

# Service quality comparison between chain and standalone hotels

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**Abstract:** Chain hotels and independent hotels are now competing more fiercely than ever before due to the development and diversity of the hospitality sector. In recent years, service quality has been seen as a key factor in determining customer happiness, loyalty, and overall company success. The purpose of this research is to evaluate the relative merits of chain hotels and independently owned establishments in terms of service quality along important aspects like responsiveness, empathy, assurance, reliability, and tangibles. The service at different sites of the same chain hotel is usually rather consistent because of the chain's standardised operations, consistent branding, and well-trained employees. The emphasis on cultural distinctiveness, personalisation, and flexibility at standalone hotels, on the other hand, may increase client happiness but isn't always consistent. Utilising primary and secondary data, including surveys, customer feedback, and service quality evaluation methods like SERVQUAL, the research takes a comparative analytical approach. According to the results, chain hotels are great at infrastructure, professionalism, and dependability, while independent hotels are far better at providing individual attention and engaging with guests. But there are holes in both industries, especially when it comes to keeping service consistent and meeting customers' ever-changing expectations. The research found that the hospitality industry might benefit greatly from a hybrid strategy that combined the measured efficiency of chain hotels with the individual attention of independent businesses. Hotel management may use the findings of this study to boost customer happiness and gain a competitive edge by better comprehending the dynamics of service quality.

**Keywords:** Service quality, standalone hotels, chain.

## INTRODUCTION

Over the course of the last several decades, the hotel sector on a worldwide scale has seen a considerable upheaval. This development has been driven by globalisation, technology improvements, and shifting customer expectations. Service quality has emerged as the most important aspect determining customer happiness, loyalty, and brand reputation. Hotels are no longer evaluated only on the basis of their physical infrastructure or pricing systems. Instead, hotels are evaluated based on the quality of their service. Maintaining excellent service standards has become crucial for survival and growth in the highly competitive hospitality business. This is especially true in this day and age, when online evaluations and digital platforms contribute to shaping the impressions of consumers. Within the context of this ever-changing environment, hotels may be roughly classified into two categories: chain hotels and freestanding hotels. Hotels that are part of a chain are often owned by big national or

multinational brands that operate according to standardised policies, processes, and administrative practices. These hotels have the advantages of having a high brand awareness, superior management systems, and consistent service delivery across a variety of locations. Reliability, professionalism, and efficiency in service are frequently ensured by their planned training programs and their adherence to worldwide standards.

Standalone hotels, on the other hand, are hotels that operate independently and are not connected to any bigger brand or network. These hotels frequently place an emphasis on creating one-of-a-kind and individualized experiences that are reflective of the local culture, customs, and preferences of its guests. Because of the flexibility of their operations, they are able to swiftly react to the requirements of their guests, therefore providing a service experience that is more individualized and personal. On the other hand, the lack of standardised processes might occasionally lead to variations in the quality of the service provided.

It is standard practice to quantify service quality in the hospitality industry using factors such as tangibility, dependability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Service quality is a multifaceted term. Providing a framework for understanding how consumers perceive and assess service experiences, these aspects, which are frequently evaluated using models such as SERVQUAL, are included in this framework. Despite the fact that chain hotels may be superior in terms of tangibility and dependability due to the organised processes they employ, independent hotels may be superior in terms of empathy and responsiveness due to the personalized approach they take.

As the competition between these two categories of hotels continues to intensify, it raises significant issues about whether category provides higher service quality and how the variations between them affect the level of pleasure experienced by customers. It is especially important for hotel managers, politicians, and other stakeholders who are looking to improve service delivery and create a competitive edge to have a thorough understanding of these disparities.

A comparison of the service quality of chain hotels and freestanding hotels is the purpose of this study. The study will highlight the strengths, flaws, and opportunities for improvement of each kind of hotel. The purpose of this research is to give significant insights into how both types of venues may adapt to changing market needs and enhance overall visitor experiences.

This will be accomplished by evaluating consumer perceptions and service delivery procedures.

## **BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Globalisation, fast technical breakthroughs, and changing consumer behaviour have all contributed to the hotel industry's exceptional expansion and change over the past several decades. This growth and transition has been driven by globalisation. The growth of international tourism, which has been made possible by the enhancement of transport networks and the proliferation of digital connection, has led to an increase in the level of competition among hotels in a variety of categories. In an ever-changing world, modern travelers are no longer content with only having a place to stay; rather, they are looking for experiences that allow them to have unique and high-quality service encounters that add value to their stay. Consequently, the quality of service has become an important factor in determining customer satisfaction. It has an impact not only on the immediate views of guests, but also on their long-term loyalty and the reputation of the business.

In addition, the proliferation of digital platforms such as online booking systems, travel websites, and social media has brought about a substantial shift in the manner in which clients assess and select hotels. The reviews, ratings, and comments provided by guests that are posted on these platforms have evolved into strong tools that have the ability to create the public image of hotels and directly influence their success in the market. poor reviews may easily reach a worldwide audience, while good ratings can boost credibility and attract new consumers. A single poor experience can soon reach a global audience. As a consequence of this, hotel operators have made it a strategic aim to ensure that the quality of their service remains exceptionally constant and high. Within this framework, both chain hotels and standalone hotels are under continual pressure to innovate and enhance their service delivery in order to fulfil the ever-increasing demands of their customers and maintain their edge over their competitors.

### **Concept of Service Quality in Hospitality**

In the hotel business, service quality is a multi-faceted notion that represents how well a service satisfies or surpasses client expectations. The evaluation of services is more subjective and depends on personal experience since, unlike tangible objects, they are fundamentally ethereal, varied, and inseparable from their suppliers. In addition to the final product, customers

evaluate service quality based on their experiences throughout the delivery process, such as their contacts with employees, the speed with which their requests are addressed, and the general atmosphere of the establishment.

Solidarities, dependability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy make up the five main components of the SERVQUAL model, which offers a generally acknowledged framework for evaluating service quality. Infrastructure, cleanliness, and the overall visual appeal of a facility are examples of tangibles. The hotel's reliability is determined by how well it regularly and accurately delivers the services that were provided. Assuring customers of staff competency, politeness, and trustworthiness is related to responsiveness, which indicates a desire to help customers quickly. The need of paying close attention to each customer's unique demands and showing empathy for them is emphasised. When taken as a whole, these factors provide a thorough framework for assessing service excellence. When hotels provide excellent service, their customers are more satisfied, which leads to more good word of mouth, more repeat business, and more profits.

### **Chain Hotels: Features and Characteristics**

One distinguishing feature of chain hotels is their connection to larger hotel companies or brands that have several sites, sometimes on a national or even global scale. To guarantee consistency and uniformity in service delivery, these hotels adhere to standard operating processes, rules, and service standards. The strong brand identification of chain hotels is a huge plus since it makes people trust and believe in the brand. Customers like staying in chain hotels because the quality is consistent no matter where they go.

Plus, most hotel chains have centralized reservation systems, cutting-edge technology, and expert management procedures that boost efficiency. They put a lot of money into training and development programs for personnel so that they can keep up their high service standards and meet the demands of their customers. Also, chain hotels can keep its infrastructure in good shape and provide competitive prices because of economies of scale. Having said that, chain hotels may not be able to offer as much personalisation and flexibility as they might due to their extremely regimented and standardised nature. Chain hotels might not be as enticing as independently owned businesses to guests looking for more personalized or culturally immersing stays.

## **Standalone Hotels: Features and Characteristics**

Independent or non-chain hotels are those that stand on their own and aren't part of a bigger chain. Because each hotel is usually owned and run independently, these establishments have more leeway to do what they want. Standalone hotels are distinguished by their capacity to cater to each guest's unique tastes through the provision of individualized service. In order to distinguish out from the crowd of generic chain hotels, they generally highlight local customs, culture, and distinctiveness.

Standalone hotels may easily adjust their offerings to meet the demands of their customers because of their versatility. Customers who appreciate unique touches and genuine experiences are more likely to be satisfied as a result of this tailored approach. Limited financial resources, a lack of sophisticated technology, and an absence of regular operating processes are just a few of the potential problems that solo hotels may encounter. Inconsistent service quality and operational inefficiency might occasionally be the outcome of these limits. Furthermore, in a very competitive industry, independent hotels may struggle to attract clients without significant brand awareness.

## **Need for Comparative Study**

There has to be a systematic way to assess and compare the service quality of chain hotels and independent hotels because of the increasing rivalry between the two. Understanding how these two hotel models perform across several aspects of service quality is crucial since they both have their perks and disadvantages. Standalone hotels are known for their individuality and comfort, but chain hotels are often thought of as consistent, dependable, and professionally run. On the other hand, various types of travelers have varying tastes and requirements, therefore these features could not always live up to customers' expectations.

In order for hotel managers to find ways to develop and implement best practices, it is helpful to compare different categories and learn about their strengths and limitations. Critical to developing successful service plans is gaining a knowledge of consumer views and expectations, which these aids in doing. Hotels need to keep improving the quality of their service if they want to stay relevant and thrive in a market that is becoming more customer-driven and competitive. Hence, this research adds to what is already known and gives useful suggestions for how chain and independent hotels might enhance their service performance.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

As a tool that is both popular and frequently utilised, SERVQUAL may be utilised by a variety of businesses in order to conduct an analysis of the quality of service. They are able to have a better grasp of the areas in which they are falling behind their competitors and the areas in which they may make improvements in order to keep their advantage over the competition.

- Employees must receive sufficient training to improve their hospitality skills in order to meet consumer requests. They ought to be approachable, pleasant, respectful, etc.
- Modern infrastructure is necessary to draw in and keep clients, and any barriers resulting from a lack of resources or communication should be removed to enable the hotel business to run smoothly.
- The materials utilised to provide services to clients must be of the highest caliber and guarantee their total safety.
- Hotels need to inspire their staff to work for both their own professional development and the improvement of hotel services. Employees won't be content with their work unless they can develop personally.
- Customers' requirements and desires must be well understood since, in today's society, they are regarded as the king. Various techniques, such as routine surveys, might be employed for this.
- The services rendered by hotel staff must be properly and routinely evaluated; client feedback forms can be utilised for this purpose.
- If a hotel concentrates on tailoring and personalizing services to satisfy client demands, its reputation might soar. The hotel will have an advantage over its rivals and be able to maintain customer satisfaction if each client's unique wants are addressed.

## **CONCLUSION**

Both chain hotels and freestanding hotels have their own unique advantages and disadvantages, which are brought to light by the comparative examination of service quality between the two types of hotels in the hospitality business. For hotels, the quality of their service is a crucial factor in determining their competitive positioning in a market that is

becoming increasingly consumer-driven and dynamic. This is because service quality is a significant predictor of customer happiness and loyalty.

According to the findings of the study, chain hotels have a substantial advantage over conventional hotels in terms of the standardisation, dependability, and consistency of the services they provide. Because of their well-established brand identification, disciplined operating procedures, and investment in staff training, they are able to maintain consistent service standards throughout all of their sites. It is common for customers to feel more confident as a result of this regularity, particularly business travelers and international tourists who place a high value on predictability and professionalism. In addition, the utilisation of cutting-edge technology and centralized management systems contributes to an overall improvement in the quality of service and efficiency in chain hotels.

Standalone hotels, on the other hand, have a number of advantages, including the ability to provide services that are specific to the individual and adaptable. With their ability to respond to the interests of individual guests and include parts of local culture, they are able to create a one-of-a-kind and unforgettable experience for their customers. Through the use of this personalized approach, greater emotional ties are frequently fostered with visitors, which ultimately results in increased levels of pleasure and loyalty. Nevertheless, solitary hotels may experience difficulties that are associated with limited resources, a lack of standardised procedures, and irregularities in service delivery, all of which can have an effect on the overall performance of the hotel.

Based on the data, it appears that neither category of hotel is intrinsically superior; rather, the success of various types of hotels is contingent upon the tastes and expectations of the target market. There are clients who appreciate the authenticity and personalized care that is supplied by independent businesses, while there are customers who value the stability and uniformity that chain hotels provide. Because of this, a well-rounded strategy that takes into account the advantages of both models has the potential to greatly improve the quality of service. The incorporation of greater flexibility and personalisation can be beneficial for chain hotels, while the adoption of some standardised procedures and the utilisation of technology can be beneficial for standalone hotels.

Consequently, in order to satisfy the ever-evolving requirements of clients, the hospitality business must continue to undergo continual evolution. It is possible for industry players to

establish more effective strategies to increase service quality, boost customer happiness, and gain sustainable competitive advantage if they have a better grasp of the comparative benefits of chain hotels versus independent hotels. This study makes a significant contribution to a more comprehensive knowledge of the dynamics of service quality and offers valuable insights that can be put into practice by hotel managers, legislators, and academics who are working to improve the general performance of the hospitality industry.

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