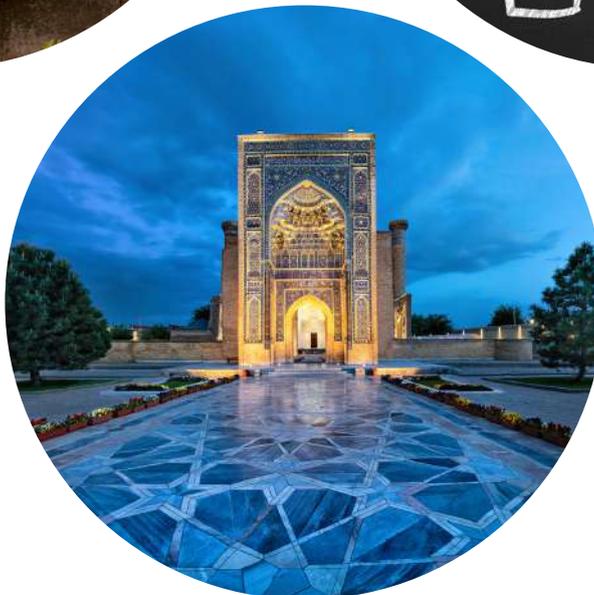


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DEVELOPMENT OF HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY BY IMPROVING SERVICE QUALITY AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN UZBEKISTAN

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

Today, 70 % of world GDB is earning by the service industry, which shows the importance of service sector among the all industries. Therefore, it is very important to increase competitiveness, effectiveness and flexibility of any organization in a service field such as hospitality companies. Service quality is an essential element to achieve success and attract more customers to the sector. The main reasons of customers to visit a hotel may be the outside of the control of the hotel and providing a satisfactory experience to the customers is dependent to the efforts of both management and hotel staffs (Saleh & Ryan, 1991). Since Uzbekistan became an independent state in 1991, there has been much effort to develop and access the tourism industry by the government. Therefore, there has been a rapid increase in the tourists' flow to the country where you can encounter mixture beauty of ancient East and modern West architecture. The cities such as Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva were always becoming the main destination of tourists who wish to meet ancient building and monuments with more than 500 years –old- history. As the number of tourists and visitors rising, the demand for improving the quality of service and customer satisfaction is increasing day by day.

By reviewing the literature of service quality, we have found that early studies attempted to concentrate on defining and measuring the service quality in manufacturing sphere. Although attention to the quality started in the 1920s on the manufacturing field, research in service industry began to develop in the late 1970s in several parts of the world (Gummesson, 1991). Over the last three decades, the service sector became the main income source for developed countries and the researches revealed that the service quality is very essential for today's organizations to succeed and survive in competitive environment (Ghobadian, A., Speller, S. & Jones, M.1994). Berry and his colleagues (1989) found out that service quality lead to several outcomes such as customer loyalty and new customers' attraction, positive word-of-mouth, well-balanced employee satisfaction and commitment, enhanced corporate image, reduced costs, and increased business performance. Moreover, the empirical work conducted by the Strategic Planning Institute has indicated the positive relationship between perceived quality and an organization's financial performance (Berry, 1991). According to the Profit Impact of Marketing Strategy program of the Institute has concluded that companies with perceived high-quality products and services typically

had higher market share, higher return on investment and less turnover than companies with perceived low quality. Therefore, service quality of products and services offered by the companies is considered as the most important factor affecting business performance (Juran & Gryna, 1993).

As there are many tourist routes and tours to Uzbekistan, the number of hospitality resources have been increased based on government's laws and innovative political view. In order to pay more attention to tourism flow to Uzbekistan, our government made laws and decrees: The President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoev instructed a number of changes in tourism sphere by means of his decree that was outsourced on government newspaper "Xalk so'zi" (People's word) on December 7 in 2016 "Measures to ensure the rapid development of tourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan" Decree" and it made a great deal on development of hospitality industry in Uzbekistan (Khamidov, 2010).

Finally, identification of the distortions and problems in the Uzbek tourism and hospitality industry is hindering the development of the sphere. Khamidov's (2010) study shows that the potential of hospitality and tourism industry of Uzbekistan is being exploited to a much lower level from its capacity. The hospitality industry and its corresponding products and services are dependent on few certain destinations. Therefore, in order to develop the Hospitality Industry in the country, it is time to investigate the dimension of the Service quality, customer's satisfaction and the relationship between these two constructs in order to get better understanding the factors which are more essential in development of hospitality industry.

1.2 Research Problems and Objectives

Customers' evaluation of service quality has always been a source of critical information for companies whose aim is to develop service performance, be strong enough for gist competencies and obtain more strategically position in the market (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Jain & Gupta, 2004). Companies that provide services with higher quality do earn higher economic returns and make a more satisfied customers (Aaker & Jacobson, 1994; Gilbert et al., 2004; Gilbert & Veloutsou, 2006). Therefore, it has become critical for service providers to find out competitive advantages by providing superior service (Lee et al., 2004).

As competition on the improvement of the service quality is becoming more vital for the hotel industry, it is important to be able to define the service quality, identify the dimensions of the service quality and their relative importance for customers (Fick and Ritchie, 1991). Having

knowledge on these fields could help managers in the challenge of improving the service quality in the hospitality industry (Asubonteng, P., McCleary, K.J. & Swan, J.E., 1996.).

Today's organizations have many problems to solve. For example, organizations should identify how to find out customers' expectations. Moreover, Companies should understand whether it is necessary to implement various techniques to get best results in identifying customer satisfaction (Gonzales & Garzia, 2008).

Maxham (2001) argued that problems in the service delivery can result customers to wait. Boshoff and Leong (1998) noticed that an apology has influence on customer's intention to purchase again. There are number of reasons for difficulties related to service control, service is about performance so there is no production process where you can put in quality (it is only possible through training), there are also huge variations in services and therefore they are difficult to standardize. The reason for this is that the human factor always will make it impossible to establish a much-customized product (Cottle, 1990).

The efficiency of the whole system is possible only if we monitor and analyze the demands of the customers, as well as define and control the process and implement constant improvements. Quality is a complex term, made up of several elements and criteria. All quality elements or criteria are equally important in order to obtain one hundred percent quality. If only one element of quality is missing, the complete quality of product or service is impossible to obtain.

Problems in service quality measurement comes from a lack of exact and measurable parameters for the determination of quality. It is not the case with product quality since products have certain and measurable indicators like durability, number of defective products and similar, which make it relatively easy to determine the level of quality.

Based on the problems mentioned above, present study has following objectives:

- find out the service quality expectations of hotels' customers;
- inspect whether the quality dimensions included in the SERVQUAL model apply in an international environment such as in Uzbekistan;
- analyze the level of importance of each specific dimension for the users of hotels' services.
- observe the relationship between each dimensions of service quality and customer satisfaction.

We believe that this research will positively make a share on the development of the service quality in hospitality industry of Uzbekistan. We assume that by enhancing the improvement of the service quality among hospitality service providers, the customers will be satisfied and the

flow of customers will increase and as a result, the income will go up. Overall, the results of this study may enable the managers of the hospitality industry to analyze the parts which they did mistakes on the process of reaching customers' satisfaction.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1 Service quality

Service quality is usually defined as the customer's judgement of the overall excellence or superiority of the service (Zeithaml, 1988). In other words, service quality is defined as an evaluation of how well a provided service matches to the customers' expectations (BusinessDictionary.com). When service quality is mentioned, the dimensions namely (reliability, responsiveness, competence, access, courtesy, communication, credibility, security, understanding and knowing the customer and tangibles) proposed by Parasuraman et al. (1985) come to mind.

Service quality is requested for gaining customer satisfaction and is resulted to customer perceptions and customer expectations. Oliver (1997) argued that service quality can be understood as the result of the correlations between customers' expectations about the service they will consume and their perceptions about the service provider. That means that the higher are the perceptions, then the more excellent are the expectations the service will be considered. Providing the expectations that are equal to the perceptions of service is considered favorable and if the expectations are not matched with the service provided, it will be considered unsatisfactory.

Chang (2008) mentioned that the concept of service quality can be generally thought from the customer's point of view as they can have various values, various ground of evaluations, and various situations. Parasuraman and his colleagues (1990) stated that service quality is an extrinsically perceived characteristic based on the customer's experience about the service that the customer perceived through the service encounter. According to the research of Kumra (2008), service quality is both involved in the final product and service, as well as involved in the manufacturing and delivering process, therefore employee involvement is important to produce hospitality products or services. Grönroos (2007) suggested a model namely "Total perceived service quality" that is a comparison between customer expectations of the service and their experience of the service they have received before. As he believed in what customer is really looking for and what they assess, the service quality is based on two dimensions. The first dimension is the technical quality and it belongs to the outcome, what is delivered or what the customer gain from the service. The latter one is the functional quality that indicates to the manner in which the service is provided or how it is provided. Both dimensions influence the total image

and the perception of quality in different ways. According to Total Perceived Service Quality Model, perceived quality of a service is not only enhanced by the experiences of the quality elements that the consumer used for assessment whether quality is perceived as satisfactory, neutral, or unsatisfactory. It is also affected by the perceived quality of delivered service as well as the outcome of the evaluation process.

Besides the general elements of quality, the product or service have to satisfy specific elements of quality, according to the demands of the profession in their pertaining activity. Today quality is the result of growing and increasingly diverse needs of the consumers, along with a highly increasing competition, market globalization and the development of modern technology. Based on Parasuraman et al. (1991), service providers can obtain their competitive overcome by utilizing innovative technology for the purpose of improving service quality and reaching market demand.

2.2 Customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is defined as a judgement that a product or service feature, or the product or service itself, provides pleasurable consumption (Oliver, 1997). Satisfaction can also be described as a matched response of service and an attitude change as a result of the consumption. Customer satisfaction as a concept remains a central position in business planning and performing processes. The purpose of performing and achieving customer satisfaction is one of the most essential problem that currently business providers, scientists and managers are facing (Band, 1978; Bitner, 1990; Oliver & De Sarbo, 1988; Parasuraman, et al, 1988). However, this concept is relatively so far. In the 1970s, for example, American companies, for some reasons, did not pay more attention to customer satisfaction as an issue. Governing market study also gained the result which the States was, "succeeding very well in providing acceptable levels of satisfaction to the customers," and that, "customers are happy and they get satisfaction in their buying process ... considerably more often than they face to difficulty and discontent" (Westbrook, et al., 1978).

The concept of Customer Satisfaction has tested exact characteristic even in those conditions with having a long-standing process of satisfaction research (Oliver, 1981). The most often given question on the definition of satisfaction has been whether it is a cognitive process or an emotional state. Howard and Sheth (1969) suggested satisfaction as the client's cognitive state of being necessarily or unnecessarily rewarded for the sacrifice he has undergone." In the same line, satisfaction was defined as a choice that the selected product is stable with past beliefs with respect

to that choice"(Engel & Blackwell, 1982). Some efforts have been done to reach accurately these cognitive and emotional processes. For example, Woodruff, Cadotte and Jenkins (1983) argued that Customer satisfaction should be interpreted to show the relationship between the cognitive and emotional processes, because "customer satisfaction is an emotional thought due to confirmation". In the same way, Pfaff (1977) stated that both the cognitive and the affective models might be valid for determining satisfaction. Those combined definitional attempts are also mainly resulted in more up to date customer satisfaction studies (Oliver & De Sarbo, 1988). A customer's overall satisfaction with the services of the company is laid on all the practices of the customers with that company. Such as service quality, customer satisfaction can happen in several steps in a company e.g. satisfaction with the client person, satisfaction with the main service and satisfaction with the company itself.

2.3 Theory of SERVQUAL model.

The SERVQUAL model is considered as a corresponding conceptual frame for the study and service quality measurement in the service sector. The model has been developed, examined and adapted during various studies in cooperation with the Marketing Science Institute from Texas and numerous companies operating in the service industry. The model is grounded on the definition of quality as a comparison of the predicted and the received service. SERVQUAL is based on the customer's thought of service quality. The concept is based on the gap between expectations and perception of the consumers.

Service quality indicates a multidimensional structure. One of these multidimensional characteristics is a logical attempt to build a list of necessary elements from the regular requirements of the customers. A sample of a scale involving desirable characteristics of services, known as SERVQUAL scale, is nowadays quite common in literature. It was developed in the marketing fields with the aim to measure service quality. In the original SERVQUAL instrument, Parasuraman et al. (1985) shown service quality through ten dimensions which they summed up them into five attributes later in 1988:

- 1) Tangibles,
- 2) Reliability,
- 3) Assurance,
- 4) Responsiveness,
- 5) Empathy.

2.4 Observing service quality in the Hotel Industry.

In recent years, a number of studies have focused on service quality in the hotel industry (e.g., Juwaheer, 2004; Ekinici et al., 2003; Tsang & Qu, 2000; Mei et al., 1999). The analysis of these studies have shared several contributions in order to better understanding the dimensional structure of service quality of hotels. At the same time, these studies have resulted that there might have been other quality dimensions to deal with for the hotels that serve to different markets and thus divided into not identical segments of the hotel industry such as, resort hotels, motels, airport hotels, convention hotels, etc. which all have distinguishing characteristics. These studies have also shown that, in hotel setting, some of quality dimensions were different from the five dimensions described by the original SERVQUAL researchers. Several researchers proposed plenty of service quality measurement methods which provides available literature (Erto & Vanacore, 2002; Parasuraman et al., 1985; Philip & Hazlett, 1997; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Franceschini & Rossetto, 1997; Teas, 1994; Schvaneveldt et al., 1991). The given methods can totally be distinguished in two groups, as incident-based or attribute-based service quality measurement methods (Stauss & Weinlich, 1997). The incident-based methods utilize the incidents that customers experience in service contact situations. Attribute-based methods exist in a wide range of variants. Among these variants, the SERVQUAL instrument has attracted the greatest attention as a result of its claim of being able to measure the relevant dimensions of the perceived service quality, regardless of which service industry is being considered (Gilbert & Wong, 2002; Tsang & Qu, 2000; Brown & Swartz, 1989; Carman, 1990; Parasuraman et al., 1988, 1991, 1994a). The SERVQUAL instrument still continues to appeal to both academics and practitioners despite numerous criticisms pointed at the scale (Caruana et al., 2000).

Mei et al. (1999) examined the dimensions of service quality in the hotel industry in Australia. They used the SERVQUAL instrument as a foundation and developed a new scale called HOLSERV scale, a new instrument to observe service quality in the hotel industry. As the key findings of their study, the authors came to the conclusion that service quality was illustrated by three dimensions in the hotel industry, relating to “employees”, “tangibles” and “reliability”, and the best indicator of service quality was the dimension referred to as “employees”. Saleh and Ryan (1992) did a study in the hotel industry and identified five dimensions of service quality. However, the dimensions they found were “conviviality”, “tangibles”, “reassurance”, “avoid

sarcasm” and “empathy”, and they varied from those in SERVQUAL instrument. Their study also showed that the “conviviality” dimension belonged to most of the variance. Knutson et al. (1990), choosing SERVQUAL as a main point, developed LODGSERV, an instrument which can be used to measure service quality in the hotel industry. In their study, five service quality dimensions appeared, among them “reliability” was the first essential dimension for evaluating the service quality, followed by “assurance”, “responsiveness”, “tangibles”, and “empathy”. Patton et al. (1994) reversed LODGSERV into Japanese and Chinese and adapted the instrument in Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Australia and the UK. Their findings showed that LODGSERV keeps its reliability when controlled in cultures outside the US. Oberoi and Hales (1990) created a scale to observe service quality in conference hotels in the UK. Due to the research, perception of service quality was two dimensional, and consisted of “tangibles” and “intangibles”. Webster and Hung (1994) composed a questionnaire that was so simple to use for measuring service quality in hotel industry. The survey was based on the SERVQUAL instrument. The authors created the adapted instrument and summarized that their instrument was real, trustful and experimental, and suggest some privileges when compared with SERVQUAL. The adapted instrument contains eight dimensions: “tangibles”, “reliability”, “communication”, “responsiveness”, “security”, “understanding”, and “convenience”. Caruana et al. (2000) observed the advantageousness of the three-column format SERVQUAL instrument composed by Parasuraman et al. in 1994. The findings indicated that the perception segment was the right component, developing up to date concerns about the usefulness of the revised expectations scale in service quality measurement. The results of the study produced a three-dimensional structure: “reliability”, “tangibles”, while “responsiveness”, “assurance” and “empathy” combining into a single factor. Fick and Ritchie (1991) surveyed both the working process of the SERVQUAL scale and its control usage in four main branches of the travel and tourism industry: airline, hotel, restaurant, and ski area services. Their result was that “reliability” and “assurance” being the most important expectations concerning service for all four branches. The feedback of their study stated the five dimensional structure and showed the usefulness of the SERVQUAL instrument, at the same time in contrast they also found several of various attitude and conclusions. The authors’ final words were that while the matters and restrictions of the instrument did not affect its usefulness, care had to be taken in the interpretation of results derived from its final circulation. They also found out that SERVQUAL, and any agreement of it, was most achievable when comparing firms by a common service segment rather than across all segments. Philip and Hazlett (1997) suggested an analysis of the SERVQUAL instrument and elucidated the discussable areas related to the instrument. The authors assumed that its five dimensions did not adequately suitable for some of the more critical matters related to the assessment of single services. In contrast to this idea, they recommended

their Pivotal–Core–Peripheral model (P–C–P model). The authors requested that their model requires an easy, but highly useful, composite figure for evaluating the service quality of any service sphere. Armstrong et al. (1997), by utilizing the SERVQUAL instrument, surveyed the effect of “expectations” on service quality perceptions in the Hong Kong hotel industry which was one of the cross-cultural examples. They summed up that important “expectations’ varieties can occur between cultural groups and that “expectations” did not follow the existence of SERVQUAL. Their findings showed that for hotel services expectations of service is unlike from culture to culture. The results of the before-done studies found in related literature cited above illustrated that attention must be taken in attempts for increasing service quality in the hotel industry, since in hotel setting some of quality dimensions were different from the five dimensions described by the original SERVQUAL researchers, service quality dimensions differ from one segment of hotel industry to another, and for hotel services customer expectations of service differ from culture to culture.

Chapter 3. Research Methodology and Hypothesis Development

3.1 Research Model

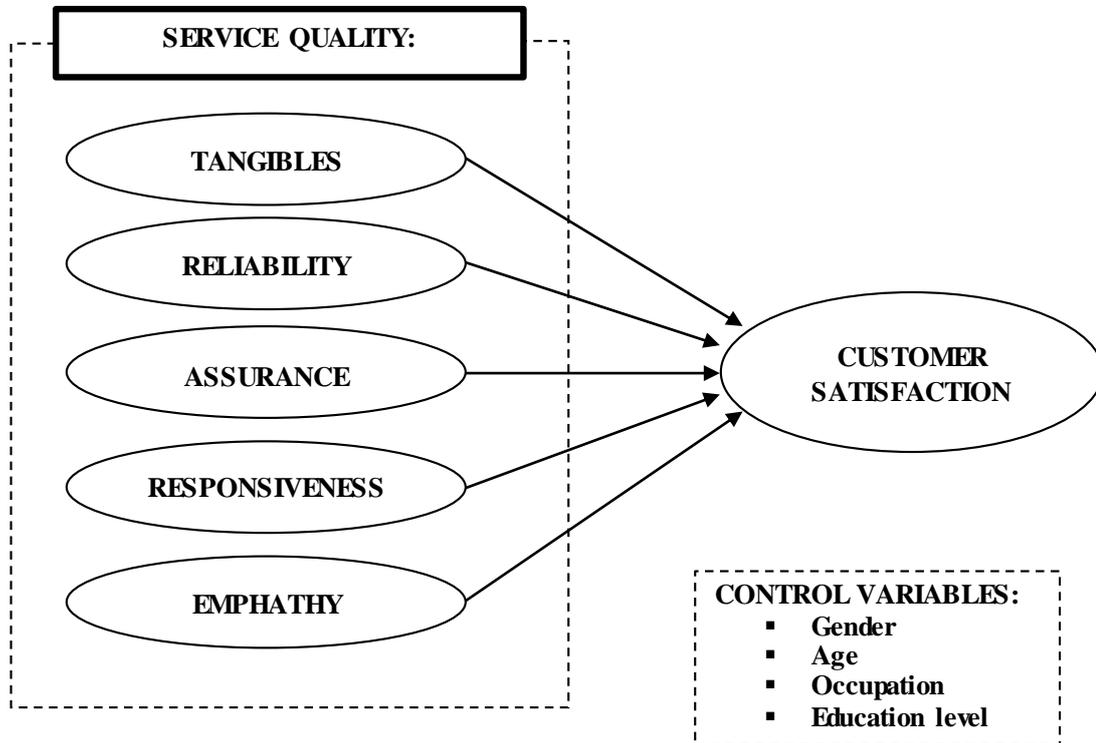


Figure 1. Proposed Research Model

3.2 Hypothesis development

Nowadays, organizations within and outside the hospitality industry are trying to deliver both their goods, services and high "quality" and "satisfaction" that will result to increase among customers to brand loyalty and market share in the competition. The efficiency of customer satisfaction (CS) and its correlation with service quality (SQ), occupancy rate and profitability has long been exhorted by both management experts and researchers in the hospitality sphere (Brewton, 1990; Edwards, 1992; Greger & Withiam, 1991; Hirst, 1992; Kirwin, 1992; Knutson, 1988; Ravel, 1992; Shifflet, 1989; Walker, 1988; Withiam, 1991; Wolff, 1992). CS and SQ often top the list of the most important matters that must be recognized by hospitality industry managers

(*HR Focus*, 1992 a, b). These beliefs for observing CS and SQ in the hospitality industry have been suggested in accordance with the necessity to position companies competitively in the marketplace.

Although determining the term service quality is not simple, theorists usually value that the concept is personal and subjective that consumer perceptions constitute an essential element of its conceptualization. The most acceptable definition of service quality is based on a global consumer judgment of the superiority of the product or service (Parasuraman et al., 1988), and then affects consumer expectations of the service and perceptions of the company occurring the service (Grönroos, 1994; Parasuraman et al., 1985). Some researchers dictate the gap model and measure perceived quality on the basis of disconfirmations of consumer expectations. A more usual application causes the use of the SERVQUAL scale (Parasuraman et al., 1985), though some empirical research has indicated reliability and validity problems with this scale (Teas, 1993). Therefore, recent offers suggest the use of customer perceptions to analyze service quality (Cronin & Taylor, 1992), which becomes to offer a superior criterion of psychometric and predictive markings (Parasuraman et al., 1994; Zeithaml et al., 1996).

Consumers realize service quality as satisfaction or meeting of expectations, a matter arises about the use of the term satisfaction. Owing to their alike meanings, some marketers determine a high interrelation between service quality and satisfaction (Cronin et al., 2000; Spreng & Mackoy, 1996), though they vary in some respects (Bansal & Taylor, 1999; Oliver, 1980). Determining definitions make this difference more obvious: Customer satisfaction causes from personal and global transactions, whereas service quality requires a general image of the superiority or inferiority of the service companies and the services (Bitner & Hubert, 1994) or a usual attention toward services (Bitner, 1990). Furthermore, some questions still remain relating to the causal relationship between customer satisfaction and service quality. However this relationship may be important, the goal of this research is to consider consumer evaluations (Cronin & Taylor, 1992). Most of the articles that attempt to examine this relationship are not empirical (Iacobucci et al., 1995); those few seems to be not accurate because consumers have problem in considering between the different levels (service versus global quality) and between quality and satisfaction (Bitner & Hubert, 1994). Some authors represent satisfaction as an effect of perceived service quality (Bitner, 1990; Bolton & Drew, 1991; Carman, 1990). That is, decent service quality events may cause a consumer to improve and stay stable their global aspect service sphere, such that a recognition of particular evaluations (satisfaction with a transaction) results in a global evaluation (perceived quality). Several articles disagree and discuss that service quality is

a priority of satisfaction. In their proposal to diminish that opposition, both Cronin and Taylor (1992) and Ekinici (2004) believed that service quality must be an essential part of customer satisfaction. Gibson (2005) suggested that satisfied customers then becoming loyal customers and so that means that they also spread positive word of mouth which consequently lead to the development of hospitality industry. Understanding which factors that influence customer satisfaction makes it easier to design and deliver service offers that corresponds to the business requirements.

Based on the arguments above we propose following hypothesis:

H.1. Service quality has a positive effect on customer satisfaction.

As there are five dimensions of service quality, let's examine each dimension's effect to customer satisfaction

- *H.1-1. Tangibles has a positive effect on customer satisfaction.*
- *H.1-2. Reliability has a positive effect on customer satisfaction.*
- *H.1-3. Assurance has a positive effect on customer satisfaction.*
- *H.1-4. Responsiveness has a positive effect on customer satisfaction.*
- *H.1-5. Empathy has a positive effect on customer satisfaction*

Chapter 4. Research Findings

4.1 Survey questionnaire development

In our study, we conducted a self-administered questionnaire, an adapted/modified version of SERVQUAL, to analyze the service quality expectations and perceptions of the customers of hotels. We adapted the questionnaire from Hsieh et al. (2007), which was designed to assess the respondents' expectations and perceptions related to the quality of services offered by the hotel. We developed our questionnaire by reviewing relevant literature, survey instruments of past studies, and information derived from experts (academia and industry). After a review of the literature and discussions with specialists, 23 measurement items of service quality developed in the questionnaire. In terms of customer satisfaction, 3 measurement items of customer satisfaction was adapted from Janssen (2001). The questionnaire assessed respondents' perceptions of overall service quality and satisfaction on the five-point scale : (1) indicating "strongly not sure" and (5) "strongly sure". The five-point scale was different from SERVQUAL, which had seven-point scales.

Table 1. Operational definition and questions

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Measurement items</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Tangibles	Tangibles are the physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of personnel		
Questions	Hardware facilities	7	Hsieh et al. (2007),
	The convenience of parking		
	The style of the interior		
	The location of the hotel		
	The lot sizes in which the hotel occupies		
	Food and beverages service		
	Additional facilities and activities provide by the hotel, including exercise gym, sports		

Reliability	Reliability is the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately		
Questions	Sanitary environment	6	Hsieh et al. (2007),
	The characteristics of water		
	The safety and privacy facilities		
	The specialized skill of services personal		
	Instant service		
	The image of the hotel		
Assurance	Assurance is guaranteeing the process of performing services		
Questions	Price level	3	Hsieh et al. (2007),
	Meeting the demands of customers		
	Convenience of reservation procedure		
Responsiveness	quick problem-solving ability of the service personnel		
Questions	The quick problemsolving abilities by the service personal	2	Hsieh et al. (2007),
	The courteous attitude by the service personal		
Empathy	additional services		
Questions	Special promotions	5	Hsieh et al. (2007),
	Opening hours		
	Permanent medical assistance		
	Convenience traffic route/shuttle		
	Tourism route suggestion		
Customer satisfaction	Customers satisfaction with the aspects of services		
Questions	Overall I am satisfied with hospitality services	3	Janssen (2001)
	I would not refuse to stay again		
	I am satisfied with the important aspects of the service		

4.2 Data Collection

We collected data randomly from customers of hotels in Uzbekistan. In data collection, we conducted online questionnaire by using Google Survey. We collected the data from September 5

to December 4 2018. In the cover letter of the survey, we emphasized that participation in the survey was voluntary and the anonymity and confidentiality of individual questionnaires were guaranteed. We asked 230 guests to participate in our survey. Out of 230 participants, 167 respondents provided completed valid data on all variables (response rate was 72 %). We transferred all answers to a Likert scale from 1 to 5, 1 for “strongly not sure” and 5 for “strongly sure” respectively. SPSS 23 and AMOS software were used for data analysis.

Chapter 5. Results and Conclusion

5.1 Data analysis

This section demonstrates descriptive analysis results of the data set. In our study, among the respondents, 71.8 % were men and 28.2 % were women. The percentage of males is higher than females. As regards to respondents' age, 19.2 % were between age of 18 and 24, 49.7 % were between ages of 25-29, while 31.1 % of participants were over 30 years old. In term of their occupation, 18.6 % of respondents were workers in companies, 16.8 % were self- employed individuals whereas, 51.4 % of respondents were students and 13.2 % were members of other occupations. According to the occupation of participants, the results indicated that the proportion of students was quite higher than the percentage of other occupation employees in our research. Regarding participants' education level, 67.7 % of respondents have Bachelor's degree, 29.3 % of respondents were Master's and finally 3.0% of respondents were PhDs. Table 2 illustrates the characteristics of the data set.

Table 2. Characteristics of data

Attribute	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	120	71.8
	Female	47	28.2
Age	18-24	32	19.2
	25-29	83	49.7
	Over 30	52	31.1
Occupation	Company workers	31	18.6
	Self-employed	28	16.8
	Students	86	51.4
	Others	22	13.2
Education level	Bachelor's degree	113	67.7
	Master's degree	49	29.3
	PhD	5	3.0

5.2 Analysis of model

In order to reach better understanding on the characteristics of each variable, descriptive statistics analysis is used to demonstrate the mean and standard deviation of each 26 items of questionnaire. The higher mean refers the stronger agreement of respondents, while the higher value of standard deviation indicates the more inconsistency of respondents' opinions. Table 3 shows descriptive statistical analysis of questionnaire items.

Table 3. Descriptive analyses of questionnaire items (n=167)

Questions	Measurement items	Mean	Standard deviation
Tangible			
Q1	Hardware facilities	3.234	1.326
Q2	The convenience of parking	3.342	1.326
Q3	The style of the interior	3.407	1.280
Q4	The location of the hotel	3.000	1.472
Q5	The lot sizes in which the hotel occupies	3.329	1.482
Q6	Food and beverages service	3.162	1.323
Q7	Additional facilities and activities provide by the hotel, including exercise gym, sports	3.192	1.251
Reliability			
Q8	Sanitary environment	3.060	1.347
Q9	The characteristics of water	3.353	1.192
Q10	The safety and privacy facilities	3.072	1.470
Q11	The specialized skill of services personal	3.287	1.406
Q12	Instant service	3.054	1.376
Q13	The image of the hotel	3.260	1.215
Assurance			
Q14	Price level	3.216	1.460
Q15	Meeting the demands of customers	3.210	1.379
Q16	Convenience of reservation procedure	3.287	1.521
Responsiveness			
Q17	The quick problemsolving abilities by the service personal	3.216	1.460
Q18	The courteous attitude by the service personal	3.216	1.380
Empathy			

Q19	Special promotions	3.317	1.423
Q20	Opening hours	3.395	1.312
Q21	Permanent medical assistance	3.263	1.242
Q22	Convenience traffic route/shuttle	3.371	1.351
Q23	Tourism route suggestion	3.216	1.406
Customer satisfaction			
Q24	Overall I am satisfied with hospitality services	3.174	1.484
Q25	I would not refuse to stay again	3.180	1.327
Q26	I am satisfied with the important aspects of the service	3.162	1.482

5.3 Factor analysis

“Factor analysis is an interdependence technique whose primary purpose is to define the underlying structure among the variables in the analysis” (Hair et al., 2010). According to the results of factor analysis (Table 4), all factors were extracted into 6 distinct factors and each item was loaded in their related constructs. However, two items’ (Q3 and Q13) factor loadings were lower than 0.5. According to Russel (2000), many authors used 0.5 as a cutoff. Therefore, we also removed the items factor loading were lower than 0.5 from our study. The rest of factor loadings for the constructs demonstrated statistical significance ($p < 0.01$), and their standardized loading values laid down between .810 and .923 for tangible, .808 and .931 for reliability, .914 and .946 for assurance, .934 and .948 for job responsiveness, .751 and .914 for empathy, and .888 to .928 for customer satisfaction.

Table 4. Factor analysis results

Questions	Component					
	Tangible	Reliability	Assurance	Responsiveness	Empathy	Customer satisfaction
Q1	.923					
Q3	.817					
Q4	.810					
Q5	.871					
Q6	.845					

Q7	.829					
Q8		.931				
Q9		.816				
Q10		.808				
Q11		.860				
Q12		.839				
Q14			.946			
Q15			.914			
Q16			.933			
Q17				.934		
Q18				.948		
Q19						
Q20					.827	
Q21					.751	
Q22					.863	
Q23					.914	
Q24						.928
Q25						.888
Q26						.899
Cronbach's Alpha	.904	.929	.924	.889	.917	.894

5.4 Reliability analysis

We conducted reliability analysis in order to know how well the items for one construct correlate or move together (Straub et al., 2004). In this study, to check the level of consistency of variables in each item, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used. Based on Nunnally's suggestion (1978), constructs with .70 Cronbach's alpha values are concerned acceptable. The results of the reliability test in our research indicated that, Cronbach's alpha values of constructs ranged from .874 to .950. Specifically, Table 4 illustrates that the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the variables tangibles, reliability, assurance, responsiveness, empathy and customer satisfaction are .904, .929, .924, .889, .917, and .894 respectively. From the results, it can be seen that in this study all coefficients of the constructs are higher than .70, which means that the variables have good internal consistency reliability.

5.5 Correlation analysis

Table-5 shows the correlations among the variables. The results indicates that customer satisfaction is positively associated with tangible ($r=.658$, $p<0.01$), reliability ($r=.515$, $p<0.01$), and assurance ($r=.531$, $p<0.01$), responsiveness ($r=.638$, $p<0.01$), and empathy ($r=.323$, $p<0.01$).

Table 5. Correlations and internal consistency reliabilities

Attribute	AVE	CR	Tangible	Reliability	Assurance	Responsiveness	Empathy	Customer satisfaction
Tangible	.677	.918	-					
Reliability	.680	.938	.518**	-				
Assurance	.655	.778	.507**	.385**	-			
Responsiveness	.637	.798	.604**	.499**	.642**	-		
Empathy	.765	.828	.534**	.382**	.620**	.494**	-	
Customer satisfaction	.718	.791	.658**	.515**	.531**	.638**	.323**	-

To assess the validity of the measurement model, we calculated the convergent and discriminant validities. The values of average variance extracted (AVE) and the composite reliabilities (CR) laid on the sufficient degree of 0.50 and 0.70 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), respectively (Table 5). Thus, the research model of our study matched with the requirements of convergent validity. We used Fornell and Larcker's (1981) approach to test the discriminant validity. As mentioned in this method, the AVE for each construct should exceed the squared correlation between the constructs and any of the other constructs. In this study, the AVE values of all the variables exceeded the squared correlations between the variable and the other variables. Therefore, the measures provided discriminant validity.

5.6 Hypothesis testing

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis enables to model the proposed constructs and estimate hypothesized correlations. Therefore, in this study, we assessed the conceptual model by using SEM practices with maximum likelihood estimation. The results of the structural model analysis demonstrates a good fit by judging the goodness-of-fit indicators, which are:

$X^2=1197.680$, $X^2/df= 973$, $p=.001$, $CFI= .979$, $GFI= .874$, $AGFI= .860$, $TLI= .977$, $RMSEA= .023$ and $SRMR=.0406$.

Table 6. Standardized structural estimates from the structural model

Path	Standardized Coefficient	T-value
<i>Direct effects</i>		
Tangible → Customer Satisfaction	.252	4.035**
Reliability → Customer Satisfaction	.171	2.969*
Assurance → Customer Satisfaction	.130	1.423**
Responsiveness → Customer Satisfaction	.267	4.189**
Empathy → Customer Satisfaction	.199	1.822*
Gender → Customer Satisfaction	.015	.189
Age → Customer Satisfaction	.056	.417
Occupation → Customer Satisfaction	.084	1.036
Education level → Customer Satisfaction	.059	.547

Note: * $P<0.05$, ** $P<0.01$

Table-6 shows the standardized estimations of all path coefficients. These coefficients were engaged to prove the validity of the hypotheses in this research. The analysis results illustrate significant positive relationship between tangible and customer satisfaction ($\beta=.252$, $p<0.01$), whereas reliability and assurance have positive effect on customer satisfaction ($\beta=.171$, $p<0.01$ and $\beta=.030$, $p>0.05$ respectively). Therefore, hypothesis 1, 2 and hypothesis 3 are empirical supported. Hypothesis 4 proposes that there is a positive link between responsiveness and customer satisfaction. Table-6 indicates that responsiveness has significant relationship with customer satisfaction ($\beta=.267$, $p<0.01$). Whilst, empathy has a substantial positive influence on customer satisfaction ($\beta=.199$, $p<0.01$). Thus hypothesis 4 and 5 both are also empirical supported. Moreover, SEM analysis indicated that control variables such as gender, age, and occupation and education level do not influence customer's satisfaction. Table-7 summarizes the hypothesis results in this research.

Table 7. Hypothesis results

Hypothesis	Relationship	Decision
There is a positive relationship between tangible and customer satisfaction	Tangible → Customer Satisfaction	Supported

There is a positive relationship between reliability and customer satisfaction	Reliability → Customer Satisfaction	Supported
There is a positive relationship between assurance and customer satisfaction	Assurance → Customer Satisfaction	Supported
There is a positive relationship between responsiveness and customer satisfaction	Responsiveness → Customer Satisfaction	Supported
There is a positive relationship between empathy and customer satisfaction	Empathy → Customer Satisfaction	Supported

Chapter 6. Conclusion

6.1 Analysis results

The role of service quality in the success of hotel industry is crucially important for the hotel managers to have a good understanding on what exactly the customers want. Identifying the specific expectations of customers, the dimensions of the service quality, and their relative importance for customer's satisfaction in hotel industry would definitely help managers in the challenge of improving the service quality.

In this research we try to understand the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction, specifically, we analyzed the dimensions of service quality which influence higher on the customer satisfaction. The model tested in this study is originally drawn from variables of SERVQUAL model. Increasing the demand for hotels by developing the tourism industry in Uzbekistan, it is very important to understand the ways of improving service quality in order to reach the customer satisfaction and consequently develop the Hospitality field in the country.

The purpose of this research is to test how service quality dimensions namely “tangibles”, “reliability”, “assurance”, “responsiveness” and “empathy” effect on customers satisfaction. Additionally, to analyze whether control variables such as gender, age, occupation and education level influence on customer satisfaction. For this study we conducted a questionnaire consisted of 26 questions to evaluate the constructs.

Finding of the study revealed that all service quality dimensions have a positive effect on customer’s satisfaction. In more detail, when we observed at attributes level, “tangibles” attribute received the highest expectation mean score, followed by “responsiveness”, “reliability” and “assurance” respectively. “Empathy” attribute was the least expectation mean score.

5.8 Theoretical and practical implications.

Our study has contributed to the theoretical and practical advancement of service quality and hotel industry literature by observing some practical service quality matters in a specific class of accommodation in Uzbekistan hotels. After having knowledge about these areas would really assist service providers in the matter of developing the service quality in the hospitality sector. In fact, reaching particular knowledge about these areas for the hotel segments which illustrate variations with relating to the people they serve, the services they offer, and the cultural context from which the hotel creates its customers would create more convenient outcomes in quality efforts.

The summarized result of the research framework consistent with the result of Ekinci’s study (2004), which suggested service quality as an essential antecedent of customer satisfaction. Specifically, the results of this research matched with the suggestions of Akbaba’s (2006) work. That is, tangibles appears to be particularly important contributor to service quality evaluation in the hotel setting. In other words, physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of personnel play an important role on the process of achieving customer satisfaction.

Moreover, the findings of this work has supported the results of Hsieh et al.’s study (2008). Both studies suggested that “responsiveness”, “reliability”, “assurance” and “empathy” have influence on customer satisfaction respectively. In other words, ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately; willingness to help customers and provide prompt service;

knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence; caring, individualized attention the firm provides its customers are all have positive effect on the customer satisfaction.

As we mentioned, hospitality industry has a great future here in Uzbekistan and the sphere needs developing and analyzing. This study checked five service quality dimensions which show the evaluative criteria customers use to assess service quality of the hotels such as “tangibles”, “reliability”, “assurance”, “responsiveness” and “empathy”. The findings of the study summarized that the most important factor in predicting customer’s overall service quality remarking was “tangibles” such as atmosphere, hotel’s conditions, free wi-fi, followed by “responsiveness”, “reliability”, “empathy”, and “assurance” respectively. The findings of this study suggest that among the five dimensions of service quality, “tangibles” has emerged as the best predictor of overall service quality.

Our research findings claims that although the SERVQUAL scale is a so helpful tool as a concept, it requires adapting for the specific service environments and for the cultural context such as we did in our survey in Uzbekistan. Moreover, the useful findings achieved in this study, the adapted questionnaire itself was also an important share of this study. It was performed through this study that matches for use by CEOs in the hotels, so that they can confidently observe the action required areas of services and create service strategies that leads to satisfied guests and loyalty.

A full analysis of expectation, perception and gap mean scores of the attributes could help hotel managers in finding the problematic points of services and organizing the services to meet or exceed guests’ expectations. Future studies should consider this point and include such questions as dependent variables. The sample of respondents in this study was dominated by male guests. So respondent bias due to demographic differences could have been created. Finally, the full analysis of this study may not have been representative of the whole population, based on the fact that a convenience sampling method was used to collect the data. This study was designed for only hotel visitor. To be able to generalize the findings for this specific hotel segment, a study that would consist of more hotels in a variety of regional settings could be conducted. Future studies could maximize the scope of the study by composing more hotels to create segment-specific data. Future research could also be conducted to other classes of hospitality spheres of accommodation, such as caravan parks, bed and breakfast motels, resorts, etc. In addition, since this study was

conducted only in Uzbekistan, future research may also look at whether the findings of this research vary by countries.

5.9 Limitations and Future directions

In performing this study, efforts were made to minimize its limitations, but there are some still need to be surveyed. Survey contains Google online questionnaires and so no interviews were taken and that resulted somehow difficulties at the SPSS analysis. Because of the hardship in performing contact with the study sample before their arrival to the hotel, we only focused on customers approach. Yet, administration of questionnaire did not follow a before and-after approach, i.e., the study has measured expectations and perceptions of respondents at the same time. According to Carman (1990), expectation and perception measures cannot both be done at the same time. Future studies should try to use two-phase approach to collect the data from the guests, administering the expectation section in advance of their stay and then perception section following their stay.

Moreover, further study can be added to these findings in order to increase the efficiency of the research area.

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Appendices

Questionnaires of our Study.

Control variables

1	Gender	① Male		② Female	
2	Age	① 18-24	② 25-29	③ Over than 30	
3	Education level	① Bachelor	② Master	③ PhD	
4	Occupation	① Company worker	② Self- employed	③ Student	④ Other

1. Service quality

Tangible		Strongly not sure	Not sure	Uncertain	Sure	Strongly sure
1	Hardware facilities	①	②	③	④	⑤
2	The convenience of parking	①	②	③	④	⑤
3	The style of the interior	①	②	③	④	⑤
4	The location of the hotel	①	②	③	④	⑤
5	The lot sizes in which the hotel occupies	①	②	③	④	⑤
6	Food and beverages service	①	②	③	④	⑤
7	Additional facilities and activities provide by the hotel, including exercise gym, sports	①	②	③	④	⑤

Reliability		Strongly not sure	Not sure	Uncertain	Sure	Strongly sure
1	Sanitary environment	①	②	③	④	⑤
2	The characteristics of water	①	②	③	④	⑤
3	The safety and privacy facilities	①	②	③	④	⑤
4	The specialized skill of services personal	①	②	③	④	⑤

5	Instant service	①	②	③	④	⑤
6	The image of the hotel	①	②	③	④	⑤

Assurance		Strongly not sure	Not sure	Uncertain	Sure	Strongly sure
1	Price level	①	②	③	④	⑤
2	Meeting the demands of customers	①	②	③	④	⑤
3	Convenience of reservation procedure	①	②	③	④	⑤

Responsiveness		Strongly not sure	Not sure	Uncertain	Sure	Strongly sure
1	The quick problemsolving abilities by the service personal	①	②	③	④	⑤
2	The courteous attitude by the service personal	①	②	③	④	⑤

Empathy		Strongly not sure	Not sure	Uncertain	Sure	Strongly sure
1	Special promotions	①	②	③	④	⑤
2	Opening hours	①	②	③	④	⑤
3	Permanent medical assistance	①	②	③	④	⑤
4	Convenience traffic route/shuttle	①	②	③	④	⑤
5	Instant service	①	②	③	④	⑤

2. Customer Satisfaction

		Strongly not sure	Not sure	Uncertain	Sure	Strongly sure
1	Overall I am satisfied with hospitality services	①	②	③	④	⑤
2	I would not refuse to stay again	①	②	③	④	⑤
3	I am satisfied with the important aspects of the service	①	②	③	④	⑤