the travel operators' reputation, the word-of-mouth advertising, and affecting the image and intent of revisiting a destination" (CHANG et al. 2010, p. 205). In addition to the wide complexity of the guide work, which involves the tour guide, the participants (tourists) and the environment (scenario), the offer of tourism experience occurs when these three elements interact in the same time and space (RABOTÍC, 2010).

Establishing a relationship with the services management from Zeithaml and Bitner (2003), specific abilities are required for the professional competencies to reach the necessary quality. Thus, as pointed by Mossberg (1995), the tour guide contributes to a safe tourism experience with his efficiency and knowledge, influencing the overall quality. Quality in tourist services is addressed below.

## **QUALITY OF SERVICES IN TOURISM**

For understanding the quality of tourist services one should review the concept of service quality and realize it is related to customer satisfaction. "The literature points out different approaches regarding satisfaction, being classified as an objective goal, a process or a psychological phenomenon" (SALOMI; MIGUEL, 2002, p. 2).

Satisfaction is like a cognitive state of being appropriately or inappropriately rewarded (HOWARD; SHETH, 1969). Oliver (1980) considers customer satisfaction as a result of a comparison between prior expectation and effective experience of consuming a product or service. To Churchill and Suprenant (1982), customer satisfaction can be understood as that which comes from the comparison between what someone gets and the costs of purchasing it, anticipated by him/her.

In the field of tourism, the concept of satisfaction according to El-Sharkawy (2015, p. 81) is defined as "the quality of the visitor's experience and the psychological result from the interaction with different facets of a service in a destination". Complementing this perception, the study on tourism agencies by Lezana and Vasconcelos (2014, p. 497) concludes that "service quality is an important element to develop the sector, intermediating between tourist and destination".

Cano et al. (2012), through management tools and using indicators for customer satisfaction analysis, verified opportunities for the sector of tour guides, to have more productive staff with general knowledge, ensure competences and technical skills, and promote positive attitudes. Brenner (2013) presents a broad study from the tourist motivation to satisfaction, defining the latter as a result from prior need and acquired experience, linking expectation to positive satisfaction results. Thus, the tourist's adaptability is a necessary element.

Consequently, due to the occurrence of a real time of encounter between production and simultaneous consumption, which is defined by Zeithaml and Bitner (2003, p. 37) as inseparability of concurrency, "the quality of services and

the customer satisfaction will largely depend on the actions of employees and of the interaction between them and the clients.

According to Lezana and Vasconcelos (2014, p. 498), “service quality should be assessed through tangible and measurable dimensions, focused on business managing, such as those related to infrastructure, human resources, operations, costumers relations, among others”. Parasuraman and Berry (1995) have already prompted about this need, but emphasizing that it is indispensable to accomplish it constantly, reporting that this is a good measure to quickly realized the weakness of the service and eliminate them.

Such assessment occurred, in this study, though the SERVPERF scale, considering the investigation of five determinants in which the quality of Tour Guide’s service can be noticed: reliability, responsiveness, security, tangibility, and empathy. Such scale will be discussed below.

### **SERVPERF MODEL**

Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985), after some years of research and definition of the service quality dimensions, created a scale called Service Quality Gap Analysis (SERVQUAL), considering costumers’ expectations on a specif service and relating it to the quality perception of the service provided.

Such model consists of 22 items that make up the five dimensions or determinants of quality presented by the authors: reliability, responsiveness, security (competence, courtesy, credibility, and safety), tangibility, and empathy (access, communication, and understanding).

Posteriorly, Cronin and Taylor (1992) proposed the SERVPERF model, which uses the same five dimensions of service quality and the twenty-two statements regarding the perception on performances of the SERVQUAL model proposed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988), suppressing the parameter of expectation, which has other 22 remaining issues (CAMISÓN, 2006).

The SERVPERF does not measure customer expectations because, according to its authors, service quality is better evaluated if only the perceptions of costumers regarding service performance are considered. The performance assessment itself offers the most appropriate results in the measurement of the construct (CRONIN; TAYLOR, 1992).

Scoring on the SERVPERF model is obtained directly from the performance assessment items of the SERVQUAL scale, trough a five- or seven-point *Likert*-type Scale (MARCHETTI; PRADO 2001).

Cronin and Taylor (1992) and Fujii et al (2010) also stated that the service quality perceived precede customer satisfaction, and that such satisfaction has an important role on purchase intentions. For the authors, service quality is represented as follows: Service Quality equals to Perceived Service Performance. In addition, “the service quality has a minor influence in the purchase intentions than customer satisfaction, so that the outcome (performance represented by satisfaction) is what really matters”. (FUJII, et al 2010, p. 9). Cronin and Taylor (1992) stated in their article that the marketing literature (CARMAN, 1990; CHURCHILL; SURPRENANT, 1982) offers considerable support to the superiority

of measures based only in the performance of service quality, being, therefore, dispensable to point expectations.

Based on this conceptual framework and quality measurement model, we describe the methodological design of the study in the following section.

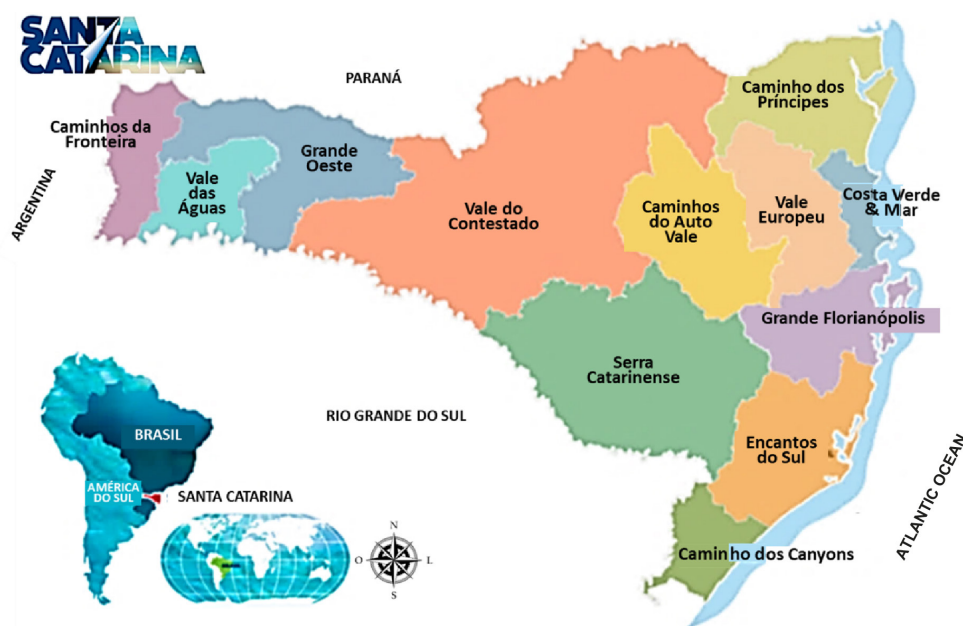
## METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

### Research locus

The investigation scope was established among customers who use the specific tourists/wayfarers' services and who have purchased the tours or trips offered by the SESC – SC in the category of Social Tourism, with origin in the unit of Prainha, Florianópolis. Based on this locus, a brief description of the Santa Catarina State is required, considering the presentation by the Department of Tourism of Santa Catarina (SANTUR), which is responsible by the state tourism managing policy. The state, located in the southern region of Brazil, receives annually about 5 million visitors, including foreigners, Brazilians from other states, and the own inhabitants of Santa Catarina moving around the territory for tourist purposes, generating an income that represents 12.5% of the state's gross domestic product. The internal trade draws attention due to the revenue, with a consumer market of great potential, a collection that represents the 6th largest country income of the country. Service sector is the 7th greatest revenue of the country, especially those related to transport and technology. (SANTUR, 2016).

The state is divided into twelve tourist regions (Figure 1), among them: Canyons' pathway; Path of the Princes; Border Route; Upper Valley Pathway; Green Coast & Sea; Southern Charms; Great Florianópolis; Great West; Mountain Range of Santa Catarina; Waters' Valley; Contestado Valley; and European Valley.

Figure 1 – 12 Tourist regions of the State of Santa Catarina, Brazil.



Source – Adapted from SOL - State Secretariat of Tourism, Culture and Sport of SC (2017).

## Data collection

As a key feature of the survey research method, it can be cited the interest in producing quantitative descriptions of a population using a predefined instrument. Because this is an applied research with the purpose of data collection, this study, after bibliographical research, was divided into two stages.

In the first stage, a questionnaire was prepared through the survey method, with adjustments to the universe of tour guides and clients. In the second stage, a new application was performed due to the fact of this being a quantitative research that aims to achieve the final results through data tab. Subsequently, we could proceed to statistical analysis and interpretation.

To verify the reliability of the questionnaire adapted, we conducted a pre-test. The application of the pre-test questionnaire with *Likert 5*, was conducted in three moments from January to February 2016 in itineraries by the SESC-SC, Unit Florianópolis – Prainha. To do so, the criteria used was through the parameter Cronbach's Alpha (Table 1).

**Table 1** - Table of *Cronbach's Alpha* values for costumers and guides

	Costumer <i>Likert 5</i>		Guide <i>Likert 5</i>	
<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>	0.96		0.81	

**Source** – Results calculated from the application of questionnaires (pre-test) to costumers and guides.

According to the results found, it is verified that the questionnaires given to customers and guides showed internal consistency in their preparation since their values are close to 1, which is the maximum in this parameter's scale.

In the second stage, from October to December 2016, after proven the questionnaires' reliability, they were applied to nine trips that had 284 customers (tourists/wayfarers) and nine tour guides. To determines the size of customer sample, the calculation was based in the Barbetta's formula (2002) for simple probabilistic samples, whereas a tolerable sample error of 5 percentage points. From 284 customer data and assuming this number as the whole population, the minimum samples was set to 164 participants. However, this number was overcome, reaching a sample of 180 valid cases. Concerning guides, the survey was conducted with all participants.

## Analysis procedure

The treatment to the answers obtained after the application of questionnaires was performed through statistical inferences, a procedure required to evaluate the opinions of customers (tourists/wayfarers) on the quality of the services received and to verify the guides perceptions about the service provided. This was done with the objective of verifying and comparing the possible existence of mean differences of customer and guide perceptions in the 22 items of the questionnaire, as well as the dimensions that make up the service quality and meet the research objectives.



Data analysis was performed through the software *Sphinx Plus2* (FREITAS; MOSCAROLA, 2000), which enabled statistical inferences. Average difference was analyzed by *Tukey* test.

## RESULTS

Results subsequently presented are organized according to the specific objectives proposed, showing the opinion of clients (tourists/wayfarers) on the quality of the Tour Guides' service provision; the perception of Guides as to how they believe the clients evaluated the service provided by them; and the possible gaps in the service quality considering opinions of tourists and guides. A brief description of the sample profile is also presented.

### Customer profile (tourists/wayfarers) and Tour Guides participating in the study

In the case of this study, the two groups defined for the research were: 180 contractors that benefited from the tourist packages of the SESC Florianópolis (Prainha), considered as "customers" in this study (tourists/wayfarers); and the Tour Guides who attended the nine itineraries practiced. Regarding the members of the first group, the variables analyzed included: gender, marital status, age group, level of education, average family monthly income, city and state of residence, and purpose of the trip.

Concerning gender variables, the female population was predominant (80.6%), with a considerable difference when compared to the male participants (19.4%). As for age group and gender, most customers were aged from 60 to 69 years (41.1%) and 70 years or more (25.6%), amounting to 66.7% of the total, of which 51.5% are women.

Regarding marital status and gender, of the 37.8% married participants, 13.4% were married women travelling alone. The percentage of widows was 18.2 times greater than the amount of widowers, showing that women have more availability for travel. With regard to education, 43% had completed a higher education degree, of which 10% had Graduate degree. Other 33% have complete high school. Average family income is concentrated mainly between 1 to 3 (37.2%) and 4 to 6 (31.7%) minimum wages, a profile that is consistent with the focus on Social Tourism of the SESC. The predominantly resided in Florianópolis (80.6%), head office of the SESC Prainha, followed by 14.4% who declared to be inhabitants of São José, both municipalities of the state of Santa Catarina, which overall corresponds to 98.9% of the participants' state of residence.

Participants were also questioned on the purposes of the trip, with the option of indicating more than one answer. Recreation was the most cited purpose, mentioned by 46% of the customers, followed by meeting new people (36%), getting to know the SESC programming (32%), and acquisition and exchange of knowledge (31%). The purpose of meeting new places was not mentioned by any respondent, indicating a prior knowledge of the destinations visited.

Concerning tour guides, the variables considered were gender, number of times working by SESC, and time in the profession. The application of these variables was done aiming to measure and discuss relevant issues on the professional profile of the respondent. For age/gender variable, it was found that male guides were 12% more present in the regional SESC-SC itineraries investigated when compared to the activity percentage of female guides (44%). The most concentrated age groups for guides were from 30 to 39 and 40 to 49 years, both with 33% each.

As for the number of times the guide acted in the regional itineraries of SESC-SC, the analysis shows that 89% of them worked in more than 10 trips, and 22% in more than 20 trips, indicating activity experience. In addition, although the Brazilian classification of occupations (MTE – CBO, 2002) states that “the full performance of tourist guides occurs after five years of practice”, the analysis showed that 22.2% of the guides presented more than ten years of experience. Professionals who work from one to three and from three to five years had a regular job frequency, having 77.7% of the guiding frequency, demonstrating a technical capacity in attendance to the labor market of tourism.

### Analysis of customers' (tourists/wayfarers) perception regarding the quality of Tour Guides' service provision

Table 2 presents the descriptive analysis of means regarding the questionnaires applied to the 180 customers in relation to the 22 variables included in the SERVPERF model. The importance of the 22 variables was measured through a *Liker 5 Scale*, which attributed levels from (1) strongly disagree to (5) totally agree. Such variables are related to the model dimensions in numerical function. Thus, the Tangibility dimension comprises numbers {1, ..., 4}; Reliability {5, ..., 9}; Responsiveness {10, ..., 13}; Security {14, ..., 17}; and Empathy {18, ..., 22}.

Considering that the means were defined based on the number of respondents who rated the variables, since they were allowed to also indicated the option “not observed” (NO) and “does not apply” (NA), even if the calculation was performed without taking the non-responses into consideration, these answers amount to 2.3% of the variables set.

The analysis of Table 2 shows that the overall mean of the set is near to the score 5, which is the maximum for this parameter. Maximum and minimum mean values are in the variables Courtesy  $4.84 \pm 0.48$  and Equipment  $4.18 \pm 1.14$ , which in turn belong to the dimensions security and tangibility, respectively.

The variables “brochures and folders, equipment, and physical facilities” are emphasized, as they represent 21.6% of this total. Even though a small percentage compared to the total respondents, it is worth considering this results, because these variables are concentrated within the dimension of Tangibility, which refers to the “appearance of any physical evidence” (ZEITHAML; BITNER, 2003). It is essential to point out that, based on Parasuraman and Berry (1995, p. 205), “services are dominated by the experience qualities, attributes that can only be significantly assessed after purchase and during consumption – production”, different from physical product that allow some level of interaction prior to purchase and consumption. In addition, the evaluation of service

quality through the tourist, being “notoriously an experiential and emotional activity, requires the inclusion of emotional and behavioral aspects” (LEZANA; VASCONCELOS, 2014, p. 495).

**Table 2** - Descriptive analysis of customers' perception regarding the quality of Tour Guides' service provision, in relation to the 22 variables and 5 dimensions

	1	2	3	4	5	Valor médio	Desvio-padrão	TOTAL
1 - Equipment	5.5% (9)	0.6% (1)	22.4% (37)	13.3% (22)	58.2% (96)	4.18	1.14	100% (165)
2 - Physical Facilities	0.6% (1)	0.6% (1)	14.6% (25)	17.0% (29)	67.3% (115)	4.5	0.81	100% (171)
3 - Presentation	1.1% (2)	0.0% (0)	9.6% (17)	12.4% (22)	76.8% (136)	4.64	0.75	100% (177)
4 - Brochures and Folders	0.0% (0)	1.8% (3)	17.0% (28)	12.7% (21)	68.5% (113)	4.48	0.84	100% (165)
5 - Time and date	1.1% (2)	1.1% (2)	10.1% (18)	8.9% (16)	78.8% (141)	4.63	0.8	100% (179)
6 - Problem solving	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	9.1% (16)	9.1% (16)	81.8% (144)	4.73	0.62	100% (176)
7 - Trust	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	7.8% (14)	7.8% (14)	84.4% (152)	4.77	0.58	100% (180)
8 - Services	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	9.4% (17)	7.2% (13)	83.3% (150)	4.74	0.62	100% (180)
9 - Tasks	0.0% (0)	0.6% (1)	8.7% (15)	8.1% (14)	82.7% (143)	4.73	0.64	100% (173)
10 - Information	0.0% (0)	0.6% (1)	5.6% (10)	10.1% (18)	83.7% (149)	4.77	0.57	100% (178)
11 - Readiness	0.6% (1)	0.6% (1)	6.1% (11)	8.9% (16)	83.9% (151)	4.75	0.64	100% (180)
12 - Disposition	0.6% (1)	0.0% (0)	8.4% (15)	7.8% (14)	83.2% (149)	4.73	0.66	100% (179)
13 - Disposition 1	0.6% (1)	1.7% (3)	10.4% (18)	10.4% (18)	76.9% (133)	4.61	0.79	100% (173)
14 - Trust 1	0.6% (1)	0.6% (1)	7.2% (13)	7.8% (14)	83.9% (151)	4.74	0.66	100% (180)
15 - Safety	0.0% (0)	0.6% (1)	6.7% (12)	6.1% (11)	86.7% (156)	4.79	0.58	100% (180)
16 - Courtesy	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	5.0% (9)	5.6% (10)	89.4% (160)	4.84	0.48	100% (179)
17 - Training and knowledge	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	6.3% (11)	11.4% (20)	82.3% (144)	4.76	0.56	100% (175)
18 - Individual attention	1,7% (3)	0.0% (0)	6.9% (12)	7.5% (13)	83.8% (145)	4.72	0.74	100% (173)
19 - Schedules/ Moments	0.6% (1)	0.6% (1)	7.4% (13)	9.7% (17)	81.7% (143)	4.71	0.68	100% (175)
20 - Attentiveness	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	7.6% (13)	8.8% (15)	83.5% (142)	4.76	0.58	100% (170)
21 - Commitment	0.0% (0)	0.6% (1)	8.4% (15)	6.1% (11)	84.9% (152)	4.75	0.62	100% (179)
22 - Understanding	0.0% (0)	0.6% (1)	9.3% (16)	8.7% (15)	81.4% (140)	4.71	0.66	100% (172)
Set	0.6% (22)	0.5% (18)	9.22% (355)	9.3% (359)	80.5% (3105)	4.69		100% (3859)

**Source** – Results from the research. Devised by the author (2016).

**Caption** – Percentage frequency %; (frequency)

Results presented in Table 2 converge with the overall evaluation of the level of satisfaction with the performance achieved by the guide in the trip (Table 3) and of the quality of the service provided by the guide (Table 4). Table 3 shows that the assessment of performance of the service provided by the tour guide (Gap 3) reaches the levels 'satisfied' and 'very satisfied', amounting to 93% of the total.

Regarding the customers' evaluation of the service provided, the Table 4 below shows that the quality of the service provided by the guide is 'very good' and 'excellent', reaching 78% of the all observations. However, this result is different for male and female customers. 89.4% of the men indicated the quality as 'very good' and 'excellent', whereas among women these levels of quality were indicated by 75.3%.

**Table 3** - Assessment of the level of customer satisfaction with the performance of the tour guide

Assessment of the level of satisfaction with the guide performance/Gender	Male %	Female %	Total %
Very dissatisfied	0.00	1.0	1.0
Dissatisfied	1.0	1.0	2.0
Indifferent	0.0	4.0	4.0
Satisfied	6.0	33.0	39.0
Very satisfied	12.0	42.0	54.0
Total	19.0	81.0	

**Source** – Results from the research. Devised by the author (2016).

**Table 4** - Customer evaluation regarding the quality of the service provided by tour guides

Evaluation of the quality of service provided/Gender	Male %	Female %	Total %
Poor	0.00	1.0	1.0
Satisfactory	1.0	11.0	12.0
Good	1.0	7.0	8.0
Very good	6.0	28.0	34.0
Excellent	11.0	33.0	44.0
Total	19.0	81.0	

**Source** – Results from the research. Devised by the author (2016).

## Tour Guides' perception

Table 5 presents the descriptive analysis of means regarding the 22 variables included in the SERVPERF model (CRONIN;TAYLOR, 1992), obtained after applying the questionnaires to the 09 tour guides. Such variables are related to the model dimensions in numerical function. Thus, the Tangibility dimension comprises numbers {1, ..., 4}; Reliability {5, ..., 9}; Responsiveness {10, ..., 13}; Security {14, ..., 17}; and Empathy {18, ..., 22}.

Table 5 shows that maximum mean values are in the variables brochures and folders, time and date, trust, services, tasks, disposition, and security with score 5. The minimum value is in Attentiveness, with mean of  $3.83 \pm 1.33$ , Equipment

(4.25 ± 1.49), and Individual Attention (4.29 ± 0.76). Overall mean of the set is close to 5, indicating that the tour guide feels confident to perform the service.

**Table 5** - Descriptive analysis of the quality perceived by Tour Guides regarding the service provided, in relation to the 22 variables and 5 dimensions

	1	2	3	4	5	Valor médio	Desvio-padrão	TOTAL
1 - Equipment	0.5% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.5% (1)	0.0% (0)	3,3% (6)	4.25	1.49	4.4% (8)
2 - Physical Facilities	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.1% (2)	3.8% (7)	4.78	0.44	4.9% (9)
3 - Presentation	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.5% (1)	4.4% (8)	4.89	0.33	4.9% (9)
4 - Brochures and Folders	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	3.8% (7)	5	0	3.8% (7)
5 - Time and date	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	4.9% (9)	5	0	4.9% (9)
6 - Problem Solving	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.5% (1)	0.0% (0)	4.4% (8)	4.78	0.67	4.9% (9)
7 - Trust	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	4.9% (9)	5	0	4.9% (9)
8 - Services	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.5% (1)	4.4% (8)	4.89	0.33	4.9% (9)
9 - Tasks	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	4.9% (9)	5	0	4.9% (9)
10 - Information	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	4.4% (8)	5	0	4.4% (8)
11 - Readiness	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.5% (1)	4.4% (8)	4.89	0.33	4.9% (9)
12 - Disposition	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	4.9% (9)	5	0	4.9% (9)
13 - Disposition 1	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.5% (1)	0.5% (1)	3.3% (6)	4.63	0.74	4.4% (8)
14 - Trust 1	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.5% (1)	4.4% (8)	4.89	0.33	4.9% (9)
15 - Safety	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.5% (1)	4.4% (8)	4.89	0.33	4.9% (9)
16 - Courtesy	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	4.9% (9)	5	0	4.9% (9)
17 - Training and knowledge	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.1% (2)	3.8% (7)	4.78	0.44	4.9% (9)
18 - Individual Attention	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.5% (1)	1.6% (1)	1.6% (3)	4.29	0.76	3.8% (7)
19 - Schedules/ Moments	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.5% (1)	1.1% (2)	2.2% (4)	4.43	0.79	3.8% (7)
20 - Attentiveness	0.0% (0)	0.5% (1)	1.1% (2)	0.0% (0)	1.6% (3)	3.83	1.33	3.3% (6)
21 - Commitment	0.5% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.5% (1)	3.3% (6)	4.38	1.41	4.4% (8)
22 - Understanding	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.5% (1)	3.3% (6)	4.86	0.38	3.8% (7)
Set	1.1% (2)	0.5% (1)	3.8% (7)	9.3% (17)	85.2% (156)	4.77		100% (183)

**Source** - Results from the research. Devised by the author (2016).

**Caption** - Percentage frequency %; (frequency)

Table 6 and 7, below, are associated with the results of guide's self-evaluation, which deals with managers' (in this case, tour guides) perceptions regarding expectations and specifications of the quality of the service provided. Thus, Table 6 demonstrates that the performance self-evaluation concerning the service provided by tour guides ranges from Satisfied to Very Satisfied, which amount to 100% of the answers. However, when analyzed according to gender, 40% of the male guides were Very Satisfied, whereas only 25% of the female guides reached such evaluation.

Regarding service quality assessment, Table 7 shows that the guide’s self-evaluation also reaches 100% of ‘good’ and ‘excellent’. However, in this case, 75% of the female guides consider this to be excellent, whereas only 40% of the male guides have the same opinion.

**Table 6 -** Assessment of the Tour Guides’ level of satisfaction regarding their own performances

Evaluation of performance satisfaction/Gender	Male %	Female %	Total %
1) Very dissatisfied	0.00	0.00	0.00
2) Dissatisfied	0.00	0.00	0.00
3) Indifferent	0.00	0.00	0.00
4) Satisfied	33.33	33.33	66.66
5) Very satisfied	22.22	11.11	33.33
Total	55.55	44.44	

**Source:** Results from the research. Devised by the author (2016).

**Table 7 -** Tour Guide’s evaluation regarding the quality of the service provided

Evaluation of the service quality/Gender	Male %	Female %
1) Poor	0.00	0.00
2) Satisfactory	0.00	0.00
3) Good	0.00	0.00
4) Very good	33.33	11.11
5) Excellent	22.22	33.33
TOTAL	55.55	44.44

**Source –** Results from the research, devised by the author (2016).

### Comparison among perceptions of customers and Tour Guides

According to Zeithaml and Bitner (2003, p. 96), “the reliability of a service is the ability to perform it in a reliable and accurate way”. Table 8 demonstrates this situation in the reliability dimensions, as it indicated there is an insignificant difference between the point of view of the guide (expectations) and service received by the costumers (performance). Comparing the percentage between service expectation and performance, it is concluded that the mean of reliability dimension achieve 95.66% of what was expected.

Despite the result, a peculiar work must be done between company and employee (tour guide) to reach the excellence of service acceptability, as proposed in the studies of Bojanic and Rosen (1994) and Markovic et al. (2015), when they discuss the gaps in the service provided, through statistical inferences among dimensions. Buosi et al. (2012) also concluded that the most important was

reliability, however, the importance of the dimensions has a direct relation with the sector analyzed, as well with customer profile, hence the need to consider other variables in the satisfaction assessment.

**Table 8** – Tukey test: two samples with different variances  
Reliability Dimension

	Customer	Guide
Mean	4.72	4.934
Variance	0.0028	0.00968
Observations	5	5
Hypothesis of difference between means	0	
GI	6	
Stat t	-4.28343	
P (T ≤ t) uni-tailed	0.002593	
critical uni-tailed t	1.94318	
P (T ≤ t) bi-tailed	0.005186	
critical bi-tailed t	2.446912	

**Source** – Results from the research. 0.05 of significance. Devised by the author (2016).

Considering the results of this study for the Reliability dimension, with Cronbach's Alpha of 0.95, the next analysis (Table 9) refers to the Tukey test to compare the mean differences between customer (performance) and tour guide (expectation) applied to the dimensions tangibility, responsiveness, security, and empathy.

**Table 9** – Tukey test comparing the difference of means between customers (performance) and tour guides (expectation) applied on the dimensions tangibility, responsiveness, security, and empathy.

	Tangibility		Responsiveness		Security		Empathy	
	Client	Guide	Client	Guide	Client	Guide	Client	Guide
Average	4.450	4.730	4.715	4.880	4.783	4.890	4.730	4.358
Variance	0.037	0.110	0.005	0.030	0.002	0.008	0.001	0.135
Observations	4.000	4.000	4.000	4.000	4.000	4.000	5.000	5.000
Hypothesis of mean difference	0.000		0.000		0.000		0.000	
gl	5.000		4.000		4.000		4.000	
Stat t	-1.456		-1.748		-2.154		2.257	
P(T≤t) uni-tailed	0.103		0.078		0.049		0.043	
critical uni-tailed t	2.015		2.132		2.132		2.132	

(continues...)

Table 9 – Continuation

	Tangibility		Responsiveness		Security		Empathy	
	Client	Guide	Client	Guide	Client	Guide	Client	Guide
P(T≤t) bi-tailed t	0.205		0.155		0.097		0.087	
critical bi-tailed t	2.571		2.776		2.776		2.776	

**Source** – Results from the research. 0.05 of significance. Devised by the author (2016).

Results of Table 9 indicate that there is also no significant difference between the point of view of the guide (expectation) and the service received by customers (performance) in analyses of the dimensions tangibility, responsiveness, security and empathy, since the performance was a mean of 94.1%, 96.62%, 97.8% and 108.54% for each dimension, respectively.

The emphasis should be given to empathy, where the service provided by the guide outperforms the expectation in 8.54%. In this case, it is clear the high level of ability of tour guides in their work, as well as the concern of the company with its clients, due to the high level of service acceptance, being the expectations met in about 99.34% of the dimensions.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Professional training and continuous improving are indispensable for a quality service provision and for the satisfaction and enjoyment of customers, due to the variables of the tourist trade, in addition to the growing competition in the labor market, as well as the adoption and popularization of new information and communication technologies.

Among the resulting implications, the statistical analysis, as well as the intersection between the 22 variables and the 5 dimensions of the adapted SERVPERF model, enabled an in-depth assessment of the Social Tourism client and of his level of satisfaction with the service.

Regarding the quality of the Tour Guide's service provision, it was possible to evaluate and quantify the customers' perceptions through statistical analysis applied to the data generated by the customers who responded the questionnaire. Results showed that the mean scores achieved for the 5 dimensions were between 4.358 and 4.93, very close one to each other and also close to the maximum value of 5.

It was possible to consider and quantify the perception of Guides as to the service provided, through statistical inferences, applied to the data generated by those who responded the model questionnaire. The results showed that the mean scores for the 5 dimensions were between 4.45 and 4.78, also very close to each other and to the maximum value (5). In addition, the results showed that the tour guide in the manager of the activity, creating an expectation about the service provided and considering the customers' perception on the service.

The conclusion possible is that the SERVPERF model could be adapted and validated by the *Likert* 5 scale for the universe of tour guides and clients. The adjusted model and its application to the regional itineraries of SESC-SC proved



there is no significant difference between the means within dimensions with regard to the service provided and perceived by the tourist guide, as well as those evaluated by customers' perceptions, because both presented similar results, namely, insignificant statistical differences. This shows that both company as guide meet the customers' demands, who demonstrated to be satisfied with the professional performance.

High performance percentage regarding the service provided indicate the existence of a good level of training and technical capability of the tour guides, as well as a sound management of SESC in trips and excursions.

As for the possible gaps in the service quality, none was demonstrated, considering the service perceived by customers and the guide performance. Thus, based on the dimensions analyzed, it is possible to conclude that both guide as customer are satisfied with the service provided and received.

Nonetheless, to improve the model's adequacy, further studies are proposed, such as the application of the same model in other SESC units in the state of Santa Catarina or other Brazilian states, aiming to increase the sample of tour guides and customers. In addition, the application can be used in other tourist segments where the tour guide is present, not only in Social Tourism, to increase the results on the topic.

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## CONTRIBUTION

**Maria Helena Alemany Soares:** She contributed to define the problem and objectives of the research; to develop the theoretical proposition; to perform the literature review and theoretical framework; to choose the methodological procedures; with data collection; with data analysis; to prepare the tables, graphs and figures; to perform the calculations and projections; to the critical review of the manuscript; to the drafting of the manuscript; to format the manuscript to the RTA rules.

**Carlos Marcelo Ardigó:** He contributed to define the problem and objectives of the research; to develop the theoretical proposition; to perform the literature review and theoretical framework; to choose the methodological procedures; with data analysis; to prepare the tables, graphs and figures; to perform the calculations and projections; to the critical review of the manuscript; to the drafting of the manuscript; to format the manuscript to the RTA rules.

**Marcos Estevão Santiago de Melo Filho:** He contributed to choose the methodological procedures; with data analysis; to prepare the tables, graphs and figures; to perform the calculations and projections; to the critical review of the manuscript.