

ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF HOSPITALITY SERVICE QUALITY ON TOURIST SATISFACTION IN HOTELS: A CASE STUDY OF KUALA LUMPUR

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ABSTRACT:

The tourism and hospitality industry are one of the leading sectors in Malaysia, making a significant contribution to the country's GDP growth. Malaysia is widely recognized as a prominent tourist destination, and this sector plays a vital role in national economic development. To remain competitive and sustainable, organizations in this sector must develop a deeper understanding of the factors that influence customer satisfaction. Therefore, this study aims to examine the relationship between hospitality service quality and tourist satisfaction in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The research is grounded in Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory (EDT), which posits that customer satisfaction is shaped by the comparison between expected and actual service performance. A quantitative research design was employed, and data were collected from a sample of 404 tourists who had stayed in various hotels across Kuala Lumpur. Stratified sampling was utilized to ensure a representative distribution of the tourist population. The statistical analysis using SPSS version 27, SmartPLS 4 was used to perform Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), encompassing both measurement and structural model evaluations. Surprisingly, the findings revealed no statistically significant direct relationship between hospitality service quality and tourist satisfaction. This suggests that superior service quality alone may not directly influence tourist satisfaction levels, highlighting the importance of managing customer expectations and considering other psychological or contextual factors that contribute to satisfaction.

Keywords: Hospitality; Service Quality; Hotels; Tourist Satisfaction, Kuala Lumpur

INTRODUCTION:

Tourism is widely recognized as a catalyst for economic growth, particularly in developing countries. According to Hundt (1996), many Third World nations actively promote tourism as a means of advancing their economies. Tourism serves as a key driver for regional and urban development, with governments leveraging it to enhance infrastructure, create employment opportunities, generate foreign exchange earnings, improve balance of payments, and support regional equity (Jones et al., 2011). Ultimately, tourism contributes not only to national revenue but also to increasing the income of individuals and benefiting local communities.

It is undeniable that the tourism and hospitality sector has played a pivotal role in transforming Malaysia from a lower-middle-income to an upper-middle-income country. The growth in tourism has significantly boosted GDP, with the sector contributing approximately 14 % of GDP in 2023, While the services sector as a whole accounted for 53.42% of GDP, tourism's direct contribution to GDP reached RM275.8 billion, making it the third-largest economic contributor after manufacturing and commodities (Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board, 2023).

As one of the world's top travel destinations, Malaysia consistently draws millions of international visitors annually, with Kuala Lumpur standing out as a key urban hub. Notably, it recorded the

highest growth rate in international arrivals among the top 10 cities, experiencing a remarkable 73% increase compared to 2023. Euromonitor International has ranked Kuala Lumpur among the top ten cities worldwide for international tourist arrivals (Sekaran, 2024). As the tourism industry becomes increasingly saturated with options, delivering exceptional guest experiences is essential for gaining a competitive edge. In such a competitive environment, ensuring high levels of tourist satisfaction is no longer optional it has become a strategic priority for hospitality organizations aiming for long-term sustainability and continued market relevance. Satisfied tourists are more likely to become repeat visitors and brand advocates, contributing to customer loyalty, positive word-of-mouth, and overall business growth. Therefore, understanding and meeting tourists' expectations is vital for maintaining competitiveness in today's dynamic hospitality sector.

Over recent years, the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction in the hospitality sector has received considerable scholarly attention. Numerous studies have explored this connection, highlighting its critical role in maintaining competitiveness. For instance, research by Bui & Robinson (2024), Latif et al. (2024), and PJ et al. (2023) has examined the influence of service quality on customer satisfaction within highly competitive industries. Lai et al. (2018) specifically emphasized the substantial impact of service quality on customer satisfaction in the tourism and hospitality context. Their findings suggest that when customers perceive service quality as high, they are more likely to be satisfied with their overall experience. This conclusion was further supported by Chin et al. (2019), who also found a positive correlation between service quality and customer satisfaction in the tourism sector. Collectively, these studies underscore the essential role of service excellence in achieving and maintaining customer satisfaction. Therefore, this study aims to identify specific gaps and challenges faced by travel agencies, particularly in the dynamic and bustling environment of Kuala Lumpur. By focusing on these issues, the research seeks to provide practical insights into how enhanced service quality and responsiveness can significantly improve tourist satisfaction in the region. This study seeks to explore the effect of hospitality service quality on tourist satisfaction in Malaysian hotels. It is hypothesized that hospitality service quality has a positive impact on tourist satisfaction

Hospitality Service Quality and Tourist Satisfaction (TS):

The tourism sector places considerable emphasis on research exploring the relationship between hospitality service quality, tourist satisfaction (TS), and social exchange theory. Tourist satisfaction is closely tied to the perceived quality of hospitality services, which subsequently influences tourist loyalty and the likelihood of repeat visits. Social exchange theory provides a valuable framework for understanding how tourists evaluate their experiences and the services they receive.

According to social exchange theory, individuals engage in interactions with the expectation of receiving rewards or benefits in return. In the context of hospitality, guests anticipate receiving high-quality services in exchange for their financial investment. When service delivery exceeds expectations, guests are more likely to feel satisfied, believing that they have received fair value for their money. This positive experience can foster stronger emotional attachment, enhance brand loyalty, and encourage repeat patronage. Conversely, if service quality falls short of expectations, guests may perceive the exchange as unfair, leading to dissatisfaction and a decreased likelihood of returning or recommending the establishment.

Numerous studies have explored the interplay between social exchange theory, service quality, and customer satisfaction. For example, Yoo and Bai (2013) found that customer satisfaction is

positively influenced by perceived service quality, which also enhances customer loyalty. Similarly, Kim et al. (2018) demonstrated that perceived fairness acts as a mediator between service quality and customer trust.

A growing body of literature supports the link between hospitality service quality and tourist satisfaction. For instance, Miguel (2024) explored how intercultural communication and cultural diversity affect service quality and customer satisfaction in tourism and hospitality. Munawaroh et al. (2024) emphasized the role of customer behavior, especially satisfaction, in shaping the performance of hospitality services. Nazarian et al. (2024) examined how service quality, satisfaction, intention to return, and e-word-of-mouth interact within the hotel industry. In another study, Abdullah et al. (2023) analyzed how food, beverage, and service quality influence customer satisfaction and retention in five-star hotels. Noor and Sharma (2023) investigated the relationship between expected and perceived service quality and satisfaction in the context of sustainable tourism in Bangladesh.

Overall, the relationship between service quality, social exchange principles, and tourist satisfaction is complex and multifaceted. Hospitality providers play a pivotal role in shaping tourists' perceptions of fairness and value. By ensuring high-quality service and exceeding customer expectations, these providers can not only enhance guest satisfaction but also improve customer retention, loyalty, and long-term profitability. While extensive research has established strong correlations between service quality and customer satisfaction in various global contexts, further investigation is needed to draw definitive conclusions within the Malaysian hospitality sector.

This study is underpinned by the Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory (EDT), a well-established framework in consumer behavior and service marketing. EDT explains customer satisfaction as a result of a comparison between initial expectations and actual performance of a product or service. When applied to the tourism and hospitality sector, this theory helps to understand how tourists evaluate their hotel experiences based on their preconceived expectations and the quality of service actually received. According to the theory, three possible outcomes can occur: Positive disconfirmation: when the actual service exceeds expectations, leading to satisfaction. Confirmation: when the service matches expectations, leading to neutral satisfaction. Negative disconfirmation: when the service falls short of expectations, leading to dissatisfaction.

In terms of facility and tourist satisfaction (TS), Langvinienė and Daunoravičiūtė (2015) assert that within the modern hospitality sector, entities that provide lodging also furnish an array of supplementary services. Gourmet fare and recreational pursuits, including excursions, conferences, and novel points of interest, are among these amenities. The endeavors above require the construction of supplementary infrastructure and the recruitment of additional competent staff. Moreover, the hotel industry is currently witnessing a transition in focus toward alternative accommodations, chargeback systems, corporate governance, and ownership. Oshins (2017) states that the industrial environment and industry complexity have undergone significant transformations due to these recent transitions. Panda and Das (2014) emphasize the importance of facility-based tangible (OBT) and market-based tangible (MBT) factors in their study, as they both possess the capacity to influence the degree of consumer satisfaction. A robust correlation exists between CS and the availability of tangible resources, empathetic customer service, dependable and responsive operations, and security measures. As a result, enhanced equipment can influence the client's viewpoint regarding the organization and subsequently affect the customer's level of satisfaction.

METHOD:

This article utilised a quantitative research method whereas customer in the tourist industry in Malaysia was chosen as the population for this study because the tourism sector serves as a significant revenue source for Malaysia. Therefore, three, four, and five-star hotels were selected as the population for this study. the occupancy rates of four- and five-star hotels in Malaysia were lower than those of three-star hotels, and when compared to three-star hotels in neighboring countries, these hotels also underperformed. Therefore, three, four, and five-star hotels were selected as the population for this study. The sample size for this study was determined using the methodology outlined Their approach provides a structured way to calculate an optimal sample size. The development of these guidelines is characterized by the use of rigorous scientific methods and calculations. These guidelines offer a dependable approach for researchers to establish the appropriate sample size. Finally, there were 414 tourists were completed their survey forms.

The Stratified random sampling (SRS) is a statistical approach that involves dividing a population into distinct subgroups, or strata, based on specific characteristics under investigation. According to the nature of the research questions and objectives of this study, which aim to examine the effect of hospitality service quality (HSQL) on Tourist Satisfaction this study employed the SRS technique to choose a representative sample from the entire population (three, four, and five stars hotels in Kuala Lumpur). The face -to face self-administrated survey forms were passed to the respondents, the concern of participant was obtained prior of the study. SRS is a method of selecting subgroups or strata to be included in a sample in a way that reflects their representation in the population, based on proportions (Almnizel & Alatom, 2019). Used SRS in this study essentially, enables a more efficient and representative sample of the population in contrast to ordinary random sampling. The research instrument used in this study consists of two parts. The first part includes questions on the demographic information of the respondents, such as gender, age, and country. The second part contains questions about respondents' opinions related to the main variables under investigation: HSQL and TS. This section is subdivided into four parts: Part A addresses Service Quality (SQ) Part B focuses on TS. Participants are required to respond to questions in each section using a five-point Likert scale, where they indicate their level of agreement or disagreement (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree).

The measurement of tourist satisfaction was measured by 10 items, these items are divided into three dimensions, they are Accommodation, Facilities, and Food. Table 1, shows the full measurement of tourist satisfaction with codes for each Dimension. The SERVQUAL Measuring Scale were used as instrument questionnaire of this study. Table 2, shows the full measurement of hospitality service quality. There are 22 expectation items and 22 perception items, all categorized under the five dimensions. There were The Five Dimensions were measured include (1) Tangibles: The physical appearance of facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials (cleanliness and condition of the facilities, the quality of the furnishings and décor, and the variety of services and amenities provided. Tangibles may also refer to the physical look of a hotel or other kind of company.) (2) Reliability: The ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately, a hotel or other company is reliable if it can supply its goods and services regularly and dependably without making mistakes or experiencing delays (A hotel or other company is reliable if it can supply its goods and services regularly and dependably without making mistakes or experiencing delays).(3) Responsiveness: The willingness to help customers

and provide prompt service, (Customer service, responsiveness refers to the readiness and capability of staff members to react swiftly and effectively to the demands and requests of customers). (4) Assurance: The knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence. Assurance also refers to the personnel's expertise, competence, and professionalism (customer's faith and confidence in a hotel or other company). (5) Empathy: The caring, individualized attention the firm provides to its customers (The capacity of staff members to comprehend and react to the requirements and emotions of customers, as well as to tailor their attention and care to each client, is referred to as empathy).

Research question:

What is the effect of hospitality service quality (HSQL) on tourist satisfaction in Malaysian hotels.

Research Hypothesis (H1):

Hypotheses H¹: Hospitality service quality positively impacts Tourist Satisfaction (TS) in Malaysia.

Table 1: The Full Measurement of Tourist Satisfaction with Codes for Dimension and Item

No	items	Codes
Accommodation		ACCO
1	I am content with the overall performance of the accommodation.	ACCO1
2	This accommodation has performed as expected.	ACCO2
3	The level of satisfaction I experience with this accommodation closely matches my ideal expectations.	ACCO3
Facilities		FAC
4	The various hotel rooms and amenities within the hotel are enjoyable	FAC1
5	The amenities offer comfort and a welcoming atmosphere.	FAC2
6	The facilities adhere to safety standards.	FAC3
7	The hotel rooms and facilities (including elevators, bedrooms, corridors, etc.) are well-maintained and in good working order.	FAC4
Food		FOD
8	I am content with nutritious meals.	FOD1
9	Reflecting on my overall dining experiences, my choices for healthy food were prudent.	FOD2
10	In general, I am satisfied with the quality of healthy food based on my experiences.	FOD3

Table 2: The Full Items of The HSQL and the Item Code

No	Tangibles (TAN)	Code
1	The hotel's physical facilities are aesthetically pleasing.	TAN1

2	Staff members at the hotel maintain a tidy appearance.	TAN2
3	Materials related to the hotel's services are visually attractive.	TAN3
4	The hotel features contemporary equipment and offers internet access, along with efficient check-in and check-out services.	TAN4
Reliability		REL
5	The hotel demonstrates genuine concern in addressing customer issues.	REL1
6	Services are executed accurately on the first attempt.	REL2
7	The hotel delivers services promptly as promised.	REL3
8	The hotel prioritizes meticulous record-keeping.	REL4
9	Staff members communicate clear timelines for service delivery.	REL5
Responsiveness		RESP
10	Customers receive timely assistance from hotel staff.	RESP1
11	Hotel employees promptly attend to customer needs.	RESP2
12	Staff members are readily available to assist customers.	RESP3
13	Employees promptly answer the customer's requests.	RESP4
Assurance		ASU
14	The behavior of hotel staff instils a sense of trust in customers.	ASU1
15	Guests feel assured during their transactions with the hotel.	ASU2
16	The hotel's staff consistently demonstrate politeness.	ASU3
17	Employees have the expertise to handle customer inquiries effectively.	ASU4
Empathy		EMT
18	The hotel provides personalized attention to guests.	EMT1
19	The business hours in this hotel are suitable for its clientele.	EMT2
20	The hotel employs staff who offer individualized attention.	EMT3
21	The hotel prioritizes the well-being of its guests.	EMT3
22	Staff members understand and cater to your specific requirements.	EMT4

Data analysis:

The information obtained from participants via the survey was analyzed in stages using SPSS version 27. Initially, the data underwent screening and preliminary analysis, including assessments for outliers, normality, linearity, and multicollinearity. Additionally, descriptive analysis was performed to summarize the variables and participants' profiles in this study. Following this, the study utilized SmartPLS 4 to evaluate the partial least squares structural equation path model (PLS-SEM), which involved two main steps: assessing the measurement model and the structural model.

RESULT:

Participants' Demographic Background:

The demographic analysis of the participants reveals a slight predominance of male respondents, with 57.7% identifying as male and 42.3% as female (refer Table 3). This gender disparity may reflect the actual demographic composition of tourists staying in Malaysian hotels or suggest a greater willingness among male tourists to participate in the survey. Recognizing this distribution is essential for hospitality providers, as it can guide the development of services and innovations tailored to the distinct needs and preferences of different genders, ultimately enhancing the overall tourist experience.

Table 3: The Profile of Respondents (n=404)

	Category	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender	Male	233	57.7	57.7	57.7
	Female	171	42.3	42.3	100
Age	21-25	24	5.9	5.9	5.9
	26-30	53	13.1	13.1	19.1
	31-35	241	59.7	59.7	78.7
	36-40	86	21.3	21.3	100
Education	Diploma	28	6.9	6.9	6.9
	Bachelor	182	45.0	45.0	52.0
	Master	113	28.0	28.0	80.0
	PhD	57	14.1	14.1	94.1
	Professional Certificate	24	5.9	5.9	100.0
Type of Hotel	Three Stars	192	47.5	47.5	47.5
	Four Stars	145	35.9	35.9	83.4
	Five Stars	67	16.6	16.6	100
Period of Staying	Two Nights	125	30.9	30.9	30.9
	Three Nights	209	51.7	51.7	82.7
	More than 3 Nights	70	17.3	17.3	100.0

The type of hotel where respondents stayed also varied. Most respondents (47.5%) stayed in three-star hotels, which are typically more affordable and cater to a broad audience. Four-star hotels were chosen by 35.9% of the respondents, offering a higher level of service and comfort. Five-star hotels, known for their luxury and premium services, were selected by 16.6% of the respondents (Table 3). This distribution highlights the range of preferences and budget considerations among the tourists.

Investigating the Relationship Between Hospitality Service Quality (HSQL) and Tourist Satisfaction in Hotels in Kuala Lumpur

Descriptive analysis aims to outline respondent traits, evaluate statistical parameters across all study variables (encompassing dependent, independent variables), identify any breaches in assumptions within individual tests, and cater to particular research queries. The descriptive analysis conducted, in this study, on hospitality service quality (HSQL), and tourist satisfaction (TS) provides valuable insights into the state of tourist hospitality within hotels in Kuala Lumpur

Table 4: The Results of Descriptive Statistics of the Variables

Variables	Mean Std.	Std. Deviation	Min	Max
Hospitality Service Quality	3.1554	0.42024	1.86	4.32
Tourist Satisfaction	3.9015	0.48291	2.60	4.90

Table 4 presents the mean and standard deviation for each of these constructs, offering a comprehensive view of their implementation levels. Among these variables, tourist satisfaction emerges with the highest mean value of 3.9015, indicating a relatively positive perception of overall satisfaction among tourists staying in Malaysian hotels. However, it's notable that tourist satisfaction also exhibits the highest standard deviation of 0.48291, suggesting considerable variability in satisfaction levels among respondents. This variability underscores the diverse experiences and perceptions of tourists within the Malaysian hospitality industry, highlighting the need for tailored strategies to enhance overall satisfaction.

Conversely, hospitality service quality (HSQL) displays the lowest mean value of 3.1554, accompanied by the lowest standard deviation of 0.42024. While the mean score indicates a moderate level of perceived service quality, the low standard deviation suggests relatively consistent perceptions among respondents regarding service quality within Malaysian hotels. This finding implies a certain level of uniformity in the quality of hospitality services provided, which could be attributed to established standards and practices within the industry.

Findings on Evaluation of Measurement Model hospitality service quality on Tourist Quality

Figure 1 and Table 5 depicts the model of measurement utilized in the study. This figure provides a visual representation of the relationships between observed indicators and latent constructs, facilitating the evaluation of the measurement model.

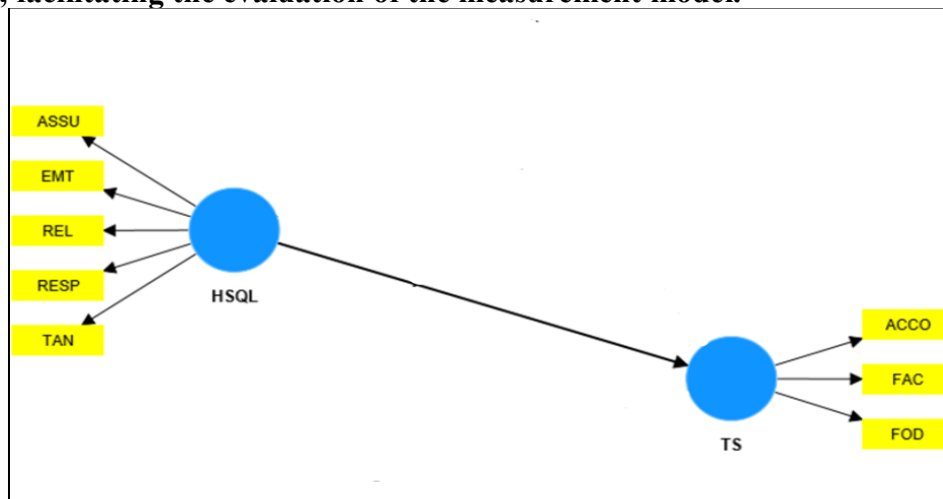


Figure 1: Measurement Model

Table 5: The Results of Outer Loading, Composite Reliability, Cronbach's alpha, and Average Variance Extracted.

Variables & Dimensions	Item	Outer Loadings	Cronbach's alpha (α)	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Hospitality Service Quality (HSQ)			0.888	0.918	0.693
Tangibles	TAN1	0.847	0.858	0.904	0.701
	TAN2	0.824			
	TAN3	0.858			
	TAN4	0.819			
Reliability	REL1	0.848	0.878	0.911	0.672
	REL2	0.789			
	REL3	0.847			
	REL4	0.830			
	REL5	0.782			
Responsiveness	RESP1	0.822	0.886	0.921	0.744
	RESP2	0.882			
	RESP3	0.859			
	RESP4	0.884			
Assurance	ASSU1	0.841	0.848	0.897	0.685
	ASSU2	0.851			
	ASSU3	0.853			
	ASSU4	0.763			
Empathy	EMT1	0.760	0.826	0.877	0.589
	EMT2	0.765			
	EMT3	0.757			
	EMT4	0.787			
	EMT5	0.766			
	SOC2	0.828			
	SOC3	0.847			
	SOC4	0.855			
Tourist Satisfaction (TS)			0.727	0.846	0.647
Food	FOD1	0.883	0.874	0.923	0.799
	FOD2	0.914			
	FOD3	0.884			
Accommodation	ACCO1	0.888	0.881	0.927	0.808
	ACCO2	0.912			
	ACCO3	0.896			
Facility	FAC1	0.877	0.906	0.934	0.780
	FAC2	0.866			
	FUC3	0.903			
	FUC4	0.886			

In assessing internal consistency reliability, two widely employed measures are Alpha Cronbach (α) and composite reliability (CR) (Hair et al., 2020; Ringle et al., 2009). Alpha Cronbach (α) assumes equal reliability across all items, which can potentially lead to inaccuracies, as pointed out by Ringle et al. (2020). In contrast, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) prioritizes the reliability of individual items, prompting a preference for composite reliability over Cronbach's alpha for internal consistency evaluation (Ringle et al., 2009).

Composite reliability, and alpha Cronbach (α) values exceeding 0.70 are generally considered acceptable for exploratory research purposes (Becker et al., 2023; Hair et al., 2022). In the current study, the composite reliability, and alpha Cronbach (α) values in the outer model range from 0.878 to 0.949 and 0.799 to 0.928 respectively for first order and second order (as depicted in Table 5), all surpassing the threshold of 0.70. Consequently, this analysis affirms the internal consistency of the model, bolstering the reliability of the research findings.

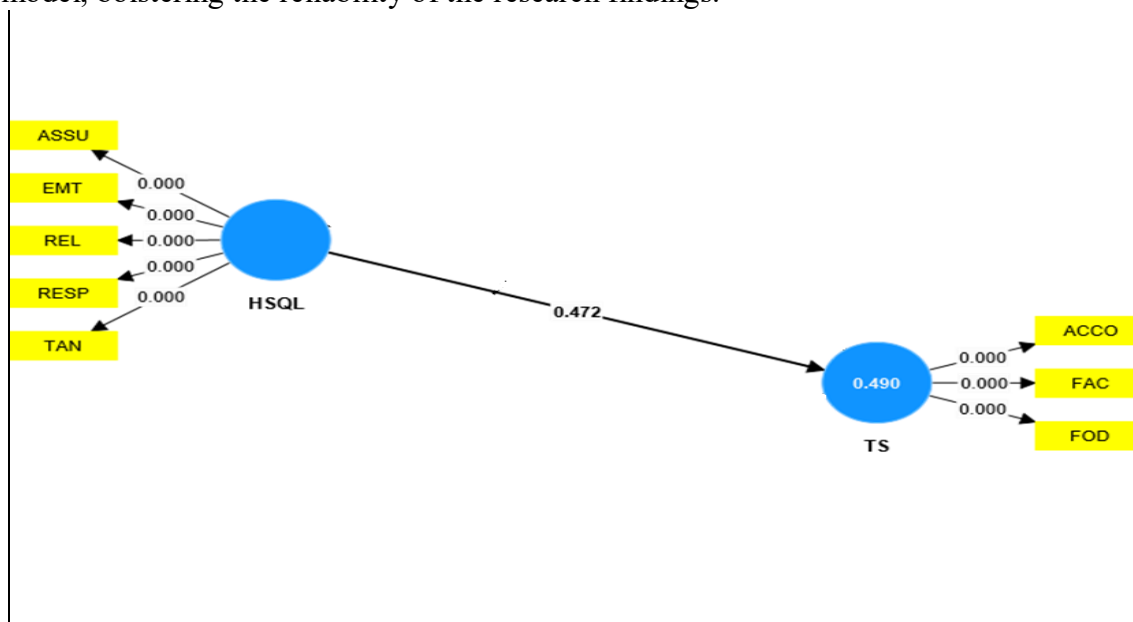


Figure 2: Path Model Significance Results

Figure illustrates the estimates for the full structural model, which are Hospitality Service Quality (HSQL), and independent variables, Tourist Satisfaction (TS) as the dependent variable, Following recommendations by Becker et al. (2023); Hair et al. (2020), several criteria need to be met. These criteria encompass the statistically significant nature of hypothesized associations within the research model, as well as the values of R square, f square, and Q square, indicative of the model's predictive relevance.

As indicated in Table 5, AVE values ranging from 0.767 to 0.907. These values surpass the correlations among the components, indicating that each construct explains more variance in its indicators than it shares with other constructs. By adhering to the Fornell-Larcker criterion, which suggests that the AVE should exceed the correlations, the research confirms discriminant validity. This means that the constructs in the study are distinct from each other and measure different theoretical concepts, supporting the robustness of the research findings.

Hypothesis Evaluation Results:

Table 6: Hypothesis Evaluation Results

NO. H	H. Direct effect	Path Coefficient	S- Deviation	T-V	P-V	Results
H1	HSQL -> TS	0.035	0.049	0.720	0.472	Not supported

Table displays the results of the analysis regarding the path coefficient of the structural model, with a specific emphasis on the direct impact. The purpose of this analysis is to investigate research question number one, which is also referred to as RQ1. The present study follows the suggestion put forth by Hair et al. (2020), which states that a "p-value less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$, representing a 95% Confidence Interval) and a t-value greater than 1.96 ($t > 1.96$ for two tail)" indicate the existence of a significant direct correlation between the variables investigated in the study.

The analysis of the provided data indicates that there is no statistically significant positive relationship between Hospitality Service (HSQL) and Tourist Satisfaction (TS) in Malaysia ($\beta = 0.035$, $t = 0.720$, $p > 0.05$). The p-value exceeds the threshold of 0.05 for two-tailed regression, suggesting insignificance and thus lacks justification for considering the relationship between HSQL and TS significant. Consequently, the findings do not support Hypothesis 1 (H1), leading to its rejection. In conclusion, the analysis of the data reveals that while there is no significant positive relationship between Hospitality Service (HSQL) and Tourist Satisfaction (TS) in studied population in this study among Kuala Lumpur tourist.

DISCUSSION:

In the context of this study, tourists visiting Kuala Lumpur bring certain expectations regarding hotel hospitality services such as cleanliness, staff professionalism, responsiveness, and comfort. Their level of satisfaction depends on how well these expectations are met or surpassed. The surprising finding from the data analysis that there is no statistically significant direct relationship between service quality and tourist satisfaction can be better understood through the lens of EDT. It suggests that even when service quality is objectively high, satisfaction may not increase if the service merely confirms expectations rather than exceeds them. Additionally, other factors such as cultural background, prior experiences, or the price paid may also influence the disconfirmation process and thereby affect satisfaction.

Thus, this study contributes to the existing literature by highlighting that service quality alone may not guarantee tourist satisfaction unless it generates positive disconfirmation. Incorporating theory EDT helps explain the nuanced psychological process behind customer evaluations in the hospitality industry, especially in a competitive and mature tourism market like Kuala Lumpur.

The lack of a significant association between hospitality service quality and tourist satisfaction in Malaysia can be attributed to the diverse perspectives among respondents regarding the effectiveness of service aspects in hospitality contexts. For instance, the study participants may have demanding tasks such as providing comprehensive service coverage, dealing with insufficient facilities, and facing challenges in connecting with the community (Ismail et al, 2013). The problematic situation raised stress levels among participants, which could have influenced their

understanding of how different aspects of service quality contribute to the overall satisfaction of tourists in the Malaysian hospitality industry.

Insignificant association between HSQL and TS in Malaysia can be attributed and consistent with the argument of the Scholars who have indicated that customer satisfaction encompasses a customer's overall sentiments based on various interactions and experiences with a service provider (Sureshchandar, et al, 2002). customers expect a higher level of service quality from the hotels, and failure to meet these expectations can lead to customer dissatisfaction (Phiri & Mcwabe, 2013). However, service quality is a more abstract concept that can be influenced by perceptions of value and experiences of others that may not always be positive. Variables such as advertising, different forms of communication, prices of the services, and the shared experiences of others are likely to impact perceptions of service quality (Sureshchandar, et al, 2002; Bitner & Hubert, 1994)

However, the result of the current study found a positive and insignificant impact of HSQL on TS in the Malaysian hotel industry is consistent with previous studies such as Ismail et al, (2013) which found that the relationship between Customer Satisfaction (CS) and SQ was insignificant in Malaysia. De Silva et al, (2022) which found that the CS was insignificantly affected by some elements of SQ (assurance and responsiveness) in the mini supermarket. In addition, the current result was consistent with a study conducted by Salsabila and Rulianto (2023). Their study did not find a notable impact of SQ on CS. This is in similar result established by Phiri and Mcwabe, (2013) who revealed that, when customers' expectation of SQ is higher than the actual SQ then the customers will be dissatisfied with the SQ.

However, the result of this study was inconsistent with previous studies that found a significant impact of HSQL on CS, such as Abdullah et al. (2023) who investigated the relationship between Five-Star CS and retention as influenced by Food and Beverage and Service Quality. Their found cuisine, beverage, and service quality positively impact CS and customer retention. Also, Noor and Sharma (2023) explore the positive association between anticipated and Per Service Quality and consumer satisfaction in Bangladesh's sustainable tourism development context. In addition, the current result is inconsistent with Fejza & Fejza (2023) who examine customer happiness and service quality for sustainability and tourism growth. Kosovo hotel statistics include local and foreign guests, and found Leisure guests loved high-quality food and drinks and friendly, timely, clean, and pleasant service. The importance of service quality and customer happiness in sustainable tourism is evident. Another study by Ezeh and Ezeuduji's (2023) study investigated the influence of SERVPERF attributes on guest satisfaction and loyalty in low-cost hotels, which revealed that dependability, responsiveness, and empathy positively impact guest satisfaction and influence guest loyalty.

While this finding aligns with prior studies such as Ismail et al. (2013), De Silva et al. (2022), and Salsabila and Rulianto (2023), which also reported no significant impact of service quality on customer satisfaction, it contrasts with several other studies that have demonstrated a strong and significant link between the two constructs. Research by Abdullah et al. (2023), Noor and Sharma (2023), Fejza & Fejza (2023), and Ezeh and Ezeuduji (2023) emphasized that various service quality dimensions, such as food and beverage quality, cleanliness, responsiveness, and empathy significantly influence customer satisfaction and loyalty in the hospitality and tourism sectors. These contradictory findings suggest that the relationship between service quality and tourist satisfaction at hotels in Kuala Lumpur may be context-specific, influenced by factors such as service expectations, tourist demographics, hotel category, cultural background, and regional

service standards. Therefore, while the current study contributes to the growing body of literature on service quality and customer satisfaction in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, it also highlights the need for a more nuanced understanding of how different service quality components affect satisfaction across different hotel types and tourist segments.

CONCLUSION:

This study delved into the intricate relationships among hospitality service quality (HSQL), and tourist satisfaction (TS) in Kuala Lumpur hotels. By examining these connections, the research aimed to shed light on the direct and indirect impacts of hospitality service quality (HSQL), and Tourist Satisfaction.

The analysis highlighted that the direct impact of HSQL on TS was not statistically significant. This indicates that while high-quality service alone might not directly lead to higher tourist satisfaction, other underlying factors may play a more influential role in shaping tourists' overall experiences. For instance, elements such as price-value perception, prior expectations, cultural compatibility, personal motivations, or even external factors like destination image and environmental conditions could moderate or mediate the relationship between service quality and satisfaction.

This finding suggests that hospitality providers cannot rely solely on service quality enhancements to drive satisfaction. Instead, they must adopt a holistic approach that integrates emotional engagement, cultural sensitivity, personalized service, and consistent value delivery. Additionally, the result may reflect the evolving expectations of modern tourists, who increasingly seek authentic, immersive, and experience-driven travel rather than just standard quality benchmarks. Future research should explore moderating variables in greater depth and consider using mixed methods or longitudinal designs to capture the dynamic and multifaceted nature of tourist satisfaction. From a managerial perspective, the study underscores the importance of continuously evaluating customer needs and adjusting service strategies beyond basic quality standards to ensure meaningful and memorable guest experiences.

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