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Factors Affecting Service Quality in a Saudi Hotel Industry: A Case Study in Albaha, Saudi Arabia

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to investigate the factors influencing Service Quality (SQ) in hotels located in Albaha, Saudi Arabia, and to assess the extent of their impact. The study employs a quantitative research approach, collecting data from 500 customers using the SERVQUAL questionnaire, with 327 responses deemed suitable for analysis. Convenience sampling was utilized, and the data were analyzed using Smart PLS software, focusing on the relationships between various service quality dimensions. The findings reveal that Tangibility and Empathy significantly influence Service Quality in Albaha's hotels, while Reliability, Responsiveness, and Assurance have a negligible impact. These results suggest that physical aspects of the hotel and empathetic interactions with guests are critical determinants of service quality in this region. In contrast, factors such as reliability and responsiveness, often considered fundamental in other contexts, do not play a significant role in this specific cultural and geographical setting. In conclusion, this study underscores the importance of focusing on Tangibility and Empathy to enhance Service Quality in Albaha's hotel industry. The findings offer practical insights for hotel management to prioritize these areas in their service improvement strategies. Furthermore, the study provides a foundation for future research, particularly in exploring culturally tailored approaches to service quality enhancement in similar regional contexts.

Keywords: Service Quality, SERVQUAL, Hotels Service Quality, Impact on Service Quality, Antecedents of Service Quality

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1. Introduction

The hospitality sector plays a crucial role in Saudi Arabia's efforts to diversify its economy, with hotels serving as essential components of the broader tourism industry (Rafiq et al., 2022; Zia and Alzahrani, 2022). Given the dynamic nature of the global tourism industry and the growing demands of customers, it has become vital to prioritize and enhance the quality of hotel services (Al-Hazmi, 2020). Located in the picturesque Albaha Region of Saudi Arabia, known for its captivating natural landscapes and rich cultural heritage, the hotel industry faces a critical juncture marked by both promising opportunities and significant challenges (Zia and Khan, 2018). To establish a strong position in the global tourism market, it is imperative to thoroughly examine the factors that contribute to service quality in this region. This study undertakes an in-depth investigation of the factors influencing Hotel Service Quality (SQ) in the Albaha Region, aiming to provide a detailed understanding of their intricate impacts.

In recent years, the Albaha Region has seen a consistent increase in visitors and business travellers, drawn by its scenic landscapes, historical landmarks, and cultural appeal. The quality of services provided by local hotels is under scrutiny from tourists, whether they seek leisure or are involved in professional activities. In the fiercely competitive hospitality industry, the quality of service offered by hotels plays a pivotal role in shaping visitors' decisions and ultimately determining their overall satisfaction. Therefore, understanding the factors that influence service quality in Albaha's hotels is crucial, not only for individual hotel owners but also for the region's broader tourism development plans.

Given the complex interplay of various factors, our academic endeavour aims to clarify key research questions (RQs):

1. What key antecedents significantly influence Hotel Service Quality (SQ) in the Albaha Region, and how do they differ from global hospitality contexts?

2. To what extent do the identified antecedents individually and collectively impact perceived Service Quality (SQ) in Albaha?

3. What are the practical implications of the research findings for hotel management and tourism stakeholders in Albaha, and what culturally sensitive strategies can be recommended to improve service quality and enhance the region's competitiveness as a tourist destination?

The objective of this study is to investigate the factors contributing to Hotel Service Quality in the Albaha Region, analyzing their impact both individually and

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collectively. Through an in-depth exploration of these antecedent factors, our goal is to provide practical and valuable insights that hotel managers and other stakeholders in the tourism industry can use to enhance service standards and effectively meet the evolving needs of their diverse customer base. Furthermore, this research contributes to the existing body of literature by offering a contextualized examination of the elements that influence service quality within the unique dynamics of the Albaha Region. While numerous studies have examined service quality in the global hospitality industry, a significant gap exists in understanding the specific factors and challenges faced by hotels operating in distinct cultural and geographic contexts.

The following sections will explore the study's methodology, the tools used for data collection and analysis, and the specific antecedents examined. Additionally, the study presents results from a comprehensive analysis of their significance for the effective management of hotels and the broader tourism industry in the Albaha Region. The primary objective of this study is to provide valuable insights and knowledge that can inform evidence-based approaches and interventions aimed at enhancing the quality standards of hotels in Albaha. By doing so, this study seeks to make a significant contribution to the long-term attractiveness of the region as a preferred tourist destination.

2. Literature Review And Hypothesis Development

2.1. Service Quality In The Hotel Industry

Most studies define service quality as the alignment between expected and delivered services. When the delivered services meet the expected standards, they are presumed to have performed well in terms of Service Quality (SQ). The extent to which a service meets customers' requirements or desires, including a comparison of customers' expectations with their perceptions of actual service performance, is viewed as SQ (Kelley & Turley, 2001; Lewis & Mitchell, 1990; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985). Satisfied customers are expected to remain loyal (Hashmi & Zia, 2020; Khan & Zia, 2019; Wong & Sohal, 2003; Zia & Azam, 2013; Zia & Ghaswyneh, 2013; Zia & Nuruzzaman, 2013). Service Quality is considered a vehicle that enhances consumer value and ensures consumer satisfaction (Sivadas & Baker-Prewitt, 2000). It also aids in competitive positioning (Mehta, Lalwani, & Li Han, 2000) and customer retention and patronage (Yavas, Bilgin, & Shemwell, 1997).

Firms gain a competitive advantage by leveraging technology to enhance SQ and meet market demand (Parasuraman et al., 1985). Various researchers have developed service perspectives over an extended period (Kelley & Turley, 2001; Zeithaml, 1988). SQ is an extrinsically perceived attribute ascribed by consumers concerning the service experience during an encounter (Zeithaml, 1988). The intangible and varied nature of services makes it more challenging to measure service standards compared to products. As a result, customers focus on service production, necessitating a distinction between the service delivery process and the actual service output, which is termed service quality.

Hotels are considered service providers and represent a form of pure service. Consequently, the hotel industry continuously innovates and strives to deliver services differently and satisfactorily (Orfila-Sintes & Mattsson, 2009). The measurement of service quality within the hotel industry has gained popularity with the extensive use of Internet technology (Mehmood, Zia, Alkatheeri, Jabeen, & Zhang, 2023; Zia, 2020). This measurement is often conducted through reviews and surveys on online platforms, creating e-word of mouth (Wang, Li, Li, & Zhang, 2016; Xu & Li, 2016). Therefore, to assess the SQ of hotels in the Albaha region, a review of antecedents has been conducted.

2.2. Servqual Scale

The SERVQUAL scale was developed to measure service quality across various sectors and is widely used globally (Kelley & Turley, 2001). Many studies have implemented the SERVQUAL scale to measure SQ in the hotel industry (Al Khattab & Aldehayyat, 2011; Dhar, 2015; Hue Minh, Thu Ha, Chi Anh, & Matsui, 2015; Rauch, Collins, Nale, & Barr, 2015; Tsaur & Lin, 2004). Research highlights the importance of service quality in Saudi Arabia due to its high tourist turnover from Islamic pilgrimage and local tourism (Al-Ismail, Carmichael, & Duberley, 2019; Alamoudi, 2009; Aleidan, 2017; Ascoura, 2013; Ihsan & Alshibani, 2018). Therefore, by examining the factors and their impact on the SQ of hotels in Albaha province, this study utilizes the five SERVQUAL antecedents.

Based on the literature review, the following model was constructed (Figure 1). The model below shows SQ as the dependent variable and five factors as independent variables.

2.3. Tangibility

Previous studies have emphasized the significance of tangibility as a fundamental element influencing service quality perceptions within the hotel industry (Al-Hazmi, 2020; Alkatheeri, Jabeen, Mehmood, & Santoro, 2023). Tangibility refers to the observable and physical characteristics of a hotel, including amenities, structural elements, and visual appeal (Al Khattab & Aldehayyat, 2011). Several studies have demonstrated the importance of tangibility in shaping guests' initial perceptions and expectations. There is ongoing debate regarding the impact of tangible cues, such as visual aspects and hotel facilities, on individuals' overall impressions of service quality. However, the influence of tangibility on service quality within the unique context of Albaha hotels, known for their blend of contemporary and traditional features, remains uncertain. When assessing the significance of tangibility as a factor affecting service quality in the Albaha Region, it is essential to consider the cultural nuances

and expectations of visitors. While global literature provides valuable insights, a thorough evaluation requires special attention to the distinct characteristics of this region.

H1: *Tangibility has no significant impact on the SQ for Hotels of Albaha.*

2.4. Reliability

Reliability is a critical aspect of service quality in the hotel industry and is often defined by the consistency and dependability of service delivery (Al-Debei, Akroush, & Ashouri, 2015; Al Khattab & Aldehayyat, 2011). Numerous studies have established the vital role of reliability in determining guest satisfaction and loyalty. The concept of reliability is essential for ensuring that guests consistently receive the promised services without interruptions (Ihsan & Alshibani, 2018). Studies across diverse hospitality settings have consistently found a strong positive correlation between reliability and service quality. However, it is important to examine whether reliability remains a critical factor in shaping perceptions of service quality within the hotel industry in the Albaha Region, considering the unique challenges and opportunities it may present. This study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of reliability in the hospitality industry in Albaha by examining the various factors that may influence reliability and its impact on hotel service quality.

H2: *Reliability has no significant impact on SQ for hotels in Albaha.*

2.5. Responsiveness

This section reviews the literature related to H3, which focuses on responsiveness. Responsiveness, defined as a hotel's ability to promptly address and fulfill guest requests, is widely recognized as a key factor influencing service quality in the hotel industry. The timely and efficient handling of customer requests and concerns can significantly affect visitor satisfaction and overall perceptions of service quality. Numerous studies consistently emphasize the importance of responsiveness in the hotel industry, highlighting its crucial role in shaping positive customer experiences (Kumar, Garg, Vandana, & Zia, 2022; Zia & Kalia, 2023). However, it is essential to assess the relevance of the relationship between responsiveness and service quality in the distinct context of Albaha hotels, considering variations in customer expectations and cultural influences. This literature review aims to explore existing research on responsiveness in the hospitality sector in Albaha and identify and analyze the factors that may uniquely influence the impact of responsiveness on service quality.

H3: *Responsiveness has no significant impact on the SQ for Hotels of Albaha.*

2.6. Assurance

The importance of assurance in the hotel industry has been widely recognized as a fundamental aspect of service quality, encompassing elements such as the competence, credibility, and courtesy of hotel staff (Kim, Bae, & Jeon, 2019; Lin, Chi, & Gursoy, 2020). Guests' perceptions of the reliability and competence of hotel staff significantly influence their overall satisfaction and service quality perceptions (Al-Ismail et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2019). Extensive research in the global hospitality industry has underscored the importance of assurance in building trust and confidence among guests. However, it is crucial to investigate whether assurance remains a key determinant of service quality in the context of Albaha hotels. Analyzing the factors contributing to the influence of assurance on service quality in the hospitality environment of Albaha may require considering cultural and geographical differences in visitor expectations and perceptions.

H4: *Assurance has no significant impact on the SQ for Hotels of Albaha.*

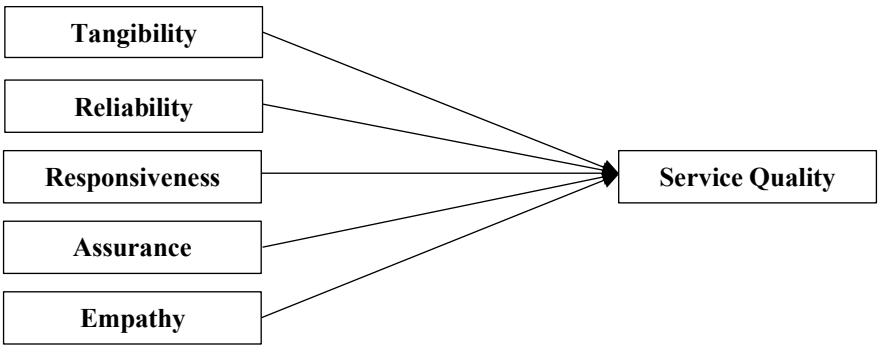

Figure 1: Conceptual Model Source: SERVQUAL (Berry, Parasuraman, & Zeithaml, 1988; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988)

2.7. Empathy

Empathy has been recognized as a crucial element of service quality within the hotel sector, particularly in the ability of hotel staff to understand and address customers' emotional needs (Al Khattab & Aldehayyat, 2011). A correlation has been established between offering personalized and compassionate services and increased levels of guest satisfaction and loyalty. Past empirical studies have consistently highlighted the importance of empathy in shaping customers' emotional attachments to hotels and their overall evaluations of service quality (Hue Minh et al., 2015). However, it is essential to investigate whether empathy remains a fundamental factor influencing service quality in Albaha hotels, considering the region's unique cultural and geographical circumstances. The

objective of this literature review is to examine the existing global research on empathy in the hotel industry. Additionally, it aims to analyze potential differences in the impact of empathy on service quality, specifically within the Albaha Region. This is particularly important, as cultural nuances in this region may significantly influence guests' emotional expectations and responses.

H5: *Empathy has no significant impact on the SQ for Hotels of Albaha.*

3. Methodology

3.1. Sample Size And Data Collection

The researchers employed convenience sampling to collect primary data from the Albaha region in Saudi Arabia. A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed, yielding a 65% response rate. Of these, 327 were used for analysis. Although the response rate is deemed satisfactory, it is important to acknowledge the potential biases inherent in convenience sampling. By including both Saudi natives and expatriates working in the hotel industry, the sample becomes more diverse, leading to a more comprehensive representation of the community under study.

3.2. Measurement Of Constructs

The SERVQUAL scale was utilized as the primary instrument for data collection, comprising a questionnaire with 22 items. The questionnaire was modified to align with the study's methodology, resulting in a revised version with 20 items. This modification was implemented to ensure that the questionnaire adequately covered the five SERVQUAL dimensions and Service Quality (SQ). Such modifications are commonly employed in research to tailor instruments to the specific circumstances of a study. A Likert scale, ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree," was used to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' opinions. Quantitative analysis was facilitated by assigning numerical values to each point on the Likert scale.

3.3. Method Of Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using Smart-PLS3, a tool for Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). SEM is a powerful statistical method that allows researchers to analyze complex relationships between variables. Smart-PLS3 is particularly well-suited for exploratory research, offering versatility in handling both reflective and formative constructs. The choice of Smart-PLS3 reflects a desire to understand both the relationships between factors and the underlying structures that influence service quality in the hotel industry.

4. Analysis And Findings

4.1. Measurement Models

Given that the data consisted of responses from hotel customers, there is a potential issue of common method bias. This issue can be identified and verified using Harman's single-factor test. The results indicated that one construct accounted for 40.55% of the variance, which is below the threshold of 50%. Consequently, the study is free of biases in the response data. The measurement model involved evaluating the reliability and validity (both convergent and discriminant) of first-order constructs, using rigorous methodologies to scrutinize the proposed model. The measurement model is based on the modified SERVQUAL scale, which includes the five dimensions and assesses overall service quality. By employing a multivariate approach, a comprehensive analysis of the factors contributing to service quality was conducted.

4.2. Descriptive Analysis

The sample composition of the study is characterized by a gender distribution of 71% males and 29% females, indicating a significant gender imbalance, likely due to cultural factors. Additionally, the inclusion of both graduate and undergraduate participants introduces an essential element of diversity to the sample, ensuring a comprehensive examination of the study objectives across various educational backgrounds.

4.3. Validity And Reliability

Convergent validity was assessed initially, including indicators such as loadings, composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), and Cronbach's alpha. The AVE, CR, and Cronbach's alpha values were found to exceed the recommended thresholds of 0.50, 0.70, and 0.70, respectively (Table 1).

Table 1: The result of the measurement model

Construct	items	Loading	AVE	CR	Cronbach's alpha	VIF
Tangibility	T1	0.728	0.775	0.911	0.852	2.623
	T2	0.941				2.739
	T3	0.953				1.998
Responsiveness	Rs1	0.813	0.715	0.882	0.802	1.459
	Rs2	0.792				2.013
	Rs3	0.924				2.259
Empathy	Em1	0.985	0.943	0.980	0.970	2.149
	Em2	0.956				2.885
	Em3	0.972				1.186
Assurance	A1	0.919	0.797	0.922	0.873	2.390

	A2	0.911				2.358
	A3	0.972				3.262
SQ	SQ1	0.916	0.879	0.973	0.965	3.512
	SQ2	0.897				2.810
	SQ3	0.950				2.623
	SQ4	0.938				2.739
	SQ1	0.948				1.998

Source: by the author

4.4. Discriminant Validity

After confirming convergent validity, two approaches were employed to assess discriminant validity. The primary criterion was based on the cross-loadings of indicators, where the loadings on the associated construct needed to be greater than those on other constructs. The second criterion, Fornell-Larcker (1981), relies on the squared values of AVE. A greater value for each indicator along the diagonal indicates that the necessary discriminant validity has been achieved, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Discriminant validity Fornell-Larcker Criteria

Dimensions	Assurance	Empathy	Reliabiity	Reponsiveness	SQ	Tangibility
Assurance	**0.893**					
Empathy	0.369	**0.971**				
Reliabiity	-0.157	-0.118	**0.789**			
Reponsiveness	0.245	0.241	-0.102	**0.845**		
SQ	0.135	0.157	-0.144	0.274	**0.937**	
Tangilibility	0.383	0.515	-0.160	0.265	0.632	**0.880**

Source: Calculated by the Author

4.5. Variance And Effect Size

The researchers assessed collinearity among the antecedents by confirming that the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values were below five. The VIF values for all antecedents were indeed below five, indicating no collinearity among the antecedents. F-square values, also known as effect sizes, provide information on the extent to which antecedents or dimensions contribute to the determination of the latent variable. The magnitude of the effect size is positively correlated with the level of participation. The findings of this study indicate that Assurance and Responsiveness have relatively small effect sizes, whereas Empathy and Tangibility have substantial effect sizes, as demonstrated by the f-squared values in Table 3.

Table 3*:* F Square (Effect Size)

Antecedents	Virtual Classes
Tangibility	0.962
Responsiveness	0.011
Empathy	0.243
Assurance	0.008

Note: Dependent antecedent = SQ, Independent antecedent = Tangibility, Responsiveness, Empathy and Assurance

The bootstrapping process provides an assessment of the statistical significance of the path coefficient values. The analysis revealed that the p-values for two antecedents were statistically significant, whereas three antecedents were not statistically significant (Table 4). Additionally, the study showed that four antecedents—Assurance, Empathy, Responsiveness, and Tangibility—had a positive influence on service quality (SQ). However, it was observed that only one construct, Reliability, had a negative effect on SQ.

Table 4: Bootstrapping values

	Original Sample	Mean	S.D	T-Values	P Values
Assurance > SQ	0.075	0.066	0.101	0.738	0.461
Empathy -> so	0.449	0.465	0.138	3.263	0.001
Reliability -> so	-0.001	-0.010	0.028	0.039	0.969
Responsiveness -> SQ	0.022	0.022	0.028	0.776	0.438
Tangibility -> sa	0.475	0.466	0.093	5.127	0.000

Source: Calculated by the author

4.6. Structural Model

The analysis in this study was conducted using the SmartPLS3 program. A sample size of 327 participants was employed in the relationship modelling study (Ong & Fadilah Puteh, 2017). Given the formative nature of this model, all interactions were represented by zero-order antecedents. Consequently, the Partial Least Squares (PLS) algorithm was employed. The path coefficient values in Table 5 demonstrate the influence of antecedents on SQ. These values are illustrated in Figures 2 and 3. Higher values indicate a greater influence, while lower values

suggest a lesser impact. The Reliability factor was found to have a score of -0.001, which was deemed statistically insignificant. As a result, this element was excluded, leading to the development of an alternative model that does not incorporate the reliability factor (Figure 2). Therefore, there is no correlation between the independent antecedents, and the coefficient of determination (R-square) for the variable SQ is 0.958, indicating a significantly strong relationship (Figure 3).

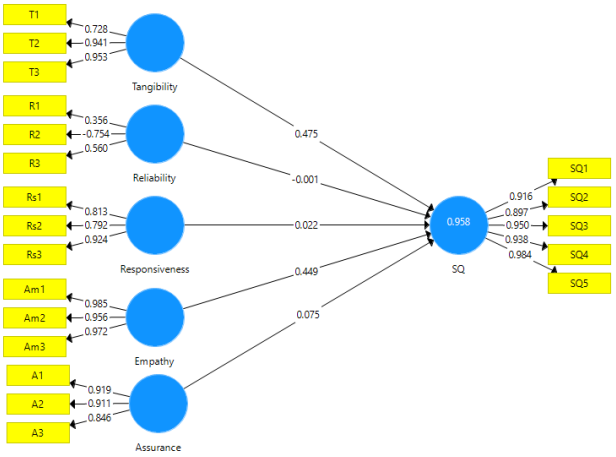

Figure 2: Path coefficient values for factors of SQ.

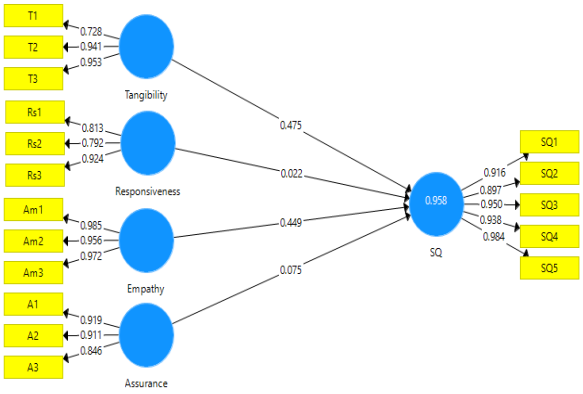

Figure 3: Path Coefficient Values After deleting Reliability

Table 5: Path Coefficient Values

S. No	Antecedents	values
1	Tangibility	0.475
2	Empathy	0.449
3	Assurance	0.075
4	Responsiveness	0.022
5	Reliability	-0.001

Source: Calculated by the author

5. Results

The conceptual model of service quality (SQ) illustrates the five aspects linked to the SQ of hotels in Albaha, Saudi Arabia, as shown in Figure 1. The observations revealed that each of the five elements exerted a certain degree of influence on SQ. The study found that among the examined elements, only Empathy and Tangibility had a statistically significant influence on hotels in Albaha, Saudi Arabia. Conversely, the factors Assurance, Responsiveness, and Reliability were determined to have a statistically insignificant impact on hotels in the region. The Reliability factor had a slightly negative coefficient value (-0.001) and a high level of insignificance (0.969). Consequently, this factor was excluded from further analysis. The remaining four criteria were found to positively influence SQ. Among these four factors, two had a statistically significant impact on SQ, while the other two had a statistically negligible impact. The path coefficients demonstrate that direct influence has a positive impact on SQ.

The The outer loadings in this model were documented as a formative model, which is necessary for this type of measurement model (Table IV). Beta values were used to assess the correlation between the indicator variables and the latent construct. The outer loadings for all indicators, except Reliability, fell within the acceptable range of 0.7 and above, as shown in Table II. Additionally, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) exceeded 0.5, indicating that all measures of antecedents in the model demonstrated a strong level of convergent validity. The Reliability factor was excluded from subsequent analyses because of its low value.

The values obtained for the dependability of individual items demonstrated that antecedents and the items themselves were found to be acceptable. The criterion for the average variance extracted (AVE) is that it should exceed 0.5. In this study, all AVE values fell within the range of 0.715–0.943. Cronbach's α coefficients ranged between 0.802 and 0.970, while the corresponding Composite Reliability values ranged from 0.859 to 0.971. A minimum outer loading of 0.70 was observed for all items in the questionnaire, as shown in Table II.

The researchers utilized the Fornell-Larcker criterion to assess the discriminant validity of the cross-loadings (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The HTMT ratios were computed using the proposed approach (Ringle, C., Wende, S., & Becker, 2015). Some studies have examined the Fornell-Larcker model and cross-loadings to assess discriminant validity, as presented in Table V. The diagonal elements of the matrix represent the squared basis of the eliminated standard deviation. The components away from the main axis demonstrate the interrelationships among the preceding elements. In this study, an examination of the cross-loadings of the model was conducted. The estimation indicated that the characteristics of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) should be more prominent than the Mean Squared Variance (MSV). The importance of the construct characteristics, particularly their vertical

and horizontal qualities, was overshadowed by the low outer loading values of the Reliability factor, as previously discussed.

The AVE values should be higher than those of MSV. The values of the constructs were more salient than their vertical and horizontal values, except for Reliability, which exhibited low outer loading values, as described earlier. An additional measure used to assess discriminant validity was the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT), which was examined in this study. The HTMT values for all dimensions were below the threshold of 0.85, as suggested by Sarstedt et al. (2022). This finding provides further evidence of the discriminant validity of the current model, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6: HTMT (Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio)

Antecedents	Tangibility	Responsiveness	Assurance	Empathy	SQ
Tangibility	-	-	-	-	-
Responsiveness	0.283	-	-	-	-
Assurance	0.816	0.318	-	-	-
Empathy	0.843	0.203	0.811	-	-
SQ	0.705	0.263	0.336	0.645	-

Source: Calculated by the author

The root-mean-square residual (RMSR) was calculated to assess the average total value of the covariance residuals. The standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) was determined by converting both the sample covariance matrix and the expected covariance matrix into correlation matrices. The SRMR is defined as the discrepancy between the observed covariance matrix and the covariance matrix implied by the estimated model. Thus, it allows for the assessment of the magnitude of discrepancies between observed and predicted connections as an absolute measure of model fit. The blindfolding system with an omission distance (D) value of 7 yielded a Q2 value of 0.781. This value, being greater than zero, indicates strong predictive significance for the model (Table 7).

Moreover, under this model, the calculated value for SRMR was 0.064, indicating strong correspondence (Table 8). A value below 0.10 is considered to indicate a strong correlation. Henseler et al. (2014) proposed using the SRMR as a measure of model fit in partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) to mitigate the risk of model misspecification.

Table 8: Predictive relevance

Dependent construct	SSO	SSE	Q^2 (=1-SSE/SSO)
SQ	500.000	109.738	0.781

Source: Calculated by the author

Table 9: Model Fit Summary

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.064	0.064
d_ULS	0.630	0.630
	n/a	n/a
Chi-Square	infinite	infinite
NFI	n/a	n/a

Source: Calculated by the author

Table 10: Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Result
H1: There is no significant impact of Tangibility on the SQ for Hotels of Albaha.	Rejected
H2: There is no significant impact of Reliability on the SQ for Hotels of Albaha.	Accepted
H3: There is no significant impact of Responsiveness on the SQ for Hotels of Albaha.	Accepted
H4: There is no significant impact of Assurance on the SQ for Hotels of Albaha.	Accepted
H5: There is no significant impact of Empathy on the SQ for Hotels of Albaha.	Rejected

Source: Calculated by the author

RMS_theta refers to the root mean squared residual covariance matrix of the outer model residuals (Kroonenberg & Lohmoller, 1990). The use of this fit measure is limited to the evaluation of exclusively reflective models because the residuals of the outer model for formative measurement models lack meaningful interpretation. RMS_theta is used to evaluate the extent to which the residuals of the outer model exhibit correlation. A desirable characteristic of model fit is that this measure approaches zero, suggesting that the correlations between the residuals of the outer model are low, or near zero. RMS_theta is derived from the residuals of the outer model, which represent the discrepancies between the projected values of the indicators and their corresponding actual values. To make predictions on indicator values, it is necessary for PLS-SEM to possess latent variable scores. However, it should be noted that PLSc-SEM relies on the assumption of common factors, which might be affected by factor indeterminacy. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that definitive scores for the latent variables

cannot be determined. Accordingly, Ringle, C., Wende, S., & Becker (2015) suggest that models with RMS_theta values below 0.12 are considered to be well-fitting, whereas larger values suggest a lack of fit. In the present study, the derived RMS_theta value is 0.027, which falls below the acceptable threshold, as shown in Table X. Therefore, this model is suitable for evaluating the four parameters related to service quality (SQ) at hotels located in Albaha, Saudi Arabia.

6. Discussions

This work makes a valuable contribution to the existing knowledge on the parameters influencing Service Quality (SQ). This study initially selected five criteria through a comprehensive analysis of the existing literature and subsequently examined their respective impacts. Path coefficients were computed to assess the influence of the five antecedents (factors). Subsequently, the Reliability factor was excluded from further research due to its low loading and minimal negative influence. The research revealed that Tangibility (0.475) had the most substantial positive influence, while Empathy (0.449) had a somewhat lower positive impact on SQ. In the Albaha region, a notable observation was made regarding the distinguishing feature of service quality (SQ), which is the tangibility aspect. This is because consumers universally perceive SQ as being primarily influenced by the physical appearance of the hotel and the services provided within. Hotels that offer exceptional waiting areas, architecturally significant structures, adequate parking facilities, and other such amenities are often favored over establishments that lack these features. According to Zia and Azam (2013), these factors serve as incentives for consumers to prefer the services of a particular hotel over those offered by other hotels.

Responsiveness and Assurance were the two variables that obtained nominal values. The nominal values of these parameters suggest that they are not significant in determining service quality (SQ) for hotels. This phenomenon may be attributed to the expectation that all hotel services must exhibit responsiveness and ensure quality, regardless of the specific hotel in question. Without these particular aspects, it would be implausible for any hotel to sustain its operations or contemplate engaging in commercial activities in any given economic context. In the context of Saudi Arabia, customers widely believe that the hotels they patronize exhibit a comparable degree of responsiveness and assurance. Consequently, individuals do not consider these characteristics when assessing their social intelligence quotient (Agrawal et al., 2023). To assess the importance of antecedents on the dependent variable, a bootstrapping technique was employed using Smart PLS3. The findings of the hypothesis testing indicated that hypotheses H1 and H5 were rejected, whereas hypotheses H2, H3, and H4 were accepted. The findings suggest that Tangibility and Empathy exert a notable influence on Service Quality, whereas Reliability, Responsiveness, and Assurance have a detrimental effect on SQ, as shown in Table 10..=

7. Theoretical And Practical Implications

The study's findings highlight the crucial role of Tangibility and Empathy in influencing Service Quality (SQ) in hotels in Albaha. This complements the existing service management theory by emphasizing the contextual significance of these characteristics. It is important to have a detailed awareness of cultural and regional dynamics to comprehend how they influence client views. Furthermore, the minimal influence of Reliability, Responsiveness, and Assurance necessitates a reassessment of existing service quality frameworks, prompting researchers to consider customized modifications that better capture the intricacies of service dynamics.

The study offers practical insights for professionals in Albaha's hotel industry by highlighting Tangibility and Empathy as crucial factors that significantly impact client satisfaction. Hotel management should deliberately invest resources and training efforts to improve the physical characteristics of the hotel and promote empathetic interactions with visitors. The findings also suggest the possibility of adjusting service delivery tactics to better align with local expectations. Moreover, the need for additional research underscores the persistent requirement for a flexible and responsive approach to managing service quality. This strategy promotes continual improvement and innovation in response to changing customer demands.

8. Conclusions

The findings of this study have substantial significance for those employed in the tourism industry and hotel personnel during the COVID-19 pandemic. These findings will facilitate the understanding of consumer behavior regarding service quality in the hotel industry. Moreover, the results contribute to the understanding of the factors linked to SQ, thereby enhancing its effectiveness through their application. Based on an analysis aimed at identifying antecedents associated with the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on service quality (SQ), four antecedents were found to impact the SQ of hotels. These antecedents are ranked in descending order of their impact, as presented in Table 10.

The results indicate that Tangibility and Empathy have a significant impact on hotels' SQ, accounting for almost 95% of the overall influence. The primary challenge faced by hotel workers and management is the endeavor to enhance the provision of practical services while also demonstrating empathy towards consumers to ensure customer satisfaction. Hence, it is imperative for all personnel to exhibit a high level of attentiveness and self-motivation to effectively cater to customer needs. Therefore, in light of the research findings and their implications, hotel personnel and administration must consider the elements outlined in Table 10. This table presents the aforementioned factors, indicating their respective levels of influence on the service quality (SQ) of hotels in Albaha, Saudi Arabia, ranked from highest to lowest.

9. Limitations

As with any research, this study has a few limitations and market implications. First and foremost, the sample size of this study is 327. Although this sample size is adequate for the Smart PLS3 statistical software and methods used in this study, future research could expand this study using a larger sample size, which may strengthen some of the insignificant relationships of the antecedents. Additionally, the sample could be more diverse and collected from different cities. Similar studies could be conducted across various demographic groups, such as gender, age, and education. Another limitation could be the introduction of new items into the surveys. These factors may have contributed to the weak loadings of some antecedents, such as the Reliability factor, which was dropped for this reason. Another recommendation is the use of a seven-point Likert scale instead of the five-point Likert scale used in the current study. Although Preston and Colman (2000) suggest that seven-, nine-, and ten-point scales are best for such studies, they were not utilized in this research.

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