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All-inclusive holiday service quality: development and validation of a measurement scale

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to develop and validate a comprehensive scale for measuring service quality in all-inclusive holidays. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the research identifies and validates a seven-dimensional scale encompassing travel, service encounters, public environment, dining, accommodation, entertainment, and arrival and departure. The findings make a significant contribution to the limited body of knowledge on all-inclusive holidays and, more specifically, on service quality within this tourism segment. The validated scale offers practical value for industry practitioners by enabling more effective monitoring and management of key service areas, as well as informing the design and marketing of all-inclusive holiday offerings.

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All-inclusive holidays; package tours; service quality; scale development; tourism marketing

Introduction

All-inclusive holidays are an innovative business model in which essential services such as accommodation, meals, entertainment, and transport are bundled into a package for a single pre-paid price (Zopiatis et al., 2020). Value for money, physical and financial security, convenience, and profitability maximization are appealing benefits of all-inclusive holidays for tourists and service providers (Bui, 2022). Such benefits facilitate the popularity of all-inclusive holidays among tourists and accelerate the global expansion of all-inclusive footprint by such hotel giants as Marriott and Hyatt (Hospitality Insights, 2022; Jelski, 2022). Globally, the all-inclusive segment has experienced significant growth, with resorts, hotel chains, and tour operators expanding their offerings to meet the increasing demand from tourists (Calveras, 2019).

The ongoing expansion of all-inclusive resorts by different hotel chains is likely to intensify the competition among industry as they strive for sustained growth and market presence. To sustain a competitive edge, the embrace of service quality by tourism businesses is of great importance (Oh & Kim, 2017). This is underpinned by the well-acknowledged effect of service quality on many vital ingredients for the industry's success such as tourist satisfaction, service loyalty, and perceived value (Lai et al., 2018).

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Although service quality is widely recognized as important, the all-inclusive system appears to lack consistent oversight in maintaining service quality standards (Ozturk et al., 2019). As a solution, developing a measurement scale for all-inclusive holiday service quality could serve as a valuable tool for industry practitioners in monitoring and enhancing service standards. However, this area remains underexplored in the existing literature, highlighting a notable gap in current knowledge.

Given the knowledge gap, this study was conducted to develop and validate an all-inclusive holiday service quality measurement scale. Despite the existence of numerous service quality scales, the crucial role of context in evaluating service quality (Strombeck & Shu, 2014) necessitates a more precise and context-specific tool to assess service quality in the particular setting of all-inclusive holidays.

Moreover, all-inclusive holidays are distinct from other types of travel and hospitality services due to their comprehensive nature, which includes a variety of services bundled into a single package (Bui, 2022). This context requires a scale that can capture the diverse aspects of the guest experience, which such generic service quality scales as SERVQUAL and SERVPERF are not designed to do. Existing scales typically focus on general service dimensions that may not fully address the unique elements of all-inclusive resorts, such as the integration of travel, dining, entertainment, and accommodation services within a single framework.

This study makes an original contribution to the limited body of all-inclusive tourism knowledge and extends the quality management literature. It also informs industry practitioners about critical service areas for actionable insights specific to all-inclusive holiday settings. Managers and service providers can use the tailored scale to identify strengths and weaknesses across different service dimensions, enabling targeted improvements and strategic enhancements.

Literature review

All-inclusive holidays are prepaid and single-priced package tours in which all or nearly all essential elements that a traveller needs for their holidays, including lodging, transport, meals, and recreation (Lo & Lam, 2004). With the launch of the first all-inclusive camp in Mallorca, Spain, in the 1950s, the French travel and tourism company Club Med initiated the global expansion of all-inclusive vacations (Issa & Jayawardena, 2003). During this time, German and Italian operators, together with Club Med, were crucial in the global growth of all-inclusive vacations to other locations in Europe, Asia, and Africa. Twenty years later, in the mid-1970s and 1980s, the entry of such new entrants as SuperClubs and Sandals in the Caribbean spurred a boom in all-inclusive vacations with more inclusive services (Issa & Jayawardena, 2003).

The development of ultra-, mega-, and imperial-all-inclusive packages offers varying levels of service. For instance, while an ultra-all-inclusive package includes accommodation, three meals, non-alcoholic drinks, and activities, an imperial all-inclusive package provides additional perks like all types of food and drinks, and off-premises tours (Ozturk et al., 2019). All-inclusive operators have also adopted superior dining and recreational experiences, such as themed dining, personalized health-conscious menus, and complimentary musical events and yoga classes (Levine, 2014; Young, 2018). Given the comprehensiveness of service offerings in all-inclusive holidays, a unique set of quality metrics is needed to facilitate a more accurate assessment and improvements in service delivery. A tailored scale of all-inclusive holiday service quality will ultimately enhance guest satisfaction and loyalty.

Moreover, compared to the non-all-inclusive, both operation efficiency and customer satisfaction in the all-inclusive have been found to be lower (Aguilo & Rossello, 2012; Aissa & Goaied, 2016; Arbelo-Perez et al., 2019). Housekeeping, kitchen, and food and beverages are considered the three typical service areas of low quality (Samarathunga & Gnanapala, 2016). Irregular and improper maintenance of public areas and swimming pools, waiting staff deficiency, limiting main dishes or dessert, inferior quality food and beverage, un- or low-skilled staff employment (Koc, 2006; Okumus et al., 2020; Samarathunga & Gnanapala, 2016) hamper service quality and customer satisfaction. Developing a measurement scale for all-inclusive holiday service quality potentially supports hoteliers and tour operators in their joint supervision of critical service areas and marketing all-inclusive holidays.

Methodology

The research adopted a mixed methods design in which a qualitative study (consisting of a literature review, in-depth interviews, and a panel of experts) in Phase 1 and a quantitative study in Phase 2 were implemented. The objective of Phase 1 is to explore all-inclusive holiday service quality from the perspective of tourists and professionals offering all-inclusive holidays for generating scale measures. Phase 2 was conducted to purify and validate the scale structure. Methodological details and results of each phase are presented in the following.

Phase 1: exploring all-inclusive holiday service quality and item generation

To specify the construct domains, 12 participants (Table 1) were recruited using a purposive and snowball sampling methods for an in-depth interview in 2023. Only individuals who have been on an all-inclusive holiday are eligible for the interview. Interviewees were asked three main questions below. Each participant was interviewed

Table 1. Demographic profile of the interviewees.

No.	Gender	Nationality	Age	Occupation	Education
1	Female	British	18–24	Travel agent	Bachelor
2	Male	British	18–24	Student	Master's
3	Male	Italian	35–44	Travel agent	Bachelor
4	Female	Spanish	25–34	Law executive	Bachelor
5	Female	British	45–54	Hotel manager	Bachelor
6	Female	Chinese	18–24	Hotel reservationist	Bachelor
7	Female	British	45–54	Housewife	Bachelor
8	Female	British	45–34	University academic	PhD
9	Male	British	25–34	Travel sales representative	Bachelor
10	Male	American	25–34	Student	Mater's
11	Female	American	25–34	Student	Master's
12	Male	American	35–44	University academic	PhD

via Microsoft Teams for a duration of 30–40 minutes as recommended by Thorsteinson (2017).

Q1: *What services were included in your most recent all-inclusive holiday?*

Q2: *What were (not) good about the services you received?*

Q3: *What aspects of the services that you received contributed to the overall service quality of your holiday?*

The transcriptions were analysed following an inductive thematic analysis approach. The coding process began with data familiarization. Each transcript was read twice to grasp the general gist. Every sentence was then scrutinized to code relevant details relevant to all-inclusive holiday service quality dimensions and/or attributes. The initial codes were then revisited and linked together to advance them into categories. The categories were reviewed and developed into themes (Figure 1).

Grounded on the exploratory results in the qualitative phase, 42 items were generated by comparing and integrating the in-depth interviews and the extant literature on each construct domain, including travel (8 items) (Bezerra & Gomes, 2016; Bui & Robinson, 2024; Simsek & Demirbag, 2017; in-depth interview), entertainment (5 items) (Albayrak et al., 2016; Bui & Robinson, 2024, in-depth interview), service encounter (6 items) (Bui & Robinson, 2024; Lemy et al., 2019; Soleimani & Einolahzadeh, 2018; in-depth interview), public environment (5 items) (Bui & Robinson, 2024; Smith et al., 2020; in-depth interview), dining (7 items) (Assaker, 2020; Bui & Robinson, 2024; Davras & Caber, 2019; Tuncer et al., 2021; in-depth interview), room (7 items) (Gupta & Srivastava, 2011; Min et al., 2002; Bui & Robinson, 2024; in-depth interview), arrival and departure (4 items) (Bui & Robinson, 2024; in-depth interviews).

The item pool was then assessed by an expert panel of three (senior) tourism marketing academics and two travel agents in the United Kingdom. The panel evaluated the relevance and applicability of each measurement item on a scale of 1 (not relevant/applicable at all) to 5 (completely relevant/applicable). The panel members were also invited to provide additional comments where applicable. Following the item pool evaluation by the expert panel, 2 items were removed due to their low applicability, resulting in 40 items retained for the survey.

Phase 2: quantitative purification and validation

Scale purification

In this phase, respondents were recruited using a purposive sampling method. A screening question *Were you on an all-inclusive holiday in the last year* was used as a criterion to recruit qualified participants. The reason for recruiting only those who were on an all-inclusive holiday last year was to minimize the memory effect and to better reflect the contemporary picture of all-inclusive holidays. The survey questionnaire was composed of two main sections. Respondents were first asked to rate the 40 items on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) in section 1. Demographic information was captured in section 2. The survey questionnaire was

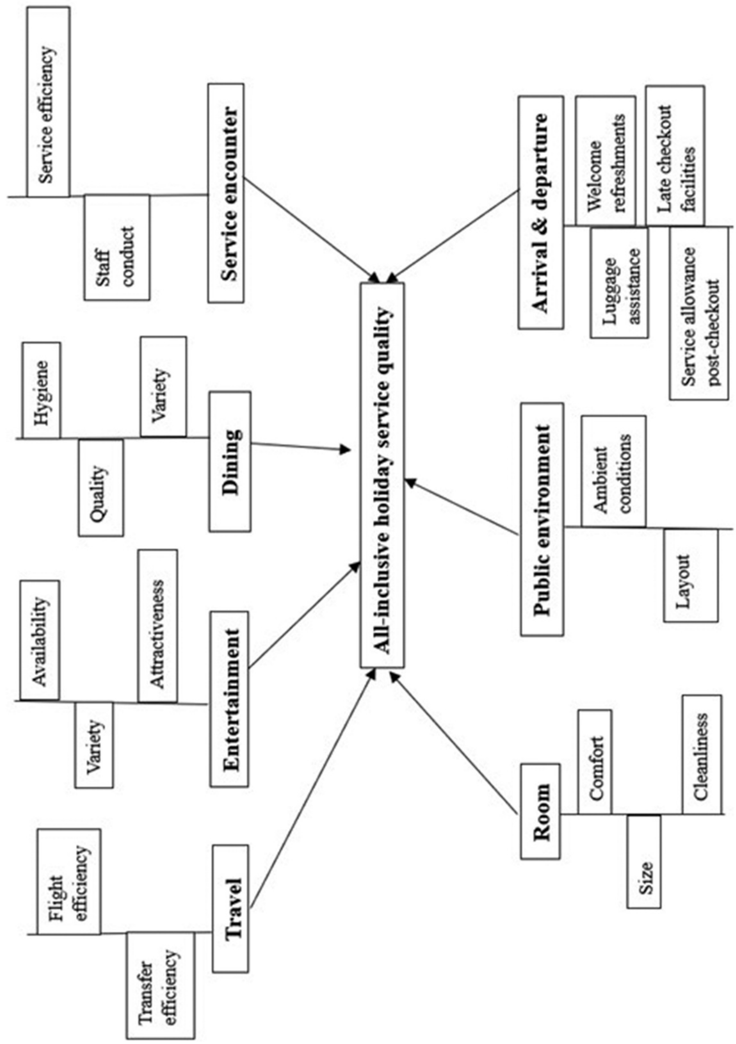

Figure 1. Summary of exploratory results of all-inclusive holiday service quality.

Table 2. Demographic information of 1st survey respondents ($N = 762$).

		Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	393	51.57
	Female	369	48.43
Age	Between 18 and 24	101	13.25
	Between 25 and 34	252	33.07
	Between 35 and 44	203	26.64
	Between 45 and 54	142	18.64
	Between 55 and above	64	8.4
Ethnic origin	Caucasian/white	215	28.22
	Asian	109	14.30
	African	81	10.63
	Hispanic/Latino	135	17.72
	Mixed	210	27.56
	Other(s)	12	1.57
Marital status	Single	280	36.75
	Married	427	56.04
	Separated	13	1.7
	Divorced	18	2.36
	Widowed	10	1.31
	Other(s)	14	1.84
Income	< $2,000	126	16.54
	$2,001–$3,000	359	47.11
	$3,001–$4,000	140	18.37
	$4,000+	93	12.21
	Prefer not to answer	44	5.77
Number of all-inclusive holidays in the last 5 years	1–3	486	63.78
	4–6	203	26.64
	7+	73	9.58

distributed in 2023 via Prolific which is considered transparent in terms of participant recruitment, payments, rights, and obligations (Palan & Schitter, 2018). 762 valid responses (Table 2) were obtained.

The data set was then randomly split into two 381-case subsamples using SPSS. The first half of the data set ($N = 381$) was used for exploratory factor analysis (EFA). The principal components extraction with varimax rotation was performed to purify the pool of 40 items. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was 0.961, which is higher than the cut-off value of 0.6 (Pallant, 2016). Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant with $p < 0.001$ ($\chi 2 = 19830.916$, df = 1431), which satisfies the requirement of sig < 0.05 (Pallant, 2016). The seven factors which were comprised of 35 items (Table 3), had the eigenvalue greater than 1, cumulatively explained 73.81% variance, and had the factor loadings of at least $|0.5|$ were retained. All factors had a satisfactory Cronbach's alpha coefficient of above the minimum threshold of 0.7 (DeVaus, 2002), which attested to the reliability of the scales.

Scale validation

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted on the second half of the data set ($N = 381$) to validate the seven-factor structure identified by EFA. Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted on the first-order model of seven factors, including service encounter, travel, entertainment, public environment, dining, room, and arrival & departure. Second-order confirmatory factor analysis was then performed to examine

Table 3. Results of EFA.

	Factor loading	Eigen value	% Variance	α
Factor 1. Service encounter		**16.720**	**46.446**	**0.951**
My questions were answered accurately by staff.	0.715			
Staff were friendly to me.	0.787			
Staff's solutions to my problems were effective.	0.740			
Staff showed respectful attitudes to me.	0.794			
Staff's interest in solving my problems was sincere.	0.763			
Staff were attentive to my needs.	0.807			
Factor 2. Entertainment		**2.308**	**6.411**	**0.936**
Operating hours of leisure facilities were appropriate.	0.749			
Availability of entertainment activities throughout the day was good.	0.840			
Range of entertainment activities was diverse.	0.803			
Entertainment activities were fun.	0.845			
Volume of entertainment activities was appropriate.	0.720			
Factor 3. Room		**2.115**	**5.875**	**0.906**
My bed was large.	0.762			
My room was spacious.	0.734			
My room was clean.	0.635			
Decoration of my room was attractive.	0.735			
Quality of bedding (e.g. pillows, blankets) was good.	0.761			
Factor 4. Travel		**1.676**	**4.654**	**0.883**
Transfer duration was reasonable.	0.659			
Punctuality of flight to destination was on-time.	0.693			
Handling luggage at drop-off points during transfer to destination was quick.	0.754			
On-board services during flight to destination were good.	0.684			
Check-in at destination airport was quick.	0.746			
Flight schedule was convenient.	0.766			
Factor 5. Dining		**1.450**	**4.028**	**0.929**
Freshness of foods was satisfactory.	0.652			
Variety of foods was acceptable.	0.757			
Presentation of foods was attractive.	0.720			
Foods were tasty.	0.717			
Foods were diversified daily.	0.743			
Factor 6. Public environment		**1.217**	**3.380**	**0.895**
Noise level was acceptable.	0.687			
Lighting was appropriate.	0.775			
Music was pleasing.	0.64			
Layout in the hotel's public areas made facilities more convenient.	0.786			
Directional signs were helpful.	0.701			
Factor 7. Arrival and departure		**1.086**	**3.016**	**0.712**
On arrival, a hotel staff member transferred my suitcases to the room.	0.784			
I was offered a welcome drink on arrival.	0.814			
I still could fully access all-inclusive services on the departure date.	0.639			

the hierarchical relationships between the seven factors and service quality which is the higher-order latent construct. The results of the first- and second-order factor analysis are presented in the following.

Results of first-order factor analysis. The results ($\chi^2/df = 2.478$, $p = 0.000$, CFI = 0.932, TFI = 0.925, IFI = 0.932, RMSEA = 0.59, SRMR = 0.044) showed a good model fit. All standardized factor loadings (Table 4) were greater than the minimum threshold of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2014). The estimates of composite reliability (CR) of all factors were well above the cut-off value of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2014). The values of average variance extracted (AVE) were also greater than the recommended value of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2014). The square root of AVE of all factors was higher than the inter-construct

Table 4. Results of first-order CFA.

	SRW	CR	AVE
Factor 1. Service encounter		**0.89**	**0.59**
My questions were answered accurately by staff.	0.811		
Staff were friendly to me.	0.894		
Staff's solutions to my problems were effective.	0.853		
Staff showed respectful attitudes to me.	0.885		
Staff's interest in solving my problems was sincere.	0.893		
Staff were attentive to my needs.	0.909		
Factor 2. Entertainment		**0.89**	**0.63**
Operating hours of leisure facilities were appropriate.	0.842		
Availability of entertainment activities throughout the day was good.	0.899		
Range of entertainment activities was diverse.	0.826		
Entertainment activities were fun.	0.915		
Volume of entertainment activities was appropriate.	0.839		
Factor 3. Room		**0.85**	**0.53**
My bed was large.	0.814		
My room was spacious.	0.824		
My room was clean.	0.715		
Decoration of my room was attractive.	0.829		
Quality of bedding (e.g. pillows, blankets) was good.	0.850		
Factor 4. Travel		**0.86**	**0.52**
Transfer duration was reasonable.	0.796		
Punctuality of flight to destination was on-time.	0.770		
Handling luggage at drop-off points during transfer to destination was quick.	0.839		
On-board services during flight to destination were good.	0.699		
Check-in at destination airport was quick.	0.678		
Flight schedule was convenient.	0.717		
Factor 5. Dining		**0.84**	**0.52**
Freshness of foods was satisfactory.	0.881		
Variety of foods was acceptable.	0.834		
Presentation of foods was attractive.	0.897		
Foods were tasty.	0.892		
Foods were diversified daily.	0.761		
Factor 6. Public environment		**0.84**	**0.52**
Noise level was acceptable.	0.753		
Lighting was appropriate.	0.861		
Music was pleasing.	0.743		
Layout in the hotel's public areas made facilities more convenient.	0.809		
Directional signs were helpful.	0.818		
Factor 7. Arrival and departure		**0.79**	**0.56**
On arrival, a hotel staff member transferred my suitcases to the room.	0.763		
I was offered a welcome drink on arrival.	0.701		
I still could fully access all-inclusive services on the departure date.	0.553		

Note: SWR = standardized regression weight, CR = composite reliability, AVE = average variance extracted.

Table 5. Discriminant validity for first-order CFA.

	SE	DQ	TQ	RQ	EQ	PE	AD
SE	**0.768**						
DQ	0.701	**0.719**					
TQ	0.606	0.555	**0.718**				
RQ	0.641	0.704	0.620	**0.727**			
EQ	0.572	0.639	0.516	0.555	**0.793**		
PE	0.565	0.713	0.708	0.631	0.616	**0.719**	
AD	0.397	0.422	0.396	0.445	0.454	0.409	**0.749**

Note: Square root of AVE is in bold.
SE = Service Encounter Quality, DQ = dining quality, TQ = Travel Quality, RQ = Room Quality, EQ = Entertainment Quality, PE = Public Environment Quality, AD = Arrival and Departure Quality.

correlation estimates (Table 5). Therefore, the convergent validity and discriminant validity of the model were confirmed.

Results of second-order factor analysis. The second-order factor analysis was conducted using the seven factors (service encounter, travel, entertainment, public environment, dining, room, and arrival & departure) as the indicators, and service quality as a latent variable. The results showed a good model fit ($\chi^2/df = 2.484$, $p = 0.000$) in which CFI = 0.932, TLI = 0.927, and IFI = 0.932 exceed the recommended threshold of 0.9; RMSEA = 0.059 and SRMR = 0.048 satisfied the cut-off value of less than 0.08.

Nomological validity. Nomological validity, which "concerns how well the research findings fit with existing theory" (Castleberry et al., 1999), was also tested to establish the nomological validity of the 35-item all-inclusive holiday service quality scale. Theoretically, service quality is considered an antecedent of satisfaction (Lee et al., 2000). Empirically, studies (e.g. Bui & Robinson, 2024; Ozturk et al., 2019) consistently identify service quality as a primary determinant of tourist satisfaction within all-inclusive holiday settings. Therefore, the nomological validity was tested by examining the relationship between service quality (exogenous construct) and tourist satisfaction (endogenous construct).

Tourist satisfaction was measured using four items adapted from Huang et al. (2015), including "my most recent all-inclusive holiday was enjoyable", "my most recent all-inclusive holiday was good", "my most recent all-inclusive holiday was satisfying" and "my most recent all-inclusive holiday was interesting". A new data set of valid 250 responses (Table 6) was collected on Prolific (those who participated in the first survey were excluded before running the second survey) to test the nomological validity.

Table 6. Demographic profile of 2nd survey respondents ($N = 250$).

		Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	135	54
	Female	115	46
Age	Between 18 and 24	38	15.2
	Between 25 and 34	150	60
	Between 35 and 44	56	22.4
	Between 45 and 54	6	2.4
Ethnic origin	Caucasian/white	146	58.4
	Asian	32	12.8
	African	16	6.4
	Hispanic/Latino	56	22.4
Marital status	Single	81	32.4
	Married	133	53.2
	Separated	12	4.8
	Divorced	24	9.6
Income	< $2,000	56	22.4
	$2,001–$3,000	144	57.6
	$3,001–$4,000	38	15.2
	$4,000+	12	4.8
Number of all-inclusive holidays in the last 5 years	1–3	168	67.2
	4–6	59	23.6
	7+	23	9.2

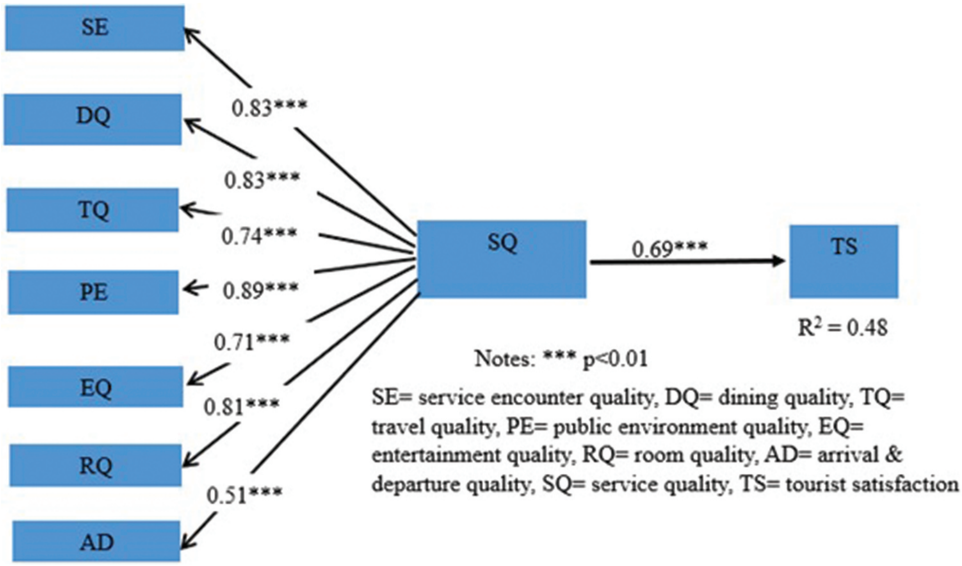

Figure 2. Nomological validity of all-inclusive holiday service quality scale.

An analysis of the structural model (Figure 2) was conducted to examine the nomological validity. The results showed a satisfactory model fit ($\chi^2/df = 2.462$, $p = 0.000$, CFI = 0.92, TLI = 0.93, IFI = 0.92, RMSEA = 0.058, SRMR = 0.046). The standardized regression coefficient from service quality to satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.48$, $\beta = 0.69$, $t = 8.91$, $p < 0.01$) was statistically significant, which exhibited good nomological validity of the measurement scale.

Conclusion and implications

Knowledge of service quality in the context of all-inclusive holidays remains sparse. No prior attempts have been made to conceptualize, explore, and validate an all-inclusive holiday service quality measurement scale. Through a qualitative study and a multi-stage quantitative study, this study developed and validated a measurement scale of all-inclusive holiday service quality. The results showed that all-inclusive holiday service quality could be measured by a scale of seven main components, including Travel, Entertainment, Service encounter, Public environment, Dining, Room, and Arrival & departure. The development of all-inclusive holiday service quality scale has both theoretical and practical implications as discussed below.

This study represents the first effort to develop a tailored service quality measurement scale for this niche tourism segment. Previous service quality frameworks, such as SERVQUAL and its derivatives, have provided foundational insights but often lack the specificity required to capture what services matter the most in all-inclusive holidays. The newly developed scale provides a more granular approach, aligning with the context-dependent nature of service quality (Akter et al., 2013). This context-specific approach enables researchers to draw more accurate conclusions about what drives service quality in this niche market.

By exploring critical service areas of all-inclusive holidays from the perspective of different stakeholders including tourists, hoteliers, and travel agents in the qualitative phase, the scale empirically reflects a contemporary picture of all-inclusive holiday service quality. The scale provides a theoretical base for building future knowledge of all-inclusive holiday service quality and for empirically exploring the relationship between all-inclusive service quality and other important research venues such as tourist satisfaction, tourist loyalty, trust, purchase intentions, or brand perceptions in all-inclusive holidays by future research.

The research also provides industry practitioners such as tour operators, and resort managers a practical and actionable framework for a more precise assessment, management, and improvement of all-inclusive holiday service quality. For tour operators, focusing on critical travel quality attributes, including flight schedule punctuality, on-board services, airport check-in, and transfer services, plays a crucial role in assessing and enhancing the transportation services associated with all-inclusive holiday packages. These touchpoints collectively shape the first impressions of customers and can significantly impact the overall holiday experience.

For resort managers, leveraging the scale to assess key service areas, including service encounters, entertainment, public spaces, dining, room quality, and arrival & departure services, provides a structured way to measure and compare performance against established industry standards and direct competitors. By identifying performance gaps, resorts can make targeted improvements in specific service areas. For example, if a resort consistently underperforms in dining quality compared to their direct competitors, the scale helps pinpoint critical factors that could be impacting guest satisfaction, including food freshness, variety, presentation, flavour, and daily diversification. With this insight, resort managers can prioritize improvements, whether by upgrading culinary offerings, or refining service processes to create a more memorable dining experience.

The scale provides a structured framework for collecting and analysing guest feedback on all-inclusive holiday service quality, enabling data-driven decision-making. This approach supports industry practitioners in identifying trends, monitoring performance over time, and implementing strategic initiatives based on empirical evidence. For example, a performance-based survey on each attribute within and across the service quality components might be distributed to guests at the post-holiday stage to identify improvement needs. The scale might also be administered to employees to raise their awareness of important service areas and a practical tool to communicate customers' expectations of their performance in each attribute within and across the seven fundamental service components.

Author contributions

CRediT: **Hien Thu Bui:** Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Software, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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