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# A STUDY ON SERVICE QUALITY IN HOSPITALITY SECTOR IN DELHI REGION

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*JABALPUR*

## ABSTRACT

*Service sector is most growing sector in the world and services in hotel industry are evaluated by its quality. Service quality in hospitality sector is prominent part of hotel industry. It is more important when tourists from worldwide visits to Indian hotels as tourist destination or stays in Indian Hotels for business purpose. The main purpose of this paper is to attempt service quality and customer satisfaction in hotels of India. Customer satisfaction influenced by Service quality. Service Quality involves prompt and consistent delivery of products and guest services according to expected standards. Delivering quality service is one of the major challenges the hospitality managers will be facing in the following years as it is an essential condition for success in the emerging, keenly competitive, global hospitality markets. This study assesses customer expectation and perception level towards service quality with in Indian context i.e. what is expected by the customer and what is perceived by hotels as the need of the customers. Customer satisfaction has a significantly direct impact on customer loyalty and customer retention.*

## KEYWORDS

hospitality, service quality, customer expectation, customer Perception, customer satisfaction.

## JEL CODES

L80, M30.

## INTRODUCTION

There have been immense changes in the hospitality industry worldwide which have forced hotel organizations to adapt their operations to cope with the changes. In order to implement effective quality management and thus raise performance, management systems should be tailor-made to approach methods of business excellence. Globally, hospitality organizations strive to measure their guests' satisfaction and explore effective tools for maintaining service quality and guest satisfaction standards

The purpose of the present study is to analyze this concept, its strengths and its weaknesses, within an Indian context. It is highly competitive in a city like Delhi that is a significant tourist destination. Many international tourists visit Delhi and stay at the five-star hotels, so these hotels must keep up with international five-star hotel standards to attract and retain customers. One of the main problems of Delhi hotel industry is challenges that hotels face in developing standard service quality and sustaining the service level. Consistency is one of the most important factors in delivering service, as it can directly influence the level of satisfaction and satisfaction level of the customer. Five-star hotels consider the front office as the first point of contact to set the tone for the entire hotel's operation.

A hotel must have a certain image while providing a standard service level as well as understanding customers' needs and wants so that a customized service delivery system can be tailored to meet these specific needs. Service quality in hotels has several dimensions with tangible and intangible indicators that influence the overall customer experience, which is either satisfactory or dissatisfactory. It could be challenging to assess these dimensions and their relevant indicators. In India, hotel visitors seem to have high standards and expect excellent service. The hotels have increased their competition and now instead of only offering a nice room to attract customers, they offer a high-quality staff as well. Service quality is thus a way to manage business processes in order to ensure total satisfaction to the customer on all levels (internal and external). As a result, companies become more efficient, effective, and flexible.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A variety of service quality definitions are available in the literature. Service quality is defined as a number of interrelated factors including the way in which individuals are treated by providers, the scope of services and contraceptives available to them and their quality of the information they receive and their counseling skills as well as availability and continuity of services **(www.General management topics.com)**. Taylor and Baker claims that "In the hospitality industry, other attributes, such as imprecise standards and fluctuating demand have been identified and further complicate the task of defining, delivering and measuring service quality" **(Wong et al., 1999, p. 137)**. In addition, he notes that Parasuraman defined service quality as "the difference between expectations for the service and actual service performance" **(Parasuraman et al, 1988 cited in Wong et al, 1999, p.138).** University of Karlstad Professor and Director of Service Research Center, Erik Edvardsson discusses how quality can be improved in service operations. A common definition of service quality is that it should meet the expectations of the customer and meet their needs and requirements **(Edvardsson, 1988; p.144)**.

A customer has a perception and earlier understanding that are largely influenced by how the service provider appears and is perceived, which is certainly another dimension of service quality. "Consumers bring their past experiences with service firms into every encounter, since they are often in constant contact with the same service provider over time (**Gronroos, 2001, cited in Kang & James, 2004, 267). Olorunniwo et al. (2006**) assessed service quality in the context of service firms along with its dimensions. They indicate the dominant dimensions of service quality as tangible, recovery, responsiveness and knowledge. These dimensions have been used by average hotel guests to define service quality. Training and development play an important role in enhancing these dimensions. Customer contact, customer involvement, labor intensity, degree of customization, employee discretion, and the production process are major components of service quality in the area of service marketing, and in the area of service operation. Service quality is greatly influenced by these elements the service quality model of **Parasuraman et al. (1985; 1988; 1991)** that indicates five gaps of understandability, service standards, service performance, communications, and service quality in the domain of service firm and he mentions the differences between the expected service and perceived service that lead to building service quality level. **Cheung & Law (1998)** mention SERVQUAL and the concept of quality in this context as it is considering variance between the actual performance and the expected performance. In fact, hotels' attributes such as price, location, security, personal service, physical attractiveness, relaxation options, service standards, appealing appearance, and reputation are viewed by travelers as decisive to their evaluation of its quality **(Atkinsons, 1988; Ananth et al., 1992; Barsky & Labagh, 1992; Cadotte & Turgeon, 1988; Knutson, 1988; McCleary et al., 1993; Rivers et al., 1991; Wilensky & Buttle, 1988).**

Customer satisfaction is the starting point to build customer loyalty, therefore a long-term relationship. As a result, the enterprise gains a loyal customer base, thereby improving its image. Guests who have established relationships with the restaurant are more likely to return. In contrast, a dissatisfied customer can pose a risk to the enterprise. A research, conducted by **Cherubini (1997**), shows that only 4% of unsatisfied customers complains to the business explaining the reason of their dissatisfaction, and each client who doesn't officially complain generates a negative WOM which can involve also 1000 people.

## OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

The aim of this study on the topic Service Quality in Hospitality Sector in Delhi Region is to evaluate whether or not customers will return to the hotel or recommend it to other tourists. This is pivotal to the success of the hospitality business.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher chose Descriptive Research as the research design. It is the process of gathering information to understand the who, what, when, where, and how of a phenomenon. Describe the current state of a phenomenon and the variables or conditions that exist in that situation using descriptive research. The purpose of descriptive research is to describe an individual, a group, or a situation. A descriptive research design is based on the study and resources available. The aim of such a study is to minimise bias and maximize reliability.

For this study, Secondary data sources such as hospitality journals, Business conferences, Master thesis, Annual Final Reports of Tourism Ministry, India, International Passenger Surveys, referring hospitality publications were helpful in knowing the current inventions in industry.

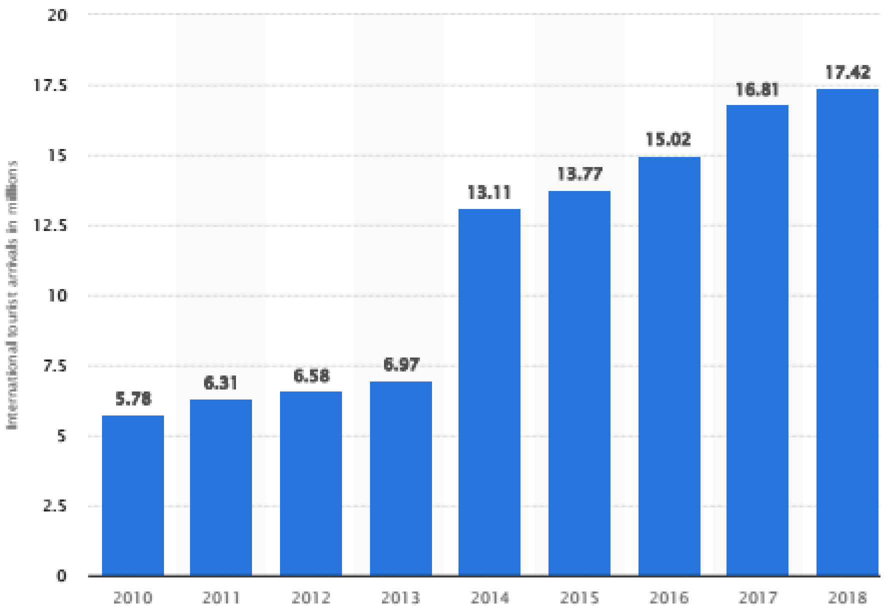
Hotel guests' perceptions were measured on the basis of a literature review and adopted to suit the specific features of a hotel setting (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry 1988; Zeithaml et al. 1990; Snoj and Ogorelc 1998; Pizam and Ellis 1999; Markovic 2003). Modified SERVQUAL model used to assess perceptions of hotel attributes. SERVQUAL is based on five dimensions of service quality, namely, 'Tangibility' (physical facilities, equipment and personnel appearance), 'Reliability' (ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately), 'Responsiveness' (willingness to help customers and prompt service), 'Assurance' (knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to gain trust and confidence) and 'Empathy' (providing individualized attention to the customers)

## FOREIGN ARRIVALS IN INDIA

India has great potential for developing itself into a leading country for tourism. Inbound tourism in India has made steady progress in recent years. However, India's share of total Foreign Tourists Arrivals (FTAs) remains a modest 0.6% and we earn only about 0.1% of our GDP through tourism. These figures are far below the potential India has given her unparallel cultural diversity, historical heritage and great amount of flora and fauna.

Indian Tourism Statistics 2019 shows that there are number of foreigners visit India per year. Statistics of year from 2010 to 2019 presents significant increased number of foreign arrivals in India.

**CHART 1: NO. OF FOREIGN TOURIST VISITS IN INDIA (2010-2019)**



Source: Statista 2021

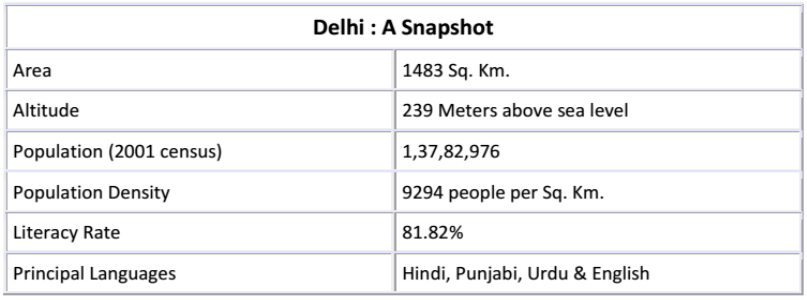
Foreign Tourist Arrivals in India increased by 2.2% (10.7 million) in 2019. But compared to 2017-18, the growth dropped by 3%. The growth rate was 5.5% in 2018. The figures are below from expectation and potential. Here the question arises "why these figures dropped from expectation when India has potential and has been recognized to serve its hospitality?"

There must be number of factors that effects on arrival of foreign tourist. In this study author is emphasis on one important factor i.e. Service Quality".

## ABOUT DELHI

Delhi is the capital of the world's largest democracy and it is the political seat of power. Delhi is located on the banks of the River Yamuna and is surrounded by the states of Uttar Pradesh and Haryana. It has a perfect blend of a rich past and vibrant present.

**TABLE 1**



| Delhi : A Snapshot | |
|---|---|
| Area | 1483 Sq. Km. |
| Altitude | 239 Meters above sea level |
| Population (2001 census) | 1,37,82,976 |
| Population Density | 9294 people per Sq. Km. |
| Literacy Rate | 81.82% |
| Principal Languages | Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu & English |

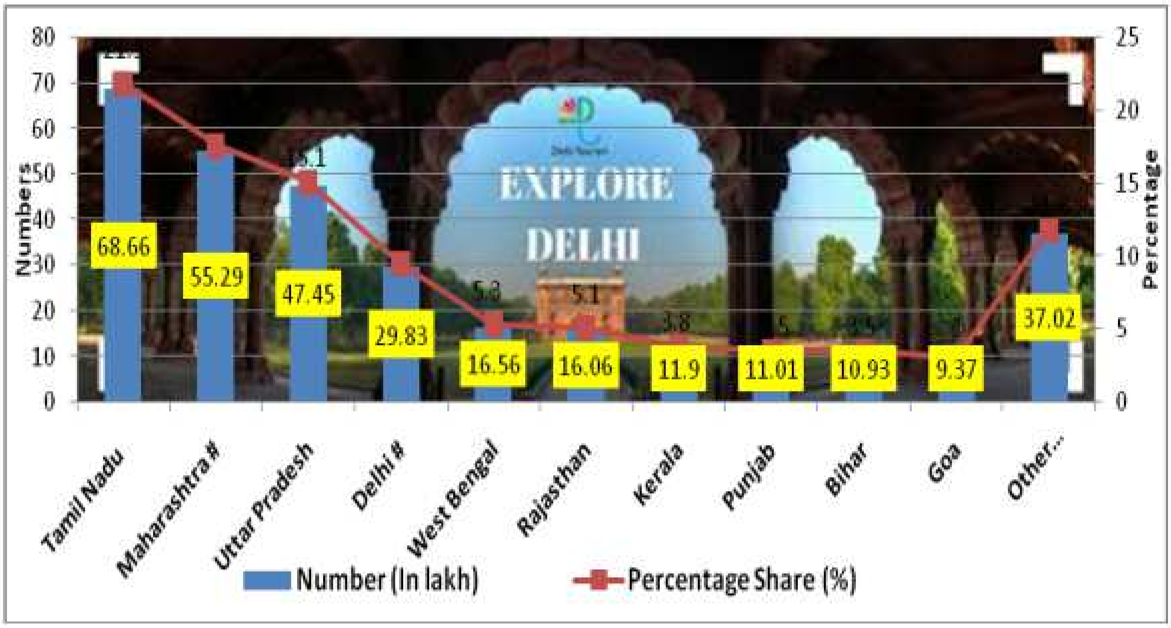
It is the site of many ancient and medieval monuments, archaeological sites and remains. Delhi was born as early as 1000 BC when a settlement sprung up near the Purana Quila on the banks of Yamuna. Hindu mythology however, records a settlement many hundreds of years earlier at the ancient site of Indraprastha. After the rise of the Delhi Sultanate, Delhi emerged as a major political, cultural and commercial city along the trade routes between northwest India and the Indo-Gangetic plains. In 1639, Mughal emperor Shahjahan built a new walled city in Delhi which served as the capital of the Mughal Empire from 1649 to 1857. Under the British Raj, a new capital city, New Delhi, was built to the south of the old city during the 1920s. The architect of the new capital city was Sir Edwin Lutyens. When India gained independence from British rule in 1947, New Delhi was declared its capital and seat of government. As such, New Delhi houses important offices of the federal government, including the Parliament of India. Today Delhi is a major cultural, political, and commercial center of India.

**TOURIST TRAFFIC**

In the Annual Final Report published by the National Tourism Department, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, 216.37 lakh tourist visits were recorded by domestic tourists in Delhi at the 47 major tourist destinations. Moreover, foreign tourists and same day visitors made a combined 18.17 lakh visits to these destinations. Tourist traffic followed a seasonal trend in Delhi. The maximum number of domestic visitors was 30 lakhs during January. The overall number of visits fell from July through September. Visits by foreign tourists also registered a peak in January but declined thereafter to the lowest level in June.

According to Economic survey of Delhi 2020-21, Delhi is one of the most frequent arrival destinations for both foreign and domestic tourists. The survey shows consistent increase in the tourist arrivals in Delhi. The state is among the top tourist destinations in the country. Approximately 30.74 lakh (28.12%) Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) in Delhi during 2019 has been recorded as per India Tourism Statistics at a Glance-2020. The number of domestic tourists visiting the state has consistently increased. A majority of tourists (95%) traveled to Delhi for 'holidaying, leisure, and recreation'. These tourists mostly stayed in hotel & guest houses followed by friends & relative's home.

**CHART 2: STATE/ UT WISE NUMBER OF FOREIGN TOURIST VISITS IN INDIA IN 2019**



Source: Economic Survey, Delhi (2020-21)

**PLACE OF ORIGIN**

The largest proportion of foreign tourists came from USA, followed by UK and Germany. Tourists from these countries made up 37.32% of the total foreign tourists. The highest proportion of domestic tourists were from Uttar Pradesh followed by Punjab. The same day visitors were largely from Delhi itself.

**VISIT PURPOSE & LOGISTICS**

Most foreign tourists visited Delhi for business purposes. A substantial proportion also engaged in leisure and social activity. Almost 78% of the same day visitors visited Delhi for business while a large proportion of domestic tourists visited Delhi for leisure. Education/ training and religion also motivated the same day visitors

**BOARDING & LODGING DETAILS**

Star hotels were most popular with the foreign tourists. A substantial proportion of the tourists ate at Dhabas. A majority of the domestic tourists stayed with friends and relatives.

**PREFERRED PLACE OF STAY**

Almost 57% of the domestic tourists stayed with friends and relatives while 41% stayed at hotels. On the other hand, 90% of the foreign tourists stayed at hotels.

**SERVICE DISTRIBUTION**

On an average, there were 62 employees for every 100 rooms. The 1521 accommodation units identified, 43 classified hotels disclosed information in this survey.

**TABLE 2: DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYEES IN ACCOMMODATION UNITS BY SERVICE**

| Quarter | No. of AUs | No. of Employees | Distribution of employees by service | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Management | F&B | House Keeping | Others |
| (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) |
| Quarter – 1 | 1431 | 19414 | 17.7 | 19.8 | 30.2 | 32.3 |
| Quarter – 2 | 1468 | 19551 | 17.6 | 19.7 | 30.0 | 32.7 |
| Quarter – 3 | 1515 | 19717 | 17.5 | 19.6 | 29.8 | 33.1 |
| Quarter – 4 | 1521 | 19745 | 17.5 | 19.6 | 29.7 | 33.2 |

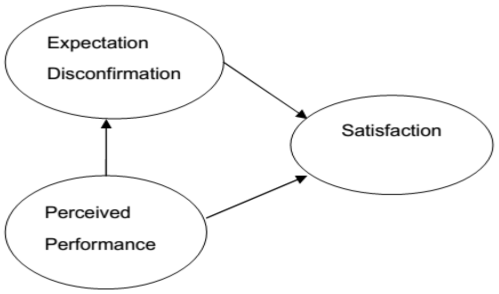
Source: Tourist Statistics, Ministry of Tourism, New Delhi (July 2009-2010).

Of the 1521 employees, almost 30% were employed in housekeeping with another 20% in the F&B function.

**DISCONFIRMATION THEORY**

Customers, expectation can be defined as customers' partial beliefs about a product (McKinney, Yoon and Zahedi, 2002). Perceived performance is defined as customer's perception of how product performance fulfills their needs, wants and desire (Cadotte et al., 1987). Perceived quality is the consumers judgment about an entity's overall excellence or superiority (Zeithmal,1988). Disconfirmation is defined as consumer subjective judgements resulting from comparing their expectations and their perceptions of performance received (McKinney et al., 2002, Sprenget al., 1996).

**CHART 3** (Khalifa and Liu 2003)



Expectation disconfirmation occurs in three forms:
1) Positive disconfirmation: occurs when perceived performance exceeds expectations.
2) Confirmation: occurs when perceived performance meets expectations.
3) Negative disconfirmation: occurs when perceived performance does not meet and is less than the expectations.

## SERVICE QUALITY & HOSPITALITY SECTOR

Service quality is the result of the comparison that customers make between their expectations about a service and their perception of the way the service has been performed (Gronroos, 1984; Parasuraman et al., 1985, 1988). A number of experts define service quality differently.

Parasuraman et al. (1985) define it as the differences between customers, expectation of services and their perceived service. If the expectation is greater than the service performance, perceived quality is less than satisfactory and hence, customer dissatisfaction occurs. Lewis and Mitchell (1990), Dotchin and Oakland (1994), and Asubonteng et al. (1996) define service quality as the extent to which a service meets customers, need and expectation.

Service quality has become focus for many hotel industry researchers (e.g. Yucelt & Marcella, 1996; Enz and Siguaw, 2000; Saleh and Ryan, 1991; Callan, 1998). The combined effect of the worldwide economic recession, technological advancement, and globalisation have increased the competitive pressures on hotel organisations (Harrington & Akehurst, 2000). All these pressures have led the hotels to be more concerned about service quality ethics. On the other hand, how consumers perceive the quality of products and services and how those perceptions influence their buying decisions is a vital issue for marketing managers (Heung et al., 2000). This is because service quality is an influential factor in attracting repeat business for a hotel (Saleh & Ryan, 1991).

A number of researchers have examined the quality of services offered in the hotel industry through the relative importance of various attributes to customers. Such attributes act as determinant factors for hotel selection and preference and for customers' judgment upon service quality (Nadiri & Hussain, 2005; Callan, 1998).

This was confirmed by Williams (1999). In her study she stated that 'it has been noted that consumers use a variety of cues to form an overall evaluation of the quality of products and services. These cues used by consumers relate to perceived product/service attributes or features. The same was assured by Hartline & Jones, (1996); and Ziethmal (1988). Dealing with the same issue, some studies found that even though products and services have many attributes, consumers tend to base their judgment of the quality on few attributes or sometimes on just one (Olshavsky, 1985; Zeithmal, 1988)

## CRITICS OF SERVICE QUALITY IN DELHI HOTELS

After the study of visitors reviews on five majors five-star hotels Metropolitan Hotel, Radisson Blu Plaza, Radisson Blu Marina, Piccadily Hotel and Jaypee Siddharth at Delhi some setback has been found towards service quality.

**Metropolitan Hotel:** Rooms were small. Food was not good. Hot Water in the shower room was muddy and stopped flowing. No water for 5-10 minutes and variable pressure. Expensive internet for the total price paid for the room. High add-on charges (taxes etc.). The people at the arrival of the hotel were not friendly, chargeable wi-fi. The services were variable and not reliable. Good location and ambiance.

**Raddisson Blu Plaza**: The front office staff was very rude, response time to guest requests was a secondary priority. In a rush to get the guests out of the restaurant so they can make seats available the new ones. Staring at guests and making faces is definitely not Radisson Standards. Service staff running from one place to the other while there were enough empty tables available. Had to get up and go request the manager for assistance. Club Sandwich Cold, had an insect sitting on it while being served. Heavy bill.

**Raddisson Blu Marina:** Food not up to the mark. No decent service. No service experienced in restaurant. Tables didn't have napkins, no body to answer requests. Limited cuisine poorly managed, terrible customer service. Hotel is extremely unfriendly, facilitates out dated, rooms unclean and hall ways dirty, staff is clearly very under paid and unhappy, and the service is at best is unhelpful.

**Piccadily Hotel:** Nice ambiance, slow servicing, stinking rooms, delayed check in, untidy and dusty rooms, stained curtains and carpets, unclean floor, cigarette buds under sofa, smelly corridor, used soap and water bottles kept in bathroom and fridge, outdated facilities, poor management, staff not friendly, broken lockers and soap dispensers, delay services, no courtesy in hotel managers and staff, talk backs by managers on complaints while apologizing.

**Jaypee Siddahrth:** Good location and ambiance, high paid room charges exclusive breakfast, paid wi-fi. Slow and delayed services, extra plates/ cutlery would be chargeable, false commitment to revert back charges of extra plates/ cutlery charged, the hotel coffee shop, expectation is highly over-priced, noisy loose wooden tiles on the floor. False charges implementation (for a broken container at mini bar), the front desk, reception & management were too head Strong's for any star category, front desk was too shy to explain the inclusions and the facilities at hotel. Good thing is near to metro station.

On conclusion 41% domestic and 90% foreign visitors stayed in 42 hotels of Delhi, where 1521 employees were employed in service still the most of complaints belongs to this area especially from housekeeping and F&B function in major five-star hotels of Delhi.

## DISCUSSION

From the above critics and theory, it is clear that the tourist selects hotels randomly at their convenient locations and comfort within the star category hotels. Theory clearly defines that customers to be satisfied if the perceived service meets (confirmation) or exceeds (positive disconfirmation) their expectations. Customers are more likely to be dissatisfied if the service quality is less than what they expected (negative disconfirmation). Khalifa &Liu (2003) discussed that taking expectation disconfirmation as the only determinant of satisfaction; this theory does not cause the fact that if high expectations are confirmed, it would much more lead to satisfaction than confirmation of low expectations. To resolve this drawback perceived performance is included as an additional determinant of satisfaction. In other words, the only way to ensure satisfaction is to empirically create disconfirmation by manipulating expectations and performance.

### SERVICE QUALITY EVALUATION AND ANALYSIS

#### *FRONT OFFICE STAFF*

Front office staff is the first contact of point in any hotel. Services provided by the front office staff is significantly makes high impact on customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Critics show that front office staff are not providing up to the mark services and rude with their customers. Delayed check in and response time to guest requests was a secondary priority.

#### *FOOD AND DINING SERVICES QUALITY*

It includes attributes like quality of food, choice of the food on menu card, quality of restaurant, prompt room service. Reviews said that the quality of food in these hotels is not good, not enough space in restaurant, hazel staff and restaurant staff took time to deliver services

### *VALUE FOR THE HOTELS PRODUCTS AND SERVICES*

Customer feels that they are over charged for some services like wi-fi. As rooms are stinking, untidy and dusty so the value for these rooms are not worth for it.

### *LOCATION AND AMBIENCE OF HOTELS*

It includes interior design, the decor of the hotels. Approximately all hotels are rated good for their location and ambience. Although, some facilities are noted to be outdated in Piccadilly Hotel.

### *SERVICE AND PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE*

The quality of service, timely service, the appearance of the staff, the willingness and ability of the personnel to Provide service, all hotels not fulfill these attributes, however, the knowledge of product of Jaypee Siddharth front office Staff is not good.

## FINDINGS

- Hospitality industry of India is emerging industry gaining the attention worldwide.
- Hotel under study charges high prices but performs poorly on service quality, cost of service and rate of service recovery, despite charging such high prices. It is therefore clear that the hotels cannot offer customized and friendly services to their customers and also they cannot recover from failed service if it occurs. These aspects require immediate attention
- An evaluation of service quality must be conducted from the perspective of the customer, so that the service can be improved accordingly. These are the ways that five-star hotels can generate positive word of mouth from their customers.
- Managers need to be more focused on service quality and delivering services by front office staff and other staff of hotel.

## CONCLUSION

Study results suggest these hotels are not providing a level of quality service that is comparable to customers' expectations. In order for guests to have a positive experience at the hotels, the hotel's managers and staff must ensure that every contact they have with the guests is pleasant. If hotel employees are not performing well, there is probably a gap between the hotel management and the employees. They may not be well paid, or they may not be happy with the hotel's policies. To retain customer and gain customer loyalty managers and staff should be friendly, polite and services should be prompt and consistence. For hotel decision-makers it’s good to analyse, identity problems, and then design strategies for achieving more customer satisfaction.

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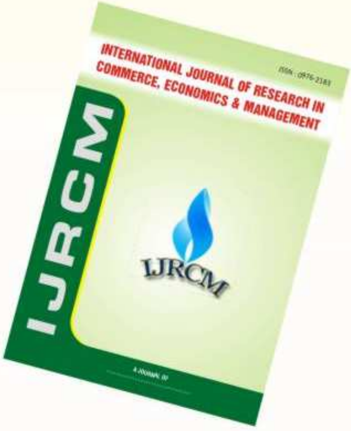
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