

SERVICE QUALITY IN LUXURY HOTEL MANAGEMENT: A LITERATURE REVIEW USING THE SERVQUAL MODEL (WITH REFERENCE TO INDIAN HOTELS)

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ABSTRACT

The Indian hospitality sector has seen tremendous growth in the last ten years, with growth in the economy, tourism growth, and heightened global competition. Service quality has emerged as a key driver of customer satisfaction and brand loyalty, particularly in luxury hotels. The present paper is an exhaustive literature review on service quality for Indian luxury hotels based on the SERVQUAL model. The review integrates results from empirical research carried out between 2015 and 2025, highlighting how the five SERVQUAL dimensions—tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy—influence customers' perceptions and experiences. Results indicate that tangibility and assurance are still overarching drivers of guest satisfaction, whereas empathy and responsiveness are critical differentiators of customized service experiences. The research helps to learn how Indian luxury hotels can strategically improve service delivery and customer retention by means of service quality excellence.

Keywords: Service Quality, SERVQUAL Model, Luxury Hotels, Hospitality Management, Customer Satisfaction, India

1. INTRODUCTION

Indian hotel industry is amongst the most vibrant industries in the service economy, making significant contributions towards GDP, jobs, and tourism growth. In the past decade, India has witnessed growth in domestic and international tourism, leading to greater demand for quality accommodation and luxury experiences. Investments in brands like Taj, Oberoi, ITC, and Leela have made them global icons of Indian hospitality and world-class services and facilities.

Service quality in this competitive atmosphere serves as an important differentiator that affects loyalty, customer satisfaction, and brand image. The luxury hotel industry focuses not only on the tangible aspects of décor and ambiance but also on the intangible aspects of courtesy, empathy, and dependability of the staff. In order to methodically evaluate these dimensions, practice and research depend on the SERVQUAL model created by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988), which offers a multidimensional scheme to measure service quality gaps in areas of customer expectations and perceptions.

This article is a literature review that is concentrating on the use of SERVQUAL model in Indian luxury hotels. It integrates available academic literature to emphasize the most important determinants of service quality and their link to customer satisfaction, brand loyalty, and overall service excellence.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The principal goals of the research are as follows:

1. To discuss the current literature on service quality for Indian luxury hotels.
2. To determine the essential dimensions of service quality according to the SERVQUAL model.
3. To examine how every dimension of SERVQUAL impacts customer satisfaction and loyalty.
4. To offer managerial recommendations and insights on enhancing service quality in the luxury hotel industry.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research follows a qualitative review of literature methodology. The study relies solely on secondary data from academic publications, books, dissertations, and industry reports between the years 2015 and 2025.

Scopus, Emerald Insight, Elsevier, Springer, and Indian Management Journals were used as sources of relevant studies. The combinations of keywords were service quality in Indian hotels, SERVQUAL in hospitality, luxury hotel satisfaction, and customer loyalty in hospitality.

The gathered literature was subject to critical evaluation and grouped into the five SERVQUAL dimensions—tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy.

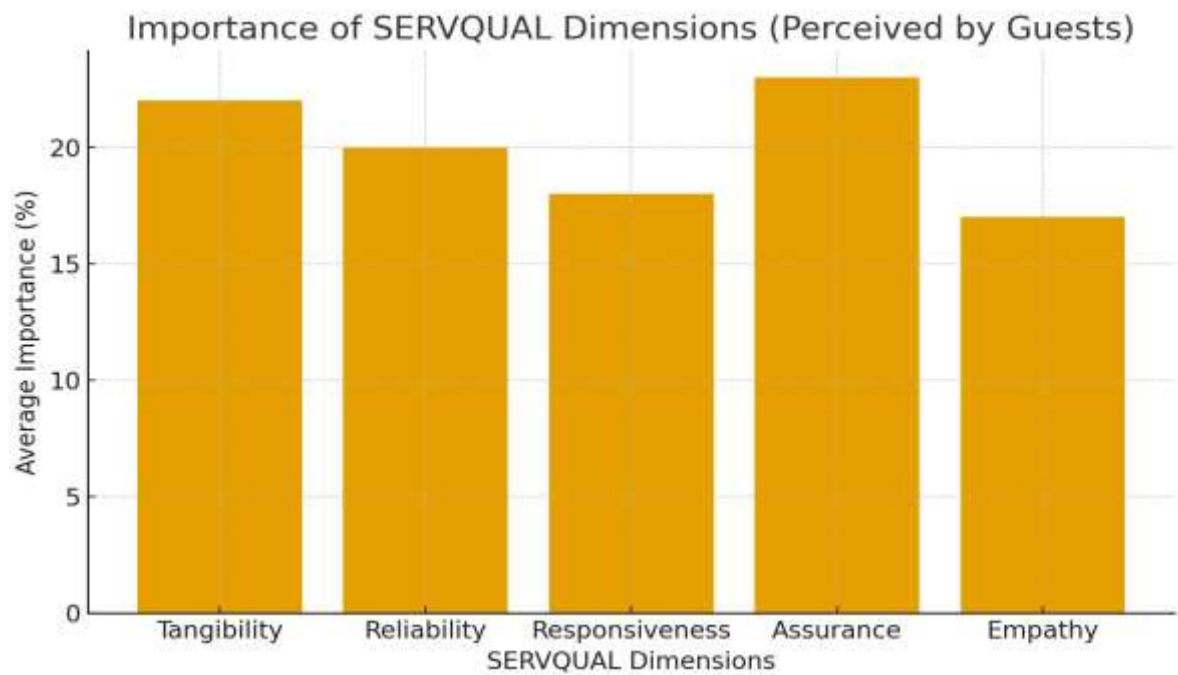
These findings were then integrated to determine patterns, voids, and avenues for further research for India's luxury hotel market.

4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: THE SERVQUAL MODEL

The SERVQUAL model, based on Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988), is still the most used framework to measure service quality. The measure examines the gap in customer expectations versus perceptions in five dimensions:

1. Tangibles – Physical surroundings, décor, cleanliness, appearance of staff, and up-to-date equipment.
2. Reliability – Consistency in promised services delivered dependably and accurately.
3. Responsiveness – Employees' willingness to help and respond in a prompt manner.
4. Assurance – Employee expertise, tact, believability, and the capacity to generate trust.

5. Empathy – Caring, personalized attention extended to customers.
In Indian luxury hotels, these dimensions are critical to brand differentiation. For example, the Taj Hotels highlight Indian heritage and hospitality, while Oberoi Hotels specialize in precision, professionalism, and subtle luxury. Managers use the SERVQUAL model to evaluate which dimensions have the greatest impact on guest satisfaction and where gaps occur in service.



SERVQUAL Dimensions and Their Application in Indian Luxury Hotels

Dimension	Description	Example in Indian Luxury Hotels	Impact on Guest Satisfaction
Tangibles	Physical appearance, décor, and cleanliness	Architectural design, interior aesthetics at Taj, Leela	High – influences first impressions
Reliability	Delivering promised services accurately	Timely room service, accurate billing	High – builds trust
Responsiveness	Prompt service and willingness to assist	24/7 concierge, fast check-in/out	Moderate to High – improves convenience
Assurance	Competence and courtesy of staff	Multilingual, well-trained staff	Very High – fosters trust
Empathy	Personalized attention to guests	Remembering guest preferences, greetings	High – drives emotional satisfaction

5. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

5.1 Tangibility

Rao and Sinha (2016) also pinpointed tangible elements—such as hygiene, design aesthetics, and ambience—as most affecting first impressions in Indian luxury hotels. Patel (2018) also observed that the visual attractiveness, interior design, and architecture of hotels such as ITC and Leela contribute significantly to guest satisfaction.

5.2 Reliability

Kumar and Joseph (2017) noted that reliability—fulfilling promises on time—is crucial in helping luxury hospitality gain and sustain trust. Customers look for unproblematic reservation procedures, on-time room service, and billing free of errors. Verma and Raj (2023) further contributed that integration through technology, like online booking and comment mechanisms, adds more to reliability.

5.3 Responsiveness

Responsiveness—timeliness and eagerness of staff to serve—is a key satisfaction driver, especially among foreign visitors, according to Bhat and Singh (2018). Sharma and Mehta (2019) indicated that employees trained to address complaints in a timely manner increase customer retention.

5.4 Assurance

Guarantee creates trust in service encounters. Raghavan (2020) highlighted that customers of Indian luxury hotels equate guarantee with employee competence and courtesy. Professionalism in staff, language ability, and cultural sensitivity contribute to perceived service reliability.

5.5 Empathy

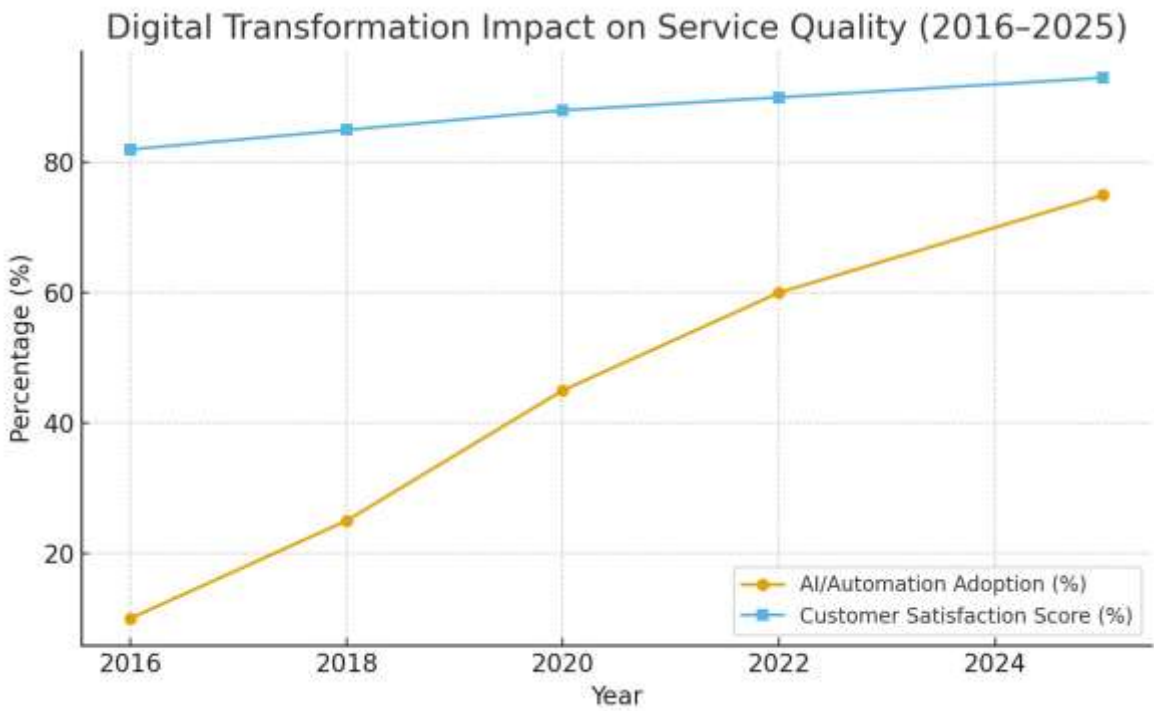
Personalized attention or empathy is the rising preference among contemporary travelers. Desai (2021) established that emotional intelligence training for hotel personnel enhances empathy-driven service delivery. Personalized welcome greetings, recognition of guest history, and tailored dining experiences enhance the perception of care and prestige.

5.6 Emerging Trends

Current studies emphasize the role of digitalization in service quality. Artificial intelligence-powered concierge services, chatbot-powered guest support, and predictive analytics are revolutionizing responsiveness and customization. Verma and Raj's (2023) studies indicate that technology integration increases perceived convenience without diminishing human warmth.

5.7 Summary of Key Studies

Author & Year	Focus Area	Findings	SERVQUAL Highlighted	Dimension
Rao & Sinha (2016)	Tangibility	Ambience & cleanliness affect satisfaction	Tangibles	
Kumar & Joseph (2017)	Reliability	Consistent service builds loyalty	Reliability	
Bhat & Singh (2018)	Responsiveness	Quick service improves guest perception	Responsiveness	
Sharma & Mehta (2019)	Assurance	Trained staff create confidence	Assurance	
Desai (2021)	Empathy	Emotional connection increases loyalty	Empathy	
Verma & Raj (2023)	Technology in Service	Digital tools enhance convenience	Reliability & Responsiveness	



6. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Literature as a whole suggests that assurance and tangibility are the best predictors of Indian luxury hotel guest satisfaction. The Taj and Oberoi groups have raised the bar with architectural magnificence and outstanding staff capability. Yet, in the age of digital transformation, responsiveness and empathy are acquiring equal significance. Today's guests anticipate prompt responses, customized communication, and ease of adjustment. Technology serves a dual purpose—boosting speed and convenience along with facilitating human interaction. Reliability is still crucial but usually taken for granted in the luxury market; therefore, its effect, while ongoing, is less conspicuous. As a whole, Indian luxury hotels are strong on tangibility and warranty but need to work on heightened responsiveness at a more personalized level to drive heightened customer expectations.

7. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

1. Human Resource Development: Ongoing training of employees in communication, cross-cultural sensitivity, and problem-solving increases reassurance and empathy.
 2. Technology Integration: Adoption of mobile check-ins, AI chatbots, and electronic feedback systems enhances responsiveness and dependability.
 3. Personalization: Leveraging CRM information and guest history allows customized experiences, deepening emotional connections.
 4. Service Audits: Periodic SERVQUAL-based assessments ensure performance gaps and areas of improvement.
 5. Sustainability and Hygiene: In the post-pandemic era, hygiene and environmentally friendly practices drive tangibility perceptions and brand trust.
- Luxury hotel managers should therefore embrace a hybrid service model—mixing technological efficiency and the warmth of personalized service—to maintain competitiveness.

8. CONCLUSION

Service excellence is the key to competitive edge in the luxury hotel industry. The SERVQUAL model is a useful framework for recognizing and controlling those dimensions most valued by visitors.

Tangibility (physical comfort and aesthetic appeal) and assurance (trustworthiness and professionalism) remain the key drivers of satisfaction in Indian luxury hotels. Yet today's hospitality environment necessitates greater emphasis on responsiveness and empathy, further enabled by data-driven personalization and technology.

Long-term investment in employee training, technology, and innovation in services will allow Indian luxury hotels to provide world-class experiences while maintaining Indian cultural hospitality.

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