

# Influence of Service Quality on Guests' Satisfaction in Selected Hotels in Anambra State

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## ABSTRACT

Hotel management scholars consider service quality a precedent to guest satisfaction, but the reasons why guests revisit a hotel and how to deliver a high quality service from hotels in Anambra State have remained unanswered. This study investigated service quality dimensions of reliability, assurance, tangibility, empathy and responsiveness, and related them to guest satisfaction in the selected hotels in Awka, Onitsha and Nnewi, representing the three senatorial zones in Anambra State, using the proportionate stratified random sampling (STRS) technique. A sample size of 138 respondents was derived using Topman formula out of which 123 copies were correctly filled, returned and used in the analysis. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The findings revealed that Responsiveness has the highest level of coefficient of which is ( $r = 0.999$ ); followed by Assurance ( $r = 0.995$ ) and Tangibility ( $r = 0.987$ , Reliability ( $r = 0.956$ ); and Empathy ( $r = 0.956$ ), with degree of freedom 0.05. Based on the findings, it was concluded that there is a strong positive relationship in all the five dimensions of service quality (Reliability, Assurance, Tangibility, Empathy and Responsiveness) in the hotel industry. It was therefore recommended that hotel operators should give priority attention to Responsiveness dimension of their Service Quality by providing prompt services to guests at all times; Staff should be willing to help their customers when needed. They should also focus on the special needs of customers, having the best interests of their customers at heart, and quickly apologizing to their guests when they make mistakes. They should also give attention to their Physical facilities, acquire modern equipment, and hotel staff should always look tidy and clean. Hotels must also prevent, detect and eliminate service quality gaps as early as possible in any service operation. The employees should be trained on how to interact with their customers; and customers' benefit packages should be tailored towards the dimensions of service quality – Reliability, Assurance, Tangibles, Empathy and Responsiveness.

**KEYWORDS:** Service quality, Reliability, Assurance, Tangibles, Empathy, Responsiveness

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of service quality has enjoyed wide academic discussion by different researchers with majority of the authors centered their works on the five dimensions of service quality proposed by Parasuraman, et al. (1985) which include; responsiveness, empathy, reliability, assurance and tangibility. However, most of these studies were on the banking industry in Nigeria. Ayuba (2018) and

Oparah (2018) held that service quality is one of the major factors that could lead to customer satisfaction in service sectors, but service quality dimension varies in the different service sectors. Parasuraman et al, (1984) originally developed ten service quality dimensions which were modified in 1988 into five dimensions (SERVQUAL) - tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy.

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SERVQUAL is a multi-dimensional research instrument, designed to capture consumer expectations and perceptions of a service along the five dimensions that are believed to represent service quality (Kwadwodu and Amamwal 2011, Okpara, 2012, and Luke 2011). It is built on the expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm, which in simple terms means that service quality is understood as the extent to which consumers' pre-consumption expectations of quality are confirmed or disconfirmed by their actual perceptions of the service experience. The instrument has been widely applied in a variety of contexts and cultural settings and found to be relatively robust. It has become the dominant measurement scale in the area of service quality (Asghari and Babu, 2017).

Critics of SERVQUAL raised serious questions on the modifications of wordings, and concluded that it should be studied further. In a similar development, Teas (1993), in his empirical study found serious objections to SERVQUAL. He felt that the interpretation of the expectation standards was flawed, and not a workable option. Also, Cronin and Taylor (1992) concluded that utilizing the consumers' assessment of performance was inadequate to determine service quality since perceived quality, in their opinion, should be reflected as an attitude. They recommended SERVPERF instead. Customer (guest) satisfaction is a business philosophy which tends to the creation of value for customers, anticipating and managing their expectations and demonstrating ability and responsibility to satisfy their needs through improved service quality. Service quality and customer satisfaction are therefore, critical factors for success of any business (Gronoos, 1990). As Valdani (2009) pointed out, enterprise exists because they have customers to serve. Customer services play an important role in increasing the customer satisfaction (Haroon, 2010). Satisfied customers form the foundation of any successful business because customer satisfaction leads to repeat patronage (Anthansopoulos, Gounasis & Tathakopoulos, 2020). There are numerous studies that have looked at the impact customer satisfaction on repeat purchases (Negi, 2019; Lee & Yoo, 2016; Amirreza, Mohammad & Mahaz, 2018).

## 2. Theories and models in Service Quality

The SERVQUAL model is a 22 items/ dimensions model, focusing on the reliability, assurance, tangibles and empathy responsiveness (Rater) as the key dimensions/determinants of service quality (Lee & Yoo, 2000). It measures the difference between perceptions (performance) and expectations of the five dimensions following the disconfirmation model. Horn (2000) held that disconfirmation can have positive effect (generally implying a satisfying result), a negative (generally implying a dissatisfying result), or a zero effect. In essence, the latter focuses on the gap between performance and expectations stated by customers. Although SERVQUAL is widely used it is not without its critics. The main problems are outlined below:

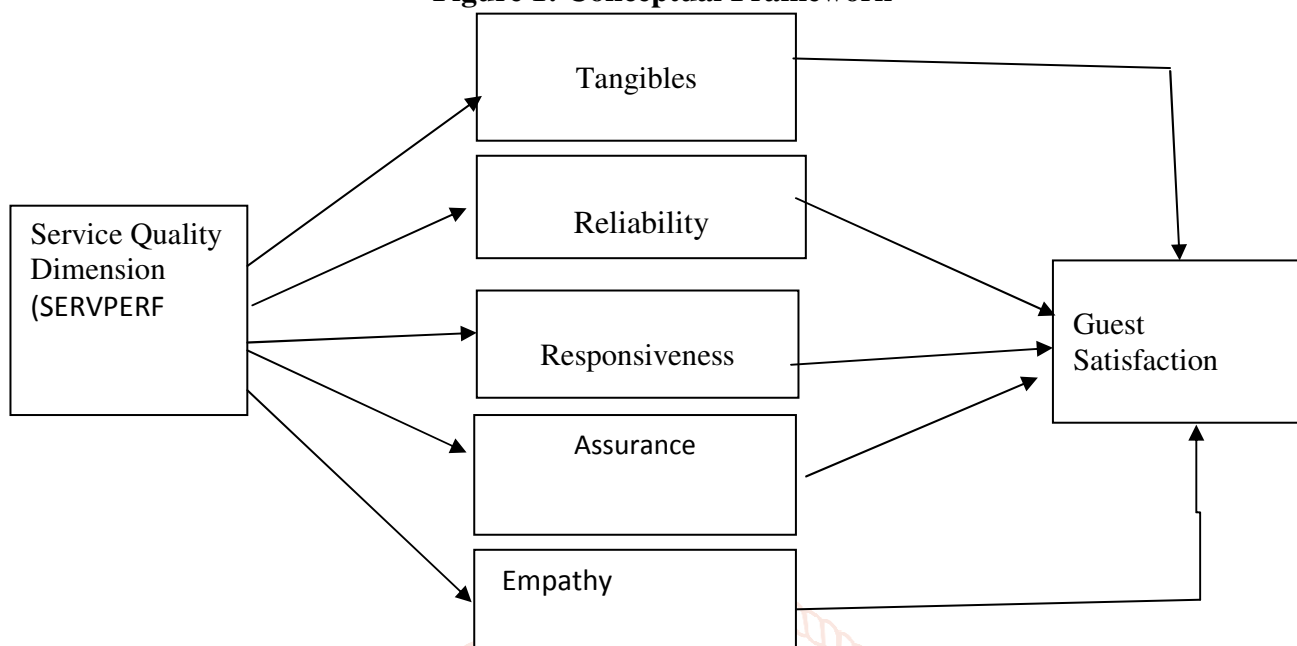
- Expectations and perceptions should be measured separately since simultaneous measurement introduces a subtle interaction between perceptions and prior experiences (Oliver, 1981).
- Expectations are based on recall. (Hubbert, Sehorn, and Brown, 1995).
- Concern regarding the measurement of service quality over multiple service functions and the treatment of the expectations measurement (Carman, 1990).
- The applicability of SERVQUAL across a wide variety of services (Babakus and Boller, 1992).

In response to the above difficulties, SERVQUAL was modified into a performance-only measure (i.e. measuring perceptions). This is called SERVPERF (Cronin and Taylor, 2005). SERVPERF makes use of the original SERVQUAL scale and also requires the respondents to rate the provider's service along a scale. Carrilat, Jamarillo, and Mulki, (2007) commented that the difference between SERVQUAL and SERVPERF is minimal and that the power of modern statistical methods can make do for SERVQUAL's perceived limitations. In this paper attention was focused on SERVPERF rather than SERVQUAL. See The SERVPERF Instrument at the Appendix.

## 2.1. Conceptual Framework

The theoretical framework guiding the evaluation as depicted in figure 1 below was adapted from Parasuraman et al. (1994) and Caruana (2002).

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**



**Source:** The SERVIQUAL Conceptual Framework, (Parasuraman et al., 1985) adapted.

## 3. Service Quality Dimensions

A number of researchers have provided list of service quality determinant but the best known determinant emanated from parasuraman and colleagues, who found five dimensions of service quality, namely; Reliability, Assurance, Tangibles, Empathy and Responsiveness.

### 3.1. Reliability

This means the ability of a hotel service provider to deliver the promised services dependably, accurately, honestly and consistently (Parasuraman et al. 1985). guests seek services upon which they can depend on (Khan and Fasih, 2014). For this reason, reliability is a crucial factor that is measured while gauging service quality (Ghasemi and Moghadam, 2016). It is a very common dimension used in almost all of the service quality measuring models, showing it's relation with customer satisfaction and retention. In fact, reliability was pointed out by many researchers as one of the most influential dimension inducing meeting customers' expectations (Al-Damen, 2017). Numerous researchers, including Garven (1987) found that reliability tends to always show up in the evaluation of service. According to parsuraman et al. (1994) reliability is the ability to perform the promise service dependably and accurately (i.e. the customer receives the desired results time and after).

### 3.2. Responsiveness

Responsiveness is the desire and willingness to assist customers and deliver prompt service makes up the dimension of responsiveness. It entails promptness of

services, willingness to be of assistance, and never too busy to respond to consumer request. It is also very pertinent to note that responsiveness was also one of the original dimensions not modified by Zeithaml, et al (1988). Therefore, responsiveness is the willingness to help guests and provide prompt service (Parasuraman et al, 1998). This dimension emphasizes attentiveness and promptness in dealing with customers requests questions, complaints, and accurately. This dimension of service quality is communicated to customers by the length of time they have to wait to be attended to. Responsiveness also captured the notion of flexibility and ability to customize the service to customer needs. To excel in the dimension of responsiveness, a company must be certain to view the process of service delivery and handling of request from the guest's point of view.

### 3.3. Assurance

Parasuraman et al., (1994) defined assurance as employer's knowledge and courtesy and the ability of firm and its employees to inspire trust and confidence. This is a service quality dimension that requires staff of hotels to possess the required skill and knowledge. It is believed that if employees of hotels perform services without fumbling around, and display trustworthy behaviour, the satisfaction level of guests can be enhanced significantly (Agagbu and Mcwabe, 2013). It may also encourage repurchase or retention intension of customers (Ndubisi, 2006; and Ndubisi and Wah, 2005). The significance of

Assurance attribute in meeting customers' expectation was proven by many researchers (Brown et al 2016; Bhat and Qadir, 2013; Karunaratne and Jayawardena, 2010) who empirically tested this dimension of service quality in relation to service quality.

### 3.4. Tangibility

Tangibles include those attributes pertaining to physical items such as equipment, buildings, and the appearance of both personnel and devices utilized to communicate to consumer. Bitner (1992) presented her conceptual framework for examining the impact of physical surroundings as it related to both customers and employees. Berry and Clark (1991) provided validation of the physical appearance on the consumer assessment of quality. With the research by Bitner (1990), it was noted that physical appearance might influence the consumer's level of satisfaction. Tangibles were one of the original dimensions that were not modified by Zeithaml, et al (1988). Parasuraman et al., (1994) defined as the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication materials. Other researchers like Alabar et al., (2014), Bostanji (2013) and ALbarq (2013) also agrees with him. Tangibles of service are one of the few dimensions that have been consistently used by different researchers (Bahia and Nantel, 2006). However, tangible refer to physical facets of the service facility, equipment, machinery, signage, communication materials etc.

### 3.5. Empathy

Empathy is the caring and personalized attention the organization provides its consumers. The extent to which the consumer feels the empathy will cause the consumer to either accept or reject the service encounter. Empathy replaces access, communication, and understanding the customer in the original ten dimensions for evaluating service quality (Zeithaml, et al, 1988). Parasuraman et al., (1994) saw it as caring individualized attention the firm provides to its customers. It also deals with dimensions such as access or ease of contact, communication and individualization of service, including understanding the customer. The essence of empathy is conveying through personalized or customer service, that customers are unique and special. This dimension is viewed as the ability to share, understand and feel another person's feeling in a relational situation thus, including readiness to respond promptly to the needs without necessarily carrying a burden.

## 4. Service Quality in Hotels

Hotel sector as one part of the hospitality industry that evolved from the modest beginning of families and landowners who opened their homes to travelers

to the high rise properties today which contain thousands of guests' rooms, and these lodging facilities can be classified by location, by room rate and by the number of rooms they contain (Chon & Sparrow, 2000; Go & Pine 1995; Olsen, 1996; Power and Barrows, 1999). The industry covers the spectrum of small, medium and large enterprises (Brotherton 2003; Jones, 2002) and makes a significant contribution to national and international economics.

The hotel industry is particularly complex for a number of reasons. Firstly, the industry is structurally complex with there being a large number of categories. These categories encompass hotel quality (e.g. luxury, first class, mid-range and economy), hotel location (e.g. city centre, rural, sea side), hotel style (e.g. traditional hotel, resort hotel, limited service hotel, motel) (Chon & Sparrowe, 2000; Go & Pine, 1995; Lewis, Chambers & Chacko, 1995; little John, 2003; Powers and Barrows, 1999) and hotel usage (e.g. Business, leisure, convention) (Jones 2002; Lewis et al 1995; Powers and Barrows, 1999).

Secondly, the industry is made complex by both the affiliation and management structures. In terms of affiliation, hotels can be operated as independent properties, franchised to a branded hotel company (e.g. Marriott, Holiday Inn) or as members of a marketing consortium (e.g. Best Western, Leading Hotels of the World). In addition, hotels can be owner managed, managed by independent hotel management companies or managed by national or international branded hotel company (Chon & Sparrowe, 2000; Go & Pine, 1995).

Thirdly, the industry is also highly fragmented, with most hotels independently owned and operated (Olsen, 1996; Powers and Barrows 1999) although there is higher level of concentration in certain key quality sectors such as the luxury and first class sectors and the limited service sector (Jones, 2002). The perceived level of fragmentation is also lower when measured by the number of bedrooms rather than the number of properties (Olsen, 1996).

Hotel basic accommodation includes a room with only a bed, a cupboard, a small table and a wash stand has largely been replaced by rooms with en-suite bathrooms and more commonly in the United States than elsewhere, climate control. Other features found may be a telephone, an alarm clock, a T.V, and broad band internet connectivity. Food and drink may be supplied by a mini-bar (which often includes a small refrigerator containing snacks and drinks (paid for on departure), and tea and coffee making facilities such as cups, spoons, an electric kettle and sachets containing instant coffee, tea bags, sugar and cream

milk (Wikipedia 2001). The increased online price/product transparency and the new e- business model (e.g. online auctions) enhances guest purchasing powers, who are becoming more price sensitive, less brand loyal and more sophisticated (Jones, 2002; Olsen, 1996; Powers and Barrows, 1999).As tourist movements continue to grow and become a source of revenue for different countries, so different segments of this industry with their activities have an important role in bringing a lot of revenue for the countries.

**5. Methodology**

To accomplish this exploratory research, descriptive survey research design was considered appropriate. The population of this study included customers of selected hotels in Awka, Onitsha and Nnewi representing the three senatorial zones in Anambra State. The researcher selected two hotels from each senatorial zone making a total of six hotels in Anambra State thus:

**AWKA**

1. Anabel Hotel - 23
2. New Jerusalem Hotel - 23

**ONITSHA**

3. Dolly Hills Hotel - 23
4. Soprom Hotel - 23

**NNEWI**

5. Beverly Hills Hotel - 23
6. De Lumen Hotel - 23

**Total 138**

Since the population of the study is unknown, we will adopt the Topman formula for infinite population, thus;  $n = \frac{(Z \times P \times Q)}{e^2}$

Where n= Sample Size

Z= Standard normal deviation

**6. Findings**

**Table 1 Relationship between Reliability and Customer Satisfaction Correlations**

	Reliability	Customer Satisfaction
Reliability Pearson Correlation	1	0.956
Sig.(2 tailed)		0.000
N	125	125
Customer Satisfaction Pearson Correlation	0.956	1
Sig.(2 tailed)	0.000	
N	125	125

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The result of the test of hypothesis one (Table 4.3.1) shows that the coefficient (r) and p-value are 0.956 and 0.000. The significance (0.000) is less than the level of significance (0.05). This indicates that there is positive correlation between Reliability and customer satisfaction in hotels in Anambra State.

P= proportion of success or respondents who agree with the variable of interest

Q= proportion of respondents not agreeing with variable of interest (1—P)

e= error margin.

The researcher did a pilot study with 10 respondents and the questions were dichotomous. 9 returned positive and 1 returned negative.

Therefore, the sample size of customers will be

Z =1.96 (See table of normal distribution)

P = assumed percentage of success rate (9/10 = 0.9)

Q = (1-P) or percentage of failure rate (1/10=0.1)

E =5% or (0.05)

$$N = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.9 \times 0.01}{0.05^2} = 138$$

The present study adopts the stratified sampling technique (Kothari, 2004), or the proportionate stratified random sampling (STRS) technique (Onyeizugbe, 2013). To Kothari (2004), this technique is a complex random sampling design or mixed sampling design because it represents a combination of probability and non-probability methods. As a probability method, with this approach, every sampling unit has a known and equal chance of being selected. As a non-probability technique, the sample size of Hotel customers was selected using the convenience method.

The choice of STRS is informed by two reasons: First, the population of the present study is in groups, comprising of six hotels, that is strata. Second, STRS helps to minimize the variability within each stratum and maximize the difference between strata (Hair et al, 2006). Table 5 below shows allocation of the sample to each senatorial zone.

**Table 2 Relationship between Responsiveness and Customer Satisfaction Correlations**

	Responsiveness	Customer Satisfaction
Responsiveness Pearson Correlation	1	0.999
Sig.(2 tailed)		0.000
N	125	125
Customer Satisfaction Pearson Correlation	0.999	1
Sig.(2 tailed)	0.000	
N	125	125

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The result of the test of hypothesis two (table 4.3.2) shows that the coefficient (r) and p-value are 0.999 and 0.000. The significance (0.000) is less than the level of significance (0.05). This indicates that there is strong positive correlation between Responsiveness and customer satisfaction in hotels in Anambra State.

**Table 3 Relationship between Assurance and Customer Satisfaction Correlations**

	Assurance	Customer Satisfaction
Assurance Pearson Correlation	1	0.995
Sig.(2 tailed)		0.000
N	125	125
Customer Satisfaction Pearson Correlation	0.995	1
Sig.(2 tailed)	0.000	
N	125	125

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The result of the test of hypothesis three (table 4.3.3) shows that the coefficient (r) and p-value are 0.995 and 0.000. The significance (0.000) is less than the level of significance (0.05). This indicates that there is positive correlation between Assurance and customer Satisfaction in hotels in Anambra State.

**Table 4 Relationship between Tangibility and Customer Satisfaction Correlations**

	Tangibility	Customer Satisfaction
Tangibility Pearson Correlation	1	0.987
Sig.(2 tailed)		0.000
N	125	125
Customer Satisfaction Pearson Correlation	0.987	1
Sig.(2 tailed)	0.000	
N	125	125

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The result of the test of hypothesis four (table 4.3.4) shows that the coefficient (r) and p-value are 0.987 and 0.000. The significance (0.000) is less than the level of significance (0.05). This indicates that there is positive correlation between Tangibility and customer satisfaction in hotels in Anambra State.

**Table 5 Relationship between Empathy and Customer Satisfaction Correlations**

	Empathy	Customer Satisfaction
Empathy Pearson Correlation	1	0.956
Sig.(2 tailed)		0.000
N	125	125
Customer Satisfaction Pearson Correlation	0.956	1
Sig.(2 tailed)	0.000	
N	125	125

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The result of the test of hypothesis one (table 4.3.5) shows that the coefficient (r) and p-value are 0.956 and 0.000. The significance (0.000) is less than the level of significance (0.05). This indicates that there is positive correlation between Empathy and customer satisfaction in hotels in Anambra State. Therefore, we accept the alternative hypothesis which states that Empathy has a significant effect on customer satisfaction in hotels in Anambra State. The result is in consonance with the work of (Lin and Chang, 2003) where they concluded by saying that empathy has a powerful impact on customer's decision to purchase.

## 7. Conclusions

Review of related literature suggests that researchers have confined their research to understand effects of service quality on customer satisfaction based on SERVQUAL model's perspective, with less focus on the performance attribute of the SERVQUAL model. Therefore, this thesis makes an attempt to understudy service quality from service providers' performance perspectives. In the course of this study, the researcher has established that there is a strong positive relationship in all the five dimensions of service quality (Reliability, Assurance, Tangibility, Empathy and Responsiveness) in the hospitality industry. This finding is consistent with Parasuraman et al (1990), Asghari and Babu (2017), Akahome (2017) and Bexley et al (2005) that consumers have the highest expectation that their service (healthcare) providers should have employees who understand their consumers specific needs, give personal attention to them, and caring in providing health services.

Results revealed that responsiveness has the most significant effect on customer satisfaction in hospitality industry followed by assurance, tangibility and Empathy. This implies that the management of hotels should understand the importance of these five dimensions of service quality. This study in line with a related study by Olaleke, (2010) on assessing the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction; evidence from Nigerian banking industry with 98 customers. This study was therefore carried to examine the relationship between service quality and appropriate statistical techniques employed to test the hypotheses were multiple regression and correlation. The study reveals that service quality has significant effect on customer satisfaction.

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**APPENDIX**

**SERVQUAL and SERVPERF Measurement Attributes and Dimensions**

	Dimensions of SERVQUAL	Description of SERVQUAL Measurement Attributes	Description of SERVPERF Measurement Attribute
1	Tangible	XYZ has up-to-date equipment.	The hotel has modern and comfortable furniture
2		XYZ's physical facilities are visually appealing.	The physical features are visually appealing
3		XYZ's employees are well dressed and appear neat.	The hotel has an attractive lobby
4		The appearance of the physical facilities of XYZ is in keeping with the type of services provided.	The staff uniform is neat and professional
			The hotel has an attractive lobby
			The room is clean

			The rooms are spacious
			The bathroom and toilet are hygienic
			The hotel provides complementary items (e. g. WIFI)
			Materials associated with the service are visually appealing in the hotel
5	Reliability	When XYZ promises to do something by a certain time, it does so.	The hotel provides the service at the time promised.
6		When you have problems, XYZ is sympathetic and reassuring.	The staff deal with you in a caring fashion
7		XYZ is dependable	The hotel provides accurate information about their service
8		XYZ provides its services at the time it promises to do so.	The hotel keeps you informed about when the service will be performed
9		XYZ keeps its records accurately.	
10		XYZ does not tell customers exactly when services will be performed. (-)	
11	Responsiveness	You do not receive prompt service from XYZ's employees. (-)	The hotel provides prompt service to you at all times
12		Employees of XYZ are not always willing to help customers. (-)	The staff is willing to help you when you needed
13		Employees of XYZ are too busy to respond to customer requests promptly. (-)	The staff offer help even though you do not specifically request
14	Assurance	You can trust employees of XYZ.	The staff has the ability to instill confidence
15		You feel safe in your transactions with XYZ's employees.	The staff make you feel safe and secured during your stay
16		Employees of XYZ are polite	The staff is friendly
17		Employees get adequate support from XYZ to do their jobs well.	The staff have product knowledge
18	Empathy	XYZ does not give you individual attention. (-)	The staff is responsive to your request
19		Employees of XYZ do not give you personal attention. (-)	The staff provided personal attention to you
20		Employees of XYZ do not know what your needs are. (-)	The staff have knowledge of your specific interests
21		XYZ does not have your best interests at heart. (-)	The hotel has your interest at heart
22		XYZ does not have operating hours convenient to all their customers. (-)	The staff have the ability to in-still confidence in you

**Source:** Compiled from the SERVQUAL model (Parasuraman, 1985), SERVPERF model (Cronin and Taylor, 1994).

Adapted SERVQUAL and SERVPERF model

	Reliability	1	2	3	4	5
1	The hotel provides the service at the time promised.					
2	The staff deal with you in a caring fashion					
3	The hotel provides accurate information about their service					
4	The hotel keeps you informed about when the service will be performed					
	<b>Responsiveness</b>					
5	The hotel provides prompt service to you at all times					
6	The staff is willing to help you when you needed					
7	The staff offer help even though you do not specifically request					

<b>Assurance</b>						
8	The staff has the ability to instill confidence					
9	The staff make you feel safe and secured during your stay					
10	The staff is friendly					
11	The staff have product knowledge					
<b>Tangibility</b>						
12	The hotel has modern and comfortable furniture					
13	The physical features are visually appealing					
14	The hotel has an attractive lobby					
15	The staff uniform is neat and professional					
	The hotel has an attractive lobby					
	The room is clean					
	The rooms are spacious					
	The bathroom and toilet are hygienic					
	The hotel provides complementary items (e. g. WIFI)					
	Materials associated with the service are visually appealing in the hotel					
<b>Empathy</b>						
16	The staff is responsive to your request					
17	The staff provided personal attention to you					
18	The staff have knowledge of your specific interests					
19	The hotel has your interest at heart					
20	The staff have the ability to in-still confidence in you					
<b>Customer Satisfaction</b>						
21	I never seriously considered changing from my hotel to other hotel					
22	I am satisfied with the services of my hotel					
23	I will recommend my hotel to my friends.					
24	I speak positively about my hotel to other people					

