

A Study on Recent Trends for Guest Satisfaction in Selected Hotels of Delhi

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Abstract

Guest satisfaction is an ever evolving phenomenon for the hotel industry. With fast changing technology and globalization, the hotel industry caters to guests from all over the world, belonging to different segments and demography. The challenge is to keep the guests more than satisfied. This research was undertaken to study the current trends in guest satisfaction in five star deluxe hotel segment in Delhi. The study analyzed the gaps between hotel employees and guests' perception of importance and performance of different areas of hotels. Popular methods of guest feedback collection were also dealt with. The study shall contribute to the knowledge pool for academicians and provide an impetus to hotel management to evolve as per the guests' needs.

Keywords : guest satisfaction, trends, five star deluxe hotels, feedback

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Guest satisfaction is a main concern for the hotel industry, being always a contemporary issue, and hotel organizations realize the significance of customer - centered philosophies. One of the key challenges for the hoteliers is the management service quality, which holds a great importance for customer satisfaction. The purpose of this secondary research is to gain a better understanding of different determinants and challenges that affect customer satisfaction from an organization's perspective.

India is a large market for travel and tourism. It offers a diverse portfolio of niche tourism products - cruises, adventure, medical, wellness, sports, MICE, eco-tourism, film, rural, and religious tourism. India has been recognized as a destination for spiritual tourism for domestic and international tourists. The launch of several branding and marketing initiatives by the Government of India such as *Incredible India* and *AthitiDevoBhava* have provided a focused impetus to growth. The Indian government has also released a fresh category of visa - the medical visa or M visa, to encourage medical tourism in the country (India Brand Equity Foundation (IBEF), 2016).

Guest satisfaction is the prime objective of the hotel industry. Guests are considered as the chief area of concern from the view point of a hotel business. It is satisfied guests who bring more and more business to hotels by repeat visits and even by word of mouth publicity. So, it is very important for the hoteliers to pay attention to the guests and put in maximum efforts to achieve their highest level of satisfaction. Hoteliers pay equal attention to the guests whether they are economy class or business class guests. It is business that is associated with a guest, irrespective of class or level of guest. The issue that is of utmost concern is that the dissatisfaction or

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disappointment of customers is growing speedily, and the same is not addressed to the organization or the accountable persons, but to closed circle of friends, family, and connections.

The Five Star Deluxe Hotel Segment of Delhi has been considered for the present study. Delhi being the capital of the country, enjoys the position of being the most important metropolitan city experiencing Indian and foreign guests of various segments. This study compares the understanding of hotel managers with that of guests with regard to satisfaction. The research also finds out the popular approaches used in hotels to measure guest satisfaction.

The study provides a prospect to estimate a generally under-researched field of guest satisfaction and customer perception in addition to the gap between the perception of hotel employees and guests in India. This systematic study has been conducted towards academic needs and keeping in mind its significance to the hotel industry as well. The hotel industry always considers this kind of research and development aspects to improve their quality of food, services, and other areas of concern to achieve guest satisfaction. As this study is focused on determinants of guest satisfaction with reference to five star deluxe hotels of Delhi, so the present study is of significance for these hotels too, as deluxe hotels would be able to know about the new trends, if any, with reference to guest satisfaction, and would be able to implement the same for the betterment of overall services and products being offered to the guests.

Literature Review

Guest satisfaction is a reaction to an experience of product or service, where the worth of the characteristics of the product or service is evaluated. In this sense, guest satisfaction is looked upon as the creator of positive or negative outcomes that can decide the flaws or the accomplishments of companies. According to Campos and Marodin (2012), the tourism sector is considered as one of the fastest growing sectors, and at present, is composed chiefly of services. This sector comprises of various interdependent sub-sectors, for example boarding and lodging, transportation, food, leisure, recreation, among others. The 'back bone' of the tourism system happens to be the hotel industry.

An important addition to the new ISO 9000:2000 standard has been the measurement of customer satisfaction. Organizations that need certification on this standard are expected to identify parameters that create customer satisfaction and are to consciously measure those (ISO, 2001). The starting point for providing customer satisfaction is providing services that are preferred by the customers. To know what services customers prefer, a relatively easy way to determine is simply to ask them. According to Gilbert and Horsnell (1998) and Su (2004), guest comment cards (GCCs) are most commonly used for determining hotel guest satisfaction. Early concepts of satisfaction research have typically defined satisfaction as a post choice evaluative judgment concerning a specific purchase decision (Churchill & Suprenant, 1992; Oliver, 1980).

Examining service quality across small, medium, and large hotels in Scotland, Briggs et al. (2007) (cited in Mohsin & Lockyer, 2010) noted major inconsistencies in service quality performance across the sector. This study suggested that it is not that customers are demanding extraordinary things or are over demanding ; rather, they get satisfaction through personal services that imply that they are basically looking at value for money. It is personalized services that differentiate poor and excellent services, which is the basis for customer satisfaction.

Studies have shown that the major determinants of customer satisfaction vary from one individual to another. However, many individuals/customers have been discovered to prefer nearly the same thing. Cleanliness, appearance, and price were found to be among the top three determinants of customers' satisfaction. The other factors on the list were found to be the availability of non-smoking rooms, hotel ratings, distance from attractions, pools, all determine customer satisfaction. Knutson (1988) revealed that room cleanliness and comfort, convenience of location, prompt service, safety and security, and friendliness of employees are important. Barsky and Labagh (1992) established that employee attitude, location, and rooms are probable to affect travellers'

satisfaction. Akan (1995), through his study, articulated that the main determinants of hotel guest satisfaction are the behaviour of employees, cleanliness, and timeliness. Choi and Chu (2001) declared that quality of employees, room qualities, and value were the main factors along with some other features like breakfast inclusive with room, airport transfer, car hire service, atmosphere, security, and friendly staff. Atkinson (1988) found out that cleanliness, security, value for money, and courtesy of staff were the most important factors in determining guest satisfaction.

According to the gap analysis conducted by McCain, Jang, and Hu (2005), between loyal customers and potential switchers in evaluating service quality attributes, it was found that the top three gaps were all related to the functional quality (interactions between customers and employees), not technical quality and customer relations.

An exploratory study conducted by Mohsin and Lockyer (2010) on customer perceptions of service quality in luxury hotels in New Delhi revealed that all the areas studied like front office, housekeeping, food and beverage service in room service and restaurants showed guests' importance perception to be higher than performance of the property. This study considered 4 star and 5 star properties in New Delhi.

Campos and Marodin (2012) examined the guest satisfaction level from the gaps taking place between the service expectations and the service perception in hotels in the city of Natal, Brazil. The results brought forth a slight difference in the ranking of attributes, both by category, or by hotel. With Spearman test, it was established that guests' expectations did not alter considerably when changing the hotel category. It was also found from the gaps calculated by the guests that the hotels surpassed customer expectations in 13 of the performance features.

Guests initially perceive standards preceding the service encounter regarding the level of service quality, examine service performance, match performance with standards, and form confirmation or disconfirmation perceptions (Bearden & Jesse, 1983 ; Oliver & DeSarbo, 1988). These perceptions are combined with standard levels by the guests, thereby forming précis of satisfaction decisions (Gummesson, 1987; Oliver, 1980) which have an effect in winning or losing their loyalty towards an organization. Service quality acts as an antecedent construct, and service loyalty is an outcome variable of customer satisfaction (Caruana, 2002). Hotels are increasing their investments to improve service quality and the perceived value for guests so as to achieve better customer satisfaction and loyalty, thus resulting in better relationships with each customer (Jones, Mak, & Sim, 2007).

Objectives of the Study

- (i) To study the perception of hotel employees and guests with respect to guest satisfaction.
- (ii) To evaluate popular methods of guest satisfaction surveys used in selected Delhi hotels.

Research Methodology

The study aimed to collect information from a sample of 300 participants, that is, 60 hotel employees - managers/ supervisors/ executives (using convenience sampling technique) and 240 guests (using simple random sampling technique) from selected six 5 Star Deluxe Hotels in Delhi. The data was collected within a period of December 2014 to December 2015 and was analyzed using SPSS version 20.

Analysis and Results

👉 **H1: Comparison of overall importance given by guests and employees.**

↪ **Data Considerations:**

(i) Guest data was gathered from guests who visited the hotel and provided their opinions on the satisfaction with respect to various attributes. Sample size is 240.

(ii) Employee data was gathered from employees who were working in the hotels and provided their opinions on satisfaction with respect to various attributes. Sample size is 60.

↪ **Hypotheses Framing**

↪ **H01 :** There is no significant difference between guests and employees in terms of their overall average rating on the importance of attributes related to products and services .

↪ **Ha1:** There is a significant difference between guests and employees in terms of their overall average rating on the importance of attributes related to products and services.

The guest data and employee data together are considered for this analysis.

There are 35 attributes given under the following heads:

↪ **Reception and Room Facilities,**

↪ **Room Service,**

↪ **Food & Beverage Outlets.**

The attributes under “Reception and Room Facilities” are given below:

- (1) Ease of making reservation,
- (2) Receiving from reservation confirmation,
- (3) First contact with the staff,
- (4) Courtesy and helpful staff,
- (5) First impression of the hotel,
- (6) The check-in and check-out procedure,
- (7) Concierge service,
- (8) Business service ,
- (9) Cleanliness of guest rooms,
- (10) Cleanliness of bathrooms,
- (11) Comfort of the bed,
- (12) Guest room amenities,
- (13) Guest room furnishings,
- (14) Quality of fixture & fittings,
- (15) Access to Internet / Wi-Fi,
- (16) Features & channels on television set,
- (17) Cleanliness of public area of hotel,

- (18) Maintenance of the swimming pool,
- (19) Dealing with complaints,
- (20) The value for money of the hotels.

The attributes under “Room Service” are given below:

- (1) Prompt response from the order taken,
- (2) Skills of the order taker,
- (3) Delivery and service of food,
- (4) The variety of items on menu,
- (5) Overall selection of beverages,
- (6) The value for money for room service.

The attributes under “Food & Beverage Outlets” are given below:

- (1) Ambience of restaurants/bar,
- (2) Appearance of the staff,
- (3) Quality of service,
- (4) Product knowledge of the staff,
- (5) Quality and taste of food,
- (6) Portion size of food,
- (7) Presentation of food,
- (8) Dealing with complaints,
- (9) Value for money of the outlets.

The importance (i.e. expectations) rating was collected for these attributes using a 7 point scale with 1- *extremely unimportant*, 2- *very unimportant*, 3- *unimportant*, 4- *neutral*, 5- *important*, 6- *very important*, and 7- *extremely important*.

For each respondent, the average rating (on importance) of these 35 attributes is calculated. Furthermore, consolidated average of all the respondents was arrived separately for guests and employee data. These two final averages are compared by this technique.

As per the Table 1, the average overall importance rating by guests is 6.231 with a standard deviation of 0.562. In the case of employees, the average overall importance rating is 6.408 with a standard deviation of 0.981. As per the Table 2, the *F*-test (Levene's test) for evaluating the equality of variance is first examined. It can be seen from the Table that the *p*-value is 0.509 (which is greater than 0.05), which indicates that the variances are not significantly different. Hence, the case of 'equal variances assumed' can be considered. The values under “*t*-test for equality of means” are examined. The *p*-value for the equal variances *t*-test is $p = 0.067$. Since this *p*-value is

Table 1. Group Statistics on Overall Importance

	Segment	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Overall importance	Guest	240	6.231	0.562	0.036
	Employee	60	6.408	0.981	0.126

Table 2. Independent Sample Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		<i>F</i>	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
										Lower	Upper
Importance of attributes	Equal variances assumed	0.437	0.509	-1.835	298	0.067	-0.176	0.096	-0.366	0.012	
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.340	68.9	0.185	-0.176	0.131	-0.439	0.086	

greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted. That is, it is proved that there is no significant difference between the guests and employees in terms of overall importance rating on the study attributes. Hence, H01 is accepted.

Hence, there is no significant difference between guests and employees in terms of their overall average rating on the importance of attributes related to products and services. Employees, therefore, understood the importance guests gave to various hotel products and services.

➤ H2 : Comparison of overall satisfaction (performance) of guests and employees.

➤ Data Considerations:

(i) Guest data was gathered from guests who visited the hotel and provided their opinions on the satisfaction with respect to various attributes. Sample size is 240.

(ii) Employee data was gathered from employees who were working in the hotels and provided their opinions on satisfaction with respect to various attributes. Sample size is 60.

➤ Hypothesis Framing

➤ **H02:** There is no significant difference between guests and employees in terms of their overall average rating on the satisfaction of attributes related to products and services.

➤ **Ha2:** There is a significant difference between guests and employees in terms of their overall average rating on the satisfaction of attributes related to products and services.

The guest data and employee data together are considered for this analysis. There are 35 attributes given under the following heads : (a) Reception and Room Facilities, (b) Room Service, (c) Food & Beverage Outlets, which have been discussed. The satisfaction (i.e. performance) rating was collected for these attributes using a 7 point scale with 1 as *extremely unsatisfied*, 2 as *very unsatisfied*, 3 as *unsatisfied*, 4 as *neutral*, 5 as *satisfied*, 6 as *very satisfied*, and 7 as *extremely satisfied*.

Table 3. Group Statistics on Overall Satisfaction

		Group Statistics			
	Segment	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Overall satisfaction	Guest	240	6.147	0.656	0.042
	Employee	60	6.452	0.438	0.056

For each respondent, the average rating (on satisfaction) of these 35 attributes is calculated. Furthermore, consolidated average of all the respondents is arrived separately for guests and employees data. These two final averages are compared by this technique. As per Table 3, the average overall satisfaction rating by guests is 6.147 with a standard deviation of 0.656. In the case of employees, the average overall satisfaction rating is 6.452, with a standard deviation of 0.438.

F-test (Levene's test) was conducted for evaluating the equality of variance, and the same is first examined from the “independent samples test”. It is seen in the Table 4 that the *p*-value is 0.00 (which is less than 0.05), which indicates that the variances are significantly different. Hence, the case of 'equal variances assumed' cannot be considered. So, we move ahead with the assumption of unequal variances. The values under “*t*-test for equality of means” are examined. The *p*-value for the unequal variances *t*-test is *p* = 0.000. Since this *p*-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, it is proved that there is a significant difference between the guests and employees in terms of overall satisfaction rating on the study attributes. Hence, H02 is rejected. With this finding, it can be inferred that there is a significant difference between guests and employees in terms of their overall average ratings on the satisfaction of attributes related to products and services. Therefore, employees of hotels have different perceptions of guest satisfaction as compared to actual satisfaction felt by guests.

The Table 5 and Figure 1 reveal that 22% of the feedback was given via guest comment cards, 28% feedback was online feedback, 13% feedback was given directly to the hotel staff, 12% feedback come through travel portals, 15% feedback came via social media, and mystery guests provided 10% of the feedback. Therefore, maximum feedback came from online feedback (28%) and guest comment cards (22%).

📌 **Frequency of Guest Stay in One Year :** The Table 6 depicts the frequency of respondent guests' stay in 5 star deluxe hotels in Delhi in 1 year. The outcome shows that there were two guests/ respondents who had stayed in

Table 4. Independent Sample Test

		Independent Samples Test								
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		<i>F</i>	Sig.	<i>T</i>	<i>Df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Satisfaction of attributes	Equal variances assumed	15.605	0.00	-3.421	298	0.001	-0.305	0.089	-0.481	-0.129
	Equal variances not assumed			-4.327	133.4	0.000	-0.305	0.070	-0.445	-0.165

Table 5. Feedback Methods

Tools Used By 5 Star Deluxe Hotels in Delhi To Assess Guest Satisfaction Currently:	
Preferred Way Of Taking Feedback By Employees	
Guest Comment Cards	13
Online Feedback	17
Staff Feedback	8
Travel Portals	7
Social Media	9
Mystery Guest	6
	60

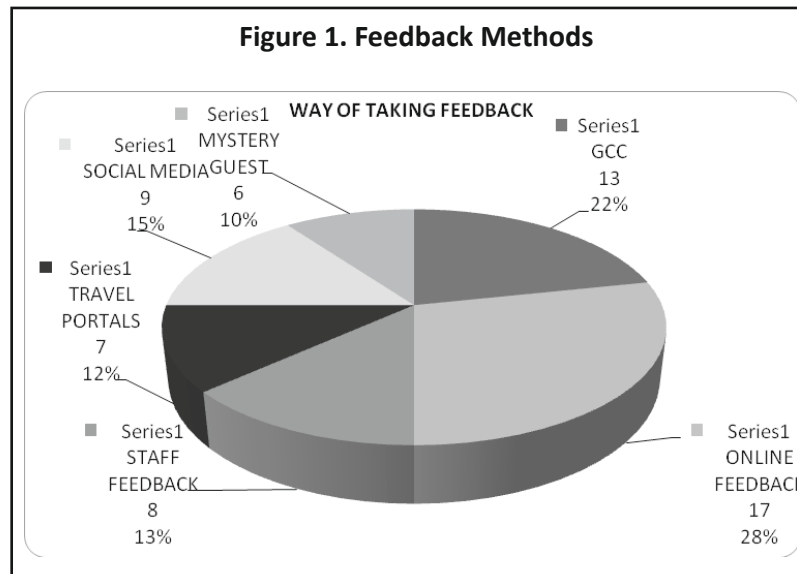


Table 6. Frequency of Guest Stay in 1 Year

No of Stay (in one year)	No. of Guests
1	10
2	35
3	22
4	42
5	46
6	40
7	16
8	19
9	2
10	2
11	0
12	2
13	0
14	2
15	2

5 star hotels in Delhi 15 times in one year, and minimum once in a year, 10 guests had stayed in the 5 star hotels in Delhi. There were 46 guests who had stayed in a 5 star hotel in Delhi for 5 times within the last one year, 4 times frequency was for 42 respondents, and 6 times frequency was for 40 guests. Therefore, it can be safely concluded that the respondents were experienced customers of 5 star deluxe hotels in Delhi and had a fairly good idea of importance and performance ratings of hotels' services and products with respect to guest satisfaction.

✎ **Guest Segmentation :** As per Table 7, guest segmentation was found to be a mix of business, leisure, and business cum leisure. It was found that 44% of the respondents were from business category, 38% were leisure travellers, and 18% respondents were from business cum leisure category.

Table 7. Guest Segmentation

Business	Leisure	Business Cum Leisure
44%	38%	18%

Managerial Implications

The study discovered that there are no evident gaps amongst hotel employees' and hotel guests' perception of quality with regard to services and products. The employees had a good idea regarding the importance of services and products for the guests' satisfaction. However, there is a significant difference between guests and employees in terms of their overall average rating with respect to the satisfaction of attributes related to products and services. This points out that there was some amount of dissatisfaction amongst guests. Hence, the managements of hotels need to closely identify the areas causing dissimilar views on satisfaction ratings.

A better understanding of guest expectations and training would help solve this issue. The study found that maximum feedback from hotel guests comes through online feedback (28%) and guest comment cards (22%). Therefore, hotel managements must not discontinue old methods like comment cards in lieu of new technology as many guests may still find old ways convenient. At the same time, research and innovation must continue to strengthen the fairly recent trends of guest feedback like travel portals and social media with innovation and technology.

Conclusion

Hotel businesses take extra pains to keep their guests happy, satisfied, and make them loyal rather than spending extra to entice new customers. This is because the guests these days are better exposed and well travelled, know the global standards, and are ready to switch brands if not satisfied. The hotels incorporate standardization in services and products with respect to quality, train and motivate their staff, and engage zero defect systems like six sigma to have satisfied guests and profitable businesses.

A review of literature advocates that guest satisfaction remains to be a subject for discussion and research. Mohsin and Lockyer (2010), in a similar research conducted in Delhi luxury hotels, found hotel guests' importance perception to be higher than performance, depicting a concern for managements of hotels in upgrading their guest satisfaction ratings. The present study considers employees' perspective as well along with guests' opinion along with findings on methods used by hotels in collecting guest feedback.

It was found that there is no significant difference between guests and employees in terms of their overall average rating on the importance of attributes related to products and services. Employees, therefore, understand the importance guests give to various hotel products and services. Furthermore, the study found that there is a significant difference between guests and employees in terms of their overall average rating on the satisfaction of attributes related to products and services. Therefore, employees of hotels have different perception of guest satisfaction as compared to actual satisfaction felt by guests.

The forthcoming research studies can even consider other factors for comparison depending on the local unique features of the hotels, and a sentiment analysis of the reviews could be used further. The results of the study could deliver strategic contributions for the service providers to improve their guest experience and thus grow the profitability of their businesses.

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Further Research

In this research, all the sample hotels are from 5 star deluxe category ; so, it does not reveal whether there are

significant differences between deluxe and non-deluxe hotels. The current study cannot claim to be wholly conclusive as it is limited to a sample size from only one metropolitan city of India, and there could be subjectivity in responses.

Research studies in India in this field are sparse and there is further scope to perform similar research in other cities of the country with a larger sample size. The present study contributes to the knowledge pool for other local and international researchers for a comparative study of guest satisfaction perceptions amongst hotel guests and employees in the form of importance and performance analysis.

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