

UNDERSTANDING THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF “A” CATEGORY HOTELS

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Abstract: *This study explores the customers' experience by examining an empirical data of “A” category hotel customers. The purpose of this study is to examine the interrelationships among the customer experience, customer satisfaction, and customer commitment in the context of “A” category hotels of Jammu and Kashmir, India. The data were collected, using convenient sampling method, from 175 tourists/ customers comprising 99 national and 76 foreign tourists of “A” category hotels located in four different tourist cities of Jammu and Kashmir, namely Gulmargh, Srinagar, Phalgam, and Jammu. After reliability and validity, the data were analysed using exploratory factor analysis, correlations, and regression analysis. The result from the findings suggests that the dimensions of customer experience influences customer satisfaction and customer satisfaction in turn, influences commitment. The study establishes positive and significant relationships among customer experiences dimensions, customer satisfaction, and customer commitment. Further, it provides directions to hospitality service providers in creating, enhancing, and maintaining satisfaction and commitment through customer experience so as to sustain competitive advantage.*

Keywords: *Customer Experience, Customer Satisfaction, Customer Commitment*

INTRODUCTION

The Indian hospitality industry has emerged one of the largest segments under the services sector of Indian economy and also one of the key drivers of growth (IBEF, 2015). The rapid development of hotel sectors makes it very competitive and enforces the service providers to ensure customer satisfaction and commitment. In hospitality business the experience of the customers play an important role in the success of the hotels and that is why the hotel practitioners are interested to know about it (Ford & Heaton, 2000). The global hospitality business has evolved into an arena of fierce competition and a fundamental challenge for marketers is to comprehend the distinguishing characteristics of customer experiences (Perdue, 2002). This is due to the fact that hospitality businesses have to really focus on customer's needs, wishes and desires to make their hospitality service a true experience and get the repeat business in the modern hospitality sector (Freund, 2002). As a result, the Indian hospitality sector is expected to experience an unprecedented increase in coming years. In order to make a mark among customers, hospitality industry needs to deliver a fascinating customer experience. This fascinating customer experience is the key driver of their satisfaction which in turn inculcates commitment.

The concept started gaining increasing interest among academicians and practitioners, especially because of shift from service-based economy to experience- based economy

(kim *et al.*, 2008; Pine & Gilmore 1999; Verhoef *et al.*, 2009). Experiences create a unique value for customers, are hard to be imitated by competitors and strongly affect satisfaction, loyalty, and recommendation behaviours of customers (Berry, Carbone, & Haeckel, 2002; Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Furthermore, satisfied customers stay longer and the customer who stays longer brings more profit to the company (Ihtiyar & Ahmad, 2012; Sim, Mak & Jones, 2006), shows lesser complaints (Ahmad *et al.*, 2012) and they may come back to the company in the future (Hui, Wan, & Ho, 2007; Kim, Kim, & Miner, 2009; Su, Swanson, & Chen, 2015). Satisfying the customers and to make them committed is very important for achieving success in the highly competitive hotel sector. Chen & Fan (2008) remarked that it is the gap between expectation and actual experience that leads to satisfaction/dissatisfaction. Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler (2006) also remarked that since services are high in experience and credence quality and their selection process is risky, experience dominates the evaluation process and not the overall outcome that is, satisfaction. Since then limited contribution from scholars on customer experience were made (Schmitt, 1999, 2003) as it was being considered as an integral part of satisfaction. In this context, the influence of the customer experience on customer satisfaction has received significant attention from researchers (Dolarslan, 2014; Grace & O'Cass, 2004; Oh, Fiore, & Jeong, 2007; Turley & Milliman, 2000).

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A common criticism of the experience economy phenomenon has been the lack of tangible measures to capture its underlying dimensions (Caru & Cova, 2003). Realising this limitation, Oh *et al.* (2007) empirically tested Pine and Gilmore's (1998) conceptual model using customers lodging experiences with bed-and-breakfasts. A better understanding of an experiential phenomenon in the hospitality service is particularly important and will permit the industry to perform better. In today's highly competitive climate, identifying, evaluating and managing the customer's experiences has become very important for effective positioning, segmentation and differentiation. Hotels that are struggling to deliver engaging customer experience need to move beyond features, products and processes by creating a positive relationship derived from engagement enabled strategies, personalisation and quality experiences. Therefore, this study aims to examine the interrelationships among the customer experience, customer satisfaction and customer commitment in the context of "A" category hotels of Jammu and Kashmir, India.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Concept of Customer Experience (CE)

The concept of customer experience was first recognised in the mid-1980s when the notion of consumption experience and hedonic consumption were discussed by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) and was popularised in marketing literature by Pine and Gilmore (1998) and Carbone and Haeckel (1994). Building from these insights, recent definitions of customer experience by Gentile, Spiller, and Noci (2007) originates from a set of interactions between customer and product, or part of its organisation, which provokes a reaction. They further added that it is strictly a personal experience with customer's involvement at different levels including rational, sensorial, physical, and emotional. Thus, the intensity of the customer experience is determined by one or more of the above dimensions. Experiences are personal and exceptional, they involve customers perception and participation, engage customers emotionally, shared with others and remembered for a while (Walls, 2009). Researchers point out the importance of customer experiences particularly for services (Pine & Gilmore, 1998; Schmitt, 1999). As services are intangible, inseparable, and heterogeneous, esthetics, entertainment, education, and escapism factors in hospitality are more important than products. The rich esthetic, entertainment, education and escapism environments make hotel sectors an attractive domain to analyse experiences. The challenge here lies in determining variables that influences customer's satisfaction levels and their commitment.

Customer Experience Dimensions

Although customer experiences have attracted considerable attention in recent years, creating and managing experiences are still among major challenges for hospitality sector (Walls *et al.*, 2011). Since the customer experience literature lacks empirical support, standardised dimensions of customer experience are yet to be established. A substantial number of studies attempted to establish the dimensions/factors that influence customer experiences. However, the seminal works of Pine and Gilmore (1999) and Hosany and Witham (2010) are the most recognised which are also supported by different scholars. While discussing experience economy, Pine and Gilmore (1998) identified four dimensions/realms of customer experiences (4Es) including entertainment, education, aesthetic, and escapism. The first dimension is aesthetic where the customer has a passive participation and immersion in the experience. The aesthetics dimension refers to customer's interpretation of the physical environment around them. A number of studies recognise the role of aesthetics in consumer behaviour, decision making, and service evaluations (Turley & Milliman 2000). The physical environment is a critical factor, which helps to define the nature of social interaction. In other words, customers who engage in positive physical and relational aspects of the customer experience may find themselves in positive emotional, satisfying, and loyal environments (Bitner, 1992). The second dimension is entertainment which is developed when passive absorption is observed by the customer such as watching a theatre performance (Oh *et al.*, 2007). For example, most cruise liners provide a variety of entertainment, such as nightly shows, performances by comedians, live music bands, and casino-style gaming among others. Entertainment schedules are carefully designed to appeal to various age groups, from young children to senior travelers (Hosany & Witham, 2010). In essence, entertainment remains an essential component of the tourism product (Hughes & Benn, 1995), with some tourist destinations famous for the level, variety, and quality of their entertainment. Hosany and Witham (2010) identified the most cruise liners provide a variety of entertainment, such as nightly shows, performances by comedians, live music bands, and casino-style gaming among others. The third dimension is education which refers to an experience where the participant actively participates. In Pine and Gilmore's (1998) framework, an educational experience actively engages the mind of consumers, intriguing them and appealing to their desire to learn something new. The fourth and the last dimension is escapism. An escapist experience can be defined as the extent to which an individual is completely engrossed and absorbed in the activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Escapist experiences are highly immersive and require active participation. Typical examples include theme parks, adventure lands, simulated

destinations, and themed attractions among others (Hosany & Witham, 2010).

Some of the studies have employed empirical approaches to gain a better understanding of customer experiences. However, significant opportunities exist to examine customer experiences in the hospitality realm (Titz, 2007). Moreover, numerous studies have begun to lay a theoretical foundation to define and elucidate the experiential concept (Berry *et al.*, 2002; Bitner, 1992; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Schmitt, 1999), yet little empirical research exists which attempts to identify, explore and measure the dimensions of consumer experiences (Knutson *et al.*, 2006; Titz, 2007). For example, from the “A” category hotel perspective, what exactly is an experience, and what are the specific perceived dimensions that make up an experience? An extensive review of the literature revealed that previous studies have focused on a broad range of factors/dimensions that influence consumer experiences (Barsky & Nash, 2002; Bitner, 1992; Carbone & Haeckel, 1994; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Knutson *et al.*, 2006). For example, Schmitt (1999) has explored how companies create experiential marketing by having customers sense, feel, think, act and relate to a company and its brands. To sum up, that the customer experience construct is holistic in nature and involves the customers cognitive, affective, emotional, social and physical responses to a service provider (Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009; Gentile *et al.*, 2007; Schmitt, 1999). Amongst the scholars who proposed different approaches to evaluate customers’ experiences, the experience economy concept (Pine & Gilmore, 1999) has recently gained attention among hospitality and tourism researchers (Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011). In fact, the empirical development of the 4Es application in various facets of hospitality sector is needed (Hosany & Witham, 2010; Oh *et al.*, 2007; Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Hence, the study hypothesised the following:

H1: All four dimensions - esthetic, entertainment, education, and escapism contribute significantly to customer experience.

Customer Experience and Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction in hospitality sector has been one of the most examined topics for decades (Golder, Mitra, & Moorman, 2012) and has aroused long term interest in many fields (Li, Ye, & Law, 2013). It is generally accepted that customer experience affects the customer’s overall satisfaction with the services brand (Grace & O’Cass, 2004). Satisfaction or dissatisfaction is an essential outcome of customer experience. Despite scarce empirical evidence, marketing scholars seem to be in agreement of a conceptual distinction between customer experience and satisfaction.

For example, Schmitt (2003) very categorically opined that satisfaction is an outcome-oriented attitude (based on customers experience) while experience is process-oriented concept. Puccinelli *et al.* (2009) also supported Schmitt’s (2003) views. On same view, Meyer and Schwager (2007) suggested that customer satisfaction is the accumulation of a series of customer experience, where degree of satisfaction is the net result of good experience minus bad experiences. Similarly, Rowley (1999) in her work considered total experience as an absolute concept, which is a function of customer satisfaction derived at different points of the transaction. However, Chen *et al.* (2008) considered actual experience and expectation as significant predictors of satisfaction. Customers who have positive perceptions would evaluate the satisfaction positively while those who have negative perceptions would evaluate satisfaction negatively. The relationship between customer experience and satisfaction has been explored in the marketing literature. Kim *et al.* (2008) stated that, the more favourable the experience is, the higher is the satisfaction. Based on this backdrop the following hypotheses are proposed:

H2: All four dimensions of customer experience - esthetic, entertainment, educational and escapism contribute significantly to satisfaction.

H2 (a): Esthetic experience influences satisfaction significantly.

H2 (b): Entertainment experience influences satisfaction significantly.

H2 (c): Educational experience influences satisfaction significantly.

H2 (d): Escapism experience influences satisfaction significantly.

Customer Satisfaction and Customer Commitment

Customer satisfaction is a fundamental marketing concept (Fournier & Mick, 1999). Morgan and Hunt (1994) define commitment as a customer’s enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship. Thus in relationship marketing, commitment is considered as one of the main component of long-term relationship (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Wang, 2009). There are many papers in which the effect of customer satisfaction on brand commitment was investigated (Bowen & Chen, 2001; Darsono & Junaedi, 2006). Zins (2001) has classified the customer commitment into three different conceptualisations: affective, calculative or continuance, and normative commitment. Each type of customer commitment conceptualisation has different antecedents, contents and consequences (Zins, 2001). Fullerton (2003) defines the affective commitment as a consumer’s sense of belonging

and involvement with a service provider akin to emotional bonding. Affective commitment was adopted in view of its larger effect on loyalty in comparing to satisfaction (Johnson et al., 2001). Customer satisfaction has been strongly linked to the development of commitment (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, & Gremler, 2002; Johnson et al., 2001; Wetzels, de Ruyter, & van Birgelen, 1998). Moreover the extant literature has concluded that there is a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and customer commitment (Hennig-Thurau, 2004; Larry & Hazer, 1986; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). It was examined in this study that customer satisfaction had a positive influence on commitment. Eris et al. (2012) also identified the positive influence and positive relationship between satisfaction and commitment. Based on this backdrop the following hypotheses are proposed:

H3: Customer satisfaction positively influences customer commitment.

H4: There exists a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and commitment.

OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this study were:

1. To examine the influence of customer experience dimensions - esthetic, entertainment, education, and escapism on customer satisfaction.
2. To investigate the influence of customer satisfaction on customer commitment.
3. To determine the applicability of customer experience practices in "A" category hotels.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Measurement Instrument and Questionnaire Design

The scale adopted for this study was based on the previous work of the author's viz., (Ali & Amin, 2014; Gabarino & Johnson, 1999; Hosany & Witham, 2010). Proper modifications were made in order to fit the current research context and purpose. The questionnaire consists of two parts; part one consists of pre coded questions regarding the demographic information like age, gender, income, nature of visit etc. of the respondents. It was followed by another part that is customer experience, customer satisfaction, and customer commitment scales. Customer experience scale contains of 16 items related to four dimensions viz., esthetics experience (4 statements), entertainment experience (4 statements), education experience (4 statements), escapism experience (4 statements) based on scale of previous researchers (Hosany & Witham, 2010). Four items from customer satisfaction (Ali & Amin, 2014) and four items

from customer commitment (Gabarino & Johnson, 1999) were used for this study. All the three constructs has been measured on 7-point Likert-type scale by 1= strongly disagree and 7= strongly agree to express the degree of agreement.

Sample and Data Collection

The field research has been conducted in "A" category hotels in Jammu and Kashmir, India. A list of "A" category hotels includes four and five star hotels as per the information obtained from Tourism Department of Jammu and Kashmir. A list of "A" category hotels operating in Jammu and Kashmir was procured from the Tourism Department. Sample size was decided according to the number of items to be used to study customer experience, customer satisfaction and customer commitment. Every item requires minimum 5 respondents and maximum 10 respondents (Hair et al., 2008). As the study's construct contained 24 items, so it was decided to take 216 as the sample size. The study used convenient sampling technique to collect the data at the various public areas in hotels like at the hotel lobby mostly, reception, restaurants, swimming pools and guest rooms. Out of 216 questionnaires, 175 completely filled (81%) questionnaires were received.

ANALYSIS

Data were collected from both primary as well as secondary sources. The geographical area for data collection was Jammu and Kashmir, India and included cities of Gulmargh, Srinagar, Phalgam, and Jammu. The information was collected from those who had consumed services of various "A" category hotels located in the selected cities.

The demographic information of the sample provides information that the majority of the customers were male (n=97, 55%) and female (n=78; 45%). In terms of age 22% (n=39) of respondents were between 20–30 years, 33% (n=57) were between 31-40 years age, 26% (n=46) were between 41-50 and 19% (n=33) above 51. In terms of educational qualification 3% (n=6) of the total respondents had matriculation degree, graduation were 46% (n=80), post-graduation were 48% (n=84) whereas others were 3% (n=5). Regarding occupation 21% business, 28% services, 39% professional and 12% others. With respect to income of the respondents below Rs 3 lakh were 12%, between Rs 3-6 lakh 18%, between Rs 6-10 lakh 29% and above Rs10 lakh 41%. About the nationality of the respondents, the majority of respondents were Indian (56%, n=99), followed by the USA (10%), UK (7%), Bangladesh (6%), Dubai and Thailand (4%) each, Russia, China and Sri Lanka (3%) each, and Canada and France (2%) each. About the nature of visit, most of the respondents were visited for

recreation and entertainment purposes (55%) followed by adventure (21%), religious (16%), and official purposes (8%). In terms of source of information about the hotel, most of the respondents were informed through friends and relations (38%), followed by internet (31%), previous visit (17%), tour agent (7%), tourist information centre (5%), and newspaper/TV (2%).

Reliability Test

Internal reliabilities of expected factors was performed in the form of Cronbach's alpha coefficient and shown in Table 2. All of the variables were testified for the consistency reliability of the items within the variables by using Cronbach's alpha. For the purpose of this study a cut off value adopted was 0.6 (Hair *et al.*, 2008) lower limit of acceptability and the acceptable benchmark value of item-to-total correlation was set above 0.3 (Hair *et al.*, 2008). All the constructs represent a robust matrix of factors underpinning customer experience practices in the “A” category hotels of Jammu and Kashmir, India.

Validity Test and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

In order to explore the dimensions of customer experience and their influence on customer satisfaction, the variables were factor analyzed. We conducted EFA on 175 datasets to evaluate and purify the scale items. A principal component analysis with a varimax rotation was applied to the scale data. Eigen value greater or equal to 1, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value greater than or equal to 0.50, communality greater than 0.50 and minimum factor loading equal to or greater than 0.40 criteria were used to purify the measurement items (Hair *et al.*, 2008). Based on the output shown, factor analysis was appropriate because the value of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) was 0.838 (between 0.5 and 1.0) and the statistical test for Bartlett test of sphericity was significant ($p=0.000$; $d.f.=276$) for all the correlations within a correlation matrix (at least for some of the constructs). Based on the principal components analysis and varimax procedure in orthogonal rotation, the results also showed that the eigen values for all the constructs were greater than 1.0, ranging from the lowest 1.218 (esthetics experience) to the highest of 7.089 (satisfaction). In terms of convergent validity, the factor loadings for all items within a construct were more than 0.50 and none of the scale items is deleted. Therefore, the four dimensional structure of customer experience instrument was acceptable (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The details of the factor analysis are presented in Table 1.

Multiple Regression Analysis

According to Table 5, $R = 59.1$ percent; R Square = 34.9 percent; Adjusted R Square (R^2) = 33.3 percent; $F = 22.764$; $P=0.000$ ($p<0.05$), Standard Error = 0.33, and there are no insignificant items in Table 5. According to Table 3, the factors/dimensions (4Es) of customer experience with a greater influence on satisfaction with “esthetics experience”, ($\beta = 0.37$), followed by “entertainment experience”, ($\beta = 0.20$), “education experience” ($\beta = 0.14$), and “escapism experience” ($\beta = 0.13$). The result of regression analysis shows, the p values of the t -test ($p=0.000$) between the dimensions of customer experience and satisfaction is less than the alpha value of 0.05. Therefore, there is a significant/positive relationship between all the four dimensions of customer experience and satisfaction. So the second hypothesis, H2 (H2a, H2b, H2c, H2d) is accepted. The Tolerance Value was ranged between 0.769 - 0.944 in which were all more than 0.10 and the VIF value ranges from 1.059 – 1.300 in which are all less than 5 (Hair *et al.*, 2008). Therefore the problem of multicollinearity does not exist. The study also concluded that the change in satisfaction is explained 34.9 percent (R square = 34.9%) by the customer experience. Regression analysis revealed that influence of esthetic experience dimension on satisfaction is more than entertainment experience which is followed by education and escapism experiences respectively.

Simple Regression Analysis

$R = 58.6$ percent; R Square = 34.4 percent; Adjusted R Square = 34.0 percent; $P=0.000$ ($p<0.05$), Standard Error = 0.33, and there are no insignificant items in the above table. According to Table 4, the Tolerance Value was 1 (more than 0.10) and the VIF value was 1 all (less than 5) (Hair *et al.*, 2006) that shows there is no multicollinearity problem in the study. The result of regression analysis shows that customer satisfaction with an influence on commitment is ($\beta 58.6$) and the p values of the t -test ($p=0.000$) between them is less than the alpha value of 0.05. Therefore, there is a significant/positive relationship between customer satisfaction and commitment. So the hypothesis, H3 also supported. The study also concluded that the change in commitment is explained 34.4 percent (R square = 34.4%) by the customer satisfaction.

Correlation Analysis

We computed means and standard deviations (S.D) for each variable and created a correlation matrix of both variables used in hypothesis testing as shown in Table 5. The means and standard deviations are within the expected ranges. According to Table 5 most of the respondents expressed the presence of a relatively higher level of satisfaction (mean

= 5.72), which is followed by commitment (mean = 5.33). Considering the table 5 indicates the correlation between satisfaction and commitment ($r = 0.586$). So the hypothesis H4 also supported the results.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of his study is to investigate the relationships between customer experiences, satisfaction and commitment. Exploratory factor analysis, correlation, simple and multiple regression analysis was used to analyse the data and based on it to test the relationships between the constructs. It also suggests the dimensions influencing customer experiences in “A” category hotels and their relative importance in strengthening satisfaction and commitment. Multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses. The result of this study found that all hypotheses are supported and the findings revealed that customer experience dimensions had positive and significant influence on satisfaction. Moreover, in this study it was also observed that customer satisfaction in turn, influence positively to customer commitment. It was also revealed that influence of aesthetics and entertainment experience factors on satisfaction is greater than other two dimensions/factors (education and escapism experiences). Similarly, Hosany and Witham (2010) and Oh *et al.* (2007) also postulated aesthetics as the main determinant of experiential dimensions in predicting satisfaction. Services providers should focus on the entertainment aspect also as it is an integral motivation of tourists visiting hotels. For example, Gee (2000) identified that the core principle of the hotels (resort hotels) concept is the creation of an environment that will promote and enhance a feeling of well-being, enjoyment and satisfaction. Furthermore, escapism was found to be the least important dimension in estimating satisfaction in this study and results are consistent with the work conducted by Hosany and Witham (2010). With regard to educational dimension of customer experience, while various hotels offers some opportunities for the guests to increase their knowledge and skills (e.g., massage techniques, cooking lessons, swimming and snorkelling etc.), such experiences are of importance in developing satisfaction, memories and positive behaviour (Oh *et al.*, 2007; Quadri-Felitti & Fiore, 2013). Since all these four dimensions of customer experience influence tourist’s satisfaction, marketers should understand their differences while implementing segmentation and positioning strategies based on experiences of customers (Hosany & Witham, 2010). Moreover, by enhancing a higher degree of customer satisfaction creates commitment among the customers. These results are consistent with (Hennig-Thurau, 2004; Larry & Hazer, 1986; Morgan & Hunt, 1994), and they concluded that there is a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and customer commitment which also replicates the results of this study.

Conclusion and Implications

Recent years have seen a significant increase in the number of tourists visiting Jammu and Kashmir, India and this number is expected to increase further in the near future. It is very surprising that despite being one of the fastest growing tourist destinations, the Jammu and Kashmir, India and its hospitality sector in general and the “A” category hotels in particular are also overlooked by researchers. Hence, this timely study intends to fill this gap by investigating the dimensions of customer experiences with regard to customer’s satisfaction and commitment of “A” category hotel setting of Jammu and Kashmir, India. As the review of literature revealed, customer experience is developed by various dimensions/components within the esthetics, entertainment, educational and escapism environments. Customers who have positive customer experience towards the particular service or brand behave as loyal customer to the service or brand (Brakus *et al.*, 2009). It is also evident that creating a high-quality and attractive environment is no longer an option for the management, but a substantial aspect of customer experience. Therefore, experiences create a unique value for customers, hard to be imitated by competition and strongly affect satisfaction, loyalty, and recommendation behaviours of consumers (Berry *et al.*, 2002; Pine & Gilmore, 1999).

The research findings do provide some insights and feedback for “A” category hotels in terms of marketing strategy. The current study shed light on several important issues including examining the concept of customer experience, satisfaction and commitment in the context of the “A” category hotels. More specifically, this research provides management a measurement tool to evaluate and understand customer experiences, their satisfaction levels and commitment. The importance of understanding customer experience as a competitive marketing offer is undoubtedly accepted which has placed a position of strategic movement in contemporary business environment. Such an understanding of customer’s experiences along the four dimensions will enable marketers to design appropriate marketing and promotional strategies. For instance, hotel marketers in their promotional campaigns should emphasize the esthetic, entertaining, educational and escapist values of customers to develop their satisfaction and commitment. Since the customer experience influences customer’s satisfaction marketers should understand their differences while implementing segmentation and positioning strategies based on experiences of customers (Hosany & Witham, 2010). The findings of this study show that “A” category hotels need to integrate different customer experience practices in order to win customer satisfaction and their desire based attachment (commitment). The management can also adopt an integrated approach to develop determinants in evaluating the customer experience.

Limitations and Future Research

Some limitations need to be considered in future research. Since convenient sampling was used in this study, results cannot be generalised. For example the findings should be interpreted with caution when applied to different industries or different category of hotels. Future research should also examine the proposed relationships in other types of industries. Further studies are needed to establish other determinants of guest experiences and their effects on consumer behaviour. With larger number of the sample size and various cross cultural dimensions aspects can be considered while doing the future studies in order to measure the customer experience levels in the hospitality and tourism

Industry. Moreover, this study did not take into account the influence of customer involvement on the evaluation of overall experiences, satisfaction and commitment that may have influenced the magnitude of the relationship between the constructs. The involvement construct has been applied in various tourism and leisure studies to examine how people engage and participate in different aspects of the consumption process (Gursoy & Gavcar, 2003). In nutshell, the influence of customers' favourable and unfavourable service experiences on customer involvement, value perceptions, customer memories, switching propensity, future intentions/behaviour, service encounter performance and employee's service attitudes or behaviours might replicate future research.

Table 1: Exploratory factor analysis: Factors identified by principal components analysis

Factor's Name and items	Factor- Loading	Eigen- Value	% of Variance	Communality
ENTERTAINMENT EXPERIENCE		2.732	11.382	
Activities at the hotel were amusing to watch and perform	0.699			0.551
Activities at the hotel were captivating to watch and perform	0.665			0.540
Activities at the hotel were entertaining to watch and perform	0.752			0.687
Activities at the hotel were fun to watch and perform	0.789			0.673
EDUCATION EXPERIENCE		2.032	8.465	
The experience has made me more knowledgeable to this hotel	0.757			0.654
I learned a lot during my experience visiting this hotel	0.628			0.562
It stimulated my curiosity to learn new things here	0.846			0.768
It was a real learning experience here	0.856			0.766
ESCAPISM EXPERIENCE		1.350	5.626	
I felt I played a different character here	0.650			0.515
I felt like I was living in a different time or place	0.637			0.543
The experience here let me imagine being someone else	0.808			0.730
I totally forgot about my daily routine	0.799			0.699
ESTHETICS EXPERIENCE		1.218	5.077	
I felt a real sense of harmony to this hotel	0.731			0.656
Just being here was very pleasant	0.697			0.633
The setting was very attractive to this hotel	0.683			0.540
The setting really showed attention to design detail	0.585			0.511
CUSTOMER SATISFACTION		7.089	29.538	
I am satisfied with my decision to visit this hotel	0.796			0.767
My choice to choose this hotel was a wise one	0.820			0.848
I feel that my experience with this hotel has been enjoyable	0.845			0.808
I think I did the right thing to visit this hotel	0.787			0.810
COMMITMENT		1.740	7.250	
I feel committed to this hotel	0.699			0.747
I am proud to belong to this hotel	0.839			0.732
I am a loyal customer of this hotel	0.639			0.751
I care long-term success of this hotel	0.669			0.631

KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy =0.838; Approx. Chi-Square = 2152.639; df =276; sig = 0.000; Cumulative Percentage Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings = 67.339

Table 2: Internal Consistency of Final Revised Structure

Factors and items	Item-total correlation	α value	Decision
CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE			
ENTERTAINMENT EXPERIENCE		0.783	Retained
Activities at the hotel were amusing to watch and perform	0.499		
Activities at the hotel were captivating to watch and perform	0.563		
Activities at the hotel were entertaining to watch and perform	0.681		
Activities at the hotel were fun to watch and perform	0.618		
EDUCATION EXPERIENCE		0.792	Retained
The experience has made me more knowledgeable to this hotel	0.564		
I learned a lot during my experience visiting this hotel	0.505		
It stimulated my curiosity to learn new things here	0.681		
It was a real learning experience here	0.695		
ESCAPISM EXPERIENCE		0.741	Retained
I felt I played a different character here	0.496		
I felt like I was living in a different time or place	0.495		
The experience here let me imagine being someone else	0.631		
I totally forgot about my daily routine	0.542		
ESTHETICS EXPERIENCE		0.721	Retained
I felt a real sense of harmony to this hotel	0.542		
Just being here was very pleasant	0.495		
The setting was very attractive to this hotel	0.498		
The setting really showed attention to design detail	0.520		
CUSTOMER SATISFACTION		0.916	Retained
I am satisfied with my decision to visit this hotel	0.769		
My choice to choose this hotel was a wise one	0.835		
I feel that my experience with this hotel has been enjoyable	0.810		
I think I did the right thing to visit this hotel	0.822		
COMMITMENT		0.838	Retained
I feel committed to this hotel	0.814		
I am proud to belong to this hotel	0.471		
I am a loyal customer of this hotel	0.804		
I care long-term success of this hotel	0.645		

Table 3: Multiple Regression Analysis

Independent variables	B	SE	β	t	Sig	T	VIF
Constant	1.139	0.479	2.291	0.023			
Esthetics Experience	0.426	0.077	0.376	5.559	0.000	0.837	1.194
Entertainment Experience	0.214	0.0705	0.200	2.834	0.005	0.769	1.300
Education Experience	0.135	0.060	0.143	2.253	0.026	0.944	1.059
Escapism Experience	0.075	0.036	0.136	2.078	0.039	0.894	1.118

Note: Dependent variable: Satisfaction and Independent variable: Customer experience dimensions

B: Unstandardised Coefficient; SE: Standard Error; β : Standardised Coefficient; t: t-Value; Sig.: Significance.

Table 4: Simple Regression Analysis

Independent variable	B	SE	β	t	Sig	T	VIF
Constant	1.949	0.356	5.469	.000			
Satisfaction	0.591	0.62	0.586	9.518	.000	1.00	1.00

Note: Dependent variable: Commitment and Independent variable: Satisfaction

B: Unstandardised Coefficient; SE: Standard Error; β : Standardised Coefficient; t: t-Value; Sig.: Significance.

Table 5: Correlation Analysis

Constructs	Mean	S.D			
			Satisfaction	Commitment	Sig
Satisfaction	5.72	.40	1	0.586**	.000
Commitment	5.33	.41	0.586**	1	.000

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

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