

Impact of Hotel Service Quality Dimensions on Hotel Brand Image and Guest Repeat Patronage

Impacto das dimensões da **qualidade do serviço** na **Imagem da Marca** do Hotel e no **padrão de repetição do hóspede**

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Abstract | The present research aims to assess the structural relationship between service quality and guest repeat patronage in the hospitality industry. The research design is exploratory and descriptive. The primary data were collected in April-June 2022, and 400 valid responses were considered for analysis. SPSS 21 was used for data and descriptive analysis. Exploratory factor analysis, structural equation modelling (SEM), and a multilateral technique were used. Service dimensions like tangibility and empathy showed the maximum variance, indicating that the guests felt these factors were more important in enhancing their satisfaction. Overall, better hotel service quality enables them to achieve higher guest satisfaction and repeat visitation. The better the hotel's service diversity, the more positive the brand image is developed in the guests' minds, influencing their repeat patronage. The present research contributes to the theory of service quality, brand image, and guest repeat patronage. It clarifies the positive relationship between service quality, brand image, and guest repeat patronage to improve the hotel's service quality and brand image.

Keywords | Service quality, hotels, guest satisfaction, brand image, repeat patronage

Resumo | O presente estudo visa avaliar a relação estrutural entre a qualidade do serviço eo padrão de repetição do hóspede. A investigação tem um carácter descritivo e exploratório. Os dados primários

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foram recolhidos entre junho e agosto de 2019 e foram consideradas 400 respostas válidas para análise. O SPSS 21 foi utilizado para o tratamento de dados, baseado em estatística descritiva, análise exploratória de fatores e modelação de equações estruturais (SEM). As dimensões da qualidade de serviço, como tangibilidade e empatia, mostraram a variância máxima explicada, indicando que os hóspedes consideram que estes dois fatores são mais importantes para aumentar o seu nível de satisfação. Em termos gerais, uma melhor qualidade de serviço nos hotéis permite alcançar uma maior satisfação e retenção dos hóspedes. Quanto melhor e maior for a diversidade de serviços do hotel, mais positiva será a imagem de marca desenvolvida na mente dos hóspedes, influenciando o seu padrão de repetição. A presente investigação contribui para evidenciar a relação positiva entre qualidade de serviço, imagem de marca e padrão de repetição dos hóspedes e o seu impacto na melhoria da qualidade de serviço em hotelaria e na imagem de marca.

Palavras-chave | Qualidade de serviço, hotéis, satisfação, imagem de marca, padrão de repetição

1. Introduction

Service quality has remained an area of interest for several researchers from times immemorial (Kandampully & Butler, 2001; Kandampully, 2007; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985) and entails when an 'accommodation provides products as well as services to the acceptable quality and matches or exceeds the guest expectations' (adapted from SABS, 2012, p. 16). Service quality also provides better service delivery to clients beyond their expectations (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003). Service quality, brand image, and WOM directly and indirectly, affect repurchase intention (Prabowo, Astuti, & Respati, 2019). Better service quality leads to customer satisfaction, especially in hospitality, leisure, and sports tourism (Singh, Kokkranikal, Bharadwaj, Rai, & Antony, 2021). Meeting customers' expectations are termed service quality (Parasuraman et al., 1985; 1988), creating better customer value (Gallarza, Saura, & Moreno, 2013), and achieving the desired requirements (Yang et al., 2014). Service quality of a high image increases guests' inclination to purchase again, and they become less sensitive to prices and communicate positive experiences with others (Venetis & Ghauri, 2004). Delivering im-

proved service quality is vital in achieving guest satisfaction, retention, and loyalty and thus helps increase an organization's economic competitiveness (Babakus, Bienstock, & Van Scotter, 2004). In the hospitality industry, managers always try to improve service quality and satisfaction to make the clients more loyal. Thus the same loyal clients by WOM spread a positive image (Tian-Cole & Crompton, 2003). The superior quality of services is an achievement in guests' service, and its reflection is seen at every encounter of the services delivered. The guests usually develop expectations from the existing service experiences, WOM, and advertisements (Tian-Cole et al., 2003).

As per Keller (1993), brand image is a perception regarding a brand, as indicated by brand associations in a customer's memory. Brand image is a series of recognition about a brand, as found in customers' minds (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990). From the time of inception, brand image is a vital segment for hotels because of its more significant implications on the strategic planning of the hotels. Several factors contribute to brand image formation, including the symbolism, practicality, and pleasantness of a product/ service (Hsieh & Li, 2008). As per the study of Riezebos (2003), which is based on image forming, brand image is directly for-

med by dint of inductive inferences. In this case, strategies related to marketing communication are the predominant elements in developing a brand image in the consumer's mind (Riezebos, 2003).

Seock (2009) defined patronage as the repeat purchasing behavior of a customer towards a product or service. Repeat patronage is reflected by the customers' willingness to conduct repeat purchases, preferring a particular product or service over the other to satisfy them, and propagating positive WOM (Agbonifoh, 2007; Kotler & Keller, 2012). It develops through positive reinforcement by derived satisfaction, leading to repeat buying behavior. Repeat patronage of ventures is significantly influenced by quality and service levels which determine the level of derived pleasure from a consumer's experience (Min & Min, 2011; Dipietro, Parsa & Gregory, 2011; Isibor & Odia, 2014).

The hotel industry's business environment is highly competitive, and each hotel, directly and indirectly, competes in 'cut-throat' competition with other hotels. Thus, a highly competitive environment triggers hotel managers to meet the guests' expectations to survive and be successful. To create a competitive advantage in the market, organizations must develop core competencies like skills and an inimitable combination of processes and assets (Kandampully, 2007). Even though the impact of service quality on guest satisfaction has been empirically studied, the exact relationship between the essential variables of brand image, service quality, and repeat patronage is still an important research issue in hospitality (Singh & Nika, 2019). Mainly in the hotel industry of Kashmir Valley, the existing literature recommends examining the in-depth relationship between service quality, hotel image, and repeat patronage. The study uses structural equation modelling (SEM) to assess the structural relationship between service quality, hotel brand image, and guest repeat patronage in the hospitality industry through structural equation modelling (SEM). The present study

has widely studied the impact of hotel service quality dimensions on hotel brand image and guest repeat patronage. The present paper benefits hoteliers by implementing its suggestions to increase service quality. This study highlights the essential parameters/recommendations through service quality dimensions whereby the hotels can capitalize on them to boost their brand image and positioning. The present study tends to the hoteliers knowing their strengths/weaknesses and opportunities/challenges. Thus, the study helps hoteliers to convert their challenges into opportunities and combat their lacunas in service quality. A significant positive aspect of the study is its focus on guests who visit and experience the services in Kashmir Valley, Jammu & Kashmir, India.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1. Service Quality

Quality is a dynamic force for better competitiveness, guest satisfaction, and profitability (Edvardsson, 1992). It is the guest's assessment of service outcome and process besides comparing expectations and service performances (Parasumaran et al. 1985). The five dimensions of SERVQUAL (Parasumaran et al. 1985), tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assertiveness, and empathy, have been used to measure service quality among the selected hotels. Furthermore, the SERVQUAL model has been used to develop the research instrument along with additional attributes, as SERVQUAL has come under much criticism in tourism and hospitality. Consequently, SERVQUAL has already been replaced by SERVPERF. Since the hospitality industry is diverse and service-based, the simple SERVQUAL could not have sufficed the motive and objectives of the present research. To measure the service perception of guests on many more essential attributes, the same could not have

been possible with the use of 22-item SERVQUAL. To make an exhaustive and accurate assessment of the service delivery by the selected hotels, there was a critical need to add many more items to the SERVQUAL scale to make it reliable in the context of the hotel industry.

Thus, service quality is a fit between perceived and expected service levels (Seth, Deshmukh, & Vrat, 2005), and it is the overall feeling of efficiency and the services of an organization. The majority of the customers express their satisfaction with the overall services they receive from the hotel (Karunaratne & Jayawardena, 2010). Customer orientation plays the most crucial role in market orientation regarding how well a hotel performs (Dabrowski, Brzozowska-Woś, Gołąb-Andrzejak, & Firgolska, 2019). Well-defined service quality and proper delivery lead to better hotel customer experience (Velooso & Gomez-Suarez, 2023). Hotel customers expect improved services from the hotels in all service quality dimensions (Khattab & Aldehayyat, 2011). Hossain (2012) revealed that five service quality dimensions have a significant positive impact on customer satisfaction. The most decisive factor is empathy, followed by responsiveness, reliability, assurance, and tangibility. Minh and Ha (2015) stated that service quality is a crucial driver for higher customer satisfaction, leading to loyalty and business profit levels in hotel service. The guests' expectations and experiences are disparity (Manhas & Tukamushaba, 2015). Oh and Kim (2017) reveals that research on customer satisfaction has simultaneously sustained interest and productivity.

2.2. Brand Image

Brand image plays an essential role in making a distinction within the same category of hotels and acts as a powerful tool for marketing (Park & Park, 2019). To attract clients, a well-defined brand image is the most viable marketing tool

for a particular organization (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990). Companies that enjoy a favorable brand image likely shine in the market and attract repeat customers and new and trial users (Connor & Davidson, 1997). A client's choice in selecting a particular company mostly depends upon its corporate image and is highly influenced by the client's perception of the goods and services offered (Andreassen & Lindestad, 1998). It is an excellent brand image of the corporate that can prove very fruitful to them in avoiding new entrants into the market (Rindova, Williamson, & Sever, 2005). Page and Fearn (2005) argued that a good image does not assure strong brands, but a lousy image negatively affects an organization's brand equity. When committing a mistake, service providers with a good market reputation suffer more than those with poor reputations (Rhee & Haunschild, 2006). The researchers argued that at the first instant, what comes to guests' minds when a brand is placed before them is known as brand image. From the hotel operator's point of view, it is a solid brand image that improves the corporate esteem, occupancy of rooms, revenue, and hotel profitability (So, King, Sparks, & Wang, 2013). The research studies have depicted that service quality is pivotal in enhancing satisfaction and repeat patronage amongst guests (Ha & Jang, 2009; Manhas & Ramjit, 2011). As per Srivastava and Sharma (2013), service quality significantly impacts guests' minds to purchase the products and services again from the same service provider. Moreover, it is validated that service quality has a broader impact on repurchase intentions among clients (Saleem & Yaseen, 2017; Haryono & Iskandar, 2015; Kadang & Sukati, 2012). Subsequently, it is the service qualities which has a significant impact on WOM and repurchase intention (Samad, 2014). To overcome this challenge, hoteliers must strive to generate strong connections to hotel products by appearing to have tangible characteristics and aligning them favorably with perceived core values. Repeat customers benefit the hotels in several ways,

like regular visits and communicating with others through positive word-of-mouth. This favourable image leads to repeat hotel business (Barber & Deale, 2014). Repeat patronage is highly influenced by the attributes of service quality, WOM, and brand image (Prabowo & Respati, 2020). As per Soleha, Arifin and Slamet (2017) study, brand image plays a pivotal role in increasing the quantum of repurchasing among clients. The favorable brand image enhances the desire among the clients to remain in contact with the particular service provider to whom they were receiving the products and services.

2.3. Relationship between Service Quality Dimensions, Brand Image, and Repeat Patronage

Excellent quality of services helps decrease costs, increase profits, improve better performance of an organization, and, thus, favourable word-of-mouth (Seth, Deshmukh, & Vrat, 2005). Satisfaction reflects a post-purchase evaluation of product quality, given pre-purchase expectations. Zaiba, Taherikia, et al. (2013) stated that the quality of service has a considerable influence on brand image. Some researchers (Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000; Nguyen & LeBlanc, 1998) have found a positive connection between service quality and loyalty. The impact of perceived service quality on loyalty is enhanced and positively influenced by the hotel's image (Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000; Nguyen & LeBlanc, 1998). Hence, it can be inferred that perceived service quality, directly and indirectly, impacts guest loyalty. At the same time, the indirect effect of service quality is mediated by guest perception of the hotel's brand image and has also been acknowledged by Nguyen and LeBlanc (1998). The impact of service quality on the loyalty of guests through brand image provides a clear picture to hotel operators that the need is to shun the previous marketing and advertisement

strategies, as the hotel brand image can no longer be enhanced through them but must be efficiently managed through the delivery of superior and exceptional services to the guests (Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2007).

It is a positive brand image that spawns many benefits to the company and helps them increase the number of loyal clients. As great competition exists in the market, the hotels compete for the neck to neck to increase their brand image and loyal clients. Moreover, it is not only to identify the attributes which affect service quality, but hotels must develop their self-models of brand image (Erkmen & Hancer, 2019; Song, Jang, Wiggins, & Nowlin, 2019). A positive brand image increases the hotel's esteem, room occupancy, revenue generation, and profitability (So, King, Sparks, & Wang, 2013). Repeat clients help the hotels to increase their business by communicating positive WOM to new and potential clients. Thus, the positive brand image leads to repeat business of the hotels (Barber & Deale, 2014). A solid and positive relationship exists between brand image and repeat patronage among guests. Brand image plays a pivotal role in increasing customer loyalty, and a positive brand image leads to favourable repeat patronage in the hotel industry (Andreassen & Lindestad, 1998; Dick & Basu, 1994).

2.4. Development of Research Hypotheses

Most scholars have found a significant link between service quality and brand image (Hsieh, Lu, & Lu, 2018; Wu, Liao, Chen, & Hsu, 2011) and hospitality business performance (Singh, 2015). Previous research studies have found that service quality is the antecedent of the brand image affecting it positively (Hsieh et al., 2018; Wu et al., 2011, Singh & Nika, 2019:2020). Geraldine and David (2013) observed a statistically significant relationship between service quality and brand image. It indicated that the services the service

providers provide positively impact their brand image. The same image has a positive relationship with the guest's repeat patronage. Kim and Kim (2005) stated that brand image and dimensions of service quality perceptions share several features. Aydin and Ozer (2005) revealed that service quality which is being perceived directly determines perception related to a particular brand. Positive or good experiences perceived over time now lead to a favourable image (Ostrowski, O'Brien, & Gordon, 1993). The expected proposed relationship between the variables may be:

H1: Service quality factors influence hotel brand image positively.

Khraim (2013) stated that service quality significantly impacts customers' repeat intentions. Factors like service quality and room amenities, general amenities, business services, value, security, and IDD facilities greatly influence customers' likelihood of returning to the same hotel properties (Choi & Chu, 2001). The proposed assumption may be expected as follows:

H2: Service quality factors have a positive impact on guest repeat patronage.

The essential element that helps hotels to gain a competitive advantage over their competitors is the brand image. Dhillon (2013) stated that the crucial attribute of the hotel is its image. In the service sector, the brand image is decisive in creating positive repeat patronage among guests. Image is a brand reflection held in guests' minds (Saleem & Raja, 2014). "The hotel operators opine that it is a solid brand image that can improve corporate esteem, financial performance, occupancy, average price, revenue and degree of profitability of the hotel" (So, King, Sparks, & Wang, 2013). Grace Lee (2003) indicated that a positive image always leads to guest repeat patronage. A better image helps to develop loyalty toward guests' repeat patronage (Han & Back, 2008). Besides, the outcome of various empirical studies has depicted that a positive image (i.e., brand, retail/shop/service) leads to guest loyalty (Anwar, Min, & Dastagir, 2019; Hsieh, Lu, & Lu, 2018; Tu, Wang, & Chang, 2012) that ultimately leads to the guest repeat patronage. Based on the above discussion, the proposed relationship may be expected as follows:

H3: There is a positive effect of hotel brand image on guest repeat patronage.

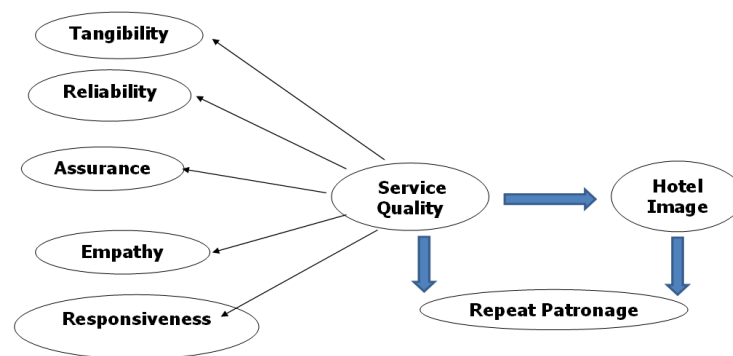


Figure 1 | Conceptual framework of the study
Source: Authors' work

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The research design is exploratory cum descriptive in nature. Exploratory research proved very useful in exploring research questions and new attributes missing in the SERVQUAL model, 1988.

3.2. Reliability

The instrument was administered to a smaller number of people who resembled the research population to conduct the pre-testing. Ten English-knowing experts & two academicians from Central University of Kashmir, India, were randomly selected to pre-test the research instrument. A pre-test was done to test the instrument's reliability and validity.

3.3. Sampling

A simple random sample was used to select the respondents. The respondents of the present study were guests staying at leading hotels like The Khyber Resort & Spa, Vivanta by Taj, and Four Points by Sheraton in Kashmir valley of Jammu and Kashmir. In the selected hotels, equal representation regarding the number of questionnaires was done while administering them to guests. The response was gathered from the guests during their departure while they were settling their bills from the front desk. The questionnaires were kept in the complaint book to get the response (*complaint book- where a customer generally provides feedback regarding the services and amenities experienced*). Regarding the sample size, a total number of 432 questionnaires were distributed among the respondents. Four hundred thirty-two questionnaires were distributed, 415 were received back, and 400 (96.38%) were considered valid responses and

analyzed.

3.4. Research Instrument

A self-administered questionnaire was developed while referring to the existing SERVQUAL scale concerning the service quality variables and brand image scale (Kim & Kim, 2005) with many more essential items. The following items were added to the SERVQUAL scale to meet the study's objectives. The additional items added to the questionnaire included *modern technology facilities, variety and excellent quality of meals in the restaurant, quick check-in and check-out procedures, efficient baggage handling mechanism, level of cleanliness of toilets, the ambiance in the hotel like interior design/décor, reliability of online assistance like convenience and service of the reservation system, management of emergencies by the hotel staff, the safety performance of the hotel, free SMS alerts/e-mails to guests when some vital information is to be given, tourism-related information to guests, free SMS alerts/e-mails to guests when some essential information is to be delivered, compensation is provided to you if anyhow baggage is lost or damaged, and tie-up of the hotel with car rentals, airlines, etc.*

3.5. Measurement Scale

Service quality dimensions concerning guest performance were each represented with various statements. These were assessed by measuring both the expectation as well as performances level on a five-point Likert scale wherein guest expectation level was anchored at 1 = not very important, 2 = somewhat important, 3 = moderately important, 4 = important, 5 = significant & guest performance level was anchored at 1 = terrible, 2 = poor, 3 = average, 4 = very good, 5 = excellent.

The brand image was measured using the five-

point Likert scale anchored at 1 = highly dissatisfied, 2 = dissatisfied, 3 = neutral, 4 = satisfied, and 5 = highly satisfied.

Guest repeat patronage was evaluated using an extremely unlikely and extremely likely on a five-point scale (Baker & Crompton 2000; Dagger et al. 2007).

3.6. Data Collection

To collect the primary data, the guests were approached in the coffee shops/lawns of the selected hotels for conducting the survey (The Khyber Resort & Spa, Vivanta by Taj, and Four Points by Sheraton). The primary data was collected between April-June, 2022. However, the secondary data was collected from international and national journals and by assessing online research articles.

4. Results and Discussion

For the treatment of the empirical data, several research methods and techniques were applied using the SPSS-21 version, descriptive analysis, explorative factor analysis (EFA), and a multivariate technique of structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to analyze structural relationships between hotel service quality, hotel brand image, and guest repeat patronage.

The socio-demographic profile of the sample depicted that in terms of gender, male respondents (n=226) were more than female respondents (n=172) and transgender (n=2). Regarding age, 35.25% were between 18-28, 36.25%, 15.25%, 5.75%, and 7.5% were between 29-38, 39-48, 49-58, and above 58 years. Regarding occupation, 20.25% (n = 81) were students, 22.5% (n = 89) were employees, 29.75% (n = 119) were business people, 19.25% (n=77) were professionals, and 8.5% (n = 34) belonged to other professions.

In terms of annual income, 30.25% (n = 121) have an income less than three lacs, 25.75% (n = 103) have an income of 3-6 lacs, 17.75% (n = 71) have an income of 6-9 lacs, 14.25% (n = 57) having income 9-12 lacs and 12% (n = 48) having income above 12 lacs. In terms of the purpose of visit, 64.25% (n=265) were travelling for leisure, 3.75% (n=15) for education, 17.75% (n=71) for pilgrimage, and 12.25% (n=49) for other purposes.

4.1. Factor Analysis and Descriptive Statistics Results

The exploratory factor analysis technique was applied to identify the underlying factors of service quality. The factor analysis and descriptive statistics results were together presented in Table 1. The value obtained for the Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was 0.75, treated as commendable and suitable for running the factor analysis (George & Mallery, 2010). The following factors were extracted and discussed.

The tangibility explained a 19.09% variance. The factor rated high and excellent by respondents except "modern technology facilities" (mean=3.89), "entertainment facilities in the lounge or restaurant" (mean=3.86), "hotel ambience" (mean=3.91), and "amenities in other hotel areas" (mean=3.90). The guests are satisfied with the tangible service attributes, but further improvement is required to make excellence in service delivery. The reliability explained a 14.84% variance. The factor rated low in terms of "reliability of online assistance" (mean=3.79), "accessibility of hotel from the airport and major highways" (mean=3.69), "management of emergency" (mean=3.67), "price of supplementary services, e.g., room service, laundry" (mean=3.64). The assurance factor explained the 8.40% variance. The two items recorded low mean values, "professional approach of employees" (mean=3.77)

and “prompt attention towards guest specific needs” (mean=3.56). The responsiveness explained 13.54% variance. All items recorded better mean values. The respondents were satisfied with responsiveness in terms of service quality. The empathy explained a 25.02% variance. Only a few items have registered low mean values “care and concern” (mean=3.76), “grievance redress cell” (mean=3.61), “pricing policy” (mean=3.54), “free

kid meal” (mean=3.69).

The results have shown that empathy (25.02%) explains more variance, followed by tangibility (19.09%), reliability (14.84%), responsiveness (13.54%), and assurance (8.40%), indicating more importance and relevance of empathy followed by tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, and assertiveness in enhancing guest satisfaction.

Table 1 | Factor Analysis and Descriptive Statistics Results –Service Quality Dimensions

S. No.	Attributes	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5		
Factor 1	Tangibility (TAN)						Mean	S.D
TAN 1	Physical appearance, dress code, and attitude of employees	.92					4.12	.94
TAN 2	Modern technology facilities	.92					3.89	1.06
TAN 3	Variety and excellent quality of meals in the restaurant	.88					4.07	.97
TAN 4	Quick Check-in and check-out procedures	.87					4.11	.95
TAN 5	Entertainment facilities being provided in the lounge or restaurant	.87					3.86	1.10
TAN 6	Efficient baggage handling mechanism	.86					4.13	.93
TAN 7	Level of cleanliness of toilets	.80					4.25	.89
TAN 8	Amenities offered to you in the guest room, like TV, radio, A/C, lights, and extra mechanical equipment installed	.72					4.34	.87
TAN 9	The ambience in the hotel, like interior design/décor	.65					3.91	1.03
TAN 10	Amenities offered in other areas of the hotel other than a guest room	.57					3.90	1.04
Factor 2	Reliability (REL)						Mean	S.D
REL 1	Hotel accessibility from the airport and highways		.96				3.69	1.15
REL 2	Price of supplementary services, e.g., room service, laundry		.96				3.64	1.16
REL 3	Reliability of online assistance like convenience and service of the reservation system		.95				3.79	1.13
REL 4	Management of emergencies by the hotel staff		.94				3.67	1.15
REL 5	Sincerity and patience of hotel employees in resolving your problems		.91				3.84	1.12
REL 6	Employees' response to your queries		.83				3.82	1.13
REL 7	Accessibility for dis-able people		.69				3.92	1.03
Factor 3	Assurance (ASS)						Mean	S.D
ASS 1	Friendliness of the hotel employees			.94			3.99	.93
ASS 2	The safety performance of the hotel			.92			3.86	.97
ASS 3	The professional approach of the employees in discharging their duties towards guests			.91			3.77	.99
ASS 4	Prompt attention by hotel authority towards guest-specific needs			.84			3.56	1.03
ASS 5	The charges on my account were clearly explained.			.80			3.97	.94

Table 1 | Factor Analysis and Descriptive Statistics Results –Service Quality Dimensions (cont.)

ASS 6	Guest room all set as promised				.77			3.96	.95
Factor 4	Responsiveness (RES)							Mean	S.D
RES 1	Free SMS alerts/e-mails to guests when some important information is to be given.				.95			4.02	.97
RES 2	Toll-free number provided by the hotel				.94			4.14	.91
RES 3	Guest feedback policy				.94			4.12	.92
RES 4	Tourism-related information given to you				.93			4.13	.93
RES 5	Money exchange facility				.87			3.97	.99
RES 6	Timeliness of the staff of the hotel while dealing with the guests during busy hours				.85			3.96	.98
Factor 5	Empathy (EMP)							Mean	S.D
EMP 1	The hotel website is updated all the time					.95		4.11	.92
EMP 2	Care and concern by the hotel staff for their guests					.94		3.76	.97
EMP 3	Compensation is given to you if anyhow baggage is lost or damaged					.92		3.80	.96
EMP 4	The tie-up of the hotel with car rentals, airlines, etc					.89		4.12	.91
EMP 5	Offers like a discount, cash-back on special occasions					.86		3.82	.95
EMP 6	Grievance redress cell of the hotel					.82		3.61	1.1
EMP 7	The pricing policy of the hotel					.81		3.54	1.2
EMP 8	Free kid meals up to the age of fourteen years					.80		3.69	.99
EMP 9	The restaurant's atmosphere was inviting					.79		4.16	.89
Eigen Value		6.57	5.59	4.47	4.99	6.72			
Total Variance Explained (%) = 80.89		19.09	14.84	8.40	13.54	25.02			
Reliability Alpha (%) = .94		.92	.96	.93	.94	.95			

Source: Authors' work

4.2. Brand Image

In terms of brand image, table 2 indicates that guests have shown concern against only two items “good impression” (mean=3.75) and “comfortable”

(mean=3.77). Thus, guiding the selected hotels in increasing service quality viz these two attributes. Overall, the guests staying in these selected hotels have perceived a better brand image.

Table 2 | Descriptive Statistics of Brand Image

S.NO	Brand Image	Mean	S.D.
BI 1	Good impression	3.75	.99
BI 2	Luxurious	4.15	.91
BI 3	Better image than its competitors	4.00	.96
BI 4	A suitable place for high class	4.12	.92
BI 5	The hotel is big and spacious.	4.11	.93
BI 6	Comfortable	3.77	.98
Overall mean and standard deviations.		3.98	.94

Source: Authors' work

4.3. Repeat patronage

Table 3 reflects that further improvement is required in the service quality of selected hotels so

that guests feel satisfied. Subsequently, this shall enable them to build positive guest repeat patronage.

Table 3 | Descriptive Statistics of Repeat Patronage

S.NO	Repeat patronage	Mean	S.D.
RP 1	You recommend this hotel to others.	3.75	.92
RP 2	Do you consider experiencing this hotel again in the future	3.57	.97
RP 3	You will sign up for a hotel membership	4.00	.86
RP 4	You like to experience the hotel again, whatever will be the price of the room	3.86	.89
Overall mean and standard deviations.		3.79	.91

Source: Authors' work

4.4. Hypotheses Testing

A multivariate analysis, Structural equation modelling (SEM) has been used to test the hypotheses.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) for Service Quality Measurement Model

Table 4 revealed that CFA loadings and composite reliability (CR) values for all the model constructs were above the recommended threshold of

0.80. In all cases, the average variance extracted (AVE) values were more than the recommended threshold of 0.50. In addition, the study's findings supported the convergent validity and reliability of the measured constructs. The constructs' discriminant validity was examined by examining the square of all the pairs of correlations with AVE values. In all cases, the results supported that the AVE values were more than the correlation square, supporting discriminant validity. The above results indicated that the data fit the hypothesized measurement model.

Table 4 | CFA Loadings, AVE, and CR

Constructs	Indicators	CFA Loadings	AVE	CR	Constructs	Indicators	CFA Loadings	AVE	CR
Empathy	EMP7	.81	0.747	0.919	Reliability	REL5	.91	0.786	0.889
	EMP6	.82				REL1	.96		
	EMP5	.86				REL3	.95		
	EMP8	.80				REL2	.96		
	EMP3	.92				REL4	.94		
	EMP4	.89				REL6	.83		
	EMP1	.95				REL7	.69		
	EMP2	.94			Tangibility	TAN9	.67	0.732	0.889
	EMP9	.79				TAN7	.80		
Responsiveness	RES5	.87	TAN6	.86					
	RES3	.94	TAN8	.72					
	RES4	.93	TAN1	.92					
	RES1	.95	TAN2	.92					
	RES2	.94	TAN5	.87					
	RES6	.85	TAN3	.88					
Assurance	ASS3	.91	0.749	0.863		TAN4	.87		
	ASS1	.94				TAN10	.57		
	ASS2	.92							
	ASS5	.80							
	ASS4	.84							
	ASS6	.77							

Source: Authors' work

The measurement model consisting of various dimensions of service quality showed that data is very well fit to the model ($X^2 = 475.9$, $df = 416$; $CFI = 0.976$; $IFI = 0.974$; $GFI = 0.856$; $AGFI = 0.815$ and $RMSEA = 0.035$) as reflected in table

5. When the measurement model was confirmed, hypotheses H1, H2, and H3 were tested through structural equation modelling, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5 | Goodness of Fit Indices and Hypotheses Testing

X^2	Df	CFI	IFI	GFI	AGFI	RMSEA
475.9	416	0.976	0.974	0.856	0.815	0.035
<i>X² = Chi-square; df = degree of freedom; CFI, comparative fit index; IFI = incremental fit index; GFI = goodness-of-fit index; AGFI, adjusted goodness-of-fit-index; RMSEA, root-mean-square error of approximation</i>						
Hypotheses Testing						
Path		Structural Coefficients	t	Test result		
H1: Service Quality → Hotel Brand Image		.75	2.02	Supported		
H2: Service Quality → Guest Repeat Patronage		.55	5.96	Supported		
H3: Hotel Brand Image → Guest Repeat Patronage		.74	7.93	Supported		

Source: Authors' work

H1: Service quality factors influence hotel brand image positively.

The structural model results indicated that the data is very well fitted ($X^2 = 475.9$; $df = 416$; $CFI = 0.976$; $IFI = 0.974$; $GFI = 0.856$; $AGFI = 0.815$; and $RMSEA = 0.035$). The study revealed that service quality factors explained 75% of the brand image, indicating that service quality determines and influences the brand image and acts as a critical element in developing a positive brand image among the guests. While examining the coefficients path, the results reveal that guests' favourable perception of service quality significantly influences the hotel brand image ($B = 0.75$, $p < 0.05$), as in Table 5. Hence, the proposed hypothesis (H1) stands accepted.

H2: Service quality factors have a positive impact on guest repeat patronage.

The structural model results proposed that the data is well fitted ($X^2 = 475.9$; $df = 416$; $CFI = 0.976$; $IFI = 0.974$; $GFI = 0.856$; $AGFI = 0.815$; and $RMSEA = 0.035$). The study revealed that service quality factors explained 54% of guest

repeat patronage, indicating that service quality determines and influences the guest's repeat patronage and is a crucial element in developing positive guest repeat patronage. While examining the coefficients path, the results reveal that guests' favourable perception of service quality significantly influences guest repeat patronage ($B = 0.55$, $p < 0.05$), as in Table 5. Hence, the proposed hypothesis (H2) stands accepted.

H3: There is a positive effect of hotel brand image on guest repeat patronage.

The structural model results proposed that the data is well fitted ($X^2 = 475.9$; $df = 416$; $CFI = 0.976$; $IFI = 0.974$; $GFI = 0.856$; $AGFI = 0.815$; and $RMSEA = 0.035$). The study revealed that hotel brand image explained 74% of guest repeat patronage, indicating that the brand image determines and influences the guest repeat patronage and acts as a key element in developing positive guest repeat patronage. While examining the coefficients path, the results reveal that guests' favourable perception of hotel brand image significantly influences their repeat patronage ($B = 0.74$,

$p < 0.05$). Hence, the proposed hypothesis (H3) stands accepted.

The first finding is that the constructs of service quality viz-a-viz empathy ($\beta = 0.77$), responsiveness ($\beta = 0.69$), assertiveness ($\beta = 0.72$), reliability ($\beta = 0.67$), and tangibility ($\beta = 0.82$) significantly impact hotel brand image as shown in Figure 2. All service quality dimensions have a positive beta (β), explaining the hotel brand image's positive impact. The overall effect illustrated by the service quality is $\beta = .75$, which indicates that a single unit change in service quality variable brings a 75% change in hotel brand image.

The second finding is that the constructs of service quality viz-a-viz empathy ($\beta = 0.77$), responsiveness ($\beta = 0.69$), assertiveness ($\beta = 0.72$),

reliability ($\beta = 0.67$), and tangibility ($\beta = 0.82$) have a significant impact on guest repeat patronage as shown in Figure 2. All the service quality dimensions have a positive beta (β), explaining the positive effect on guest repeat patronage. The overall impact presented by the service quality is $\beta = .55$ which indicates that a single unit change in the service quality variable brings a 55% change in the guest repeat patronage.

The third finding suggests that a hotel brand image significantly impacts guest repeat patronage, as shown in Figure 2. The overall effect explained by the hotel brand image is $\beta = .74$, which indicates that a single unit change in hotel brand image brings a 74% change in guest repeat patronage.

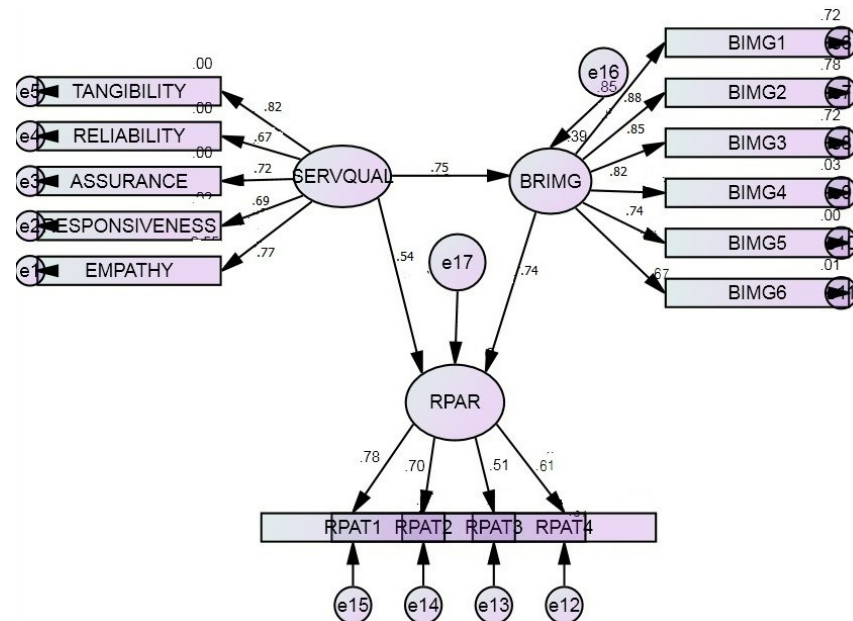


Figure 2 | Results of Structural Equation Model
Source: Authors' work

5. Implications

Theoretical Implications

The present results follow the study of Singh and Nika (2020), where they revealed a better service quality and sharp image in a highly compe-

titive environment that helps the service providers survive and increase their market share. Thus enabling them to develop positive repeat behavioural intention among their prospective clients (Bansal, Singh & Gangotia, 2014). The existing literature backs all the results and is in tune with the previous studies. Also, the present research has con-

tributed to the current body of knowledge by adding new items to the 22-item SERVQUAL scale, thus bridging the gap between service quality theory and practice in the context of the hotel industry like modern technological facilities, variety, and excellent quality meals in the restaurant, quick check-in and check-out procedures, efficient baggage handling, cleanliness of toilets, hotel ambience like interior design/décor, online assistance, management of emergencies, safety performance, free SMS alerts for providing information, tourism-related information, compensation on baggage lost or damaged, a tie-up of the hotel with car rentals, airlines, etc.

Managerial Implications

The study has significant managerial implications for hotel managers, particularly concerning service quality and its impact on brand image and repeat patronage. The managers should focus more on service quality dimensions, especially reliability, assurance, and empathy, which are essential in fostering guest satisfaction. The results have revealed that it is not only the better infrastructure of hotels that can lead to satisfaction, but there are many more essential attributes connected to the human resource working in these hotels which play a pivotal role in enhancing guest satisfaction, better image, and positive repeat patronage. The empathy component of hotel staff should be so elegant that it should make a positive mark in the minds of clients who experience services from them.

6. Conclusion

The present study demonstrated that service quality plays a pivotal role in enhancing the level of satisfaction among guests, specifically in the hotel

industry. As the hotel industry is service based in its nature, thus makes the scope broader and more critical as far as the service quality of products and services are concerned, which are being delivered to guests. Better service quality increases the flow of guests to the hotels and their profitability. The study depicted that service quality enhances the hotels' brand image, and ultimately, a positive and favourable brand image leads to the guest's repeated positive patronage. The results of the present study align with the study conducted by Singh and Nika (2020) and Bansal et al (2014), where they revealed that it is better to service quality and a sharp image in a highly competitive environment to help service providers to survive and increase their market share. Thus enabling them to develop positive repeat behavioural intention among their prospective clients.

Recommendations

The pricing policy of hotels needs to be at par with other hotels of the same calibre. To have a better employee professional approach in discharging duties, hotel management should train employees about guest relationships at regular intervals. Courtesy and patience among employees can play an essential role in increasing their satisfaction. Hotel authorities should pay prompt attention to guest-specific needs. To enhance modern technology, hotels should prepare for keyless entry (through SPG app-based entry system), mirror televisions while enjoying a bath, sauna, or swimming pool, texting concierge, smart thermostats, streaming devices to the TV, smart lighting, MP3 docking stations, high-speed internet. Hotels should install photo booths and digital arts to hook them up, indulge guests in arcade games, musical performances, and spirit tastings, invite favourite performers to the eatery, and offer cooking classes and live music. The amenities like an incredible indoor or outdoor pool can be a deal-breaker for

guests; a business centre, onsite dining, a fitness centre, and room service shall enable the hotels to delight guests and lead to a favourable image. All recommendations have been drawn from the study itself, and hotels must follow them in letter and spirit to develop a sense of positive repeat patronage among the guests.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The data collection was performed only for three months, which permitted only summer visiting guests to be surveyed, not year-round tourism. Thus, the service perception of guests should be analyzed while they visit select hotels during winter times as well. Therefore, views/responses of a particular set of guests were considered and not of year-round tourism. Besides the time and financial constraints, the study is not providing any inclusive information about the guest group's behavior. Moreover, a much larger sample size should be taken to understand the present research study and enhance results to the optimal level. In the future, an investigation should be conducted to provide suggestions and implications separately for each hotel to gain in-depth knowledge about their service quality and delivery. Future research should be further executed in the area of Service quality management and Customer relationship management (SQM & CRM), where issues like service failure and service recovery could be addressed.

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