Faranak Memarzadeh
San Jose State University

Sulekha Anand
San Jose State University

The Impact of Frequency of Stay on Business Travelers' Ratings of Hotel Attributes

Identifying the valued hotel attributes that depend on travelers' frequency of hotel stays can provide a better understanding of travelers' desired service patterns. In the case of work-related hotel stays, we found that business travelers' ratings of importance of the following hotel attributes depended on their frequency of hotel stays: multi-lingual staff, hotel reputation, existence of business-related meeting rooms and business center, presence of an in-room mini-bar, value for money of food and beverage, and received an apology from staff/management. These findings indicate that on-site services that provide more business-related convenience are important to repeat business travelers.

Faranak Memarzadeh, Ph.D.
Department of Hospitality, Tourism and Event Management
San Jose State University
One Washington Square, San Jose, CA. USA. 95192-0211
faranak.memarzadeh@sjsu.edu
Phone: (408) 924-7487

Sulekha Anand, Ph.D. Adjunct Faculty
Department of Biological Sciences
San Jose State University
One Washington Square, San Jose, CA. USA. 95192-0100
sulekha.anand@sjsu.edu
Phone: (408) 924-4917

Introduction

Although the importance of various hotel attributes to travelers has been widely researched (Qu, Ryan & Chu, 2000; Dolnicar & Otter, 2003), no study has tested whether the expected quality of hotel attributes for business travelers depends on their frequency of hotel stays. According to a study by Akbaba (2006), it is undeniable that hotels must provide guests an expected quality, but managing quality is a challenge if service providers do not know what hotel attributes guests consider essential when evaluating the hotel experience. It is therefore important to investigate guests' desired attributes to maximize satisfaction, which leads to intention to repurchase (Usta, Berezina & Cobanoglu, 2011).

Previous studies have examined expectations and satisfaction of different types of hotel guests. However, no studies have examined the impact of inter-segment variables, such as frequency of hotel stays, on guests' expected services. It is possible that repeat business travelers have preferences for specific hotel attributes that develop with repeated stays. Therefore, the current study aimed to determine the effect of frequency of hotel stays on the importance of hotel attributes in the business traveler's perspective.

Literature Review

Previous studies have identified important hotel attributes that influence a guest's hotel room purchase decision (Bojanic, 1996). These attributes can be categorized as internal like hotel/hotel room cleanliness, comfortable bed/pillow, room amenities, etc. (Slevitch & Oh, 2010) or external such as hotel location (Hung, Shang & Wang, 2010). Different types of hotel guests have varying desires in terms of expected service attributes (Dolnicar & Otter, 2003; Ariffin & Maghzi, 2012). For example, according to Dube & Renaghan (1999), business travelers mostly look for a guaranteed type of stay, which they termed "worry-free," while leisure travelers are more

concerned about being comfortable. Other attributes such as personal communication with hotel staff, safety and security, and room rates may also influence both business and leisure travelers' final hotel choices (Ariffin & Maghzi, 2012; Wilson, Zeithaml, Bitner & Gremler, 2016). Cleanliness, location, well-maintained rooms, and prompt service are also rated important by both business and leisure travelers (Knutson, 1988; Min & Chung, 2002; Lockyer, 2005).

Satisfaction is defined as a consequence that derives from the customer's experience of being loyal (Oliver, 2014), and it is a factor that generates value for customers (Dominici & Guzzo, 2010). Tian-Cole & Cromption (2003) describe two types of satisfaction, overall satisfaction and attribute satisfaction. Overall satisfaction pertains to the customer's general experience, while attribute satisfaction examines satisfaction with specific elements or attributes of any offered service or product (Tian-Cole & Cromption, 2003). Barsky (1992) on the other hand, believes that satisfaction and the importance of an attribute are the same from the customer's point of view. Satisfaction is dependent on the perceived quality of an offered product or service (Chu & Choi, 2000), where perceived quality is defined as an individual's overall evaluation of the significance of a product or service attribute (Swan & Combs, 1976; Chu & Choi, 2000). The overall perceived quality is a combination of money spent and non-monetary considerations, which include time, cost spent on the search, and convenience of location (Kashyap & Bojanic, 2000). Kuo, Wu & Deng (2009) found that perceived quality is influenced by the perceived excellence of the offered service which indirectly leads to re-purchase intention. Similarly, Hemmasi, Strong & Taylor (1994) believe that the level of a customer's perceived quality correlates with future choice of similar products or services.

On the other hand, Eggert & Ulaga (2000) define perceived quality as an exchange of a customer's gains and losses of value on an offered service or product. Therefore, Chu & Choi

(2000) concluded that it is essential for hoteliers to realize and to recognize the perceived quality of the offered services. Even though substantial research has been conducted on loyalty programs for repeat travelers in the hotel industry (McCall & Voorhees, 2010; Tanford, Raab & Kim, 2012), none has examined the impact of the frequency of recent hotel stays on a potential guest's decision-making process to purchase a hotel room. For instance, according to Tanford, Raab & Kim (2012), full-service hotel guests are usually reward program members and loyal to their preferred hotel brand. Like full-service hotel guests, repeat travelers may have specific hotel attribute preferences that arise from their experiences during prior hotel stays. The current study addresses this gap in research to determine the hotel service attributes that depend on the frequency of business travelers' hotel stays.

Methodology

In order to measure business travelers' ratings of the importance of various hotel attributes, a questionnaire was designed and distributed as an online survey. The targeted respondents for this research were business travelers who had multiple hotel stays in United States hotels in the six months prior to the distribution of the online survey, which led to 300 qualified respondents for the current study. Qualtrics was used to identify participants and collect survey responses.

The contents of the questionnaire were based on the results of previous studies conducted on the significance of hotel characteristics and the hotel attributes under investigation (Dolnicar & Otter, 2003), and the impact of satisfaction with various hotel attributes on overall guest satisfaction (Usta et al., 2011). The survey incorporated questions about travelers' attitudes with questions extracted from different studies such as Chu & Choi (2000), and Smith, Bolton & Wagner (1999). Chu & Choi (2000) suggested a six-factor solution, which includes 30 hotel characteristics. The six-factor solution includes the quality of offered service, the value of

money, business facilities, security, food and beverage, and service recovery. In order to verify

the reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted with 20 business travelers who

experienced a hotel stay within the last six months. According to the results of an internal

consistency analysis (Table 1), all factors indicated an adequate level of internal consistency,

reflected in a value of Cronbach's alpha greater than 0.5 (Jenkinson, Wright & Coulter, 1994).

Table1: Descriptive Statistics and Reliability of the Pilot Study

Variable	Mean	SD	α
SSQ1	5.75	.786	**.771**
SSQ2	5.70	.733	
SSQ3	5.95	.686	
SSQ4	6.00	.973	
SSQ5	5.45	1.099	
SSQ6	4.05	2.012	
VAL1	5.50	1.100	**.816**
VAL2	5.80	.834	
VAL3	5.60	1.314	
VAL4	5.55	.999	
VAL5	6.25	.639	
VAL6	6.20	.894	
VAL7	5.75	1.070	
VAL8	5.00	1.522	
VAL9	5.75	.786	
VAL10	5.35	1.040	
VAL11	5.90	.788	
BFA1	5.00	1.686	**.521**
BFA2	5.15	1.182	
BFA3	6.25	.967	
SEC1	5.55	1.234	**.921**
SEC2	5.40	1.188	
SEC3	5.30	1.261	
FOD1	5.25	1.251	**.700**
FOD2	5.75	1.020	
FOD3	4.45	2.038	
FOD4	5.60	1.046	
REC1	5.35	1.309	**.866**
REC2	5.15	1.226	
REC3	5.25	1.020	

To evaluate the importance of hotels' internal and external attributes, the following characteristics were assessed: service and service provider-related features, facilities, staff and management team, value for money, safety and security facilities, reservation system, location, amenities, transportation service to the hotel, efficiency of check-in/check-out services, comfortable bedding, gym/workout facilities, and appropriate compensation services. For each question, there was a 7 point Likert scale with 1 indicating Strongly Disagree and 7 indicating Strongly Agree. A 7 point Likert scale was chosen to maximize the reliability of responses (Choudhury & Bhattacharjee, 2014).

Respondents also indicated their frequency of hotel stays within the prior 6 months by choosing among the following choices: 1-2 times, 3-5 times, 6-8 times, or more than 8 times. In addition, the survey included questions about demographics. One way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed in SPSS version 23 for each attribute, with the categorical variable, the frequency of hotel stays, as the independent variable and rating of the attribute's importance as the dependent variable. Each ANOVA compared the mean response between the four categories of stay frequency. For each statistically significant ANOVA, Tukey's post hoc tests followed to determine which stay frequency categories differed. For all analyses, $\alpha = 0.05$.

Data analysis, results and discussion

The demographic characteristics of the sample appear in Table 2. Forty-seven percent of the 300 respondents were female while the rest (53%) were male. The most common age group was 26 to 40 years old, at 48.3%. Among the 300 respondents, 189 were White/Caucasian. The most frequently reported level of education, with a percentage of 46.3%, was a 4-year college degree. Almost half of the participants' (49.3%) annual income was $80,000 or less.

Table 2. Demographic Profile (N=300)

Variable	Item	N	%
Gender			
	Male	159	53
	Female	141	47
Age			
	18-25 years old	55	18
	26-40 years old	145	48
	41-60 years old	86	29
	61 years old and older	14	5
Ethnicity			
	African American	35	11.7
	Asian	38	12.7
	Hispanic	30	10
	Native American	7	2.3
	White/Caucasian	189	63
	Others	1	0.3
Level of Education			
	Less than high school	2	0.7
	High school/GED	22	6.9
	Some college	55	18.9
	2-year college degree	25	8.4
	4-year college degree	139	47.6
	Master's degree or higher	57	17.5
Annual Income			
	Less than $40,000	57	19
	$40,000 - $80,000	91	30.3
	$80,001 - $100,000	78	26
	$100,001- $120,000	28	9.3
	$121,001- $140,000	17	5.7
	$140,001 or more	29	9.7

The attributes with statistically significant ANOVA results were: multi-lingual staff, hotel is part of a reputable chain, presence of business-related meeting rooms, presence of a business center, presence of an in-room mini-bar, food and beverage is value for money, and received an apology from staff/management. For the multi-lingual staff question (Figure 1), the mean rating of its importance was significantly higher for respondents who indicated 3-5 and 6-8

recent hotel stays relative to those with 1-2 hotel stays ($p \leq 0.05$ for ANOVA and these Tukey's post hoc tests).
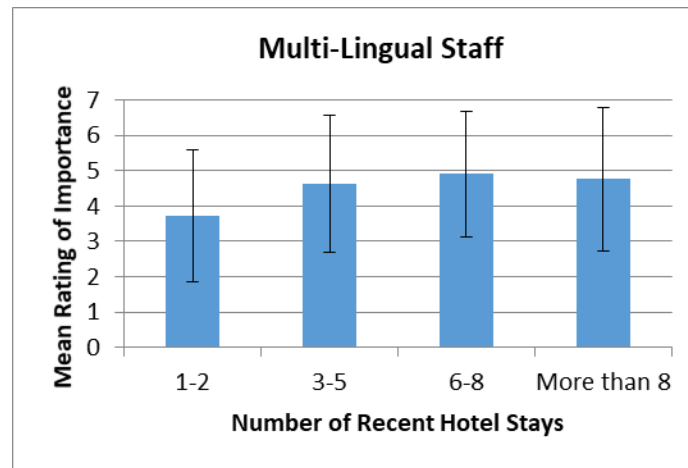
Figure 1. Dependence of the importance of a multi-lingual staff on the number of recent hotel stays. In all figures, error bars represent the mean plus or minus the standard deviation.

The mean rating of importance for the "hotel is part of a reputable chain" question was significantly higher for respondents with 6-8 stays compared to those with 3-5 stays ($p \leq 0.05$, Figure 2).

Figure 2. Dependence of the importance of whether the hotel is part of a reputable chain on the number of recent hotel stays.

Business-related meeting rooms (Figure 3A) and a business center (Figure 3B) were important to respondents who stayed frequently in hotels. Respondents with 6-8 recent stays rated the presence of business-related meeting rooms significantly higher than those who only had 1-2 recent stays ($p \leq 0.05$). The presence of a busine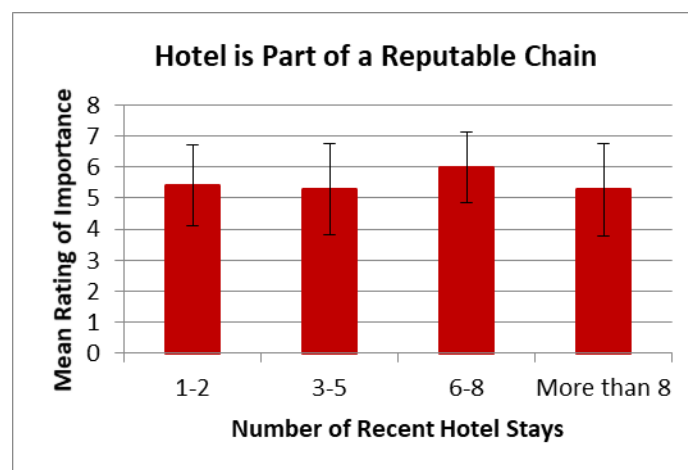ss center was rated significantly higher by respondents who stayed in hotels 6-8 times recently relative to those who stayed 1-2 times ($p \leq 0.05$).
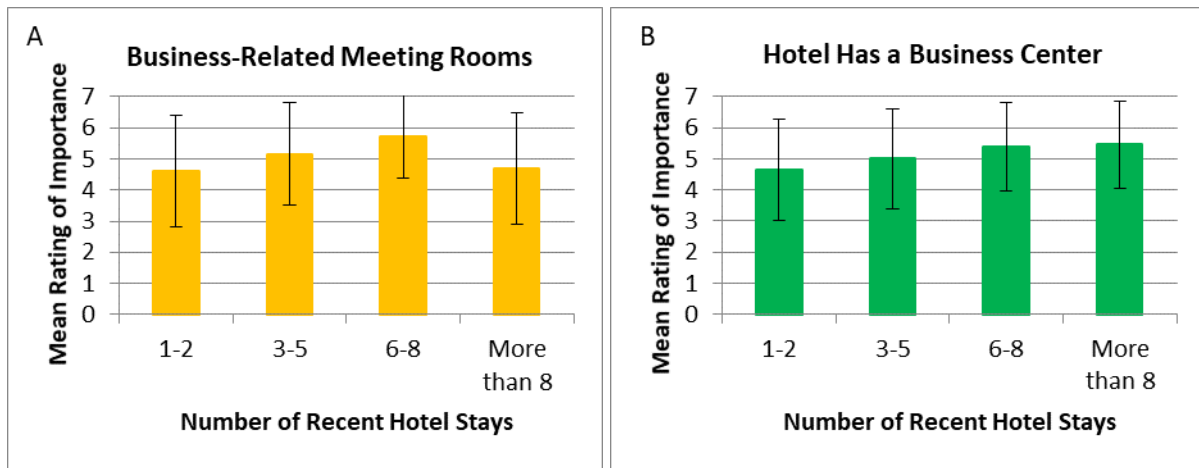
Figure 3. Dependence of the importance of (A) business-related meeting rooms and (B) a business center on the number of recent hotel stays.

Two questions pertaining to food, an in-room mini-bar (Figure 4A) and the value of food and beverage for money (Figure 4B), were both rated significantly higher by respondents who had 6-8 recent stays compared to those who had 1-2 stays ($p \leq 0.05$).
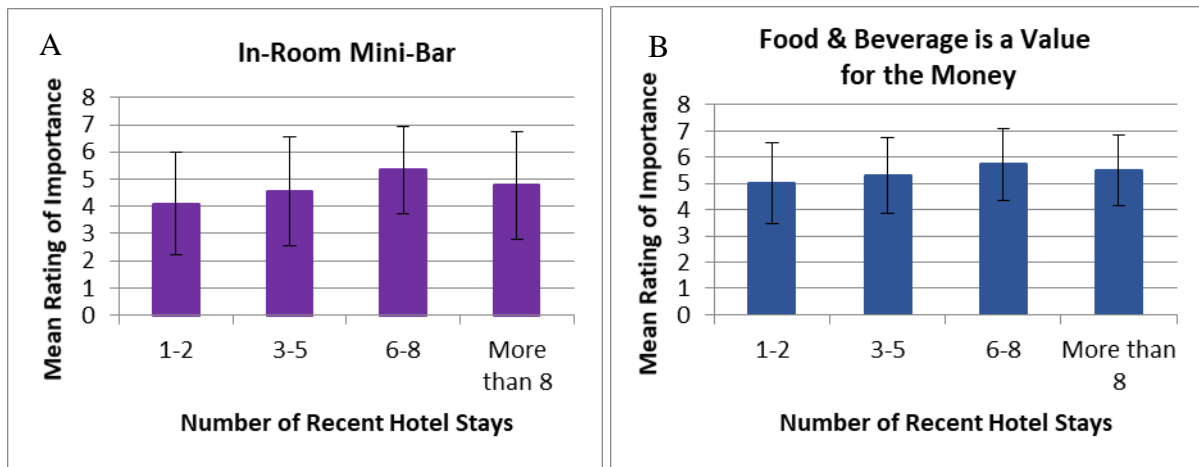
Figure 4. Dependence of the importance of (A) an in-room mini-bar and (B) whether food and beverage is value for money on the number of recent hotel stays.

Finally, receiving an apology from staff or management was rated significantly higher by respondents with 6-8 recent stays relative to those with 1-2 stays ($p \leq 0.05$, Figure 5).

Figure 5. Dependence of the importance of whether an apology was received from staff or management on the number of recent hotel stays.

For the remainder of the assessed attributes, the mean rating of importance did not differ between the various stay frequency categories ($p > 0.05$ for ANOVA). Some of these attributes were staff-related such as staff are helpful, polite and friendly, they provide efficient service, understands guests' requests, and they have a professional appearance. Other attributes that did not depend on stay frequency were hotel-related, such as reservation system is reliable, location is convenient, check-in/check-out services are efficient, gym/workout facilities are available, overall ambiance is pleasing, and adequate transportation to hotel is available.

There were several room-related attributes whose importance did not depend on the frequency of hotel stays. These attributes were room is clean, comfortable bedding and pillows, in-room temperature control operates properly, room is value for money, and Wi-Fi is available. Other attributes that did not depend on frequency of stays were safety/security related attributes such as fire alarms and other safety measures, security personnel, and a security camera system in the hotel. Food and beverage-related attributes such as having a variety of food/beverage outlets and high-quality food/beverages, as well as service recovery-related attributes (appropriate compensation for failed service and speed of service recovery) did not depend on the frequency of stays.

These results indicate that frequent business travelers appreciate distinctive, in-property convenience attributes. The most significant attribute for these travelers is a mini-bar in the room, which is a tangible attribute. Some other important attributes, however, are intangible such as staff behavior, service efficiency, and multilingual staff. These results can be interpreted within two different viewpoints, both of which are consistent with Kandampully & Suhartanto study (2000), claiming that the hotel image and customer satisfaction are essential factors in determining a customer's intention to repurchase and stay loyal. The first viewpoint postulates that hotel guests experience a higher level of service

quality while they are staying with well-known brands; therefore, the importance of hotel image becomes essential in relation to the frequency of stays. For well-known hotels, it is essential to maintain the fame of the brand so their aim is to offer the quality service that is highly demanded by more frequent travelers.

According to the second viewpoint, on the other hand, guests benefit from a brand's loyalty program, which increases customer satisfaction and consequently increases the chance of retention. As repeat customers, business travelers' brand loyalty (Bloemer & Kasper, 1995), reflects a successful, long-term, customer-client relationship.

Conclusion

The hotel industry is a highly competitive business that is not being evaluated by consumers based on the hoteliers' offered services, but rather on hotel guests' assessment of the perceived service quality (Akbaba, 2006). In order to maintain guest loyalty, hoteliers should concentrate on assessing guests' desires (Torres & Kline, 2006). This focus can be achieved by gathering guests' hotel-stay related statistics and evaluating patterns in their preferred hotel services. Hoteliers can thereby deliver customized service to suit their guests' needs, which ultimately increases guest retention.

The current study explored the impact of frequency of hotel stays on the importance of several hotel attributes to business travelers. The importance of the in-room mini bar differed the most based on the frequency of the hotel stays (with a mean rating difference of 1.24), meaning that this attribute is more important than others for frequent business travelers. Multi-lingual staff, with a mean difference of 1.17, was the second most important attribute for repeat business travelers. The third most valued attribute was business-related meeting rooms. In conclusion, this study demonstrates that repeat business travelers' ratings value in-site services that provide greater business-related convenience for them.

References

Ariffin, A. A. M., & Maghzi, A. (2012). A preliminary study on customer expectations of hotel hospitality: Influences of personal and hotel factors. *International Journal of Hospitality Management,* 31(1), 191-198.

Akbaba, A. (2006). Measuring service quality in the hotel industry: A study in a business hotel in turkey. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 25*(2), 170-192.

Barsky, J. D. (1992). Customer satisfaction in the hotel industry: Meaning and measurement. *Hospitality Research Journal, 16*(1), 51-73.

Bloemer, J. M., & Kasper, H. D. (1995). The complex relationship between consumer satisfaction and brand loyalty. *Journal of economic psychology*, *16*(2), 311-329.

Bojanic, D. C. (1996). Consumer perceptions of price, value and satisfaction in the hotel industry: An exploratory study. *Journal of Hospitality & Leisure Marketing, 4*(1), 5-22.

Choudhury, S., & Bhattacharjee, D. (2014). Optimal number of scale points in likert type scales for quantifying compulsive buying behaviour. *Asian Journal of Management Research,* 4(3), 431-440.

Chu, R. K., & Choi, T. (2000). An importance-performance analysis of hotel selection factors in the hong kong hotel industry: A comparison of business and leisure travellers. *Tourism Management, 21*(4), 363-377.

Dolnicar, S., & Otter, T. (2003). Which hotel attributes matter? A review of previous and a framework for future research.

Dominici, G., & Guzzo, R. (2010). Customer satisfaction in the hotel industry: A case study from sicily.

Dubé, L., & Renaghan, L. M. (1999). How hotel attributes deliver the promised benefits: Guests' perspectives on the lodging industry's functional best practices (part II). *The Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly, 40*(5), 895-895.

Eggert, A., & Ulaga, W. (2002). Customer perceived value: A substitute for satisfaction in business markets. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing, 17*(2/3), 107-118.

Hemmasi, M., Strong, K. C., & Taylor, S. A. (1994). Measuring service quality for strategic planning and analysis in service firms. *Journal of Applied Business Research, 10*(4), 24.

Hung, W., Shang, J., & Wang, F. (2010). Pricing determinants in the hotel industry: Quantile regression analysis. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 29*(3), 378-384.

Jenkinson, C., Wright, L., & Coulter, A. (1994). Criterion validity and reliability of the SF-36 in a population sample. *Quality of Life Research, 3*(1), 7-12.

Kandampully, J., & Suhartanto, D. (2000). Customer loyalty in the hotel industry: The role of customer satisfaction and image. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 12*(6), 346-351.

Kashyap, R., & Bojanic, D. C. (2000). A structural analysis of value, quality, and price perceptions of business and leisure travelers. *Journal of Travel Research, 39*(1), 45-51.

Knutson, B. J. (1988). Frequent travelers: Making them happy and bringing them back. *The Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly, 29*(1), 82-87.

Kuo, Y. F., Wu, C. M., & Deng, W. J. (2009). The relationships among service quality, perceived value, customer satisfaction, and post-purchase intention in mobile value-added services. *Computers in human behavior,* 25(4), 887-896.

Lockyer, T. (2005). The perceived importance of price as one hotel selection dimension. *Tourism Management, 26*(4), 529-537.

McCall, M., & Voorhees, C. (2010). The drivers of loyalty program success: An organizing framework and research agenda. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly,* 51(1), 35-52.

Min, H., & Chung, K. (2002). Dynamic benchmarking of hotel service quality. *Journal of Services Marketing, 16*(4), 302-321.

Oliver, R. L. (2014). *Satisfaction: A behavioral perspective on the consumer* Routledge.

Qu, H., Ryan, B., & Chu, R. (2000). The importance of hotel attributes in contributing to travelers' satisfaction in the hong kong hotel industry. *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism,* 1(3), 65-83.

Slevitch, L., & Oh, H. (2010). Asymmetric relationship between attribute performance and customer satisfaction: A new perspective. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 29*(4), 559-569.

Smith, A. K., Bolton, R. N., & Wagner, J. (1999). A model of customer satisfaction with service encounters involving failure and recovery. Journal of marketing research, 356-372.

Swan, J. E., & Combs, L. J. (1976). Product performance and consumer satisfaction: A new concept. *Journal of Marketing, 40*(2), 25-33.

Tanford, S., Raab, C., & Kim, Y. S. (2012). Determinants of customer loyalty and purchasing behavior for full-service and limited-service hotels. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *31*(2), 319-328.

Tian-Cole, S., & Crompion, J. (2003). A conceptualization of the relationships between service quality and visitor satisfaction, and their links to destination selection. *Leisure Studies, 22*(1), 65-80.

Torres, E. N., & Kline, S. (2006). From satisfaction to delight: A model for the hotel industry. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 18*(4), 290-301.

Usta, M., Berezina, K., & Cobanoglu, C. (2011). The impact of hotel attributes' satisfaction on overall guest satisfaction.

Wilson, A., Zeithaml, V., Bitner, M. J., & Gremler, D. (2016). *Services marketing: Integrating customer focus across the firm* McGraw Hill.