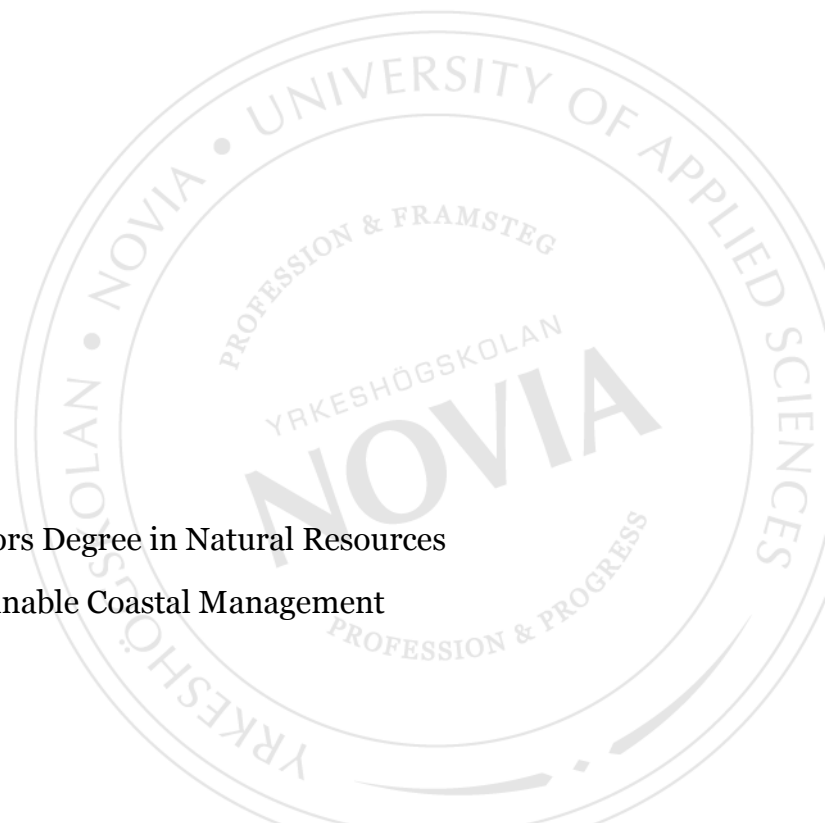# Tourists-perceived service quality and satisfaction of sustainable tourism in Ethiopia

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Degree thesis for the Bachelors Degree in Natural Resources

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

CSQ: Customer Service Questioners

E.C: Ethiopian calendar

COM: Commission of the European communities

ETB: Ethiopian Birr

IPA: Importance Performance Analysis

MOCT: Ministry of Culture and Tourism

NTO: National Tourist operators

SERVQUAL: Service Quality**

SERVPERFE: Service Performance**

SPSS: Statistical Package for Social Scientists

UNWTO: United Nations World Trade Organization

WB: World Bank

WEF: World Economic Forum

WTO: World Trade Organization

** Are Acronyms

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ABSTRACT

For the economic development tourism plays a great role for countries like Ethiopia. As international tourism continues to grow from time to time, it is necessary to maintain the tourism sector for generations. As a result, sustainable tourism becomes the best tool to achieve the goal. The purpose of this study is to measure the sustainable tourism management with regard to tourists' satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the service they get while they staying in Ethiopia. The study has used the gap model of service quality with the application of the SERVQUAL instrument. The five dimensions of SERVQUAL, namely responsiveness and assurance, reliability, empathy, resource and corporate image and tangibility were used to measure tourists' expectations and perceptions regarding the tourism. A total of 203 respondents who have prior experience were selected with a non-probabilistic convenience sampling technique. Findings show that the reliability dimension scored high in terms of customer expectation and in determining customers' satisfaction. Finally, the study concludes that tourists' expectations of sustainable tourism have exceeded their perceptions.

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Language: English   Key words: SERVQUAL, tourists' satisfaction,

                                       sustainable tourism, perception, expectation

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

Sustainable tourism is taking full responsibility for the current and future generations to have a well maintained tourism development. It is protecting the country's social, economic and environmental impacts, understanding the needs of the tourists and establishing a common goal for the tourism industry and the tourists by maintaining a long term income benefit for the host communities. (Ritchie, J. & Crouch, G. 2005, 89-93).

The tourism sector has a lot of competition in the entire world. The competitiveness comes from different sides of the activity, and it is closely linked to its sustainability, as the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of tourists in their destinations is strongly influenced by their cultural, natural environment and their integration into the local community (Robinson & Picard, 2006). Keeping the balance between sustainability in economic, cultural and environmental terms will lead to a long and sufficient sustainable tourism in a country. (SIDS 2014 Conference).

Customers' satisfaction or dissatisfaction is a function of the confirmation arising from a discrepancy between prior expectation and actual performance (Bolton & Drew, 1991, 125-130). Many studies show that a higher level of satisfaction leads to greater customer loyalty, which in turn results in better company performance (Kotler & Armstrong, 2011, 75-80). At the same time, if customers perceive quality as unsatisfactory, they have no hard rule to go for other companies to get what they need (Lovelock & Wright, 1999). Therefore, currently as well as in the future, tourist attractions can be affected with the quality of the tourism and its natural wellbeing, relative to its competitors. But producing and delivering the right service with its all important quality dimensions as perceived by customers is not an easy task. It demands to assess determinant variables exhaustively and to address them properly.

According to Parasuraman et al. (1988), service quality is a form of attitude, related but not equivalent to satisfaction, which results from customers comparing expectations with their perceptions of performance. We can infer from this that customers determine the service quality after a computation between two variables. These are consumers' expectation and

perception. Customers' expectation is a pre- purchase experience, while perception usually is an experience of customers while and after actually consuming what the supplier of the service delivers. In the same way tourists will analyze the situations that they come across in every place they go in terms of their expectation and perception of the tourism service they have got.

Among the service industries, the travel and tourism sector is appearing to be the most important one for the economic growth of a country. According to a world economic forum report of 2013, the sector helps to create a job opportunity in which it will reduce the unemployment rate of the country, because it doesn't involve only one area but have a lot of different sectors which have a direct impact on the industry. The tourism sector already contributed around 120 million direct jobs and about 125 million indirect jobs to the world we live in. It also gives an annual turnover of US$6 trillion, which makes it 9 percent of the GDP. The WEF report of 2013 also uncovered that the tourism sector plays a great role and catalyzes the economy for a country by creating a sustainable development and work opportunity, and works of any country by attracting the tourists. It contributes in many ways to the development and growing economy of a country and has a direct impact by providing a higher national income for a country. It doesn't only involve the direct tourism sites but it also fastens the growth and building of hotels, infrastructures and more advanced transport systems, which helps not only the tourists but the country itself in its general economic growth.

But this is not the case in an Ethiopian context. The return from the sector, when compared with the country's huge tourist potential, is so insignificant. The current travel and tourism competitiveness position of the country, which is 120th in the world and 17th among sub-Saharan African countries, clearly shows the above truth (WEF, 2013). The researches made till this time labelled Ethiopia as one of the poorly performing countries in terms of tourist arrival (Walle, 2010). Abudu Kedir (2013) also expressed the quality of service of operators as poor and unsatisfactory to tourists. According to the research done in this sector by different scholars they suggest that due to this and other related problems the country is found to be less competitive and related the service quality problem with poor preservation of tourist attraction, hassling tourists in the streets and shops, the bureaucratic visa process, inconsistent pricing in the value chain system, policy implementation problem, backward public transport, unpredictable telecommunication and poor information dissemination for tourists via the distribution channel.

This low performance in the sector is attributed to all stakeholders, especially to the travel and tour agencies, which are the major players in the field. These agencies, acting as wholesalers, purchase separate elements of transportation, accommodations and other services and combine them into packages to sell. The services the agencies provide include organizing, sightseeing tours and package tours, providing travel information, serving as a middleman for accommodations and transportation bookings, issuing air tickets, and arranging car rental services (Mohamed, 2007). Their crucial role for delivering quality service as perceived by customers and making them satisfied stems from this position they assume in the market. For these agencies, understanding the most important values that customers are looking for and delivering accordingly, should be the core of their operation. By doing so they will be in opposition to remain competitive and increase their market share. (Gizachew, 2013)

This study attempts to apply the service quality measurement instrument (SERVQUAL) in determining the existence of sustainable tourism quality gaps and show the relationship of these gaps in determining the overall customers' satisfaction in tourism.

1.2   Statement of the problem

The number of tourists visiting Ethiopia is increasing in line with the country's tourism potential but all the other African countries also try to attract visitors. This creates an intense competition among them. It is also true that this sector by its nature is exposed to the competition from the main tourism heritages throughout the world. Meanwhile, customers' perceptions about tourism sustainability and service quality, which are the main competitive tools, seem to have been largely ignored by the sector's operators (Abudu, 2013). The assessment of service quality provides an important feedback for agents, governments and local peoples to evaluate and improve the service to the tourists. Any service improvement programs that do not take tourists' attitude on the quality of service the country offered and delivered into consideration will not achieve its objectives. The sustainability of tourism means thinking about the future while satisfying the current needs of the tourists. (Lam, 2000)

According to Abudu (2013), to remain competitive the tour and travel agencies, the government and all the stakeholders should assess the quality of service they are currently delivering. This is not only a matter of interest. The business situation in which they are

operating demands it and the income generated from this service support country's foreign currency highly.

Walle (2010, 23-25) states that the sector is exhibiting intense competition among and between emerging new operators and well established ones. The older ones try to avoid and to control the large business to themselves and they try to get rid of the newcomers to this sectors. It was rather being very nice to welcome the new ones and to get new looking dimensions to grow the sector and maximize their market share; it also helps the tourists because they can choose from many tour agents.

As far as my reading is concerned, even if sustainable tourism is a new theory, there is some theoretical literature source that states that it is a crucial factor for extending the tourism sectors abundant resources and potentials for the generations UNEP and UNWTO, 2005. But, according to Abudu, (2013) research work made on the perceived service quality and customer satisfaction as an issue related to sustainable tourism activity done in Ethiopian context is rare to find. It has been ignored or it hasn't got any attention from the government (MOCT) nor from the tour and travel agencies. The situation calls for the need for focused studies to fill the gap. This research partly intends to play this role. It is when everything goes smoothly and well maintained that the tourism benefits can be passed from one generation to another, in addition to becoming a source of income for the country (Filiz,Z. 2009).

In its attempt to investigate the aforementioned problems, this study addresses the following research questions:

- How do tourists perceive the sustainable tourism service quality?
- To what extent does customers' service perception match with their expectations?
- To what extent are customers satisfied with the service delivered by the travel and tour operators in Ethiopia?
- To what extent does customers' perceived service quality relate to their overall level of satisfaction?
- Is Ethiopia achieving a sustainable tourism?
- Which parts should be focused on to maintain the tourism sustainability?

1.3   Objective of the study

This research wants to achieve the following general and specific objectives.

1.3.1   General objective

The general objective of the study is to assess customers' perceived sustainable tourism service quality and satisfaction of tourism in Ethiopia.

1.3.2   Specific objectives

The researcher asserts that through answering the above mentioned research questions; this study tries to reach the following specific objectives:

- It investigates the relationship between customers' expectations and perceptions of the sustainable tourism, and examines the gap between the two attributes in Ethiopian context.
- It measures the overall level of customers' satisfaction with regard to tourism sustainability in Ethiopia.
- It examines the relationship between service quality dimensions and overall customer satisfaction.
- It identifies the service quality dimensions which are more significant to customers' satisfaction in the case of Ethiopian tour and travel agencies.
- Identifying the main attributes for developing sustainable tourism in Ethiopia from the answers given by the tourists.
- It also tries to give a solution to the problem that arises on handling of the tourist activity in Ethiopia.

1.4   Scope of the study

The study focuses on comparing the sustainable tourism in Ethiopia with tourist's previous another visited country sustainable tourism activity. Tourists will give an answer to the questionnaires and give scale 7 results based on their perceptions and expectations. The researcher then tries to come up with an answer to the question whether Ethiopia is going in the right way to maintain sustainable tourism or not? This study considers all tourists together, focusing on those who consume the tourism services and have knowledge about what they answer about it.

This paper deals with the three factors that the writer thinks are interrelated to reach the final assumption of sustainable tourism. These are the tourism (Industry), the tourists (customers), the tour and travel agencies/the authorities (the intermediary).

The limitation is that the research paper highly depends on the tourist response and as their answers depend on the level of their knowledge, background and age, it might not show the real images of whether Ethiopia is going to achieve sustainability or not. It is hard to tell what exactly is done in Ethiopia, but at least it will be used as a solution for the problem that arises from this area, it will also indicate the main factors needed to be done to have a better tourism management.

2   Review of related literature

2.1 General overview

The participation of all relevant stakeholders and strong political leader ship needed to have a sustainable tourism development is unquestionable. The process for reaching the target of sustainable tourism requires constant monitoring of negative and positive impacts and make adjustment when needed to protect the environment. There need a deep involvement of tourists to have a conserved and well maintained environment. By joining the tourism and the tourist will lead to creating a major social interaction called Sustainable tourism development. It's mandatory for all the tourists to start thinking and understand what is expecting from them to fulfil some role in a sustainable tourism and development. With regard to the tourist, sustainable tourism also must keep the level of their satisfaction to the maximum and gives a meaningful experience to the tourists by creating knowledge about monitoring and taking responsibility for sustainable tourism.(UNEP and UNWTO, 2005, p.11-12).

2.1.1   Definition of Sustainable Tourism

There is no one formula or policy to be followed to guarantee the sustainability of the tourism without affecting the environment. The analysis is that the three main components of the tourism system integrated the tourist, the environment and the country.
It is not easy to formulate one general description about tourism and its sustainability, to find a guarantee that it can be maintained for a long time without damaging or protecting the environment. (UNEP and UNWTO, 2005).

The World Tourism Organization(2004) defines sustainable tourism as sustainable tourism development that while protecting and enhancing opportunities of tourism for the future, the tourists and the host countries must work together, leading to management of all resources in such a way that social, economic and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining the host countries cultural difference, nature diversification.

Today most governments, tour and travel agencies, international development institution believes that, without sustainability, there cannot be any tourism development that generates a continuous income for all the stakeholders (Graci, S. and Dodds, R. 2010) .

The paper tries to see what sustainability means in tourism sector, what needed to be done to reach to the maximum level of sustainability, what makes other countries reach to that level, what is the basic difference from country to country and even from place to place. According to (Groth, A. 2000) there should be a leadership for achieving it and all relevant stakeholders must give due attention towards the sector. Therefore although the paper is aimed mainly on tourists and with the comparison that get from there expectation and reality, It's good to focus also on other wide ranges of factors which have an impact on achieving sustainable tourism.

2.1.2   What makes tourism sustainable?

To begin with, without travel there is no Tourism. As the tourists move from one place to another and by concentrating on the positive impact on environment, economy and society makes sustainable tourism. Sustainable tourism is not separated from tourism in all the way; all the forms of tourism should thrive to be more sustainable in the future (IUCN, 1996).

All types of tourism evolve around sustainable tourism one-way or the other; it can be single person tourism or mass tourism. Sustainability includes the economic aspects, the environmental and cultural aspects of the tourism development. Sustainable tourism need to establish a common interaction between the visitors, the industry and the environment in order to have a long, well balanced and guaranteed sustainability of tourism development. (UNEP and UNWTO, 2005).

Making tourism sustainable means adding and maintaining the positive impacts, the sector tourism is giving a lot of benefits for the local peoples, the government and also for travel and tour agencies. Within the tourism sector, economic development and environmental protection must be going hand in hand, the policies and actions that are going to strength the benefits of the environment protections and helping the tourism sector. Then the tourism sustainability means that generating income for the government and the stakeholders. (COM 2007, 621final).

2.1.3   Stakeholders in sustainable tourism

Different parts of the society can benefit from the tourism sustainability; some of the main stakeholders can be;

- Tourism enterprises-while working for generating income for them, they should focus on relationship with the workers, their corporate image, and their impact on the environment.
- Local Communities- they are also profitable from having sustainable tourism, they can work as guide tours and also environmental protection persons.
- Tourists- all the tourists main goal of visiting one country is that to see something different from their own home country, they need a well maintained environment in order to stay for a long time and to return back in the future.
- Environmentalists- it also can be worked for them as another side of bringing awareness to the people as the whole, and also benefit from the income generated from this sector.

Sustainable tourism development is therefore about providing the best all people can get from the sector in the present time and maintaining it to the future generation too. In other words, sustainable development is based on equity on the world's resources and sharing the benefits. (UNEP and UNWTO, 2005).

2.1.4   What a Tourist should have done for a Sustainable Tourism

- Give respect and due attention for the communities and the environment you visited
- Do not throw used things away, put them in a proper storage places, for instance there are a lot of plastic wastes so try to avoid using a plastic materials.
- Have some background studies about the place you are visiting
- Do not eat or purchase endangered species

- Ask your tour and travel agencies to give you pre information about the countries environmental and sustainable tourism policies

- Support a responsible organization which tries to achieve something about sustainable tourism. (Sustainable tourism, 2008).

2.1.5   Policies for sustainable tourism

It is advisable to have some pre- knowledge about the place to travel, in addition to that the tour operators and the government also must support and encourage the tourist to understand the sustainable tourism by following the guidelines and polices such as;

- Ensuring economic operations viable in the long term, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty reduction.

- Tourism development projects need to include local representatives on planning teams and being compatible with the needs and practices of local communities.

- Environmental safeguards rigidly applied.

- Maintaining essential ecological practice make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development.

- The government or the private agencies should work to review progress and report the sustainable tourism achievement to the concerned parties

- Understanding of the socio-cultural difference between host communities and home country. (UNEP/GRID, 2014).

2.2   Sustainable tourism service quality defined

As one scholar asserted the word quality is difficult to define because in different circumstances it means different things (Lam, 2000). But in general it can be expressed as the difference between how things ought to be and how things are. To put it more plainly in respect of tourism services: What is the service supposed to do? And what does the service actually do? There will still be a degree of subjectivity in this along with tourists' age difference, experience and income level. Service quality as (Michael, 2013) cited is "the degree to which an event or experience meets individual's needs or expectations". Regardless of the definition of quality used, each tour and travel agencies need to identify how the company's customers define quality (Parasuraman, 1988). Currently service

quality has become a major area of attention to managers, researchers and practitioners because of its own business performance, lower costs, and return of investment, customer loyalty, customer satisfaction and gaining higher profit (Shahin & Samea, 2010). Yet, service firm can differentiate it by delivering consistently higher quality than its competitors provide.

UNWTO (2003) defines Sustainability and Quality in tourism as interrelated. Quality is the "face" of sustainability. Quality can be easily seen and recognized by the tourists while sustainability is working behind as managing and creating a policy for ensuring a high quality service and as a result maintaining the tourism activity for a long term.

2.2.1 Dimensions of service quality

Love lock and Wright (1999) presented research findings about the five broad dimensions of service quality. These are:

A. Reliability

It refers to the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately. It is regarded as the most important determinant of perceptions of service quality.

B. Responsiveness

Responsiveness is serving the customers accurately and insightfully whenever a problem and a service issue problems occurred. Sometimes the service providers have to come forward even before the questions arise from their customers and whenever there is a need they must provide a prompt service.

C. Assurance

It refers to giving and having a full confidence to provide the service with trust. There are different sectors which relates to this category like providing a healthy customers environment, financial information security and when a problem arise providing a legal service. The customers must feel fully confidence in order to engage in this business in the future so having an assurance means maximizing profit.

D. Empathy

It arises from the customers handling, caring and giving an attention to the way they move around. The size of the company plays a great role in this manner as a small service companies are better placed for treating customers as individuals than their larger,

invariably standardized counterparts. However, relationship marketing is designed to offer a more individualistic approach for customers of large organizations.

E. Tangibles

It refers to the appearance of equipment, physical facilities, communication materials and personnel. All of these are used in varying degrees to project an image that will find favour with consumers. Where the customer's physical presence at a service facility is necessary for consumption then the tangibility will come to force; e.g. hair salon, hotel, and night club.

Of these five dimensions, reliability is the one which gives customers a full confidence on the service provider , once the reliability of the service provider knows to the customer then it can build its name on this one. Unreliable service means having a bad reputation in the business and can easily be transferred from one person to another. Some scholars even said Reliability is the heart of the travel and tourism service sector. If the core service is not performed reliably, tourists may assume that the company is incompetent and may switch to another service provider.

Reliability is an outcome measure because customers judge it after the service experience: Either the service was delivered as promised or it wasn't. The other four dimensions of quality—tangibles (physical evidence), responsiveness, assurance, and empathy—are process dimensions because they can be evaluated by customers during service delivery. These dimensions provide companies with the opportunity to delight customers by exceeding their expectations during interactions with employees and the service environment.

2.2.2 Perceived service quality and customers perception

Quality has been defined as the consumer's overall impression of the relative inferiority or superiority of the organization and its services (Zeithaml et al., 1990). Perceived service quality is an attitude of a consumer judgment on the overall service. Perceived service quality results from a comparison of consumers' expectations with their perceptions of the service actually delivered by supplier (Kangis and Voukelatos, 1997) e.g. providing services which are not provided by others; positive word of mouth to others about the service overall the customers are found to be satisfied with services of the firm.

Perceived quality and objective quality are different concepts according to Zeithaml (1988). Objective quality in the marketing literature refers to the measured technical superiority of a product whereas perceived quality reflects a consumer's subjective evaluation of the product's superiority. In her review of perceived quality, price and value, she suggested that the perceived quality of a product was,

- a higher level abstraction rather than an attribute,
- a global assessment similar to attitude and,
- a judgment made within consumers' evoked set

Whereas perception is the process by which an individual selects, organizes and interpret stimuli in to a meaning full and coherent picture of the world. It is the process by which incoming stimuli activate our sensory receptor.

2.2.3 Measurement of service quality

Efforts in defining and measuring service quality have come largely from the goods sector But Since service is a distinct product with its own uniqe characterstics these knowleges are insufficient to understand and measure service quality. moreover,the authors also uncovered the difficulty of measuring service quality than that of goods. when purchasing goods, the consumer employes many tangable cues to judge quality:style, hardness, color,lable,feel,package etc but when purchasing services fewer tangeble cues exist to measure. In most cases tangable evidense is limited to the service providers physical facilits,equipment and personnel. Due to these specific nature of services these researchers presesented mesurment of sevice quality interms of expectation and performance (Zeithaml *et al*., 1990).

2.2.4 Service quality models

In an attempt to determine customers' service quality, researchers come up with several conceptual models. It is envisaged that conceptual models in service quality enable management to identify quality problems and thus help in planning for the launch of a quality improvement program, thereby improving the efficiency, profitability and overall performance (Shahin & Samea, 2010). The two main research instruments that have been developed over the years to analyze the concepts of quality and consumer satisfaction in

the service industry are Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) and SERVQUAL (Miller et al. 2004).

2.2.4.1 Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA)

IPA is a technique that helps service providers determine the relative importance of various attributes of their performance. It provides practical insights for marketing and management implications for better decision making. The major benefit of using IPA is the determination of areas for service quality improvements. Applying this technique starts with identifying the different attributes of the service encounter, after which customers are asked to evaluate services through two main questions regarding each service attribute: These are how important is the attribute? And how well did you find the performance? Using these two questions, importance and performance are measured separately. The data are then displayed graphically on a two-dimensional grid, and the results can be interpreted easily using a simple matrix. Decision makers can identify areas in which attributes or steps in their service blueprint are importance for their customers and what attribute performance needs to be improved.

2.2.4.2 The gaps models and theoretical frame of the study

Parasuraman et al. (1985) introduced and published a conceptual model of service quality. This model was known as the Gaps model, and it illustrated that quality is a function of the difference between a customer's perceptions and expectations of a service. This gap between a customer's expectation of service quality and their perception of what is actually delivered is measured in the construct. The intent of the model is to minimize the gap in service in order to maximize the level of customer satisfaction.

The model's key features are:
- The identification of key attributes of tourism service quality from a management and consumer perspective
- Highlighting the gaps between consumers and service providers with particular reference to perceptions and expectations.
- Understanding the implications for service management of closing the gaps.

According to Parasuraman et al. (1985), the model, the gaps include:

Gap 1: Customer expectation-management gap

This gap addresses the difference between consumers' expectations and management's perceptions of service quality. It states that many service organizations simply do not understand what customers expect and what really matters to them. This gap can only be bridged through customer research and, more particularly, knowledge from front-line employees.

Gap 2: Management perception-service quality specifications gap

This gap addresses the difference between management's perceptions of consumer's expectations and service quality specifications, i.e. improper service-quality standards. Even where customer expectations- Management may believe that customer expectations are unreasonable or unrealistic.

Gap 3: Service quality specification-service delivery gap

This gap addresses the difference between service quality specifications and service actually delivered, i.e. the service performance gap. Even when formal standards or specifications for maintaining service quality are in existence, the delivery of a quality service is by no means certain. This is caused by poor, inadequately deployed resources in terms of people, systems and technology. The implications for the human resource or personnel management function should be obvious.

Gap 4: Service delivery-external communication gap

This gap addresses the difference between service delivery and the communications to consumers about service delivery, i.e. whether promises match delivery. Advertising and other forms of communication by a service organization can affect consumer expectations. The danger is that promises made are not kept. Many service organizations use the brochure or prospectus (some very glossy) for communicating with potential customers. It should be a statement of what the customer will receive, not an attractive set of promises that cannot be delivered.

Gap 5: Expected service-perceived service gap

This gap addresses the difference between consumer's expectations and perceived service this gap represents the key challenge. To ensure good quality the provider must meet or exceed customer expectations. Perceived service quality is the result of the consumer's comparison of expected service with perceived service delivery..

The fifth gap depends on size and direction of the four gaps associated with the delivery of service quality on the marketer's side. The gap score (G) is calculated using the formula G=P-E where P stands for perception and E for expectation. Hence the greater P-E score, the greater is the perceived service quality from customer point of view. This paper tries to measure and present the 5th gap from the context of travel and tour agencies service agencies. That is to determine the service qualities of these firms which are operating in Ethiopia. As it is presented above the original model identified five dimensions namely; responsiveness, reliability, assurance, empathy and tangibility.
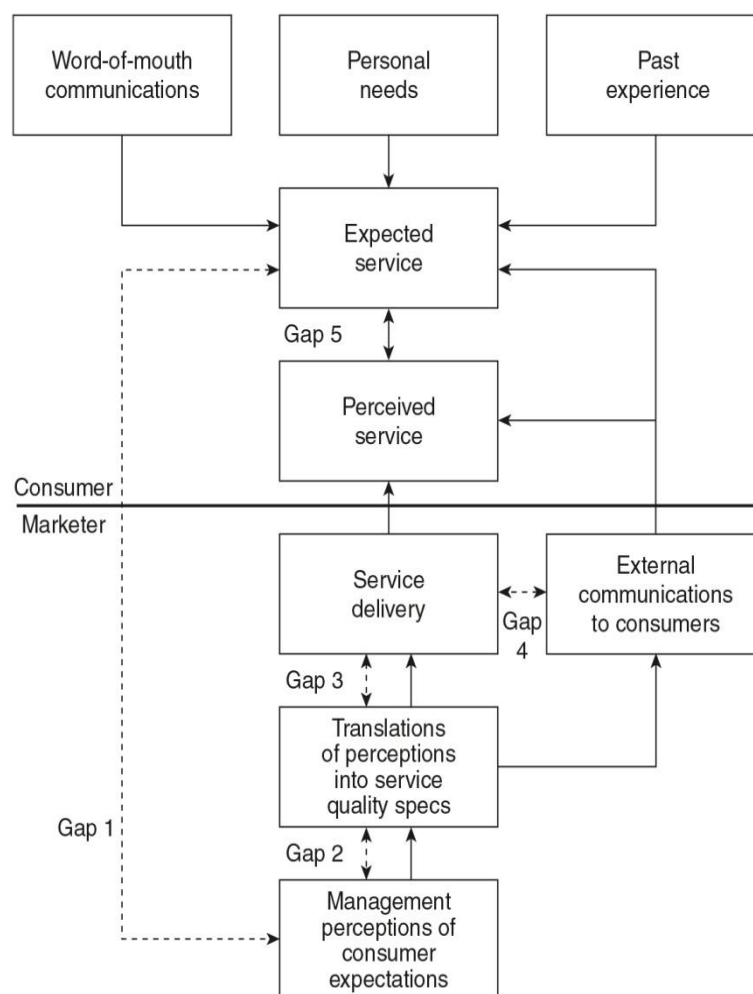

Figure 1. Service quality models   Source: Parasuraman *et al.* (1985)

2.2.4.2.1 SERVQUAL instrument

The fifth gap in the Gaps Model of Service Quality gave rise to SERVQUAL, a self-administered questionnaire purported to be a generic measure of service quality**.** SERVQUAL is an instrument developed by Parasuraman et al. (1985), which focuses on the notion of perceived quality. It is based on the difference between consumers' expectations and perceptions of service. Exploratory research conducted in 1985 showed that consumers judge service quality by using the same general criteria, regardless of the type of service. Parasuraman et al. (1985) capture these criteria using a scale composed of 23 items designed to load on five dimensions reflecting service quality. The dimensions are tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy.

Each item is used twice: first, to determine customer's expectations about the tourism in general, within the sustainable tourism service being investigated; second, to measure perceptions of performance of a particular tourism service. These evaluations are collected using a seven-point Likert scale. According to the authors, the service quality is then the difference between customer's perceptions and expectations. (Parasuraman et al. 1985)

Whilst SERVQUAL remains a significant contributor in the literature, a number of criticisms have been made. Mudie & Pirrie (2006) presented a brief summary of the major criticisms in the following list.

- It focuses on the functional aspects of the process (the 'how' of the service process), neglecting the outcome. Of course services are by their very nature experiences, making the functional aspect of key importance. However services can and do deliver a tangible outcome.

- Its application across the service sector has been called into question. Services can vary in many respects, revealing quite different and unique dimensions.

- Customers will evaluate a service favourably as long as their expectations are met or exceeded, regardless of whether their prior expectations were high or low, and regardless of whether the absolute goodness of the (service) performance is high or low. This unyielding prediction according to some is illogical, arguing that 'absolute' levels (e.g. the prior standards) certainly must enter into a customer's evaluation.

- Is there a need to incorporate expectations into the measurement scale?

The authors of SERVQUAL have argued in favour of its diagnostic value for management. Expectations serve as a kind of benchmark, anchor or reference point in the assessment of service performance. Others have argued for a perceptions-only measure of service quality Mudie and Pirrie, 2006).

2.3   Customers satisfaction

In the service industry customer satisfaction is the key to any successful business. If customers are not satisfied with the services provided to them, it's given that they will stick to the one who gave them a good service and forget the bad one, it will lead to business failure for the latter, as a big concern the country who maintain the sustainability of the tourism means the more tourist attraction. For Kotler and Armstrong (2012) customer satisfaction depends on the product's perceived performance relative to a buyer's expectations. This is in line with scholars thought which tied customer satisfaction to an evaluation process and which entails a comparison of product performance and some sort of a standard in relation to this performance (Duman, 2002).

The current thought suggests that consumers develop expectations and use them as standards to compare with perceived product performance. Expectation is the service that the customer anticipates (Hagy A, 2001). Expectation can be seen as a pre-consumption attitude before the next purchase: it may involve experience, but need not. That customers' expectations are formed by many uncontrollable factors these include customer background, customers' psychological condition at the time of service delivery, previous experience with other countries and their advertising methods , values and the image of the purchased product. The result of this comparison is termed as disconfirmation that can be both positive and negative based on this comparison (Gaydos,K, 2008).. According to Oliver (1997) positive disconfirmation is achieved if perceived performance exceeds expectations or negative disconfirmation results if performance falls short of expectations. Satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the experience or use of product then is the consumers' disconfirmation process in which positive disconfirmation leads to satisfaction whereas negative disconfirmation leads to dissatisfaction.

Bolton and Drew (1991) have shown both customer satisfaction/ dissatisfaction and perceived service quality are postulated to be influenced by the gap between expectations and perceptions of performance (i.e., disconfirmation).

There are five key factors that influence a customer's expectations: previous experience; personal recommendation; personal needs; marketing communications; and the level of involvement in the purchase (Mudie & Pirrie, 2006). Research suggests that the most important of these factors in shaping expectations are the consumer's past experience of the service and what other people say about it. Prior to using a service, consumers may have in mind four different scenarios of the service that they might experience: The ideal, the anticipated, the deserved and the minimum tolerable. The consumer can expect any of these. As it is already stated expectations shape satisfaction. If the 'minimum tolerable' is expected then this or anything better may lead to satisfaction. Equally, anyone expecting the 'ideal' will be dissatisfied with anything less (Mudie & Pirrie, 2006).

Customer satisfaction comes from the quality of service delivery that is expected by the customers during the act of purchase and while being served. Customer satisfaction of a product is often measured with specific attributes that describe the product features. In general, the response to a satisfactory experience will contain both emotional and behavioural elements. So customer satisfaction will result in positive emotional states. These, in turn, mediate the response between customer satisfaction and behavioural responses – positive word of mouth, no complaint behaviour and repeat purchase. (Christine T. Ennew, Geoffrey V. Reed, Martin R. Binks, 1993)

For customer centred companies, customer satisfaction is both a goal and a major factor in company success. These and other companies realize that highly satisfied customers produce several benefits for the company. They don't give a lot of focus on the price given by the companies; they will remain loyal to the company who offered them a good quality of service. As they are loyal to the companies whatever the company offer to its customers they will be the first to have an interest and also will invite others to join the same company in the future. It means that once the company grows higher the next step is bringing foreign income to the country they are worked. (Kotler , 2000).

2.3.1   Customer Satisfaction and Service Quality

In service quality and consumer satisfaction literature, some confusion remains in particular regarding the nature of the connecting direction of the relationship between service quality and consumer satisfaction (Darfoon, 2013). It means the relationship between customer satisfaction and service quality seems to have arguable elements. But there is a general agreement among scholars on the existence of relationship between them.

Parasuraman et al., (1981) acknowledging the two constructs are different and he presented service quality as one component of customer satisfaction. He also showed service quality as an antecedent of customer satisfaction and affirmed the presence of a positive and significant relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction.

Lovelock & Wirtz (2004) also believed that perceived service quality is only one component of customer satisfaction. For them Satisfaction and quality have things in common but certain underlying causes are different. Satisfaction is a general description to show the level of reality it reaches but service quality has limited areas to focus so the level will be lower. Hence, perceived service quality is an element of customer satisfaction. Service quality is a reflection of the customer's perception of assurance, empathy, responsiveness, tangible and reliability. Whereas customer satisfaction is more general term and influenced by perceptions of service quality, situational, price, personal factors actual nature existence and product quality.

2.4 The tour and travel agencies, sustainable tourism service quality and customer satisfaction

2.4.1 The tour and travel agencies and their business

Different groups having their own objectives are currently involving in the tourism industry. Of these actors the travel and tour agencies are found to be key player in the field. They took an intermediary place in the tourism production and distribution. (Kasimoglu, 2012) compiled and presented three different types of intermediaries, i.e. outgoing travel agencies (retailers), tour operators (wholesalers) and incoming travel agencies based at destinations (handling). In particular, an outgoing travel agency serves as sales channel for tourist specific activities and wholesalers generally for giving advice on tickets(inland or air) , finding a suitable place to stay and offering packages from tour operators. Tour operators buy individual tourist services (e.g. transport and accommodation) from their suppliers (e.g. carriers and hotels) and assemble them into holiday packages. Finally, incoming travel agencies plan tour packages on a destination level and act as intermediary between tour operator and specific tourist activities, but also sell to individual tourists that do not travel through a tour operator (Gizachew, Y., 2013).

To put in a nut shell the tour and travel agencies services include organizing tour packages, providing travel information, serving as middlemen for issuing air tickets, hotel bookings, and arranging car rental services for their customers. However, it seems that these agencies

have faced difficult times in recent years because of internal competition in the industry and increasing customer demands but not having a well maintained tourism environment meaning sustainable tourism. The internal competition is created due to the attractiveness of the sector in making money. The service requires relatively small set up cost. Yet, it can be easily managed at family level. These along with the dramatic development of the tourism market have increased competition among travel agencies (Li, 2011).

Moreover, in the tour-operating sector, it's not working hard to find a solution to the customers problems, with most tour operators relying upon traditional methods of customer feedback such as customer service questionnaires (CSQs) at the end of the holiday (Miller et al.2004). Although such methods are important as they provide information about the customer's actual experience, they are unable to provide a measure of their original expectations about their stay. In fact managers have revealed scepticism with regard to the precise usefulness of CSQs while nevertheless persisting with their use. All major package holiday companies have spoken about the need to exceed customer expectations in order to deliver exceptional service. In order to reach to the maximum goal every tour operating agency need to take time to time evaluation rather than just sitting and assuming it's the same every time(Miller et al.2004).

The tour and travel agency is a kind of service provider with continuous operation and highly fluctuating demands and the quality of service is greatly determined by environmental variables (Li, 2011). Mean while the nature of the industry in which the agents operate it is sensitive in terms the quality of service the agents deliver. As the same time customer satisfaction is found to be an important measure of service quality in travel agents. But customers' perceptions about agents seem to have been largely ignored by agent management in developing countries. Yet, the assessment of service quality provides an important feedback for agents to assess and improve (Filiz, 2009).

2.4.2 Tour and Travel Agencies in Ethiopia

Currently within the tourism sector there are two business groups in Ethiopia which gives overlapping service. These are tour agencies which there business is entirely related with tourist and the travel and tour agencies which add ticketing as the other wing of their operation. In doing so the travel and tour agencies business includes local customers (Walle, 2010). According to the strategy document prepared by World Bank for Ethiopian government WB (2006) The historical aspect of tour operators of Ethiopia dictates Private

tour operators in Ethiopia have only been permitted since the end of the Dreg Regime prior to which the National Tour Operator was the government-owned monopoly in the sector. Based on the 9th tourism statistics bulletin of ministry of culture and tourism (2010) this government owned tour operator started operation in the year 1990. Till the above World Bank strategy report (2010) is prepared 75 tour operators were in the market (of which about 15-20 handle most of the international business and a further 20 or so are active in the domestic market, all but NTO are privately owned (Yabibal, M.W, 2010).

The current available data from Ministry of culture and tourism (2013) shows the existence of 306 tour and travel agencies in the country. This of course did not include new entrants of in the year 2014 GC on. This number shows an increase of these agencies by 231 from the time were the 2012 World Bank report is released. This agencies having total investment of 90,057,256 ETB secured an income of 477,832,377 ETB in the year 2014 business operation only. (1ETB=22EURO). The numbers of tourist who got service through these agencies and visited the country were 30,675 in the above stated year. (MOCT, 2013).

Most of the operators offer a very similar range of tours, including the one-day Addis tours, the one-day excursions from Addis, and a range of two-to-thirteen day tours to the historic sites and national parks. However, a number of tour operators are beginning to diversify and other unique tours that exploit the full diversity of Ethiopia (including hiking tours, bird-watching, hunting) are emerging. (Mohamed, G, 2007).

The strategy prepared presented Tour operators as critical link in the tourism supply chain. Tour operators actually create the product that ends up being sold to consumers and as such they are the innovators and originators of extra value-added at the destination level (Mohamed, G, 2007). In an emerging destinations county like Ethiopia, tour operators based in source markets are the major driver of business. The relationship between international tour operators and domestic tour operators which the writers termed ground handlers becomes subject of the strategy. Foreign investment in the sector is not permitted and so all are Ethiopian companies. This feature has put ownership of the tourism product very much in the hands of international tour operators because they have the resources to market effectively in source markets (Abudu, K., 2013).

In neighbouring countries domestic tour operators are the primary distribution platform for tourism products but in Ethiopia the scenario is different. According to WB (2012) here tour operators provide about 55% of the business to the main hotels around the historic

route, but in turn almost 80% of their business comes from international tour operators. This is a key difference is that foreign tour operators are allowed to operate in these countries. Because of the competitive environment, these foreign tour operators play an important role in constantly modifying and diversifying the product base, and, marketing the destination.

2.4.3 Tourist flows in Ethiopia

Based on the information dispatched from Ministry of Culture and Tourism (2013), the number of tourist visiting the country is growing by 10% each year. This is attributed to the countries many historical and natural sites and diverse cultural, historic and natural attractions. The recent development in infrastructures like road and hotels, the relative stability of the country and government marketing contributed a lot for this increment.

Tourists visit the country for leisure recreation and holidays, visiting friends and relatives, business and professional and meeting, conference, congresses. As shown in Table 2.1, The MOCT (2013) growth and transformation plan (GTP) made a forecast of tourist arrival will be large in numbers for the years ahead.

Table .1 Strategic plans of tourists in flow and fee

Year		2015	2016	2017	2018
No. of arrival	GTP	560,000	750,000	850,000	1,000,000
FEE receipt (Birr)	GTP	7,773,500	12,000,000	19,120,000	30,000,000

Source: MOCT(2013)

2.4.4 Sustainable tourism service quality and satisfaction of tourism sector

Meeting the needs of current and potential customers is the main objective of developing products in any industry. Tourism is mainly a service industry, which includes a strong psychological aspect in terms of reacting to and developing feelings toward an experience (Darfoon, 2013). This sensitiveness nature of the sector needs to be accompanied with research works. The concern surrounding issues such as quality and productivity are becoming more and more important.

To keep the satisfaction of travellers, tour agencies should consider relevant dimensions of service qualities in line with the expectation of the prospect customers. Perhaps several elements relating to expectation internal to the customer and external to the customer need to be taken into account (Gaydos,K, 2008). Internally, even similarly experienced tourists may have extremely different expectations due to cultural background. Externally, considered that customers' expectations are formed when they plan to go to a destination where they have never been and so they anticipate something about which they have no previous experience. It is natural for travellers to dream about having a good encounter rather than receiving a bad experience. However, from the supplier's point of view the resultant expectations may be unclear and unpractical (Duman,T, 2002).

Some researchers believe that measuring service quality in travel tourism should focus on measuring experience quality. In many cases, the quality tourists perceive is related more to their experiences during their visit as a whole than to services delivered in the attraction (Hudson,S.Hudson,P.& Miller,GA, 2004). For example Otto and Ritchie (2000) built their scale in measuring experience quality in tourism with four dimensions: peace of mind, involvement, hedonics and recognition. Others such as Haber and Lerner (1999) insisted that experience quality and tourist satisfaction depend on location attractiveness, number of services offered, managerial skills, and personnel attitudes. Finally some argue that tourism service experience can be seen as a key link between the two concepts that include the service element, with its managerial roots, and the experience element, with its psychological roots (Lam,E, 2000).

Research shows that the satisfaction that tourist traveller experience in a specific destination is a determinant of the tourist revisiting. Tourist's satisfaction can be defined as what they experience and give a comparison to the level they knew earlier and the tourist's emotional state after experiencing the trip. Assessing satisfaction can help to improve the tourism services and to compare the potential and performance of a country. In addition, the ability of managing feedback received from customers can be an important source of competitive advantage. Moreover, satisfaction can be used as a measure to evaluate the products and services offered at the destination (Valle et al, 2006).

3 Research design and methodology

3.1 Research design

In this study the descriptive research design, specifically the survey method is used, this method is well suited for collecting information from the group of peoples' when an individual wants to know something about the peoples' understanding of a subject, who takes part in the study. More over it is a well known research design when the purpose of the study is to describe the characteristics of a certain group (Shukla, 2010). The study determined and measured the sustainable tourism quality gaps between customer expectation and perception. To enable this SERVQUAL method which measure sustainable tourism service quality based on the five fundamental service quality attributes is used. The study further empirically examined the relationship between perceived service quality and customer satisfaction with regard to the sustainable tourism management.

To collect relevant data from respondents, this study applied the five sustainable tourism service quality dimensions questionnaire. The survey instrument was then pilot tested with tourist randomly selected by the researcher. This is conducted to assess the reliability of the attributes and to ensure that the format, length, wording and sequencing of questions are appropriate.

3.2 Population and sampling techniques

3.2.1 Population of the study

The current tourists which visited Ethiopia using the services of tour and travel agencies operating in the country were the population of the study. Based on the report released from the ministry of culture and tourism office the number of tourists visited the country were 523,438 in the year 2014. It is also expected this number to show an increase of 10% each year. But tourist who used the tour and travel agencies service are in small proportion compared to the above number. For instance, it is only around 36,000 tourists, who used this agencies service in the year 2014 (MOCT, 2014). Therefore, the population consists of those tourists who used tour and travel agencies service available in the Addis Ababa city.

3.2.2 Sampling technique

The number of tourist visiting the country via tour and travel agencies in a year is too high to treat them all. More over the problem associated with approaching them makes this difficult. Hence it is necessary to limit the sample size with the available time and resource. Therefore, 203 respondents are selected for the purpose of primary data collection, guided by similar researches made in different countries in the same industry as well as taking the minimum recommended number by scholars for the same purpose.

Participants were selected based on convenience sampling method which is a type of non probability sampling technique. This kind of sampling enables to draw a sample from the part of population that is close to hand, readily available or convenient. This method is selected because of the nature of respondents. They are tourist passengers which cannot be accessed easily from time and place constraints. The other and obvious critical problem in this regard is the unwillingness of most agencies to allow the researcher to access their customers.

3.3   Types of data and tools/Instrument of data collection

The importance of collecting data from the right source using the right data collection methods and instruments always determine the quality of the study made in any field. To use as an input for this study, only a primary data source were used to get important information from the respondents. The measures employed were acquired from previous researchers study conducted in the similar industry.

To collect relevant data from sample respondents oneself administrated questionnaire was distributed in Addis Ababa to the targeted sample. It is prepared in English because the respondents are foreigners who communicate in it. The survey was conducted from Dec 2014 to Feb 2015. The questionnaire consists of four main parts. Part one dealt with the socio demographic data of the respondents and some background evaluation questions. Part two concentrated on the customers' expectations of the sustainable tourism service quality on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" which took score 1 to "strongly agree" which took score 7. Part three was to understand the customers' perceptions of the sustainable service quality on the same 7-point Likert scale .Part four is to evaluate the customers' overall satisfactions of the sustainable tourism service quality ,

on a 7- points Likert scale ranged from "highly dissatisfied" which took score 1 to "highly satisfied" which took score 7.

3.4   Procedure of data collection

The questioner was sample tested and some experts from tour operating sectors as well as who have some experience about sustainable tourism management were consulted on its appropriateness in conducting the study. This is made before it is administered. Then it is distributed to the respondents from December 2014 to January 2015 through volunteer independent tour guides, tour and travel agents and the researcher. The agencies mail the soft copies of the questioner for their customers who recently visited the country. They also distributed some of it from office. This actually is made towards end of tourist stay time. The tour guides, who actually have ample time with tourists, distributed using their convenient time. But they were advised to distribute the questioner while or after consumption of the service. The researcher administered and accessed the respondents at their Hotels like Tayetu and Hilton Addis, Sheraton Addis as well as at Addis Ababa Museum.

3.5   Methods of data analysis

The data collected from respondents, was analyzed applying descriptive as well as inferential statics using PSPP soft ware package. Paired t-tests were conducted to assess the significance of differences between the two means of expectations and perceptions. Consumer's perceptions and expectations of travel agency also been assessed, Then, the analyzed data is presented using tables and graphs.

This study entails to measure the sustainable customers-perceived service quality and satisfaction using SERVQUAL model which served as framework for the instrument of data collection. This model was adopted so that it fitted into tourism. The concept of measuring the difference between expectation and perceptions in the form of the SERVQUAL gap score proved very useful for assessing levels of service quality. Gap analysis, correlation analysis and regression analysis (Paired Sample T-test) were used to identify service shortfalls of the agencies, the relationship between dimensions and their impact on overall satisfaction of customers. Those statistical elements helped to observe

the existing customer gaps and set different strategies by the agencies on how to meet or exceed the customers.

At first the pilot test interview was made with Ethiopians (local peoples), travel agencies, government offices found in Ethiopia, but it seems difficult for many respondents to understand the main concept of tourism sustainability in Ethiopia. As there is no policy, procedure, protection, awareness about keeping safe the environment and the tourism sites and while only the government is responsible about everything, understanding sustainability of tourism becomes unthinkable.

The second option becomes asking tourists about Ethiopian tourism sustainability and it works fine. The questionnaires made then include the 23 SERVQAL attributes and analyze the answer they give using this method. As the tourism sector is at infant stage in Ethiopia, gathering information about whether Ethiopia is maintaining the tourism in sustainable manner or not by asking direct questions will have no benefit for the country and the researcher. Hence by using SERVQAL method the researcher tries to achieve what is needed to have a sustainable tourism in Ethiopia by taking in to consideration the tourist's perception and expectation of Ethiopian sustainable tourism, and comparing it with other developed tourism country the tourists visited. In addition the researcher added some common demographic and simple tourism sustainability questions to evaluate the level of the answer given by the tourists.

The five dimensions of SERVQAL, which are reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangible has been used to categorize the 23 questionnaires into five groups. With regard to the questionnaires' as it is about sustainable tourism and as SERVQAL is subjective, there raw meaning might not fit to them. Reliability dimension is used for the questions from 1-6, which discuss about the participation of the community, the researcher believes that as far as the community engage in the protection of the nature, there good actions will promote the sustainable tourism then it is reliable that the sustainable tourism will be maintained for generations. The second attribute 7-11, assurance is used with regard to nature, so preserving and protecting the nature will assure the existence of sustainable tourism. The third 12-15, empathy is used as it is about caring and giving individual attention to the service so giving attention to the nature is included here. The fourth 16-20, resource category is used, the researcher thinks that as far as there is a law and procedure to be followed in order to maintain the tourism service then the natural

resources can be used properly and for long time. The last one from 21-23, which is tangibility is used as with regard to discussing about cash, whether the tourists can pay for well maintained environment or not.

The readers have to keep in mind that the five dimensions didn't play a big role as it stands; it is the points or questions which are included under each dimension that make sense. Each reader of this thesis paper needs to go through all the 23 SERVQAL Questionnaires made, to understand about the values that are found in each tables. Then looking what is included in each category of reliability, assurance, empathy, corporate image.

4 Data presentation, results and discussion

4.1 Questionnaire response rate

During the period of study, a total of 139 questionnaires were distributed to tourist that used the service of Vision travel and tour agency. Table 2, shows the response rate of the tourists, the total number of questionnaires returned was 102. Of these only 84(82.5 %) are found to be usable. Being incomplete the remaining 18 are eliminated. However the total number of questionnaires returned is considered sufficient for data analysis.

Table 2. Response rate

Questionnaire Distributed	Questionnaire Collected	Survey Eliminated	Usable as Percentage of Population
139	102	18	82.5%

Source: Own survey (2015)

4.2 Demographic analysis of the respondents

Tourists were classified according to their gender, age, marital-status, and education, source of information, continental origin, and average use of travel agency service purpose of trip. The consequent three tables present the characteristics of sample.

Figure 2 shows; the number of female customers (41.9%) was less than male customers (58.1%). The male customers have a positive response towards having sustainable tourism than women respondents; the researcher believes that it might be due to the tendency of women expecting more than men and also with luck of information about what is sustainable tourism.

Gender Differences of the Tourists
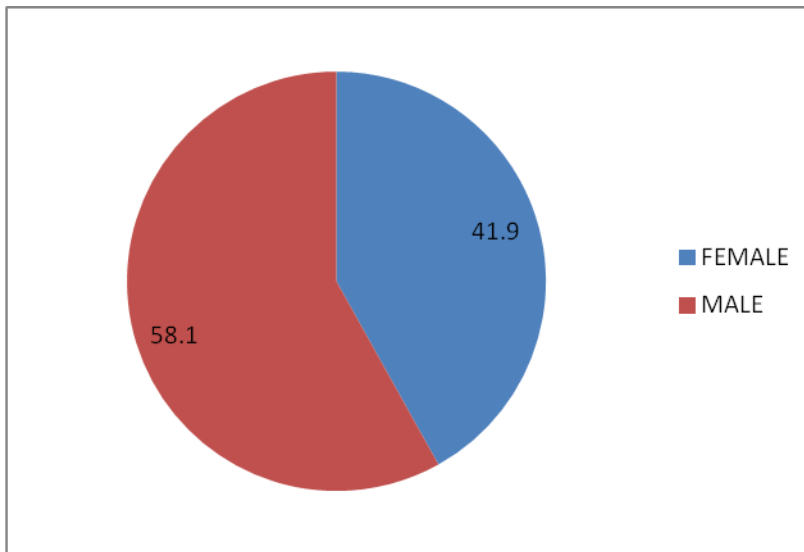
Figure 2.   Gender differences of tourists
Source: Own Survey (2015)

As you can see from figure 3, most respondents were in the age categories 44-49 (35.5%) or 30-39 (22.7%). Young age group categories (18-39) took the least place (16.3%) next to elders age category (4.4%).The majority of respondents were found to be married (51.2%) and single (35%).

From this category those age categories 30-39(22.7%) have a deep knowledge and answer the questionnaires in a manner which can reflect the real solution for having a sustainable tourism in the country.
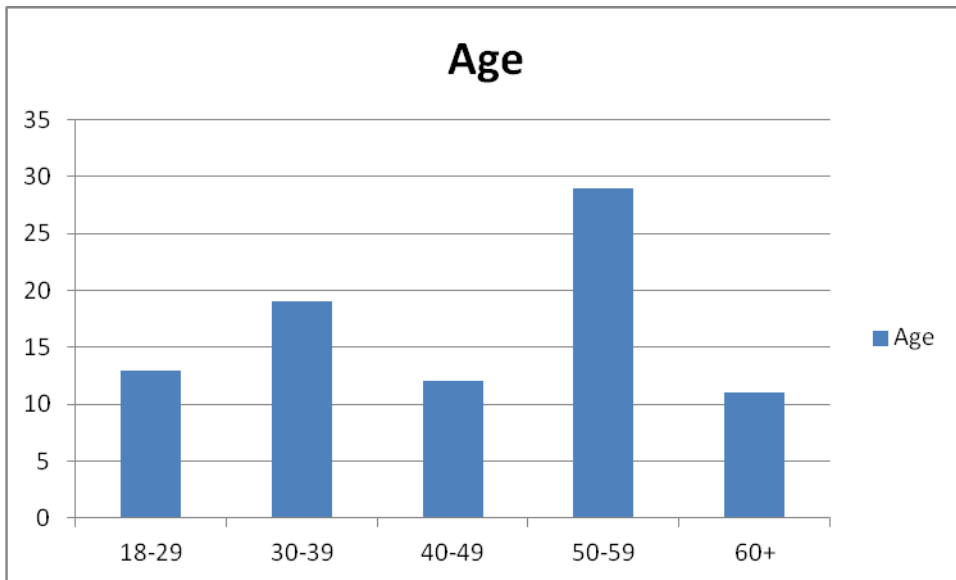
Figure 3.   Ages

Source: Own Survey 2015

As shown in figure 4, regarding continental origin, the largest groups were from Europe (49.2%) and North America (25.1%) respectively. while those from South America (12.3%) and Asia (12.7%) are nearly equal. Australian took the last place in the sample (1%).

In the country of residence arrival of tourists section of the report, the largest percents (31.1%) is that of Europeans and the smallest belongs to that of Australians (1.1%).
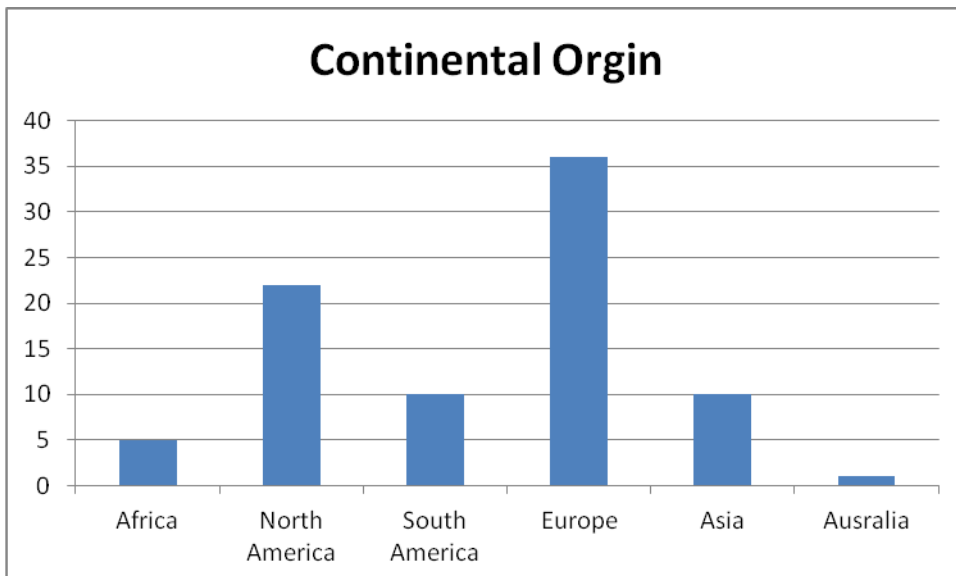
Figure 4.   Continental Origin

Source: Own Survey (2015)

The below figure 5 shows, the educational status of the samples, the dominant figure goes to those from graduate school (52.9%). Of the sample 6.4% are at high school or less in their schooling level.
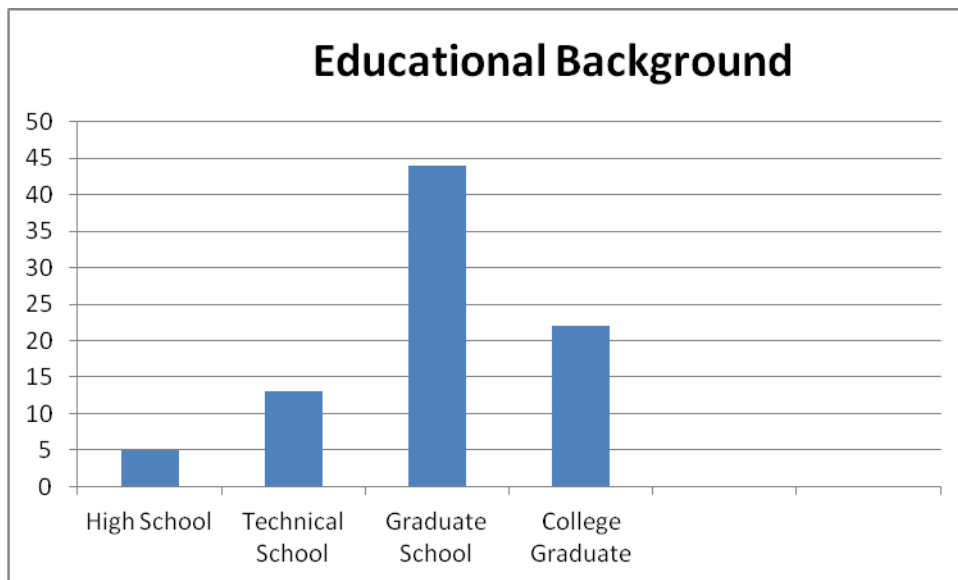
Figure 5.   Educational Background

Source: Own Survey (2015)

4.3   Tourists purpose of trip

In Figure 6 which shows tourists profile of trip, it appeared that respondents with a "pleasure" purpose for their last trip (53.2) dominated the sample, while "business" and "passing by" accounted for only 33.5% and 9.4% respectively. About 23.6% of the respondents used travel agency services less than once a year; about 16.7% used such services once a year; 35.5% used such services twice a year; 14.8% three times a year and 6.9% used four times a year.
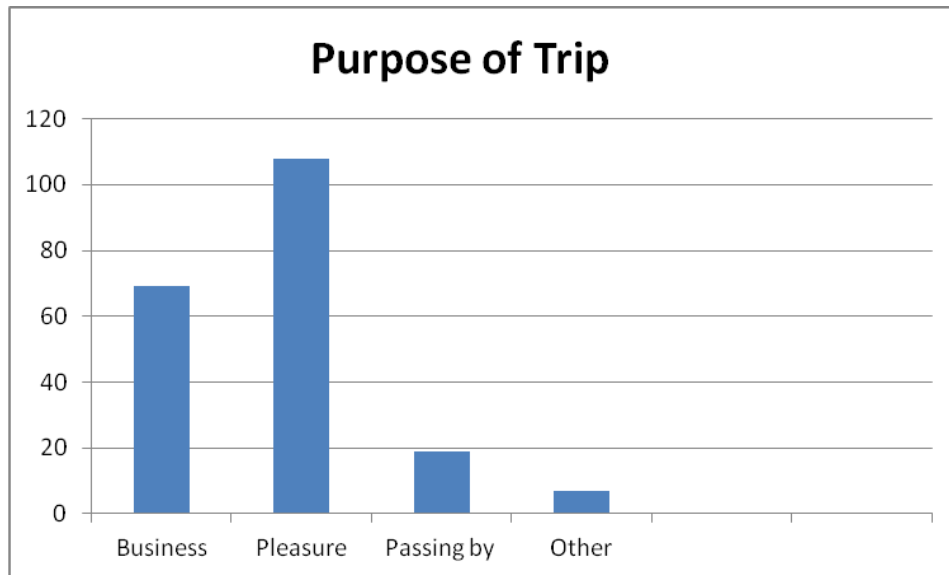
Figure 6.   Tourists Purpose of Trip

Source: Own Survey (2015)

4.4   Tourists source of information

The below figure 7 show the tourists source of information, majority of the respondents which are around (45.1%) find out the information about the Sustainable tourism from the internet search engine, from web sites and some search engines, which most of the people now a day's get information from and (14.8 %) from tourism information centre.
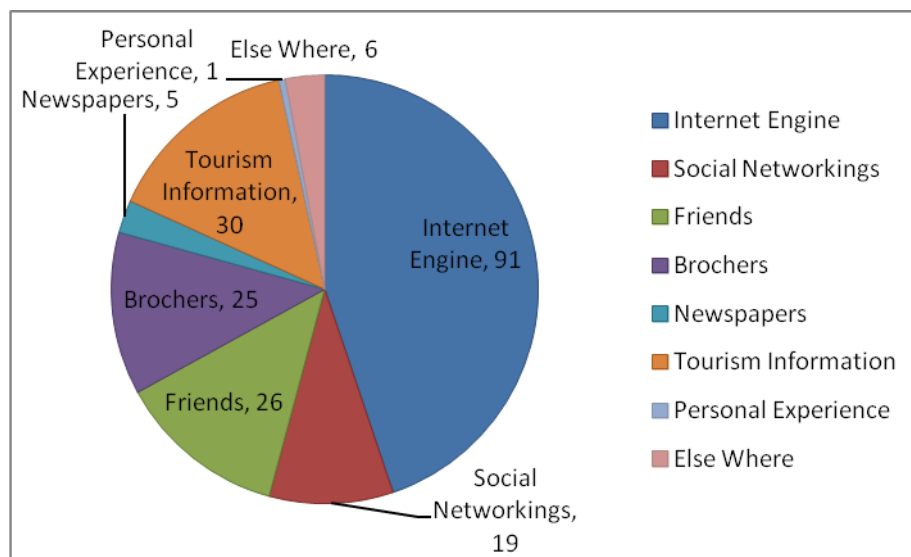
Figure 7.   *Source of Information*

                     Source: Own Survey (2015)

4.5   Tourists expectation, perception and gap means of sustainable tourism management

Compressed Table 2 presents the results of "expectations", "perceptions", and "gap" means scores for the mentioned five dimensions. Regarding to expectation among the dimensions reliability has got the highest mean scores of 6.26 and ranked first. This basically indicates how important and crucial attributes under reliability are for maintaining sustainable tourism management and development. Whenever tourists come across with this attributes almost all the respondents agree with the idea mentioned.

The remaining four attributes tangibility, responsiveness and assurance, empathy, resource and corporate image rank 2nd, 3rd 4th and 5th respectively.

The perception column of table 2 shows the actual service experience of the respondents. This is a real experience that the tourists have whenever they go from one place to another, even it can be compared to their best tourist country. Whenever they are satisfied with the way the tourism is handled and managed in that country then it means that they expect a lot from Ethiopia too, the measurement is perfect for determining the best sustainable tourism development, if they didn't satisfy it means that they prefer other countries than Ethiopia. In this regard resource and corporate image scored the highest mean score of 4.95 and stood 1st as compared to the remaining four attributes. The finding ranked responsiveness and assurance, empathy, reliability and tangibility 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th respectively.

The maximum gap in this study is recorded in tangibility dimension (I will pay more for high protected area; it is another way of collecting money). It is clear that money plays active role in deciding the option to choose. Based on tourist's different background some might think to pay more but others might say who cares as far as I enjoy it, that's what makes the Gap high.

Table 2. Comparison of consumer's perceptions and expectations of travel agency service (n = 203)

Dimension	Perception			Expectation			Gap	
	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	Rank
Reliability	4.34	.83	4	6.26	.63	1	-1.91	2
Responsiveness and Assurance	4.55	.81	2	5.81	.78	5	-1.25	4
Empathy	4.52	1.01	3	6.04	.61	4	-1.52	3
Resource and corporate image	4.95	1.03	1	6.05	.68	3	-1.10	5
Tangibility	4.18	1.08	5	6.20	.50	2	-2.00	1
Aggregate mean			4.508			6.072		-1.564

Source: Own survey (2015)

4.6 Paired sample t-test

Table 3 shows the respective perception means, expectation means, gap means and *t* values regarding the sustainable tourism service quality the tourist thinks what needs to be done and what's done in real, from what they experience while they were in Ethiopia. Gap scores were calculated by subtracting the expectation score from that of perception. Since the tourism sustainability can be achieved from the difference between customer expectation and perception of service, and the minimum the gap is the best way to follow to have a sustainable tourism management. Paired t-test is employed to test the significant difference between the two means of expectation and perception.

Overall expectation values exceed perception values in the total 23 attributes. The results showed that there were significant differences between perceptions and expectations of all attributes. The negative gap means indicated that the perceived sustainable tourism management did not meet customers' expectations. The largest gap scores were found for telling the tourism development should have done in a sustainable manner (3.03) and it is another way of collecting money by charging more in the name of protecting the nature (2.36).

The results showed that respondents high mean of expectation was for without us (Human Being) nature is nothing (6.46) and It is another way of collecting money by charging more in the name of protecting the nature (6.44). As shown in table 4.5, customer perception scores were not high as the highest score that reached (mean 5.02) People should give due attention to protect the nature and ignoring the laws of nature leads to unattractiveness of the sites (5.02). The rest are lower than this figure. Meanwhile, there were the lowest score of (mean=3.29) Nature has its own right to exist as a result we can destroy it when needed.

The negative gap along all attributes in the result which exhibit the difference between perception and expectation did not undermine the customers overall satisfaction. Of course it clearly indicates the existence sustainable tourism management problem in Ethiopia.

Table 3. Gap analysis for each service quality attributes

No	Attributes	Perception		Expectation		Mean Gap	T-value
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
	Reliability						
1	People should give due attention to protect the nature	5.02	1.22	5.94	1.26	-0.92	7.43
2	Ignoring the laws of nature leads to unattractiveness of the sites	5.02	1.22	5.86	1.02	-0.83	10.10
3	As Humans and animal have the right of existence, natural resources and plants have equal right	4.98	1.14	6.16	0.77	-1.17	13.21
4	The tourism development should have done in a sustainable manner	4.78	1.30	6.43	0.64	-1.66	16.51
5	All of us need to participate for protecting nature	4.92	1.41	6.05	0.89	-1.13	11.54
6	The community should engage in the business to reach to the highest tourism	4.94	1.25	5.86	1.00	-0.91	10.72

	management						
	Responsiveness and assurance						
7	Natural resources should be maintained even if the result affects the human being	4.88	1.20	6.33	0.75	-1.45	14.02
8	Feeling sorry for the destruction of natural resources	4.56	1.37	6.25	0.79	-1.70	14.95
9	There must be high restriction for natural resources	4.42	1.30	6.11	0.82	-1.71	17.50
10	Nature is created by God so no need to control it	4.57	1.05	6.26	0.86	-1.69	18.22
11	Nature has its own right to exist as a result we can destroy it when needed	3.29	0.86	6.34	0.73	-3.03	37.76
	Empathy						
12	Without us (Human Being) nature is nothing	4.42	1.27	6.46	0.70	-2.04	21.44
13	People need to give the best for the natural resources	4.27	1.07	5.83	0.98	-1.56	15.54
14	Nature will recover even if we destroy it	4.67	1.19	5.87	0.93	-1.20	11.43
15	The community engage in the protection of the resources	4.72	1.19	6.02	0.67	-1.50	19.85
	Resource and corporate image						
16	Local authorities must impose a penalty for not protecting the natural environment	4.53	0.96	6.03	0.67	-1.50	19.85
17	Humans need to follow the rules and	4.46	1.07	5.88	0.87	-1.42	15.46

	laws						
18	The people need to have sufficient knowledge about the nature	4.74	0.98	5.86	0.92	-1.11	11.95
19	There must be a benefit for the community as large	4.43	1.13	5.63	1.01	-1.19	13.90
20	Working for the future sustainability of tourism must come from all the stake holders	4.60	1.09	5.60	1.18	-1.03	10.62
	Tangibility						
21	I will pay more for high protected area	4.38	1.18	5.97	0.70	-1.58	17.09
22	It is another way of collecting money by charging more in the name of protecting the nature	4.07	1.27	6.44	0.64	-2.36	24.92
23	I don't have to pay more because the environment is protected in a sustainable manner	4.09	1.35	6.18	0.72	-2.08	21.29

Source: Own survey (2015)

Notes:
1. T-test two- tail with probability<0.05.
2. A Gap mean is defined as perception mean – expectation mean
3. SD: standard deviation
4. Customers' expectations and perceptions were measured on a 7-point Likert scale, 1= strongly disagree 7= strongly agree

4.7 Lowest gap score

Table 4 shows five attributes that have relatively shown a less negative gap score, indicating that tourist's perception is relatively in line with their expectation, even though there was still a gap. It shows areas where these tour and travel agencies are strong enough in maintaining tourism management and sustainable tourism development. Therefore the government, tourism office, stake holders etc should work hard to keep and to add more

values to these attributes so that sustainable competitive advantage can be secured in the future.

Three attributes from responsiveness and assurance and one attribute from each dimension of empathy and resource and corporate image have shown good quality indications. The Agencies are good in delivering prompt service by understanding and looking the best interest of customers. They are also staffed with employees having sufficient knowledge about the product and behaviours which instil confidence in their customers.

Table 4. Lowest Gap Score Service Attributes for Agencies Customers

No	Attributes	Dimension	Gap score
1	Ignoring the laws of nature leads to unattractiveness of the sites	Reliability	-0.83
2	The community should engage in the business to reach to the highest tourism management	Reliability	-0.91
3	All of us need to participate for protecting nature	Reliability	-1.13
4	The people need to have sufficient knowledge about the nature	Resource and corporate image	-1.11
5	Nature will recover even if we destroy it	Empathy	-1.20

Source: Own survey (2015)

4.8 Highest gap score

Table 5 illustrates the highest gap score from all the attributes the tourist responds. According to the respondents two attributes from each reliability and tangibility dimensions and one attributes from empathy dimension exhibited low quality.

Table 5. Highest Gap Score Service Attributes for Agencies Customers

No	Attributes	Dimension	Gap score
1	Nature has its own right to exist as a result we can destroy it when needed	Responsiveness and assurance	-3.03
2	It is another way of collecting money by charging more in the name of protecting the nature	Tangibility	-2.36
3	I don't have to pay more because the environment is protected in a sustainable manner	Tangibility	-2.08
4	Without us (Human Being) nature is nothing	Empathy	-2.04
5	There must be high restriction for natural resources	Reliability	-1.71

Source: Own survey (2015)

4.9 Overall tourists' satisfaction level

In this study tourist satisfaction is measured how much they have been satisfied by the way the tourist resources are handled and managed, how good the environment has been protected and based on peoples association to the environment in Ethiopia. It was measured using a seven-point likert scale. As shown in Table 6 passengers overall satisfaction was above average, slightly they were satisfied with what they saw and experience. It seems the negative service quality gap along all attributes did not undermine their satisfaction. Most of the time such phenomenon is encountered in SERVQUAL studies (Rute, James, 1991).

Table 6. Overall Satisfaction Level

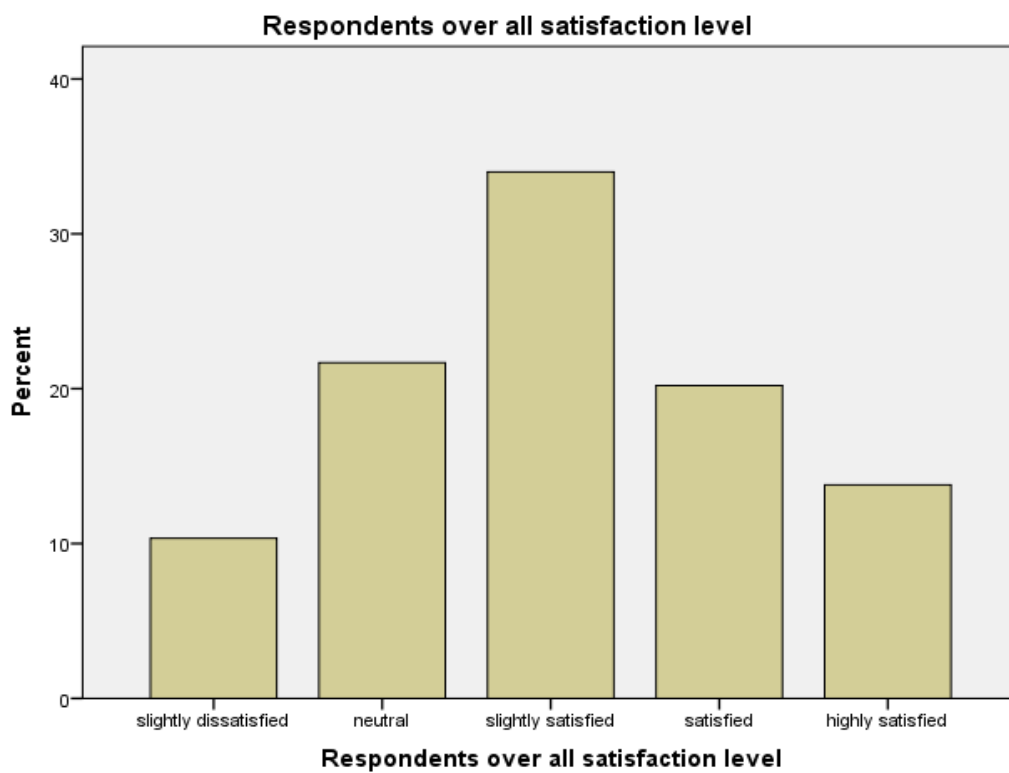|	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Respondents overall satisfaction level	203	3.00	7.00	5.0542	1.17819
Valid N (list wise)	203				

Source: own survey (2015)

Figure 8.   Respondents overall satisfaction

Source: SPSS output (2015)

5 Findings, discussion, recommendations and limitation

5.1 Findings

Concerning expectation, the reliability dimension of service quality has been ranked first with a mean score of 6.26 in terms of expectation. The second highest was found to be tangibility with mean value of 6.20 followed by responsiveness and assurance with a mean value of 6.05. Empathy dimension of service quality ranked fourth with a mean score of 6.04. The least rated service quality dimension in terms of customers' expectation was the resource and corporate image attribute, scoring a mean value 5.81.

With regard to actual experiences or perceived performance, it has been obtained that responsiveness and assurance dimension was ranked first with a mean value of 4.95. This implies that majority of tourists agreed that they have perceived relatively good service quality on the attributes of responsiveness and assurance dimension. Resource and corporate image, empathy, and reliability dimensions were ranked second with a mean score of 4.55, third 4.52, and fourth 4.18 respectively. The least ranked service quality dimension was tangibility with a mean score of 4.18.

Gap analysis result indicates tourists' actual service experience was less than their expectation along all service quality dimensions. This clearly indicates the sustainable tourism quality level is low. The aggregate mean difference was also -1.564. The wider gap is observed in tangibility dimension with a score of -2.00. Furthermore, such a negative gap has also been observed on the remaining service quality dimensions as follows: reliability (-1.91); empathy (-1.52); resource and corporate image (-1.25); and responsive and assurance (-1.10).

Another gap analysis considered was related to attributes of service quality dimensions. To this end, it has been obtained that of the 23 measured attributes, the five least rated gaps were reported on the following attributes: Ignoring the laws of nature leads to unattractiveness of the sites (-0.83); The community should engage in the business to reach to the highest tourism management (-0.91); all of us need to participate for protecting nature(-1.13); the people need to have sufficient knowledge about the nature (-1.11) and nature will recover even if we destroy it (-1.2). This denotes the strong sides of the sustainable tourism service because low scores in this sense is a sign of good management. As opposed to the aforementioned attributes, the following five attributes are top rated in

terms of reported gaps: nature has its own right to exist as a result we can destroy it when needed (-3.03); it is another way of collecting money by charging more in the name of protecting the nature (-2.36); I don't have to pay more because it's well protected(-2.08); without us (human being) nature is nothing (-2.04); and there must be high restriction for natural resources (-1.71). This indicates customers did not experience the service in line with their expectation.

In regard to tourists overall satisfaction level, the obtained mean score was 5.0542. The standard deviation obtained here was 1.12 implying that the respondents were consistent in their pattern of response. Moreover, the extreme options (both highly dissatisfied and highly satisfied) were not marked by any respondent.

5.2   Discussion

The research revealed that, from figure 2, the male customers have a positive response towards having sustainable tourism than women respondents; the researcher believes that it might be due to the tendency of women expecting more than men and also with luck of information about sustainable tourism. It also can be seen from figure 4, as more tourists come from Europe it's to be expected that more information comes from those categories. From the response collected the researcher clearly see that most of the respondents have a big concern about what has been done in the country and mentioned what has to be done to maintain the sustainable tourism service. From Figure 5, since the sustainable tourism is a new idea in the world the researcher believes that those who studied in the recent years will have some good knowledge about sustainable tourism than the old ones. The result shows also the same thing, those whose ages are around 30-39 and from graduated school have a good knowledge about sustainable tourism than the others. Regarding tourists profile of trip as shown in figure 6, about tourist's profile of trip, it doesn't matter what is the purpose the visit that determine the quality of the respondents, but it is understandable that those tourists who came for a pleasure have good understanding about the tourism sites and environment than the others. They are the one who can compare what they actually expected and found in real manner.

As shown in Table 5 according to the respondents two attributes from each reliability and tangibility dimensions and one attributes from empathy dimension exhibited low quality. These should be the assignments at hand for having sustainable tourism management in

Ethiopia. Therefore the government, the tourism office and all the stakeholders should spend a great deal of time and resource for the improvement of theses weak sides.

The first research question proposed for this study was about how customers' of tour and travel agencies in Ethiopia perceive the sustainable tourism service quality. To this end, it has been found out that the customers' ratings of their perception of the sustainable tourism management range from the highest mean score of 4.95 in tangibility dimension to the lowest mean of 4.18 in responsiveness and assurance. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the management and maintenance of the sustainable tourism in Ethiopia is fair in the eyes of the tourists.

The second point of analysis was about the extent to which the customers' perception of the sustainable tourism' match with their expectations. It has been found out that the mean values obtained against the five service quality dimensions range from the minimum of 5.81 in resource and corporate image to the maximum of 6.24 in the reliability dimension of sustainable tourism service quality. The result shows that there is a mismatch between customers'' expectations and what the country have as a tourist attraction. This is true both in terms of the difference in aggregate mean values and in terms of each service quality dimensions. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the customers' expectations are not met with reference to the actual management of sustainable tourism.

The third research question geared towards measuring the extent to which customers are satisfied with the sustainable tourism service delivered to them, what they actually witnessed while they were in Ethiopia. The mean value obtained to this end was 5.0542. The tourists' modestly rated their level of satisfaction with the overall tourism management.

5.3 Recommendations

Looking on the findings and discussions made to this time, the below recommendations are suggested to fill service quality gaps by taking corrective actions. Since the tourism is not in high level compared to other country, there are some crucial things need to be done to have a sustainable tourism service in Ethiopia. This is expected to help the government, the tour agencies, the environmentalist and all the stakeholders to get the best out of the tourism sector. Moreover, these improvement schemes narrow down the gap between tourist's perception and expectation. Taking this as a short term goal any party who have a

positive thinking towards developing the sustainable tourism in Ethiopia could work to attain positive gap among service quality attributes and keep the tourism service maintained for the future. To this end stake holders should also take their own share.

Government and tourism office should give maximum attention for reliability dimension and attributes related with it. This is basically true because this dimension ranked first in customers' expectation score and rank second in service quality gap. Reliability is also found the only dimension behind predicting customers' satisfaction.

The appropriate execution of reliability dimension is very much related with human activity for having a sustainable tourism in a country. It could mean that all the concerned parties will have to implement strategies for human participation in short and long terms to recruit, train and develop the communities to protecting the nature, give due attention and willingness to participate in the sector. Besides, tourism faculties and academic institutes must develop their educational program and courses according to market needs and requirements accomplishing quality approach regarding international levels. In addition, systematic monitoring and control policies appear to be important in order to improve reliability.

The next dimension which needs considerable attention as far as this theses study is concerned is Resource and corporate image. It is not a work for one party to have a sustainable tourism management in a country. The authorities must impose a penalty for not protecting the natural environment, all the local people, the governor and stakeholders must work hand in hand. Foreigners especially tourists look for modern and well maintained areas than areas which doesn't have any environmental protection. Most of the agencies customers in this regard are from developed nations where the latest sustainable tourism is trying to achieve. This in turn makes their expectation high. Therefore all the concerned parties need to invest on these respect in order to narrow the negative gap registered in there attributes.

This study can be used to add to the existing body of knowledge both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, the study could be used as reference literature for further study in the area by other interested researchers. Since there is shortage of research resources in this specific area, it will play a role of filling the gap. Practically, it gives an insight about the expectation of tourists which is a basic input for the improvement of giving quality and maintaining the sustainable tourism sector. It will pinpoint the strongest and weakest points regarding the achievement of sustainable tourism in Ethiopia.

5.4 Limitations

Regarding this study the researcher believes that, the limitation with this studies are, first, the result which are obtained doesn't give any assurance about the current tourism sustainability in Ethiopia. Many repeated studies must have done to get the exact figure and meaningful results in the future and to compare the results with other previous studies.

The issues with the perception and expectation of the service the tourists acknowledge and give rank in the questionnaire depend on many factors such as study background and age, there expectation and also there perception highly depend on their experience on other tourism management they witnessed in other countries.

The other limitation is that the five attributes sometimes doesn't reflect their usual meaning, so each reader has to take into consideration that, the attributes used in the questionnaires' sometimes might not come under the same factors.

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12 Aims of sustainable tourism

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Appendix 1

Definition of terms

The following definitions/terms are frequently appearing in this paper.

- Tourism

  Tourism is deemed to include any activity concerned with the temporary short-term movement of people to destinations outside the places where they normally live and work, and their activities during the stay at these destinations (The Tourism Society, 1979).

- Sustainable Tourism

  Maintaining and keeping the balance the level of tourist satisfaction by protecting countries current and future tourism sectors, without having a negative impact on the environment and socio-cultural terms.

- Service Quality

  It is the degree to which an event or experience meets individual's needs or expectations (Martin, 2013).

- Value

  For customers it is a customer's perceived preference for and evaluation of those product attributes, attribute performances, and consequences arising from use that facilitate (or block) achieving the customer's goals and purposes in use situation (Martin,2013). For operators it refers to all types of returns of the tour and travel agencies in the form of current and future sales, market share and profit (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012).

- Customer Satisfaction

  Kotler & Armstrong (2012) conceptualize customer satisfaction as the extent to which a product's perceived performance matches a buyer's expectation. Moreover, Thakur (2005) contends that customer satisfaction includes customers' perception that they are properly served. Therefore, the customer satisfaction is operationally defined here as customers' perception that their needs have been served and their rating that their expectations are met.

- Operators/tour/

  Means an organization that coordinates or organize travel, transports for tour, and operates tour, for domestic or foreign tourists, being supported by professionals who are acquainted with touring (Yehalashet, 2013).

- Service Delivery

  It refers to the act and activities of operators in making ready the services for consumers.

- Perceived Service Quality

  Perceived service quality is an attitude of a consumer judgment on the overall service. It results from a comparison of consumers' expectations with their perceptions of the service actually delivered by supplier (Parasuraman, et al 1985).

Appendix 2

Questionnaires for Tourists

Part One
Personal Characteristics of the respondents:
Please fill out the survey by putting "X" mark in the appropriate box to the right of each statement that most accurately reflects your rating or that most closely matches your feeling about the statement.

Age: ☐ 18-29 ☐ 30-39 ☐ 40-49
☐ 50-59 ☐ 60 +

Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

Marital status: ☐Single ☐Widowed ☐Married ☐ Divorced

Highest level of schooling completed: ☐ High school or less ☐ Technical school
☐ Graduate school ☐ College graduate

From where you are ☐ Africa ☐ North America ☐ South America
☐ Europe ☐ Asia ☐ Australia

How did you find out about Sustainable Tourism service? You can choose more than ones
☐ From the Internet: search engine, please specify:
☐ From the Internet: social networking sites and discussion groups.
☐ Friends, acquaintances, relatives
☐ Brochures
☐ Newspapers and local papers
☐ TV/Radio Tourism information service
☐ Personal experiences
☐ Elsewhere, please specify:
☐ Others, specify_____

Purpose of the trip: ☐ Business ☐Pleasure ☐ Passing by ☐ Other, Please specify__

Is your work related with environmental protection, sustainable tourism management etc?
☐ Yes ☐ No

Are you willing to pay more for the service which protect the natural resources highly?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Which of the following choice do you think more necessary for sustainable tourism management and destination for tourism?

☐ Comfort of transportation, hospitality, accommodation and meals
☐ Natural resources attraction
☐ Cultural attraction
☐ Existence of sustainable tourism services and management
☐ Cost

Which one you choose to have a sustainable development and sustainable tourism?

☐ Going to anywhere without any environmental protection and rules
☐ Minimum protected areas
☐ High protected areas

PART TWO AND THREE
Expectations and perceptions of service quality

The 7 point Likert scale is designed to measure expectations and perception. It can be described as follows: 1= strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=slightly disagree, 4=neutral, 5=slightly agree, 6=agree, 7=strongly agree. Please circle the number of your opinion.

1-6	Reliability
7-11	Responsiveness and Assurance
12-15	Empathy
16-20	Resource and corporate image
21-23	Tangibility

No	Travel and tour service quality Attributes	Your expectation for an Excellent Tourism Management							Your perception on your Particular Experience						
1	People should give due attention to protect the nature	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	Ignoring the laws of nature leads to unattractiveness of the sites	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	As Humans and animal have the right of existence, natural resources and plants have equal right	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	The tourism development should have done in a sustainable manner	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5	All of us need to participate for protecting nature	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	The community should engage in the business to reach to the highest tourism management	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

7	Natural resources should be maintained even if the result affects the human being	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	Feeling sorry for the destruction of natural resources	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9	There must be high restriction for natural resources	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10	Nature is created by God so no need to control it	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11	Nature has its own right to exist as a result we can destroy it when needed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12	Without us (Human Being) nature is nothing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13	People need to give the best for the natural resources	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14	Nature will recover even if we destroy it	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15	The community engage in the protection of the resources	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16	Local authorities must impose a penalty for not protecting the natural environment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17	Humans need to follow the rules and laws	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18	The people need to have sufficient knowledge about the nature	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19	There must be a benefit for the community as large	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20	Working for the future sustainability of tourism must come from all the stake holders	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21	I will pay more for high protected area	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22	It is another way of collecting money by charging more in the name of protecting the nature	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23	I don't have to pay more because the environment is protected in a sustainable manner	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

PART FOUR

What is your overall satisfaction level on tourism management? Please circle the number of your opinion

Highly satisfied   highly dissatisfied

7   6   5   4   3   2   1