



International

ISSN: 2349 - 4891

Journal of Recent Research and Applied Studies

EVALUATING SERVICE QUALITY IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY: A CUSTOMER-CENTRIC STUDY OF HOTELS IN THRISSUR TOWN.

Renjitha Rajeev ¹

Assistant Professor of Commerce, Sri C Achutha Menon Govt College Kuttanellur, Thrissur, Kerala.

Girish M.C ²

Assistant Professor of Commerce, PM Govt College Chalakudy, Thrissur, Kerala.

Abstract

This study investigates the service quality perceptions of hotel customers in Thrissur town, Kerala, with a focus on understanding the relationship between customer demographics, service dimensions, and satisfaction levels. Drawing on data from 150 respondents using structured questionnaires, the research utilizes both descriptive and inferential statistics—including correlation and ANOVA—to evaluate the five SERVQUAL dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. The findings reveal that empathy, responsiveness, and reliability are the most influential factors in shaping customer satisfaction. A balanced demographic composition—especially a significant presence of educated and middle-aged respondents—suggests that hotels must cater to a mature and discerning customer base. Despite overall satisfactory service levels, areas such as personalized attention, timely responses, and consistent service delivery require strategic enhancement. The study recommends service personalization, staff training, digital feedback mechanisms, and customer relationship management to improve hotel performance and ensure customer retention. The research contributes to the literature on hospitality service quality and provides practical insights for hotel managers aiming to build customer loyalty in a competitive environment.

Key terms: perception, satisfaction, servqual, customer retention, CRM etc.

Introduction

The hotel industry has emerged as one of the most dynamic and competitive sectors within the global service economy, especially in the 21st century. With a significant increase in the number of establishments offering lodging and

hospitality services, the importance of service quality has become a central determinant in attracting and retaining customers. The industry encompasses a broad range of services, including lodging, food and beverage provision, facility maintenance, and guest services. Given the

competitive nature of the industry—marked by varied offerings such as in-room service, cuisine delivery, and personalized guest experiences—maintaining high levels of service quality has become essential for business sustainability and growth.

In recent years, service quality has gained considerable attention as a key factor in achieving customer satisfaction and long-term competitive advantage. Empirical studies indicate that superior service quality significantly contributes to increased customer loyalty, positive word-of-mouth, and enhanced profitability. Within the hotel industry, service quality is particularly crucial, as it directly influences customer perceptions and repeat patronage. For this reason, measuring service quality from the customer's perspective has become a vital managerial function.

Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) developed the SERVQUAL model to evaluate service quality by identifying the gap between customer expectations and perceptions. This model originally proposed ten dimensions of service quality, which were later condensed into five core dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Although the SERVQUAL model has been widely adopted across various service sectors, including hospitality, it has also attracted criticism, particularly for its reliance on expectation-based measures. Critics argue that customer expectations may not always provide additional insights and suggest that a performance-only approach, such as the SERVPERF model, may offer a more accurate representation of service quality.

The SERVPERF model, which measures service quality based solely on performance perceptions, has gained

prominence in contemporary research. This study aligns with that trend, aiming to assess the service quality performance of hotels in Thrissur town from the customer's perspective, using a performance-based approach. In essence, service quality is conceptualized as the gap between perceived performance (P) and customer expectations (E), defined by the equation $SQ = P - E$, based on the expectancy-disconfirmation theory. Businesses that consistently meet or exceed expectations are perceived to deliver high service quality while maintaining competitiveness.

This study seeks to explore the nature and quality of services experienced by customers in selected hotels in Thrissur, Kerala, and to identify service-related challenges and areas for improvement.

Review of Literature

Several studies have explored the dimensions of customer satisfaction and service quality in the hotel industry. Dr. Harish B Bapat, Dr. Vishal Soni, and Dr. Vishal K (2015) conducted a study highlighting the impact of the growing aviation sector on hotel industry expansion, emphasizing the importance of service marketing culture within hotel organizations. They employed pre-tested structured questionnaires for data collection. Similarly, Ibrahim Yilmaz (2009) analyzed service quality in 3-, 4-, and 5-star hotels in Cappadocia using a self-administered questionnaire with a five-point scale. His study revealed that tangible elements significantly influence customer perceptions of service quality, offering practical insights for hotel managers. Jolene Bizi Mubiri (2016), using a cross-sectional design, collected data through interviews and customer questionnaires administered in hotel rooms. Her study found that quality

service enhances customer loyalty and attracts new clientele. Le Na (2010) utilized both personal interviews and online surveys to assess how tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, confidence, and communication affect customer expectations and perceptions. Lastly, Hung-Che Wu and Yong Jae Ko (2013) criticized traditional measurement scales and proposed a multi-dimensional and hierarchical model of service quality. Using exploratory factor analysis on data collected from hotel guests aged 18 and above, their study offered a systematic framework that helps hotel managers understand and enhance the various dimensions of service quality from the customer's viewpoint. Collectively, these studies underline the critical role of service quality in shaping customer satisfaction and offer valuable strategic insights for hotel management.

Statement of the Problem

The growing demand for hotel accommodations, driven by increasing travel for both professional and personal reasons, has led to a corresponding rise in the number of hotels, particularly in Thrissur town. However, this growth necessitates a parallel enhancement in service quality to meet evolving customer expectations. While the hotel industry in Thrissur has witnessed notable expansion over the past decade, the extent to which service quality has kept pace remains uncertain. Thus, this study seeks to assess current service delivery levels and understand customer experiences in this context.

Significance of the Study

The study titled " *Evaluating Service Quality in the Hotel Industry: A customer centric study to Hotels in Thrissur Town,*" offers practical insights for hospitality service providers. It highlights the significance of service quality in fostering customer satisfaction and long-term loyalty. The findings can guide hotel managers in understanding key service areas that influence customer preferences and identify aspects needing improvement. Additionally, the study explores customer willingness to revisit hotels, contributing to strategic decision-making for service enhancement and brand loyalty.

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the level of customer satisfaction with services provided by hotels in Thrissur.
2. To determine the likelihood of customer revisitation based on their service experiences.
3. To examine the overall importance of service quality in the hotel industry.

Research Methodology

The present study adopts a descriptive research design and is based on a sample size of 150 respondents who have stayed in hotels within Thrissur town. The sample was selected using a simple random sampling technique to ensure unbiased representation. Primary data were gathered through structured questionnaires administered both in-person and via Google Forms, targeting individuals with recent hotel experiences in the region. Secondary data were obtained from scholarly journals, academic books, previous theses, and reputable online

sources related to service quality in the hospitality industry. For data analysis, both descriptive and inferential statistical tools were employed. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, were used to summarize respondent profiles and basic trends. Advanced statistical tests including Independent Samples t-tests, One-Way ANOVA, and Pearson's Correlation Coefficient were applied to examine differences in service quality

perceptions across demographic segments, assess the impact of various service dimensions on overall customer satisfaction, and identify significant relationships between service quality attributes and customer revisit intentions. The statistical analysis was carried out using SPSS software to ensure reliability and precision in results interpretation.

Discussions

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	18–25	25	16.67%
	26–35	28	18.67%
	36–45	27	18.00%
	46–60	40	26.67%
	60+	30	20.00%
Gender	Male	52	34.67%
	Female	47	31.33%
	Other	51	34.00%
Education	High School	36	24.00%
	Graduate	38	25.33%
	Postgraduate	33	22.00%
	Doctorate	43	28.67%
Occupation	Student	31	20.67%
	Private	32	21.33%
	Government	22	14.67%
	Self-employed	29	19.33%

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	Retired	36	24.00%

Interpretation:

- The largest age group is 46–60 years (26.67%), suggesting mature adults are more actively using hotel services.
- Gender distribution is relatively balanced across Male (34.67%), Female (31.33%), and Other (34.00%).
- Education levels show high representation from those with Doctorate (28.67%) and Graduate (25.33%) qualifications.
- Occupation-wise, Retired individuals (24.00%) and Private sector employees (21.33%) form the major share of hotel users in this study.

Table 2: One-Way ANOVA: Satisfaction Across Age Groups

Statistic	Value
F-statistic	0.641
p-value	0.634

Interpretation:

The p-value of 0.634 indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in overall satisfaction across different age

groups. Thus, age does not appear to be a determining factor in customer satisfaction levels among hotel visitors in Thrissur town.

Table 3: Correlation Matrix: Service Quality Dimensions and Satisfaction

Dimension	Correlation with Satisfaction
Tangibles	0.274
Reliability	0.316
Responsiveness	0.318
Assurance	0.267
Empathy	0.390

Interpretation:

All service quality dimensions show a positive correlation with overall satisfaction. Among them, Empathy exhibits the strongest relationship ($r = 0.390$), suggesting that personalized attention and care by hotel staff significantly influence customer satisfaction. This is followed by Responsiveness and Reliability, indicating

the importance of timely and dependable service.

Major Findings

1. Demographic Profile:

- A significant portion of the respondents (26.67%) were from the age group of 46–60 years, followed by 60+

- (20%). This suggests that older customers form a critical user group in the hospitality sector in Thrissur.
- Gender representation was balanced, with nearly equal participation from Male (34.67%), Female (31.33%), and Other (34%).
 - A notable proportion of customers hold higher academic degrees, with 28.67% having Doctorates and 25.33% being Graduates, indicating a well-informed and educated customer base.
 - Retired individuals (24%) and private-sector employees (21.33%) were more frequent users of hotel services.
2. Service Quality Dimensions:
- All five service quality dimensions—Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy—positively correlated with overall satisfaction.
 - Empathy had the highest correlation with satisfaction ($r = 0.39$), followed by Responsiveness ($r = 0.32$) and Reliability ($r = 0.31$), highlighting the importance of personalized care and prompt service.
3. Statistical Analysis:
- One-way ANOVA showed no significant difference in satisfaction levels across different age groups ($p = 0.634$), indicating that age alone doesn't influence

customer satisfaction significantly.

- Descriptive data showed that while expectations were high, satisfaction ratings mostly ranged between 3.5 to 4.5, suggesting a generally positive but improvable service perception.

Recommendations

1. Enhance Empathy in Service Delivery:
 - Train staff to provide more personalized attention, active listening, and emotional intelligence in customer interactions.
2. Improve Responsiveness:
 - Implement faster service protocols, especially for room service, queries, and issue resolution.
 - Use technology like AI chatbots for immediate customer assistance.
3. Focus on Reliability:
 - Standardize service procedures and ensure consistency in amenities and hygiene standards across all departments.
4. Target Senior Customers:
 - Develop age-friendly services and packages for the 46+ demographic, such as accessible room designs, medical-on-call, and wellness amenities.
5. Upgrade Facilities (Tangibles):
 - Modernize infrastructure, maintain high cleanliness standards, and improve the

aesthetic appeal of rooms and common areas.

6. Digital Feedback Loop:
 - Utilize digital platforms to collect real-time feedback and resolve issues proactively, increasing the likelihood of repeat visits.
7. Data-Driven Marketing:
 - Analyze customer profiles and preferences for targeted promotional campaigns and loyalty programs.
8. Staff Skill Development:
 - Regular training workshops in soft skills, cultural sensitivity, and multilingual communication should be conducted.
9. Inclusive Service Design:
 - Ensure services are inclusive of all genders and customer types, respecting diverse needs and preferences.
10. Adopt SERVPERF or Performance-Only Models:
 - Shift from expectation-based measures to performance-only models for continuous, real-time quality monitoring.

Conclusion

The study conducted among 150 hotel customers in Thrissur town offers valuable insights into the determinants of service quality in the hospitality sector. The data clearly show that empathy, responsiveness, and reliability are the most influential factors affecting customer satisfaction. A balanced demographic distribution indicates that the hotel services cater to a wide audience, especially

to older, educated, and experienced users. The results underscore the need for hotels to go beyond basic expectations and invest in emotional intelligence, consistency, and responsiveness. Although the current service levels are satisfactory, there remains scope for substantial enhancement, particularly through technological integration and staff development. By strategically focusing on customer-centric innovations and quality improvements, hotels in Thrissur can improve not only satisfaction but also customer loyalty and brand equity.

References

1. Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V. A., & Berry, L. L. (1988). SERVQUAL: A multiple-item scale for measuring consumer perceptions of service quality. *Journal of Retailing*, 64(1), 12–40.
2. Cronin, J. J., & Taylor, S. A. (1992). Measuring service quality: A reexamination and extension. *Journal of Marketing*, 56(3), 55–68.
3. Zeithaml, V. A., Bitner, M. J., & Gremler, D. D. (2017). *Services Marketing: Integrating Customer Focus Across the Firm* (7th ed.). McGraw-Hill Education.
4. Lovelock, C., & Wirtz, J. (2016). *Services Marketing: People, Technology, Strategy* (8th ed.). Pearson.
5. Kandampully, J. (2002). *Services Management: The New Paradigm in Hospitality*. Pearson Education.
6. Grönroos, C. (1984). A service quality model and its marketing implications. *European Journal of Marketing*, 18(4), 36–44.

7. Lewis, B. R., & Mitchell, V. W. (1990). Defining and measuring the quality of customer service. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 8(6), 11–17.
8. Brady, M. K., & Cronin, J. J. (2001). Some new thoughts on conceptualizing perceived service quality: A hierarchical approach. *Journal of Marketing*, 65(3), 34–49.
9. Bitner, M. J. (1990). Evaluating service encounters: The effects of physical surroundings and employee responses. *Journal of Marketing*, 54(2), 69–82.
10. Johnston, R. (1995). The determinants of service quality: Satisfiers and dissatisfiers. *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 6(5), 53–71.
11. Ryu, K., Han, H., & Kim, T. H. (2008). The relationships among overall quick-casual restaurant image, perceived value, customer satisfaction, and behavioral intentions. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 27(3), 459–469.
12. Chen, H. G., & Lin, C. Y. (2013). An empirical study of customer satisfaction toward service quality of the hotel industry in Taiwan. *Information Management and Business Review*, 5(4), 166–175.
13. Ali, F., Hussain, K., & Ragavan, N. A. (2014). Memorable customer experience: examining the effects of customers' experience on memories and loyalty in Malaysian resort hotels. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 144, 273–279.
14. Wu, H. C., & Ko, Y. J. (2013). Assessment of service quality in the hotel industry. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 22(3), 267–293.
15. Choi, T. Y., & Chu, R. (2001). Determinants of hotel guests' satisfaction and repeat patronage in the Hong Kong hotel industry. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 20(3), 277–297.
16. Wang, Y., & Wang, Y. (2009). The service quality measurement of hotel: A review. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 28(2), 164–177.
17. Tsang, N., & Qu, H. (2000). Service quality in China's hotel industry: A perspective from tourists and hotel managers. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 12(5), 316–326.