

The Influence of Service Quality on the Growth of the Tourism Industry

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Abstract

There is a great attention to service quality in all aspects of business in businesses oriented towards providing services and achieving competitive advantage. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia pays great attention to tourism in accordance with the Kingdom's Vision (2030). Therefore, the Kingdom has taken many measures aimed at making the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia an influential tourist destination by exploiting the Kingdom's strategic location. Therefore, organizations seek to improve and diversify the strategies used to improve the quality of service. The purpose of this study is to identify the reality of applying service quality from tourist's point of view in hotels in Riyadh city, measure the level of tourists' satisfaction from tourist's point of view in hotels of Riyadh city and identify the impact of service quality with its dimensions (Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Competence and Communication) in hotels in Riyadh from tourist's point of view. This study used a quantitative methodology, gathering primary data from the sample through the use of a questionnaire applied on a sample of (425) tourists in hotels of Riyadh city in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia depending on electronic questionnaire about the research. SPSS was used in the analysis. The results demonstrated that service quality with element of tangible partially significant effect on customer satisfaction. Findings also show that reliability, responsiveness, competence and communication have high level of effect on the Tourism Industry.

Keywords: *Service quality, tourism industry, Kingdom's vision (2030), Saudi Arabia.*

1. Introduction

Most tourism organizations in various countries of the world tend to achieve the highest quality rates in providing services in different fields of life, which is known as service quality. These organizations also seek to achieve customer satisfaction as a primary goal of the work system within the organizations. Achieving these goals also results in reducing costs and increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of work inside and outside tourism organizations, considering that achieving these goals is the most prominent means of increasing profits in a safe way. Recently, most researchers have noticed that the service quality provided to customers is the safest means of achieving the goals that tourism organizations seek to achieve. Although most organizations turn to marketing, enhancing service quality remains the most prominent factor in achieving optimally planned goals (Han, et al., 2021, P 2).

Attention to service quality is increasing at a rapid pace in all aspects of business in businesses oriented towards providing services and achieving competitive advantage. Therefore, organizations seek to improve and diversify the strategies used to improve the quality of service. The main goal of improving the quality of services is to pay attention to customers and work to achieve customer loyalty, trust and satisfaction. Organizations tend to maintain existing customers while developing new strategies capable of targeting new customers and strategically increasing the customer base, which is an indirect goal of enhancing service quality (Wang, et al., 2022, P 1).

During the past few decades, the tourism industry in various countries of the world has become of great economic and social importance, in addition to being one of the fastest growing and developing industries in the contemporary business environment. The importance of interest in the tourism industry is due to the fact that it contributes significantly to the economic growth of

countries and increasing their opportunities as a tourist destination. This results in many positive results and aspects, which include increasing job opportunities, developing and improving infrastructure, and providing many foreign currencies, in addition to enhancing the value of local currencies. In light of the above, there is great interest from tourism organizations as well as researchers in the field of tourism in the service quality used in the tourism industry and interest in achieving tourist satisfaction (Agusmal, 2020, P 592).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Service Quality

Service quality has been one of the most important topics in today's competitive business environments, and it has been undergone extensive research in literature. The overwhelming interest in service quality was motivated by the tremendous growth of service industries that influenced the global economy (Prakash & Mohanty, 2013).

In fact, service quality positively influences profitability (Hallowell, 1996), improves business performance (Kunst & Lemmink, 2000), increases customer satisfaction (Sivadas & Baker-Prewitt, 2000) and increase customer loyalty (Chang, Wang, & Yang, 2009). Also, companies providing high- quality services have higher market share and a higher return on investment compared with companies providing low-quality services (Ghobadian, Speller, & Jones, 1994).

Although service quality has been extensively investigated in the literature, it was described as an elusive and abstract construct that is difficult to define and measure (Crosby, 1979; Anantharathan Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985; Prakash & Mohanty, 2013). Indeed, there is no universal or conclusive definition or model of service quality (Reeves & Bednar, 1994). Many authors have provided various definitions of service quality. For example, Bitner and Hubbert (1994) defined service quality as the customer's perception of the superiority/inferiority of the service and the organization providing the service. Also, Ghobadian et al. (1994) defined service quality as the degree to which the service delivered meets the customer's expectations. Other definitions of service quality were based on the comparison between service expectations and perceptions. Gronroos (1984), for instance, defined service quality as an outcome to the assessment process of comparing the customer's expectation of service with his/her perception of the actual service he/she received. In this regard, Anantharathan Parasuraman et al. (1985) identified three key points that help understand and measure service quality:

- The quality of services is more difficult to evaluate than the quality of goods for consumers.
- Consumers perceive service quality by comparing their expectations with the actual performance of the service.
- Consumers assess service quality based on both the service outcome and the service delivery process.

2.2 Dimensions of Service Quality

Service quality is one of the elements that has recently attracted the interest of many researchers and specialists in various fields. By taking a comprehensive look at the different meanings of service quality, it can be noted that service quality is based on a number of dimensions, each of which contributes to improving and developing the quality of service in a certain way. Therefore, the dimensions of service quality can be presented as follows:

- Tangibles
- Reliability
- Responsiveness
- Assurance
- Empathy (Salome, et al.,2022, P 4).

2.3 Service Quality in Tourism

Service quality plays a major role in tourism and set the standard of how services should be provided (Prabaharan et al., 2008; Wyllie, 2000). Many service providers in tourism use the SERVQUAL model to assess the quality in tourism industry (Ostrowski et al., 1993). It has been used by Mackay and Crompton (1988) in Canadian municipal parks, he concluded the same five dimensions as the model of Anantharayanan Parasuraman et al. (1988). In 2003 Bigne, Martinez, Miquel, and Andreu (2003) applied SERVQUAL model to services they get from travel agencies, they found that it's still a reliable model to measure the quality of travel agencies. Luk (1997) Discovered a relationship between the overall service quality and the arithmetic means of the marketing culture of a travel agency.

Also on a theme park visitors, employees, and managers, McLaughlin and Fitzsimmons (1996) focused on the levels of service-quality expectation. He did a comparison between the median scores by kruskal-wallis test, and it indicated that there is a significant difference in expectations among these three groups. Based on this, they questioned the sufficiency of SERVQUAL approach, in addition, they claimed that it ignored multiple stakeholders. Díaz-Martín, Iglesias, Vazquez, and Ruiz (2000) Verified that service quality expectation can also be used as variable in the market of tourism. They formed a homogeneous tourist group in terms of their expectation using k- means method. Then investigated the relation between the customer perceptions and satisfaction using multiple regression analyses. The conclusion was that the expectations of different groups influence their overall satisfaction which provides expectation-based market segmentation.

A standard SERVQUAL procedure was used on 39 attributes by Juwaheer and Ross (2003) to measure service quality in hotels in Mauritius, for this, they used a group of tests such as ANOVA, t- tests, and factor analysis. They identified 9 dimensions in which the reliability and assurance arose as the main service quality determinates.

2.3 Tourism Industry in Kingdom Saudi Arabia:

Tourism Industry is a diverse sector that includes millions of people, employers, the largest global travel brands and the smallest tour operators, in addition to hotel and restaurant owners, among others. Therefore, the tourism industry represents great importance and tremendous power at the level of governments and countries (Bingjie, et al., 2022, P 236).

The tourism industry is a leading activity in most countries of the world at the present time, as the tourism industry represents about 5% of the world's gross domestic product and about 8% of total global employment. With the increasing number of tourists, interest in the tourism industry has become a priority in many countries in order to improve national income. Therefore, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, whose tourism activity was limited to Hajj and Umrah trips, is turning to tourism investment. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia began directing investments to tourism in order to diversify sources of income after relying on oil as its primary source of income. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia can be a distinguished tourist destination due to the availability of tourism, human and economic capabilities that enable it to be a unique tourist destination in accordance with the State Vision 2030. Therefore, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia organizes many tourism initiatives and promotional trips to visit the Kingdom (Abuhjeeleh, 2019, P 2).

The tourist industry in Saudi Arabia is a unique sector that has experienced faster growth than other industries. In 2017, the tourist sector contributed roughly 241 billion Saudi Riyals (RS) to the country's economic performance. This amount rose by nearly 4.6% of the GDP growth, or 5239.13 billion Saudi Riyals (RS), According to Kingdom Vision (2017), which emphasized the need to neutralize oil as a source of income through multiple alternative sources, this percentage is expected to reach roughly 9.4% of GDP by 2030. This means that decisions about large-scale tourism projects like Draft Right and the Red Sea, as well as recreational camel and falcon clubs, are flowing in this direction. Additionally, the plan for promoting attractions in the Kingdom and localizing entertainment was given (The world travel and Tourism Council, 2018).

Religious pilgrimages have dominated Saudi Arabia's tourism industry for decades; the majority of visitors came for religious reasons. However, because of government initiatives to boost tourism, the business has seen some changes in recent years. According to World Bank data, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is one of the top

twenty most visited nations worldwide, indicating a sharp rise in tourism. A significant market niche, "faith travel," "religious tourism," or "pilgrimage" is probably the oldest type of tourism in history. As previously said, the majority of travel was related to religious tourism; nevertheless, new reports indicate that travellers also came to the Kingdom to see sites and attractions including the Red Sea, Sarawat Mountains, and Hijaz, among other historic sites (Mourad & Paul, 2017).

Saudi Arabian tourism takes into account Islamic religious ideas and current ethical norms. Morality, ethics, and values have been incorporated into institutional and structural systems by religion. As a result, together with Arabian standards and values, this is producing a cultural and social unity that has resulted to one civilization. Many people consider the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to be the spiritual home and birthplace of Islam. The nation is full of wonderful sights that evoke symbolism. However, foreign visitors also rank the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as one of the least accessible and preserved countries (Nicolaidis, 2016).

2.4 Tourism Industry in Riyadh City

The city of Riyadh is considered one of the largest tourist destinations in the Kingdom, in addition to being the capital of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been keen to direct attention to the tourism sector in all major cities such as Riyadh, which is at the top of these cities, in addition to Jeddah, Abha, Mecca, Medina, and other cities

The city of Riyadh has witnessed a remarkable development in tourism growth in accordance with the State Vision (2030), which aimed to achieve more tourism opportunities that work to attract more tourists and visitors from inside and outside the Kingdom. The city of Riyadh is famous for many tourist attractions and destinations that have made it an important tourist destination. It also includes the Kingdom Tower, Al-Faisaliah Tower, Al-Masmak Palace, the National Museum, the Archeology Museum at King Saud University, the Snow City, Salam Park, the edge of Riyadh, and others. The number of hotels in the city of Riyadh, according to the Information Center (MAS), reached about 108 hotels, of which (20) were in the (5) star category, (43) were in the (4) star category, and (26) were in the (3) star category, which is equivalent to about (15,974). Room in various hotel categories. These numbers indicate the city of Riyadh's interest in stimulating and developing tourism and taking all measures in order to achieve the highest tourism growth rate the Kingdom has ever witnessed (Nour, 2021).

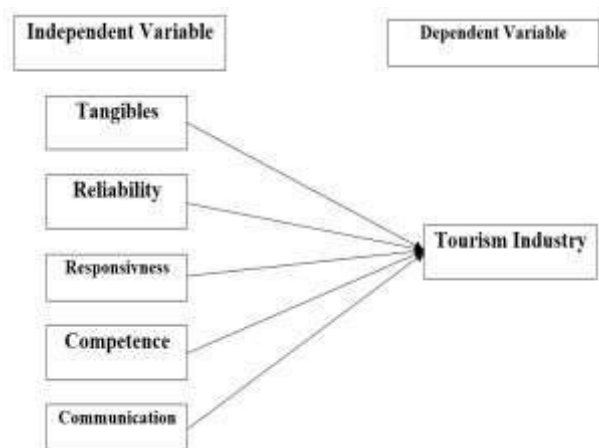


Figure 1 Research Framework

3. Research Methods

This section includes problem statement, research objectives, and research questions. This study depended on two main types of data; the first one is depending on a number of studies that included the variables in order to identify the most appropriate methodology. The second method is quantitative research approach was employed in this study where data from the research sample was gathered via electronic questionnaires. Based on the ideal sample size table developed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) and Raosoft, the study's sample size was 425 tourists in hotels in Riyadh city in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Data was analysed using SPSS in order to evaluate the data that was gathered.

4. Result Findings and Discussion

The initial section of the tool gathered data on the respondents' background profiles, including their Gender, Sector, Experience, Organization Age, and System. table below lists the attributes of each demographic profile.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics

Construct	Options	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	214	52.5
	Female	194	47.5
Age	Less than 20 years old	86	21.1
	20 – 40 years old	218	53.4
	More than 40 years old	104	25.5
Nationality	Saudi	301	73.7
	Foreigner	107	26.3
Visit	First tome	109	26.70
	Second time	215	52.70
	Several times	84	20.60
	Total	425	100.00

4.1 Assessment of Measurement Model

Using the Statistical software IBM for SPSS 29.0, the mean, standard deviation, variance, minimum, and maximum value were calculated. Table 1.4 shows the descriptive analysis for all the indicators in the study by reporting the mean, minimum and maximum for each item. Among all the constructs, Responsiveness (RES) recorded the highest mean of 4.39 (where item RES2 has the largest mean score among items 4.46). This is followed by Tourism Industry (TI) recorded 4.31 (where item TI7 has the largest mean score among items 4.50) and Reliability (REL) recorded 4.31 (where item REL5 has the largest mean score among items 4.44). As for Competence (COP), and Communication (COM), the mean values are 4.23, and 4.16 respectively (the highest mean among each item is COP2 and COP3 4.32, and COM4 4.25 respectively). The lowest mean scores are recorded by Tangibles (TAN) with mean values of 4.07.

Table: Descriptive Analysis

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
TAN1	425	3	5	4.25
TAN2	425	1	5	3.91
TAN3	425	1	5	4.02
TAN4	425	2	5	4.14
TAN5	425	1	5	4.08
TAN6	425	1	5	4.03
REL1	425	2	5	4.34
REL2	425	2	5	4.37
REL3	425	1	5	4.22
REL4	425	2	5	4.16
REL5	425	3	5	4.44
RES1	425	2	5	4.40
RES2	425	3	5	4.46
RES3	425	3	5	4.33
RES4	425	3	5	4.41
RES5	425	3	5	4.37
COP1	425	2	5	4.29
COP2	425	3	5	4.32
COP3	425	3	5	4.32
COP4	425	1	5	4.03
COP5	425	2	5	4.27
COP6	425	3	5	4.27
COP7	425	1	5	4.10
COM1	425	1	5	4.06
COM2	425	2	5	4.15
COM3	425	1	5	4.16
COM4	425	2	5	4.25
COM5	425	2	5	4.15
COM6	425	2	5	4.19
TI1	425	1	5	4.24
TI2	425	2	5	4.34
TI3	425	1	5	4.29
TI4	425	2	5	4.33
TI5	425	2	5	4.04
TI6	425	2	5	4.30
TI7	425	2	5	4.50
TI8	425	2	5	4.41
Valid N (listwise)	425			

The KMO MSA and the BTS were used to determine whether factor analysis is suitable. Table 1.5 shows that the KMO value for the research model is 0.939, higher

than 0.9, which is considered meritorious. The observed BTS value (12746.704) large and its' associated significance value is very low ($P < 0.001$) that can be considered good (Hair et al., 2014). Further, Eigenvalues indicate the amount of variance explained by each component.

Table: KMO and Bartlett's Test

<i>KMO and Bartlett's Test</i>		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.939
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	12746.704
	df	666
	Sig.	<.001

PEARSON CORRELATION ANALYSIS

In this study, five hypotheses have been proposed in an attempt to analyse the relationships between the factors in the model proposed. Here, the variables' mean scores within the factors or constructs were computed. Then, the obtained values underwent the correlation analysis.

All tests on hypotheses indicate that a positive relationship exists between constructs. As such, a positive correlation different from zero and meeting the minimum criterion stated earlier indicates support to both the hypothesis and the relationship. Then, the next step was to perform the simple correlation hypotheses tests (zero-order). The detailed results of the hypothesis tests are illustrated next. According to Pallant (2016), the Sig. value, which is less than 0.01 in the correlation test means there is a relationship between the two variables, and statistically shows significant unique contribution to the equation (Pallant, 2016). In conjunction, Table 1.8 indicates that the correlation coefficient between the variables are high and significant. This result suggests that a positive relationship exists and is supported at the zero-order level.

Correlations

		TAN	REL	RES	COP	COM	TI
TAN	Pearson Correlation	1	.702**	.663**	.711**	.556**	.653**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	425	425	425	425	425	425
REL	Pearson Correlation	.702**	1	.774**	.730**	.638**	.713**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	425	425	425	425	425	425
RES	Pearson Correlation	.663**	.774**	1	.822**	.656**	.723**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001		<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	425	425	425	425	425	425
COP	Pearson Correlation	.711**	.730**	.822**	1	.671**	.756**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001		<.001	<.001
	N	425	425	425	425	425	425
COM	Pearson Correlation	.556**	.638**	.656**	.671**	1	.657**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001		<.001
	N	425	425	425	425	425	425
TI	Pearson Correlation	.653**	.713**	.723**	.756**	.657**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	
	N	425	425	425	425	425	425

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

5. Summary of Hypotheses Testing

The relationship between Tangibles and Tourism Industry is significant, as the p-value was less than 0.05 and T-value was larger than the accepted level of 1.645. In addition, the Beta value is 0.142, which indicates that Tangibles has 14.2% positive prediction influence over Tourism Industry. Moreover, Table is showing that Reliability is strongly and significantly affecting Tourism Industry. The results of the analysis showed that p-value is below the cut off point of 0.05, and T-value was larger than the accepted level of 1.645, while Beta value is 0.314, which indicates that Reliability has 31.4% positive prediction influence over Tourism Industry.

In addition, Table shows that Responsiveness has strong and significant relationship with Tourism Industry as the p-value was less than 0.05 and T-value was larger than the accepted level of 1.645. As well as, the Beta value is 0.228, which indicates that Responsiveness has 22.8% positive prediction influence over Tourism Industry.

Moving on to the next aspect of this study, Competence has strong and significant relationship with Tourism Industry as the p-value was less than 0.05 and T-value was larger than the accepted level of 1.645. As well as, the Beta value is 0.362, which indicates that Competence has 36.2% positive prediction influence over Tourism Industry.

Finally, Communication is strongly and significantly affecting Tourism Industry. The results of the analysis showed that p-value is below the cut-off point of 0.05, and T-value was larger than the accepted level of 1.645, while Beta value is 0.198, which indicates that Communication has 19.8% positive prediction influence over Tourism Industry.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study not only bridges the theoretical gap by focusing on the tourism industry in Saudi Arabia but also provides a new theoretical discipline by integrating the SERVQUAL and SERVPERF models. The study's findings have significant implications for theory and practice, particularly in light of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, which aims to diversify the economy and promote the tourism sector. This study lays a theoretical foundation for future research to explore further the dimensions of service quality and their impact on the tourism industry in different contexts.

6.1 Implication

The findings of this study hold several practical implications for the tourism industry in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, especially in alignment with the Vision 2030 initiative. The significant effect of Tangibles on the Tourism Industry highlights the importance of physical infrastructure and facilities. Tourism stakeholders should invest in high-quality, aesthetically pleasing, and functional facilities to enhance tourist satisfaction and attract more visitors. This includes improving accommodation, transportation, and leisure facilities, ensuring that they meet international standards. Such investments are crucial for positioning Saudi Arabia as a

premier tourist destination and aligning with the Vision 2030 goal of increasing tourism's contribution to the national economy.

6.2 Theoretical Implication

The purpose of this study is to determine the impact of service quality on the tourism industry, specifically analysing the effects of Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Competence, and Communication as independent variables. The study was conducted on the tourism industry in Saudi Arabia. To achieve comprehensive results, the researcher used the SERVQUAL and SERVPERF models as underpinning theories. These models provided a robust theoretical framework to explore the relationship between service quality dimensions and the performance of the tourism industry. The findings suggest significant relationships between all five service quality dimensions and the tourism industry, thereby supporting the relevance of the SERVQUAL and SERVPERF models in this context.

In terms of methodological implications, the study presents a well-structured approach to addressing the research questions and identifying critical aspects of the study. The research methodology was meticulously designed to fulfil the research objectives and answer the research questions. The study involved an extensive review of the literature on service quality and its impact on the tourism industry, particularly in the context of Saudi Arabia. This review helped in identifying the appropriate theories and elements suitable for the study's regional and industry-specific context, thus enabling the development of a comprehensive research model.

The data collection process included the development and testing of surveys to ensure reliability and validity. Quantitative data were obtained through the distribution of questionnaires using non-probability sampling methods. A pilot study was conducted to refine the survey instrument. Reliability and validity of the constructs were assessed using Cronbach's alpha and factor analysis techniques. The data were analysed using IBM SPSS, which allowed for a detailed examination of the measurement and structural models to test the research hypotheses.

One of the most important theoretical implications of this study is its contribution to the body of literature on service quality in the tourism industry, with a specific focus on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This study enriches the literature by providing a holistic view of how Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Competence, and Communication influence the tourism industry. Previous studies have often overlooked the specific context of Saudi Arabia and the unique challenges and opportunities it presents in the tourism sector. By addressing this gap, the study offers a nuanced understanding of service quality in this context and provides a solid theoretical foundation for future research.

Furthermore, the integration of the SERVQUAL and SERVPERF models in this study highlights the applicability of these models in evaluating service quality

within the tourism industry. The findings underscore the importance of these models in conceptualizing and measuring service quality dimensions that are critical to the tourism industry's success. This integration offers new theoretical insights and validates the use of these models in similar studies, thereby advancing the theoretical discourse on service quality and its impact on the tourism sector.

6.3 Recommendation:

This research was surrounded with many limitations that deserved to be addressed in this chapter, which are:

- The current study focused solely on the tourism industry in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, not extending to other countries or regions, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to different cultural and economic contexts.
- The study's sample was restricted to specific tourism enterprises and participants within Saudi Arabia, potentially limiting the scope of the findings to this particular group and not representing the broader tourism sector.
- The research was conducted over a relatively short period of time. Extending the study with a longer timeframe and using the same framework might provide deeper insights into the dynamics of service quality and its impact on the tourism industry.
- This study was limited to one method of research, which was the quantitative research method. Incorporating qualitative methods, such as interviews or focus groups, could offer more in-depth insights into the reasons behind the observed relationships.
- This study was limited to five independent variables, i.e., "Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Competence, and Communication." However, there are other factors in the published literature, such as customer satisfaction, perceived value, and cultural factors, which might impact the tourism industry.
- This study was geographically limited to one country, Saudi Arabia, without investigating potential variations in service quality dimensions and their impact on the tourism industry in different regions or countries. Exploring these variations could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the tourism industry globally.

6.4 Future Research Direction

This study has a lot of potentials, many of them could be addressed here in order to make sure that future researchers are aware of them, and to list few:

- Explore other sectors within the tourism industry, such as hospitality and transportation, to understand diverse impacts on the Tourism Industry.
- Increase the sample size to enhance statistical power and reliability of results.
- Use qualitative or mixed methods (e.g., interviews) to gain deeper insights into service quality dynamics.

- Investigate additional independent variables like customer satisfaction and cultural factors.
- Consider studying how Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Competence, and Communication act as moderating factors.
- Expand research across multiple countries to compare service quality impacts.
- Conduct longitudinal studies to track long-term effects of service quality improvements.

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