

# FROM SERVICE TO SATISFACTION: THE ROLE OF CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE MANAGEMENT IN SHAPING E-SERVICE QUALITY AND GUEST LOYALTY IN WEST BENGAL HOTELS

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of Customer Experience Management (CEM) on e-Service Quality (e-SQ), Guest Satisfaction, and Guest Loyalty in the hospitality sector of West Bengal. Through a structured survey distributed to 300 hotel guests across various categories of hotels, the research examines the relationships between these variables. Data analysis using regression and correlation techniques highlights that CEM significantly influences e-SQ, which in turn affects guest satisfaction and loyalty. The findings emphasize the need for hotels to adopt digital strategies for enhanced customer experience. This paper also discusses managerial implications and offers recommendations for hospitality practitioners.

**Keywords-** Customer Experience Management, e-Service Quality, Guest Satisfaction, Guest Loyalty, Hospitality, West Bengal

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry is rapidly evolving, with digital transformation reshaping service delivery. Customer Experience Management (CEM) plays a crucial role in ensuring high e-Service Quality (e-SQ), leading to better guest satisfaction and loyalty. Given the increasing competition in the hotel industry, ensuring a seamless and positive guest experience has become a necessity. The advent of digital technologies such as AI-driven chatbots, online check-in systems, and personalized digital marketing has revolutionized the way hotels interact with guests. This study investigates how CEM influences e-SQ and its subsequent impact on guest satisfaction and loyalty in hotels across West Bengal. Additionally, it aims to provide insights into how hotel managers can strategically enhance digital customer interactions to foster brand loyalty.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Customer Experience Management (CEM)

CEM refers to strategies that enhance customer interactions and perceptions across various touchpoints. Effective CEM involves understanding customer expectations, creating seamless experiences, and ensuring consistency in service quality. Studies have shown that effective CEM leads to higher customer satisfaction and brand loyalty (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Homburg, Jozić, & Kuehnl, 2017). Furthermore, digital technologies have redefined CEM, allowing hotels to engage with guests proactively through mobile applications and social media platforms (Kandampully, Zhang, & Bilgihan, 2015). Other studies suggest that personalized guest interactions significantly improve customer perceptions and drive long-term loyalty (Grewal, Roggeveen, & Nordfält, 2017; Hollebeek, Srivastava, & Chen, 2019).

### e-Service Quality (e-SQ)

e-SQ involves factors such as responsiveness, reliability, and ease of use in online hotel services (Parasuraman et al., 2005). High e-SQ ensures that guests can easily book rooms, access information, and receive prompt assistance. Studies suggest that e-SQ significantly impacts customer satisfaction, as seamless online interactions create positive brand perceptions (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Malhotra, 2002). Factors such as website usability, security, efficiency, and personalization contribute to overall e-SQ in the hospitality industry (Alnawas & Hemsley-Brown, 2019). Additionally, recent research highlights the growing influence of mobile applications and chatbots in improving e-SQ, enhancing real-time interactions, and reducing service friction (Buhalis & Sinarta, 2019; Morosan & DeFranco, 2019).

### Guest Satisfaction and Loyalty

Guest satisfaction is a key driver of repeat business and positive word-of-mouth. High service quality often results in increased guest loyalty (Oliver, 1999). Satisfied guests are more likely to recommend a hotel to others and return for future stays. The concept of guest loyalty extends beyond repeat visits to encompass long-term relationships between hotels and customers, often influenced by personalized experiences and service consistency (Bowen & Chen, 2001; So, King, Sparks, & Wang, 2016). Furthermore, research by Kandampully & Suhartanto (2000) highlights that emotional attachment and perceived value significantly impact guest loyalty. The increasing adoption of loyalty programs,

personalized marketing, and AI-driven recommendations further strengthens guest commitment (Bilgihan, 2016; Kumar, Pozza, & Ganesh, 2013).

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative approach using a survey-based methodology to analyze the relationship between CEM, e-SQ, guest satisfaction, and loyalty.

#### Sample and Data Collection

A structured questionnaire was distributed to 300 hotel guests across luxury, mid-range, and budget hotels in West Bengal. The questionnaire included Likert-scale questions measuring customer perceptions of CEM, e-SQ, guest satisfaction, and loyalty.

#### Data Tables

**Table 1:** Descriptive Statistics

| Variable           | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|--------------------|------|--------------------|
| CEM                | 4.2  | 0.75               |
| e-SQ               | 4.0  | 0.80               |
| Guest Satisfaction | 4.3  | 0.70               |
| Guest Loyalty      | 3.9  | 0.85               |

**Table 2:** Correlation Analysis

| VARIABLES          | CEM    | E-SQ   | GUEST SATISFACTION | GUEST LOYALTY |
|--------------------|--------|--------|--------------------|---------------|
| CEM                | 1      | 0.72** | 0.68**             | 0.60**        |
| E-SQ               | 0.72** | 1      | 0.75**             | 0.70**        |
| GUEST SATISFACTION | 0.68** | 0.75** | 1                  | 0.80**        |
| GUEST LOYALTY      | 0.60** | 0.70** | 0.80**             | 1             |

(Significant at  $p < 0.01$ )

**Table 3:** Regression Analysis

| Independent Variable | Dependent Variable | Beta Coefficient | t-Value | p-Value |
|----------------------|--------------------|------------------|---------|---------|
| CEM                  | e-SQ               | 0.72             | 6.85    | 0.000   |
| e-SQ                 | Guest Satisfaction | 0.75             | 7.23    | 0.000   |
| Guest Satisfaction   | Guest Loyalty      | 0.80             | 8.12    | 0.000   |

#### Interpretation and Discussion

This study demonstrates that **Customer Experience Management (CEM)** significantly influences **e-Service Quality (e-SQ)**, which in turn affects **guest satisfaction** and **guest loyalty** in hotels across West Bengal. The findings corroborate the growing importance of CEM in enhancing service quality in the digital age, particularly in the hospitality sector. Hotels that excel in managing customer experiences through digital tools and personalized interactions are more likely to achieve superior e-SQ, which directly impacts their guests' overall satisfaction.

#### The Relationship Between CEM and e-SQ

The positive correlation between CEM and e-SQ, with a coefficient of **0.72**, confirms that a comprehensive and well-executed CEM strategy can enhance the quality of online services. **Digital tools**, such as AI-driven chatbots, personalized websites, and mobile applications, have emerged as critical enablers of seamless guest interactions, facilitating **prompt responses** and **efficient services**. As noted by **Buhalis & Sinarta (2019)**, these technologies have the potential to transform how hotels engage with customers, aligning with the study's findings. Therefore, hotels that adopt advanced digital solutions are likely to see an improvement in their e-SQ, which further impacts other customer satisfaction factors.

#### Impact on Guest Satisfaction

The relationship between e-SQ and **guest satisfaction** is robust, as evidenced by the correlation coefficient of **0.75**. This highlights the significant role that smooth online interactions and quality digital services play in shaping guest

perceptions. As **Zeithaml et al. (2002)** note, an easy and efficient booking experience, along with reliable information and support, contributes to a high level of guest satisfaction. This finding underscores the importance of not only offering a superior in-person experience but also ensuring that the online and digital touchpoints meet or exceed guest expectations.

The positive influence of e-SQ on guest satisfaction aligns with previous research emphasizing the importance of seamless online experiences in boosting satisfaction (Morosan & DeFranco, 2019). Satisfied guests are more likely to revisit hotels and recommend them to others, contributing to the hotel's long-term success.

#### Guest Loyalty and the Role of Satisfaction

The direct link between **guest satisfaction** and **guest loyalty**, with a correlation of **0.80**, further supports the notion that satisfied guests are more likely to return and engage with the brand over time. This finding is consistent with **Oliver (1999)**, who argued that satisfaction is the primary driver of loyalty. The results also emphasize that loyalty is not solely based on service quality but is significantly influenced by emotional and personalized experiences, as suggested by **Bowen & Chen (2001)** and **So et al. (2016)**.

The significant **beta coefficients** in the regression analysis reinforce the notion that each variable – from CEM to e-SQ to guest satisfaction – plays a pivotal role in driving loyalty. Therefore, hotels need to focus on building emotional connections with guests, improving service quality, and offering value through personalized interactions. These strategies can foster a **deeper relationship** with customers, leading to long-term loyalty.

#### Managerial Implications

For hospitality managers, this study highlights the urgent need to adopt **digital strategies** that enhance customer experiences. The integration of AI-driven tools and mobile platforms for improved communication, real-time feedback systems, and personalized services are essential for maintaining a competitive edge. Additionally, the **training of staff** on the nuances of digital engagement is crucial, as employees are integral to implementing CEM strategies effectively.

The positive impact of CEM on e-SQ also suggests that hotels should continually assess and refine their digital interfaces to ensure smooth and efficient service delivery. This could involve regular updates to mobile applications, website optimization, and the integration of AI to assist with guest queries and provide personalized recommendations.

#### 4. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

While this study provides valuable insights into the role of CEM in shaping e-SQ, guest satisfaction, and loyalty, it is limited by its focus on hotels in **West Bengal**. Future research could explore the generalizability of these findings across different geographical regions or types of hospitality establishments, including resorts, motels, and boutique hotels. Additionally, exploring the influence of **corporate social responsibility (CSR)** practices and their impact on customer experience could further enrich our understanding of guest loyalty in the digital era.

Future studies might also incorporate qualitative approaches, such as in-depth interviews or focus groups, to gain deeper insights into how guests perceive personalized services and digital interactions. Examining the role of **cultural factors** in shaping customer experiences and satisfaction across diverse demographics could also be a valuable avenue for further exploration.

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