



A Systematic Review On Impact Of Service Quality On Customer Satisfaction In Heritage Hotels

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ABSTRACT

This research is a systematic literature review which intends to find out the role of service quality in customer satisfaction in the context of heritage hotels. Although there are many service quality models including SERVQUAL, which is commonly used in various contemporary hospitality environments, their applicability in the context of heritage hotels has received little attention. Heritage hotels where the buildings provide a history of the culture with the added facilities of a modern hotel have unique problems in the assessment of service quality due to guests' expectation of a historical appearance and feel. In this research, using a review of the current literature, the impact of service quality dimensions such as tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy on customer satisfaction in the context of heritage hotels is analyzed. Further, the review evaluates the overall influence of service quality on the customers' loyalty and retention with a special reference to the cultural aspects and the concept of authenticity. The results offer critical implications for the operators of heritage hotels to identify the ways of maintaining the cultural significance of the property along with the quality of services that contributes to the overall satisfaction and repeat patronage of the guests.

Keywords: Heritage Hotels, Service Quality, Customer Satisfaction, Customer Loyalty, Client Retention, Hospitality Industry, Tangibility, Responsiveness, Reliability, Assurance, Empathy

1 INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry is a fast-growing and highly competitive industry where the quality of service is one of the main factors that define customers' satisfaction, their loyalty and business success. Especially, the 'heritage hotels' which have incorporated many of the cultural aspects into their designs provide an interesting setting to examine the service quality and customer satisfaction. While heritage hotels are not typical hotels, the expectations of the guests are much broader and multifaceted in comparison with standard hotels since they are to provide a full range of services combined with the historical atmosphere (Heung, Wong, & Qu, 2000). Such guests are interested in comfort and opulence but also cultural enrichment and the actual experience of the historical times. Hence, the process of assessing and enhancing the service quality in heritage hotels requires the consideration of how the various elements of service actually make an impact on the guests' impressions (Prentice, 1993).

Most of the prior studies in the area of service quality primarily deal with the contemporary hotels and resorts and employ models such as SERVQUAL and SERVPERF for measuring the level of customer satisfaction in terms of factors such as food hygiene, service delivery and staff conduct. Still, these frameworks do not capture the unique features that define heritage hotels, where the tension between the preservation of the historic fabric and the provision of modern services may pose certain issues (Chen & Chen, 2010). In addition, despite the fact that service quality has been investigated in the context of customer satisfaction, loyalty and retention in general hotel environments, very little research has been done to identify these links in the context of heritage hotels where the culture and emotion of the guests and the building play a crucial role in the service experiences of the guests (Timothy & Boyd, 2006).

Heritage hotels have therefore been established to act as cultural icons in that they play a part in the tourism industry as well as the conservation of cultural resources (McKercher & du Cros, 2002). Customers in these

hotels are likely to be more demanding in as much as they seek quality service delivery, they also seek to be associated with a rich cultural heritage of the buildings (Lashley, 2008). However, the issue arises as to how these expectations are to be met and fulfilled while at the same time not diluting the very essence of the heritage experience as defined by Poria, Reichel, & Biran (2006). It is important to know how these service quality dimensions including tangibility and empathy affect the guests' satisfaction in heritage hotels in order to maintain the growth of the success in the growing competitive market (Alonso & Ogle, 2008).

Furthermore, the role of service quality in enhancing customer satisfaction and hence the loyalty and retention in heritage hotels is another area that has not been well researched. Customer loyalty in general hospitality settings with regards to service consistency and emotional connection are often highlighted in the literature but in heritage hotels, these factors are augmented by cultural and historical antecedents of the guest (Han & Back, 2008). This study aims to address this gap by examining the impact of service quality on customer satisfaction, loyalty and retention in the context of heritage hotels, more specifically, how the characteristics of these kinds of properties influence the experiences and relationships with guests (Chen, 2013).

Therefore, this research seeks to add to the literature on heritage tourism and hospitality by assessing the role of service quality in heritage hotels while considering both the conventional service quality and culturally appropriate service quality. This study will give insight to the heritage hotel operators about how the service quality dimensions like reliability, responsiveness and authenticity can be further improved to increase guest satisfaction and thus, customer loyalty in such a competitive and culturally sensitive market.

2 CONCEPTUALIZING SERVICE QUALITY

There is hardly any field in the hospitality industry that has not discussed the concept of service quality extensively with the help of scholars. One of the most common approaches to defining the concept of service quality is based on the idea of the gap between the customers' expectations and their assessment of the received service. One of the most popular models to define and to measure the service quality is SERVQUAL model, which was introduced by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry in the mid 1980s. According to the SERVQUAL model, service quality can be explained and operationalised through the identification of the discrepancy between the customers' expectations and their perceptions of the received service (Parasuraman et al. , 1985; Wilkins et al. , 2007; Oh, 1999).

The most popular model in service quality literature is the SERVQUAL model which was proposed by Parasuraman and his colleagues (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1985). According to the model, service quality is the gap between the customers' expectations and their perceived service quality. In this case, the customers' perception of the service as being at par or even better than what they expected is sufficient to satisfy them on the quality of the service (Parasuraman et al. , 1985; Gundersen, Heide, & Olsson, 1996). If the service delivery is below the expectation then the service is rated as poor (Jones et al. , 1997).

SERVQUAL proposes that service quality is a multi-dimensional concept, consisting of five main dimensions: tangible, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. These dimensions assist to dissect and evaluate the various factors that make up the impression of service quality (Knutson et al. , 2010; Luo & Qu, 2016).

2.1 Dimensions of Service Quality

2.1.1 Tangibility

Tangibility relate to the physical infrastructure of the service environment such as facilities, equipments and the appearance of the service providers (Wilkins et al. , 2007). In the hospitality industry, tangible elements may refer to the physical appearance of hotels and rooms, the restaurant atmosphere or even the quality of the services offered such as gyms or swimming pools (Oh, 1999). The physical environment is a major determinant of the initial impressions and plays a key role in determining other perceptions of service quality (Parasuraman et al., 1985). In the context of the SERVQUAL model, the aspect of tangibles is the most outward and therefore the most simple to measure (Jones et al., 1997).

2.1.2 Reliability

Reliability is defined as the firms' capacity to deliver services as per the promise made with precision and consistency (Parasuraman et al., 1985). In hospitality, reliability may include properly cleaned rooms, on time room service or honoring of reservation schedules (Oh, 1999; Wilkins et al., 2007). The expectation of customers is to receive services without mistakes and service failures in this dimension are likely to negatively affect the satisfaction of the customers (Knutson et al., 2010). For instance, Wilkins et al. (2007) opine that reliability is one of the key customer satisfaction factors in luxury hotel settings because customer s anticipate a high degree of uniformity.

2.1.3 Responsiveness

Responsiveness is the extent to which staff are receptive to customer needs and the ability to deliver fast service (Gundersen et al. , 1996; Parasuraman et al. , 1985). This dimension seeks to identify the extent and speed at which hotel staff is able to attend to customer inquiries, complaints or requests for help (Jones et al. , 1997; Wilkins et al. , 2007). In hospitality it can be the time taken in checking in clients or the time that it takes for attendants to attend to room service (Oh, 1999). Responsiveness helps to create perception of attentiveness,

which is vital for improving customers' experiences particularly in organizations whose operations involve offering services to customers such as the hospitality industry (Luo & Qu, 2016).

2.1.4 Assurance

Assurance is the extent of employee's knowledge, competence, courtesy and the ability to create trust and confidence in the customers (Parasuraman et al. , 1985). In the context of hospitality, assurance can be manifested by the level of training and knowledge possessed by the hotel staff and their self-confidence while interacting with the customer s (Oh, 1999). The concept of assurance is very relevant in the sectors of high quality services because trust and competence are among the most important factors influencing the level of satisfaction of customers (Wilkins et al. , 2007; Gundersen et al. , 1996).

2.1.5 Empathy

Empathy can be defined as the offering of personalized attention to the customers (Parasuraman et al. , 1985). It shows how much the service providers know and care for the special needs and issues of the clients and customers (Jones et al. , 1997; Wilkins et al. , 2007). In hospitality, this may include remembering customer preferences, providing customized services or going out of the way to make customer s feel valued (Gundersen et al. , 1996). As Luo & Qu, (2016); Oh, (1999) noted, empathy is one of the significant factors that define the difference between exceptional service and satisfactory service that can be delivered in the high-contact service environment such as luxury hotels.

All these dimensions are useful in the evaluation of the overall service quality and it can be observed that the dimensions may differ across one industry and another and across one service environment and another (Parasuraman et al. , 1985). The five dimensions identified above can be applied to the hospitality industry to gauge customer satisfaction; some of the dimensions such as responsiveness and empathy are more influential in places where personnel interface is central to the service delivery process (Wilkins et al. , 2007; Oh, 1999). The concept of service quality has been defined as a multi-dimensional concept that is critical in analysing customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry as noted by Parasuraman et al. (1985), Wilkins et al. (2007) and Knutson et al. (2010). Parasuraman's SERVQUAL model for instance provide definitions of service quality that act as a benchmark for measuring the extent to which service providers meet customers' expectations (Jones et al. , 1997; Gundersen et al. , 1996). Through the analysis of the five generic services attributes, which include tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, the organisations can formulate strategies to facilitate the enhancement of service delivery systems and customers' experience (Oh, 1999; Luo & Qu, 2016). Every dimension plays its part in shaping the customers' perceptions of the quality of service and together, the dimensions give a full picture of service quality (Wilkins et al. , 2007).

3 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Customer satisfaction in the context of the hotel industry is therefore defined as the level of match between a hotel's goods and services and what the consumers expect. It is also an essential indicator of the hospitality industry since it determines customer loyalty or return business and overall success of the hotel. Wilkins et al. (2007) define customer satisfaction as an overall assessment of the perceived quality and it includes the physical quality of the room, the cleanness and the quality of the service delivery. The overall satisfaction of the customers is a result of the perceived value that they get when they feel that their needs and expectations have been met, which will in turn result in positive word of mouth, repeat patronage and referrals (Oh, 1999).

3.1 Models of Customer Satisfaction

There are several models that have been applied in the measurement of customer satisfaction particularly in the service sectors such as the hospitality industry. Among the two models that have been talked of most often the first one is the Expectation-Disconfirmation Model and the second one is the Customer Satisfaction Index.

3.1.1 Expectation-Disconfirmation Model

This model has been formulated by Oliver (1980) and it lays emphasis on the fact that customer satisfaction is a function of the difference between perceived expectations and perceived performance. If the service or product performance is greater than the customer's expectation level, then the customer feels that his/her expectation level was not met, which leads to satisfaction. If the performance is below the expectation level, then there is negative disconfirmation which results to dissatisfaction. For instance, in the hotel industry, the perception of a customer may be defined by whether or not the services offered by the hotel including cleanliness and customer relations meet the expectations of the customers before they booked a room in the hotel (Gundersen et al. , 1996).

3.1.2 Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI)

The Customer Satisfaction Index is a quantitative model that is based on the number of indicators that is used to determine overall satisfaction including service quality, value and customer expectations. This model offers the ability to monitor customers' satisfaction trends and make comparisons between the findings of one's own organization and/or competitors. In the context of the hotel industry, the CSI can be employed in order to

determine the extent to which hotels deliver services as per the expectations of the consumers, thus directing the process of enhancement (Jones et al. , 1997).

3.2 Customer Satisfaction in Hospitality

Customer satisfaction is a key factor in sustaining competitive advantage within the hospitality industry and plays a major role in customer loyalty and hotel image. Happy customers are likely to repeat their business with the hotel, visit the hotel again, and refer others to the hotel making it gain a better position in the market (Luo & Qu, 2016).

Studies have established that customers' satisfaction level is proportional to the customer loyalty level. Happy customers are likely to engage in the repeat buying behavior hence the hotel does not need to constantly look for new customers because it can be expensive as compared to retaining the existing ones (Wilkins et al. , 2007). Oh (1999) found out that when customers' satisfaction levels are high, customers are likely to be more loyal and willing to stay at the same hotel again. Loyalty can be maintained by offering and providing incentives such as reward programs, attention to customer needs and standard service delivery.

Another important factor that may greatly influence the image of a hotel is the satisfaction level of the customers. Customers who are satisfied with the products or services produced by a company will recommend them to their friends, or will post positive comments on their social media pages thereby attracting more customers. On the other hand, the dissatisfied customers will post negative comments on the hotel's performance and this will deter many customers from doing business with the hotel. In the present generation where people rely on online reviews such as those found in TripAdvisor and Google Reviews, customer satisfaction plays a crucial role seeing that they determine the future customer's buying behavior (Su et al. , 2016). It has been discovered that hotels that have the ability to satisfy their customers better are likely to have a good reputation and therefore more people will book in those hotels and hence they will be more profitable (Knutson et al. , 2010).

Satisfaction of customers is always an essential factor of continued success in the hotel industry. Some of the theories that can be used to assess customer satisfaction of hotels include Expectation-Disconfirmation Model and the Customer Satisfaction Index. Customers who are satisfied with the services provided by the hotel will be more inclined to continue to use the services of the hotel in future and also recommend the hotel to other people. Hence, the need to maintain high levels of satisfaction among the customers is not only for the purpose of customer loyalty but also for the creation of a reputable hotel brand.

4 SERVICE QUALITY AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

The hospitality industry is an industry that has the service quality as one of the most vital factors that define how satisfied customers are, how loyal those customers are and how profitable the business will be in the long-run. Customer satisfaction depends on many factors including the condition of the rooms, the conduct of the employees, the speed of the service delivery among others. A lot of research work has been done to review the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction, where various factors have been analyzed and factors that define the hospitality experience have been noted. This essay aims at identifying the impact of service quality on customers' satisfaction in the hospitality industry with emphasis on the factors considered from the academic researches.

The analysis of the service quality in the context of the hospitality industry reveals that the concept is rather broad and consists of a large number of factors. One of the most important concepts in the examination of services is the distinction between tangible and intangible attributes. Tangible aspects are the physical entities such as cleanness of the room and the hotel environment, facilities or the lack of them. On the other hand, intangible elements are for instance the demeanour of employees and the extent to which the service is individualized. In a study by Gundersen, Heide, and Olsson (1996), the authors pointed out that both physical and non-physical factors have a great effect on customer satisfaction and that reception and housekeeping departments are particularly important. For instance, it was found that reception services which are difficult to measure were found to have the strongest influence on satisfaction while housekeeping which are tangible items were found to have the greatest impact on satisfaction (Gundersen et al. , 1996).

The dimensions of service quality have been researched and discussed in detail especially through models such as the SERVQUAL model that is commonly used to assess the perceived service quality across various sectors. The five elements of SERVQUAL; reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibility are highly important in hospitality when it comes to customer satisfaction and customer loyalty (Wilkins, Merrilees & Herington, 2007). Wilkins et al. (2007) went further and said that whereas customer s have a way of noticing physical characteristics of a service like the state of the hotel, they do not have the same way of perceiving services like empathy and assurance of the staff, yet these are the aspects that make the difference in the quality of the service delivered. In the same way, Jones, Lee-Ross, and Ingram (1997) examined the small hotels and customer houses finding that the staff attitude and customer needs attention was more important than the tangible attributes when it came to the customers' overall satisfaction (Jones, Lee-Ross & Ingram, 1997).

Since the customer satisfaction is the moderating variable in the model, the mediating impact of the customer satisfaction on the relationship between service quality and long-term outcomes such as customer loyalty, repurchase intentions and positive word-of-mouth communication is an important factor in overall customer

experience. Oh (1999) expanded the service quality model and underlined the fact that the perspectives of customer value and satisfaction should be included in the model of customer decision-making. Customer satisfaction was suggested to act as a mediating factor between perceived service quality and such behavioural consequences as loyalty and recommendation intention towards the hotel (Oh, 1999).

One of the areas that have been covered is the impact of culture on customer satisfaction. Luo and Qu (2016) stated that Western and Chinese customers have different expectations of services in hotels. They found out that Western customers were more satisfied as compared to Chinese customers and were more likely to communicate positively to other persons. This implies that culture should be taken into consideration when it comes to the implementation of service quality especially in the international market (Lu & Qu, 2016). A similar study by Su, Swanson, and Chen (2016) on Chinese tourists focused on relationship quality as a mediator; this analysis showed that customer satisfaction and brand identification affect both behavioral intentions and subjective well-being. The findings also stress the need to manage and develop the customer relationships to improve the level of satisfaction (Su et al., 2016).

Another significant phenomenon that can be observed in the sphere of hospitality management is the increased emphasis on the use of technology and data analysis for evaluating and enhancing the quality of service delivery. Sánchez-Franco, Carrion, and Roldán (2019) examined the applicability of machine learning algorithms that would help in the analysis of the customer reviews with the aim of determining satisfaction outcomes. Moreover, using customer feedback and structural equation modeling, they found out the areas that required attention in order to improve hotel services, which provides a more accurate picture of how different aspects of service quality influence customers' satisfaction (Sánchez-Franco, Carrion, & Roldán, 2019).

In the case of customer loyalty, Knutson et al. (2010) have provided a conceptual model which posits that service quality is a sub-set of the experience economy, meaning that customer satisfaction is not the only factor that affects hospitality consumers. Their framework states that hotels should not only concentrate on service provision but more so, on the delivery of an experience to the customers, which in turn improves satisfaction and loyalty (Knutson et al., 2010).

Furthermore, Habineza, Odhuno, and Benson (2022) also investigated the quality performance in four- and five-star hotels in Rwanda and found out that service delivery, responsiveness, and customer expectation have positive correlation with satisfaction. The study also focused on service improvement strategies that will help in achieving customer needs and hence retain the customer (Habineza, Odhuno, & Benson, 2022).

Overall, this paper has identified that service quality has a positive impact on customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry, and this is moderated by such factors as tangible and intangible services, culture and the overall perceived experience of the customer. From these studies, it can be seen that if hotels want to enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty, it is necessary to adopt a holistic approach to service quality management that involves both the traditional dimensions of service quality and new approaches that are based on information and communication technologies and the use of customer data. In the long run, therefore, customer satisfaction is the main source of long term success in the hospitality industry and hence why hotels need to work on upgrading their services.

5 CHALLENGES IN MEASURING SERVICE QUALITY IN HERITAGE HOTELS

Therefore, issues involved in the measurement of service quality in the context of heritage hotels are different from those in normal hotels because the customers' expectations and their experiences are quite different. Heritage hotels are usually associated with historical and cultural values, distinct atmosphere, and the concept of the hotel may play an important role in the evaluation of the service quality, which makes it different from the standard approach. While the new generation of hotels focuses on cleanliness, speed, and facilities as key sources of guests' satisfaction, the heritage hotels are more complex in their meaning as they combine historical aesthetics and hospitality services.

5.1 Varying Expectations of Guests

While selecting a heritage hotel, the expectations of the guests are somewhat different to what they are in other conventional hotels. Some may consider the look of the environment and the adherence to the historical context as more important than efficiency of the services. This poses a problem because most traditional service quality measurement models, including SERVQUAL, might not encompass these specific dimensions of expectations of the guests. For instance, what may be considered as important to the conventional hotels may not appeal to the heritage guests; while reliability or responsiveness may be valued, the guests may prefer the authenticity of the surrounding or cultural touch.

5.2 Subjective Evaluation of Historical Ambiance

Another important issue that relates to the assessment of service quality in heritage hotels is the fact of the clearly evaluative nature of the assessment of the ambiance. People may perceive things like, for example, the use of antique pieces, traditional design, and historical stories in various ways. Some may find these elements a positive addition while others may find them as a negative add-on or even as relics. Another model that may have the same problem in evaluating these unique historical characteristics is the SERVPERF model developed by Cronin and Taylor (1992) which is based on actual service performance.

5.3 Balancing Modern Comfort with Historical Authenticity

One of the main issues that is more apparent with heritage hotels is the ability to provide the needed facilities and comforts while at the same time maintaining as much of the historical character of the building as possible. Some guests may want luxurious service (good internet, contemporary washrooms, or air conditioning) while others want the history of the place that is offered by a traditional hotel. This means that there is a conflict of interest on how service quality is perceived and delivered for example the comfort of the modern facilities may have to be compromised with the historical feel of the place (Wilkins et al. , 2007). For example, lack of elevators or air conditioning can be seen as lack of service by some clients while on the other side, the historical view of the building may be seen as an added bonus.

5.4 Cultural and Emotional Aspects of Service

There are other traditional measurement models such as the Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) which might not capture the emotional and cultural factors that affects satisfaction in heritage hotels. Tourists go to heritage sites with the expectation to experience culture or history and therefore the emotional appeal of the service delivery is crucial (Oliver, 1980). These are feelings that are hard to measure yet they are vital in the customers' perception of the service quality.

5.5 Cultural and Heritage Factors in Service Quality

In heritage hotels, culture and heritage are very important factors that determine the perception of the customers on the service quality and their satisfaction. People who decide to spend their time in heritage hotels do so with the view of being in a place that has been marked by history and culture where the best of the cultures and architecture are well maintained. But when it comes to mixing the cultural and heritage aspects with the contemporary hotel standards, the guests' perceptions of services can be quite mixed.

Thus, cultural authenticity is itself created as one of the key service quality attributes in heritage hotels where the guest experience is directly linked to the cultural and historical setting of the hotel. In contrast to conventional hotels, where perceptions of quality can be influenced by such aspects as room service or housekeeping, in the context of the heritage hotels, aspects like the architectural, interior design and adherence to traditions can be defining for satisfaction (Knutson et al. , 2010). Customers may anticipate authenticity, for example, wooden floors, antique furniture or traditional food and beverages which may be considered less important by today's hotels.

To the many guests who are interested in culture, the heritage hotel has the potential of adding value in terms of satisfaction among guests. Customer Value Based Model by Zeithaml (1988) explained how perceived value influenced customer satisfaction and in case of heritage hotels, this value is associated with the history of the building. Consumers may be willing to accept low levels of service quality, for example, outdated technology and absence of modern comforts if they think they are being offered a cultural value add.

Another factor that may affect the perception of guests towards service quality in a heritage hotel is cultural factors. For instance, the foreign guests might have different things that they consider important in regard to culture conservation in comparison to the native guests. A visitor from another country may have a cultural interest in the hotel which is historically built and has traditional practices, but a domestic visitor may have a certain expectation that may be greatly influenced by the balance of the modern comforts and the traditional Chinese culture (Luo & Qu, 2016). Consequently, cultural factors can lead to a variety of and sometimes opposite conceptions of service quality.

These cultural encounters are not only influential to the level of satisfaction that customers have but also to the issue of loyalty that is important to the guests. Studies show that guests who have a concern for culture and history and are willing to pay for it are more likely to revisit heritage hotels, if the guests feel a sense of cultural identity with the story of the hotel (Wilkins et al. , 2007). For instance, the guests who spend their time in the heritage hotels, which give proper representation of the local culture and historical elements, may feel the emotions, which would make them more loyal and likely to visit the hotels again (Oh, 1999).

The problem of service quality measurement in heritage hotels is not easy due to the differences in customers' expectation, perceived service quality, and the blend of historical touch and contemporary facilities. There are other models of service quality measurement, such as SERVQUAL and SERVPERF that may not be sufficient to reflect the situation of the heritage hotel. Culture and originality are also other essential factors that determine customer satisfaction since several guests expect to get a cultural experience when they book for heritage hotels. Some of the expectations of the modern services can be overshadowed by the value that the guests can get from the specific experiences and for many clients, the maintenance of history and culture plays the important role in the overall assessment of the stay.

6 KEY THEMES FROM THE LITERATURE

Service Quality and Its Dimensions: One of the most discussed issues in the literature is the definition and the assessment of the service quality which can be defined by SERVQUAL model that includes five factors: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy (Parasuraman et al. , 1985). These dimensions are commonly applied in hospitality research to evaluate the degree of services' conformity to or even exceeding

guests' expectations. In the context of heritage hotels, these dimensions have a different meaning, particularly in the aspect of tangibility where the aspect of history is very crucial.

Customer Satisfaction: The literature review also points out that the satisfaction of the customers is one of the most significant consequences of service quality. Other theories like the Expectation-Disconfirmation Theory point that satisfaction results from service that is delivered and the extent to which they meet the expectations of the customers (Oliver, 1980). Heritage hotels are also considered by customer satisfaction not only by the quality of services delivered but also by the cultural heritage of the hotel.

According to Sharma and Gupta (2020), managing human resources is both vital and challenging, with job satisfaction playing a critical role in improving employee productivity. Their study examined job satisfaction across seven industries: insurance, banking and finance, travel and tourism, outsourcing, education, healthcare, and logistics. Healthcare workers exhibited the highest job satisfaction, followed by those in education and travel and tourism, while outsourcing and insurance had the lowest. The research indicates that the service-oriented and socially impactful nature of work in healthcare and education enhances satisfaction, whereas the more transactional roles in outsourcing and insurance lead to dissatisfaction. Variability in job satisfaction was minimal in healthcare, education, and travel and tourism but significantly higher in outsourcing, banking and finance, and logistics. These insights can help industry leaders refine human resource policies to boost both satisfaction and productivity. However, the study is limited by its small sample size and scope, and future research should expand to include a broader range of industries, respondents, and a control group for a more comprehensive understanding of job satisfaction determinants.

Impact of Service Quality on Customer Loyalty and Retention: A lot of research has been done in the area and all of them indicate that high service quality leads to increased customer loyalty and retention. Customer satisfaction means that the customers will come back to the hotel and also refer other people to do the same. However, in the field of heritage hotels, the literature also indicates that there is another important factor that relates with loyalty and retention, which is the perceived value from the historical attributes of the hotel (Wilkins et al. , 2007).

Challenges in Measuring Service Quality in Heritage Hotels: One of the themes that are derived from the current analysis is that of the challenges of assessing service quality because of the special expectations guests have when visiting such a heritage hotel. The conventional service delivery paradigms may not adequately address the qualitative aspects of the guests in the heritage contexts, where the blend of the contemporary amenities and the historic character are critical.

Cultural and Historical Factors: The second important theme is related to the role of cultural heritage and genuineness in the eyes of the guests in defining service quality. Heritage hotels are culturally and historically important and the extent of their role in preserving and presenting this heritage is a major factor that impacts guests' satisfaction and repeat patronage. It is therefore imperative to understand that guests who patronize heritage hotels are more concerned with the cultural aspect of their trip than the quality of services they receive hence altering the satisfaction equation.

These themes show the challenges of assessing service quality and customers' satisfaction in the context of heritage hotels, which are influenced by cultural, historical and emotional factors.

7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS LINKING SERVICE QUALITY AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

The two concepts of service quality and customer satisfaction are known to be the most important factors that can determine the success of organizations especially those that operate in the service and hospitality sectors. Two constructs have been created to explain the relationship between the two and several theories have been proposed to help business organizations enhance service delivery and customer satisfaction. Among the most famous models that relate service quality and customer satisfaction, there are the SERVQUAL model, Expectation-Disconfirmation Theory and the SERVPERF model.

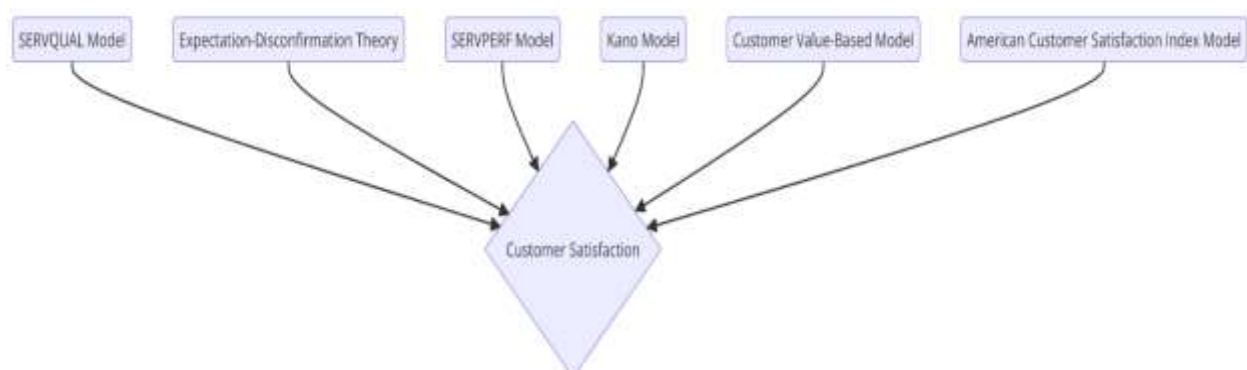


Figure 1 – Theoretical Framework

7.1 SERVQUAL Model

The SERVQUAL model is probably the most acknowledged and applied to establish the relationship between service quality and satisfaction (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1985). The model follows the concept that customer expectations of service and perception of the service delivered are the major determinants of satisfaction.

The SERVQUAL model identifies five dimensions of service quality that influence customer satisfaction:

- **Tangibles (physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of personnel),**
- **Reliability (ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately),**
- **Responsiveness (willingness to help customers and provide prompt service),**
- **Assurance (knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust), and**
- **Empathy (caring, individualized attention provided to customers).**

The SERVQUAL model asserts that the better a business can close the gap between expectations and perceptions in these five dimensions, the more likely it is to achieve high levels of customer satisfaction (Parasuraman et al., 1985).

7.2 Expectation-Disconfirmation Theory

The Expectation-Disconfirmation Theory (EDT) by Oliver (1980) is one of the most popular models that describe the links between service quality and customer satisfaction. This theory holds that customer satisfaction is the perceived gap between what the customer expected to receive before taking the service and what he or she perceives after being served. This difference, known as disconfirmation, can be either positive or negative: This difference, known as disconfirmation, can be either positive or negative:

- **Positive disconfirmation occurs when the actual service exceeds the customer's expectations, leading to satisfaction.**
- **Negative disconfirmation occurs when the service falls short of expectations, resulting in dissatisfaction.**

In relation to the service quality dimensions in the hospitality industry, EDT postulates that guests' expectations can be surpassed and this will lead to satisfaction and if the expectations are not met, dissatisfaction will occur (Oliver, 1980).

7.3 SERVPERF Model

The SERVPERF model, proposed by Cronin and Taylor (1992), is the version of the SERVQUAL model which is limited to the measurement of customer's perceived performance only. In this respect, SERVPERF differs from SERVQUAL, which is based on the expectation-perception gap, stating that the role of expectation is not very important as far as customer satisfaction is concerned and that it is the performance that matters most. According to the SERVPERF model it is stated that service quality is positively related with customer satisfaction, which in other words means that the extent of perceived performance of the service is directly related to the satisfaction of the customer. This model has been widely implemented in industries where the perceived performance is considered to be a better measure of satisfaction than the customer's initial expectations (Cronin & Taylor, 1992).

7.4 Kano Model

The Kano model which was introduced by Noriaki Kano in 1980s is another view on the nature of the link between service quality and customer satisfaction. The Kano Model distinguishes between different categories of customer needs: The Kano Model distinguishes between different categories of customer needs:

- **Basic needs: These are the minimum requirements that customers expect. Meeting these needs may not increase satisfaction, but failing to meet them will lead to dissatisfaction.**
- **Performance needs: These are attributes that customers explicitly evaluate, and their satisfaction levels will vary depending on how well these needs are met.**
- **Excitement needs: These are unexpected attributes that, when delivered, can significantly enhance customer satisfaction and lead to customer delight.**

Kano Model states that the needs of consumers should not only be met and the needs of the company should not only meet the basic and performance needs of consumers but should go beyond and create exciting and unexpected services. This could include, for instance, the provision of services or special extras in the hospitality industry that are not expected by the client but which if provided will increase their satisfaction and hence, their loyalty (Kano et al., 1984).

7.5 Customer Value-Based Model

According to the Customer Value-Based Model, customer satisfaction arises from the perceived value of the service whereby benefits received are compared to costs incurred. In this context, service quality is one of the components of the perceived value, through which customer satisfaction depends (Zeithaml, 1988). The following is a simple model that suggests that if the customer has a perception that the service quality is

superior to the price, then he or she will be happy. On the other hand, if they feel that the service is not worth the price of the product that they are paying for, then dissatisfaction takes place.

7.6 American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) Model

The ACSI Model is a complex model that connects service quality, customer satisfaction and business performance. The ACSI model suggests that customer satisfaction is determined by three key drivers: includes perceived quality, perceived value and customer expectations. Perceived quality is the global assessment of the service while perceived value is the appraisal of the quality of the service in relation to the price that has been charged. Customers make expectations depending on what they have learnt in the past on the same product as well as other information.

In the ACSI model, service quality is a key driver of customer satisfaction and it is believed that satisfied customers will be loyal, will repurchase and recommend the product or service to others (Fornell et al. , 1996). For instance, in the hospitality industry, consistency in delivering quality services to customers can increase perceived value and meet and/ or exceed customer expectations and therefore lead to repeat patronage.

There are several theoretical models that relate service quality and customer satisfaction, although they are all slightly different in terms of how these two variables are connected. The SERVQUAL model highlights the need for the gap between expectations and perceived service while the Expectation-Disconfirmation Theory underscores the part played by over or under expectations. SERVPERF model focuses on actual service delivery while the Kano Model emphasizes on exceeding the expectations of the client through extra service delivery. Moreover, the Customer Value-Based Model and the ACSI Model show the relationship between perceived value, the service quality, and customer satisfaction. Combined, these frameworks offer important methodologies for organisations to enhance service quality and customer experiences.

8 RESEARCH GAP

However, the existing literature review shows that there is a lack of research relating to the service quality and customer satisfaction with reference to heritage hotels, where tourists' expectation is centered on the culture, history and the contemporary and traditional aspects of service delivery. Although the SERVQUAL type of models has been adopted in the modern hotel environment, their relevance to the concept of heritage hotels, where such factors as tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy may have different meanings, has not been adequately examined. Prior research concentrates on present day hotels while ignoring the peculiarities that characterise heritage buildings in relation to overall guest satisfaction, clients' retention, and customer loyalty. Further, the link between service quality and customer loyalty in the context of heritage hotels has received little attention, especially on the role of historical conservation in encouraging revisit and loyalty. This research aims to fill these gaps by assessing the impact that service quality has on guest satisfaction, retention and loyalty within the context of heritage hotels wherein history and hospitality services are intertwined.

9 CONCLUSION

The analysis of the literature on service quality and customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry suggests several important issues that are most relevant to heritage hotels. These models such as SERVQUAL have given a framework on how elements like tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy are used in the measurement of service quality, however the lack of adaptability of these models to the context of the heritage hotels where guests' expectations are beyond the measures of service quality have not been well addressed. As has been seen in the case of heritage hotels, service delivery is not only about service delivery and customer satisfaction but also about the customers' perceived historical and cultural experience that can impact on their repeat patronage. The difficulties that are encountered when assessing service quality in heritage hotels stem from the fact that guests' experiences are highly personal and require both the comforts of the contemporary world and the heritage of the old world. Further, the literature also reveals that cultural and emotional attachment towards the heritage properties by guests also influences their perceived service quality significantly. Taken together, these findings suggest that there is a clear need for more research to be conducted on the nature of service quality and customer satisfaction in the context of heritage hotels, especially in terms of their implications for customer loyalty and retention.

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