

# Assessment of Guest Satisfaction in Hotels of Nainital: A Study from Managers' Perspective

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## Abstract

Hospitality Industry in India is facing one of the biggest contemporary challenges as guest satisfaction index. Service quality and measuring guest satisfaction in different departments in the hotels play important role in retaining the guests. The present study aims in examining the managers' viewpoints and perception of guest satisfaction and its importance in hotels of Nainital. The study has been done by collecting data from managers of 80 hotels regarding guest satisfaction practices in the study area. It aims to analyze their perspective for guests' satisfaction practices being adopted. The results revealed that guest comment cards filled by the guests are of utmost importance and there is a positive relationship between practices followed and guest satisfaction in sample hotels of study area.

**Keywords:** Hotels, Guest Satisfaction, Manager, Nainital

## Introduction

Guest satisfaction is a pivotal factor in revenue management of any hotel enterprise as it is very important for customer retention. Today most of the hotels are focusing on guest satisfaction index depending on their size, budget and category. Guest Satisfaction is a psychological conception that revolves around well being and pleasure which guest expects and the kind of services he/she received. Guest satisfaction is a judgment based on post use of services (Gundersen, Heide and Olsson, 1996). In order to measure guest satisfaction index hotels use guest comment cards. The concept has seen a manifold change in the recent years with increase in importance being given to service quality and measuring guest satisfaction levels. Guest retention has been a major challenge being faced by hotels worldwide in the global market now a day. Due to increased competition in the industry hotels have focused

more on retaining the existing customer by evaluating the level of their satisfaction with the services at all levels.

Satisfaction level of guest is the outcome of parity between the expected and perceived services and services received (Oliver, 1980). Adoption of high service quality as normal practices for ensuring satisfaction of guest to get repeat business is of utmost importance in hospitality sector (Bowen and Chen, 2001). Various factors like cleanliness, security, value for money and courtesy of staff contribute to customer satisfaction (Atkinson, 1988). These factors can be used as parameters to be measured for guest satisfaction by the managers in hotels. Modern day hotel enterprises have various concerned departments, applications of information technology, property management systems to provide facilities expected by the guests staying there (Bhatnagar, 2007). Various departments like Accommodation, Front Desk, Guest relations are well supported by allied departments like sales, human resource stores etc. In hotels and hospitality related industry hotel rooms division and front desk are the most important area in ensuring guest satisfaction related to comfort in rooms, cleanliness in the hotel (Barsky, 2003).

## Review Of Literature

Measuring and ensuring guest satisfaction safeguards that people are getting what they are expecting for the services they are paying for. Marketing strategies should be aligned to focus the demographic characteristics of the customer to target them (Le Blanc & Nguyen, 1996). The request and increase in demand for higher standard of services by the guests has created competition among hotels and also enlightened about the level and quality of services required. Hotels in this competitive world offer

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homogeneous services and must be able to satisfy guests better than their rivals (Choi & Chou, 2001). Wuest et al. (1996) in his study has highlighted the perception of guests about the desired services and facilities to be offered during their stay in the hotel. Richard & Sundaram (1993) stressed that attributes that most likely effect customer choice must be acknowledged by the hotels. As per the findings of Reichheld and Sasser (1990) loyal customers are less likely to go to other hotels owing to price. In fact they give more revenue than non-loyal guests. Thakkar (2014) enlightened that front office plays major role in guest satisfaction and food and beverage services provided to guests staying in the hotel is other attribute contributing to the guest satisfaction. When functional and technical quality is compared then functional quality in hotels is rated more important of perceived services by the guests (Gronross, 1987).

### Study Area

The study is conducted on hotels of Nainital in Uttarakhand State of India. Nainital was discovered by a British sugar merchant P. Baron in 1839. He was so fascinated by the lake and its forested surroundings that he came back with the sailing boat and built a house named 'Pilgrim's cottage'. Subsequently people started settling in Nainital with colonial villas and walk away. Nainital became a chief administrative town as well, with the summer capital of the United Province being set up here. Being one of the most sought after hill stations, Nainital has a flourishing tourism industry. From lodging to shopping, the town provides a wide range of options for the tourists. The city has 5 star hotels like Manu Maharani, number of 4 star and 3 star hotels and budget hotels catering to needs of travelers. Total number of hotels in Nainital is around 200 (registered & non registered). Out of which 111 are registered as per record of Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board. These hotels offer variety of services to travelers including accommodation and other facilities. Nainital has approximately 6500 guest beds in hotels. Out of total 11619457 tourists visiting in the state, 9130379 are domestic tourist and 109084 are foreign tourist and 843815 are visiting Nainital.

### Objectives of the Study

1. To Study various guest satisfaction practices by hotels in Nainital.

2. To examine importance of guest satisfaction practices by hotel in Nainital.

### Research Methodology

The aim of this study is to find out the importance and usage of guest satisfaction practices adopted by hotels in Nainital. The research objectives of the study have addressed the guest satisfaction practices adopted by hotels in Nainital on the basis of exploratory study. Data were collected using questionnaires addressed to owners\ managers of 80 hotels operating in Nainital City. The data were analyzed using exploratory principal components factor analyses with varimax rotation in SPSS. The questionnaire was tested for reliability and internal consistency using Cronbach  $\alpha$ . Fifteen guest satisfaction practices/parameters are measured on a Likert-type 5-point scale ranging from 1=never 5=very often and in case of usage 3-point scale (1=not important, 2=moderately important, 3= important) for importance.

### Results and Findings

Managerial staffs from 80 hotels of the study area are selected as sample for this study. The sample distribution is presented in the table. The majority of the sample (88%) were from 1 to 3 star type hotels. Managerial staffs from four star type hotels comprise of 12 % of sample and 38%, 30 % and 20 % sample belong to the staff of 3 star, 2 star and 1 star type of hotels. 32 % hotels have been established less than 5 years ago and 25 % hotels are established between 11-15 years. There are 7 % hotels having established more than 21 years before.

**Table 1: Sample Distribution**

<i>Distribution of sample from different types of Hotels (N=80)</i>		
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Category of hotels		
5 star	01	1.25
4 star	09	11.25
3 star	30	37.5
2 star	24	30
1 star	16	20
Existence of Hotels (in years)		
≤ 5	25	31.25
6 – 10	15	18.75

Distribution of sample from different types of Hotels (N=80)		
	Number	Percentage
11 – 15	20	25.00
16 – 20	15	18.75
≥ 21	05	06.25

Source: Primary data

The results from exploratory principal components factor analyses with varimax rotation on the 15 guest satisfaction practices categorised into two groups are shown in table-2. The guest satisfaction practices items were factored in to two factors explaining from 81.12 to 82.53 percent of total variation. The first factor is guest satisfaction practices in front office adopted by hotels including Confirmation mail in advance makes a guest more satisfied, Guest Reservation online, Feedback during the stay, Guest gets message regarding rooms on Phone, Guest can request for Upgradation or other services from room, Sending E-mails for Updates, greetings to Guests makes them more satisfied, Guest comment cards are filled, Rooms are checked before check in to ensure cleanliness, Guests have access to Wi-Fi and Quality of Fixtures in rooms

The second factor includes guest satisfaction practices in Food & Beverage Service department which comprises of guest can view order number & service time from their table, Guest feedback taken regarding food, guest preference and special request can be saved, Guest can pay by card and Knowledge of Cuisines by Staff .

**Table 2: Factor Analysis Results for the Guest Satisfaction Practices**

Factor analysis results for the Guest Satisfaction Practices	Factor 1	Factor 2
Explained variation (per cent)	81.12	82.53
Eigen values	3.71	3.47
Guest Satisfaction in Front Office Practices		
Confirmation mail in advance makes a guest more satisfied	0.66	
Guest Reservation online	0.80	
Feedback during the stay	0.72	
Guest gets message regarding rooms on Phone	0.64	
Guest can request for Upgradation or other services from room	0.66	
Sending E-mails for Updates greetings to Guests makes them more satisfied	0.65	
Guest comment cards are filled	0.69	

Factor analysis results for the Guest Satisfaction Practices	Factor 1	Factor 2
Rooms are checked before check in to ensure cleanliness.	0.72	
Guests have access to Wi-Fi	0.73	
Quality of Fixtures in rooms	0.61	
Guest Satisfaction in Food & Beverage practices		
Guest can view Order No & Service Time.		0.84
Guest feedback taken regarding food		0.80
Guest's Preference and special request can be saved.		0.81
Guest can pay by card		0.75
Knowledge of Cuisines by Staff		0.69
Cronbach alpha	0.84	0.89

Source: Primary data

Table 3 tries to find out the extent to which hotels in Nainital have applied guest satisfaction practices to provide more accurate data for decision making. Respondents were asked to indicate importance and usage of guest satisfaction practices. Fifteen guest satisfaction practices have been ranked according to their usage and importance. Two factors of guest satisfaction practices have been identified based on exploratory principal components factor analysis and are indisputably widely used and important in the hotels such as front office, food & beverage section. Ranking these practices high in terms of their importance and adoption is made. Feedback taken from the guest has been ranked of utmost importance in guest satisfaction variables taken by front office managers. However the guest preference and special request is ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> with mean of 4.58 in hotels in Nainital. The other factors considered by managers in front office related to guest satisfaction are facilities like Wi-Fi offered to guest and knowledge level of staff. Access to Order number by guest & Service Time with a mean of 4.40 has been ranked 5<sup>th</sup>. Guest can request for Upgradation or other services from room has been ranked 15<sup>th</sup> in term of importance and has been ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> in terms of usage which hints that hotels in Nainital are focusing more on room services to be provided to the guests. It reveals that hotels in Nainital are focusing more on taking feedback from every guest during stay to provide them better services. Guest can pay by card ranked same in both cases of importance and usage shows that hotels have facility now a day by which guest can pay bills by cards. The analysis reveals that hotels are stressing on guest satisfaction practices and there is not

significant difference in guest satisfaction practices being adopted by hotels in Nainital.

**Table 3: Ranking and Descriptive Statistics of Guest Satisfaction Variables**

Ranking and descriptive statistics of Guest Satisfaction Variables						
Guest satisfaction Variables	Importance*			Usage**		
	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank
Confirmation mail in advance makes a guest more satisfied	4.04	0.74	11	3.80	0.79	5
Guest Reservation online	4.06	0.67	10	3.18	0.79	11
Feedback during the stay	4.70	0.70	1	3.11	0.78	15
Guest gets message regarding rooms on Phone	4.03	0.75	12	3.95	0.76	4
Guest can request for Upgradation or other services from room	3.16	0.79	15	4.00	0.75	3
Sending E-mails for Updates greetings to Guests makes them more satisfied	4.22	0.73	9	3.14	0.77	13
Guest comment cards are filled	4.00	0.75	13	4.20	0.75	2
Rooms are checked before check in to ensure cleanliness.	4.30	0.74	8	3.84	0.79	6
Guests have access to Wi-Fi	4.44	0.71	3	3.82	0.77	7
Quality of Fixtures in rooms	4.39	0.70	6	3.61	0.79	10
Guest can view Order No & Service Time	4.40	0.71	5	3.68	0.77	8
Guest feedback taken regarding food	4.34	0.70	7	3.64	0.75	9
Guest's Preference and special request can be saved.	4.58	0.77	2	4.70	0.71	1

Ranking and descriptive statistics of Guest Satisfaction Variables						
Guest satisfaction Variables	Importance*			Usage**		
	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank
Guest can pay by card	3.92	0.75	14	3.13	0.79	14
Knowledge of Cuisines by Staff	4.41	0.71	4	3.15	0.81	12

\* Based on 3-point scale (1= not important, 2=moderately important, 3= important)  
 \*\* Based on 5-point scale (1=never, 2=rarely, 3=sometimes, 4=often, 5=very often)

Source: Primary data

### Conclusion

As per the review available ensuring guest satisfaction in hotels is a great challenge. The decision making regarding guest satisfaction measures or to handle guest complaints or making them more comfortable still lies with the top management in hotels. But the onus lies in both the hands of managers and operating staffs at all level. The results showed that guest satisfaction measures have great significance in the working and guest retention policies adopted by a hotel. The managers' attitude and approach regarding various measures for the same is of utmost importance. Future research should consider incorporating other important variables that have been omitted from other studies and are likely to influence the adoption of guest satisfaction practices in other areas especially in context of Indian hospitality industry.

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