

# An Experiential Analysis of Guest Perceptions Using SERVQUAL Dimensions in a Post-Pandemic Hospitality Context

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**Abstract**—The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly altered consumer expectations and service delivery in the hospitality industry, especially in airport hotels that cater to transient and health-conscious travelers. This study explores the impact of service quality on customer satisfaction, loyalty, and brand image in the context of Cochin's airport hotels, utilizing the SERVQUAL model as the primary analytical framework. Data were collected from 210 guests through structured questionnaires and analyzed using SPSS version 25, employing descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis. Findings indicate that among the five SERVQUAL dimensions—tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy—reliability and empathy showed the strongest influence on customer satisfaction and loyalty, while tangibility and assurance significantly impacted brand image. The study also reveals a shift in post-pandemic service expectations, with guests placing higher emphasis on hygiene, safety, and staff responsiveness. The results offer practical insights for hotel managers to redesign service protocols to align with evolving guest priorities and reinforce brand loyalty in a competitive, safety-sensitive market environment.

**Index Terms**—Guest Perception, hospitality industry, post-COVID, Service Quality

## I INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry is intrinsically service-oriented, where the perception of service quality significantly influences customer satisfaction, brand image, and ultimately, customer loyalty. Among the various segments of hospitality, airport hotels hold a unique position due to their clientele of time-sensitive, convenience-seeking travelers—typically

business professionals, airline crew, and transit passengers.[1] In the post-COVID era, these establishments face renewed challenges and expectations, especially in the realm of health, hygiene, responsiveness, and reliability of services.

Cochin, home to one of the busiest international airports in India, has seen rapid growth in airport hotel development. These hotels must maintain high service standards to meet rising guest expectations shaped by pandemic-related anxieties and global hospitality trends. Hence, evaluating service quality from the guest's perspective becomes a critical strategic factor in sustaining competitive advantage and building long-term customer relationships.[2]

### Concept and Meaning of Service Quality

Service quality refers to the comparison between customer expectations and actual service performance. It is often viewed as a multidimensional construct encompassing both technical quality (what is delivered) and functional quality (how it is delivered).[3] In hospitality, it includes elements such as room cleanliness, staff behavior, responsiveness, assurance, and physical ambience. The most widely used model for assessing service quality is the SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry.[4] which includes five key dimensions tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. Empirical studies affirm that high service quality leads to customer satisfaction, which strengthens brand image and fosters loyalty.[5] However, recent literature also suggests that post-COVID guest behavior shows elevated concern for safety protocols, employee hygiene, and real-time

responsiveness, especially in travel-related accommodations like airport hotels.[6]

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, guest preferences have shifted dramatically. Travelers are now more selective, expecting enhanced cleanliness, digitalized contactless services, and more empathetic customer care.[7] These expectations necessitate a reassessment of existing service quality models and performance indicators. This research is especially relevant for airport hotels in Cochin, which function as critical nodes for international and domestic travelers.[8] Understanding how SERVQUAL dimensions are perceived in this unique environment will help in redefining service delivery standards to build trust, satisfaction, and loyalty in the “new normal.”[9]

While there is abundant literature on service quality and customer satisfaction in hospitality, studies focusing specifically on airport hotels in the Indian context—particularly in Cochin—remain scarce. Furthermore, there is limited empirical evidence integrating SERVQUAL analysis in the post-COVID scenario.[10] This study attempts to bridge that gap by assessing guest perceptions of service quality and its effect on customer satisfaction, loyalty, and brand image in the emerging hospitality climate.

## II MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study employed a quantitative, descriptive, and cross-sectional research design, leveraging a structured questionnaire to gather primary data from hotel guests. This research design was chosen for its capacity to provide a clear, statistical representation of guest perceptions regarding service quality and its impact on customer satisfaction, loyalty, and brand image. Quantitative methods are particularly suited for understanding relationships between variables in a measurable way. The post-positivist paradigm guided the approach, under the assumption that reality is objectively measurable and can be analyzed through statistical tools to derive meaningful insights. This paradigm supports the idea that service quality, customer satisfaction, and brand loyalty can be accurately quantified and statistically tested within the context of the hospitality industry.

**Study Area and Population:** The research was conducted among guests who had stayed at airport hotels in proximity to Cochin International Airport,

Kerala, India. This region was selected due to its strategic importance in the tourism and aviation sectors, attracting both domestic and international travelers. The study population consisted of hotel guests who had checked in at these hotels during the post-COVID-19 reopening period (2022–2024). To ensure a comprehensive representation, respondents were selected from various hotels within the region, with an emphasis on those whose stays met the study criteria of recent travel experiences and post-pandemic service interactions.

**Sample Size and Sampling Technique:** The study utilized convenience sampling, a non-probability technique that allows for the selection of participants who are accessible and willing to participate within the timeframe of the study. Given the transient nature of hotel guests, convenience sampling was deemed appropriate for this context. The final sample size comprised 210 valid responses, which were sufficient for conducting a robust statistical analysis. The sample size was calculated based on Cochran’s formula for large populations, ensuring that it was adequate for achieving statistically reliable results. This sample size was deemed appropriate for applying various statistical techniques, including correlation and regression analyses, which require an adequate number of responses for valid generalization.

**Instrumentation and Questionnaire Design:** The primary instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire based on the SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman et al. (1988), which is widely used in service quality research. The SERVQUAL model focuses on five key dimensions of service qualities namely Tangibility (appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, etc.), Reliability (ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately), Responsiveness (willingness to help customers and provide prompt service), Assurance (knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence), Empathy (caring, individualized attention provided to customers)

The questionnaire was structured into four sections: **Demographic Profile** – Questions related to the respondent’s age, gender, nationality, purpose of stay (business, leisure, etc.), and frequency of hotel stays. **Service Quality Dimensions** – This section contained 22 items, adapted from Parasuraman et al. (1988),

measuring perceptions of service quality on a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

**Customer Satisfaction** – A section of 5 items, adapted from Oliver's (1997) work, assessed overall satisfaction with the hotel experience.

**Customer Loyalty and Brand Image** – A section of 6 items, adapted from research by Kandampully & Suhartanto (2000) and Kim et al. (2021), evaluated the impact of service quality on loyalty and brand image.

The questionnaire was pilot tested on a sample of 20 respondents to ensure clarity, reliability, and validity of the questions. The Cronbach's alpha values for all constructs exceeded 0.7, indicating acceptable internal consistency and reliability.

**Data Collection Procedure:** Data collection was carried out over a span of six weeks. The process involved both in-person distribution at selected hotels and online surveys sent via email to recent hotel guests. Hotel management assisted in distributing the online links to the survey to ensure it reached a representative sample. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and informed consent was obtained before they filled out the survey. The participation was voluntary, and respondents could choose to remain anonymous. No personally identifiable information was collected, ensuring confidentiality throughout the study.

**Statistical Tools and Software:** Data collected from the questionnaire were coded and analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 25. The following statistical techniques were applied to analyze the data:

**Descriptive Statistics:** To summarize the demographic characteristics of the respondents and to provide an overview of the respondents' perceptions of service quality, customer satisfaction, and loyalty.

**Reliability Analysis:** Conducted using Cronbach's Alpha to assess the internal consistency of the constructs, ensuring that the measurement items reliably reflect the underlying variables.

**Correlation Analysis:** To examine the relationships between service quality dimensions and the dependent variables—customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, and brand image. Pearson's

correlation coefficient was used to test the strength and direction of the relationships.

**ANOVA (Analysis of Variance):** Used to compare the mean scores of service quality perceptions and satisfaction levels across different demographic groups (e.g., gender, age, nationality). This technique helps in determining if there are statistically significant differences between subgroups.

**Ethical Considerations:** The study adhered to established ethical guidelines for research. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed that they could withdraw at any time without consequences. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the process, with all data being anonymized. The research did not collect any personally identifiable information. All data collected were used exclusively for research purposes, and results were reported in aggregate form to ensure privacy and data protection for all participants.

### III RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study based on the analysis of 210 valid responses collected from hotel guests in the vicinity of Cochin International Airport, Kerala, India. The results are derived from statistical analysis conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 25, with various tests such as descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, correlation analysis, multiple regression analysis, and ANOVA applied to understand the relationships between service quality dimensions, customer satisfaction, loyalty, and brand image.

**Demographic Profile of Respondents:** The demographic profile of the respondents provided insights into the characteristics of hotel guests in the Cochin area. A total of 210 responses were analyzed, of which 74% were male and 26% were female. The majority of respondents were aged between 26-35 years (45%), followed by those aged 36-45 years (32%), indicating that the most frequent hotel guests are young adults and middle-aged professionals. Additionally, 72% of the respondents were domestic travelers, while 28% were international guests, highlighting Cochin International Airport's significance in attracting both local and foreign tourists.

Table 1: Demographic value of the respondents:

Demographic Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	155	74%
Female	55	26%
Age Group		
18–25	30	14%
26–35	94	45%
36–45	67	32%
46–55	15	7%
56+	4	2%
Nationality		
Domestic	151	72%
International	59	28%
Purpose of Stay		
Business	111	53%
Leisure	99	47%

**Reliability Analysis:** A reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha to assess the internal consistency of the measurement items for each construct (service quality dimensions, satisfaction, loyalty, and brand image). The results were:

**Service Quality Dimensions:** Cronbach's Alpha = 0.91, indicating excellent internal consistency.

**Customer Satisfaction:** Cronbach's Alpha = 0.85, which is considered acceptable.

**Customer Loyalty:** Cronbach's Alpha = 0.87, also within the acceptable range.

**Brand Image:** Cronbach's Alpha = 0.83, indicating good reliability.

All constructs exhibited acceptable to excellent reliability, demonstrating that the questionnaire was consistent and dependable for measuring the constructs of interest.

Table 2. Reliability Test

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha
Service Quality Dimensions	0.91
Customer Satisfaction	0.85
Customer Loyalty	0.87
Brand Image	0.83

#### Correlation Analysis

To explore the relationships between the dimensions of service quality and the outcomes of customer

satisfaction, loyalty, and brand image, Pearson's correlation analysis was performed. The results indicated significant positive correlations:

**Service Quality & Customer Satisfaction:**  $r = 0.75$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . This strong positive correlation suggests that higher perceptions of service quality are closely associated with higher levels of customer satisfaction.

This indicates that improving service quality could significantly boost guest satisfaction in airport hotels.

**Service Quality & Customer Loyalty:**  $r = 0.68$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . A moderate to strong positive correlation was found between service quality and customer loyalty, indicating that service quality is an important determinant of repeat visits and long-term loyalty.

**Service Quality & Brand Image:**  $r = 0.72$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . A significant positive relationship was found between service quality and the brand image of the hotels. This implies that a better service experience positively influences the way customers perceive the hotel brand.

**Customer Satisfaction & Customer Loyalty:**  $r = 0.83$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . A very strong positive correlation was observed between satisfaction and loyalty, reinforcing the idea that satisfied customers are more likely to be loyal.

**Customer Satisfaction & Brand Image:**  $r = 0.78$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . A strong positive correlation between satisfaction and brand image suggests that satisfied customers are likely to have a more favourable view of the hotel's brand.

These findings underline the critical role of service quality in shaping customer satisfaction, loyalty, and the brand image of airport hotels.

Table 3: Correlation Analysis

Variable	Customer Satisfaction	Customer Loyalty	Brand Image
Tangibility	0.72**	0.62**	0.67**
Reliability	0.75**	0.68**	0.72**
Responsiveness	0.63**	0.60**	0.58**
Assurance	0.78**	0.71**	0.74**
Empathy	0.70**	0.65**	0.69**
Note: $p < 0.01$ indicates a significant relationship.			

**ANOVA Analysis:** To investigate whether service quality perceptions varied significantly across different demographic groups, an ANOVA was conducted. The following findings were observed:

**Gender:** Significant differences were found in the perceptions of Tangibility ( $F = 4.65$ ,  $p = 0.032$ ) and

Assurance ( $F = 5.20$ ,  $p = 0.024$ ), with female respondents rating the service quality slightly higher than male respondents.

Nationality: International guests reported higher satisfaction levels across Reliability ( $F = 3.78$ ,  $p = 0.030$ ) and Empathy ( $F = 4.01$ ,  $p = 0.027$ ) compared to domestic travelers, suggesting that international guests may place more value on personalized service.

Table 4: ANOVA Results for Demographic Variations in Service Quality Dimensions

Demographic Variable	Service Quality Dimension	F-value	p-value
Gender	Tangibility	4.65	0.032
	Assurance	5.2	0.024
Nationality	Reliability	3.78	0.03
	Empathy	4.01	0.027

The results of this study highlight the significant role of service quality in shaping customer satisfaction, loyalty, and brand image in airport hotels. The findings are consistent with previous research indicating that service quality is a primary determinant of guest perceptions. The Reliability and Assurance dimensions were identified as the strongest predictors of customer satisfaction, loyalty, and brand image, which is consistent with the critical role these dimensions play in the hospitality industry. This suggests that airport hotels must focus on providing consistent, reliable service and ensuring that staff are knowledgeable and confident to inspire trust among guests.

#### IV CONCLUSION

The study highlights the significant impact of service quality on customer satisfaction, loyalty, and brand image in airport hotels near Cochin International Airport, especially in the post-pandemic context. The findings indicate that dimensions such as Reliability and Assurance were most influential in shaping customer perceptions. The study suggests that enhancing these aspects of service quality can help improve guest satisfaction and foster loyalty. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of addressing responsiveness as an area for improvement and recommends focusing on staff training to meet the evolving expectations of customers in a post-COVID world.

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