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A Study on Heritage Hotels Performance towards Customer Services in Madhya Pradesh

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Abstract

This study examines the role of heritage hotels in Madhya Pradesh, focusing on customer service performance, satisfaction, and loyalty. Heritage hotels, with their historical and cultural significance, provide a unique hospitality experience, yet balancing high service standards with historical preservation presents challenges. The research analyzes how service quality, staff behavior, amenities, and heritage characteristics influence customer loyalty. A quantitative survey-based approach was conducted among tourists and employees of eight heritage hotels, including Ahilya Fort Maheshwar, Amar Mahal Orchha, and Jehan Numa Palace Bhopal. Data were analyzed using statistical methods such as correlation analysis, ANOVA, and One-Sample t-tests. Findings reveal a strong positive relationship between service variety and customer satisfaction ($r = 0.928, p = 0.000$), with staff behavior and personalized services significantly impacting service quality and loyalty. Heritage hotel characteristics, including architecture and cultural elements, also play a crucial role. The study concludes that service diversification, improved staff engagement, and personalized experiences can enhance customer satisfaction while maintaining cultural authenticity, ensuring the sustainable growth of heritage hotels in the evolving hospitality industry.

Keywords; *Heritage Hotels, consumer services, Guest Satisfaction, Service Quality, Cultural Preservation, Modern Hospitality, Madhya Pradesh*

INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry is a cornerstone of global tourism, offering diverse experiences that cater to a broad spectrum of travelers. Among the various segments of this industry, heritage hotels stand out as unique entities that blend historical significance with contemporary luxury. Heritage hotels, often situated in historically significant buildings such as palaces, forts, and mansions, provide guests with an immersive experience that connects them to the cultural and historical essence of a region. [1]

In India, heritage hotels play a pivotal role in attracting tourists who seek authentic experiences tied to the country's rich history and diverse cultural heritage. Madhya Pradesh, a state renowned for its historical landmarks and architectural marvels, is home to several such establishments. These hotels not only preserve the architectural beauty and cultural traditions of the past but also contribute significantly to the local economy by promoting tourism and creating employment opportunities. [2]

Despite their cultural and economic importance, the performance of heritage hotels in delivering high-quality customer service remains a critical concern. Customer service in the hospitality industry is crucial as it directly impacts guest satisfaction, loyalty, and overall perception of the hotel [3]. For heritage hotels, which aim to offer both luxury and a cultural experience, the challenge is to balance traditional charm with modern service expectations.

The unique characteristics of heritage hotels—such as their historical architecture, cultural decor, and traditional hospitality practices—pose distinct challenges and opportunities in the realm of customer service. Understanding how these factors influence customer satisfaction and service performance is essential for enhancing the quality of service and sustaining the growth of heritage tourism in Madhya Pradesh. [4]

Heritage hotels as tourism drivers

One of the primary motivators of travel worldwide has always been heritage and culture. In turn, tourism is a boon to cultural preservation and growth. Worldwide, 37% of tourists go for cultural reasons, and that number is expected to rise by 15% every year, according to the UNWTO. The function of historic hotels in attracting visitors has been significant on a worldwide scale within the context of heritage tourism.

One of the most consistent factors in the expansion of India's tourist industry is the country's many historic hotels. Guests of these hotels, which are located in restored palaces, forts, and mansions, have the rare opportunity to immerse themselves in India's fascinating history and beautiful architecture. Located all around the country, historic hotels play an important and varied role in India's tourist industry [5]. In addition to housing guests, heritage hotels help spread awareness of cultural tourism and keep historic buildings in good repair.

Historic hotels help bring in tourists, who spend a lot of money for India's economy. These hotels benefit the community by providing employment, protecting historical landmarks, and bringing visitors to less well-known regions. Tourists from all over the world who are interested in learning more about India's rich cultural heritage often stay in heritage hotels.

The preservation of historic structures is benefited by heritage hotels as well. The transformation of several of these structures into hotels occurred after they had fallen into a terrible condition.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Finding out how satisfied guests were with their hotel experience in Theni, Tamil Nadu, was the driving force for the research. Participants in this survey were able to provide a wide range of feedback on the quality of the services offered to them. In order to get primary data from respondents, surveys employ well-structured questionnaires. The researcher used a basic random sampling procedure to

gather data from 150 participants who volunteered to be part of the study. That consumers estimate their pleasure differently with each and every quality is shown by the fact that their levels of satisfaction shift across all of them. At last, it has been shown that hotel guests are generally satisfied. [6]

The effect of guests' experiences on their opinions of specific hotels and hotel chains was the focus of this research. Emotions, satisfaction, attitude towards the hotel chain, desire to return, scepticism about bad information, and word-of-mouth (WOM) are the particular areas of attention in the research. A 300-person sample was used in an empirical investigation to examine the hypothesis. The data was evaluated using structural equation modelling, and the findings reveal that guests' reactions to both the hotel and the chain are influenced by their particular experiences inside each hotel. The word-of-mouth (WOM) impact is the most robust of all the outcomes assessed. [7]

All around the globe, the service sector is a driving force behind societal and economic progress. Consequently, it is critical to grasp the significance of service culture. The main goal of every lodging establishment should be to provide excellent service in order to ensure the happiness and loyalty of its customers. Providers of services may distinguish themselves from the competition and get long-term benefits in the global market by focussing on providing high-quality services. Achieving success and financial gain is possible for those who grasp the significance of happy customers. Customer happiness is a precondition for successful operations, and this research primarily focusses on service culture as one of the most critical components of the hotel business. The present service culture and potential ways to enhance it will be examined in this research. Some of the features of services, such as their intangibility, perishability, inseparability, and variability, are briefly discussed. Customer data, cultural background, and suggestions for fostering a service culture are also welcome. The impact of management, front-line employees, the establishment's physical and virtual looks, the cuisine, and technological amenities on the development of a service culture. More than 70% of the gross domestic product in most developed countries comes from services. [8]

The study looked at the third category of historic hotels. These structures are culturally significant, historically significant, and full of place. Results from sixteen semi-structured in-depth interviews with front-line staff and management at three privately run rural boutique historic hotels in the United Kingdom (UK) are detailed in this note,

which uses an exploratory qualitative research approach. The chance to delve deeply into the participants' service experiences and interactions was presented by this qualitative technique. The study note adds to the existing literature that has looked at staff interactions in small historic lodgings through the lens of guests' emotional and personalised experiences. This finding lends credence to the idea that historical hotels housed in formerly used historic buildings provide something unique to the hospitality industry. Therefore, in addition to their regular duties as receptionists, waitresses, etc., they also saw themselves as guardians and storytellers of the local culture. It wraps up by suggesting avenues for future studies centred on this understanding of historic hotel staff. [9]

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative research design using a survey-based approach to assess customer service performance, satisfaction, and loyalty in heritage hotels across Madhya Pradesh. Data were collected from tourists and employees of eight selected heritage hotels, including Ahilya Fort Maheshwar, Amar Mahal Orchha, and Jehan Numa Palace Bhopal. A structured questionnaire was developed, incorporating demographic questions and Likert scale-based statements to evaluate service quality, staff behavior, amenities, and customer perceptions.

To analyze the data, statistical techniques such as correlation analysis, ANOVA, and One-Sample t-tests were applied to examine relationships between key variables. Correlation analysis measured the strength of associations, ANOVA tested differences among groups, and One-Sample t-tests assessed customer perceptions against expected service standards. These methods helped identify significant factors affecting customer satisfaction and loyalty in heritage hotels.

Table 1 Sample size and distribution

Heritage Hotel	Tourists	Employees	Total
Ahilya Fort Maheshwar	30	20	50
Amar Mahal Orchha	30	20	50
Jehan Numa Palace Bhopal	30	20	50
Lal Bagh Palace Indore	30	20	50
Hammeer Garhi Heritage Resort Khajuraho	30	20	50
Usha Kiran Palace Gwalior	30	20	50
WelcomHeritage Golf View Pachmarhi	30	20	50

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The “Data Analysis and Interpretation” section presents a detailed examination of the findings derived from the survey conducted with respondents in heritage hotels across Madhya Pradesh.

Table 1: Gender

Gender					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	247	70.6	70.6	70.6
	Female	103	29.4	29.4	100.0
	Total	350	100.0	100.0	

The table shows the distribution of respondents based on gender. Out of a total of 350 respondents, the majority are male, with 247 individuals. The remaining 103 respondents are female, indicating a smaller representation of females compared to males in the survey.

Table 2: Age group

Age group					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18 years to 25 years	77	22.0	22.0	22.0
	26 years to 35 years	149	42.6	42.6	64.6
	36 years to 45 years	71	20.3	20.3	84.9
	46 years and above	53	15.1	15.1	100.0
	Total	350	100.0	100.0	

The table shows the age distribution of the 350 respondents. The majority fall within the 26 to 35 years age group, with 149 respondents, followed by 77 respondents in the 18 to 25 years category. The 36 to 45 years group has 71 respondents, while the 46 years and above category is the least represented with 53 respondents. This indicates that the majority of respondents are young to mid-aged adults, with fewer participants in the older age group.

Table 3: Occupation

Occupation					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Unemployed	49	14.0	14.0	14.0
	Self-employed	89	25.4	25.4	39.4
	Salaried	204	58.3	58.3	97.7
	Retired	8	2.3	2.3	100.0
	Total	350	100.0	100.0	

The table highlights the occupational distribution of the 350 respondents. The largest group comprises 204 respondents who are salaried, indicating a significant share of employed individuals. 89 respondents are self-employed, while 49 respondents are unemployed. The smallest group consists of 8 respondents who are retired. This distribution reflects that most participants are engaged in salaried or self-employment occupations, with relatively fewer individuals being unemployed or retired.

Table 4: Responent category

Responent category					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Tourist	210	60.0	60.0	60.0
	Hotel employee	140	40.0	40.0	100.0
	Total	350	100.0	100.0	

The table shows the distribution of respondents based on their category. Of the total 350 respondents, 210 are tourists, making up the majority at 60%. The remaining 140 respondents are hotel employees, accounting for 40% of the

sample. This indicates a higher representation of tourists in the survey, with hotel employees being the secondary group.

Table 5: Frequency of visiting heritage hotels

Frequency of visiting heritage hotels					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	First Visit	206	58.9	58.9	58.9
	Once a year	95	27.1	27.1	86.0
	Twice a year	33	9.4	9.4	95.4
	More than twice a year	16	4.6	4.6	100.0
	Total	350	100.0	100.0	

The table presents the frequency of visits to heritage hotels by the 350 respondents. A majority of 206 respondents (58.9%) are visiting heritage hotels for the first time, while 95 respondents (27.1%) visit once a year. A smaller group, 33 respondents (9.4%), visit twice a year, and only 16 respondents (4.6%) visit more than twice a year. This indicates that most visitors are first-time guests, with a significant portion returning on an annual basis, and fewer individuals making more frequent visits.

Table 2 Responses of the respondents

Questions/statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A wide range of recreational activities is provided for guests in heritage hotels.	79	69	74	25	103
Dining options offered cater to diverse preferences.	147	93	61	17	32
Amenities provided by the hotel meet expectations for comfort.	183	57	50	48	12
Additional services such as tours and cultural programs are available.	167	83	41	39	20
Services offered reflect the standards of a luxury heritage hotel.	140	67	63	16	64
Hotel staff displays politeness and professionalism in their behavior.	60	61	119	48	62
Amenities provided are modern and well-maintained.	130	104	58	31	27
Staff responds quickly to guest requests and inquiries.	194	66	48	32	10
Staff behavior enhances the overall experience of staying at the hotel.	136	82	65	34	33
Amenities align with the comfort expected from luxury accommodations.	118	101	46	19	66
Services provided by the hotel align with overall expectations.	93	67	78	51	61
The quality of services provided justifies the cost of staying at the hotel.	141	93	58	20	38
High standards of service quality are maintained throughout the stay.	182	55	55	34	24
Service delivery is reliable and consistent.	122	82	61	61	24
A blend of heritage and modern hospitality is reflected in the service quality.	125	93	69	14	49
The architectural design of the hotel enhances its visual appeal.	125	63	43	28	91

Cultural elements incorporated within the hotel offer a unique experience.	159	75	46	7	63
Staying at the hotel provides insights into the region's heritage.	182	25	70	50	23
The hotel successfully integrates heritage preservation with modern facilities.	108	97	55	69	21
The interiors of the hotel reflect historical significance and aesthetic value.	144	73	84	11	38
The overall experience of staying at the hotel has been satisfactory.	49	71	103	17	110
Expectations regarding cleanliness and comfort are met consistently.	149	97	62	20	22
Staff ensures a smooth and pleasant stay for guests.	193	71	46	38	2
The quality of food and beverages surpasses expectations.	174	90	42	21	23
This hotel is recommended for its unique and high-quality experience.	129	73	47	27	74
Hotel staff ensures timely and efficient service delivery.	109	78	51	50	62
Check-in and check-out processes are smooth and well-organized.	152	91	54	15	38
Issues or complaints, if any, are resolved promptly.	183	42	47	36	42
Service quality at this hotel is superior compared to other hotels.	129	88	36	77	20
The performance of hotel services contributes to guest satisfaction.	143	68	90	9	40
Personalized attention is given to guest needs and preferences.	125	84	54	25	62
Special requests from guests are remembered and addressed during the stay.	144	110	40	24	32
Services are tailored to create a unique and enjoyable experience.	135	72	59	46	38
Recommendations provided for activities or dining add value to the stay.	113	101	38	76	22
Personalized services enhance the overall satisfaction with hotel services.	153	56	91	9	41
Revisiting the hotel for future stays is highly likely.	113	75	54	41	67
A positive experience encourages loyalty toward the hotel.	150	90	53	21	36
Preference is given to this hotel over other similar accommodations.	171	52	54	41	32
The hotel is recommended to others for its unique offerings.	144	84	35	66	21
Unique services provided create a strong reason for future visits.	145	71	83	10	41
Challenges are faced in maintaining the property due to its heritage status.	116	97	54	23	60
Limited availability of skilled staff affects service quality.	135	125	36	23	31
Infrastructure-related limitations impact the overall service delivery.	125	95	57	45	28
Balancing heritage preservation with modern guest expectations is challenging.	109	112	39	62	28
Seasonal fluctuations in tourist numbers create inconsistency in service quality.	143	78	77	10	42
Modern hotels provide more advanced and technology-driven services.	150	59	45	26	70
Other types of hotels offer better amenities compared to heritage hotels.	149	62	71	21	47
Modern hotels are more suitable for business travelers.	145	78	74	34	19
Heritage hotels offer unique experiences not found in other hotels.	123	116	49	36	26
Greater emphasis is placed on cultural immersion in heritage hotels.	116	74	75	23	62
Service standards among heritage hotels differ significantly.	115	61	50	31	93
Larger or well-known heritage hotels provide superior services.	167	93	44	5	41
The quality of staff training affects service standards in heritage hotels.	161	42	60	48	39
Preservation efforts influence the consistency of services across heritage hotels.	125	80	41	84	20
Variations in amenities lead to differences in service quality among hotels.	145	47	104	6	48
Other luxury hotels focus on providing a more modern ambiance.	97	58	79	50	66
Technology-driven customer services are prioritized in luxury hotels.	124	119	57	21	29
Luxury hotels focus more on modern amenities rather than cultural immersion.	193	68	48	40	1
Flexibility in facilities like gyms and pools is higher in luxury hotels.	161	97	38	26	28
Luxury hotels differ in ambiance compared to heritage hotels.	139	89	45	9	68

Effective strategies are implemented to improve guest experiences.	90	58	74	62	66
Feedback collected from guests is utilized to enhance services.	125	116	62	15	32
Training programs for staff have contributed to better service standards.	199	62	48	40	1
Service strategies focus on preserving the hotel's cultural identity.	161	91	44	26	28
New initiatives for customer service have improved the overall guest experience.	136	100	42	9	63
Significant improvements have been observed in service quality over time.	148	62	29	18	93
Management actively addresses gaps in service delivery.	146	82	44	3	75
Maintenance and upgrades have enhanced overall service performance.	192	23	75	51	9
Guest suggestions are implemented to improve customer satisfaction.	117	104	57	50	22
Improvements in service performance have led to greater guest satisfaction.	154	81	69	8	38

The interpretation of the survey responses on heritage hotel services highlights several key insights. Guests generally express satisfaction with the amenities, services, and cultural experiences offered, as reflected in the high percentage of "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" responses across multiple categories. Service efficiency, personalized attention, and staff professionalism are widely appreciated, with a significant majority acknowledging the reliability and responsiveness of staff. Dining and recreational activities also receive positive feedback, though some guests remain neutral or dissatisfied. Heritage preservation and modern comfort balance pose a challenge, as indicated by mixed responses regarding infrastructure limitations and the impact of preservation efforts on service consistency. While many guests appreciate the unique experience and cultural immersion provided by heritage hotels, some compare them unfavorably to modern luxury hotels in terms of advanced amenities and technology-driven services. The survey also highlights seasonal service inconsistencies, staff training needs, and maintenance challenges, emphasizing areas for improvement. However, positive responses regarding guest loyalty, repeat visits, and recommendations suggest that the overall experience remains satisfactory, with room for enhancement in service delivery and modern facilities integration.

CONCLUSION

The study on heritage hotels highlights their unique role in offering a blend of cultural preservation and modern hospitality. Findings indicate that while guests appreciate the historical ambiance, personalized services, and cultural experiences, challenges remain in maintaining infrastructure, ensuring service consistency, and balancing heritage preservation with modern expectations in Madhya Pradesh. Guest satisfaction is largely influenced by efficient service, staff professionalism, and well-maintained amenities. However, some respondents express concerns

about service delays, limited modern facilities, and seasonal variations in service quality. The comparison with luxury hotels reveals that heritage hotels excel in cultural immersion but lag in technology-driven services and advanced amenities.

Despite these challenges, guest loyalty remains strong, with many respondents willing to recommend and revisit heritage hotels. Strategies such as staff training, service enhancements, and improved maintenance practices can further elevate guest satisfaction. Additionally, integrating select modern amenities while preserving historical authenticity could help heritage hotels remain competitive.

Overall, the study underscores the need for a balanced approach where heritage preservation coexists with contemporary hospitality standards. Addressing key service gaps and enhancing guest experiences will ensure that heritage hotels continue to thrive as significant contributors to tourism and cultural heritage conservation.

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