Modeling Front Office Service Determinants of Brand Loyalty in Chain and Non-Chain Hotels

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Abstract: Brand loyalty has become a critical factor for achieving sustainable competitive advantage in the hospitality industry. As the front office department represents the primary point of interaction between hotels and their guests, the quality of services provided at this stage plays an important role in shaping customer perceptions and loyalty toward hotel brands. The present study aims to investigate the factors influencing brand loyalty among guests staying in chain and non-chain hotels in the Delhi National Capital Region (NCR). A quantitative research approach with a descriptive and analytical research design was adopted for the study. Primary data were collected from 400 hotel guests through a structured questionnaire consisting of twenty-five statements related to service quality, front office staff behavior, reliability of services, value perception, trust in the hotel brand, and emotional attachment. The responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and the One Sample t-test to determine whether the identified factors significantly influenced brand loyalty. The results indicated that in chain hotels, seventeen out of twenty-five factors significantly influenced brand loyalty, while in non-chain hotels, twenty-one factors were found to be statistically significant. The findings highlight that service quality, staff professionalism, operational efficiency, trust, and emotional connection with the hotel brand are important determinants of guest loyalty. The study concludes that both chain and non-chain hotels must focus on enhancing front office service experiences and building strong emotional relationships with guests to strengthen brand loyalty and ensure long-term success in the competitive hospitality industry.

Keywords: Front office, Brand loyalty, Service determinants, Chain hotel, Non-chain hotel

Introduction

The hospitality industry is among the oldest commercial activities in the world. The origin and development of the hospitality industry is a direct outcome of travel and tourism. The hotels provide a number of services to the visitors. The present day modern concept of the hotel is not just a place to provide accommodation and food and beverage but offering to its guest every possible facility, service and convenience. The departments of a hotel can be classified as revenue generating and support providers (Tewari, 2009). F&B and Front office are the most revenue generating departments of the hotel. The focus of this paper is on one of the major revenues generating department which is front office. Front office is the nerve centre of hotel operations as it is the first department of the hotel with which guest can interact first time and also the last department they interact at the time of check-out (Tewari, 2009). Front office is divided into various subsections like reservation, reception, concierge, bell desk, travel desk, cashier, information desk, etc. Providing hospitality and service to the guest firstly starts with the hotel personnel of the front office and the key to success of a hotel business is service. The way in which guest is treated and received plays a pivotal role as this becomes the basis of their first impression and affects the other services of the hotel. According to Roldan, 2004, to retain customer the guests should receive brand of hotel hospitality at the onset, this can mean repeated patronage in the future. There are set of practices are following in the various subsections of front office. Further, Davis, et. al., (2003); Meyer et. al., 1999; Morita & Flynn, 1997; Skinner, 1969 stated that operation practices as "the extent of established system and behavior practiced by management in relation to the structure of the operations system". Service operation practices implemented by hotel management which usually includes leadership practice, organization and cultural practice and service delivery practice.Service quality is one of the important factors which support success in the business service environment, leading to customer satisfaction (Huang et al., 2019). Customer satisfaction itself depends on the product efficiency in giving relative value in the same manner as the customer expected to. As stated by Bergmann and Klefsjö (2004), quality begins from the customer's needs and ends in the customer's satisfaction. Also, Akbaba (2006) argues, improved understanding regarding what the customer wants is essential since it has a major impact on the success of the hotel itself. It follows logically that through the improvement of service quality, it is expected that the customer's satisfaction can also be improved (Lenka et al., 2009). Alternatively, poor service quality may cause customer dissatisfaction. Service quality is an abstract and elusive concept because of its intangibility, heterogeneity, and inseparability which sets it apart from goods quality that can be measured by such indicators such as the number of defects (Crosby, 1979; Garvin, 1983). In this context, the SERVQUAL framework is considered an effective way to measure service quality within service sectors, emphasizing on the identification of gaps between customer expectations and satisfaction and the allocation of resources where maximum benefit can be achieved (Buttle, 1996; Butt and de Run, 2010). This framework consists of five dime nsions which are tangibility, empathy, reliability, responsiveness, and assurance (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Development is a systematic and continuous effort made to realize something that is aspired. Development is a change towards improvement. Changes towards improvement require the mobilization of all human resources and reason to realize what is aspired. In addition, development is also very dependent on the availability of natural resource wealth. The availability of natural resources is one of the keys to economic growth in an area. (Shah, M. et al. 2020). From the above considerations and from the perspective of hotel management, it follows logically that to meet customer needs and increase their satisfaction, hotels should develop service quality. This is particularly important for Front Office employees whose duties are to assist customers more intensely than other departments. In fact, their engagement with customers extends from arrival until departure time (Sulastiyono, 2006). As mentioned by Baum and Devine (2007), the front office employee has their responsibility of understanding their guests and deliver a high level of service quality.

Literature Review

According to Kotler, Bowen & Makens (2003), satisfaction means to post purchase evaluation of product quality given pre purchase expectations. When post purchase evaluation reveals service quality higher than guests expected service quality seems that customer is satisfied (Kotler, Bowen & Makens, 2003). To enhance guest satisfaction, proper functions of operation and hotel staff, guest oriented technological amenities are introduced. To provide comfortable and safe environment, in room technology amenities are designed which may include entertainment systems, security systems, desktop computers, mini bars and others (Collins & Cobanoglu, 2008). For the long-term success hotel guest satisfaction is an essential component (Skogland & Siguaw, 2004). For several industry studies the adoption rate of hospitality technology has been a focal point (Beldona & Cobanoglu, 2007; Ham et al., 2005; Verma, Victorino, Karniouchina, & Feickert, 2007). Hospitality is one of the world's most rapidly expanding service sectors (Ivasciuc and Brasov, 2014). In many ways, the hospitality industry and the tourism industry are inextricably connected. Hotels operate within the hospitality industry, providing a range of services. According to Lawson (1976) and Pendit (2005), hotels are places to stay in that provide visitors with a range of facilities and services, including room service, food and beverage services, and other hotel accommodation in exchange for payment. One of the most important departments within a hotel that plays a crucial role in dealing with visitors is the front office department. The Front Office department is responsible for more than selling the hotel's main product, which is rooms. Front Office employees are responsible to give a good first impression to customers in order to create a comfortable feeling during their stay (Wagen,

1999). This statement is also supported by Soenarno (2006) who explains that a hotel will be directly perceived as a neat, big, and comfortable company when arriving customers and welcomed with great service from the employees. This suggests that Front Office employees have to be able to give a good service upon guest arrival, during the stay, and upon check out.Consumers use a number of tangible cues to assess quality when they buy physical products such as product design, color, material, texture, package, brand name, and others (Djajadiningrat et al., 2004). On the other hand, consumers can only rely on some available cues when buying products in the form of services. Lukman (2011) defined service as a sequence of activities that occurs in direct interaction between a person and another that provides satisfaction in an intangible form. Services can only be consumed without involving transfer of ownership. Thus, service capacity cannot be stored for sale in the future (Tjiptono and Chandra, 2005). Customer satisfaction is one of the most extensively researched subjects in the hospitality literature, owing to researchers' strong interest in quantifying it. (Deng et al., 2013; Rahimi and Kozak, 2015; Ali et al., 2016; Mathe et al., 2016; Oh, and Kim, 2017; Lee and Whaley, 2019; Prayag et al., 2019; Sharifi, 2019; Nunkoo et al., 2020). The word 'satisfaction' is derived from the Latin satis (quiet, good, adequate) and facio (doing or making). It can be translated as "the attempt to complete something" or "to render something satisfactory." Then, satisfaction is described as a function of work performance and expectation, and customers will be dissatisfied if performance falls short of expectations (Tse and Wilton, 1988; Sivadas and Baker- Prewitt, 2000; Gustafsson et al., 2005). Customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction, according to Rust and Oliver (1994), is a "cognitive or affective reaction" that develops as a result of a single or repetitive sequence of service experiences. According to Oliver (1980), the satisfaction is an attitude or evaluation that is formed by the customer comparing their pre-purchase expectations of what they would receive from the product to their subjective perceptions of the performance they actually did receive. Frontline personnel have to face huge demands daily as career in the hospitality is very labour intensive (Wong & Lin, 2007). Further he opined that hotel employee are on the backline working day and night hard and ensure that the guest is having their leisure stay. This work, done by the service providers is known for its antisocial working hours. As this type of work takes lots of employee time and energy which leads to the less opportunity to participate them in their own family life and leisure activities. Now day's employees are looking for more benefits and facilities as well a good quality of life (Huang, Lawler and Lei, 2007).

Objectives of the study

The primary objective of this research paper is to investigate the factors influencing brand loyalty among guests staying in chain and non-chain hotels in the Delhi National Capital Region (NCR). In the highly competitive hospitality industry, brand loyalty has become a crucial determinant for long-term success, as loyal customers are more likely to revisit a hotel, recommend it to others, and maintain a positive relationship with the brand. Hotels continuously strive to deliver superior service experiences in order to build strong emotional connections with their guests. Among the various operational departments within a hotel, the front office department plays a significant role in shaping guest perceptions and influencing loyalty behavior. As the first and most frequent point of interaction between the hotel and its guests, the quality of front office services such as reservation handling, check-in and check-out procedures, communication with guests, responsiveness to requests, and complaint management can greatly affect the overall guest experience. The study specifically focuses on identifying the service-related, operational, trust-based, and emotional factors that contribute to brand loyalty in both chain and non-chain hotels. While chain hotels generally follow standardized service procedures and brand guidelines, non-chain hotels often provide more flexible and personalized services. These differences in service delivery may influence how guests perceive hotel brands and develop loyalty toward them. Therefore, the study aims to examine whether front office service quality, staff behavior, service reliability, value perception, and emotional attachment significantly influence brand loyalty among hotel guests. By comparing these factors in chain and non-chain hotels in Delhi NCR, the research seeks to provide insights into how hotels can strengthen customer relationships, enhance guest satisfaction, and develop long-term brand loyalty within the hospitality sector.

Research Methodology

The present study adopts a quantitative research approach to investigate the determinants of brand loyalty in chain and non-chain hotels in the Delhi National Capital Region (NCR). A descriptive and analytical research design was used to systematically examine the relationship between front office service determinants and brand loyalty among hotel guests. The descriptive design helped in identifying and explaining the various factors that influence brand loyalty, while the analytical approach enabled the statistical testing of hypotheses related to these factors. The study was conducted in the Delhi NCR region, which represents one of the most important hospitality destinations in India due to its high concentration of business travelers, international tourists, and leisure visitors. The region hosts a large number of internationally recognized chain hotels as well as several independent non-chain hotels that cater to diverse categories of guests. For the purpose of the study, hotels were categorized into two groups: chain hotels and non-chain hotels. Chain hotels refer to properties operating under established national or international brands with standardized operational policies, while non-chain hotels are independently owned and managed establishments that operate without affiliation to a hotel chain.Primary data for the study were collected through a structured questionnaire designed to measure the factors influencing brand loyalty among hotel guests. The questionnaire consisted of twenty-five statements representing various dimensions of brand loyalty and service experience, including satisfaction with service quality, front office staff behavior, reliability of services, responsiveness to guest requests, value for money, reservation processes, trust in the hotel brand, and emotional attachment toward the hotel. These statements were developed based on previous studies in hospitality service quality and customer loyalty research.The responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. This scale was used to quantify the perceptions and experiences of hotel guests regarding the services provided by the hotel and their level of loyalty toward the hotel brand. The target respondents for this study were hotel guests who had recently stayed in chain or non-chain hotels in the Delhi NCR region and had experienced front office services during their stay. A total of 400 valid responses were collected for the study, comprising 200 responses from guests staying in chain hotels and 200 responses from guests staying in non-chain hotels. The data were collected using both direct survey distribution and online data collection methods to ensure broader participation and representation of hotel guests from different hotels within the region.For the purpose of data analysis, statistical techniques were applied using statistical software. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used to summarize the responses and assess the general perception of guests toward various service attributes. To examine whether the identified factors significantly influenced brand loyalty, the One Sample t-test was applied to each of the twenty-five statements. The test compared the mean responses of the respondents with a neutral test value to determine whether the observed responses significantly differed from neutrality. Two null hypotheses were formulated for the analysis. The first hypothesis examined whether there were significant factors influencing brand loyalty among guests in chain hotels, while the second hypothesis examined the same for non-chain hotels. The significance level for the test was set at 0.05. If the p-value was less than 0.05, the factor was considered statistically significant in influencing brand loyalty. Through this methodological framework, the study systematically identified the key determinants influencing brand loyalty and provided a comparative understanding of how these factors operate in chain and non-chain hotels in the Delhi NCR region.

Results and Analysis

To achieve the objective, which aimed to investigate the factors influencing brand loyalty in chain and non-chain hotels in Delhi (NCR), an empirical analysis was conducted using statistical techniques. In this objective, brand loyalty of hotel guests was examined based on 25 statements describing various aspects of loyalty, such as repeat visits, preference for the hotel brand, willingness to recommend the hotel to others, trust in

the hotel brand, and emotional attachment toward the hotel. The responses collected from guests staying in chain and non-chain hotels were analyzed separately to understand the extent to which these factors contributed to brand loyalty in both categories of hotels. In order to test the significance of these factors, the One Sample t-test was applied to the responses obtained from the respondents. To statistically examine the influence of these factors on brand loyalty, two separate null hypotheses were formulated for chain and non-chain hotels:

H_{01a}: *There are no significant factors influencing brand loyalty among guests in chain hotels in Delhi (NCR).*

H_{01b}: *There are no significant factors influencing brand loyalty among guests in non-chain hotels in Delhi (NCR).*

The results of the One Sample t-test were used to determine whether the identified factors significantly influenced the brand loyalty of hotel guests in both chain and non-chain hotels in the Delhi (NCR) region.

Factors influencing brand loyalty in chain hotels in Delhi (NCR)

To examine the factors influencing brand loyalty among guests in chain hotels in Delhi (NCR), a One Sample t-test was applied to the responses collected from 200 respondents. The test was conducted on 25 statements describing different aspects of brand loyalty, including satisfaction with service quality, staff behavior, reliability of services, emotional attachment, and trust toward the hotel brand. The purpose of applying the One Sample t-test was to determine whether the mean response for each statement significantly differed from the neutral test value, thereby indicating whether the particular factor significantly influenced brand loyalty among hotel guests.

Table: One sample t test statistic for factors influencing brand loyalty in chain hotels in Delhi (NCR)

Factors influencing brand loyalty	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
I was satisfied with the cleanliness and comfort of my room	200	4.3150	.74737	5.961	199	.000
The front office staff were polite and professional	200	4.3900	.66340	8.314	199	.000
My check-in and check-out process was smooth and efficient	200	4.2400	.78452	4.326	199	.000
I received good value for the money spent on this hotel	200	3.7800	.88630	-3.510	199	.001
My stay experience at this hotel was memorable	200	4.3600	.73011	6.973	199	.000
The services provided by the hotel were consistently reliable	200	3.7650	.94565	-3.514	199	.001
Hotel staff responded promptly to my requests	200	4.3800	.69137	7.773	199	.000
The front office handled issues or complaints efficiently	200	4.3300	.75095	6.215	199	.000
Staff were well-informed and knowledgeable about hotel services	200	4.1450	.71169	2.881	199	.004
The quality of service matched my expectations	200	4.1700	.79008	3.043	199	.003
I received a warm and personalized welcome at the front desk	200	4.0400	.74914	.755	199	.451
The front office staff provided accurate information about local attractions	200	3.8950	.84709	-1.753	199	.081
My preferences and requests were noted and addressed by the front office team	200	3.9150	.86109	-1.396	199	.164
The reservation process was quick and user-friendly	200	3.3650	1.02813	-8.735	199	.000
The front office made my stay more convenient and comfortable	200	3.5550	.94416	-6.665	199	.000
I believe this hotel brand provides consistent service every time I stay	200	3.8100	.94252	-2.851	199	.005
I trust this hotel to take care of my needs and safety	200	3.9200	.93163	-1.214	199	.226
I consider this hotel brand to be reliable and dependable	200	4.1550	.71662	3.059	199	.003
I feel confident in the decisions made by this hotel brand	200	3.9050	.88310	-1.521	199	.130
I believe this hotel treated me fairly at all times	200	4.1050	.79822	1.860	199	.064
I feel emotionally attached to this hotel brand	200	4.4800	.58421	11.619	199	.000
Staying at this hotel makes me feel valued and cared for	200	4.4550	.59981	10.728	199	.000
I have a strong personal preference for this hotel brand	200	4.4300	.65363	9.304	199	.000
I feel a sense of belonging or comfort when staying at this hotel	200	4.0900	.68134	1.868	199	.063
I associate positive memories and experiences with this hotel brand	200	3.7300	3.00704	-1.270	199	.206

The results of the One Sample t-test indicated that several factors had a statistically significant influence on brand loyalty in chain hotels. Guests reported high agreement with statements related to room cleanliness and comfort (Mean = 4.3150, t = 5.961, p = 0.000), polite and professional front office staff (Mean = 4.3900, t = 8.314, p = 0.000), and smooth and efficient check-in and check-out processes (Mean = 4.2400, t = 4.326, p = 0.000). Similarly, respondents indicated that their stay experience was memorable (Mean = 4.3600, t = 6.973, p = 0.000), that hotel staff responded promptly to requests (Mean = 4.3800, t = 7.773, p = 0.000), and that the front office handled issues or complaints efficiently (Mean = 4.3300, t = 6.215, p = 0.000). The statements related to staff knowledge about hotel services (Mean = 4.1450, t = 2.881, p = 0.004) and service quality meeting expectations (Mean = 4.1700, t = 3.043, p = 0.003) were also found to be statistically significant. Furthermore, factors related to perceived value and reliability also showed significant influence on brand loyalty. Guests agreed that they received good value for money (Mean = 3.7800, t = -3.510, p = 0.001), that hotel services were consistently reliable (Mean = 3.7650, t = -3.514, p = 0.001), and that the hotel brand provided consistent service during each stay (Mean = 3.8100, t = -2.851, p = 0.005). Additionally, the reservation process being quick and user-friendly (Mean = 3.3650, t = -8.735, p = 0.000) and the front office making the stay convenient and comfortable (Mean = 3.5550, t = -6.665, p = 0.000) were also found to significantly influence brand loyalty. The results also highlighted the importance of emotional and psychological attachment to the hotel brand. Guests reported a strong emotional attachment to the hotel brand (Mean = 4.4800, t = 11.619, p = 0.000), felt valued and cared for during their stay (Mean = 4.4550, t = 10.728, p = 0.000), and expressed a strong personal preference for the hotel brand (Mean = 4.4300, t = 9.304, p = 0.000). In addition, respondents agreed that they considered the hotel brand reliable and dependable (Mean = 4.1550, t = 3.059, p = 0.003), which further strengthened their loyalty toward the brand.However, some factors were found to be statistically insignificant, including receiving a warm and personalized welcome at the front desk (Mean = 4.0400, t = 0.755, p = 0.451), accurate information about local attractions (Mean = 3.8950, t = -1.753, p = 0.081), preferences and requests being noted by the front office (Mean = 3.9150, t = -1.396, p = 0.164), trust in the hotel for safety and needs (Mean = 3.9200, t = -1.214, p = 0.226), confidence in decisions made by the hotel brand (Mean = 3.9050, t = -1.521, p = 0.130), fair treatment by the hotel (Mean = 4.1050, t = 1.860, p = 0.064), sense of belonging when staying at the hotel (Mean = 4.0900, t = 1.868, p = 0.063), and associating positive memories with the hotel brand (Mean = 3.7300, t = -1.270, p = 0.206), as their significance values were greater than 0.05. Overall, the results indicated that many of the service quality, staff behavior, reliability, and emotional attachment factors significantly influenced brand loyalty among guests in chain hotels in Delhi (NCR). ***The null hypothesis H_{01a}, which stated that "There are no significant factors influencing brand loyalty among guests in chain hotels in Delhi (NCR)", was rejected for 17 out of 25 statements.***

Factors influencing brand loyalty in non-chain hotels in Delhi (NCR)

To examine the factors influencing brand loyalty among guests in non-chain hotels in Delhi (NCR), a One Sample t-test was applied to the responses collected from 200 respondents. The test was conducted on 25 statements describing different aspects of brand loyalty, including satisfaction with service quality, staff behavior, reliability of services, emotional attachment, and trust toward the hotel brand. The purpose of applying the One Sample t-test was to determine whether the mean response for each statement significantly differed from the neutral test value, thereby indicating whether the particular factor significantly influenced brand loyalty among hotel guests.

Table: One sample t test statistics for factors influencing brand loyalty in non-chain hotels in Delhi (NCR)

Factors influencing brand loyalty	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
I was satisfied with the cleanliness and comfort of my room	200	3.9950	.71942	-.098	199	.922
The front office staff were polite and professional	200	4.1600	.67578	3.348	199	.001
My check-in and check-out process was smooth and efficient	200	3.9700	.82004	-.517	199	.605
I received good value for the money spent on this hotel	200	3.7750	.88787	-3.584	199	.000
My stay experience at this hotel was memorable	200	4.1150	.74468	2.184	199	.030
The services provided by the hotel were consistently reliable	200	3.6200	.84211	-6.382	199	.000
Hotel staff responded promptly to my requests	200	4.1000	.67250	2.103	199	.037
The front office handled issues or complaints efficiently	200	4.0200	.82645	.342	199	.733
Staff were well-informed and knowledgeable about hotel services	200	3.7550	.81751	-4.238	199	.000
The quality of service matched my expectations	200	3.9850	.74670	-.284	199	.777
I received a warm and personalized welcome at the front desk	200	3.7650	.74333	-4.471	199	.000
The front office staff provided accurate information about local attractions	200	3.6250	.83538	-6.348	199	.000
My preferences and requests were noted and addressed by the front office team	200	3.4900	.86814	-8.308	199	.000
The reservation process was quick and user-friendly	200	3.2750	.90191	-11.368	199	.000
The front office made my stay more convenient and comfortable	200	3.4200	.92078	-8.908	199	.000
I believe this hotel brand provides consistent service every time I stay	200	3.7350	.82959	-4.518	199	.000
I trust this hotel to take care of my needs and safety	200	3.8550	.93721	-2.188	199	.030
I consider this hotel brand to be reliable and dependable	200	3.8000	.88539	-3.195	199	.002
I feel confident in the decisions made by this hotel brand	200	3.5900	.85766	-6.761	199	.000
I believe this hotel treated me fairly at all times	200	4.0250	.69048	.512	199	.609
I feel emotionally attached to this hotel brand	200	4.2250	.64534	4.931	199	.000
Staying at this hotel makes me feel valued and cared for	200	4.1800	.63214	4.027	199	.000
I have a strong personal preference for this hotel brand	200	4.1700	.68075	3.532	199	.001
I feel a sense of belonging or comfort when staying at this hotel	200	3.7450	.79570	-4.532	199	.000
I associate positive memories and experiences with this hotel brand	200	3.3750	.90469	-9.770	199	.000

The results of the One Sample t-test indicated that several factors had a statistically significant influence on brand loyalty among guests in non-chain hotels. Respondents reported that the front office staff were polite and professional (Mean = 4.1600, t = 3.348, p = 0.001), which significantly influenced their loyalty toward the hotel brand. Similarly, guests agreed that they received good value for the money spent on the hotel (Mean = 3.7750, t = -3.584, p = 0.000), and that their stay experience at the hotel was memorable (Mean = 4.1150, t = 2.184, p = 0.030). The findings also indicated that hotel staff responded promptly to requests (Mean = 4.1000, t = 2.103, p = 0.037), which significantly contributed to brand loyalty. Further, several operational and service-related factors were also found to be statistically significant. These included services being consistently reliable (Mean = 3.6200, t = -6.382, p = 0.000), staff being knowledgeable about hotel services (Mean = 3.7550, t = -4.238, p = 0.000), receiving a warm and personalized welcome at the front desk (Mean = 3.7650, t = -4.471, p = 0.000), and accurate information about local attractions from the front office staff (Mean = 3.6250, t = -6.348, p = 0.000). In addition, respondents indicated that their preferences and requests being addressed by the front office team (Mean = 3.4900, t = -8.308, p = 0.000), the reservation process being quick and user-friendly (Mean = 3.2750, t = -11.368, p = 0.000), and the front office making the stay convenient and comfortable (Mean = 3.4200, t = -8.908, p = 0.000) significantly influenced brand loyalty. The analysis also revealed that factors related to trust and reliability of the hotel brand had a significant effect on brand loyalty. Guests believed that the hotel brand provided consistent service every time they stayed (Mean = 3.7350, t = -4.518, p = 0.000), trusted the hotel to take care of their needs and safety (Mean = 3.8550, t = -2.188, p = 0.030), and considered the hotel brand reliable and dependable (Mean = 3.8000, t = -3.195, p = 0.002). Additionally, respondents reported that they felt confident in the decisions made by the hotel brand (Mean = 3.5900, t = -6.761, p = 0.000). The results further highlighted the role of emotional connection and psychological attachment in building brand loyalty. Guests indicated that they felt emotionally attached to the hotel brand (Mean = 4.2250, t = 4.931, p = 0.000), felt valued and cared for during their stay (Mean = 4.1800, t = 4.027, p = 0.000), and had a strong personal preference for the hotel brand (Mean = 4.1700, t = 3.532, p = 0.001). In addition, respondents reported that they felt a sense of belonging or comfort when staying at the hotel (Mean = 3.7450, t = -4.532, p = 0.000) and associated positive memories and experiences with the hotel brand (Mean = 3.3750, t = -9.770, p = 0.000), which significantly contributed to brand loyalty. However, a few factors were found to be statistically insignificant, including satisfaction with room cleanliness and comfort (Mean = 3.9950, t = -0.098, p = 0.922), smooth and efficient check-in and check-out process (Mean = 3.9700, t = -0.517, p = 0.605), efficient handling of issues or complaints by the front office (Mean = 4.0200, t = 0.342, p = 0.733), service quality matching expectations (Mean = 3.9850, t = -0.284, p = 0.777), and fair treatment by the hotel (Mean = 4.0250, t = 0.512, p = 0.609), as their significance values were greater than 0.05. Overall, the findings indicated that several service qualities, operational efficiency, trust, and emotional attachment factors significantly influenced brand loyalty among guests in non-chain hotels in Delhi (NCR). *The null hypothesis H01b, which stated that "There are no significant factors influencing brand loyalty among guests in non-chain hotels in Delhi (NCR)", was rejected for 21 out of 25 statements.* The analysis conducted to achieve the objective, which examined the factors influencing brand loyalty in chain and non-chain hotels in Delhi (NCR), revealed that several service quality, operational, trust, and emotional attachment factors significantly influenced guests' loyalty toward hotel brands. In chain hotels, 17 out of 25 factors were found to have a statistically significant influence on brand loyalty, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis H01a. Similarly, in non-chain hotels, 21 out of 25 factors were statistically significant, resulting in the rejection of the null hypothesis H01b. Overall, the findings indicated that service quality, staff behaviour, reliability, and emotional connection with the hotel brand played a crucial role in strengthening brand loyalty among guests in both chain and non-chain hotels in Delhi (NCR).

Conclusion

The present study examined the factors influencing brand loyalty among guests staying in chain and non-chain hotels in the Delhi National Capital Region (NCR). The findings of the statistical analysis revealed that several service-related, operational, trust-based, and emotional factors significantly contributed to the development of brand loyalty among hotel guests. In chain hotels, seventeen out of the twenty-five examined

factors were found to have a statistically significant influence on brand loyalty. Key factors included satisfaction with room cleanliness and comfort, professional behavior of front office staff, smooth check-in and check-out processes, prompt response to guest requests, efficient handling of complaints, service reliability, perceived value for money, and emotional attachment to the hotel brand. These factors highlight the importance of service consistency and operational efficiency in strengthening loyalty toward hotel brands operating under standardized systems. In non-chain hotels, the analysis revealed that twenty-one out of twenty-five factors significantly influenced brand loyalty. Factors such as polite and professional staff behavior, memorable stay experiences, prompt service responses, knowledgeable staff, personalized welcome, effective reservation processes, trust in the hotel brand, and emotional attachment to the hotel were particularly influential. The results suggest that although non-chain hotels may operate with fewer standardized systems compared to chain hotels, personalized service experiences and emotional connections with guests play a crucial role in developing loyalty. Overall, the study confirms that front office service quality, staff professionalism, reliability of services, value perception, and emotional attachment significantly influence brand loyalty in both chain and non-chain hotels. The rejection of both null hypotheses indicates that multiple determinants contribute to guest loyalty in the hospitality sector. Hotels should therefore focus on improving front office service delivery, strengthening guest relationships, and creating memorable experiences in order to enhance long-term customer loyalty and maintain a competitive advantage.

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