

The Impact of Perceived Service Quality on Guest Satisfaction of Mid-Scale Hotel in India: A SEM-PLS Analysis

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Abstract *The theme of service quality and customer satisfaction has been among the most debated in the tourism and hospitality research field. The researchers have addressed several dimensions of service quality to allied areas of the hospitality industry. The current research is a form of undertaking a combined model of perceived service quality that is correlated to the guest satisfaction in the mid-scale hotels located in India. Five-point Likert scale based self-administered questionnaire was given to the guests who had stayed in different hotels of the mid scale category and 112 out of 150 distributed questionnaires came back. In order to expand on the body of guest perceptions, this paper seeks to discuss the variables of perceived service quality and guest satisfaction. A comprehensive literature review that was conducted to investigate the modern variables of perceived service quality. Perceived service quality in the hotel industry has shown weaknesses of lack of emphasis in guest perception yet in the other sciences, down-playing service quality has been shown.*

Keywords: *Perceived Service Quality, Functional Quality, Technical Quality, Guest Satisfaction, Mid-Scale Hotel, Re-Visit Intention*

INTRODUCTION

The shift in the lifestyle, local and foreign tourist demand in India increases the growth of mid-scale hotel in the past few years. It is taken into account that tourism and hospitality are the key to generating income in the country and is a significant contributor to GDP. Therefore numerous nations are geared towards attracting tourists to their destinations in the development of the country and life (Jamal Ali et al., 2021). Hotels are considered an indispensable element of the tourism industry as they satisfy the most significant and the most fundamental need that is room (Jamal Ali et al., 2021). In addition, visitors do not only rest in hotels, but also receive other types of goodies such as sauna bath, swimming

pool, spa, etc. offered by hotels. Housekeepers are the most vulnerable because they are more prone to injuries and illness than other service providers in the hotel and in this case, guests have a better experience hence they are likely to revisit.

As a result, the Midscale category, which made up over 43% of the country's total supply in 2019, has grown to be the biggest sub-group of the branded hotel supplies in India. (Datta & Mohan, 2020). Moreover, Midscale hotels have lower operating expenses than the other Upscale and Luxury hotels; hence, they are better placed to provide flexible pricing and remain profitable. The lessons of COVID will also help us design our future Midscale hotels into a more efficient construction product as the contactless demands will

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allow to reduce the public space, the number of restaurants, and a more efficient technological product which will help reduce the amount of money spent on capital construction, and more effectively recover the investment in the form of rooms and higher returns.

The hotel is commonly referred to as one of the oldest business industries that are recognized to be a global service industry (Whitla et al., 2007). The characteristics of the Indian market support the expansion of the hospitality industry and attract foreign hotel chains in the country. Nevertheless, the chain hotels possess marketing strategies and business philosophies. To illustrate, the case of Premier Inn Hotel, which is a budget chain of hotels in the UK, poses as a value hotel brand in the midst-market. The many multinational chain hotels that have established themselves in India have all these features; specialty restaurants, contemporary architecturally designed halls, in-room dining, etc. The high difference in the services provided by premium hotels, mid-market or sector hotels, and budget hotels has impact on the operation of the hotels, which is an opportunity in the Indian hospitality market (Sinha & Ekka, 2021).

In the hospitality industry, a customer is viewed and treated like a guest. The services that they are offered and the value they get are different. Some of the products and services offered by the hotel are lodging, dining, beverage, room service, 24-hours a la carte, and transportation related services. Hotel clients worldwide reserve the hotel and patronize its facilities, yet to get high-quality services many customers prefer to be in an established chain of hotel. The hotel is categorized into three according to the grade such as an economy hotel, a mid-scale hotel, and a luxury hotel (Xu & Li, 2016; Zhang et al., 2011).

The status of a hotel influences the perception of the customer towards what that hotel is offering and what he/she can expect of the hotel (Xu & Li, 2016; Zhang et al., 2011). In throat-cut competition, every hotel is struggling to gain an edge over the others for health business sustainability. For service quality and guest satisfaction have become the focus of interest of the hoteliers and the academia over the past decades. In the recent situations, there is an increased emphasis to match loyalty and a solid brand image with the customer to do business repeatedly (Saleem & Raja, 2014). The purpose of this study is to check these correlations among the observed quality of services and these middle-scale hotels to explain these reason behind guest satisfaction that subsequently translates to loyalty and re-visit. The area of improvement is determined by the guest responses to these quality of service since the identical of guest fulfillment translates towards loyalty (Loke et al., 2011). The sense of service quality (PSQ), which is defined as the level

of customer satisfaction with their experience at the hotel (in terms of such factors as the quality of sleep, the quality of the room service, the manner in which the hotel employees treat on-site customers, the quality of the products, etc.) is the key determinant of the quality of performance of the hotel, which in turn causes the customer satisfaction, which in turn provokes the purchase intention, which builds the brand perceptions, and gives the hoteliers an edge in the dog eat dog game in the hotel industry (Cronin & Taylor, 1992). It can be nice to have the standard hotel facilities and services, such as the rooms and services related to housekeeping, which can result in a good experience (Bulchand-Gidumal et al., 2011). The hotel has exceptional services, which will expand eWOM, and these are its hallmarks (Yen & Tang, 2019).

The level of service quality in the hotel business is higher than that in any other business due to the rising guest demands. (Palazzo et al., 2021). There are numerous elements of service quality that can be applied to the hospitality industry based on the experiences in other service industries and tested over the years (Park & Jeong, 2019). Quality in service industry leads to customer satisfaction and customer loyalty to a given brand (Mittal et al., 2015). The circumstance that service quality in the tourism industry is a wide issue has disallowed the use of a holistic approach to study this field since it encompasses a range of business environments. Thus, the primary purpose of our research was to find the most substantial studies, general and specific issues, which are connected with the quality of hotel services, and explore the current and prospective directions and trends of the topic under research in a form of a comprehensive literature and SEM-PLS analysis (Park & Jeong, 2019). To survive in the competitive market, service organizations and especially hotel industry need a clear evaluation of the perception of the quality of their services to their consumers. Despite the economic business-like similarity, Airbnb had a pronounced disruptive effect on the hospitality industry, more studies requiring concentration on PSQ in relation to upscale hotels and additional research and work are required in other areas of the hotel segment (Rauch et al., 2015). The quality of the service (PSQ) is a factor that influences the acceptance of something. Value has been revealed to affect the intentions of the guests to revisit a hotel either directly or indirectly. Hotels have the opportunity to add value by increasing PSQ (Kashyap & Bojanic, 2000).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The impact of hotel characteristics on hotel reservations has been considered in the recent studies, such as service

quality and room features are the significant characteristics which affect the high level of hotel rating (Rhee & Yang, 2015). During their stay at the hotel, they expect very high standards of staff and the food they eat and they do not fail to complain about the staff that serves them in the room, the front desk staff as well as the hotel service. Cleanliness is one of the factors that guests have high expectations on, yet, in the end, they were not attained. To any guest, the primary consideration during the assessment of the hotel is their sleeping (Liu et al., 2013). One of the elements is the location, which must be near the airport, business mall, bus stop and parking facilities (Dolnicar Sara & Otter, 2003). The researcher also found out that there is a mix of tangible (physical properties) and intangible (hotel services) in the hospitality industry (Kotler et al., 2017). As per the same theory, the hotel properties may be partitioned into the following types of intangible services: customer-judged hotel security, hotel reputation, and service quality (Chow et al., 1995). To further the same theme, there have been suggestions to categorize the characteristics of the hotel under two groups that are core characteristics and facilitating characteristics. The hotel gives physical amenities being one of the basic features. The delivery of intangible services is an example of the facilitating characteristic in the hotel (Yen & Tan, 2015).

The Concept of Perceived Service Quality Within the Hotel Industry

Hotels must work towards making the perceived service quality of customers to meet their expectations in the prevailing competitive market. Research has indicated that customer loyalty and customer satisfaction are greatly influenced by what they perceive about the service quality (Donnelly et al., 2006). Besides enhancing the hotel performance and profitability, the perceived service quality (PSQ) serves as the variable in modification of other variables such as guest satisfaction facilitating word-of-mouth advertising (WOM) etc. (Seth et al., 2005).

Robotic Waiters in Service Industry

These days, robotic waiters are becoming more popular in hotels, restaurants, and workplaces. There are many cutting-

edge technologies when it comes to robotic technique-based waiters. created by academics to make ordering services simple, such as using mobility robots (Afsheen et al., 2018);

- Gathering dining choices
- Wireless call systems
- Waiter robots
- Self-service ordering in restaurants.
- Recommenders of menu (automated).

The more and more the life of ordinary people is being made more involved with robots. They can entertain or play as part of their work to help human beings in laborious or straining work. The robot will take part in the personal interaction with a human group in natural settings in such applications. It implies that natural and naturalistic models of human-robot communication will have to be developed (Kamruzzaman et al., 2017). Robots assist in serving humanity. The robotics branch, which is relevant to the extent, is referred to as the social automata. As the robotics technology is being modernized, a great number of new designs and mechanisms are being introduced that are able to read human minds and understand the human behavior. These robots find extensive use in the assistive robotics. The restaurant automation with robots is an industry that is ever expanding. The robots will be used to greet the visitors, collect the orders, and deliver the food to the customers. The menu bar is constructed on the LCD screen, keyboard and the Bluetooth part. The LCD screen displays the menu bar order. With the assistance of the keyboard, you may select the orders. The buyers place their orders via an electronic menu bar. This order will be passed on the kitchen Receive through Bluetooth. According to a study (Cheong et al., 2016), the introduction of mobile robots into the service sector, and specifically the catering sector in the service industry is spreading its popularity in the industry most especially in Asia. Cited reasons are; expensive recruitment and failure to keep employees, who are not patient enough to develop their career in the food industry. However, these service robots are not intelligent enough to improve the quality of services and customer satisfaction, such as the restoration of the customer recognition through the individualized meal regimes, as opposed to human waiters and waitresses (Yang & Chew, 2021).

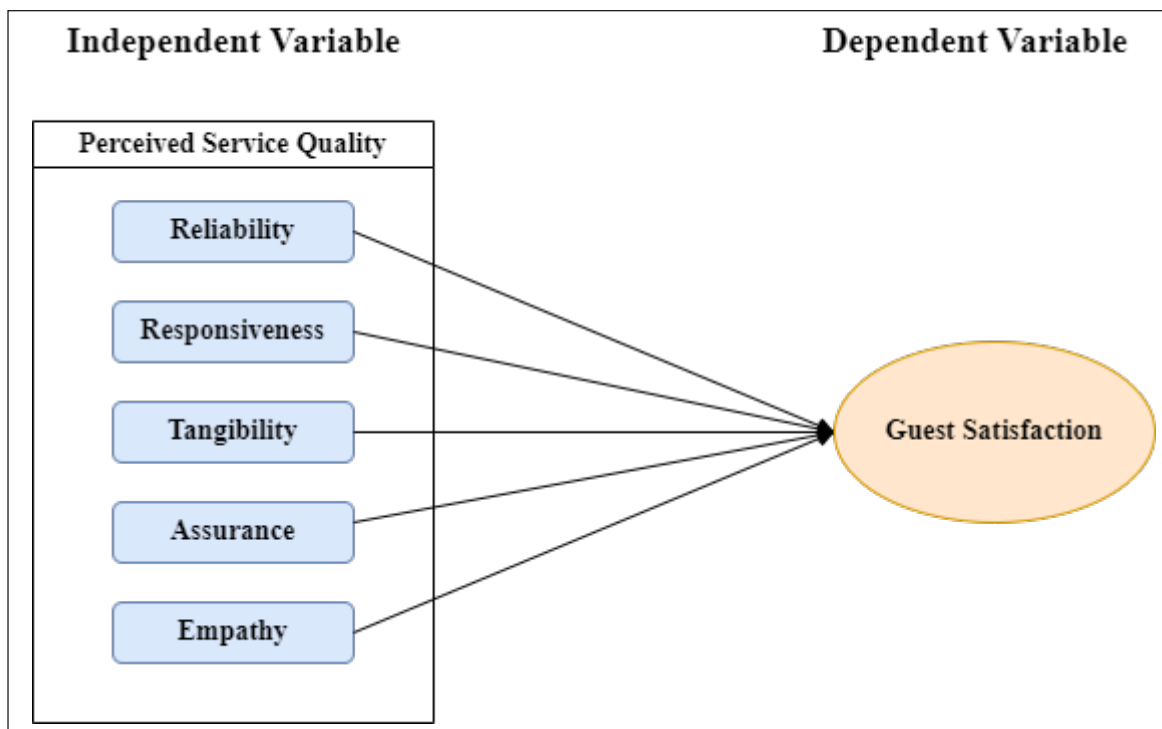


Fig. 1: The Conceptual Model of the Study

HYPOTHESIS

In line with conceptual model of the research, the researcher utilized the following hypothesis study:

- H1: The influence of the reliability on the guest satisfaction is considerable.
- H2: Responsiveness plays a significant role in the guest satisfaction.
- H3: Tangibility is a high determinant of guest satisfaction.
- H4: Guarantee does not play a significant role in the satisfaction of guests.
- H5: Guest satisfaction is very much dependent on empathy.

The researcher defined perceived service quality as how well the consumer felt the service they received compared to their expectations, there are two groups for these dimensions (Grönroos, 1984).

- Customer service quality (Process of service delivery to guests).
- Technical quality (perceived service quality which the guest receives in the hotel) Moreover, the SERVQUAL model introduced five dimensions (Sujay & Afza, 2019); Tangible, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy.

Tangible

The tangible meaning is the perspective of physical structures, equipment and the appearance of a building and renovations along with the appearance of the personnel in the hotel. The term tangibility suggests cleanliness of rooms, hotel outlets, and other publicity such as a swimming pool, hotel lobby, coffee shop, etc. (Abdullah et al., 2017). The guest feels that the other five dimensions are the least important as far as the tangibles are concerned. It presents a physical explanation of the images of the services according to which a very new guest could construct the judgment of the quality of the services. The service providers find the tangibles very popular to improve their reputation, provide uniformity and a sign of quality to the guest. Most of the hotels form partnerships with others and shape service quality strategy of the hotel.

Reliability

It demonstrates that a service provider is able to keep his promises and is worthwhile in his activities. The most important element is the rapid fulfillment of the needs of the customer (Hameed & Anwar, 2018). Consistency and reliability of the hotel staff to render services on a regular basis such as wake-up call, room service, express check-out etc. (Dabholkar et al., 1996). Reliable service must be as

expected by the guests in terms of performance. The service should be efficient and timely, to be provided in a consistent manner and in the same way every time. Reliability in particular refers to the hotel providing services as promised and guests are willing to come again in future since the hotel will not change its promise on providing services (Anwar, 2017).

Responsiveness

Being willing to help is the ability of the hotel to provide timely service and willingness to resolve the problems of the guests. The guest request must be met in time other than it becoming a complaint. One of the key elements of service quality to the guest is the capability of service providers to ensure that they are providing a service in time (Jamal Ali et al., 2021). The length of time, which a guest takes before a reply is given to his or her inquiries points to responsiveness. Adapting the service to the need of the guest is also another idea that responsiveness embodies. The expectations of the guests may not be the same as those of the policy of the hotel.

Assurance

The confidence is measured by the experience and politeness of the hotel staff and the possibility to establish the trust and confidence. The hotel can then have an opportunity to demonstrate it by delivering the services that a guest is paying. A guest that avails hotel services is supposed to feel comfortable, safe, and secure when in the hotel (Kangogo & Manyasi, 2013). Hospitality industry has various challenges as compared to the sales of products and failure rate in service industry is high. The most crucial aspect is the safe financial transaction and reliable employees since the expectation of guests is high (Abukhalifeh & Mat Som, 2012).

Empathy

This is the ability of the employee to communicate effectively, comprehend a guest, and offer individualized attention to each guest (Oh & Kim, 2017). Empathy also portrays good communication abilities and product knowledge when offering good services. The impression that the hotel knows what the guest wants is important as far as the guest satisfaction is concerned.

On the same note, the researcher also identified five service quality parameters under the umbrella of Technical Quality, which are linked to the service quality perceptions of hotels (Ali, 2015); hotel ambience, friendly staff, quality food and beverage, knowledgeable staff, service quality and overall worth of the products.

Perceived service quality is becoming increasingly seen as the key factor that affects the perceptions of a guest about the hotel and the choice to play again in order to utilize other services (Zeithaml et al., 1996). Service quality has been defined as the ability of the hotels to address the customer demands and expectations (Lin & Su, 2003). In the hotel industry, the perceived service quality is used to determine the degree to which the hotel meets the expectations of the customers.

Guest Satisfaction

The SERVQUAL model is essentially created to identify the way in which the service sector may achieve the guest satisfaction (Mouzaek et al., 2021). One of the greatest competitive advantages of the hotel industry is the presence of very satisfied customers (Liang & Zhang, 2011). Guest satisfaction refers to assessment of previous anticipation and services provided in the hotel (Kim, 2011). The benefits that satisfied guest can have on the hotel include, but are not limited to, loyalty, word of mouth marketing, and higher pricing (Ali et al., 2016; Amin et al., 2013). The positive outcome illustrates the satisfaction of the guests by the perceived service and guest expectation but it leads to disappointment. Hotel needs guest satisfaction and loyalty to gain market share and continue to increase profit whereas perceived value keeps customer returning (Prasad et al., 2014).

Satisfaction refers to the emotions of a guest with regard to either the happiness or disappointments of a guest in comparison with the perceived service performance and expectation (Sujay & Afza, 2019). The most significant outcome of perceived service quality literature on the topic of differential pricing is the notion of guest satisfaction. Part of the guest satisfaction is to increase the quality of product and service provided by the hotel which helps to retain the guest in the existing competitive market. Re-visit intention and eWOM are the results of a positive image of the hotel based on product quality and service quality (Mohammed et al., 2019).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sample and Data

This was completed using the self-administered questionnaire to the hotel guests that dealt with the mid-scale category of hotels. The entire guests were approached in the course of the hotel research. Self-administrated questionnaire survey was employed in collecting the data where convenience approach of sampling was applied. These statements were established in the five-point Likert,

1 strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 neutral, 4 agree and 5 strongly agree. The target group was the guests of the mid-scale hotel i.e. 3-star and 4-star hotels (Soifer et al., 2021).

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To investigate the possibility of the perceived quality of service in the determination of the guest satisfaction.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The data were evaluated according to the structural equation modeling (SEM). SEM is a second-generation process that can model many independent and dependent components at times. The interpretations of the data were done using Smart PLS 4.0 partial least square (PLS) software. The two models that are to be applied in the analysis of the data would involve the measurement model and the structural model. Structural model reflects cause-effect relationship between the constructs and the measurement model reflects the relationship of the variables attributed to latent factors (Chin, 1998).

Measurement Model: The Table 1 presents the outcome of the PLS algorithm of the measurement model. The outcome of the analysis is used to make the convergent and internal consistency validity. It has a convergence validity that is measured by both average variance extracted (AVE) and internal consistency that also is measured by composite reliability (CR). The value of CR had been indicated to be 0.7 or more in order to attain internal consistency (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). A value of less than 0.5 of AVE cannot be regarded as appropriate since it is unable to explain over half of the aggregate by its pieces, or variables (Henseler, Ringle & Sinkovics, 2009). Consequently, a number of items in the constructs are eliminated in an attempt to achieve the 0.5 AVE. The eliminated item in the construct of working conditions is GS4 & GS7 (Did you feel that the hotel has overcharged you, the hotel was delivering the services according to the image of their brand). As indicated in Table 1, the value of all the constructs is greater than 0.5. By the way, all constructs exhibit the CR of greater than 0.8. In this way, convergent validity, internal consistency and reliability are ensured in the model that works.

Table 1: Measurement Model

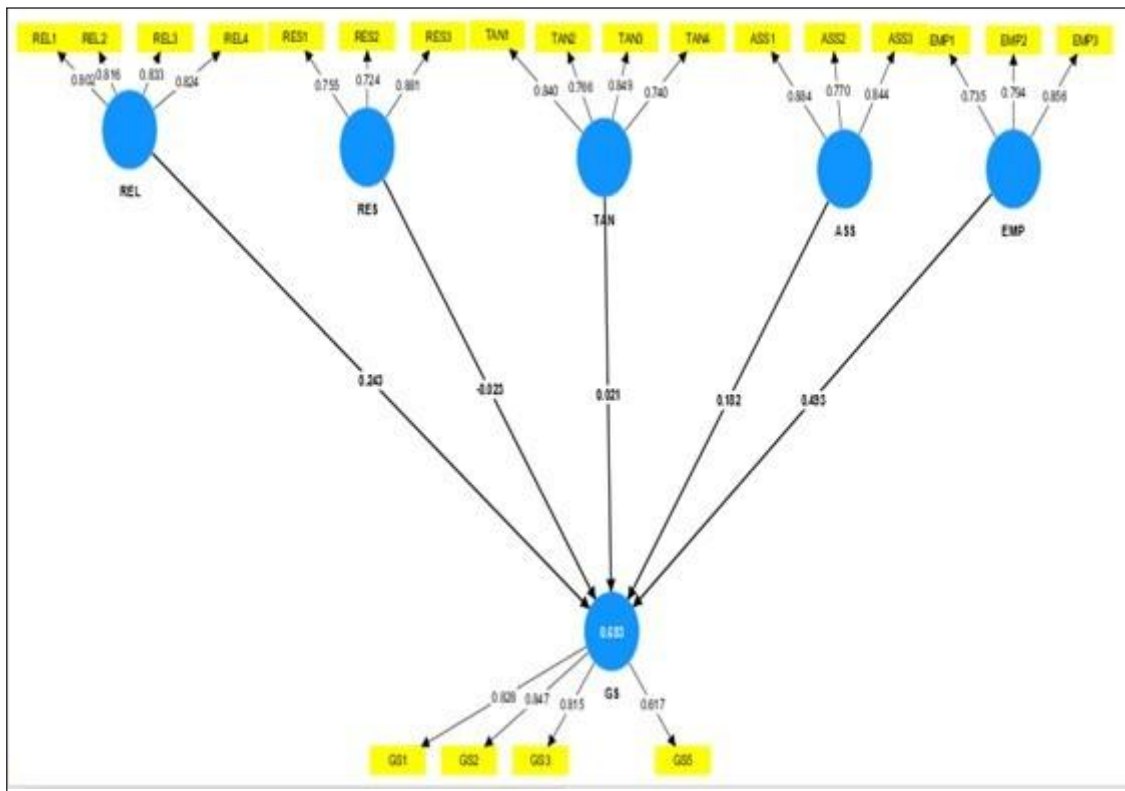
Construct	Item	Loading	AVE	CR
Reliability	The hotel staff members could deliver service accordingly.	0.802	0.67	0.89
	The hotel workers were reliable when it came to dealing with issues associated with customer service.	0.816		
	My room was ready as promised.	0.84		
	There were no malfunctioning equipment in the room.	0.817		
Responsiveness	The employees of hotel responded promptly to my requests.	0.76	0.623	0.831
	The staff of hotel was very responsive in resolving my problems.	0.724		
	The employees were ready to provide all my questions.	0.876		
Tangibility	The hotel was fitted with modern equipment.	0.841	0.64	0.876
	The hotel also offered clean and neat room.	0.781		
	The hotel was in a good condition both inside and outside.	0.854		
	The hotel was also equipped with sufficient fire safety facilities.	0.723		
Assurance	Employees of the hotel were always polite and welcoming towards customers.	0.883	0.695	0.872
	The hotel was safe and secure.	0.77		
	The hotel employees were in a position to respond to the queries of the guests.	0.844		
Empathy	The hotel dedicated an un-diluted attention to the guests.	0.738	0.634	0.838
	The hotel workers were familiar with the needs of their customers.	0.79		
	The workers were in position to get in touch with you.	0.857		
Guest Satisfaction	The quality of service that I received was satisfactory.	0.789	0.612	0.862
	I had positive experiences with the perceived service quality and can recommend the hotel.	0.768		
	I would still go back to this hotel in the event of a minor hike in the prices.	0.769		
	Did you feel that the hotel has charged you higher?	0.461		
	Was the hotel reservation process convenient to you?	0.624		
	The hotel perceived service quality was as per the reviews given by other guests.	0.655		
	The hotel offered the services as per their brand image.	0.563		

Table 2: Discriminant Validity

Construct	Reliability	Responsiveness	Tangibility	Assurance	Empathy	Guest Satisfaction
Reliability	0.761					
Responsiveness	0.614	0.776				
Tangibility	0.401	0.555	0.781			
Assurance	0.245	0.353	0.678	0.789		
Empathy	0.12	0.235	0.611	0.763	0.881	
Guest Satisfaction	0.614	0.776	0.611	0.763	0.614	0.892

Structural Model: Fig. 2 gives the structural model. The model is the correlation among the various constructs. The

test of relationship is the implementation of the bootstrapping run with Smart PLS 4.0 program.

**Fig. 2: Structural Model Results****Table 3: Results of Hypotheses Testing Using Structural Model Analysis**

Hypothesis Path	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values	Decision
ASS -> GS	0.182	0.195	0.111	1.634	0.102	Not Supported
EMP -> GS	0.493	0.489	0.131	3.753	0.000	Supported
REL -> GS	0.243	0.248	0.161	1.511	0.131	Not Supported
RES -> GS	-0.023	-0.002	0.105	0.219	0.826	Not Supported
TAN -> GS	0.021	-0.004	0.152	0.136	0.892	Not Supported

Table 3 shows the path coefficient obtained with SmartPLS and t-values. The t-values are calculated with the help of

the bootstrapping method in the software. The hypotheses developed in the course of study was tested and the results

provided in Table 3. The path coefficients should be no less standardized than 0.2 and ideally more than that of 0.3. (Chin, 1998).

DISCUSSION

The Developed Hypotheses which are based on the correlations of constructs are tested and results are obtained. The following findings are discussed according to the findings made in Table 3. Assurance and empathy factors are identified to be not significant to guest satisfaction and empathy significant to perceived service quality, as per this study (H2), Reliability and responsiveness also not significant to guest satisfaction, Tangibility also not significant to guest satisfaction.

The results of the study are expected to positively affect the academic and practitioners in the hospitality field across the globe because the research studies would present new but important implications. In the modern hotel industry empathy is highly significant in guest satisfaction and quality of perceived service and hence hotel management has to consider the guest, physically challenged guests or special needs guests. The results showed that empathetic dimensions were very influential on the service experiences of the hotel customers. Unlike in the case of the cognitive empathy, where emotional service experience of the business guests was by far determined, emotional service experience of the leisure guests was determined primarily by emotional empathy. Though most of the findings were immensely interesting which they could be groundbreaking research in the future directions.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

In this part, managerial and theoretical suggestions are provided, and they are based on the outcomes of the study. The mid-range hotels were taken to conduct the study and identify the variable of guest services. The perceived service quality and its role in the guest satisfaction were examined. Guest satisfaction and service quality were found to be correlated. It was also determined that trust and empathy have no significant relation with customer satisfaction and empathy a significant relation with perceived service quality. Customer satisfaction is much affected by the perceived service quality. This is largely related to customer satisfaction. Customer service can be maintained and developed as the hotels are always keen on improving the quality and efficiency of their services. Service excellence involves being attentive to respond to the expectations of the guests and to be flexible which is best in the hotels. This improves the profitability of the hotel. That is why managers should not underrate their performance in terms of service preservation and they should always strive to improve

through consultations of visitors.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Customer satisfaction has a high relationship with perceived service quality (PSQ). Reliability of the services is deemed to be great when the services are available and equipment in the facility is in good state. Along with this, clean and neat rooms, ample fire safety facilities, maintenance of the hotel exterior and interior, which gives a sense of services tangibility. The staffs should also be polite, knowledgeable and communicated and hence the hotel should strive in these aspects to understand and meet the expectations of the guests. The associates in the hotel can be more concerned with the empathy of the guests who are provided with one-on-one attention.

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