Evaluating the Quality of Provided Services from the Perspective of Customers of Top Hotels in Isfahan Province

Abstract

This study aims to evaluate the quality of services provided from the customer's perspective of 4 and 5-star hotels in Isfahan province based on the SERVQUAL model. The method of this applied research is a descriptive-inferential and survey type. This study's statistical population includes all people who have received services at least once in 4 and 5-star hotels in Isfahan province. The statistical sample includes 150 customers that have been to 4 and 5-star hotels in Isfahan province. A simple random sampling method was used in this study. Library and field methods were used in this study to collect data. The data collection tool in this particular study was a questionnaire. Due to the different dimensions, the questionnaire consisted of 25 questions about the quality of services. According to the researchers, the questionnaire had high validity, and its reliability was 0.78 as depicted by Cronbach's alpha. The questionnaire was distributed among the selected statistical sample to complete, and then the collected information from the questionnaire was entered into the SPSS program. The statistical tests were finally performed on these data. The statistical results showed a difference between the current and desired conditions of hotels' services in terms of tangible services, reliability of services, responsiveness, dependability of services, empathy of services, and the cost of services from customers' ideas.

Keywords: *Service quality, reliability, responsiveness, dependability, service cost*

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Introduction

Quality is one of the most important criteria for evaluating services, which means that it is crucial that a wide concept to which the organization's various departments are committed and whose goal is to increase the efficiency of the entire complex to prevent the emergence of factors that impair quality. The quality matches the whole complex to the customer's specifications with the least cost and increasing competitiveness (Figenbam, 1991) ". Quality is the ability and capacity to meet demands. In the final analysis of a market, the quality of a product depends on how much the product in question can meet the patterns of consumer preferences (Safaeian, 2004).

Lewis Booms is among the first individuals who defined service quality as a measure of how the level of service provided meets customer expectations. However, Parasuraman has defined service quality differently: "the size and direction of the difference between customers' perceptions and expectations of service" (Parasuraman, 1985), which is more accentuated in this study. A service is considered high quality when it meets the customers' needs and requests and matches the provided service levels with customer expectations. Customer expectations relate to what customers want and are interested in, and what they feel the service provider should offer them (Venus and Safaeian, 2003, 53).

New approaches investigate quality with a different perspective. They include; quality in regards to the organization, quality as a strategic issue, quality control as everyone's responsibility, quality as reaching desirability, and quality should be managed. (Ansari, 2004). Parasuraman believes that service quality includes the customer's pre-purchase expectations, the perceived quality of the purchasing process, and the perceived quality of the result. The first tool for quality evaluation in service marketing is the "Service Quality Scale."

It is inevitable to analyze the performance and supervision of such institutions due to the increase in the number of 4 and 5-star hotels after the Islamic Revolution and the increasing growth of travel. A limited number of hotels in Iran provided services before the Islamic Revolution, and most of the accommodation service centers included inns. The need for these centers increased after the Islamic Revolution due to the growing population and increased travel. In addition to their growth, we witnessed their development and the creation of luxurious 4 and 5-star hotels in Iran, most of which are built-in Mashhad. Almost 60% of Iranian hotels have been providing services in Mashhad because it is a pilgrimage city.

On the other hand, improving the quality of services leads to attracting new customers (offensive effect). In this case, satisfied customers advertise by word of mouth, to attract new customers, and then increase market share. Improving the quality also enables the organization to maintain its current customers (defensive effect).

The offensive effect refers to gaining more market share, and the defensive effect refers to maintaining customers and reducing promotional costs (Heidarzadeh and Hajiha, 2008, 81). So far, different organizations in the country have done little research about service quality despite its importance. For example, a study was conducted entitled "evaluating the quality of services of the Social Security Organization from the

employees' perspective." According to the results, the employees of the Social Security Organization believe that the organization's performance is lower than the customers' expectations in all five dimensions of service quality. Due to the growing importance of quality services in the hotel industry from the customers' points of view, this research seeks to satisfy the customers of 4 and 5-star hotels and offers solutions to improve these services.

Theoretical foundations of research
Quality
Quality is any particular industry or action of a product or service that can be evaluated to define whether that product or service adapts to certain conditions. It is noticed that good quality does not essentially mean the highest quality (Parasuraman, 1990). Quality is a state of excellence that indicates the goodness of quality and can be distinguished from poor quality. Quality is a set of traits embedded in each product unit's characteristics (Venus and Safaeian, 2003, 53). Quality is defined as the best conditions from a particular customer's point of view, which are the real use and selling price of that product. Other sources also describe quality as the excellence degree at an acceptable price and control of change at an acceptable cost level. (Parasuraman, 1985).

Quality is not something to deal with during a match. Quality should be institutionalized as part of a company's work culture. Each individual in a company should be responsible and have a daily plan for quality (Seyed Javadin, 2005). Customers are the focus of targeting, and their current and future needs are simultaneously measured. Therefore, it is significant to study the market to identify the customer's current and future needs. All employees mainly focus on customer satisfaction. This issue is important enough that those companies with a strong quality culture have formed a customer satisfaction unit in their organization. Quality improvement is synonym with providing superior services to customers in such companies (Zitamel, 2008).

When all the employees cooperate, and each department performs its duties efficiently, the quality becomes pervasive in the organization. It is necessary to notice that quality improvement is everyone's role, and not only one person to create. Therefore, everyone should contribute and fulfill to improve quality. In the postal network, all its parts must cooperate to create quality. For example, a person goes to a post office to send a parcel and asks the cashier to send the parcel to a far city. The responsible person receives the shipment with the necessary instructions and respect. Then, he performs the postal operation on it, and finally, the customer leaves the counter with satisfaction. Here, the acceptance unit has done its job well (Alami, 2008).

Barriers to improving service quality:

There are some problems in providing services to customers, which include:

Lack of visibility: Research shows that 25% of customers stop repurchasing when they are dissatisfied with the service completely, but only 4% complain about the organization, which makes the service provider's responsibility more serious to actively recognize quality issues (Koozegar, 2003).

Problems in assigning special responsibilities: Different stages of providing service affect the customer experience regarding service quality. Anyway, it is difficult to relate quality issues to a specific stage of providing service delivery (Koozegar, 2003)

Time requirements for improving service quality: Solving service quality issues demands a lot of effort over a long period because service quality depends more on individuals than systems and procedures. It takes more time to change attitudes and beliefs than to change practices. Therefore, managers have difficulties focusing on the problem and solving the basic reasons for service quality deficiencies (Kazazi, 1999).

Unspecified providing: Due to the unpredictable nature of individuals, it is difficult for them to control quality and provide service. The human element includes customers and front desk staff in service organizations (Potter, 2003).

Over the past decades, quality and satisfaction service concepts have been significantly considered in writings and marketing activities. Marketing researchers value the satisfaction and quality benefits that indicate an organization's competitive advantage. Customer satisfaction is a fundamental factor in shaping customers' future purchasing desires, although the exact nature of customer judgments and their relationship is still unclear (Alami, 2008). In addition, satisfied customers are more interested in sharing their experiences with others, especially in Eastern cultures where social life has been designed to improve social interactions with others in the community (2008).

Cronin and Taylor (1992) have questioned the relationship between expectations and performance to measure service quality. They also suggested the Seroporf scale, which directly investigates customer perceptions of performance in the face of services. Their studies indicate the performance-based scale (Seroporf) as a modified concept of measuring the service quality structure with a servqual scale (Safaeian, 2004).

Brady et al. (2002) conducted a study that repeated and expanded Cronin and Taylor's studies. They also confirmed the priority as an appropriate way to measure service quality. They stated that Servperf performs better than servqual when there is a difference between customers' general perceptions of service quality (expectations) and performance as an introduction to customer satisfaction. There are still two issues that need further investigation (Safaeian, 2004). The first one is that the Servperf scale is used as a summary indicator of its
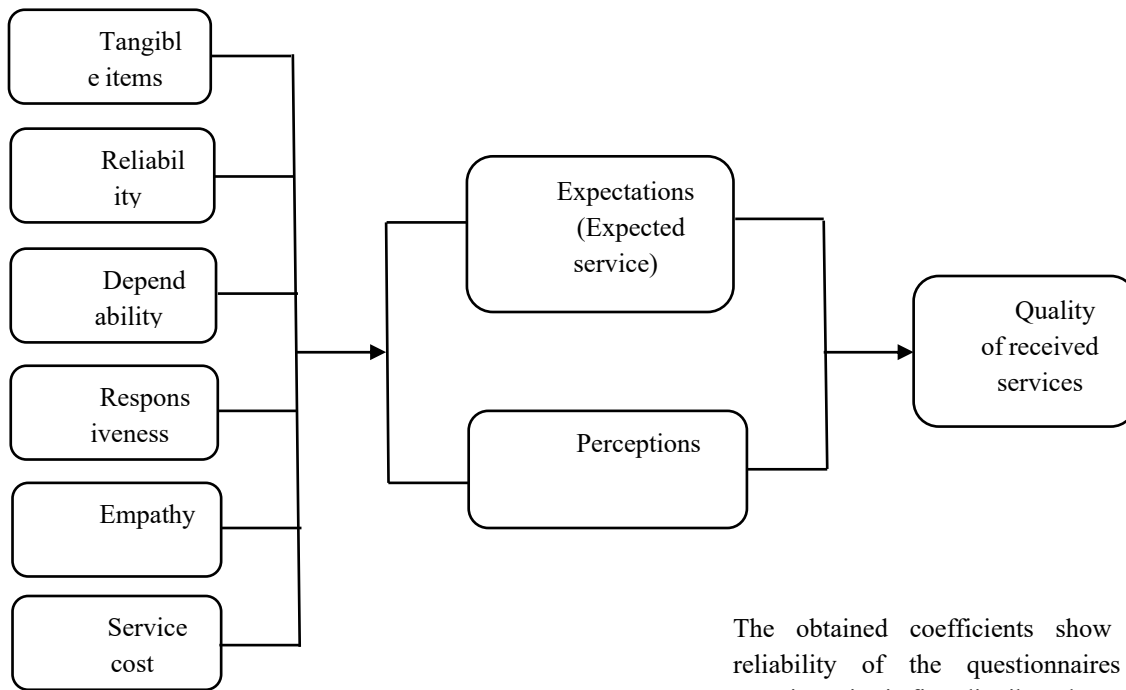
predictive value with outcomes such as satisfaction and behavioral intentions despite the theoretical basis and written empirical confirmation in the literature. Focusing on specific service quality dimensions can better show the strategic value of using seroperf, especially the relationship between these dimensions and satisfaction and the resulting variables. (Momeni et al., 2010).

The second issue is related to the applicability of the SERVPERF in international services. The cultural tendencies of customers may affect the applicability of this model due to cultural differences and primary investigation of the SERVPERF superiority in Western services. Therefore, the SERVPERF model needs more attention because it is a good basis for measuring the quality of services in international markets that is mentioned in Table 1(World, 2008).

Table 1: A review of past research

Row	Authors	Year	Description
1	Lasser.et.al	2000	According to the results, the technical, operational model predicts satisfaction better in high contact conditions or in situations where customers are actively involved.
2	Chi cui. et.al	2003	This study's results show that the results of service quality assessment can be misleading without SERVQUAL localization.
3	Suresh et. al.	2002	Sureshchaer et al. conducted a study that investigated the quality of hotel services in India in three sectors: private, public, and foreign, based on a five-dimensional model including dimensions: main service, the human element, systemic or inhuman element, tangible factors, and social responsibility.
4	Gounaris	2003	According to the results, different dimensions of hotel service quality are not affected by all the mentioned factors. In addition, offering more diverse hotel products is the main reason why customers tend to a new hotel.
5	Yang, Z	2004	This study investigated the quality of electronic services in hotels. Thus, 235 people who use online transactions completed the research questionnaires. Six criteria for measuring the quality of electronic services were identified and introduced to evaluate these people's answers
6	MICUDA. DAN	2009	The SERVQUAL model in this research has been reduced from the five main dimensions to the three dimensions of tangible customer orientation, reliability, and responsiveness. Finally, it is concluded that it is essential to pay attention to the community's specific cultural characteristics that are consistent with the SERVQUAL model.
7	Kazi Omar Siddiqi	2011	The results show a positive relationship between all five components of the SERVQUAL model and customer satisfaction and a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty. Therefore, more customer satisfaction leads to increased customer loyalty.
8	Ahmed. Khalil	2011	According to the results, customers are satisfied with the online hotel services of Islamic Hotel. The dimension of empathy has the greatest impact on satisfaction, and the component of responsiveness ranked next.
9	Finn. Adam	2011	By reviewing the past literature, this researcher considered 14 dimensions for measuring the quality of electronic services and their effect on customer satisfaction.
10	Sharifzadeh and others	2003	The results show that the average expectations of customers in each of the five components of service quality are higher than their perceptions. The largest gap between expectations and perceptions is related to dependability, and the lowest is related to reliability.
11	Kimasi	2004	The results indicate that gender and background activity has a significant relationship with service quality. There is a direct relationship between customers' experience with the hotel and their perceptions of service quality. In all five dimensions, the quality of service and the overall quality of service expected by customers is beyond their perceptions of hotel performance.
12	Gholshan	2011	The results show that the quality of service is above average in four aspects the characteristics of the route, the ability of service providers, comfort and respect for passengers, and safety and security. However, the quality of service is below average in the information aspect.

Based on previous studies by Parasuraman (1985) and their results, the conceptual framework in this research is as follows:

Tangible items

Reliability

Dependability

Responsiveness

Empathy

Service cost

Expectations (Expected service)

Perceptions

Quality of received services

Research Methods

The research method is descriptive-inferential. This study's population includes all people who have gone at least once to 4 and 5-star hotels in Isfahan province. The sample group is 150 customers of 4 and 5-star hotels in Isfahan province. In this study, the random sampling method was used to sample data, and the library and questionnaire methods were used to collect data. The researcher distributed 30 questionnaires among the statistical population to evaluate the reliability. Then, the questionnaires were collected, and Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated for each variable using SPSS software. The results of the alpha coefficient are described in Table (2).

Table 2: Questionnaire reliability

Variables	Cronbach's alpha
Tangible items	0.706
Reliability	0.838
Responsiveness	0.708
Dependability	0.725
Empathy	0.707
Services cost	0.704
Service quality from the perspective of hotel customers	0.780

The obtained coefficients show high coordination and reliability of the questionnaires with each other. A questionnaire is first distributed among the selected statistical sample to analyze the data. Then, the collected information from the questionnaire is entered into the SPSS program. Then, homogeneity tests of variance, multivariate analysis of variance, and Duncan statistics are performed.

Results and Discussion

According to the results, 57.7% of respondents were male, 42.3% were female, 46.7% were 31 to 40 years old, and 48.9% of hotel visitors (Kowsar-Aseman-Negarestan - Farhangian-Abbasi) are bachelors. The results show that customers evaluated the current situation of the quality of the service in Abbasi Hotel, which was better than other hotels with 16.1% good evaluation of services provided in the hotel. The Kosar Hotel ranked second with 14.6% good evaluation of services. In addition, Negarestan, Farhangian, and Aseman hotels have average service quality. All private hotels are highly expected to provide better and more acceptable services to clients. The Kowsar, Negarestan, and Abbasi hotels are more expected among the hotels than other private hotels.

Table 3: Results of analysis of variance to compare tangible services in two situations in 5 hotels

Source	Degrees of freedom	F	Significance level
Constant	1	14581.86	0.000

Hotels	4	32.89	0.028
Current and favorable situation	1	2.75	0.000
Hotels and service conditions	4	1.72	0.145

Table (3) shows that the tangible services in the current situation and the expected situation in private hotels are different according to the significance level obtained of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. In addition, there is a significant difference between the tangible services in 5 private hotels (Abbasi, Negarestan, Farhangian, Kowsar, and Aseman) based on the significance level of 0.028, which is less than 0.05. The results of the Duncan test show that the tangible services and services provided in this field are different in Aseman Hotel, Negarestan Hotel, and Farhangian Hotel, but this difference was not observed in other hotels.

Table 4: Results of analysis of variance to compare reliability in two situations in 5 hotels

Source	Degrees of freedom	F	Significance level
Constant	1	6963.93	0.000
Hotels	4	1.692	0.101
Current and favorable situation	1	429.37	0.000
Hotels and service conditions	4	2.963	0.020

As observed in Table (4), there is a significant difference between the reliability of the current situation and the expected situation offered in private hotels based on the significance level obtained at 0.000, which is less than 0.05. In addition, there is no significant difference between the reliability of 5 private hotels (Abbasi, Negarestan, Farhangian, Kowsar, and Aseman) based on the significance level of 0.101, which is greater than 0.05. Duncan's test results show that this type of service is the same in each of the five private hotels.

Table 5: Results of analysis of variance to compare service responsiveness in two situations in 5 hotels

Source	Degrees of freedom	F	Significance level
Constant	1	4925.15	0.000
Hotels	4	3.66	0.006
Current and favorable situation	1	444.55	0.000
Hotels and service conditions	4	1.48	0.207

As observed in Table (5), the responsiveness of the service in the current situation and the expected situation in private hotels are different based on the significance level obtained of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. In addition, there is a significant difference between the service responsiveness in 5 private hotels (Abbasi, Negarestan, Farhangian, Kowsar, and Aseman)based on the significance level obtained of 0.006, which is less than 0.05. The results of the Duncan test showed that the responsiveness of the services in Negarestan, Abbasi, and Farhangian hotels are the same. Farhangian, Kowsar, and Aseman hotels have the same service responsiveness, but there is a significant difference between the responsiveness of Negarestan and Abbasi hotels with Kowsar and Aseman. Responsiveness in Kowsar and Aseman hotels is higher than in Negarestan and Abbasi hotels.

Table 6: Results of analysis of variance to compare dependability in two situations in 5 hotels

Source	Degrees of freedom	F	Significance level
Constant	1	9997.96	0.000
Hotels	4	2.28	0.060
Current and favorable situation	1	38.01	0.000
Hotels and service conditions	4	3.95	0.004

As observed in Table (6), there is a significant difference between the dependability of the current situation and the expected condition of services provided in private hotels based on the significance level obtained of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. In addition, according to the obtained significance level of 0.060, greater than 0.05, the dependability is the same in Negarestan, Abbasi, and Farhangian hotels. Aseman, Kowsar, Farhangian, and Negarestan hotels also have the same dependability. The only difference between Abbasi Hotel and Kosar and Aseman hotels is that Abbasi Hotel has a higher level of these services.

Table 7: Results of analysis of variance to compare empathy in two situations in 5 hotels

Source	Degrees of freedom	F	Significance level
Constant	1	8354.94	0.000
Hotels	4	2.417	0.049
Current and favorable situation	1	64.615	0.002
Hotels and service conditions	4	7.424	0.000

As observed in Table (7), there is a significant difference between the level of empathy in the current situation and the expected condition of services provided in private hotels based on the level of significance obtained at 0.002, which is less than 0.05. In addition, the level of empathy in 5 private hotels (Abbasi, Negarestan, Farhangian, Kowsar, and Aseman) is significantly different based on the level of significance obtained at 0.049, which is less than 0.05. The results of the Duncan test showed that empathy is the same in Negarestan, Abbasi, Aseman, and Farhangian hotels but different in Negarestan and Kosar hotels and providing services in Negarestan Hotel is higher than in Kowsar.

Table 8: Results of analysis of variance to compare the services cost in two situations in 5 hotels

Source	Degrees of freedom	F	Significance level
Constant	1	2882.81	0.000
Hotels	4	4.644	0.001
Current and favorable situation	1	18.04	0.000
Hotels and service conditions	4	7.460	0.085

As observed in Table (8), there is a significant difference between the price of services in the current situation and the expected condition of services provided in private hotels according to the significance level obtained of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. In addition, there is a difference in the price of services in 5 private hotels (Abbasi, Negarestan, Farhangian, Kowsar, and Aseman based on the level of significance obtained at 0.001, which is less than 0.05. The results of the Duncan test show that the price of services in Negarestan and Aseman hotels is the same, and the price of services in Farhangian, Kowsar, Abbasi, and Aseman hotels is the same.

In addition, the quality of service in Negarestan Hotel is weaker than in Abbasi, Kowsar, and Farhangian Hotels.

Conclusion:

This study evaluates the quality of services provided from customers' perspectives of 4 and 5-star hotels in Isfahan province. The results of the analysis of variance comparing services in the component of tangible cases in two situations in five hotels show that the quality of service varies according to the variables of tangibles items in the current situation and the expected situation in private hotels based on the significance level obtained 0.000 which is less than 0.05. In addition, there is a significant difference between the tangible services in 5 private hotels (Abbasi, Negarestan, Farhangian, Kowsar, and Aseman) based on the significance level of 0.028, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, the Duncan test was performed to investigate the differences between the studied hotels. The results show that the provided services are different based on tangible items in Aseman Hotel, Negarestan, and Farhangian, but not different in other hotels like Kowsar and Abbasi. To provide better services, it is possible to prioritize the hotels based on the variable of tangible cases as follows; Aseman Hotel is in the first rank, Kowsar, Abbasi, and Farhangian hotels, and finally, Negarestan hotel is in the next rank.

The analysis of variance results compares the reliability in the two existing and desirable situations in five hotels. The results show a significant difference in the quality of services provided based on the reliability dimension in the current situation and the situation customers expect in private hotels based on the level of significance obtained at 0.000, which is less than 0.05. In addition, there is no significant difference in the reliability of 5 private hotels(Abbasi, Negarestan, Farhangian, Kowsar, and Aseman) based on the significance level of 0.101, which is greater than 0.05. Duncan's test results show that this type of service is the same in each of the five private hotels.

The analysis of variance results compares the component of service responsiveness in both existing and desirable situations in 5 hotels and indicates a significant level of 0.000 which is less than 0.05. The quality of service varies based on responsiveness in the current situation and the expected situation in private hotels. In addition, there is a significant difference between service responsiveness in 5 private hotels (Abbasi, Negarestan, Farhangian, Kowsar, and Aseman) based on the obtained level of 0.006, which is less than 0.05. The results of the Duncan test show that the service responsiveness is the same in Negarestan, Abbasi, and Farhangian and also in Farhangian, Kowsar, and Aseman hotels. There is a significant difference between the responsiveness of Negarestan and Abbasi with Kowsar and Aseman hotels. Kosar and Aseman hotels also have a higher level of responsiveness than Negarestan and Abbasi hotels. In terms of providing better services, the hotels can be prioritized based on the

responsiveness variable: Aseman Hotel is in the first rank, Kowsar, Farhangian, Abbasi, and finally, Negarestan Hotel is in the next rank.

The analysis of variance results compares the dependability in two situations in 5 hotels. It shows a significant difference between the dependability of the current situation and the expected condition of the services provided in private hotels based on the significance level obtained of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. In addition, there is no significant difference in the dependability of 5 private hotels (Abbasi, Negarestan, Farhangian, Kowsar, and Aseman) based on the level of significance obtained at 0.060, which is greater than 0.05. The Duncan test results show that the only difference between Abbasi Hotel and Kowsar and Aseman hotels is their dependability that Abbasi Hotel has a higher level in terms of these services. Based on the reliability variable, the hotels in question can be prioritized as follows: Abbasi Hotel is in the first rank, Negarestan, Farhangian, Kowsar, and finally, Aseman Hotel is in the next rank.

The results show a significant difference between the level of empathy in the current situation and the expected condition of services provided in private hotels based on the significance level obtained of 0.002, which is less than 0.05. In addition, there is a significant difference in empathy in 5 private hotels (Abbasi, Negarestan, Farhangian, Kowsar, and Aseman) based on the level of significance obtained at 0.049, which is less than 0.05. Duncan's test shows that the component of empathy is different only in Negarestan and Kosar Hotel, and the Negarestan Hotel has a higher level of providing services than Kosar. Based on the empathy variable, the hotels can be prioritized as follows: Negarestan Hotel is in the first rank, Farhangian, Aseman, Abbasi Hotel, and finally, Kosar Hotel is in the next rank.

The results show a significant difference between the price of services in the current situation and the expected condition of services provided in private hotels based on the level of significance obtained at 0.000, which is less than 0.005. In addition, there is a difference in the price of services in 5 private hotels (Abbasi, Negarestan, Farhangian, Kowsar, and Aseman) based on the significance level obtained, 0.05, which is less than 0.01. Duncan's test results show that the cost of services in Negarestan and Aseman hotels is the same. The price of services in Farhangian, Kowsar, Abbasi, and Aseman hotels is the same, but the quality of this type of service in Negarestan Hotel is poorer than in Abbasi, Kowsar, and Farhangian Hotels; this rate varies in these hotels. Based on the service price variable, the hotels in question can be prioritized as follows: Farhangian Hotel is in the first rank, Kosar, Abbasi, Aseman and finally Negarestan Hotel is in the rank

Finally, it is concluded that there is a significant difference between the current situation and the desired hotel services from the perspective of customers of private hotels. In addition, the level of expectations is higher than the provided services. This study and previous research such as Sharifzadeh (2003) and Kimasi (2004) indicate the difference between customers' perceptions and expectations of the quality of hotel services. Previous research with all the components in question indicates the clients' high expectations and confirms that the provided service level to customers is lower than their expectations.

According to the results, the tangible item is one of the variables affecting the quality of hotel services. Hotels can meet customers' needs by designing, creating a suitable environment, and creating branches in the required places. In addition, reliability is another variable that affects the quality of service and customer satisfaction from the customers' point of view. Employees of service organizations, including hotels, can satisfy the customer more by "promising less and acting more." Another effective variable is responsiveness. Hotels are suggested to encourage customers to visit the hotel less in person by creating more counters in each branch, better use of information and communication technology services, and informing customers about the benefits of e-hospitality such as hotel phones, hotel management through mobile, online hotel management. Hotel staff can strengthen the sense of security in customers and meet their expectations by creating a respectful and polite relationship with customers. Hotels can train their staff to create a friendlier social relationship between the hotel and customers, have a deeper understanding of customers' real needs, create a more intimate atmosphere for customers, and seek the best benefits for their customers. The price of services is the last variable affecting the quality of hotel services. Private hotels consider the profit aspect of providing services. Therefore, they should provide customers with complete information about service fees, interest rates on deposits, and the percentage of loans granted.

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