

A Study of Customer Satisfaction & Service Quality of Indian Hotels (A Comparative Study in Indore Region)

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Abstract: Indian tourism and hospitality emerging as a chief growth driver for services industry in India, hotel sector is only poised for further growth. Though economic slowdown has resulted in low occupancy and average room rates for hotels across certain major cities in the country, Indian hotel sector is still expected to show healthy prospects compared to global hotel growth. India is the ninth largest civil aviation market in the world in 2014. The sector is projected to be the third largest aviation market globally by 2020. India's aviation market caters to 117 million domestic and 43 million international passengers in 2014. Over the next decade the market could reach 337 million domestic and 84 million international passengers.

The study discovers their present levels of the product offerings on the basis of SERVQUAL dimensions. Present study also attempts to compare quality of product offerings of the selected Hotels in the region on SERVQUAL dimensions. It is an exploratory research study, which after development of conceptual frame work deploys structured instrument and statistical analysis tools like Eigen value scores and comparison of means. This study shall be helpful to give a wonderful insight to the concerning organizations to identify the gap and take leverage by offering the desired quality products.

Keywords: Quality, SERVQUAL, Hotel, Organization, Service

I. Introduction

The Indian economy is opening up its horizons as it continues to integrate with the world economy. Therefore, the advantages of conducting business with and in India are many. This has lead to the maneuvering of variety of jobs to the shores of India, bringing in its wake transit travelers, business travelers, business meets and holiday seekers. India is the ninth largest civil aviation market in the world in 2014. The sector is projected to be the third largest aviation market globally by 2020. India's aviation market caters to 117 million domestic and 43 million international passengers in 2014. Over the next decade the market could reach 337 million domestic and 84 million international passengers.

1.1 Changing Face

With Indian tourism and hospitality emerging as a chief growth driver for services industry in India, hotel sector is only poised for further growth. Though economic slowdown has resulted in low occupancy and average room rates for hotels across certain major cities in the country, Indian hotel sector is still expected to show healthy prospects compared to global hotel growth. At a time when global hospitality conditions are still nearing saturation, Indian hospitality sector is being considered as a viable proposition for players.

1.2 The Future of Hospitality

The Indian economy is opening up its horizons as it continues to integrate with the world economy. Therefore, the advantages of conducting business with and in India are many. This has lead to the maneuvering of variety of jobs to the shores of India, bringing in its wake transit travelers, business travelers, business meets and holiday seekers. India is the ninth largest civil aviation market in the world in 2014. The sector is projected to be the third largest aviation market globally by 2020. India's aviation market caters to 117 million domestic and 43 million international passengers in 2014. Over the next decade the market could reach 337 million domestic and 84 million international passengers.

1.3 Government Initiative

The Government of India and the Ministry of Tourism have contributed significantly to the growth and development of the industry by providing various policy measures, tax incentives and infrastructural support such as-Promotion of rural tourism by Ministry of Tourism in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme, Availability of Medical Visa for tourists coming into the country for medical treatment, 100 percent FDI allowed through automatic route in hotel and tourism sector, Insurance of visa on arrival for tourists from select countries like Finland, Japan and New Zealand, Capital subsidy programmes for

budget hotels, Elimination of customs duty for import of raw materials, equipment, liquor etc, Five-year income tax holidays for 2-4 star hotels established in specified districts having UNESCO-declared 'World Heritage Sites' Further, the tourism policy of the government aims at development of integrated tourism circuits, speedy implementation of tourism projects, special capacity building in the hospitality sector and new marketing strategies.

1.4 Hotels in Indore

Indore has the largest economy in central India and is the business and trading capital of Pradesh. Located at the crossroads of western and central India the residents of the city love to refer Indore as Mini Bombay. Indore has relatively good connectivity and has been the hub of trade and commerce, not only for the state but also for western India. Today Indore can boast of a phenomenal industrial and business development. It has one of the largest trans-shipment centers for truck transport. There are various hotels located in Indore and surrounding vicinity. To name few Radisson Blu Hotel(Carlson Group),Hotel Fortune landmark ,Sayaji Hotel, Shreemaya Hotel, Lemon Tree, The Best Western Plus Hotel Horizon

II. Review Of Literature

2.1 General reviews: On marketing of services

A study by Parasuram A, Zelthaml V.A. and Berry L.L (1990), reveals that, over two-third of the customer dissatisfaction is because of perceived indifference to their problem or concerns on the part of service providers. Cristopher and Ballntyne (1991) reported that it is the relationship marketing that brings quality, customer service and marketing. Brown and Swartz (1989) reported that the consistent delivery of superior service is the key to the service provider to position themselves more effectively. Parasuraman, Zithmal and Berry (1988) provide a terse definition of service quality. They defined service quality as 'a global judgment, or attitude, relating to the superiority of the service', and explicated it as involving evaluation of the outcome (i.e. what the customer actually receives from the service) and process of the service act (i.e. the manner in which service is delivered). Bapat, Harish et al (2014) in their study on based on SERVQRAL dimension 'A Comparative Study of Service Quality of Selected Indian Banks' revealed that few organizations have strong performances in some dimensions and they have become their USP. In line with the propositions put forward by Gronroos (1982), Parasuraman, Zithmal and Berry (1985, 1988) posited and operationalised service quality as a difference between consumer expectations of 'what they want' and their perceptions of 'what they get'.

2.2 Committed Studies

A noticeable study by Lee and Hing (1995), Steven, et. Al 1995), John and Tyas (1996), Oh and Jeong (1996), Sessa Sai (1999), Harsh (2001), Simla and Swain (2002) and Mushtaq (2003) suggests that customer satisfaction is important because it directly linked to return behavior. However, quality cannot be improved unless it is measured. Bapat, Harish et al (2007) in their study on 'Effect of Interactive marketing on service quality of retail industry' revealed that interactive marketing efforts leads to better interactive encounters. The SERVQUAL instrument has been widely applied in a variety of service industries, including tourism and hospitality. Research related to this sector can be divided into measuring service quality in historic houses (Frochot and Hughes, 2000), hotels (Douglas and Connor, 2003; Antony et al., 2004; Juwaheer, 2004; Marković, 2004; Nadiri and Hussain, 2005; Olorunniwo et al., 2006; Wang et al., 2007), restaurants (Heung et al., 2000; Fu and Parks, 2001; Namkung and Jang, 2008), travel agencies (Atilgan et al., 2003; Martinez Caro and Martinez Garcia, 2008), diving (O'Neill et al., 2000), health spas (Snoj and Mumel, 2002; Marković et al., 2004; González et al., 2007), ecotourism (Khan, 2003), theme parks (O'Neill and Palmer, 2003), tourism and hospitality higher education (Marković, 2005; Marković, 2006). The instrument was used to measure hotel employee quality as well (Yoo and Park, 2007).

To sum up, the relationship between quality and satisfaction is complex. Some authors have described it as Siamese twins (Danaher and Mattsson, 1994; Jamali, 2007). Although there still remain a lot of unresolved questions, it can be concluded that service quality and customer satisfaction can be perceived as separate concepts that have causal ordering.

III. Importance Of The Present Study

The study is very important from the point of view of dealing and developing the service marketing culture in the organization especially in the Hotel & Hospitality sector. In the cutting edge competition and liberalization, those organizations will survive and lead who will maintain service quality. The present paper is a humble attempt to identify the major factors based on descriptive research design and addresses very important aspect of service quality in hotel industry.

Rationale: After doing rigorous literature review, it is found that there are many studies which have been done on SERVQUAL in the large organizations. The previous studies have also been focused on different aspects of organizational culture and other dimensions of marketing such as internal and interactive marketing. As the reach of the hospitality sector is growing, the researchers inclined to conduct the research in order to know the gap between customers' expectation and product delivery in the selected Hotels operating in tier two cities. This study may be helpful for the concerning organizations to bridge this gap in order to benefit the society at large and build a profitable proposition to adapt to the specific requirements of tier two cities..

IV. Objectives

The main objectives of the present study can be figured out as follows.

- To study the applicability of SERVQUAL dimension in selected hotels.
- To measure the perception of customers of selected Hotels in terms of service quality.
- To compare the perception of customers of selected Hotels in terms of service quality.

V. Research Methodology

5.1 Research Design

The present research is designed to explore the dimensions of SERVQUAL in the organizations. The conceptual frame work and theoretical linking of the subject is done and the entire research is divided in to two parts according to the problem definition and objectives. First Tentative norms are applied to the SERVQUAL profile to know the validity and reliability of the instrument. Then it is measured and compared for SERVQUAL dimensions by applying statistical tools. Sample Organizations were RB*, SJ* located in Indore. (*The identity of the organizations is not disclosed for the sake of the confidentiality).

5.2 Operationalization

At this level the researcher has put the theoretical concepts to the conceptual frame. It has been found that service quality has been broadly characterized by SERVQUAL. To capture the various dimensions of SERVQUAL a pre tested instrument with extended items to capture two new dimensions namely 'cost' and 'accessibility' have been used. On the basis of above mentioned theoretical understanding the researcher has operationalize the concept.

5.3 Variables

It can be characterized as consisting of five dimensions of SERVQUAL -

1. Tangibility
2. Reliability
3. Responsiveness
4. Assurance
5. Empathy

5.3.1 Servqual Scale

The SERVQUAL scale includes five dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. Within each dimension are several items measured on a five-point Scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree, for a total (24+8*) items.

5.3.1.1 Tangibles

- 1) Excellent Hotels will have modern equipments.
- 2) The physical facilities at excellent Hotels will be visually appealing.
- 3) Employees at excellent Hotels will be neat in appearance
- 4) Tangibles associated with the service will be visually appealing in an excellent hotel.
- 7) The internet accessibility of this hotel is widespread

5.3.1.2 Reliability

- 8) Excellent Hotels keep promise
- 9) Excellent Hotels will have sincere problem solving approach
- 10) Excellent Hotels will perform the service right the first time
- 11) Excellent Hotels will provide their services at the time they promise to do so
- 12) Excellent Hotels insist on error free services

5.3.1.3 Responsiveness

- 13) Employees of excellent Hotels will tell customers exactly when services will be performed
- 14) Employees of excellent Hotels will give prompt service to customers
- 15) Employees of excellent hotel are always willing to help customers
- 16) Employees of excellent Hotels are never too busy to respond to customer requests

5.3.1.4 Assurance

- 17) The behavior of employees of excellent Hotels will instill confidence in customers
- 18) Customers of excellent Hotels will feel safe in their transactions
- 19) Employees of excellent Hotels are consistently courteous with customers
- 20) Employees of excellent Hotels are having the knowledge to answer customer questions

5.3.1.5 Empathy

- 21) Excellent Hotels will give customers individual attention
- 23) Excellent Hotels will have employees who give customers personal attention
- 24) Employees of excellent Hotels will understand the specific needs of their customers Accessibility
- 25) Excellent Hotels will have wide spread network
- 26) Excellent Hotels reach out to the customers
- 27) Excellent Hotels understand the value customers' time and efforts
- 28) Excellent Hotels will have wide and strong coverage of ATM network

5.3.1.6 Cost

- 29) Excellent Hotels provides the services at reasonable cost
- 30) Excellent Hotels will have no hidden charges for their services
- 31) Excellent Hotels takes care of service affordability
- 32) Excellent Hotels deliver value added services at reasonable cost

These findings do not undermine the value of Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry's achievement in identifying some of the key underlying constructs in service quality, but they do highlight the difficulty of measuring customer perceptions of service quality. Anne Smith notes that the majority of researchers using SERVQUAL have omitted from, added to, or altered the list of statements purporting to measure service quality.

Hence, In addition to this *two more variable (Accessibility & cost) are added. A pilot test is conducted on very small sample and many errors have been found in the instrument. It is designed and redesigned to avoid the systematic errors. It is also used to see whether the scores are behaving as expected.

5.4 Sampling Plan

Population: It included all those 1) SelectedHotels2) Existing customers for at least last two years in selected Hotels. The Hotels were selected on the basis of market share.

Sampling Element: The sampling elements of the defined population are existing customers at least for last two years in selected hotels.

Sample size: 70 samples were collected.

5.5 Data Collection

The researcher has used pre tested structured instrument for primary data collection. The questionnaire is used because they have items designed to elicit the information on the research interest and they have protocol for recording the responses. Care has been taken to keep them simple and to avoid leniency, severity, central tendency and halo error (positive and negative questions).A brief introduction of the research is provided in the beginning and the demographics are intentionally placed at last, to maintain the interest of the respondents. Questionnaire was typed and presented to respondents in an arranged manner with likert scale. Pre-tested SERVQUAL scale of Parasuraman, Zithmal and Berry is used.

VI. Hypotheses

On the basis of the literature review and the objectives of the study following Null hypotheses have been formulated:-

H01: There is no significant difference between perceptions of customers of selected Hotels in terms of Tangibility.

H02: There is no significant difference between perceptions of customers of selected Hotels in terms of Reliability.

H03: There is no significant difference between perceptions of customers of selected Hotels in terms of Responsiveness.

H04: There is no significant difference between perceptions of customers of selected Hotels in terms of Assurance.

H05: There is no significant difference between perceptions of customers of selected Hotels in terms of Empathy.

H06: There is no significant difference between perceptions of customers of selected Hotels in terms of Cost.

H07: There is no significant difference between perceptions of customers of selected Hotels in terms of accessibility.

VII. Analysis & Interpretation

7.1 Reliability and validity measures

The indicator scores obtain during the pilot study is subjected to the chronbach alpha test to measure the internal consistency and reliability and it was found that the entire alpha values are more than .7 hence good consistencies is concluded.

7.2 Objective-1: To study the applicability of SERQUAL dimension in selected Hotels

To check for the reliability of the data Chronbach’s alpha method was used and its value was found to be more then (.7) for all seven variables (Table-1) and which indicates the scale is reliable and consistent.

Table-1: Reliability Statistics (Cranach’s Alpha)

| Variable | RB | SJ |
|----------------|------|------|
| Tangibility | .684 | .701 |
| Reliability | .674 | .688 |
| Responsiveness | .784 | .635 |
| Assurance | .669 | .788 |
| Empathy | .714 | .711 |
| Accessibility | .611 | .791 |
| Cost | .844 | .819 |

7.3 Objective-2: To analyze the perception of customers of selected Hotels in terms of service quality.

| Table-2 Independent Samples Test | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|------|------------------------------|--------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---|---------|
| | | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
| | | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Tangibility | Equal variances assumed | .026 | .872 | -2.297 | 68 | .022 | -.42000 | .18282 | -.78480 | -.05520 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | -2.297 | 67.362 | .022 | -.42000 | .18282 | -.78486 | -.05514 |
| Reliability | Equal variances assumed | 13.655 | .000 | 7.931 | 68 | .020 | 1.14571 | .14446 | .85744 | 1.43399 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | 7.931 | 54.193 | .020 | 1.14571 | .14446 | .85610 | 1.43533 |
| Responsiveness | Equal variances assumed | 3.888 | .053 | -2.272 | 68 | .024 | -.35429 | .15595 | -.66549 | -.04308 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | -2.272 | 56.921 | .025 | -.35429 | .15595 | -.66659 | -.04198 |
| Assurance | Equal variances assumed | .389 | .535 | 3.170 | 68 | .001 | .48857 | .15411 | .18106 | .79609 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | 3.170 | 67.983 | .001 | .48857 | .15411 | .18106 | .79609 |
| Empathy | Equal variances assumed | 4.753 | .033 | -3.287 | 68 | .02 | -.39714 | .12082 | -.63823 | -.15606 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | -3.287 | 66.521 | .02 | -.39714 | .12082 | -.63832 | -.15596 |
| Accessibility | Equal variances assumed | .035 | .852 | 7.153 | 68 | .000 | .97429 | .13621 | .70249 | 1.24608 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | 7.153 | 67.794 | .000 | .97429 | .13621 | .70247 | 1.24610 |
| Cost | Equal variances assumed | 6.426 | .014 | 3.063 | 68 | .005 | .40571 | .13247 | .14137 | .67006 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | 3.063 | 65.411 | .005 | .40571 | .13247 | .14118 | .67025 |

Tangibility

Further table-2 of the analysis explains the Z test calculation with a level of significance of .05. Z test analysis here explains the pattern of the relationship between the independent variables. In the present case the

table shows that the $p=.022$ value at $\alpha= .05$ which is highly significant; from this value we can infer that the service quality of RB and SJ Hotels in terms of Tangibility are different.

Reliability: The analysis explains the Z test calculation with a level of significance of .001. Z test analysis here explains the pattern of the relationship between the independent variables. In the present case the table shows that the $p=.020$ value at $\alpha= .001$ which is highly Significant; from this value we can infer that the service quality of RB and SJ Hotels in terms of Reliability are different. The above analysis and interpretation states that the null hypothesis is rejected.

Responsiveness: Similarly for $p=.024$ value at $\alpha= .05$ which is highly significant; from this value we can infer that the service quality of RB and SJ Hotels in terms of Responsiveness are different. The above analysis and interpretation states that the null hypothesis is rejected.

Assurance: The analysis for assurance $p=.001$ value at $\alpha= .05$ which is highly significant; from this value we can infer that the service quality of RB and SJ Hotels in terms of Assurance are different. The above analysis and interpretation states that the null hypothesis is rejected.

Empathy: For $p=.02$ value at $\alpha= .05$ which is highly significant; from this value we can infer that the service quality of RB and SJ Hotels in terms of Empathy are different. The above analysis and interpretation states that the null hypothesis is rejected.

Accessibility: Further analysis explains the Z test calculation with a level of significance of .001. Z test analysis here explains the pattern of the relationship between the independent variables. In the present case the table shows that the $p=.000$ value at $\alpha= .001$ which is highly significant; from this value we can infer that the service quality of RB and SJ Hotels in terms of Accessibility are different. The above analysis and interpretation states that the null hypothesis is rejected.

Cost: Further table-9 of the analysis explains the Z test calculation with a level of significance of .05. Z test analysis here explains the pattern of the relationship between the independent variables. In the present case the table shows that the $p=.005$ value at $\alpha= .05$ which is highly significant; from this value we can infer that the service quality of RB and SJ Hotels in terms of cost of services are different. The above analysis and interpretation states that the null hypothesis is rejected.

7.4Objective-3: To compare the perception of customers of selected Hotels in terms of service quality.

The researcher has compared the service quality on the basis of SERQUAL model and added two more variables (Accessibility & Cost). The researcher has compared on the basis of group statistics obtained from Z-test calculations. The mean value of the items for the selected construct has been taken in to account. The result is shown in following table.

| | TR | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|----------------|----|----|--------|----------------|-----------------|
| Tangibility | RB | 35 | 1.5029 | .72659 | .12282 |
| | SJ | 35 | 1.9229 | .80113 | .13542 |
| Reliability | RB | 35 | 2.5427 | .74134 | .12531 |
| | SJ | 35 | 1.9971 | .42529 | .07189 |
| Responsiveness | RB | 35 | 1.4257 | .48770 | .08244 |
| | SJ | 35 | 2.2800 | .78321 | .13239 |
| Assurance | RB | 35 | 2.3514 | .64969 | .10982 |
| | SJ | 35 | 1.6829 | .63962 | .10811 |
| Empathy | RB | 35 | 1.8000 | .54178 | .09158 |
| | SJ | 35 | 2.3971 | .46620 | .07880 |
| Accessibility | RB | 35 | 2.3914 | .58530 | .09893 |
| | SJ | 35 | 1.4171 | .53386 | .09362 |
| Cost | RB | 35 | 2.2400 | .49598 | .08384 |
| | SJ | 35 | 1.5343 | .60680 | .10257 |

VIII. Conclusion

The researcher has found that SJ Hotel leads to RB on Tangibility (1.9229>1.5029), Responsiveness (2.2800>1.4257) & Empathy (2.3971>1.8000) and RB Hotel leads to SJ hotel on Reliability (2.5427>1.9971), Assurance (2.3514>1.6829), Cost (2.2400>1.5343) & accessibility (2.3914>1.4171).

IX. Limitations And Scope

The scope of the present study is limited to the city of Indore and surrounding area because of the availability of the resources. For the purpose of studying the SERVQUAL existing customers of hotels under study are considered. Further the tenure of association of customers subject to present study is quite stable. Personal interests of customers are not taken into consideration. Implementation and practices of the organizations differ from institute to institute and thus the result may vary. This is a pioneering study on this topic hence limited up to fundamental domain.

X. Further Areas Of Research

There remains a scope and gap for further research in this domain of knowledge. It can be extended to regional, national level and to other professionally managed organizations. New variables can be developed taking in to account the other aspects of service quality. Further research can be done by developing a suitable model to test the contribution of each variable on dependent variables. In brief, it can be suggested that replication of this study on other randomly selected hotel organizations, and comparative analysis of hotel organizations can be made. Also further study can be done to identify the performance indicators of various categories of hotels with a view to evolve training policy/designs for marketing and product development personnel

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Biographical Notes

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He had done Ph.D. in management. He did post graduation in management (MBA-Marketing) & computer science (MCA) and graduation in B.Sc. [Comp Sc. (Hons.)]. He has experience of more than 17 years, out of which 15 years is in academics and remaining in industry. Before joining this institute, He had served in many eminent institutes like Swati Jain college, Shi Vaishnav Institute of Management, Indore, Maharaja Ranjit Singh College of Professional Institute, Indore, Vindhya Inst. Of Management & Research, Indore, CH Inst. Of Mgmt. & Commerce, Indore & Sapient Inst. Of Management Studies, Indore as a director & professor. There are more than 11 international and national

research papers & four case studies publications in his credit. He did long FDP (Nearly 3 Months) from IIM, Indore. He is prolific writer & written various book on Management Information System, digital electronics, IT fundamental & PC s/w. He got an opportunity to serve at LINCOLN University, Malaysia for short term research project to taught research scholars and part of aggradations of MQA. He had conducted several workshops for faculties & students on Case based learning & research methodology at various prominent inst.