



# THE IMPACT OF WAITING LINES ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN TOURISM COMPANIES

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This qualitative research study explores the impact of waiting lines on customer satisfaction in the context of tourism companies. The objective of this study is to gain insights into the customers' perceptions and experiences while waiting in lines, and how these factors affect their overall satisfaction with tourism companies. The research adopts a comprehensive literature review to capture the richness and depth of customers' subjective experiences. The analysis focuses on understanding the factors that contribute to positive or negative waiting experiences, including the perceived wait times, the level of information provided during the wait, the demand variability, service capacity, technology integration, customers expectation, queue management strategies, employee commitment and attitude and the interactions with staff and other customers. The findings of this study highlight the importance of effective communication, appropriate facilities, and staff training, managing perceived waiting times, maintaining service quality, embracing technology, and offering alternative experiences in mitigating the negative effects of waiting lines. The implications of this research contribute to the development of strategies and best practices for tourism companies to optimize their customer service and experience management. By recognizing the significance of waiting lines and addressing customers' concerns, companies can foster positive customer perceptions, loyalty, and ultimately enhance their competitive advantage in the tourism industry.*

**Keywords:** *waiting lines, tourism, customers and satisfaction*

## **1. Introduction**

Most of the customers in any business that is existing in this world either serves goods or services are very impatient, on the matter of waiting lines and standing in line whereby it can be one of the most frustrating things the companies especially tourism companies must deal with (Jacobs & chase, 2018). Waiting lines are a common occurrence in various service-oriented industries, including the tourism sector. While waiting is an inevitable part of customer experiences, it has been widely recognized that excessive or poorly managed waiting times can lead to customer dissatisfaction. In this sense mostly the customers term time as a vital factor to access the quality of the service delivered. Time is an essential aspect as well as a restricted resource which has a significant effect on economic value (Hassan & Hassan, 2020). As the century-old proverb determinedly highpoints “time is money”. Within the field of consumption such as in tourism campiness like hotels, restaurants and others, the time is regarded as a limitation in purchasing choice when is not well managed and controlled. The effect of waiting time has the great relationship with customer satisfaction or product evaluation.

According to Brown & Jones (2019) In the highly competitive tourism industry, customer satisfaction plays a critical role in establishing a strong reputation and ensuring repeat business. Mostly the tourism companies are providing the services and not much goods as it in the manufacturing companies so for these reasons, the customer satisfaction is the first thing to be observed and fulfilled so as to ensure the customer loyalty as well as trust on the services

themselves. Waiting lines, however, are often an unavoidable aspect of service delivery in tourism companies, such as hotels, theme parks, and airlines. Waiting times can significantly impact customer satisfaction and have implications for overall service quality perception. Having service day or waiting time in the lines for long, it is not much a problem to most of the customers, the problem happens and causing some negative reactions from the customers when the company management (managers, supervisors and staffs) do not communicate the cause of the delays or waiting lines in the service delivery and how will it be solved without compromising the products' qualities.

Waiting lines are unavoidable or it is the common phenomenon to happen in service industry and even to other sectors as well. There is a need of managing these waiting lines to avoid destructing the main goal of the businesses in tourism companies to satisfy the customers. The management of waiting lines plays a vibrant role in shaping customer perceptions of service quality and, consequently, their satisfaction and loyalty (Liu& Gursoy 2019). With growing competition in today's business in tourism sectors especially in this advanced technology where artificial intelligence is started to be introduced, understanding the impact of waiting lines has become essential for organizations aiming to improve their customer service strategies.

## 2. Research Methodology

This research is the qualitative research study which employs the systematic literature review approach to analyse the existing researches on the impact of the waiting lines to the customer satisfaction in the tourism companies occurring in various settings such as airlines, hotels, theme parks, and tourist attractions. The paper focused much on the articles published between 2019 and 2023 and they were selected from reputable academic and business databases that focusing on empirical studies that explored the relationship between waiting lines and customer satisfaction. Real-world case studies are explored to provide practical insights and validate the proposed strategies.

In the realm of service operations management, it is highly suggested to adopt a standardized approach that facilitates understanding of current procedures, identifying necessary improvements, and enhancing them (Yaduvanshi, & More, 2019). This study is focusing on exploring the impact of waiting lines on customer satisfaction within tourism companies. By utilizing queuing theory, the objective is to improve the performance of the tourism companies or organizations and enhance customers' satisfaction. The research entails a comprehensive analysis of tourism companies or organizations from various perspectives, aiming to achieve the following objectives;

01. Identifying the factors influencing waiting lines in tourism companies.
02. Examining the impact of waiting lines on customer satisfaction.
03. Exploring strategies for reducing waiting lines and enhancing customer satisfaction in the tourism industry.

## 3. Literature Review

This part of the paper presents the review of related literature on The Impact of Waiting Lines on Customer Satisfaction in Tourism Companies. The findings of the study are obtained by addressing each objective as follows:

### 3.1 *The factors influencing waiting lines in tourism companies*

Customer waits in lines are very common in almost all services such as airports, banks, restaurant, hospitals, universities and others but this it doesn't mean that, the companies should not worry themselves on how to resolve them because, they have a big part to play in customer satisfactions when are not well managed (Mittal, 2016). Though, different services have

different target customers but waiting time satisfaction is expected to remain a source of customer satisfaction nevertheless. In the competitive tourism industry, handling waiting lines efficiently is necessary for ensuring customer satisfaction and maintaining a competitive advantage. This part is exploring the factors that influence waiting lines in tourism companies and the possibly ways of managing them without compromising the first role of the company to satisfy the customers. There are some studies analysed and discussed the time the customer used to wait to get the service ranged between 30 to 45 minutes to get exactly what services they ordered (Barlow, 2017; Bielen & Demoulin, 2017; Ahmad et al., 2017). It seems to be like the acceptable time to some of the customers while on other side it is the boredom to other customers which leads to the regening of the services.

According to Aburayya, et al., (2020) there are common five factors in the service industry especially in the tourism companies like hotels and restaurants that influence waiting lines issue are demand variability, service capacity, technology integration, customers expectation, queue management strategies, employee commitment and attitude and administrative facilities, which then were discussed in different perception basing to the studies. Demand Variability whereby this happens when there is fluctuations or changes of time due to the rate of product demand over a given time. It can be influenced by various factors, including seasonal trends (high seasons and low season), economic conditions, market trends, consumer preferences, and external events. High demand variability means that the demand for a product or service can vary significantly from one period to another, while low demand variability indicates a more stable and predictable demand pattern (Smith et al., 2021), Service Capacity basing to the ability to handle the customers within the specific time, directly influences waiting times. Insufficient service capacity often leads to longer waiting lines and frustrated customers. Wang et al. (2020) kept emphasizing the importance of positioning service capacity with anticipated demand to minimize waiting lines. On the technology integration, the research conducted by Li et al., (2019) as well as Zhang et al., (2021) indicate that technologies such as mobile apps, self-service stalls, and real-time updates can vest customers to monitor wait times and make informed decisions, customer expectations. It is sometimes not the matter of longest time of the services to be provided to the costumers rather the way to communicate as to why the delays or waiting lines happen and how will it be solved without compromising the required expectations of the customers. Regarding the study conducted by Kim & Chon, (2019); Luo et al., (2020) emphasized and underlined the need for effective communication, managing expectations, and providing transparent information about waiting times to avoid unnecessary complaints and quarrels with the customers, queue management Strategies. In the study of Chen et al., (2019); Wu & Li, (2022) underlined the importance of adopting suitable queuing models, such as virtual queuing, single-line, or multiple-line to modernize the waiting process. Implementing strategies like virtual queuing or appointment systems can enhance customer satisfaction and reduce perceived wait times, employee commitment and attitude and administrative facilities; when employees are devoted, motivated, and committed to their work, they are more likely to prioritize tasks efficiently and complete them on time hence, this leads to reduced waiting times for customers or clients who are relying on the services provided by the company. Moreover, the company with administrative facilities which are outdated, inadequate, or poorly organized, it can lead to delays in processing paperwork, retrieving information, or accessing necessary resources (Aburayya, et al., 2020). Therefore, organization or the company should work as the team and not individually making sure every part plays its role effectively and, on the way, it is required. Moreover, according to Dawes & Rowley (2016) the common two factors were identified as potentially influencing customer satisfaction throughout the day criticality of time to the customers and the number of customers in the store. Other factors influencing the waiting time satisfaction relationships included time of day, company location and customer activities, both

before and after visiting the fast-food restaurant, hotels and other companies with relation to tourism activities. Though sometimes the customers cannot complaint about waiting times especially in the special events and weekend days. It is normally known that the demand of the service is more the capacity of the service providers (hotels and restaurants).

### *3.2 The impact of waiting lines on customer satisfaction*

In many service-related businesses, waiting lines, also known as queues, are a typical occurrence. Their impact on customer satisfaction have been well researched but there is a need of researching more in this technology advancement era as the customers’ needs are changing as well. Several important findings have been drawn from numerous research studies (currently papers) that have explored the connection between waiting times and customer satisfaction. According to the study by Liang, (2019) waiting lines and delays in receiving the services cause annoyance, boredom, and frustration. The frustrated person acts out in order to deal with the anxiety of waiting in both public and private situations. Similar to the customers in the tourism companies who have long wait times could act in ways to deal with their grievances, such as starting a rumour or switching brands. Negative feelings like frustration, impatience, and annoyance can be caused by standing in line. This indicates that customers experiencing anger after a service delays might file a complaint to the corresponding hotel and might also talk negatively to their friends about the corresponding hotel or airline. Moreover, this also indicates that such customers may not use the corresponding hotel or airline again as the result the hotel or airline loses the revenues and the customer loyalty status as well. Customer satisfaction may be directly impacted by these feelings. According to a study by Zhang and Prybutok (2020), those who are unhappy with the service are more likely to express that displeasure and have a lower overall satisfaction rating. Moreover, unfavourable Word-of-Mouth has been playing a big impact on the affecting the reputation of the goods and services which causes more negative to the service businesses like tourism companies (Yoo & Kim's ,2020). Hence, Long wait times and unsatisfied clients can result in unfavourable word of mouth communication and harm a company's reputation and brand. It is obviously the extended wait times significantly raised negative word-of-mouth (WOM), which in turn affected the purchasing decisions of potential customers and the level of customer satisfaction.

### *3.3 The strategies for reducing waiting lines and enhancing customer satisfaction in the tourism industry*

Waiting time is the amount of time a customer has to wait to receive a product or service. Waiting time or delays have adverse effects on the overall service evaluation, whereas an effective response to the wait influences the service satisfaction. While the good response to the wait in line improves service satisfaction, waiting times and delays have negative consequences on how well the service is evaluated overall. Waiting is possibly the most significant factor contributing to customer complaints in the context of service businesses (Liu et al., 2018) such as hotels, restaurants, airlines and travel dealers. There are many approaches that have been proposed reducing waiting lines and enhancing customer satisfaction as the crucial goals in the tourism industry. Over the years, various strategies have been implemented to achieve these objectives. The strategies like shortening the queue, making waiting times more enjoyable, fairness in queue setup, improving the waiting environment using time fillers while providing information to customers can help to reduce the negative feeling and response from the customers when waiting for the service whether (Liang, 2019).

According to Nandi &Paul (2021) virtual queuing systems have the beneficial effect on the tourism sector's perception of waiting times and consumer satisfaction. It has been shown to be one of the effective strategies in utilizing queue management systems to optimize waiting lines and improve customer satisfaction. These systems involve the use of technology, such as

virtual queuing or mobile applications, to provide real-time information about wait times and allow customers to join queues remotely. Technology solutions adoption, such as property management systems and workflow automation tools, can modernize operational processes, reduce manual errors, and enhance service efficiency which can be a big source and cause of service delays in the hotels. Computerization also facilitates better coordination between departments, leading to faster service delivery and problem-solving techniques when waiting lines occur (Jin et al., 2020). While (Tse & Ho, 2022) believes that adapting to the new technology is one part to cover but also Proper resource allocation can play the vital role in minimizing the service delays and waiting lines in the tourism and hospitality industry particularly in the hotel. By conducting thorough demand forecasting and capacity planning, managers can allocate the right resources, such as staff, equipment, and supplies, to meet customer expectations and reduce service delays. In addition, diversifying attractions and experiences, by providing a variety of attractions and activities, a destination can better distribute tourist traffic and ease congestion in high-traffic regions (national parks, museums). Tourists are encouraged to explore alternate options, relieving pressure on congested locations, by promoting lesser-known destinations or creating new experiences (Guttentag, 2019). On top of that, well-trained and empowered staff members can handle customer inquiries, requests, and transactions more efficiently, reducing waiting times (Sigala, 2019). There is the need to invest in comprehensive training programs to enhance their knowledge, communication skills, and problem-solving abilities. Empower staff to make decisions and resolve issues promptly, ensuring a positive customer experience. While according to Zhang et al., (2020), in today's competitive tourism industry, providing timely and efficient services to customers is vital for creating and sustaining a positive brand image. However, in spite of careful planning, delays or waiting in service delivery may still occur due to the different factors such as customer preference and expectations. It is then recommended to the managers to invest in staff training and empowering them, this is essential for managing and handling delays effectively. The managers as well should prepare employees (staffs) with the necessary skills, knowledge, and authority to address the problem of waiting times and service delays on time and efficiently, ensuring customer satisfaction is maintained. Basing in comprehensive training programs can be among the best and important strategies and techniques that the managers can use to equip staffs with the necessary skills to handle and resolve service delays effectively, though looks to be a long-term strategy. Empowering employees to make decisions within their scope of authority enables quicker problem-solving and enhances overall guest satisfaction (Vaske, 2020). Sometimes the problem is not the delays or waiting time on service delivery rather the actions and decisions that take place after the delays have happened. The quicker the reaction and recovery of the service delays as well the right information that states as to why the services takes long time, gives hope and tolerance to the customers that they are valued and considered. Many customers are annoyed and become unhappy when delays are not solved quicker and no one communicates about the problem itself

#### **4. Discussion**

In the highly competitive scene of the tourism industry, customer satisfaction plays a fundamental role in the success and sustainability of businesses specifically in the tourism business few to mention hotels, airlines, restaurants and travel agencies. Actually, the key aspect that significantly influences customer satisfaction is the management of waiting lines and performing and serving the services to the rate of their expectations. Whether it's at check-in counters, ticket booths, tourist attractions, or even restaurants, waiting lines are an integral part of the tourism experience.

Understanding the impact of waiting lines on customer satisfaction is essential for tourism companies to formulate strategies that enhance the overall customer journey from the

point they start to interact with the business (moment of truth) to the point they are using and evaluating the service packages. This study was mainly based on the qualitative approach whereby basing the finding of waiting lines as shown to be having direct negative impacts on customer satisfaction when the managers and their teams fail to control and manage them.

The main lesson here is that managers need to understand that the notion of having to wait longer than necessary might lower customer satisfaction ratings. Waiting in line can be a frustrating experience for customers, as it consumes their valuable time (Liang, 2019). However, it is not just the duration of waiting that affects customer satisfaction; it is also the perceived waiting time. The findings have shown that customers who perceive the waiting time to be shorter than the actual time tend to be more satisfied (Johnson & Anderson, 2020). Therefore, tourism companies should focus on managing customers' perceptions by employing strategies like training the staff; well-trained staff can positively impact customer satisfaction because waiting in lines makes the customers unhappy and annoyed, the training will add new skills and experience to the staff to serve fast. Training employees to handle difficult situations, provide personalized recommendations, and maintain a friendly manner can enhance the overall customer experience (Lam & Hsu, 2019). The use of chatbots and AI-powered customer service solutions has become more widespread. These technologies can provide instant responses to customer inquiries and offer personalized assistance. Providing entertainment like music and using TV, comfortable seating, or engaging queuing systems. Then, advancements in technology provided tourism companies with opportunities to manage waiting lines more effectively. For instance, mobile apps, online reservations, and virtual queuing systems can help customers plan their visits, reducing actual wait times (Guttentag, 2019), the companies should adopt all technology changes that will facilitate the easier way of serving the customers while reducing the rate of waiting lines as it is currently observed. Implementing these technological solutions not only improves efficiency but also enhances customer satisfaction by providing convenience and reducing frustration associated with waiting lines. Moreover, tourism companies can also opt for providing alternative experiences to mitigate the impact of waiting lines. For example, instead of making customers wait in long queues, companies can offer virtual reality experiences (using electronic display to show the customers what the properties the company has so to help them know what to expect), interactive displays, or pre-show entertainment (like cultural dances). These alternatives not only reduce perceived waiting time but also engage customers, ensuring they have a positive experience even during periods of waiting. On top of that, regularly gather feedback from customers to identify areas for improvement. Conduct surveys, collect reviews, and engage with customers through social media or online platforms. Actively address concerns, make necessary adjustments, and communicate the changes to customers. Demonstrating the commitment to improvement can enhance customer satisfaction.

Although, they can have a big impact on customer satisfaction, waiting lines are an inescapable part of the tourism sector. Tourism businesses must carefully address waiting lines if they want to guarantee client pleasure or happiness. Businesses can increase customer satisfaction and loyalty while achieving long-term success in the severely competitive tourism industry by concentrating on managing perceived waiting times, reducing stress and anxiety, maintaining service quality, embracing technology, and offering alternative experiences.

## **5. Conclusion**

For many tourism businesses across the world, managing consumers in lengthy queues and guarding against lost revenue has been a major area of worry. Customers who are paying a lot of money for a service at hotels, restaurants, and other tourism-related enterprises typically do not want to wait. The task is to ensure that any unpleasant parts of this service experience

induced by the delay are reduced, whether it be the real wait time or the perceived wait time (Kim & Chon,2019). It is true that waiting lines have negative impacts towards the customer satisfaction but in some aspects customers' satisfaction levels are inversely proportional to the length of waiting lines. Prolonged waiting times not only diminish customer satisfaction but also lead to increased frustration, reduced patience, and even potential loss of future business, hence the waiting lines goes beyond the customer satisfaction, it affects even the business as whole. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the importance of managing waiting lines effectively to enhance the overall customer experience and ensure positive word-of-mouth.

## 6. Recommendations.

Based on the research outcomes, several recommendations can be made to tourism companies aiming to improve customer satisfaction. First and foremost, organizations should invest in technologies and systems that streamline the waiting process, such as online booking platforms, mobile apps, and self-check-in booths. These tools can significantly reduce waiting times in lines and enhance efficiency. Secondly, implementing effective queue management strategies is decisive. This involves optimizing staff allocation, providing accurate wait time estimates, and offering entertainment or information to alleviate perceived waiting times. Additionally, regular monitoring and analysis of waiting line data can help identify bottlenecks and operational inefficiencies, enabling companies to make data-driven decisions for process improvements. Furthermore, emphasizing customer communication and providing updates regarding wait lines can enhance transparency and manage expectations. Offering incentives or perks for customers who experience extended waiting times can also help mitigate dissatisfaction and maintain positive customer relationships

Finally, investing in employee training and empowerment is essential. Well-trained staff who can handle customer inquiries, diffuse tension, and provide personalized service during waiting periods can significantly influence customer satisfaction levels. The customers cannot be satisfied before the employees. The Companies and organizations should prioritize the employees first as their number one customer which will increase commitment and devotion in serving customers with better services.

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