

# An Analytical Study of WOW Customer Satisfaction in Hotel Industry



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*The Indian Hotel Industry in the recent past has shown growth at a fast pace, which could be accorded to increase in disposable income, growth in tourism not only from foreign countries but also within the country, permission for FDI in hotel industry, change in spending habits of people, various government initiatives to boost tourism, etc. But along with it competition too has increased manifold. India is a country running with the philosophy of 'Atithi Devo Bhava' (Guest in God). Thus, it is but natural for the hotel industry to serve the customers to their utmost satisfaction. But it must be remembered that with change in life style and standard of living, it is indeed a tough task for the hotels to live up to the demands and expectations of their customers belonging to diverse cultures. In order to be successful in the market it is not sufficient to attract new customers but hotels must concentrate on retaining existing customers through effective services and gaining their loyalty. In hotel industry customer satisfaction chiefly depends on quality of service. Hence, exploring the importance for customers of hotel attributes in hotel selection are indispensable and more important is to find out the areas where they can enable their customers to experience wow elements. This paper traces the factors which allow the customers to experience wow element which could be achieved by filling the gap between customers expectations and hotel's service attributes. The findings of the research are intended to assist hoteliers to concentrate on customer satisfaction through effective strategies for providing tangible and intangible services as well as thriving for good customer relationships management.*

**Keywords:** Gold Return, Multivariate GARCH, Market Spillover, Contagion Effect, Volatility Persistence

## 1. Introduction to Hotel Industry and Wow Consumer Satisfaction

21<sup>st</sup> century has seen hotel industry turning into one of the most competitive industries. Hotel industry too is a part of service industry and thus the satisfaction depends on quality of service provided. Thus, to have an edge over others one of the vital aspects is enhancing customer loyalty which will not only ensure its survival but also stability and growth in the long run. With competition increasing every hotel tries to provide services to utmost satisfaction of customers. Customer satisfaction is now gone and what is required that consumers experience Wow elements from hotels. Providing and maintaining customer satisfaction to the extent of customers experiencing Wow is one of the major contemporary challenges.

As per Lonely Planet, India is the fourth most preferred travel destination as per their ranking from among 167 countries. As per Ministry of Tourism report The Government of India is working to achieve 1 per cent share in world's international tourist arrivals by 2020 and 2 per cent share by 2025. One biggest asset of Hotel industry in India is that hotel is a labour intensive one and India has a large concentration of English-speaking individuals, which proves as a catalyst in advancement and prosperity of the industry. The figure given below indicates that 'Scenario of Indian Hotel Industry' looks rosy.



**Figure 1**

**Notes:** CY – Calendar Year, E- Estimated, \*up to February 2018

*Source: World Travel & Tourism Council's Economic Impact 2017, Ministry of Tourism 12.*

### Meaning of Hotel

The three most essential things of human are – food, clothing and shelter. Hotel or hotel industry alone provides two basic things: food and shelter i.e., accommodation. 'Home away from Home' is what hotel is referred as. The primary purpose of hotels is to provide travelers with shelter, food, refreshment, and similar services and goods on a commercial basis thing that are customarily found at home but are not available when on journey away from home.

As per Cambridge Dictionary<sup>18</sup>, "a hotel is a building where you pay to have a room to sleep in and where you can eat meals". Wikipedia<sup>20</sup> states that "a hotel is an establishment that provides paid lodging on a short-term basis". Thus, hotel is the

place where the tourist or person away from home becomes a customer or guest of the hotel and stops being the traveler. Hotel usually offers a full range of accommodations and services, which may include suites, public dining, banquet facilities, lounges and entertainment facilities on payment. Additionally, hotels also offer telephone call services, laundry services, travel services, internet services, recreational facilities, entertainment activities in the hotels. Thus, other than accommodation the umbrella of services included are restaurant, spa, gyms, swimming pool, travel, internet, etc.

The hotel industry consists of multiple groups such as facility maintenance and direct operations servers, housekeepers, porters, bartenders, kitchen workers, management, marketing, and staff, etc.

### **Customer Satisfaction and Hotel Industry**

Being a part of hospitality industry, it requires practice of being hospitable which involves the act of welcoming, receiving, hosting or entertaining the guest. It involves generous welcome and care of the hotel guests to ensure that customers are satisfied and return back to it whenever requires and suggest to others to so that hotels get word of mouth publicity.

Roy Hollister Williams<sup>5</sup> rightly states, *“The first step in exceeding your customer’s expectations is to know those expectations.”* Service providers need to understand their customers and design their services in such a way that maximum possible satisfaction is attained by the customer. Because customers are most likely become loyal and keep spreading good word of the hotel. In case they are not satisfied, they will talk bad about the hotel to different customers and change the hotel. As consumers expectations are increasing, the hotels will have to take extra efforts to create a feeling of wow in customers. When a customer experiences WOW, this implies that the hotels are giving them a pleasant surprise by exceeding the customers’ expectations. They are addressing their needs thoughtfully and in unexpected ways. It is an expression of their authentic interest in the person who seeks their services, not just in the transaction.

However, many hotel managers face problems trying to satisfy their customers and end up experiencing high levels of customer dissatisfaction. The problem can be solved by learning customer needs and using the knowledge to increase satisfaction.

Customer satisfaction being of utmost important, every hotel should strive to have a good relationship with its customers to enhance loyalty and thus increase its profitability through loyalty. For this hotels should be willing to adapt to the needs and expectation of the customers. They must put a lot effort in understanding customer needs and fulfilling them end up learning many factors that contribute to customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction should be given utmost consideration by the management, because it would be more expensive to draw in new customers that retaining the existing ones. In order to be fruitful, managers must focus on holding existing customers actualizing compelling arrangements of customer loyalty and steadfastness. This is particularly valid in the hotel business.

## **2. Review of Literature**

The researcher reviewed literature related to the topic online as well as printed journals, papers and magazines to understand issues related to health insurance.

**Na Le (2009/10)**<sup>35</sup> attempted to measure service quality and customer satisfaction in the hotel industry by using three most popular and quite complete models namely, SERVQUAL, HOLSERV and LODGING QUALITY INDEX for analysis of customer expectations and perceptions of men and women, Asian and European guests and disabled people related to the hotel services. Its findings were that customer expectation and perception varies between men and women, between people of Asia and Europe and this should be taken care of. Similarly, it was suggested that the hoteliers should make all the hotel services more convenient for the disable people so that they can use all the services provided. Grab bar in the bathroom and easy accessibility to the hotel/room for disable was recommended.

**Holjevac Ivanka Avelini, Marković Suzana and Raspor Sanja (Jan 2010)**<sup>29</sup> in their paper examined hotel guest comment cards (GCCs) and customer satisfaction management schemes. Findings indicated that in most hotels GCCs can be found in a folder on a room table and are not distributed randomly. Hotel guests were expected to complete GCCs during their hotel stay. It was observed that response rate to GCC was low and hotel provided no incentives to guests for completing questionnaires. The majority of GCCs do not have effective question order as they are designed according to managers’ personal experience. The researchers recommended that motivation should be provided to guests to fill up GCC and on the other hand GCCs should be designed in a scientific manner.

**Karakas Klára Morvay (2014)**<sup>34</sup>, undertook a study to measure guest satisfaction by examining the quality awareness, quality perception, guest satisfaction and the following behavioral intentions of domestic guests of spa hotels. The researcher opine that customer satisfaction cannot be achieved through prices discounts but by improvement in quality of service provided and it is only satisfaction is closely related to their willingness to return to the hotel and thus an essential condition for loyalty. He used the term fascinated for those who perceived much higher level of performance compared to expectations. They reward the company with an active positive behavior widely advertising their good experiences as ambassadors of the firm, improving the reputation. Loyalty is one of the positive results of satisfaction. It can be seen that guests are willing to pay more for the high-quality services. The positive word of mouth can be observed only among satisfied guests proportionally increasing with the level of satisfaction. It concluded that it is time to encourage hotel guests for giving feedback, because the user generated contents mean valuable market information for potential guests and service providers as well. It can help hotel managers to study the various consumer preferences from internal and external aspects of hotel attributes, so it’s also recommended for each property to track them on a daily basis.

In a study of Customer Satisfaction towards hotel Industry in Kashmir Valley, **Pazir Dil and Amin Insha (2015)**<sup>37</sup> the conclusion was that the customers are very much sensitive towards the various service segments and thus it is very much needed from the service provider's end that they should draft and present and their services in such a manner that maximum customer satisfaction is attained and a strong customer base is attained. The service providers thus need to augment their services in such a way that they meet the expectations of the customers at desired levels and also enhance their services frequently to meet the changing global scenario. Hotels must be customer centric and provide customized services and should focus on handling the complaints of the customers and addressing their grievances. They must provide the services when asked for as an exercise of building image of the hotel and gaining loyalty. Employees training be provided amounting to empowering employees to exercise responsibility, judgment and creativity in responding to guests' problems.

**Mubiri Joleen Bize (May 2016)**<sup>36</sup> on customer satisfaction stated that the needs of a customer are based on tangible aspects like quality of food, beverages, rooms, beds, beddings, etc. and non-tangible aspects of service which are influenced by the hospitality of those servicing the customers. The researchers affirmed that workers at front work area are the key faculty who frame the impression of the hotel. Thus, their appearance should be flawless, and they must strike to give every customer a customized touch. It must be remembered that customer needs are influenced by the cultural background of the customer, natural needs such as those of vegetarians, as well as the quality of the services. Workers must be caring, obliging, and chipper while serving the client if customer satisfaction is to be enhanced.

In their research paper **Anawade P.A. and Bendale Shilpa K. (2016)**<sup>1</sup> it was found that trends in perception of hoteling and spending pattern of individuals are changing constantly day by day which is mainly due to changes in the financial conditions of the individuals. Those who belong to the higher income family, the spending on luster life get changed. Thus, the hotel owners and or hospitality industry has to keep their eyes open and look outside the world for recent trends in the factor of development and subject to the need of the individual customer, is what the paper concluded.

From the various literature reviewed a lot of study is undertaken to know customer satisfaction and increase it. No study is done in the field of Wow Customer Satisfaction and hence the researcher took on the study.

### 3. Research Methodology

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Health\\_insurance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Health_insurance) - cite note-4 **Objectives of the Study**

1. To know customers needs and expectations from hotel's tangible and intangible aspects of services.
2. To understand the elements which would provide Wow Customer Satisfaction.
3. To suggest measures to overcome the gaps between customers' expectation and services offered.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Health\\_insurance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Health_insurance) - cite note-4 **Hypothesis of the Study**

**H0:** Customers experience Wow Customer Satisfaction with the facilities and services provided by hotels in India

**H1:** Customers do not experience Wow Customer Satisfaction with the facilities and services provided by hotels in India

#### Data Collection

1. **Primary Data:** Primary data is collected to get an insight into the views of respondents about the tangible and intangible aspects of services provided by hotels.
  - **Research Area:** India
  - **Sample Technique:** The study was conducted by selecting 100 based on convenience sampling. These 100 were from members of Rotary and Inner Wheel Clubs in the age group of 35 to 60 and who travel not only in India but also abroad as a part of their employment or for their own business or for fun and stay in 4 star and 5-star hotels and deluxe hotels.
  - **Data Collection Technique:** Questionnaire with open as well as close ended questions were circulated online to members of Rotary and Inner Wheel Clubs to fill it up if they were in the age group of 35 to 60. The first 100 questionnaires received were taken for analysis. It included questions relating to general ambience, lobby and reception, rooms, restaurants, staff and facilities, etc. The question was asked in close ended as to whether they were satisfied with a particular facility in Yes and No type and further, if the answer was no, then they were required to state the issues leading to dissatisfaction. They were also asked to state at least 5 expectations from hotel services in the end.

2. **Secondary Data:** Secondary Data is used to critically to study the material on the customer satisfaction in hotel industry. It helped in preparing questionnaire and making useful suggestions too. For this various research papers and articles in journals, information available on health insurance on website, etc. were referred.

Both, views received from primary data and knowledge collected from secondary data is used to analyses the issues and suggest measures.

### 4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

On the basis of the questionnaires received duly filled, the following experiences of customers which are causes of consumer dissatisfaction came to light:

#### 1. At Entrance

**Car Parking:** For those who come by car it is cumbersome to park the car and struggle with car parking.

## 2. Reception Service

- **Check in:** Most guests at the hotel arrive tired and then they find that there is time to check in either because of the procedures or because of room not being ready in spite of prior booking.
- **Check-out:** Most guests are in a hurry to leave and once they arrive at the counter the bill is not ready or there is an issue relating to billing.
- **Sitting Arrangement in Lobby:** No sitting place if there is a huge rush of guests arriving at one time or an event. The sitting arrangement at times is not comfortable.
- **Attention of Front Desk:** Staff at the front desk talk more amongst each other than paying attention to the guest.

## 3. Room

- **Electric Fittings:** Customers have to go on a treasure hunt to find all the switches to switch off all the lights. Also, however luxurious the hotel, plug points for charging too have to be hunted and are not enough. At times mobiles have to be charged in the bathroom.
- **Lighting:** Dim lights which makes to feel depressed. Foreigners like low and yellow lights. Many complained about the bad reading lights in the bedroom.
- **Bedding:** All complained that ultra-luxurious beds make them sink into the floor and they wake up with back ache and neck ache. The same with over fluffy pillows which causes neck ache.
- **Room Safe:** Room safe which is always placed so you have to bend low to open it. No overhead or closet lights to see the numbers that you punch into safe
- **Luggage Keeping Area:** Most of the time cupboard is large but space for keeping luggage to enable it to be opened and used is less. Most of the people do not have the habit of keeping clothes in the cupboard if they are going to stay just for 3-4 days. If luggage is kept down then bending every time is a problem.
- **Cooling of Room:** Most hotels have centralized AC system. But bearing of that temperature by customers differ. Some may find it too hot and some too cool. This leads to health problems too.
- **Bathroom:** Many found turning on the shower, hot and cold options to use complicated. Bathroom fittings were not easy for many to understand.
- 39% found hairdryer in the closet amusing, which was earlier found in bathrooms.
- All complained of no water in toilet and water being replaced by tissue paper.
- Glass partition for bathrooms was not at all liked by anyone. This was especially true when they shared the room with some acquaintance or business partner. They were uncomfortable.
- **Room Key:** For security purpose room key is used to operate lift to go to one's room. Many complained that for a double bed room a single key is issued and if that key is taken away by one person, the other person gets handicapped.

## 4. Restaurant Service

- **Food:** No one had any problem with quality of food and neatness with which it is served. But a few health-conscious customers felt that diet food should be available. This health conscious is increasing and the demand for diet food too will increase. A few who fast a lot opined that food that could be eaten during fasting should also be made available. At times people are hungry in the night, food is not available and not what required.
- **Food Delivery:** 64% felt that food ordered takes time to come too. That too 2 to 3 reminders have to be given.
- **Complimentary Breakfast:** 32% said that they hate going to the area where complimentary breakfast is served. They would prefer it in their room.

## 5. General

- **Wifi Facility:** Almost more than 90% complained that some hotels do not provide free wi-fi or every 24 hours they have to reconnect.
- **Pick Up and Drop Facility:** It is not provided which creates a problem if in new place. At times it is provided but the charges are too high.
- **Stay of Drivers:** This is either not provided or provided at a high cost leading to problem.
- **Porters:** Porters arrive late while checking out of the hotel to pick up the luggage
- **Smoking Area:** A few hotels do not have separate smoking area which creates problems for customers who are allergic to smoke.
- **Hotel Feedback or Guest Comment Cards (GCCs):** As per study undertaken by Holjevac Ivanka Avelini, Marković Suzana and Raspor Sanja (Jan 2010)<sup>25</sup>, GCCs can be found in a folder on a room table but are not filled up. Also, they are designed not scientifically but according to managers' personal experience.
- **Check-in Time:** Some hotels are strict regarding check-in and check-out time. It is mostly as per schedule of flights.
- **Shuttles to Town:** In case of business trip with family, the head goes for business, but family is left behind in the hotel. Since it is a new place they do not know where to go if they wish to go out.
- **Staff Ability:** 53% of respondents felt that the staff at the desk is not too helpful to solve room problems.

The above analysis of problems faced by customers shows that customers are not satisfied with the various tangible and intangible aspects of services provided by hotels. Hence, H1: Customers do not experience Wow Customer Satisfaction with

the facilities and services provided by hotels in India is accepted.

## 5. Recommendations

On the basis of suggestions of respondents, study of literature, and researcher's own experience, the following recommendations are made

**1. At Entrance:** For car parking a driver may be employed to park car for the guests and bring it to the front gate whenever required by the guest.

### 2. Reception Service

- A friendly welcome on arrival will take away at least 50% of the tiredness.
- A quick check- in/out procedure be adopted. They should be quick in verifying documents and see that bill is prepared as per the instructions of the guest.
- If prior booking is done and arrival time of the guest is known then the room must be kept ready.
- Serve welcome drinks on arrival of guests. This will remove the customers' tiredness too.
- Increase sitting facility in the lobby.
- Staff be trained to give undivided attention to the customer at the front desk
- The bell-boy could while taking the guest into the room guide the customers on various switches.
- Plug points be increased.
- It is observed that some like dim lights and some bright. Option could be for dim and bright lights to suit the needs of different kinds of people. Thus, there could be at least a few lights like one above the writing table and one above the bedroom for reading could be bright.
- Choice of hard or soft beds need to be provided. Same should be for choice of pillows.
- Room safe be placed at a proper height not requiring too much of bending and sufficient light be given in the closet to punch the numbers of the safe.
- More space be provided for luggage keeping through consulting of interior decorators to find ways for it.
- Simple and uncomplicated way of turning on the shower. Or they be guided by bell-boy.
- Jacuzzi shower, instead of bathtubs were preferred
- Hairdryers must be kept in the bathroom.
- Since Indians are used to using water in toilets it should be provided.
- The glass partition could remain, but an option of curtain too could be kept which is found in a few hotels.
- Two room keys are to be issued for double bed room. This will provide freedom to both to come in and go out.
- Nail-scissor and nail-file be kept in the bathroom or room.
- Towel warming area is a great idea as towels could be reused helping to save water. It could also be used to dry underclothes.
- 24 hours Room Service.
- Fixture and fittings in room, including bathroom be made more comfortable and Equipment and facilities are easy to use.
- Informative literature about the room be provided in regional languages. Main instructions could be in English and as per the language preference, through google translate, it could be provided in their language.
- Provide microwave in the room.

**3. Restaurant Service:** When restaurant is a part of the hotel, food and beverages can dramatically enhance the overall guest experience by offering variety of food with speed.

- Restaurants should make available dietary meal or food consumed during fasting. They should also reduce the time of delivering the food to the hotel guest. Now a days organic food is in. Items prepared with organic food also should be included in the menu.
- Thus, restaurant must provide variety of food and beverages meet guests' needs. They could also have tie ups with nearby quality restaurants to increase food assortment.
- The hotel could also send on phone WhatsApp 'Today's Special'.
- The speed of delivering food be improved upon. 24-hour restaurant service be provided.
- The hotel can send complimentary breakfast menu on phone to the guest who could choose and order it in his room with extra charges.
- Food and beverage businesses might offer special activities, such as a fundraiser, or meal discounts on certain days of the week. They could offer passport to dining to a family as a surprise or lucky draw.

### General:

- Today's guests should be provided with Digital Hospitality. Online access at home, work or on journey enables them to be multi-connected. Internet is now their lifeline. Internet services provided free of charge will be appreciated.
- Provide free pick up and drop facility from nearest railway station or airport. Else have a tie up with those at railway station and airport to pick them up and drop them.
- A separate small dormitory kind of place with separate exit may be kept for drivers.

- Have a separate Non-Smoking Floor/Area
- Customers should be motivated to complete the GCC and incentives be provided for it such as lucky draw of GCCs, coupon for dining or spa or discotheque as per wish of the winner be given.
- Flexi check-in and check-out time option be given.
- The hotel can provide shuttles to the town for a charge. Since it is by the hotel, it creates more trust and confidence in the minds of the customers.
- Other Suggestions: These are from secondary sources, researcher's friends and researcher herself: Customer relationship management is the strategies used by businesses to manage their interaction with customers throughout the customers' lifecycle. The process involves creating a good relationship with customers to increase their satisfaction and develop a culture of mutual understanding. Use different methods of enhancing customer relations such as emails, social media, telephone and its website
- The complaints of the customers ought to be well respected. It must be answered and dealt with appropriately and without much waste of time.
- 24 hours Doctor on Call
- With people becoming health conscious Health Club Facilities will be provided.
- Staff should be trained for following attributes:
  1. Responsiveness: Willingness to help customers and provide prompt service
  2. Competence: Employees possess the required skills and knowledge necessary to perform the service adequately be able to address customers' questions with the correct answers.
  3. Courtesy: Be polite, respectful, considerate toward guests.
  4. Friendliness: The extent to which employees are approachable and easy to find.
  5. Communication: Good communication implies good listening skills and using language and terms that all customers can understand.
  6. Understanding: Making the effort to know the customers' needs.
  7. Reliability: Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.
  8. Appearance: Appearance be neat with a smile on the face.
  9. Greet Guests: This is common in foreign countries which is missing in India
  10. Empathy: Give individual attention with emotional expression, deal with guests in a caring fashion and have guests' best interests at heart
  11. Awareness: Employees knew about local places of interest
  12. Over and above all this is required a pleasant staff.

In short, workers should be cheerful, helpful and caring while serving the hotel guests.

- Reservationists must try to find out particular needs beforehand.
- Hotel staff must take into account cultural differences while providing service because the service of the hotel service provider is perceived in different ways by different people depending upon the culture to which they belong. For example, in many Asian luxury hotels, a bellboy accompanies guests to the departing car and waits until the guests have departed which is not so in western countries. The key ingredient of good service seems to be personal attention or customization and not the efficiency and time savings that appear so highly valued in the western countries.
- To lure customers, schemes like discounted price package, reduced services for a lower rate packages, deal for introducing others, bring a friend for free or one gift/ congratulation on your birthday/wedding anniversary are considered good.
- Money Exchange should be there in the hotel or they may tie up with an ATM
- Souvenir Shop
- Tour Guide be made available
- For keeping children happy bed for kid and doll, game website, free kid meal up to the age of 12, baby sitting facility, etc. will be appreciated.

## 6. Conclusion

Being scaled down from the earlier 8-10%, constrained by the regulatory hurdles the industry is currently facing. The growth is expected to come from the rise in online bookings. Hotel bookings are one of the least penetrated segments in the travel categories in India. The long-term outlook for the Indian hospitality business continues to be positive, both for the business and leisure segments." As per a report by ICRA<sup>26</sup>, "the revenue growth for the Indian hotel industry is expected to improve to 6-7% in FY18, despite growth prospects

The prediction for the hotel industry in India shows that its future is bright. With revival in the global economy, international tourist inflow into the country as well as domestic tourist movement within the country is also expected to rise. With FDI and hosting of international sports events and trade fairs and exhibitions in the country rise in hotels also is expected. Competition is going to be tough.

Gone are the days of customer satisfaction. That is in general provided by every hotel. But what is now required in Wow Customer Satisfaction. Since hotel industry is a part of service industry, satisfaction depends on various aspects of services –

tangible and intangible provided by hotels. It is clear that the needs of a customer are based on tangible and non-tangible aspects of service provision. A loyal customer is a customer who keeps consuming the services of a hotel and keeps recommending the services of the hotel to other people. Commitment to customer satisfaction increases the chances of winning their loyalty.

Different parts of the hotel operation like rooms, reception, lobby, restaurants, gym, spa, etc. directly effect the image of the hotel. Hotels being part of service industry, hotel staff are the key to customer satisfaction. Their flawless appearance and the conduct of those providing the services is a major factor when it comes to satisfaction. The ultimate aim should be the feeling of the customer that “Wow! I got more than what I paid for”.

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