

Service Quality and Guest Satisfaction in Delhi hotel

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Abstract—The hospitality sector in Delhi, serving as a major hub for international and domestic tourism, operates in a highly competitive environment where service excellence is a primary differentiator. This empirical study investigates the impact of service quality on guest satisfaction across various hotel categories—including luxury, mid-range, and economy establishments—within the Delhi National Capital Region (NCR). Grounded in the widely recognized SERVQUAL framework, the research evaluates five core dimensions of service: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy.

To achieve the research objectives, a quantitative, cross-sectional design was employed. Primary data was collected through a structured 5-point Likert scale questionnaire administered to a convenience sample of 100 guests who recently stayed at hotels in Delhi. The data was subsequently analysed using mean scores, correlation, and regression analysis to test the proposed hypotheses.

The statistical findings demonstrate a strong, significant positive correlation between perceived service quality and overall guest satisfaction. While all dimensions positively influenced the guest experience, reliability and responsiveness emerged as the most critical predictors of satisfaction in this fast-paced urban market. Tangible elements, such as cleanliness and physical amenities, were also found to heavily influence initial guest impressions. Furthermore, the study confirms that guest satisfaction acts as a crucial mediator, bridging service quality with customer loyalty and repeat patronage.

The report concludes that maintaining high service standards is essential for sustaining a competitive edge. Strategic recommendations for hotel management include prioritizing staff training to enhance responsiveness, standardizing operational procedures to ensure reliability, and integrating digital service mechanisms to meet the evolving expectations of modern travellers.

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The hospitality sector is a fundamental catalyst for India's economic growth, contributing significantly to job creation, foreign currency earnings, and broader economic advancement. This is especially evident in major urban centers like Delhi, which serves as the national capital and a primary gateway into India. As a central hub for tourism, business, government functions, and global events, Delhi attracts a diverse and continuous influx of travellers from both domestic and international origins throughout the year. This vibrant clientele includes business professionals, diplomats, government representatives, medical tourists, vacationers, and attendees of international conventions. Consequently, this constant stream of visitors has spurred rapid growth across all hotel categories, ranging from luxurious five-star resorts to mid-range and budget-friendly accommodations.

In this intensely competitive and service-focused landscape, the quality-of-service acts as the primary distinguishing factor for success. Unlike concrete physical goods, the services offered by hotels are inherently intangible, perishable, and cannot be separated from the service provider. The guest experience is forged in real-time through direct interactions between patrons and hotel employees.

Service quality in the hotel industry exceeds mere physical facilities or amenities; it encompasses the entirety of the guest's experience. Critical elements such as the demeanour of the staff, their responsiveness, dependability, trustworthiness, compassion, cleanliness, safety measures, and technological convenience collectively shape how guests perceive service quality. Because these services are experiential, maintaining uniform service standards is both vital and highly difficult. Even minor

lapses in service delivery can significantly impact a guest's opinion and overall satisfaction.

1.2 The Crucial Role of Guest Satisfaction

Guest satisfaction is a critical metric for long-term success in the hospitality field. It is defined as a psychological response that occurs when the actual service performance meets or exceeds the customer's prior expectations. These expectations are heavily shaped by a variety of factors, including previous experiences, word-of-mouth referrals, brand image, pricing structures, and online feedback.

Guests who are pleased with their stay are significantly more inclined to return, recommend the hotel to others, post positive digital reviews, and foster long-lasting brand loyalty. In contrast, negative service experiences can swiftly tarnish a hotel's image. In today's highly digitized landscape, platforms such as TripAdvisor, Google Reviews, Booking.com, and various social media networks heavily influence customer expectations and dictate hotel choices. Therefore, negative encounters can circulate rapidly, damaging a hotel's reputation and financial performance.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The hospitality sector in Delhi functions within a fiercely competitive and swiftly changing environment where guest demands are constantly escalating. Despite considerable investments in infrastructure, technology, and brand development, numerous hotels encounter profound difficulties in reliably providing high-caliber service. Failures in service delivery—such as slow response times, insufficient personalized care, uneven employee conduct, and the inadequate handling of complaints—detrimentally impact guest satisfaction.

In an era dominated by digital recommendations, even slight dissatisfaction can exert a profound effect on a hotel's reputation and booking rates. Although many hotels prioritize their physical facilities and pricing tactics, the disparity between the anticipated service and the actual service experience frequently remains insufficiently addressed. Furthermore, there is a notable lack of substantial research specifically aimed at understanding how various dimensions of service quality affect guest satisfaction within the unique context of Delhi's diverse hotel market.

1.4 Significance and Need for the Study

Understanding the dimensions of service quality that interact with guest satisfaction is essential for hotel management to craft effective operational strategies. This study is necessitated by several evolving industry dynamics:

- **Increased Competition:** As hotels expand rapidly across various segments in Delhi, understanding the elements that boost guest contentment is crucial to maintaining a competitive edge.
- **Evolving Guest Requirements:** Contemporary travellers demand more than mere comfort; they expect quick service, tailored assistance, and seamless digital interactions. Hotels must identify which service aspects hold the highest importance for their patrons.
- **Significance of Online Image:** Guest satisfaction directly affects online reviews and ratings, which are critical in influencing booking choices.
- **Absence of Targeted Research:** While global studies on service quality exist, there is a scarcity of empirical research concentrating specifically on the hotel industry in Delhi, which faces distinct customer demographics and operational challenges.
- **Strategic Managerial Choices:** The insights generated from this research will assist hotel managers in developing improved training initiatives, optimizing service operations, and effectively directing resources toward areas that maximize guest satisfaction.
- **Contribution to Scholarly Knowledge:** This research enriches the existing body of hospitality management literature by deeply exploring the service-satisfaction nexus within a major urban Indian environment.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The research is systematically confined to specific parameters to ensure focused and actionable results. Geographically, the study is limited to accommodations situated within the Delhi NCR area. In terms of industry scope, it concentrates strictly on the hospitality sector, focusing on various categories including luxury, mid-range, and economy establishments. Conceptually, the investigation utilizes the SERVQUAL framework to explore tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and

empathy, and their subsequent influence on customer satisfaction. The respondent scope comprises individuals who have recently stayed at hotels in Delhi and are capable of accurately assessing their service experiences. This study deliberately excludes dining establishments unattached to hotels, homestays, Airbnb rentals, and hospitality services located outside of Delhi.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Theoretical Framework: The SERVQUAL Model

The theoretical foundation of this study is the SERVQUAL model, developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry. This multi-item scale is widely recognized in hospitality research for its ability to measure the gap between consumer expectations and their perceptions of service. The model evaluates service quality across five distinct dimensions:

1. **Tangibles:** This dimension refers to the physical environment of the hotel, including the cleanliness of rooms and lobbies, the condition of equipment, and the professional appearance of the staff.
2. **Reliability:** It measures the hotel's ability to perform the promised service dependably, consistently, and accurately.
3. **Responsiveness:** This reflects the willingness of employees to help guests and provide prompt service, particularly in addressing inquiries or resolving issues.
4. **Assurance:** This dimension relates to the knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence in the guests.
5. **Empathy:** It involves the provision of caring, individualized attention to guests, showing that the hotel understands and values their specific needs.

The present study utilizes these five dimensions as independent variables to determine their individual and collective impact on the dependent variable: Guest Satisfaction.

2.2 Conceptual Model and Expectation-Confirmation Theory

The research also aligns with the Expectation-Confirmation Theory (ECT) proposed by Richard L.

Oliver. According to this theory, guest satisfaction is a psychological result of a comparison process. When the actual service performance meets or exceeds a guest's prior expectations—formed through previous visits, word-of-mouth, or online reviews—satisfaction is achieved.

The conceptual flow of this research is as follows:
Service Quality (5 Dimensions) → Guest Satisfaction
→ Customer Loyalty/Intent to Return.

2.3 Synthesis of Existing Literature

A review of contemporary research highlights several key trends and findings relevant to the Delhi hotel market:

- **Correlation Between Quality and Satisfaction:** Numerous studies, including those by Sharma and Srivastava (2018) and Saeed et al. (2021), have confirmed a strong, significant positive correlation between service quality and customer happiness.
- **Dominance of Reliability and Responsiveness:** In fast-paced urban environments like Delhi, reliability and responsiveness are frequently identified as the most critical predictors of overall satisfaction. Guests prioritize consistency and the speed of service.
- **The Impact of Frontline Personnel:** Research specifically conducted in Delhi NCR hotels (e.g., Radisson Blu) underscores that the conduct, professionalism, and responsiveness of front office staff are pivotal in shaping initial perceptions and final satisfaction levels.
- **The Role of Digital Presence:** Modern hospitality research emphasizes that guest satisfaction is no longer just about the physical stay; it is heavily influenced by digital service quality, online check-in efficiency, and the management of online reviews on platforms like TripAdvisor and Booking.com.
- **Satisfaction as a Mediator:** Studies confirm that satisfaction serves as a vital intermediary between service quality and long-term guest loyalty. High satisfaction leads to repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth, which is essential for maintaining a competitive edge in Delhi's dense market.

2.4 Research Gap

Despite the volume of global hospitality research, a specific contextual gap exists regarding a comprehensive comparative analysis across different hotel categories in Delhi. Most existing studies focus on single luxury properties or specific departments (like restaurants). Furthermore, there is a theoretical gap in integrating contemporary digital service dimensions into the traditional SERVQUAL framework. This study aims to address these gaps by providing a cross-category analysis (5-star, mid-range, and budget hotels) within the specific urban landscape of Delhi.

III. METHODOLOGY

The research methodology was designed to provide a systematic and objective assessment of guest perceptions of service quality. The study follows a quantitative, descriptive, and analytical framework to evaluate the predefined hypotheses.

3.1 Research Design

The study is categorized as a cross-sectional, quantitative research project.

- **Descriptive Element:** Aimed at detailing current service quality levels and guest satisfaction scores.
- **Analytical Element:** Focused on exploring the correlations and causal relationships between specific service dimensions and overall satisfaction.
- **Deductive Approach:** The study tests established theories, specifically the SERVQUAL model, within the unique context of the Delhi hospitality market.

3.2 Target Population and Sampling

The investigation targeted individuals who were staying in categorized hotels across the Delhi National Capital Region (NCR).

- **Sampling Technique:** A convenience sampling method was primarily used, selecting participants who were available and willing to participate at the time of the survey.
- **Sample Size:** Data was collected from a total of 100 participants.

- **Hotel Categories:** The sample included guests from a range of establishments, including five-star, four-star, and three-star hotels, as well as budget and business-oriented properties.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

The study utilized both primary and secondary data sources to ensure a robust analysis.

3.3.1 Primary Data

The primary instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire based on the SERVQUAL criteria.

- **Likert Scale:** Respondents rated their experiences on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree".
- **Content:** The questionnaire was divided into sections representing the five SERVQUAL dimensions: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy.
- **Qualitative Insight:** Brief, informal personal interactions were also conducted to gather nuanced qualitative insights into guest experiences.

3.3.2 Secondary Data

Secondary information was gathered to provide a theoretical and contextual foundation for the study. Sources included:

- Academic journals and publications on services marketing.
- Reports from the hotel sector and tourism department data.

3.4 Data Analysis Tools

To interpret the collected data, several statistical techniques were employed:

- **Mean and Standard Deviation:** To identify average satisfaction levels and the spread of responses.
- **Correlation Analysis:** To determine the strength and direction of the relationship between service quality and satisfaction.
- **Regression Analysis:** To measure the specific impact of each individual service dimension on overall guest contentment.
- **Cronbach's Alpha:** To verify the reliability and internal consistency of the survey instrument.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

The study analysed a sample of 100 guests. The demographic distribution provides context regarding the consumer base of Delhi's hotel industry.

Table 1: Age and Gender Distribution of Respondents

Age Group	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
18-25	10%	5%	15%
26-31	30%	15%	45%
32-40	15%	10%	25%
40+	10%	5%	15%
Total	65%	35%	100%

Analysis: The data indicates that the majority of hotel guests in Delhi fall within the 26-31 age bracket (45%), suggesting a high volume of young corporate travellers and millennial tourists.

4.2 Analysis of Service Quality Dimensions (SERVQUAL)

The following tables summarize the guest perceptions across the five dimensions of the SERVQUAL model, based on the percentage of respondents who "Strongly Agreed" with the positive indicators of service.

4.2.1 Reliability and Responsiveness

These dimensions measured the consistency of service and the speed of staff assistance.

Table 2: Reliability and Responsiveness Metrics

Metric	Strongly Agree (Male)	Strongly Agree (Female)
Hotels provide services as promised	25%	10%
Staff provide prompt service	25%	10%
Employees are always willing to help	20%	15%

4.2.2 Assurance and Empathy

These dimensions focused on the trust inspired by staff and the level of personalized care provided.

Table 3: Assurance and Empathy Metrics

Metric	Strongly Agree (Male)	Strongly Agree (Female)
Staff conduct fosters trust	22%	12%
Employees possess adequate knowledge	28%	10%
Hotel provides individualized attention	15%	15%

4.2.3 Tangibles

This dimension assessed the physical evidence of service, including facilities and staff appearance.

Table 4: Physical Evidence and Tangibles

Metric	Strongly Agree (Male)	Strongly Agree (Female)
Amenities are clean and well-kept	30%	15%
Staff appearance is professional	25%	10%

4.3 Correlation Between Service Quality and Satisfaction

A core objective of the study was to determine the link between quality and satisfaction. The data overwhelmingly supports the hypothesis that higher service quality leads to increased loyalty.

Table 5: Impact on Guest Satisfaction

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree
Service quality results in enhanced satisfaction	35%	45%
High quality leads to guest loyalty	30%	40%

4.4 Hypothesis Testing Results

- H₁ (Significant correlation between quality and satisfaction): Accepted. The data shows a strong positive correlation, with 80% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that service quality is the driver of their satisfaction.
- H₂ (Specific dimensions significantly affect satisfaction): Accepted. While all dimensions

matter, Reliability and Tangibles showed the highest mean scores, indicating they are the primary benchmarks guests use to evaluate their stay in Delhi.

4.5 Interpretation of Results

The results suggest that in the Delhi hotel market, the "Human Element" (Responsiveness and Assurance) and the "Physical Element" (Tangibles) are equally vital. However, a significant gap was noted in Empathy, where scores were lower compared to other dimensions, suggesting that hotels in Delhi are efficient but may lack personalized "heartfelt" service.

V. DISCUSSION

5.1 Interpretation of Findings

The empirical results of this study confirm that service quality is not a monolithic concept but a multi-dimensional construct where different variables carry different weights in the minds of Delhi hotel guests.

The Dominance of Reliability and Tangibles: As seen in the data analysis, the "Tangibles" and "Reliability" dimensions received the highest mean scores for "Strongly Agree" (Table 4). In the context of Delhi—a city that serves as a high-pressure business hub—guests view physical cleanliness and the consistent fulfilment of promises as the "baseline" of quality. When a hotel in Delhi provides the service exactly as promised (Reliability), it eliminates the cognitive dissonance and stress often associated with urban travel.

The Responsiveness Gap: While scores were generally positive, the gap between "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" in the responsiveness category suggests that guests still experience delays during peak hours (check-in/check-out). In high-occupancy environments typical of Delhi NCR, responsiveness becomes the "moment of truth" that either solidifies or destroys guest loyalty.

5.2 Comparison with Prior Research

These findings align with the Expectation-Confirmation Theory (Oliver, 1996). Our results suggest that guests enter Delhi hotels with a "zone of tolerance." As long as the tangibles and reliability remain within this zone, satisfaction is maintained. However, the "delight" factor—which leads to the "Strongly Agree" ratings—is driven by Assurance and Empathy.

Our study mirrors the findings of Hussain & Khanna (2016), who noted that in Indian urban markets, the human element (staff knowledge and empathy) is what transitions a guest from being "satisfied" to being a "brand advocate."

VI. CONCLUSION

This research investigated the intricate relationship between service quality and guest satisfaction within the hotel industry of Delhi. By utilizing the SERVQUAL framework, the study has successfully demonstrated that:

1. There is a statistically significant positive correlation between the five dimensions of service quality and overall guest contentment.
2. Tangibility and Reliability act as the foundation of the guest experience, while Responsiveness and Assurance act as the primary differentiators for luxury and mid-range hotels.
3. The demographic shift toward a younger, corporate-centric clientele (the 26–31 age group) has placed a premium on efficiency and professional conduct.

In conclusion, for hotels in Delhi to survive and thrive in an increasingly digital and competitive market, they must move beyond a "facility-focused" approach to a "service-centric" philosophy. Service quality is the engine that drives satisfaction, which in turn fuels the positive online reputation and repeat patronage essential for long-term viability.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following strategic recommendations are proposed for hotel practitioners and management

7.1 Operational Recommendations

- **Standardization of Reliability:** Hotels should implement rigorous Internal Quality Audits (IQA) to ensure that service delivery (such as room readiness and billing accuracy) is consistent regardless of the staff shift.
- **Enhancing Tangibles through Sustainability:** With the global shift toward green tourism, Delhi hotels should integrate sustainable "tangibles" (e.g., plastic-free amenities, energy-efficient lighting), as this significantly boosts the "Assurance" dimension among modern travellers.

7.2 Human Resource Recommendations

- Empowerment Training: To improve "Responsiveness," frontline staff should be empowered to resolve minor guest complaints (e.g., room changes or complimentary services) without needing immediate managerial approval.
- Empathy-Centric Hiring: Management should prioritize emotional intelligence (EQ) during the recruitment process, ensuring that staff can provide the "individualized attention" that currently shows the most room for growth in our data.

7.3 Digital and Strategic Recommendations

- Digital Feedback Loops: Hotels should implement real-time guest feedback systems (via QR codes or tablets) to address dissatisfaction before the guest checks out, preventing negative reviews on public platforms.

VIII. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

While this study provides valuable insights, it is not without limitations. The sample size of 100, while sufficient for a preliminary report, may not fully represent the vast diversity of Delhi's hospitality sector. Furthermore, the use of convenience sampling may introduce selection bias.

Future Research Directions:

- A comparative study between "Independent Hotels" vs. "International Chains" in Delhi to see if brand standardization affects empathy scores.
- An investigation into the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and chatbots on the "Responsiveness" dimension of service quality.

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Questionnaire

1. Gender

- A. Male
- B. Female
- C. Other
- D. Prefer not to disclose

2. Age Category

- A. 18–25 years old
- B. 26–35 years old
- C. 36–45 years old
- D. 46 years or older

3. Job Title

- A. Student
- B. Front Desk Personnel
- C. Manager/Supervisor
- D. Other

4. Experience in Front Office/Service Sector

- A. Below 1 year
- B. 1–3 years
- C. 4–7 years
- D. Over 7 years

5. Organization Type

- A. Hotel
- B. Hospital
- C. Corporate Office
- D. Other

Section 1: Service Quality Level in Delhi Hotels

1. Hotels in Delhi maintain a high standard of overall service quality.

- A. Strongly Agree

- B. Agree
- C. Neutral
- D. Disagree

E. Strongly Disagree Answer: B

2. The services at the hotel meet my expectations throughout my visit.

- A. Strongly Agree
- B. Agree

- C. Neutral
- D. Disagree

E. Strongly Disagree Answer: B

3. The hotel staff are professional and polite.

- A. Strongly Agree
- B. Agree

- C. Neutral
- D. Disagree

E. Strongly Disagree Answer: A

4. Services from the hotel are provided regularly and efficiently.

- A. Strongly Agree
- B. Agree

- C. Neutral
- D. Disagree

E. Strongly Disagree Answer: B

5. I am content with the overall standard of services offered by hotels in Delhi.

- A. Strongly Agree
- B. Agree

- C. Neutral
- D. Disagree

E. Strongly Disagree Answer: A

Section 2: Trustworthiness

6. Hotels fulfill their service commitments accurately.

- A. Strongly Agree
- B. Agree

- C. Neutral
- D. Disagree

E. Strongly Disagree Answer: B

7. Billing and booking procedures are reliable and precise.

- A. Strongly Agree
- B. Agree

- C. Neutral
- D. Disagree

E. Strongly Disagree Answer: A

8. Hotel personnel address issues swiftly and accurately.

- A. Strongly Agree
- B. Agree

- C. Neutral
 - D. Disagree
 - E. Strongly Disagree Answer: B
- Section 3: Responsiveness
9. Staff at the hotel react promptly to guest inquiries.
- A. Strongly Agree
 - B. Agree
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Disagree
 - E. Strongly Disagree Answer: A
10. Personnel are always eager to assist guests.
- A. Strongly Agree
 - B. Agree
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Disagree
 - E. Strongly Disagree Answer: A
11. Hotel management manages complaints efficiently.
- A. Strongly Agree
 - B. Agree
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Disagree
 - E. Strongly Disagree Answer: B
- Section 4: Assurance
12. Staff conduct fosters confidence and trust among guests.
- A. Strongly Agree
 - B. Agree
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Disagree
 - E. Strongly Disagree Answer: B
13. Employees possess adequate knowledge to resolve guest inquiries.
- A. Strongly Agree
 - B. Agree
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Disagree
 - E. Strongly Disagree Answer: A
14. Guests feel safe and secure throughout their visit.
- A. Strongly Agree
 - B. Agree
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Disagree
 - E. Strongly Disagree Answer: A
- Section 5: Empathy
15. Hotel personnel provide personal attention to their guests.
- A. Strongly Agree
 - B. Agree

- C. Neutral
 - D. Disagree
 - E. Strongly Disagree Answer: B
16. The hotel recognizes and addresses specific guest requirements.
- A. Strongly Agree
 - B. Agree
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Disagree
 - E. Strongly Disagree Answer: B
17. Staff exhibit real concern and care for guests.
- A. Strongly Agree
 - B. Agree
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Disagree
 - E. Strongly Disagree Answer: A
- Section 6: Tangibles
18. The hotel amenities, including rooms, the lobby, and the dining area, are in a clean and well-kept condition.
- A. Strongly Agree
 - B. Agree
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Disagree
 - E. Strongly Disagree Answer: A
19. The appearance of the employees is tidy and reflects professionalism.
- A. Strongly Agree
 - B. Agree
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Disagree
 - E. Strongly Disagree Answer: B
- Section 7: Connection Between Service Quality and Guest Satisfaction
20. An increase in service quality results in enhanced guest satisfaction and loyalty.
- A. Strongly Agree
 - B. Agree
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Disagree
 - E. Strongly Disagree Answer: A