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HOSPITALITY SERVICE QUALITY: A THEMATIC REVIEW ON THE IMPACT OF SERVICE QUALITY ON TOURIST GUEST SATISFACTION

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ABSTRACT

This literature review explores the vital link between service quality and tourist satisfaction within the hospitality industry. It draws on a range of studies to highlight how service quality acts as a fundamental factor in driving customer satisfaction, loyalty, and overall business performance in a highly competitive environment. This study aims to explore the major concept of Service Quality and Tourist Satisfaction experienced by tourist or customers. Finally total 33 literature materials were analysed. The concepts of Tourist Satisfaction were analysed based on three primary dimensions: accommodation, facilities, and food. These dimensions are widely recognized and commonly adopted in the evaluation of service quality, as they represent key elements that significantly influence tourists' overall experiences and satisfaction levels. The discussion also addresses major challenges in managing hospitality services, such as frequent staff turnover, shifting customer expectations, and the integration of new technologies. Furthermore, the review considers how cultural factors and the influence of online customer reviews shape service experiences and satisfaction. It identifies current research limitations and calls for more robust and adaptable methodologies to capture the complexities of today's hospitality landscape. In conclusion, the review reaffirms the essential role of service quality in securing and sustaining a competitive edge in the hospitality sector.

KEYWORDS: *Hospitality; Service quality; Tourists; Satisfaction; Hotels; Malaysia*

INTRODUCTION

The tourism and hospitality industry has long recognized the pivotal role of service quality in shaping tourist satisfaction (TS). In an increasingly competitive global tourism environment, the quality of hospitality services is not only a determinant of customer satisfaction but also a key driver of tourist loyalty, positive word-of-mouth, and repeat visitation. Extensive scholarly research has been conducted to explore this dynamic relationship, highlighting how tourists' perceptions of service delivery significantly influence their overall experience and behavioral intentions.

A valuable theoretical framework to understand this interaction is Social Exchange Theory (SET). According to SET, individuals engage in social interactions with the expectation of gaining rewards or benefits in return. In the context of hospitality, this implies that tourists expect a fair and valuable service experience in exchange for their financial and

emotional investment. When service quality meets or exceeds expectations, tourists are more likely to perceive their experience as equitable and satisfying, leading to greater loyalty and a higher likelihood of returning. Conversely, when service quality falls short, tourists may perceive the exchange as unfair, leading to dissatisfaction and negative perceptions of the destination or establishment.

Numerous studies have confirmed the critical linkage between perceived service quality (Per SQ), customer satisfaction (CS), and loyalty within the hospitality sector. For example, Yoo and Bai (2013) found that perceived service quality has a significant positive effect on tourist satisfaction, which in turn enhances customer loyalty. Kim et al.,(2018) and Park& Jeong, (2019) further argued that perceived fairness in the service encounter serves as a mediating factor between service quality and customer trust. These findings reinforce the importance of delivering consistently high-quality services to meet evolving tourist expectations.

Recent literature continues to broaden the discussion by incorporating cultural, behavioral, and technological dimensions. Miguel (2024) explored how intercultural communication and cultural diversity affect service quality and satisfaction, while Munawaroh et al. (2024) emphasized the role of consumer behavior in shaping the performance of hospitality services. Nazarian et al. (2024) examined how intercultural factors influence loyalty and electronic word-of-mouth through satisfaction and service quality. Additional contributions by Abdullah et al. (2023), Noor & Sharma (2023), Fejza&Fejza (2023), and Gu (2023) further illuminate the complex interplay between service dimensions, perceived fairness, consumer expectations, and retention.

One of the most significant issues that managers in the hotel sector face is ensuring that their customers are satisfied and maintaining that contentment over time. According to Yen and Su (2004), professionals in the tourist sector are becoming more aware that customers have increasingly high expectations for the quality of the goods and services they get. According to Gruen et al. (2000), the company uses its connections with guests as a strategic asset, and customers' happiness is the beginning point for defining the business's goals. In this setting, it is possible for good connections to generate a more substantial level of commitment from customers and to improve the rate at which they return. There is a strong positive link between the overall satisfaction levels of visitors and the likelihood that they would return to the same hotel (Choi & Chu, 2001). As a result, it is becoming more crucial for hotels to cultivate long-term relationships with their customers that are mutually beneficial. This is done to attain higher levels of CS and loyalty, ultimately leading to improved relationships with each customer (Jones et al., 2007).. According to Kim et al. (2001), the quality of relationships has a surprising and significantly favorable impact on the behavior of hotel visitors. It generates good word of mouth (WOM) and increases the number of repeat guests.

Tourism was frequently historically an unavoidable outcome stemming from the region's environmental and cultural assets. As a result, from this perspective, the function of hospitality establishments is limited to delivering services to patrons and does not influence demand levels. Le Blanc and Nguyen (1996) hypothesize that marketing initiatives should emphasize the region's environmental attributes to attract fresh clientele. Competition among hospitality providers has intensified due to the steadily growing demand for touristic services and the visitors' expectation of elevated quality. The evident consequence of this competition is that the standard of service provided by hotels in the vicinity does indeed impact the appeal of a tourist destination.

Several studies, including Barsky and Labagh (1992), Le Blanc (1992), Le Blanc et al. (1996), Stevens et al. (1995), and Oppermann (1998), have established that the provision of high-quality services and the enhancement of CS are fundamental factors that contribute to the enhancement of the performance of businesses operating in the hospitality and tourism industry. According to Oh and Parks (1997), hotels that provide consistently high-quality service will eventually increase their revenue. An individual hotelier has to be able to provide a higher level of CS than their competitors in order to succeed in the hospitality sector, which is highly competitive and delivers almost identical services (Choi & Chou, 2001).

Hotel service providers need to achieve high levels of guest for their services to win clients' loyalty and get an advantage over other businesses in the industry. Research has been conducted on several occasions to investigate the requirements and preferences of visitors. According to the findings of a study conducted by Wuest et al. (1996), the perception of hotel characteristics may be described as the extent to which visitors may evaluate specific services and amenities as being essential for their stay in a hotel.

The consumer's pleasure is the foundation for developing customer loyalty and, therefore, a long-term connection. This increases the enterprise's loyalty stock, boosting the corporation's image. Relationships with visitors that are strengthened over time result in recurring business from those guests. On the other side, a client who is dissatisfied with the service they get may serve as a threat to the business.

In light of this, it is essential to systematically assess customers' satisfaction with hotels and investigate the significance of single criteria for consumers when choosing hotels. For the hospitality industry to thrive, it is essential to research the subject of visitor happiness. This research evaluates whether consumers would return to a hotel or recommend it to other tourists. Negative evaluations of the hotel result from ignoring the aspects of the hotel that are believed to be the most significant by visitors. This lowers the likelihood that guests will return to the hotel.

METHOD

A thematic review of scholarly articles retrieved from Google Scholar was conducted to examine the service quality and tourist satisfaction within the hospitality industry. The review focused on contextual factors of quality services particularly the service quality on Measurement of Tourist Satisfaction. To guide the search, keywords such as *"Service Quality Model," "*Service Quality*," "*Tourist Satisfaction" were used. A total of 113 articles were initially retrieved. After removing duplicates and irrelevant studies, 33 articles were selected for detailed analysis. The journal articles and books were included without any limitation year of publication.

This thematic approach facilitated a preliminary assessment of the size, scope, and availability of existing literature, enabling the identification of core themes and patterns within the data. It also allowed for the evaluation of both the strengths and limitations of the current body of research. Through this methodology, we aimed to develop a systematic understanding of how service quality influences tourist satisfaction in the hospitality industry, highlighting key dimensions, contextual variations, and potential gaps for future research.

To achieve these objectives, the study addresses the following research questions:

- What are the primary experiences of hospitality service quality of tourist who stayed in hotels   , based on the analysis of existing literature?

- What themes emerge most frequently in scholarly publications regarding the Measurement of Tourist Satisfaction particularly dimension of accommodation, facilities, and food?

- What gaps exist in current academic literature on the Service Quality on Tourist Guest Satisfaction and what areas need further research?

Dimension 1: Summary of Themes of Food and Tourist Satisfaction (TS)

Food refers to the culinary services offered within the hospitality setting, including meals, snacks, and beverages. Service quality in this dimension involves taste, variety, presentation, hygiene standards, dietary accommodations, timeliness, and the ambiance of dining spaces. Based on the concepts of hospitality and tourist satisfaction (TS) in relation to the food dimension, several key themes emerged from the reviewed literature. These themes include: (1) Visual Appeal and Presentation of Food, (2) Color and Perception of Flavor, (3) Psychological Influence of First Impressions, (4) Food Presentation and Consumer Behavior.

Table 1: Summary of Themes of Food on Tourist Satisfaction (TS) and Frequencies in Reviewed Articles

Theme	Number of Articles Noting the Theme
Visual Appeal and Presentation of Food	4
Color and Perception of Flavor	3
Psychological Influence of First Impressions	2
Food Presentation and Consumer Behavior	3
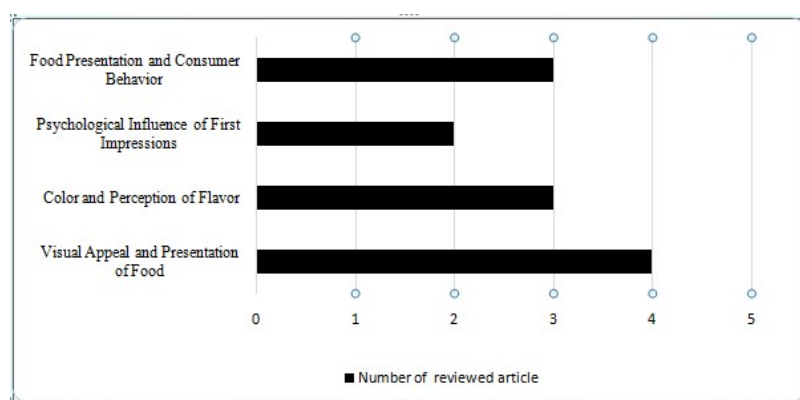
Figure 1: Themes on Food and Tourist or Guest Satisfaction

Theme 1: Visual Appeal and Presentation of Food

The visual presentation of food plays a vital role in shaping diners' perceptions, expectations, and overall satisfaction with their dining experience. Numerous studies have emphasized that the way food is visually arranged can significantly enhance or diminish its appeal (Refer Table 1 and Figure 1). For instance, Zhong and Moon (2020), along with Talukder (2020), found that aesthetically presented food tends to be perceived as tastier and more enjoyable, leading to higher levels of customer satisfaction. This aligns with the psychological principle that visual stimuli can influence how individuals anticipate taste, even before consumption. Similarly, Wu et al. (2021) demonstrated that food presented in a disorganized or messy manner is generally rated as less appealing compared to food that is neatly and thoughtfully plated. Diners tend to

associate well-arranged dishes with higher culinary expertise and care, thereby enhancing their overall experience. Further supporting this, Di Palma et al. (2021) and Turnwald et al. (2019) highlight that aesthetically pleasing food presentation not only improves taste perception but also contributes to a more memorable and enjoyable dining atmosphere. The notion that "we eat with our eyes first" is deeply rooted in consumer psychology and underscores the importance of visual elements in the hospitality industry. Hence, food presentation is not merely about aesthetics but is a strategic tool that directly affects customer satisfaction in the tourism and hospitality sectors.

Theme 2: Color and Perception of Flavor

The color of food plays a pivotal role in shaping consumers' expectations and perceptions of taste. Research by Spence and Velasco (2018) indicates that color is not only essential for identifying the type of food or beverage but also significantly influences how its flavor is perceived. Nakano et al. (2019) support this notion, emphasizing that visual cues like color often form the "first taste" even before the food reaches the palate. For instance, a mismatch between expected and actual food colors may lead to confusion or misjudgment of flavor. Azman et al. (2022) further assert that when food and beverages are presented in appropriate and familiar colors, consumers are better able to recognize and appreciate them, whereas inappropriate or unexpected colors can distort perception. For example, if a drink typically perceived as white wine is served in a red hue, people may use descriptors that do not match the actual flavor profile. This sensory mismatch can lead to decreased satisfaction and a feeling of inconsistency. Hence, the literature clearly supports the notion that color is a crucial element in shaping not only the aesthetic experience of food but also its perceived quality and flavor.

Theme 3: Psychological Influence of First Impressions

First impressions formed through the visual and contextual presentation of food can have a lasting psychological impact on diners' overall experience and satisfaction. Nakano et al. (2019) argue that the phrase "the first taste is with the eyes" is not merely figurative but grounded in psychological reality. The immediate visual appraisal of a dish including elements like plating, color harmony, and layouttriggers cognitive and emotional responses that shape the diner's expectations about taste and quality. Emphasize that this initial visual engagement activates a form of sensory priming, where customers start forming judgments before tasting the food. These early perceptions can enhance or diminish the actual dining experience, depending on whether the food's appearance aligns with what the customer anticipates. If the presentation appears professional, clean, and thoughtfully arranged, it can elevate the perceived value and trust in the quality of the service. Conversely, poorly presented dishes may generate skepticism or even aversion, regardless of the actual taste. Thus, the psychological impact of first impressions becomes a crucial determinant in the overall satisfaction and evaluation of hospitality service quality.

Theme 4: Food Presentation and Consumer Behavior

Food presentation has a direct influence on consumer behavior, particularly regarding choice, consumption, and willingness to return. Research by Wu et al. (2021) demonstrates that neatly plated and visually appealing dishes are more likely to elicit positive reactions and higher consumption levels than their messily arranged counterparts. Serhan and Serhan (2019) explain that the way food is structured on a plate can reinforce or challenge a consumer's expectations, affecting not only the evaluation of the meal but also their behavior toward the dining establishment. Customers often associate attractive presentation with higher culinary skill, hygiene, and value, leading them to develop stronger emotional connections with the brand or hospitality service. This behavioral pattern is further reinforced by the psychological association between appearance and quality, where aesthetically pleasing food is seen as more flavorful and satisfying.

Turnwald et al. (2019) emphasize that even subtle enhancements in presentation can significantly increase a diner's willingness to pay more or recommend the restaurant to others. Therefore, the strategic presentation of food serves as an influential factor in shaping consumer behavior, particularly in competitive tourism and hospitality contexts.

Dimension 2: Accommodation and Tourist Satisfaction (TS)

Accommodation refers to the lodging services provided to tourists, including the quality of rooms, cleanliness, comfort, interior aesthetics, noise level, and the availability of essential amenities (e.g., bedding, air conditioning, Wi-Fi, toiletries). It also includes the efficiency and friendliness of front desk services, room service, and housekeeping. Such as cleanliness and hygiene, Comfort and room size, Safety and privacy Maintenance and functionality of appliances Check-in/check-out experience. The retrieved themes from the reviewed materials demonstrated below.

Table 2: Summary of Themes of Accommodation on Tourist Satisfaction (TS) and Frequencies in Reviewed Articles

Theme	Number of Reviewed Articles
Room Amenities and Guest Satisfaction	4
Influence of Accommodation Quality on CS	3
Competitive Strategies for Customer Retention	2
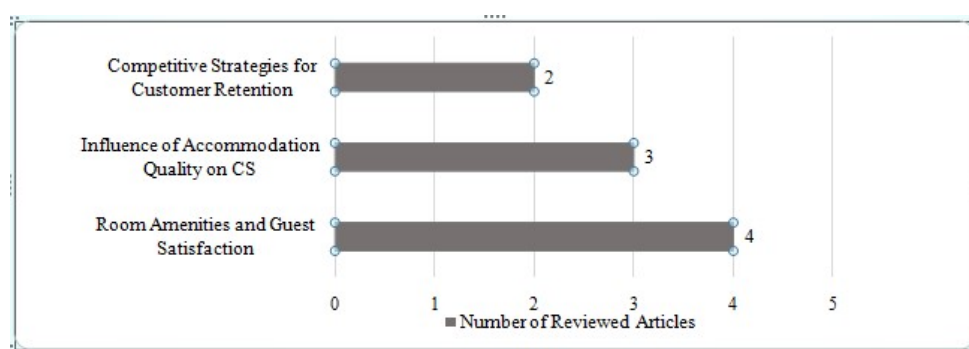
Figure 2: Themes on Accommodation and Tourist or Guest Satisfaction

Theme 1: Competitive Service Improvement as a Response to Rising Expectations

The lodging industry plays a vital role in the broader tourism sector, where customer expectations are constantly rising due to increased competition. Deng et al. (2013) highlight accommodation as one of the most critical service aspects for tourists, while Koo et al. (2020) emphasize how intensified competition among providers has led to greater customer choice and thus higher expectations. As depicted in Table 2 and Figure 2, accommodation providers are continuously enhancing their service quality to retain existing customers and attract new ones. This strategic improvement in services ranging from better room features to personalized customer interactions—is now viewed as essential for maintaining a competitive edge and sustaining customer satisfaction in the modern hospitality landscape.

Theme 2: The Role of Room Amenities in Enhancing Satisfaction

Room amenities are integral to guest experiences and significantly influence satisfaction levels. According to Mathew and Panchanatham (2016), room amenities such as linens, mini-bars, toiletries, and entertainment systems are regarded as essential elements of hotel offerings, on par with food and beverage services. These amenities contribute to a sense of comfort, convenience, and perceived value, thereby elevating the overall tourist experience. Casado (2000) further reinforces that these items, often designed for single use, are expected components of a quality stay, contributing to customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Theme 3: Guest Perception and the Value of Complimentary Amenities

Guests often associate complimentary amenities such as toiletries, bottled water, and in-room Wi-Fi with the generosity and quality of the hotel. Jones, Mak, and Sim (2006) argue that the term "amenity" often refers to such value-added offerings that are included in the price of the stay but not itemized on the bill. These additions, though seemingly minor, shape the guest's perception of service fairness and elevate their satisfaction, especially when they exceed expectations or feel customized to guest preferences.

While the hospitality industry widely recognizes the importance of in-room amenities, there remains a noticeable gap in academic research focused specifically on this area. Jones, Mak, and Sim (2006) and Casado (2000) observe that despite the proliferation of industry publications and trade journals discussing guestroom features, there is a scarcity of scholarly literature examining their direct impact on customer satisfaction. This gap indicates an area of potential growth for future hospitality research.
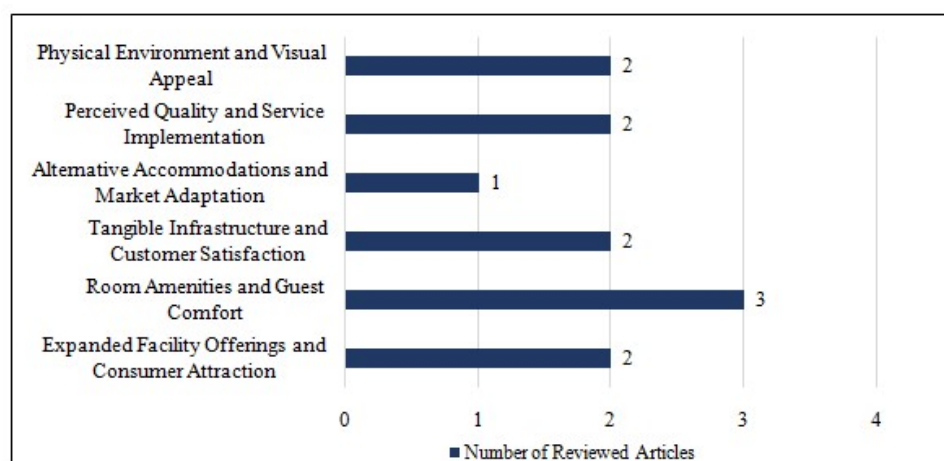
Dimension 3: Facilities and Tourist Satisfaction (TS)

Facilities encompass the range of physical and recreational infrastructure offered within the hospitality premises to enhance guest experience. This includes conference halls, swimming pools, fitness centers, parking, spas, laundry services, business centers, and internet access.

High-quality facilities contribute significantly to tourist satisfaction, especially in leisure and business tourism.

Table 3 Summary of Themes of Facilities on Tourist Satisfaction (TS) and frequencies in reviewed Articles

Theme	Number of Articles
Expanded Facility Offerings and Consumer Attraction	2
Room Amenities and Guest Comfort	3
Tangible Infrastructure and Customer Satisfaction	2
Alternative Accommodations and Market Adaptation	1
Perceived Quality and Service Implementation	2
Physical Environment and Visual Appeal	2

Figure 3: Themes on Facilities and Tourist or Guest Satisfaction.

Theme 1: Expanded Facility Offerings and Consumer Attraction

Modern hotels are increasingly incorporating diverse facilities to enhance guest experiences beyond basic lodging. Langvinienė and Daunoravičičitė (2015) emphasize that contemporary hospitality providers offer a mix of gourmet cuisine, recreational programs, excursions, and conference spaces as part of a broader service package. These value-added services not only enrich the tourist experience but also serve as distinguishing features in a highly competitive market, particularly in attracting specific customer segments such as business travelers or luxury tourists.

Theme 2: Facility-Based Tangibles and Customer Satisfaction

The physical infrastructure and amenities offered by hotels—such as fitness centers, spas, and lounges—play a critical role in shaping tourist satisfaction. Panda and Das (2014) highlight the influence of observable tangible benefits (OBT) and market-based tangible (MBT) assets on customer satisfaction, noting that such facilities are often seen as representations of quality and professionalism. Nurcahyo et al. (2017) further support this view, suggesting that high-quality tangible assets directly correlate with increased customer happiness, while poorly maintained facilities are a major source of dissatisfaction.

Theme 3: Service Responsiveness and Security as Part of Facility Quality

In addition to tangible amenities, intangible elements such as responsive service and the presence of visible safety measures contribute to positive perceptions of facility quality. Panda and Das (2014) argue that customer satisfaction is strongly linked to reliable and empathetic service, particularly when combined with effective security protocols. These features foster a sense of care and trust, which enhances the overall experience and encourages repeat visits.

Theme 4: High-Quality Facilities Foster Loyalty, Poor Ones Deter Return Visits

The quality of hotel facilities significantly impacts guest loyalty. Nurcahyo et al. (2017) found that well-maintained, high-quality facilities not only enhance satisfaction but also encourage guests to return. Conversely, facilities perceived as outdated, insufficient, or poorly managed contribute to customer dissatisfaction and decrease the likelihood of future visits. Nobar and Rostamzadeh (2018) affirm that hotels offering superior amenities are more likely to meet guest expectations and foster brand loyalty.

Theme 5: Facility Aesthetics and Environmental Comfort

Aesthetics also play a substantial role in shaping guest experiences. Rasyida et al. (2016) emphasize that visually appealing environments and well-designed spaces contribute positively to satisfaction, while distractions such as noise, clutter, or poor lighting reduce comfort. The ambience created by thoughtful design helps elevate a guest's perception of value and contributes to an overall pleasant experience.

Theme 6: Modern Expectations: Wi-Fi, Bars, and Branded Experience

Today's travelers often expect specific modern conveniences as standard, such as high-speed internet, on-site entertainment, and affiliations with recognizable hotel brands. Radojevic et al. (2015) note that such features can significantly increase customer satisfaction, especially when integrated seamlessly into the guest experience. Nobar and Rostamzadeh (2018) add that branded hotels that consistently deliver quality through their amenities tend to receive higher satisfaction ratings and enjoy stronger reputations.

DISCUSSION

This thematic review highlights how various dimensions of hospitality specifically food, accommodation, and facilities collectively influence tourist satisfaction (TS). The findings indicate that these elements are not only interdependent but also critical in shaping the overall guest experience and perception of service quality.

The quality of food services was found to significantly impact tourist satisfaction. Key themes such as visual appeal and presentation of food, color and perception of flavor, psychological influence of first impressions, and consumer behavior based on food aesthetics were consistently identified in the literature. Studies show that food presentation enhances perceived taste, while color affects flavor expectations. Aesthetics and plating can trigger emotional responses that contribute to satisfaction. Thus, food is not merely a functional necessity but a core emotional and experiential component in the hospitality experience.

Accommodation remains central to hospitality service, particularly in a competitive market where consumer expectations are continuously rising. Themes such as room amenities, value-added services, and customer perceptions of cleanliness, comfort, and design were identified as key satisfaction drivers. Prior research underscores the importance of aligning accommodation offerings with customer expectations to build loyalty and return intentions. Accommodation features such as free Wi-Fi, branded toiletries, and health retreats were positively linked to TS.

Facilities offered by hospitality providers including both tangible (e.g., gym, pool, conference rooms) and intangible aspects (e.g., responsiveness, convenience)also play a substantial role in TS. Thematic review of literature pointed to expanded facility offerings, alternative accommodations and market adaptation, visual appeal of physical infrastructure, and the correlation between high-quality facilities and guest satisfaction. These facilities often serve as differentiating factors in the hospitality sector, influencing not only initial attraction but also long-term loyalty.

Across all three dimensions, the Social Exchange Theory (SET) provides a useful framework for understanding why service quality directly impacts satisfaction. Guests perceive their spending as a form of social exchangeexpecting fairness and value. When their expectations regarding food, accommodation, and facilities are met or exceeded, they feel the exchange is balanced or favorable, leading to higher satisfaction and loyalty.

CONCLUSION

The review of literature reveals that service quality in hospitality is a multi-dimensional construct where food, accommodation, and facilities contribute synergistically to tourist satisfaction. Visual, emotional, and functional experiences embedded within these dimensions help shape tourists' perceptions, behavior, and revisit intentions.Although considerable research has addressed these areas individually, there remains a gap in integrated, cross-dimensional analysis. Future research should explore the interactive effects of these dimensions using mixed-method approaches and comparative cross-cultural settings. Furthermore, limited scholarly attention has been given to emerging service expectations in the post-pandemic tourism environment, such as hygiene technology, contactless facilities, and mental wellness spaces. Hospitality providers that strategically invest in enhancing the aesthetic, functional, and psychological aspects of food, accommodation, and facilities are more likely to secure customer satisfaction, loyalty, and competitive advantage in the global tourism sector.

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