
THE EFFECTS OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND COMMITMENT ON CUSTOMER LOYALTY: EVIDENCE FROM THE HOTEL INDUSTRY

Raouf Ahmad Rather*, Jyoti Sharma*

**Research Scholar, The Business School, University of Jammu, Jammu & Kashmir, India. Email: r.raouf18@gmail.com*

***Jyoti Sharma, Assistant Professor, Kathua Campus, University of Jammu, Jammu & Kashmir, India. Email: reachedjyoti@yahoo.co.in*

ABSTRACT

So as to be successful in the business, it is not adequate to attract new customers; hoteliers should focus on maintaining existing customers employing effective strategies of customer commitment, satisfaction and loyalty to maximize their lifetime value. The main goal of this investigation is to demonstrate the vital effects of customer satisfaction and customer commitment on customer loyalty. A field survey of four and five star hotel customers in Jammu and Kashmir, India was conducted using a questionnaire. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the sample. A total of 120 questionnaires were distributed to hotel customers and out of which 112 were returned (93% response rate). The results showed that satisfaction and commitment has positive effects on customer loyalty and also customer satisfaction has a positive effect on commitment. Thus, to generate competitive benefits and increase customer loyalty, hospitality managers may pay more reflection towards satisfaction and commitment to sustain existing customers in developing long lasting relationship with customers in the hotel industry.

Keywords: *Customer Loyalty, Commitment, Satisfaction, Hotel Industry*

Introduction

Customer loyalty, a dominant theme in marketing research, has become an essential concern for managers, and a strategic compulsion for many. This increasing concern has mainly been due to profound competition, particularly in service industries, and the current focus on the relationship between customers

and service providers, which is the essence of the relational marketing approach. The hotel industry has evolved into truly global industries within which both customers and producers are distributed worldwide. Utilization of hotel facilities like restaurants, rooms, bars, nightclubs, or health clubs has been no longer considered a luxury. For various people these services have become an integral element of life style (Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000). Enhancing sophistication and experience of consumer's demands matched with the enhancing business competition has created a new challenge to hotel industry. Hotel managers therefore are pursuing ways to understand the most influential factors effects customer loyalty that may assist them to implement marketing strategies which will ensure that hoteliers will receive customer loyalty from existing and prospective customersto maximize their lifetime value. For several years, the development of customer loyalty is the main objective of marketing activities of numerous firms.

In the hospitality industry, currently one of the foremost challenges for managers is to offer and maintain customer satisfaction and loyalty. Customer satisfaction is an important element of marketing activity that links the process of purchasing and consumption with post purchase phenomena (Ha & Jang, 2009). High levels of satisfaction have been linked to the development of enduring relationships (Hennig-Thurau & Klee, 1997). Improving levels of customer satisfaction is important for firms due to the influence on economic performance (Fornell, Mithas, Morgeson, & Krishnan, 2006). Higher degree of customer satisfaction has several advantages for the service provider/brand like increased brand reputation, enhanced customer loyalty, lower price elasticity, reduced switching tendency and positive word of mouth (Anderson, Fornell, & Lehmann, 1994; Fornell,1992). On the other hand, commitment has been established to influence positively with relational and/or behavioral intentions like motivation to pay a premium price, customer retention, acquiescence and advocacy (Fullerton, 2003; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Researchers proposed that benefits like switching costs, perceptions of value and trust lead to relationship commitment. This involves that commitment towards the firm could be an important driver of customer loyalty (e.g., Bowen & Shoemaker, 1998; Rather, 2017).

Researchers have highlighted the significance of satisfaction and commitment in building positive behaviors and loyalty in hospitality sector. Although, mere satisfaction of customers has been inadequate for loyalty (Bowden, Dagger, & Elliott, 2013; Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009; Han & Ryu, 2009) due to inseparable, heterogeneous and intangible nature of services offered (Ali & Amin, 2014). Moreover, satisfying customers alone is not enough, since there is no guarantee that satisfied customers will return to purchase and is now becoming apparent that customer loyalty is significantly more important than customer satisfaction in a business organizations success

(Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000). Companies are often looking to provide holistic and layered experiences which not only satisfy the consumers, but also connect consumers affectively towards company (e.g., Walls, Okumus, Wang, & Kwun, 2011). However, satisfaction as an explanation for long-term loyalty is limited as it fails to portray the psychological meaning and depth of consumer's responses to consumption states, and measures only rational evaluation of precedent experience (e.g., Bowden, Dagger, & Elliott, 2013; Oliver, 1999; Rather, 2017). It is therefore critical to understand the role of other relational determinants of loyalty. This is because, in addition to providing satisfying experiences, customer loyalty is likely to be earned through relational determinants such as customer commitment within the service relationship, which have received considerably less attention in the literature. Thus, the need for further research on customer satisfaction, commitment and customer loyalty in four and four star hotels in different geographical contexts in this view is very essential and timely. Our literature search indicates that there was limited study on customer satisfaction, commitment and customer loyalty in the hospitality industry particularly in Jammu and Kashmir, India even though recent events indicate that the sector is highly competitive.

In view of the research deficiency, the aim of this study is to investigate the effects of customer satisfaction on customer loyalty, to investigate the effects of commitment on customer loyalty, to examine the influence of customer satisfaction on commitment and to suggest the marketing practices for enhancing customer loyalty in hotel industry of Jammu and Kashmir, India (Figure 1). The results of this study are going to be perceptively to service marketing scholars and relevant to hotel firms who are interested in benchmarking for best practices in the concepts of hotel services. Moreover, the findings can yield valuable information for hotel industry in developing effective marketing strategies by not only remaining the competition but also strengthening their long-term profit margins.

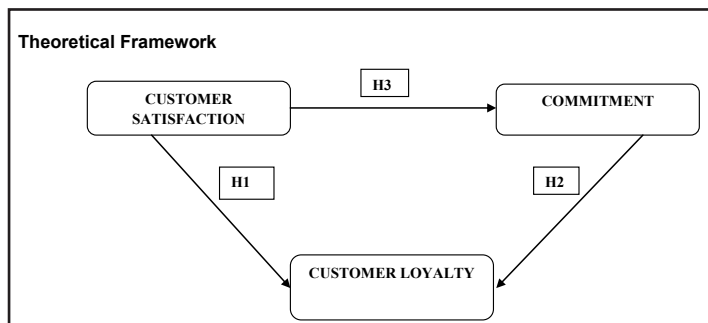


Fig. 1: The Schematic Diagram Showing the Factors Effecting Customer Loyalty

Review of Literature

Customer Loyalty

On the basis of relationship marketing, investigators have contended that maintaining and building of customer loyalty has turned out to be an essential marketing strategy particularly in the hotel industry (e.g., Sui & Baloglu, 2003; Rather, 2017; Rather & Sharma, 2016a; 2016b; Rather & Sharma, 2017; Sharma & Rather, 2016). Loyalty is considered to be an essential factor in achieving company success and long term sustainability (Casalo, Flavian, & Guinaliu 2007; Rather & Sharma, 2017; Sharma & Rather, 2016). Customer loyalty increases brand equity by lowering vulnerability to competitive marketing activities, increasing marketing communication, increasing margins, extension opportunities, effectiveness and possibly creating more brand licensing for service companies, (Keller, Parameswaran & Jacob, 2011). It acts as a multidimensional and/or three-dimensional construct encompassing attitudinal, behavioral and composite (Bowen & Chen, 2001; Rather, 2017; Rather & Sharma, 2017). Behavioral perspective of loyalty has been typified as purchasing behaviors (like intensity, frequency, proportion), repeat purchase intentions, and word-of-mouth recommendations (Baloglu, 2002). These measures are the sole indicators of loyalty and have been criticized because of incapability to differentiate between spurious loyalty and true loyalty (Odin, Odin & Valette-Florence, 2001). Similarly, investigators consider loyalty from attitudinal perspective that has been the affection with a service provider/brand due to indicators like trust, emotional attachment (Baloglu, 2002; Bowen & Shoemaker, 2003; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). While as reflection of the attitudinal perspectives of loyalty facilitates the investigator to differentiate loyalty from repeat buying, it concretizes on the customer declarations rather than on actual purchases and hence cannot be a precise demonstration of reality (Mellens, Dekimpe, & Steenkamp, 1996; Odin et al., 2001). Other supporters of customer loyalty called as the contingency or composite perspective to loyalty that encompasses behavioral as well as attitudinal measures, as composite perspective presents a holistic comprehension of loyalty concept, it has been supported and investigated in many customer loyalty research studies (Harris & Goode, 2004; Li & Petrick, 2008; Rather, 2017; Rather & Sharma, 2017) and accordingly adopted in this study.

Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty

Johnson and Fornell, 1991 defined customer satisfaction as the customer's overall assessment of the performance with a brand/offering. It has been a locus

of marketing from past couple of decades and satisfaction and dissatisfaction has turned out to be a central marketing concept that can facilitate the long-lasting competitive advantages of organizations (Heitmann, Lehmann, & Herrmann, 2007; Mittal & Kamakura, 2001). The level of satisfaction about the service or product is ascertained by the level of satisfaction and/or dissatisfaction experienced by the customer regarding that product or service (Song, Veen, & Chen, 2011). Therefore, by increasing the level of satisfaction of consumers, the hotel provider can gain a competitive benefit over its competitors (Mittal & Kamakura, 2001). On top of that, studies reveal that customer satisfaction also has a direct impact on customer loyalty (Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000). A great deal of previous research has shown empirical evidence of a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty (Han & Ryu, 2009; Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000; Mittal & Kamakura 2001; Rather, 2017; Rather & Sharma, 2016a). Therefore, this study suggests that customer satisfaction will influence customer loyalty with hotel service providers.

Customer Commitment and Customer Loyalty

In relationship marketing research, commitment acts as one of the vital concepts (Fullerton, 2003; Rather, 2017). It is defined as an enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship (Moorman, Zaltman, & Deshpande, 1992). Many researchers have found commitment to be the key component of establishing and maintaining long-term relationships between business partners (Geyskens, Steenkamp, Scheer, & Kumar, 1996; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Rather, 2017). Customers with strong levels of commitment or have cultivated sound relationships with their offering/brand likely to perceive sound connections among themselves and the offering/brand (Escalas & Bettman, 2003). As a focal construct in the literature, commitment has been strongly related to loyalty (Fullerton, 2003; Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, & Gremler, 2002; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Narteh, Agbemabiese, Kodua, & Braimah, 2013; Rather, 2017). In the hospitality sector, customer commitment has been identified to be a key driver of customer loyalty (e.g., Bowen & Shoemaker, 1998; Narteh et al., 2013; Rather, 2017; Rather & Sharma, 2016a; So, King, Sparks, & Wang, 2013).

Customer Satisfaction and Customer Commitment

Customer satisfaction is a fundamental marketing concept (Fournier & Mick, 1999). It has been linked to overall firm performance and is seen as a primary objective for managers (Anderson et al., 1994). Customer satisfaction has been strongly linked to the development of commitment (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002; Johnson, Gustafsson, Andreassen, Lervik, & Cha, 2001).

In relationship marketing, commitment is considered as one of the main component of long-term relationship (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Wang, 2009). There are many papers in which the effect of customer satisfaction on commitment was examined (Bowen & Chen, 2001; Darsono & Junaedi, 2006). Moreover, the extant literature has concluded that there is a positive relationship between satisfaction and commitment (Eris, Unal, Candan, & Yildirim, 2012; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Rather, 2017; Sharma & Rather, 2015).

Hypothesis Development

Based on the literature review, the following hypotheses have been formulated:

H1: Customer satisfaction has a positive association with customer loyalty.

H1: Customer commitment has a positive influence with customer loyalty.

H3: Customer satisfaction has a positive impact with commitment.

Research Methodology

Research Instrument and Questionnaire Design

To ensure the validity, all the measurement items were taken from previous studies; however, little modifications were done to make them adequate for the present study. Four items from customer satisfaction (Ali & Amin, 2014; Rather, 2017; Rather & Sharma, 2016a; Sharma & Rather, 2015), four items from customer commitment (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Rather, 2017; Rather & Sharma, 2016a; Sharma & Rather, 2015) and four statements from customer loyalty (Rather, 2017; Rather & Sharma, 2016a; 2016b; Sharma & Rather, 2016) were used for this study. All the three constructs has been measured on 7-point Likert-type scale by 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree to express the degree of agreement.

Sample and Data Collection

For this research, the population was confined to those customers who had stayed at five and four star hotels in Jammu and Kashmir at least once for a night or more. List of hotels was obtained from Tourism Departments of Jammu and Kashmir. Questionnaire was pre-tested with 20 participants selected randomly from 6, star hotels to make sure that they understand the wording and meaning of questions. The responses indicated that the questions

were well worded. Furthermore, to diminish the mistakes linked with written questionnaires, participants were given the chance to suggest for any extra explanations about the questionnaire. This was helpful in attaining content validity.

Simple random sampling method was used to collect the data. Sample size was decided as per the number of items to be used to study customer commitment, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Every item requires minimum 5 respondents and maximum 10 respondents (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2008). Since this study has 12 items, hence it was determined to take 120 as sample size. Out of 120 questionnaires, 112 were completely returned (93% response rate). Descriptive statistics was employed to calculate the means and standard deviations of the constructs. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) by using principal component analysis and varimax rotation was adopted to minimize the variable and factor numbers. Finally regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationships among commitment satisfaction, and loyalty.

Results

This section presents the empirical part of the study. It begins with the background data of the respondents. Table 1 illustrates the background and travel characteristics data on gender, occupation, age, income, nature of visit, purpose of travel, source of information about hotel, frequency of stay at hotel, customer status, country of origin, and the hotel preferences of the respondents.

Demographic and Travel Behavior Information of Respondents

A descriptive analysis of the respondents indicates that 55% were male while 45% were female. An overwhelming 32% of the respondents were between 31 and 40 years, 26% of the respondents were between 41 and 50 years, 20% of the respondents were between 20 and 30 years and 22% of the respondents were above 51 years of age. In addition, 60% of the respondents were based in the four-star hotels while 40% of the respondents were based in the five-star hotel. 58% respondents are first time and 42% are repeated customers of the hotels. The detailed results are presented are table 1.

Table 1: Demographic and Travel Behaviour of Respondents

| Demographics | | Travel Behaviour | |
|-----------------------------|--------|---------------------------------------|---------|
| Gender | | Nature of visit | |
| Male | (55%) | Recreation & Entertainment (61%) | |
| Female | (45%) | Adventure | (23%) |
| Age of customers in (years) | | Religious | (11.6%) |
| 20 – 30 | (20%) | Official visit | (4%) |
| 31 – 40 | (32%) | Others | (0.4%) |
| 41 – 50 | (26%) | Frequency of stay at hotel | |
| Above 51 | (22%) | First time | (50%) |
| Qualification of customers | | Once in a year | (39%) |
| Matriculation | (5%) | Twice in a year | (6%) |
| Graduation | (46%) | More than twice in year | (5%) |
| Post-graduation | (41%) | Duration of stay (days) | |
| Others | (8%) | Less than 3 | (48%) |
| Income (Annual) INR (lakhs) | | 4– 6 | (45%) |
| Below 5 Lakhs | (12%) | More than 7 | (7%) |
| 5 lakh – 10 | (28%) | Source of information about the hotel | |
| 10 lakh – 15 | (24%) | Friends/Relations | (20%) |
| Above 15 | (36%) | Previous visit | (32%) |
| Occupation of customers | | Tour operator /Travel agent | (13%) |
| Business | (36%) | Tourist information centre | (7%) |
| Service | (21%) | Internet | (28%) |
| Professional | (33%) | Travel companion/s | |
| Others | (10%) | Alone | (3%) |
| Country of origin | | Family | (57%) |
| Indian | (60%) | Friends | (25%) |
| USA | (8%) | Relatives | (6%) |
| UK | (6%) | Partners | (5%) |
| Russia | (6%) | Tour group | (4%) |
| Bangladesh | (5%) | Customer status | |
| Dubai | (4%) | First time customer | (58%) |
| Srilanka | (4%) | Repeat customer | (42%) |
| Indonesia | (2.6%) | Star Category | |
| France | (2.6%) | Four | (60%) |
| Saudi Arabia | (1.8%) | Five | (40%) |

Descriptive Statistics and Internal Consistency

Table 2 presents the descriptive analysis of the dependent as well as independent constructs. All the variables have moderate to high mean values.

Reliability Test

Research instrument’s internal consistency can be tested by reliability analysis (Hair et al., 2008). Cronbach’s statistics criterion was used to measure reliability. The variables are regarded adequate when the Cronbach’s alpha values are greater than the suggested value of 0.6 (e.g., Hair et al., 2008). On the basis of research results as presented in table, the Cronbach’s alpha values for all the variables are more than 0.6 value, ranging from satisfaction = 0.93, commitment = 0.88 and loyalty = 0.84. The reliability values are presented in table 2. All alpha scores were above the recommended .60 point and indicate that the scales were reliable (Hair et al., 2008). Reliability analysis was also tested to retain reliable items on the basis of inter-item correlation (greater than 0.30) and item to total correlation (greater than 0.15) see table (2).

Table 2: Internal Consistency Reliability and Descriptive Statistics

| Variables | M | SD | SITCS | SMCs |
|--|------|------|-------|------|
| Customer satisfaction ($\alpha = .93$) | | | | |
| I am satisfied with my decision to visit this hotel | 5.68 | 0.46 | .79 | .65 |
| My choice to choose this hotel was a wise one | 5.68 | 0.46 | .90 | .81 |
| I feel that my experience with this hotel has been enjoyable | 5.63 | 0.53 | .82 | .72 |
| I think I did the right thing to visit this hotel | 5.59 | 0.49 | .84 | .72 |
| Customer commitment ($\alpha = .88$) | | | | |
| I feel committed to this hotel | 4.96 | 0.70 | .69 | .58 |
| I am proud to belong to this hotel | 4.71 | 0.83 | .80 | .70 |
| I am a loyal customer of this hotel | 4.97 | 0.82 | .76 | .65 |
| I care long-term success of this hotel | 4.53 | 0.90 | .74 | .66 |
| Customer loyalty ($\alpha = .84$) | | | | |
| I would say positive things about this hotel to other people | 5.38 | 0.48 | .61 | .45 |
| I would do more business with this hotel in the next few years | 5.33 | 0.52 | .65 | .50 |
| I would recommend this hotel to someone who seeks my advice | 5.65 | 0.47 | .74 | .79 |
| I would encourage friends and relatives to do business with this hotel | 5.65 | 0.47 | .72 | .78 |

SD= standard deviation; M= mean; SMCs = Squared Multiple Correlation; SITCS = Square Item to Total Correlation.

Validity Test and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

A principal component analysis with a varimax rotation was applied to the scale data. Eigen value greater or equal to 1, Kaiser-Meyer-Okin (KMO) value greater than or equal to 0.50, communality greater than 0.50 and minimum factor loading equal to or greater than 0.40 criteria were used to purify the measurement items (Hair et al. 2008). Validity can be measured with the help of the KMO value which is higher or equal to 0.50. They are valid (Hair et al. 2008). KMO value was 0.843; Barlett's test chi-square = 1054.758, $df= 66, p = .000$. So, data was valid.

Based on the principal components analysis and varimax procedure in orthogonal rotation, the results showed that the eigen values for all the constructs were greater than 1.0, ranging from the lowest 1.267 (loyalty) to the highest of 6.172 (satisfaction). In terms of convergent validity, the factor loadings for all items within a construct were more than 0.50 and none of the scale items is deleted. The EFA examination generated all the three factors which accounted for a acceptable 76.259% of the variance explained. The details of the factor analysis are presented in table 3.

Table 3: Exploratory Factor Analysis: Factors Identified by Principal Components Analysis

| Factor's Name and Items | Factor-Loading | Ei-gen-Value | % of Vari-ance | Commu-nality |
|--|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Customer satisfaction | | 6.172 | 51.432 | |
| I am satisfied with my decision to visit this hotel | 0.802 | | | 0.787 |
| My choice to choose this hotel was a wise one | 0.918 | | | 0.914 |
| I feel that my experience with this hotel has been enjoyable | 0.882 | | | 0.832 |
| I think I did the right thing to visit this hotel | 0.818 | | | 0.830 |
| Commitment | | 1.713 | 14.272 | |
| I feel committed to this hotel | 0.765 | | | 0.673 |

| Factor's Name and Items | Factor-Loading | Ei-gen-Value | % of Vari-ance | Commu-nality |
|--|----------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|
| I am proud to belong to this hotel | 0.862 | | | 0.814 |
| I am a loyal customer of this hotel | 0.776 | | | 0.770 |
| I care long-term success of this hotel | 0.860 | | | 0.774 |
| Customer loyalty | | 1.267 | 10.555 | |
| I would say positive things about this hotel to other people | 0.728 | | | 0.593 |
| I would do more business with this hotel in the next few years | 0.726 | | | 0.635 |
| I would recommend this hotel to someone who seeks my advice | 0.826 | | | 0.773 |
| I would encourage friends and relatives to do business with this hotel | 0.798 | | | 0.757 |

KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy =0.843; Approx. Chi-Square = 1054.758; df =66; sig = 0.000; Cumulative Percentage Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings = 76.259

Regression Analysis

Single and/or multiple regression analyses were adopted to investigate the hypotheses (table 4). The findings reveal that there is a positive correlation between the key constructs. The first regression model was used to investigate the relationship among customer satisfactions, commitment and loyalty. The results indicate that the proposed model for these hypotheses is fit, as $R^2 = .401$ and $p < .001$. The model indicates that the 40% variance of dependent factor which is loyalty can be explained satisfaction and commitment as independent factors that support H1 and H2. The findings for these Hypotheses shows that satisfaction positively and significantly influences the level of loyalty ($\beta = .401, p < .05$). As can be seen in Table 4, customer satisfaction has significant positive regression weights, indicating higher customer satisfaction can leads to higher level of customer loyalty. In addition, that customer commitment is another factor that affects customer loyalty. Furthermore, it indicates that customer commitment has a positive and significant association with

loyalty ($\beta = .339$, $p < .05$). As can be seen in Table 4, customer commitment has also significant positive regression weights, indicating higher customer commitment can lead to higher level of customer loyalty. The results demonstrate that, one-unit increase in customer commitment enhances the degree of loyalty by .3 units ($\beta = .339$, $p < .05$).

The regression model second examines the association between satisfaction and commitment. The results show that the proposed model is fit $R^2 = .214$ and $p < .001$. Result indicates that customer satisfaction has a significant association with customer commitment ($\beta = .727$, $p < .05$) which accepts H3. It is also significant to note that all the hypotheses were supported by the analysis. The results are presented in table 4.

Table 4: Regression Analysis

| Dependent variable | Independent variable | R ² | Adjusted | F | B | Beta | p-value | Conclusion |
|--------------------|----------------------|----------------|----------|--------|-------|-------|---------|------------|
| CL | CS | 0.401 | 0.390 | 36.503 | 0.364 | 0.401 | 0.000* | Accepted |
| | CC | | | | 0.196 | 0.339 | 0.000* | Accepted |
| CC | CS | 0.214 | 0.207 | 29.899 | 0.727 | 0.462 | 0.000* | Accepted |

Note. CL = customer loyalty, CS = customer satisfaction, CC = customer commitment, R² = R square, B = unstandardized coefficient, (* $p < .05$)

Discussion and Conclusion

The present research contributes to the literature of hospitality by representing the effects of commitment and satisfaction on loyalty in hotel industry. Descriptive statistics, exploratory factor analysis, simple and multiple regression analysis were used to analyze the data and based on it to test the relationships between the constructs. The result of this study found that all hypotheses are supported and the findings revealed that customer satisfaction and commitment had positive and significant effects on loyalty. To offset competitors and to obtain customer loyalty, hoteliers should be able to acquire higher customer satisfaction levels for the service supplied and generate value for their customers. The study suggests that the customers who are satisfied with a product/service or have a more favorable judgment of the overall evaluation of the performance and have attachments with the service providers are more likely to say positive things, will do more business, repeat the purchase and to recommend the consumption experience to others. Such constructive hotel attachments and evaluations in turn determine levels of customer loyalty towards the service providers. Consistent with the studies

of authors that investigated a loyal customer will not only return to repeat purchases but will also bring their friends and family with them (Veloutsou, Gilbert, Moutinho, & Good, 2005; Bowden, Dagger, & Elliott, 2013).

Another vital finding of our empirical results regards the centrality of satisfaction in the brand loyalty development. Satisfaction was also identified to have a strong positive impact on commitment. The relationship between satisfaction and commitment construct was stronger than the direct association between satisfaction and loyalty. This empirical result supports the notion that satisfaction is a necessary initiator in the transition to loyalty (Bowden et al., 2013). A key finding of this reach thus is that satisfaction, in and of itself, may not be adequate to develop sustained and enduring loyalty in the hospitality industry. The study analysis recommends that commitment also have an important influence on the development of hotel customer loyalty within the sector. The strength of the relationship among satisfaction and the other relational constructs (commitment) in the model recommends that hospitality management would require to continue to invest in monitoring and measuring satisfaction performance. In addition, satisfied hotel customers tend to proud about the hotel, feel committed to the hotel satisfied customers are most likely to have the intention of re-patronizing the hospitality service and care long-term success of the hotel.

Commitment also proved to be a strong determinant of customer loyalty. The result demonstrates that customer commitment to hotel guests, certainly adds to customer loyalty in Jammu and Kashmir hospitality sector. The finding maintains the view that commitment which results from affective attachment to the service offering or brand by the customer acts as an essential driver of customer loyalty in hospitality sector (e.g., Mattila, 2006). As hotel service providers recognize consumer needs and commit resources to satisfy them, they anticipate to promote customer loyalty. The challenge for hotel industry is how to create what Mattila (2006), referred to as affective commitment represented by strong emotional attachment to the hotels. Consistent with most of the findings in the previous empirical researchers that also supports the influence/effects of customer satisfaction on customer loyalty (Han & Ryu, 2009; Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000; Mittal & Kamakura, 2001; Rather, 2017) and customer commitment on customer loyalty (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002; Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Fullerton, 2003; Narteh et al., 2013; Rather, 2017).

Implications

Researchers examined that sustaining and achieving customer loyalty is the future of hospitality marketing (Shoemaker & Lewis, 1999). In

business, attaining customer loyalty is the central issue to both researchers and managers. Researchers have demonstrated that it costs more to attract new customers than to retain old ones (Pfeifer, 2005; Uncles, Dowling, & Hammond, 2003) and that the benefits of loyal customers are enormous. Loyal customers boost the overall profitability of a service brand or providers like hotels (Reichheld, 1996). The different constructs used in this study, all have positive and significant relationships with each other.

The results of the present study demonstrate that four and five hotels have to integrate diverse marketing strategies so as to gain customer loyalty. This study has several implications for hospitality business management. From theoretical viewpoint, this study expands the current comprehension of hotel customer loyalty by investigating the role of customer satisfaction and commitment. Such variables are important for acquiring significant source of competitive advantage and to the development of customer loyalty in service industries (Ballantyne, 2005). The other important theoretical contribution is that the existing academic literature focuses on economic/social exchange relationship between customers and brands/firms (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). In this line of research, constructs like satisfaction (Bowden et al., 2013), commitment (Morgan & Hunt, 1994) receive great attention as fundamental predictors and indicators of strong customer relationships. Recently, the literature renders interest to incorporating the roles of different constructs: such as satisfaction, commitment and loyalty (Bowden et al., 2013; Narteh et al., 2013; Rather, 2017) to customer loyalty.

From practical viewpoint, empirical results propose that in maintaining and building sound customer loyalty, hotel managers may generate positive customer perceptions of the consumption service experience. Such management features epitomize the vital practical aspects that hotel providers have to satisfy patrons to meet consumer expectations. The practical implication to star hotels is that they should put a great deal of extra importance on maintenance and building of valued relationships in the form of customer commitment. Consequently, hospitality managers will need to spotlight on social bonding tactics to improve and maintain levels of commitment in producing greater states of customer satisfaction and loyalty. Hospitality brand managers may also provide personalized services to satisfy consumer needs where necessary. Factors like recommend the hotel to someone who seeks advice, would encourage friends and relatives to do business with the hotel, would do more business with the hotel in the next few years, customer intention to say positive things regarding hotel to other people, are emerged as the most substantial indicators of customer loyalty.

Therefore, in order to be successful in the market and to intensify customer loyalty and create competitive advantages, our results imply that star hotel managers should pay more attention by implementing effective marketing strategies of customer satisfaction and commitment to retain existing and prospective customers in maintaining and developing long lasting relationship with customers in the hotel industry of Jammu and Kashmir, India.

Limitations and Future Research

However, an evaluation of the findings must acknowledge several limitations. First, the sample size of the study is small. Increasing the sample size and including participants in other geographical areas can strengthen the study. With an increased sample size, a more detailed empirical analysis among the constructs. Secondly, the study sample were chosen from five and four star hotels types, the lower kinds such as two and three star hotels may influence the results. Thirdly, it is not obvious whether the similar results would emerge if survey participants were differentiated as per hotel stay or usage, frequency of travel that could be the topic of future examinations. Finally, a valuable undertaking for future investigation would be to identify other determinants of customer loyalty, such as customer engagement, customer engagement behaviors, customer memories, co-creation, customer value, customer brand identification, brand championship, trust, word of mouth and profitability. Future research should aim to find empirical evidence for these perspectives.

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