

IMPACT OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ON SERVICE QUALITY: EMPIRICAL LINKAGE EVIDENCES FROM INDIAN HOTEL INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the paper: Emotional Intelligence and Service Quality--this study was designed to examine the relationship between the said two variables. The purpose of this paper is to develop an empirically based comprehensive study for measuring the impact and develop linkages between the two.

Design/Methodology/Approach : This paper describes a procedure which explicates the employees' EI while dealing with the customers. Various factors were derived from extensive literature review & key informant interviews. While using empirical knowledge & tools, data was collected through a self administered questionnaire from the hotel industry comprising of leading Hotels in Delhi/NCR in various locations. 130 employees randomly drawn from 10 leading hotels constituted the study sample.

Findings : The crucial findings of the study revealed a significant relation between EI and Service quality. Findings suggested that EI could be used as an intervention to enhance Service quality. The five-dimensional structure of SERVQUAL was reconfirmed.

Practical Implications : The construct of this study can be used to meet the service quality expectations of business hotels' customers, where the linkage finds its maximum usage. It represents a practical way to measure the service quality dimensions in hotel industry. The study can be a ground for search for any additional dimensions that should be included in the service

1. quality construct, and measure the level of importance of each specific dimension for the customers of the business hotels.

Originality/ Value : More effort should be devoted to widen the horizon, to assess the role of EI for the service quality. This paper develops linkages which is complimentary to work that has preceded it. Findings, analysis and suggestions offer an alternative perspective as evidences for linkages and

Service Quality in Hotel Industry: an Introduction

The role of service quality in the success of hotel industry cannot be denied. It is vital for the hotel employees to have a good understanding on what exactly the customers want. Identifying the specific expectations of customers, the dimensions of the service quality, and their relative importance for customers for each specific segment of hotel industry would definitely help managers in the challenge of improving the service quality.

The domination of the service sector today is confirmed by the fact that 70% of the world GDP is realized in the service sector. The same sector sees the concentration of

70% of workforce. In order to ensure and keep the quality expected by today's customer, we need to identify the importance of EI to enhance the quality of service. It has become essential for the service firms in general & hotels in particular to identify what the customers' requirements are & within what suitable dispositions employees can meet it effectively. In the days where product & price differences are blurred, superior service by the service provider is the only differentiator left before the hotels to attract, retain & partner with the customers.

The intense competition in hotel industry requires the development of a new approach to management which should include EI. While introducing the concept of EI with service quality, hotel companies use various approaches adapted to their business conditions. The following part of the paper describes the most effective linkages of EI with Service quality, in particular the model of Schuttle for EI and SERVQUAL model of service quality.

Literature Review

The hotel industry, by definition, is a service industry. (Garvin, 1984) identified five ways in which the term quality might be interpreted: as innate excellence; product based, where quality is precise and measurable, implying that "more" or "purer" is higher quality; user-based manufacturing based. The third interpretation is the one that most closely matches that used in 1986 in the ISO8402 definition of the term quality i.e. "the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs."

The model of service quality originally presented by (Parasuraman et. al, 1985) basically said that if customer's perceptions of the service received adequate response with customer's prior expectations, then a quality service has been delivered. However, in 1993 they modified the original model to differentiate between desired and adequate service.

Service Industry's success largely depends upon the high quality services. There are so many factors behind high quality services. Efficient and quality services are not the result of a single causal factor, it is a result of the multiple factors. Human effort has a lot to do when we talk about the service quality. Yes, there are always a number of factors behind the quality generating human effort. Emotional intelligence is one of them.

Daniel Goleman defined emotional intelligence in individuals as "the ability to interact socially in a caring manner, persist, self-motivate, control impulses, delay gratification, think clearly in stressful situations, and to hope. (Goleman, 1995) even said that emotional intelligence is possibly more important than IQ in explaining individual achievement and potential struggles that individuals may face later in life. According to Goleman, abusive and unloving environments damage emotional intelligence. (Mayer and Salovey, 1997), who created the term Emotional Intelligence, define it as "the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional meanings, and to reflectively regulate emotions in ways that promote emotional and intellectual growth". In their

influential article “Emotional Intelligence,” they defined emotional intelligence as, “the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions”.

Due to their intangible nature, the perceived quality of the services purchased is impacted by the service method in which it is rendered. (Langhorn, 2004) noted that in hospitality, the service provider is “part of the product itself”. (Varca, 2004) and (Winsted, 2000) examined many of the elemental traits of EI in relation to customer satisfaction in service delivery and found significant effects. (Kernbach and Schutte, 2005) and (Langhorn, 2004) found a strong relationship between the overall EI level of service providers and customer satisfaction.

One of the problems that the industry faces is that hospitality workers are often minimum wage earners who are unable to afford the service that they are providing. For the employees to be able to provide the necessary level of service, they too must feel appreciated and supported. They are, in fact, the internal customers of their company. One of the primary duties of hospitality managers is to lead in such a way that both their internal and external customers can find satisfaction (Lewis, 2000; Sosik & Megerian, 1999; Wong & Law, 2002). In seeking to satisfy both internal and external customers, the skill sets included in emotional intelligence (EI) are important (George, 2000; Higgs & Aitken, 2003; Langhorn, 2004).

To be successful, managers must know their strengths, weaknesses, and limitations. They must be adaptable, conscientious, persuasive, collaborative, high performing, and possess the ability to see things from others' perspectives (Goleman, 1995). Leaders who possess high levels of EI are able to communicate vision and enthusiasm effectively (Bagshaw, 2000; Brownell & Jameson, 2004; Dearborn, 2002; Dess & Picken, 2000; Graetz, 2000). They are able to minimize unnecessary conflict (Bagshaw, 2000) while empathizing with subordinates and guests (Abraham, 1999; N. M. Ashkanasy & Tse, 2000; Kellett, Humphrey, & Sleeth, 2002). They can also accurately assess their own and others' emotions in an effort to choose the best strategies to both maximize results and satisfy the parties involved (Cooper, 1997; Sosik & Megerian, 1999; Voola, Carlson, & West, 2004). Leaders with high EI can create constructive relationships with followers and motivate themselves and their employees to not only do their job, but also to do it well (N. M. Ashkanasy, Hartel, & Daus, 2002; George, 2000; Goleman, 1998; Wong & Law, 2002).

Emotional labor (EL) is viewed as the display of a particular emotion in exchange for a wage. In fact it finds a major place in the hotel industry as total service quality can be affected by the deep acting and surface acting depicted by the employees. (Wong and Law, 2002) in reviewing works on EL summarized that there are at least three types of “labor” : mental, physical and emotional. Emotional labor refers to the extent to which an employee is required to present an appropriate emotion in order to perform the job in an efficient and effective manner (Wong and Law, 2002).

According to (Goleman's, 1998) EI construct has four domains. These are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management.

Self-awareness is recognizing and understanding one's own emotions; using them to guide behavior; accepting one's strengths, weaknesses, and competencies; and possessing the self-confidence to succeed. .

As the service providers are required to be adaptive towards the demands and behaviors of the customers, it is basically EI that helps managers in responding effectively towards the customer needs. As service providers in the hotel industry require the potentials such as interpersonal, intra personal and technical skills, these skills can be easily translated in the terms of EI. The learning and practice of these skills help improving the performance of service providers and thus increasing customer satisfaction. By using EI, organizations can have increased knowledge about customers and greater ability for recognizing and regulating the quality of service according to the desires of customers.

Successful managers always try to adjust to the needs of the guests as well as of the employees. While handling grievances, manager must accurately assess the situation without internalizing negative comments. Determining the best course of action without allowing setbacks to alter their course (Scott-Halsell, Blum, and Huffman) is essential. The ability to exercise this appropriate control is the self- management component of EI. The subcategories of self-management are self-control, trustworthiness, conscientiousness, adaptability, achievement orientation, and initiative (Boyatzis & Goleman, 1999). Many of these sub- categories can affect the individual's satisfaction, desire to continue employment, and organizational commitment, as well as have a strong influence on the actions of one's subordinates (Bagshaw, 2000; Carmeli, 2003; Langhorn, 2004; Pirola-Merlo, Hartel, Mann, & Hirst, 2002; Sivanathan & Fekken, 2002; H. M. Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Self-management of emotions is important in conveying ideas and creating team spirit and team effectiveness (Gardner & Stough, 2002; Langhorn, 2004; Pirola-Merlo et AL. 2002; Yost, 2000). Being emotionally stable promotes free-flowing ideas and keeps the lines of communication open (Caruso & Wolfe, 2001).

The social awareness dimension of EI includes empathy, organizational awareness, and service orientation. Empathy is being aware of others' feelings and needs, as well as being able to see things from others' perspectives. Organizational awareness is being aware of the environment around oneself, including political undertones, while service orientation is meeting the needs of those to whom one has a responsibility, including employees and customers (Boyatzis & Goleman, 1999). (Langhorn, 2004) found "The restaurant general managers' ability to identify with their place of work, the team within the outlet, its role in the local community and possibly the brand itself are important factors in delivering good performance"

Relationship management, as the fourth identified domain of EI, focuses on an inspirational and persuasive leader, nurturing subordinates appropriately. (Boyatzis and Goleman, 1999) identified the fourth dimension as social skills, with the sub-categories of developing others, leadership, influence, communication, change catalyst, conflict management, building bonds, and teamwork and collaboration.

Relationship Management include being a change agent; effectively managing conflict, motivating others, and being a team builder. Findings by (Bardzil and Slaski, 2003) indicated that managers who desired a more positive experience for workers as well as customers by providing a service oriented environment should work at creating an atmosphere that promoted a positive climate and minimized negative emotional encounters. (Scott-Halsell, Blum, and Huffman) Emotional Competencies are learned capabilities, based on EI, that result in outstanding performance at work (Goleman, 2001). Difference exist between EI and Emotional Competencies. Emotional Intelligence is a dispositional aptitude and Emotional Competencies are learned capabilities (Boyatzis, 1982; Goleman, 2001).

Previous research indicates that one feature of successful organizations is that they are able to create a climate for service (Shneider & Bowen, 1993, Schneider et al, 1998). At the level of the individual employee this manifests itself as concern for customers and awareness of the practices and behaviours that are expected by management. In effect, these qualities may be expressed as broad interpersonal competencies such as communication skills (Ostell, 1996), empathy (Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry, 1990, and emotional labour (Hochschild.1993, Morris & Feldman, 1996). At the organizational level, a climate for service requires reinforcement through the implementation and support of appropriate employee behaviours based on clear 'service quality specifications' (i.e. from the SERVQUAL model – Parasuraman et al. 1988). This also involves genuine concern for employees as 'internal customers' (Schneider et al.1998, Johnson 1996), and is facilitated by an appropriate leadership style.

Service quality may not help to distinguish one company from another in the same industry based on the type of industry (Cronin & Taylor, 1992). Therefore, the use of EI competence to increase service quality is considered in many organizations including service companies. Emotional intelligence is important for a service industry, where service providers are needed to be adaptive and able to deal with difficult customers (Weitz, Castleberry, & Tanner, 2000).

Problem Statement

The research problem is "Whether Emotional Intelligence can be a predictor of higher Service Quality in hotel industry or not?"

Managerial Implications of the study

The study will be a great contribution to the hotel industry's body of knowledge as the relationship between the two said variables has not yet been much explored. This paper proposes that strong EI can predict high service quality for both line and management personnel. Different levels of EI significantly influence service quality through its different dimensions. The said research has lots of applied aspects. Findings may be forwarded to the India hotel industry for necessary implementation at operational level.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the research are:

- 1) To study the impact of EI on Service Quality in hotel industry.
- 2) To study effect of EI on Employee Performance.
- 3) To study EI as a determinant of service quality to focus it's high usage.

Methodology

The aim of this research was to empirically study the Hotel sector of India to address one central question- Is Service Quality affected by Emotional Intelligence? This question has been explored from Employees' point of view from different hotels in Delhi/NCR. Primary data was collected through close ended questionnaires whereas secondary data was collected through the data already available in the organizations. Hypothesis testing was performed while applying multiple regression and correlation. The sample consisted of 130 employees from 10 leading hotels in Delhi/NCR . Out of the 130 questionnaires only 120 were in a condition with appropriate information to be used.

Hypothesis

The hypothesis consists of two variables; Service Quality, an independent variable and Emotional Intelligence, a dependent variable. We for our research purpose proposed the following hypothesis.

(H1): There is a Linkage between Emotional intelligence & Service Quality in Indian Hotel Industry.

(H2): The Emotional Intelligence & 5 dimensions of Service Quality are positively Linked in hotel Industry.

Research Questions:

- 1) Is there any relationship between Service quality and EI of employees?
- 2) How the five dimensions of Service quality are related to EI?

Instruments used

Service Quality Measurement

In general, the service quality measurement literature identifies two major dimensions. (Gronroos, 1982; McDougall and Levesque, 1992; Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml, 1991, Dabholkar, Thorpe and Rentz, 1996): Core Dimensions/Outcome aspects concerning - 'What is delivered' and Relational Dimensions/Process aspects concerning 'How it is delivered'. But researchers have been trying to explore more dimensions of services with different approaches, using different models since last three decades. (Sasser, Olsen, and Wychoff, 1978) found seven major attributes in the context of the service industry: Security, consistency, attitude, completeness,

conditions availability and training. Subsequently ten dimensions were uncovered in an exploratory study conducted by (Parsuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, 1985): tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, communication, credibility, security, competence, courtesy, understanding the customer and access. The ten dimensions were purified and distilled into five dimensions to form SERVQUAL (Parsuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, 1988). Twenty-two statements in SERVQUAL instrument measure the performance across these five dimensions. SERVQUAL measures the difference between expectations and perceptions of performance level for the service attributes. Perceived service quality is viewed as the degree and direction of discrepancy between consumers' perception and expectations, where expectations are viewed as desired or what consumers feel a service provider should offer. Later, SERVQUAL underwent some critical conceptual and empirical assessments (Cronin and Taylor, 1994; Dabholkar, Thorpe and Rentz, 1996). In spite of the mixed results obtained from SERVQUAL, it is the most widely used service quality scale, both in research and in practice. (Cronin & Taylor, 1992) proposed another scale called SERVPERF, but they retained all the five dimensions of SERVQUAL. However, in SERVPERF, the scores for calculating the service quality are only performance based.

SERVQUAL is a 22 item instrument for assessing customers perception of service quality in service and retailing organizations. It is a concise multiple item scale with good reliability and validity that Hotel Industry can use to better understand the service expectations and perceptions of consumers and as a result improve service. The instrument has been designed to be applicable across a broad spectrum of services.

The five dimensions include the following:

- 1) Tangibles: Physical facilities, equipment and appearance of personnel.
- 2) Reliability: Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.
- 3) Responsiveness :Willing to help customers and provide prompt service.
- 4) Assurance: Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence.
- 5) Empathy: Caring, individualized attention the firm provides its customers.

So, authors are using SERVQUAL to measure the service Quality of the service sector in hotel industry.

The current study uses the instrument developed by Schutte et al. (1997). The 33 items include the following:

- 1) I know when to speak about my personal problems to others.
- 2) When I am faced with obstacles, I remember times I faced similar obstacles and overcame them.
- 3) I expect that I will do well on most things I try.
- 4) Other people find it easy to confide in me.
- 5) I find it hard to understand the non-verbal messages of other people.*

- 6) Some of the major events of my life have led me to re-evaluate what is important and not important.
- 7) When my mood changes, I see new possibilities.
- 8) Emotions are one of the things that make my life worth living.
- 9) I am aware of my emotions as I experience them.
- 10) I expect good things to happen.
- 11) I like to share my emotions with others.
- 12) When I experience a positive emotion, I know how to make it last.
- 13) I arrange events others enjoy.
- 14) I seek out activities that make me happy.
- 15) I am aware of the non-verbal messages I send to others.
- 16) I present myself in a way that makes a good impression on others.
- 17) When I am in a positive mood, solving problems is easy for me.
- 18) By looking at their facial expressions, I recognize the emotions people are experiencing.
- 19) I know why my emotions change.
- 20) When I am in a positive mood, I am able to come up with new ideas.
- 21) I have control over my emotions.
- 22) I easily recognize my emotions as I experience them.
- 23) I motivate myself by imagining a good outcome to tasks I take on.
- 24) I compliment others when they have done something well.
- 25) I am aware of the non-verbal messages other people send.
- 26) When another person tells me about an important event in his or her life, I almost feel as though I have experienced this event myself.
- 27) When I feel a change in emotions, I tend to come up with new ideas.
- 28) When I am faced with a challenge, I give up because I believe I will fail*.
- 29) I know what other people are feeling just by looking at them.
- 30) I help other people feel better when they are down.
- 31) I use good moods to help myself keep trying in the face of obstacles.
- 32) I can tell how people are feeling by listening to the tone of their voice.
- 33) It is difficult for me to understand why people feel the way they do*.

*These items are reverse scored.

It is observed from **Table III** that Emotional intelligence is significantly and positively related to tangibles at 0.01 level where as responsiveness and empathy of the respondents are positive and significantly related at 0.01 level . But in case of assurance

, it is significantly related to emotional intelligence but shows one count in negative direction with the impact of empathy at 0.01 level.

As indicated in Table III and IV, the linear combination of five independent variables was significantly related to the dependent variable (emotional intelligence),

Table III: Correlations

Dimension	1	2	3	4	5	
Tangibles	1					
Reliability	.826(**)	1				
Responsiveness	.524(**)	.251(**)	1			
4Assurance	.321(**)	.448(**)	-.085	1		
5Empathy	.702(**)	.597(**)	.608(**)	.148	1	
6Emotional intelligence	.701(**)	.566(**)	.646(**)	.265(**)	.963(**)	1

**** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

$R^2=0.96$, adjusted $R^2=0.821$, $F(5, 133)= 543.979$, $p=0.000$. An estimated 83% of variance in emotional intelligence can be attributed by the linear combination of independent (Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy) and predictor (emotional intelligence) variables. As shown in Table VI, the beta values show that tangibles, responsiveness, assurance and empathy is positively related to emotional intelligence. Reliability seems a little negative indicator in the above assumed model.

Table IV- Model summary:

Multiple R	0.86
R square	.830
Adjusted R square	.821
Standard error of the estimate	.15397

Table V: ANOVA table:

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	64.481	5	12.896	543.979	.000(a)
Residual	2.679	113	.024		
Total	67.160	118			

a Predictors: (constant) Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy
b Dependent Variable: Emotional intelligence

Table V: ANOVA table:

Dimension	Unstandardized Coefficientst		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	B	Std. Error
Constant	.139	.109		1.281	.203
Tangibles	.061	.038	.067	1.600	.112
Reliability	-.121	.035	-.135	-3.489	.001
Responsiveness	.097	.025	.107	3.938	.000
Assurance	.175	.022	.176	8.060	.000
Empathy	.771	.025	.902	30.727	.000

Findings

The findings of the proposed study clearly establishes both the Hypothesis. Emotional Intelligence is positively related to Service quality. Managerial Emotional Intelligence is positively related to customer satisfaction. Five factors of SERVQUAL are positively related to delivery of positive emotional response in employees except for one negative count in assurance. There is a positive relationship between the emotional expression of the employees and a range of service cues.

Consistent with the literature the study demonstrated that the emotional intelligence of the individual, has an impact on their key performance outputs and results into raised service quality. The emotional attributes that appear to come through consistently are those around interpersonal skills, general mood and adaptability. All of these would have an impact on the employees , the very people who ultimately interact with the customer directly. There would certainly seem to be opportunities to utilize a measure of Emotional Intelligence in the improvement of Service quality in hotels in future. The approach of using the Schutte's questionnaire as a measurement of Emotional Intelligence was extended to the employee sample, but in addition to this, the concept of Emotional Labour was introduced to this population. This study explored the relationship of the various Emotional Intelligence competency sets in the employees and then went on to examine the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Service quality in order to explore if in some way these two concepts are linked. Significant relationships were established between self and Emotional intelligence in particular, which has been evident in the literature.

Whilst the results above suggest that this EI naturally lead to better service quality delivery, there are advantages in reducing the risk of emotional dissonance. Over and

above these benefits, service operators may want to consider the potential employee fit in service roles, where a more genuine style of service might be more aligned to their brand proposition. Conducting regression analysis on the results revealed a strong relationship between perceptions of Value, Overall Service, Interaction and other contributing service cues.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings in this study would call for a much more integrated approach, we are dealing with emotions in the broad context in these service situations. The emotional expression of the employees would appear to impact their performance and concomitantly the service offered to their customers. Hotel Sector needs to plan the emotional content and context of their operations and decide how the environment and personal interactions will look and feel in pursuit of that design. This is not necessarily by creating rigid scripts and routines but more by creating awareness of desired outcomes.

Based upon our research, we suggest that future research can further explore and discuss the topic of emotional management in different sectors.. To increase the depth of this domain, future research can also take customers' information factors into consideration related to dimensions of service quality indicating that when employees of the organization practice the skills of emotional intelligence, it enhances service quality. As the results of data indicate that there is a positive relationship between EI and SQ, the importance of usage of EI can be emphasized.

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