

Hospitality Hurdles: An Expedition into the Challenges Facing the Hotel Industry

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The study aims to empower hotel operators in prospective tourist spots, aiding informed decision-making in navigating the dynamic hospitality landscape. The study investigates challenges in the hotel industry to aid practitioners and researchers.

It combines secondary data from expert blogs and research articles with primary data from 230 Indian hotel managers surveyed via a Likert scale questionnaire from January to March 2024. Validity and reliability are ensured through first-order constructs. Data analysis utilizes SPSS-22 for exploratory factor analysis and Amos-17 for confirmatory factor analysis. Theoretical frameworks from prior literature were examined to inform the selection of variables. A two-part questionnaire was devised to gather demographic information, years of experience, etc., followed by a section employing a 5-point Likert scale to explore our proposed hypothesis.

Initially identifying twenty-seven global challenges, the study highlights three key factors – marketing, operational, and human resources – relevant to the Indian context, encompassing 25 specific challenges. Notably, challenges in the Economic/Financial Factor show low manifestation in India.

The study emphasizes the burgeoning tourism potential in Eastern India and the proactive measures taken by hotel industries to meet global guest demands. While Eastern India is the primary focus, insights extend to emerging tourist destinations worldwide.

Keywords: hotel industry, challenges, EFA, CFA

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Introduction

The vibrant and dynamic hotel industry stands at the crossroads of hospitality and commerce, catering to the diverse needs of travellers around the globe (Morrison, 2022). Despite its inherent allure and undeniable

economic significance, challenges exist within the industry (Ari, 2022). The Travel World (2021) notes that the popularity of vacation and weekend travel is on the rise. In January–March 2022, international tourism witnessed a significant 182% increase compared

to the same quarter of the previous year (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2022). The global leisure travel market, which was valued at \$1,006.5 billion in 2019, is expected to reach \$1,737.3 billion by 2027, with a CAGR of 22.6% from 2021 to 2027 (Allied Market Research, 2024). The Indian travel market is predicted to reach US\$ 125 billion by FY27, up from 75 billion in FY20. By 2028, international tourism is expected to generate over US\$ 59 billion (India Brand Equity Foundation, 2025). The hotel industry must prepare for sustained growth, recognizing tourism's growing importance as a significant economic driver and employment generator (Government of India, 2021).

One of the primary challenges confronting hotels is the ever-changing nature of consumer preferences (Mahmoud et al., 2023). Travellers today seek a place to stay and an immersive experience that aligns with their lifestyles and values (Baek et al., 2020). As the industry strives to keep pace with these evolving demands, the quest for personalization and uniqueness in service delivery becomes increasingly pronounced (Tang & Chan, 2023). The ability to seamlessly blend modern conveniences with a touch of personalization has become a pivotal factor in guest satisfaction and, consequently, in the success of hotels (Shin & Jeong, 2022).

Moreover, economic fluctuations profoundly influence the hotel industry (Ozdemir et al., 2022). The cyclicity of the global economy directly impacts travel patterns, corporate budgets, and, consequently, hotel occupancy rates. Economic upswings often correlate with increased business and leisure travel, prompting hotels to expand and invest (Deng et al., 2021). Conversely, economic downturns can reduce travel, affecting occupancy rates and revenue streams. As we explore the hurdles the hotel sector faces, it becomes evident that its landscape exhibits complexities, ranging from economic uncertainties to evolving customer expectations and global crises (Mehta et al., 2023). The industry's resilience in economic uncertainties requires adaptive strategies, including flexible pricing models and cost-effective operations (Ahmadi & Ghasemi, 2023).

While economic challenges are formidable, the contemporary hotel industry also grapples with the

omnipresent impact of technological advancements (Gaur et al., 2021). The rise of online booking platforms, review sites, and the ubiquity of social media has transformed how customers engage with hotels. Navigating this digital landscape demands a strategic approach to online marketing, reputation management, and technology integration into day-to-day operations. Hotels that successfully harness technology streamline their processes and enhance the overall guest experience (Garrido-Moreno et al., 2020).

In addition to the persistent challenges it faces, the hotel industry has been compelled to grapple with unforeseen global crises. The COVID-19 pandemic, for example, halted travel altogether, leading to widespread closures, cancellations, and financial strain for numerous establishments. Such crises underscore the industry's susceptibility to external shocks and emphasize the critical significance of crisis management, flexibility, and adaptability in hotel operations (Sucheran, 2022). Furthermore, hoteliers face a consistent challenge posed by the rising cost of daily consumables. Fluctuations in the prices of essential items, from toiletries to linens, can impact the expense of maintaining quality services. Striking a delicate balance between providing excellent service and managing operational costs becomes crucial for sustained profitability (Pereira et al., 2021).

As we delve into the multifaceted challenges of the hotel industry, it becomes increasingly clear that sustained success hinges on a nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between economic forces, technological advancements, and evolving consumer expectations. This study aims to explore these challenges within the context of a rapidly changing industry, with a particular focus on the innovative strategies and adaptive practices that hotels are employing to remain competitive. By identifying and categorizing the key challenges faced by the industry, the paper highlights how innovation serves not only as a response mechanism but also as a catalyst for transformation and resilience. Each challenge is examined alongside potential or existing innovations that can address it effectively, providing a structured framework for both practitioners and researchers. Ultimately, this research lays the groundwork for future studies and practical applica-

tions, encouraging a forward-thinking approach to problem-solving in the hospitality sector.

Literature Review and Theoretical Background

To conduct a comprehensive literature review and identify key variables relevant to the hotel industry, publications spanning a 22-year period (2003–2024) were systematically examined. The search was initiated using two primary keywords – *Hotel* and *Challenges* – to capture literature specifically focused on the challenges within the hotel sector. A custom date range from 2003 to 2024 was applied to ensure the inclusion of both foundational and recent studies.

An initial search using Google Scholar alone yielded approximately 30,700 articles. To refine the results, additional keywords associated with top academic publishers – such as Sage, Taylor & Francis, Elsevier, Emerald, and *Academica Turistica* – were incorporated. This filtering process significantly reduced the number of relevant articles to 440. Further screening was conducted using electronic databases and academic portals, including Taylor & Francis, Emerald, EBSCOhost, ProQuest, Elsevier, and Google Scholar.

Ultimately, 51 articles directly addressing the challenges in the hotel industry were selected for in-depth analysis and inclusion in the literature review. In addition, seven articles were specifically chosen for their relevance to theoretical frameworks applicable to the challenges faced by the hotel sector.

Theories Applicable to Challenges Faced by the Hotel Industry

The hotel industry faces various challenges, and there are several theories and perspectives that can be applied to understand and address these challenges. Here are a few theories commonly discussed in relation to challenges facing the hotel industry:

Supply and Demand: Economic principles of supply and demand play a significant role in the hotel industry. Fluctuations in demand due to economic factors such as recessions, currency fluctuations, or changes in consumer preferences can impact hotel revenues and profitability (Corgel et al., 2012).

Price Elasticity: Understanding price elasticity helps hotels in pricing strategies and revenue

management. It involves analysing how changes in price affect demand for hotel rooms (Chen et al., 2022).

Technology Adoption Theory: Hotels need to adapt and adopt new technologies to enhance operational efficiency, improve guest experiences, and remain competitive. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Diffusion of Innovations theory can help in understanding how and why hotels adopt new technologies (Huang et al., 2019).

Data Analytics and Big Data: The use of data analytics and big data can help hotels in personalizing guest experiences, optimizing pricing, predicting demand, and improving operational efficiency (Bui et al., 2022).

Service Quality Theory: Ensuring high service quality is crucial for hotels to attract and retain guests. The SERVQUAL model and Total Quality Management (TQM) are relevant theories that focus on maintaining service excellence (Ahrholdt et al., 2017).

Human Resource Management Theories: Employee satisfaction and engagement are critical for delivering exceptional guest experiences. Theories such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory can guide hotel management in understanding and addressing employee needs and motivations (Norbu & Wetprasit, 2021).

Sustainability Theory: Environmental sustainability is becoming increasingly important in the hotel industry. The Triple Bottom Line theory (People, Planet, Profit) emphasizes the importance of balancing economic prosperity with social and environmental responsibility (Assaf et al., 2012).

By applying these theories and perspectives, stakeholders in the hotel industry can gain insights into the challenges they face and develop strategies to address them effectively.

Review of Literature

The study conducts a narrative review of literature to ease the identification of challenges within the hotel industry. Fifty articles from experts' blogs and reputed research papers identified these challenges. After identifying the challenges, the study regulated

nomenclatures for meaningful representation and sequenced them alphabetically. Twenty-five challenges of the hotel industry were identified.

Cyber Security & Data Privacy: Morosan and De-Franco (2015) explore cybersecurity and data privacy in hotel apps, emphasizing the crucial role of trust and perceived value. Their study sheds light on factors influencing consumers' decisions to share personal data, providing insights for both theoretical frameworks and practical applications in data security and privacy management. Suter (2016) cautions that a breach can trigger severe consequences, including financial loss and erosion of trust. Implementing robust cybersecurity measures is an investment in maintaining guest confidence, preserving the integrity of the business, and upholding the highest standards of professionalism in the hospitality sector.

Decision Making: Glaveli et al. (2023) tackle strategic decision-making challenges in hospitality, employing the MUSA (Multicriteria Satisfaction Analysis) method to assess location, cleanliness, service, and value contributions to guest satisfaction. The study identifies weak points, prioritizing strategic improvements for an enhanced overall guest experience. Pappas (2018) explored strategic decision-making among Greek accommodation providers during crises, using fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis and identifying five configurations related to competitiveness, operations, marketing, productivity, and finances. Effective decision-making in hotels is paramount for smooth operations and guest satisfaction. Decisions impact service quality, staff performance, and overall guest experience (Özdemir et al., 2019).

Employee Burnout: Nam and Kim (2009) reveal the Hotel Employees' Burnout Phenomenon (HEBP), indicating stress-induced emotional exhaustion, reduced accomplishment, and diminished work motivation in hotel staff. A proposed healing programme involves psychotherapy and company support, emphasizing positive reinforcement and personal resilience. Baquero's (2023) study links employee burnout in male hotel workers to continuous changes and high workloads, predicting both intentions to quit and psychological distress. Financial well-being regulates

burnout's impact on distress but not the intention to quit, highlighting the necessity of addressing burnout in hotel organizations.

Energy Use: Palani and Karatas (2021) tackle the challenge of comprehending and influencing energy-related behaviours among hotel guests to curtail energy consumption. With 47,000 U.S. hotels collectively spending \$2,200 per room annually, the study devises an integrated energy-use framework, analyses energy-use profiles, and recommends interventions. Dibene-Arriola et al. (2021) investigate global energy efficiency indicators for hotels, finding the 'total average annual energy use intensity index' commonly used. Tropical hotels, especially four- and five-star, exhibit higher energy consumption than those in temperate zones.

Fluctuations in Economy: Ozdemir et al. (2022) investigate the economic impact of hotels, uncovering a negative lead-lag effect on occupancy, average daily rate, and RevPAR (Revenue Per Available Room) attributed to policy-related economic uncertainty. Structural equation modelling reveals consumer sentiment mediates this relationship, offering insights into economic factors influencing hotel demand. Türkcan and Erkuş-Öztürk (2020) assess the economic impact on tourism-related firms in Antalya during crises, discovering lower survival rates. Factors like age, size, and legal form enhance survival, while specialization, high entry rates, and smaller markets reduce survival chances. Hotels and travel agencies are often more vulnerable to economic and political shocks compared to restaurants and spas.

Guest Expectations: Suryanarayanan et al. (2021) highlight successful hotel management's critical role in meeting guest expectations, emphasizing hospitality and technology. Cultural factors, including brand identity and language, influence expectations. Loizos and Lycourgos (2005) stress the importance of quality services in Cyprus hotels during economic challenges, focusing on warm and efficient service delivery. Service failures impact customer loyalty, emphasizing the necessity of managing human resources and providing personalized services for creating memorable experiences and retaining long-term customers in the hospitality industry.

Guest Experience: Luxury hotel guest experience relies on hedonism, ambience, escapism, personalization, and convenience. Positive experiences lead to favourable word of mouth (Shahid & Paul, 2022). Lee et al. (2019) use TripAdvisor data to reveal multisensory service impacts on satisfaction, emphasizing affective evaluations and cognitive effort. Praharaj et al. (2023) studied service automation in hotels post-Covid, finding positive impacts on value creation and guest experience, with value creation mediating service automation's indirect effect on guest experience.

Hiring & Retaining Staff: Ghani et al. (2022) review employee retention within the hospitality industry, emphasizing the insufficient attention given to retention strategies, which leads to subpar performance. They propose a model centred on employee satisfaction factors to achieve sustainable retention and offer targeted guidance for establishing effective strategies. The study concludes that contented employees are less inclined to depart, underlining the managerial implications of their findings. Marinakou and Giousmpasoglou (2019) delineate the concepts of talent and talent management within luxury hotels, emphasizing effective retention strategies such as fostering an open culture, promoting teamwork, implementing competitive compensation structures, devising succession plans, and investing in training initiatives. Their proposed hybrid approach integrates exclusive and inclusive elements, tailored to suit organizational culture, thereby providing valuable empirical comparative research to the field.

Housekeeping Issues: Alcalde-González et al. (2021) detail Las Kellys' fight for dignity, deploying subversion tactics in Spanish hotel housekeeping. Nimri et al. (2020) focus on Gold Coast hotel room attendants, revealing dignifying factors despite exploitation. Hsieh et al. (2023) study immigrant hotel housekeepers in Florida, highlighting time pressures, excessive workloads, inadequate breaks, and racial discrimination, urging improved occupational health strategies in the hospitality industry.

Infrastructural Bottlenecks: Hotelogix (2019) urges hotel professionals to confidently address operational bottlenecks for sustained success, emphasizing the importance of technology adoption, data-driven

insights, discarding outdated practices, prioritizing guest experience, simplifying operations, and fostering teamwork. McCartney (2014) explores Macao's gaming revenue growth compared to meetings, incentives, conventions, and exhibitions (MICE) development. Despite casino expansion, MICE has not progressed, prompting strategic actions for improvement during the second wave of integrated resort construction on Macao's Cotai Strip.

Irregular Cash Inflows: The study by Dogru et al. (2020) uncovers that restaurant firms with high free cash flows experience lower returns from acquisitions, which serves to mitigate underinvestment but exacerbate overinvestment issues. Franchising firms also experience lower returns, exacerbating overinvestment problems with available free cash flows. Brown (2025) highlights the high priority of cash flow for hotels and restaurants, emphasizing the impact of competitiveness and flexibility on cash flow. The guide explores tips for improving financial management in a dynamic industry.

License Issues: Gikera and Vadgama's (2022) article underscores the critical importance of statutory compliance in the hospitality sector, focusing on Kenya's tourism and hospitality industry regulated by the Tourism Regulatory Authority (TRA). Emphasizing the legal ramifications of non-compliance, the article highlights the necessity for businesses to acquire mandatory licenses and permits to avoid legal conflicts, as outlined in the Tourism Act 2011. It specifically addresses the licensing requirements for short-term rentals, including those facilitated through online platforms like Airbnb, underlining the penalties for non-compliance. Mensah (2014) examines the influence of primary and secondary stakeholders on hotel environmental performance in Accra, revealing the substantial impact of customers and the board of directors, with moderation by hotel size. Melissen et al. (2016) assess the Dutch hotel industry's readiness for sustainable development through literature review and interviews, suggesting the industry has potential but requires assistance in addressing guest needs and institutionalizing sustainability.

Losing Loyal Customers: From a theoretical standpoint, customer loyalty is crucial for hotels, leading

to increased revenue, positive word-of-mouth, and cost-effectiveness. The 20/80 rule highlights that a significant portion of business comes from a small customer base. While customer satisfaction is widely believed to drive loyalty, there are cases where satisfied customers may still switch to competitors. Transaction-specific investments and switching barriers are crucial in understanding the hotel industry's complex nature of customer loyalty (Qiu et al., 2015). Jasinskis et al. (2016) evaluate the influence of hotel service quality on customer loyalty by introducing the SERVQUALOYL (Service Quality and Loyalty) methodology. Combining SERVQUAL (Service Quality) and loyalty research methodologies, the study finds that aligning expected and experienced quality significantly influences customer loyalty. For hotels to enhance competitiveness and foster customer loyalty, aligning customer expectations with delivered service quality is crucial.

Loyalty Programmes: Han et al. (2019) investigate the intricate connections among ambient atmospherics, emotional experiences, overall image, and guest satisfaction, testing their impact on loyalty intentions in upscale hotels. The results indicate significant relationships, predicting guests' loyalty intentions, with satisfaction playing a prominent role. Continuance commitment moderates these associations, and emotional experiences, overall hotel image, and guest satisfaction mediate in generating loyalty intentions. Koo et al. (2020) explore the relationships in hotel loyalty programmes, emphasizing the importance of perceived value in forming customer brand loyalty. Results indicate that the perceived value is crucial, and affective commitment and switching barriers mediate its relationship with customer brand loyalty. This research highlights the significance of loyalty programmes as a crucial strategy for customer loyalty in the hotel industry.

Maintenance of Hygiene: Alcalde-González et al. (2021) explore the hygienic challenges faced by room attendants in Spain's hotel housekeeping sector, particularly focusing on the efforts of Las Kellys, a collective advocating for the dignity of room attendants. Using qualitative methods, the study reveals three subversion tactics employed by Las Kellys, address-

ing occupational, organizational, and socio-political levels. Pillai et al. (2021) examine the repercussions of previous disasters on the global hospitality industry, with a specific focus on hygiene measures amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. It explores the industry's response to pandemics, integrating Industry 5.0 into hospitality for efficiency, emphasizing technology's role in ensuring hygiene across customer touchpoints.

Maintenance of Safety: Chan and Lam (2013) investigate the disparity between hotel safety managers' perceptions and guests' perceptions of safety and security. Surveys reveal guest priorities include fire prevention, emergency plans, lighting, 24-hour security, and testing. Managers prioritize CCTV (Closed-Circuit Television), lighting, and key-activated lifts, showing potential areas for improved understanding. Anichiti et al. (2021) gauge the importance of safety for Romanian tourists, considering service classification and generation. The questionnaire encompasses various aspects including detectors, emergency and medical preparedness, staff and guestroom security, pool/beach security, access control, and cyber security. Safety perceptions differ based on accommodation and generation.

Regulations: Adhering to regulations ensures guest safety, security, and satisfaction. Regulations cover areas like hygiene, fire safety, and accessibility. Strict adherence fosters a positive guest experience and safeguards the hotel's reputation and business continuity (Yeon et al., 2020).

Reputation of Management: Perez-Aranda et al. (2019) developed a reputation management model for hotels using online reviews, finding its impact on perceived benefits by surveying Spanish hotel managers. In his study, Lai (2019) delves into the connection between hotel image, reputation, and customer loyalty, establishing hotel image as a precursor to reputation. Factors like service quality, perceived value, customer satisfaction, and commitment significantly contribute to building loyalty, offering insights for effective hotel marketing strategies.

Restoring Business Post-crisis: Triantafyllidou and Yannas (2020) experimentally investigate the effects of social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) and image restoration strategies on the post-crisis rep-

utation, social media engagement, and offline behaviour of a fictitious hotel during a racially charged crisis. Twitter/X is more effective, with corrective action being the most engaging strategy. The study addresses the interplay of social media usage frequency, offering vital implications for crisis managers. Promnil and Polnyotee (2023) concentrate on the post-COVID recovery strategies employed by SME (Small and Medium-sized Enterprise) hotels in northern Thailand. Their findings illuminate the substantial impact of customer relations and service provision strategies on recovery, wherein cost-saving measures and revenue management indirectly contribute to the process. Valuable insights are provided for SME hotel owners and managers navigating post-pandemic challenges.

Rising Competition: Sánchez-Pérez et al. (2020) explore hotel competition through vertical and horizontal differentiation, incorporating online reputation. It suggests that local competition and agglomeration moderate the relationship between differentiation and pricing, with online reputation having more pronounced effects on lower-priced hotels. Hotel clustering reinforces category impact on price but diminishes service-related benefits in competitive environments.

Rising Cost of Daily Consumables: Kothari et al. (2005) conducted a study on hotel supply chain management in Philadelphia, focusing on the challenge of increasing consumable costs. Their research underscores the critical significance of implementing efficient procurement systems and leveraging information technology (IT) strategically to effectively manage these costs. The research investigates hotel purchasing managers' perspectives on e-Procurement, identifying perceived costs and benefits amid the evolving landscape of hospitality supply chains.

Seasonality: Zhang and Xie (2023) explore the influence of tourism seasonality on the risk of hotel closures within the Norwegian industry. Their research reveals that the varied seasonal patterns observed in leisure, business, and conference tourism segments affect hotels' risk of closure in distinct ways, thereby mitigating the overall impact of seasonality on operational and financial performance, as well as survival probabilities. Lozano et al.'s (2021) study examines

tourism seasonality in Spanish hotels (2008–2017), filling a gap by correlating night stays and prices. The framework introduces a supply-demand perspective, illustrating how factors such as cost, price flexibility, and other determinants contribute to comprehending tourism seasonality in both quantities and prices.

Service Standards: The study by Chan et al. (2021) investigates the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the hospitality industry, focusing particularly on Asia. The study examines shifts in service standards among hotels in mainland China and Hong Kong, analysing variations based on operational types, classifications, and locations. The research sheds light on the evolving service standards in physical and social servicescapes, offering insights into how hotels have adapted during the crisis. The study by Liat et al. (2017) explores the challenges encountered by the expanding global hospitality industry, emphasizing the heightened competition driven by technological advancements. It underscores the importance of service quality and effective service recovery programmes in maintaining customer satisfaction and hotel image. The findings underscore the substantial influence of service quality and recovery on satisfaction and subsequent customer loyalty, wherein corporate image partially mediates this relationship.

Stagnant Innovation: Campo et al. (2014) explore how an innovation-based orientation influences hotel performance, considering management's perception of market turbulence and a crisis atmosphere. Conducting surveys among four-star hotel managers across 52 Spanish cities, the study uncovers that while a hotel's inclination towards innovation may not immediately boost short-term performance, it becomes indispensable for achieving medium- and long-term success. This importance is shaped by perceptions of technological turbulence and crisis-related management perspectives. The study conducted by Hassi (2019) examines the correlation between empowering leadership and management innovation across 127 hotels in Morocco. Using structural equation modelling with Bayesian estimation, it identifies the climate for creativity as a mediating factor. Facilitating the empowerment of leaders in embracing new management practices, processes, or structures are dimen-

sions such as employee creativity recognition, flexibility to change, and provision of adequate resources for innovation.

Technological Demand: Brochado et al. (2016) delve into the influence of contemporary technologies on customer experiences within upscale hotels. Employing a two-step approach encompassing qualitative and quantitative methods, the study reveals that hotel guests place significant emphasis on digital engagement during their stay. Moreover, business travellers and younger generations exhibit a heightened preference for incorporating cutting-edge technologies into their hotel experiences. Lee et al.'s (2003) study explores the adoption of technology in the hospitality industry, focusing on the perceptions of international hotel managers. It reveals a growing demand for technology-supported services from hotel customers. Technology is identified as influencing employee support, service quality, efficiency, competitive advantage, customer relationships, and profitability in the hotel sector.

Gap in Literature

The findings from the literature review were juxtaposed with insights gleaned from expert blogs and reports accessible online. Notably, two challenges highlighted by these experts – namely, the *Cost of Living of Customers* and *Marketing Trends & Dynamics* – were conspicuously absent in the existing literature. Acknowledging these omissions as gaps in the current body of knowledge, the research has integrated these two challenges and subsequently subjected them to empirical scrutiny in the Indian context to determine their existence, if any.

Methods

This research aims to conduct a comprehensive factor analysis to uncover the underlying challenges faced by the hotel industry. By utilizing factor analysis, a robust statistical method developed by Spearman (1904), the study will identify latent factors and their interrelationships within the data. This approach serves as the primary analytical tool to distil meaningful patterns and dimensions, offering valuable insights into the complexities and obstacles that shape the industry's landscape.

Sampling

The study employs a purposive sampling technique, strategically selecting participants with specific, relevant characteristics to ensure the investigation's focus and depth. A carefully determined sample size of 230 is chosen, based on statistical considerations, to maintain the validity and reliability of the factor analysis results (Sapnas & Zeller, 2002). This deliberate approach strengthens the robustness of the study, ensuring that the findings are both precise and reflective of the key factors under examination.

Data Collection

Primary data for the study were meticulously collected through structured survey methods, tailored to the specific needs of the investigation. The data collection process involved both direct interactions and electronic communication via email, ensuring comprehensive reach and engagement. Utilizing the five-point Likert scale, introduced by Likert (1932), the research gathered detailed insights from participants. The geographic scope of the study spanned four Indian states – Odisha, West Bengal, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh – covering a vast area of 459,367 square kilometres, larger than the combined size of 180 countries and dependencies worldwide (Statistics Times, 2020). The sample included fourteen hotels, ranging from 3-star to 7-star establishments, providing a diverse and representative cross-section of the hospitality sector for analysis.

Instrumentation

The instruments were meticulously crafted to capture observed variables that are hypothesized to be influenced by latent factors. To assess the reliability and validity of these measures, several statistical techniques were employed. Cronbach's Alpha, a key indicator of internal consistency reliability, evaluates the correlation among items within a factor or scale (Cronbach, 1951). Average variance extracted (AVE) is used to measure convergent validity, determining how much of the variance in items within a factor is attributable to the factor itself, rather than measurement error (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Composite reliability (CR) further gauges internal consistency by examining the

Table 1 Rotated Component Matrixa (Challenges assigned to principal factors)

Factor	Challenges	Var.	Component			Remarks
			1	2	3	
Economic/ Financial Factor (EF)	Rising Cost of Daily Consumables	EF1	0.290	-0.441	-0.273	Insignificant
	Cost of Living of Customers	EF2	0.405	-0.457	-0.353	
	Irregular Cash Inflows	EF3	0.407	-0.469	-0.430	
	Fluctuations in Economy	EF4	0.505	-0.430	-0.343	
Marketing Factor (MF)	Rising Competition	MF1			0.725	Significant
	Seasonality	MF2			0.758	
	Marketing Trends & Dynamics	MF3			0.758	
	Loyalty Programmes	MF4			0.716	
	Guest Experience	MF5			0.664	
	Guest Expectations	MF6			0.727	
	Losing Loyal Customers	MF7			0.673	
Operational Factor (OF)	Service Standards	OF1		0.706		Significant
	Restoring Business Post-crisis	OF2		0.730		
	Maintenance of Hygiene	OF3		0.655		
	Maintenance of Safety	OF4		0.665		
	Cyber security & Data Privacy	OF5		0.704		
	Energy Use	OF6		0.765		
	Housekeeping Issues	OF7		0.763		
HR Factor (HRF)	Hiring & Retaining Staff	HRF1	0.628			Significant
	Employee Burnout	HRF2	0.690			
	Decision Making	HRF3	0.732			
	Technological Demand	HRF4	0.776			
	Stagnant Innovation	HRF5	0.729			
	Reputation of Management	HRF6	0.690			
	Infrastructural Bottleneck	HRF7	0.538			
	License Issues	HRF8	0.666			
	Regulations	HRF9	0.758			

Extraction method: principal component analysis.

Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

correlation among items within a factor (Kalkbrenner, 2023). Finally, goodness-of-fit indices assess how well the hypothesized model aligns with the observed data, providing insight into the overall adequacy of the model (Bandalos & Finney, 2018).

Variables

The study has meticulously identified and defined twenty-seven observed variables that form the foundation for the factor analysis. These variables encompass a range of relevant data, including expert blogs,

research outcomes derived from survey responses, behavioural indicators, and other measurable aspects directly aligned with the research objectives. This comprehensive selection ensures that the analysis captures a broad spectrum of factors critical to understanding the complexities under investigation.

Data Analysis

Factor analysis was conducted using advanced statistical software, with SPSS-22 employed for Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and Amos-17 for confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The study rigorously examined the correlation matrix, extracted underlying factors, and interpreted the factor loadings to identify key patterns. To enhance the interpretability and clarity of the factors, the Varimax rotation method was applied, ensuring a more distinct and meaningful structure in the data. This robust analytical approach strengthens the study's ability to uncover the complex relationships within the dataset.

Interpretation and Reporting

The interpretation of the identified factors is carefully aligned with the research objectives, ensuring a clear connection between the findings and the study's core focus. The results are presented in a clear and concise manner, supported by detailed tables and descriptive statistics to enhance comprehension. Additionally, the study explores the implications of these factors, examining their relevance to both the theoretical framework and practical applications, thereby offering valuable insights for future research and real-world implementation.

Results

The factor analysis employed the principal component extraction method coupled with Varimax rotation to identify underlying factors. All extracted factors demonstrated Eigenvalues exceeding the critical threshold of 1, ensuring their significance and relevance. The resulting rotated component matrix, which highlights the refined factor structure, is presented in detail in Table 1, providing a clear and comprehensive view of the underlying dimensions.

In this methodology, the 27 observed variables were classified into four distinct factors, each associ-

ated with its corresponding factor loadings. The factor loadings were carefully sorted, with values exceeding a minimum threshold of 0.5 being considered significant. Notably, the Economic/Financial Factor exhibited marginalization, as all its factor loading values fell below the 0.5 threshold, indicating its weaker influence in the context of the study. Factor loadings reflect the extent to which a factor explains a variable, with higher values signifying a stronger relationship. Specifically, factor loading scores exceeding 0.70 highlighted variables with substantial impacts, underscoring their dominant role in the factor structure (Hair et al., 2014).

Factor analysis was employed to uncover the key challenges, or drivers, impacting the hotel industry within the Indian context. To assess the reliability of the identified factors, Cronbach's Alpha was used to evaluate internal consistency by examining the correlation among items within each factor or scale. The results of this reliability test revealed that the Marketing Factor scored 0.893, the Operational Factor scored 0.890, and the HR Factor scored 0.900, all indicating high levels of internal consistency. These findings demonstrate that the items within each factor contribute reliably to the measurement of the underlying constructs, ensuring the robustness of the study's results. Researchers utilize this measure to confirm that the factors consistently reflect the true nature of the challenges being investigated.

Convergent validity was assessed using average variance extracted (AVE), which measures the proportion of variance captured by the items within a factor relative to the variance attributable to measurement error. High AVE values indicate that a substantial portion of the variance in the items is due to the underlying construct, rather than measurement errors. In this study, the Marketing Factor recorded an AVE of 0.561, an Operational Factor of 0.540, and an HR Factor of 0.504, all demonstrating strong convergent validity. These results confirm that the factors are accurately measuring the intended constructs and that there is a robust convergent relationship among the items within each factor, ensuring the reliability of the measurement process.

Composite reliability (CR) was utilized as an alternative measure of internal consistency reliability, eval-

Table 1 Reliability, Validity and Model Goodness of Fit Indices

Part A: Reliability and Validity Test Result							
Constructs	Cronbach Alpha		AVE		CR		
Marketing Factor (MF)	0.893		0.561		0.899		
Operation Factor (OF)	0.890		0.540		0.891		
HR Factor (HRF)	0.900		0.504		0.901		

Part B: Model Goodness of Fit Indices							
Construct	CMIN/df	GFI	AGFI	CFI	NFI	TLI	RMSEA
MF	0.765	0.987	0.974	1.000	0.987	1.000	0.000
OF	1.048	0.982	0.964	0.999	0.981	0.999	0.014
HRF	1.663	0.959	0.931	0.981	0.954	0.974	0.054

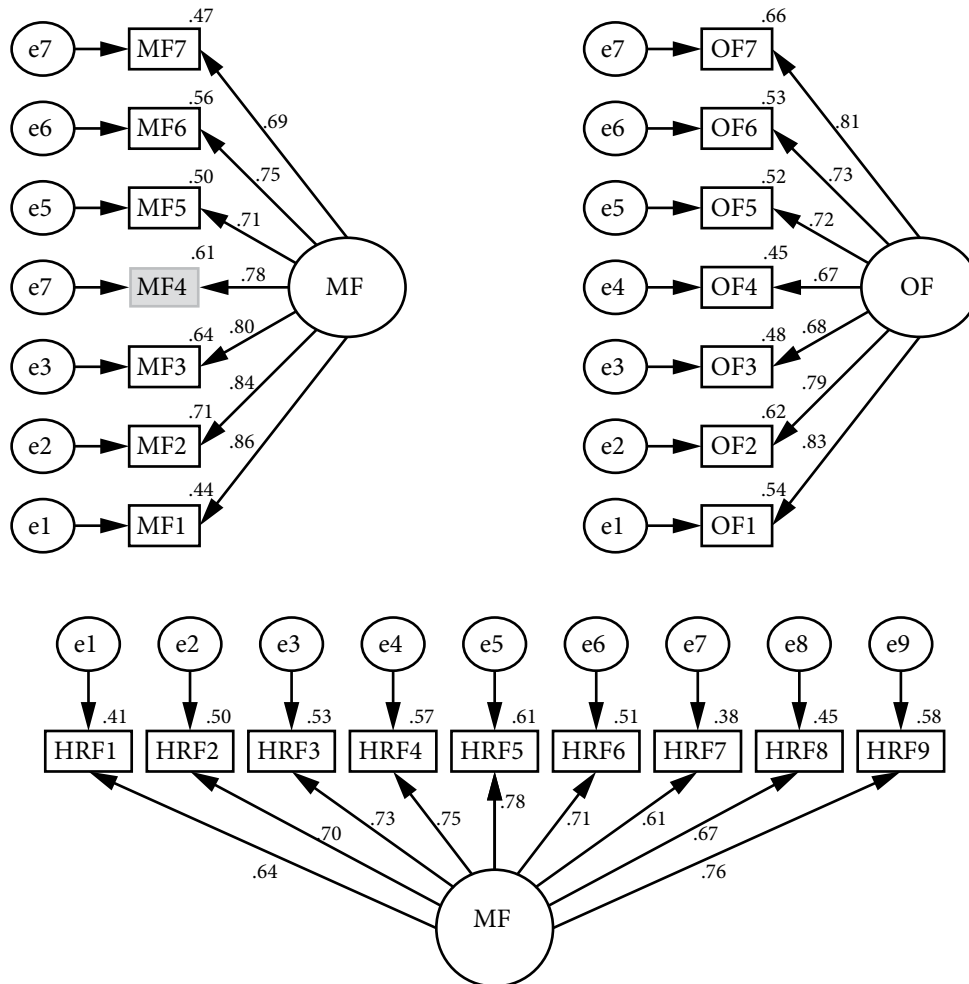


Figure 1 Relationships Between Marketing, Operational and HR Factors and Their Respective Challenges

uating the correlation among items within each factor. With CR values of 0.899 for the Marketing Factor, 0.891 for the Operational Factor, and 0.901 for the HR Factor, the study indicates high internal consistency, surpassing even the reliability indicated by Cronbach's Alpha. CR is considered a more accurate estimate of reliability, particularly in cases where factors consist of only a few items. Unlike Cronbach's Alpha, CR accounts for differences in factor loadings among items and is less susceptible to the number of items in a factor, providing a more precise measure of consistency.

Discussion

A key contention of this study lies in the exclusion of the Economic Factor as a major challenge – an approach informed by the unique geographical and socio-economic context of the research setting. Specifically, the cost of living for customers, while often a significant variable in broader hospitality studies, was deemed less relevant in this particular locale. Of the two initially identified gaps, the cost of living was not recognized as a critical concern. In contrast, Marketing Trends and Dynamics were acknowledged as highly relevant and were thus consolidated under the broader category of the Marketing Factor, reflecting their greater impact on the local hotel industry. This reallocation underscores the study's focus on elements most relevant to local hotel industry dynamics, highlighting the importance of strategic and innovative marketing approaches while deemphasizing economic pressures less pertinent to the local context.

The success of hotels is shaped by a range of influential factors, among which marketing factors remain particularly critical. In an increasingly competitive hospitality landscape, effective marketing strategies are essential for attracting new guests and fostering customer retention. A well-crafted marketing approach not only enhances brand visibility but also enables targeted outreach to key customer segments and the cultivation of long-term loyalty (Kandampully & Hu, 2007). Core elements such as a robust online presence, strategic pricing, and well-executed promotional campaigns play a pivotal role in strengthening a hotel's market position. In the current digital era, social media engagement and online customer re-

views have become especially powerful, significantly shaping consumer perceptions and decision-making processes (Ampountolas et al., 2019). The findings from this study reveal specific marketing challenges and opportunities, offering valuable insights that hotel practitioners can leverage to drive innovation in their marketing strategies and maintain a competitive edge.

Operational efficiency is a cornerstone of effective hotel management, playing a vital role in ensuring smooth daily functioning, enhancing guest satisfaction, and driving overall business success. Elements such as service quality, the condition of hotel facilities, and the adoption of modern technologies are fundamental to delivering a consistently positive guest experience. Efficiently managing core operations – such as check-in and check-out processes, cleanliness standards, and seamless service delivery – is crucial for fostering guest loyalty (Praharaj et al., 2023). This study highlights several pressing operational challenges faced by hotels, including maintaining consistent service standards, recovering business in the aftermath of crises, upholding hygiene and safety protocols, securing cybersecurity and data privacy, and addressing concerns related to energy consumption and housekeeping. These insights highlight the need for hotels to drive innovation in their operational practices, ensuring consistently high service standards and enhanced efficiency in an increasingly competitive environment.

Human Resource Factors are equally vital in delivering exceptional service within the hotel industry. The presence of highly skilled and motivated staff is central to achieving guest satisfaction and building customer loyalty. Key drivers of service quality include strong employee engagement, comprehensive training programmes, and effective communication channels among staff members (Buil et al., 2016). This study identifies several HR-related challenges, such as difficulties in recruiting and retaining skilled personnel, employee burnout, inefficiencies in decision-making, evolving technological demands, stagnation in innovation, management reputation concerns, infrastructure constraints, and regulatory obstacles. These findings emphasize the critical need

for robust human resource management strategies to overcome these challenges, ensuring that hotels maintain a capable, motivated, and efficient workforce dedicated to delivering outstanding service. Top hotel managers are committed to finding innovative solutions to every HR challenge.

While economic factors – such as rising consumable costs, customer living expenses, irregular cash flows, and overall economic volatility – are widely acknowledged as critical drivers in the hotel industry, this study reveals a notable lack of emphasis on these economic challenges within the specific geographic region examined. Although economic fluctuations remain significant influencers of hotel performance, impacting both revenue streams and operational strategies, their perceived relevance appears diminished in this local context. Expert consultations in the study highlight that hotels in the area are counteracting economic volatility through innovative pricing strategies. These adaptive approaches underscore the importance of embracing flexible business models and practicing sound financial management to navigate an ever-changing economic landscape.

The Eastern region of India is gaining increasing global prominence in the hospitality sector, driven by its rich cultural heritage, rapidly emerging tourist destinations, and rising levels of investment. This positions the region as a growing hub for both international travellers and sustainable hotel development. Hotel industries in this region are becoming increasingly attentive to the dual demand from global tourists and domestic travellers, recognizing the pressing need to address industry-specific challenges. Identifying these challenges is a critical first step toward developing effective, forward-looking solutions – solutions that must align with the dynamic and evolving nature of the global hospitality landscape.

Conclusion

In the dynamic and ever-evolving hospitality industry, hotels are continuously shaped by a complex interplay of internal and external factors that directly impact their success and operational efficiency. Marketing emerges as a critical pillar, establishing a hotel's visibility, reputation, and ability to attract and retain

guests – forming the foundation of its competitive advantage. Equally vital is operational efficiency, which ensures seamless service delivery, enhances guest experiences, and drives cost optimization. Additionally, the performance of hotel staff – characterized by skilled service, effective communication, and strong engagement – plays a pivotal role in elevating guest satisfaction and overall operational outcomes.

The intricate relationship between marketing strategies, operational effectiveness, and human resource management fundamentally defines success in the hospitality sector. By strategically addressing these interconnected dimensions, hotels can significantly strengthen their competitiveness, profitability, and responsiveness to the evolving demands of the market. This study's comprehensive examination of Marketing, Operational, and Human Resource Factors offers valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities facing the industry, providing practical guidance for professionals aiming to refine their strategies, enhance performance, and sustain a robust market presence amid intense competition.

Practical Implications

The practical implications of this study hold substantial value for hotel operators, especially in emerging tourist destinations such as Eastern India. By pinpointing critical challenges across marketing, operations, and human resources, the study offers actionable insights that enable practitioners to effectively navigate the evolving hospitality landscape. These findings equip hotel managers with the knowledge to make informed decisions, refine strategic approaches, and enhance operational efficiency – ultimately leading to improved guest satisfaction and stronger competitive positioning. Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of adopting a strategic mindset to meet the shifting demands of global tourism, providing valuable guidance for hotel operators not only in India but also across other emerging markets worldwide.

Limitations

This study acknowledges several inherent methodological limitations, including potential sample bias, measurement errors, and constraints associated with

the chosen factor analysis approach. While these limitations do not diminish the study's core contributions, they highlight important areas for refinement in future research. To overcome these challenges, future studies could expand sample sizes, explore alternative analytical methods, and enhance the precision of measurement instruments. By addressing these aspects, subsequent research can build on the current findings, improving both the robustness and generalizability of results, and offering deeper insights into the complex dynamics of the hotel industry.

Scope for future studies

Although this study has examined marketing, operational efficiency, and human resource management as distinct factors, it is essential to acknowledge their intrinsic interdependence. Strategic marketing drives bookings and enhances visibility, while operational efficiency ensures a seamless and memorable guest experience. At the same time, human resource management is central to both areas, directly shaping staff performance, service quality, and overall customer satisfaction. Future research should adopt a holistic perspective that explores the dynamic interactions among these factors, recognizing how they collectively reinforce one another to build a cohesive and high-performing hotel operation. Such an integrated approach is vital for advancing sustained success in the evolving hospitality industry.

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