



CONSUMER FASCINATING DETERMINANTS OF GLOBAL FIVE-STAR HOTEL BRANDS: A SRI LANKAN PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract:

Global brands for five-star hospitality firms such as Sheraton, Hilton, Marriot, Intercontinental, and Shangri-La were examined to scrutinize the determinants of global five-star hotel brands by exploring brand awareness, brand preference and brand association. Multi-methodological approach addresses the determinants of global five star hotel brands with a perspective in Sri Lanka, an emerging tourism small island to answer several questions: (1) how do global consumers of different cultural and different geographical regions and domestic Sri Lankan consumers evaluate global five star hotels brands differently? (Brand Awareness) (2) what determines their preference for global five-star hotels brands? (Brand Preference); and (3) how do different types of services associated with global five-star hotels brands influence consumer preferences? (Brand Association).

JEL: D11; D12; L83

Keywords: determinants, domestic tourists, five-star hotels, global, global brands, global tourists, Hilton, Inter-Continental, Shangri-La, Sheraton, Sri Lanka, Marriot

1. Introduction

Referring to Sufi and Shojale (2018) between the eras from 1998 to 2018 there were appropriate keywords to introduce the five-star hotels such as “luxury hotels”, “upscale hotels”, “deluxe hotels”, “high-end hotels”, and “four- or five-star hotels”. Consumers search the luxury hotel facilities to spend their free time and the extra money to receive the quality of services to fulfil their leisure ambitions in an extra superior living style.

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According to Liang, Schuckert & Law (2019) global five-star hotel brands depend on by catering exclusive hospitality services to their guests. According to Rather, Tehseen & Parrey (2018) this exclusive or elite living style introduces the customers an extraordinary association with a memorable lifetime experience at global five-star hotel brands. Accordingly, Lo, Im, Chen & Qu (2017) pointed out worldwide tourists invest multibillion dollars to receive the global five-star hotel brands hospitality services which included a price premium. When referring to Perez & Manzano (2019) principally the global five-star hotel brands industry consists of three (3) service areas as, accommodations, food and beverage and travel and tourism. Hence, “*service is an act of respect, kindness and love in the heart of hospitality industry*” (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, p.259).

According to Simpson & Ayeh (2019) 75.5% of world’s luxury hotels are located in the United States and the rest of top five being the U.K., Canada, Hong Kong, and France. Also, Rishi & Joshi (2016) clarified major economic slowdowns in the luxury hospitality industry in the Asia-Pacific region revealed a significant growth of 18% in 2017 and 11% in 2018 (Timetric, 2018). When referring to Adzoyi, Blomme & Honyenuga (2018), Kolter & Armstrong (2016, pp. 273); Keller, Parasuraman & Jacob, (2016) initially brand associations are appeared as “*the foundation of brand – building*”. As a key provider hospitality industry in 2010 jobs for over 235 million people, and on a global scale, this is 8% of all the people employed. In the US alone, the hospitality services industry generated 5,633,000 jobs in 2015, and this amounts to 3.8% of the total number of people employed in the US. By the end of 2016, the employment figure grew by 1.2% to 5,698,000. This upward trend looks set to continue as the industry is forecast to employ 18,493,000 people in the US by 2026 (Kolter & Armstrong, 2016). Therefore, to build a strong awareness of the global five-star hotel brands services is highly essential.

1.2 The Problem Statement

The tourists around the world highly keen on associating the global five-star hotel brands by spending 20% to 25% price premium than other star class hotels. Hence, there is a requirement to scrutinize “*determinants of global five star hotel brands hospitality services that influence to decide the services brand awareness, services brand preferences & services brand associations*” in the consumer’s perception with a greater insight into services branding in a theoretical and practical standpoint.

1.2.1 Primary objectives that scrutinize in the determinants of global five-star hotel brands

- 1) To define the consumer fascinated determinants_of global five-star hotel brands (Identify determinants for brand preference than the lower star class brands).
- 2) To explore the psychological & cultural distinguishes that caused the consumers to do the brand preference on global five-star hotel brands.
- 3) To determine the most influential (Preferred) brand associations & least influential brand associations in determining for global five-star hotel brands.

- 4) To evaluate the most influential link /origin hoteliers make to get the consumers brand awareness & brand association to select the global five-star hotel brands services.
- 5) To explore the managerial implications of increasing the quality of service to promote the brand preference and brand association for global five-star hotel brands.

1.2.2 Research Questions

- 1) What are the consumer fascinated determinants of global five star hotel brands to make the brand preference on global five star hotel brands than lower brands?
- 2) How psychological distinguishes & cultural influence caused the consumers to do the brand preference on global five-star hotel brands?
- 3) Which brand associations are most influential (preferred) & least influential to the consumers in determining for global five-star hotel brands?
- 4) What are the most influential links /origins hoteliers (management & staff) make to get the consumers brand awareness & brand association for choosing the global five-star hotel brands?
- 5) What are the managerial implications to increase the quality of service to promote the brand preference & association for global five-star hotel brands?

Categorized the global five-star hotel brands services for cluster analysis of consumers' perceptions of services which included three distinct groups. As Category I: customer contact individually e.g. health services, spa and beauty care, Category II: low customer contact services e.g. appliance repair, laundry services, pest control service. Category III: moderates customer contact services e.g. cinema theaters, cafeterias, grocery stores etc.

1.3 Composition of the Services Discussed in this Research

Overall out of 120 global five-star hotel brands services considered for higher and lower preference global five-star hotel brands united. Here cited 110 various global five-star hotel brands services. Additionally, 56 out of 60 high preference global five-star hotels brands services identified as different brands and 54 out of the 60 low preference global five-star hotels brands services identified were various brands. Services type in concisely.

Service Category I: comprised of comfortable utilities services (6), reservation services - flights , rooms and tours (4), spa and beauty therapy (2), travel services & valet parking (6), beverages (4), health centers (6), primary products supply services (8) interior arrangement services (2), and laundry and dry cleaning centers (2).

Service Category II: comprised of appliance repair services (4) primary products services (8), pest control services (1), ATM services (6), cleaning services (4), landscaping services (6), telecommunication services (7), internet services (2), room cleaning services (4), swimming maintenance and rescue services (2).

Service Category III: comprised of services which moderate wear – houses (14), theme amusement organizing (2), cafeterias (2), fast food restaurant facility (8), health

development games (1), tour facilities and guides services (7), grocery stores (4), cinema halls (2).

1.4 Literature Review

The global five-star hotel brands industry is based on services they cater. As a result of that attributes of services and the importance of branding them should be scrutinized and elaborated. On this purpose firstly will clarify the attributes of brands and further expands how brands can apply on services to endow the power to the services. According to Murawski (2019) when the services that the hoteliers provide unable to touch or intangible, unpreserved, varied qualities or skills and inseparability conditions brand development became critical. Consumers' should realize the dissimilarities among brands in the product or service category. Referring to Fatma, Khan, & Rahman (2018) brand meaning is determined by the associations that a consumer builds with the brand. Kotler & Keller (2017) noted the strong brands are described by "*considering perceived quality*". The service process that the customers' experienced with global five-star hotel brands services providers or employees will be overviewed to elaborate the research and strategies to investigate how they work as determinants (Kotler & Keller, 2017; Kotler & Armstrong, 2016). The literature review observes consumers' services brand awareness, services brand preferences and services brand associations & services brand satisfaction with a Sri Lankan perspective empirically and quantitatively across the questionnaire and interviews. The sample groups were chosen in a systematic sampling method.

1.4.1 Presented Brand

According to Zemke, Zhong & Raab (2019) the word of brand is derived from the Old Norse word "brandr", which means "to burn". In the sixteenth century, whiskey distillers, shipped their products in wooden barrels under the name of producer burned or "branded" by placing it on the top of each barrel. This brand name introduced the maker to the consumer and controlled substitution of low-quality products (Kotler & Armstrong 2016). Hence brands perform valuable functions and it creates barriers for entering the substitute products and services into customer association and preference. Brand loyalty also can translate into customer willingness to pay a higher price often even 20 percent to 25 percent more than competing brands (Kotler & Keller 2017). The American Marketing Association (2018) defines a brand has a "*name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition*". When searching Eldho, Babu, Arshinder & Chandrasekharan (2018) a brand enlarges scope to a product "*to differentiate it in some way from other products designed to satisfy the same need*" (Kotler & Keller 2017). The content investigation of the brands definitions in the branding literature (Kotler & Keller 2017, pp 323) recognizes twelve ways brands are viewed in the past research: as a legal instrument, a logo, a company, a shorthand, a risk reducer, an identity system, an image in consumers' minds, a value system, a personality, a relationship, a value enhancer and an evolving entity. In simply the brand is one of the most valuable

intangible assets to an organization. And building a strong brand is careful planning, a deep long-term commitment. When referring to Fatma, Khan & Rahman (2018) building a strong brand is a never-ending process.

Referring to Kucukusta (2017), Hua, Wei, Agnes, Franco & Wang (2018) elements of presented; the global five star hotel brands services associations can be scrutinized with the consumers' reported data such as price, policies offer, provided facilities, appearance of employees, publicity and symbolic representations used by the hoteliers. According to Metodijeski, Filiposki & Micev (2018) as they noted the unavailability of theoretical foundation of services branding literature here have been occupied the literature on branding the tangible aspects to address the global five star hotel brands services associations and analyze the determinants of global five star hotel brands. Referring to Rishi, Joshi (2016) Health of the global five-star hotel brands equity measuring managers became chiefly interested in built up on two basic components as global five-star hotel brands awareness and brands associations.

1.4.2 Services Brand Carried (Dimension Factor that Expand the Presented Brand)

When referring to Amin, Aldakhil, Wu, Rezaei & Cobanoglu, C., (2017) the brand that the global five-star hotel services carry listed according to the participants' association, was taken into discuss the determinants of global five-star hotel brands. When referring to Alrawadieh & Dincer (2019) these explanations prove how hoteliers could enhance their global five-star hotel brands name and services when it is extremely intangible. Hence branded products they offer in every requirement is considerable to enhance the brand & determining the global five-star hotel brands.

1.4.3 Policies (Dimension Factor that Expand the Presented Brand)

According to Ortega (2016) elaborated the policies offer to consumers. It exhibits the devoted policies that enhance the consumer's satisfaction and loyalty as a determinant of the global five-star hotel brands services. Ren, Qiu, Ma & Lin (2018) pointed out some of the policies that can be appreciated by the consumers.

1.4.4 Price (Dimension Factor that Expand the Presented Brand)

Masa'deh, Alananzeh, Tarhini, Algudah (2018), Nguyen & Gunasti (2018) have revealed the consumers as "*price takers*" because of the face value or as they accept it given (Kotler & Keller, 2017). This situation explicates the consumer's brand loyalty to pay additional amount for the brand (Kotler & Armstrong, 2016). When referring to Zeng (2018), Veloso, Leal, Malheiro & Burguillo (2019), the "*consumers' preference of prices*" according to their vision some are fair, some prices are typical, the last price they paid, upper bound prices or lower bound prices, historical competitor prices, expected future price and usual discounted prices etc. Hence price as a determinant decides the existence or survival of the industry. Alexakis & Jiang (2019) noted the price hoteliers' target, the maximum current profit they could earn directly and decide the facilities they could provide for their consumers, employees to provide the satisfactory quality service and future

investments of the industry. In brief; Customers have less price sensitivity to low cost items or what they buy infrequently, when there are less or no substitutes, higher prices and became a small part of lifetime experience. Also, Lo, Im, Chen & Qu (2017) explained hoteliers applied the pricing strategies for their consumers. E.g. Marriot vacation club – vacation villas high in prices, Marriot marquis high price range, Marriot high – medium price, Renaissance medium high price, Court yard medium price, and Towne Place Suites medium and low price Marriot hotel convey the price tiers (Kotler & Keller, 2017; Kotler & Armstrong, 2016).

1.4.5 Management and Staff

According to Liang, Schuckert & Law (2019) global five-star hotel brands based on the services they cater to their consumers. As a result of that primarily concern the management and staff and its dimensions to identify the contribution of consumer brand awareness, consumer brand preference and consumer brand association as described in the below.

1.4.6 Employee Appearance (Dimension Factor that Expand the Management & Staff)

Service marketing literature suggests the importance of the physical appearance of service staff or employees for the services brands (Kotler & Keller, 2017). In this study participants also revealed pleasant appearance of employees encourage to have link with the global five-star hotel brands as a determinant factor.

1.4.7 Employee Behavior (Dimension Factor that Expand the Management & Staff)

Referring to Adzoyi, Blomme & Honyenuga (2018) employees frequently achieve to fulfil the industry goals with their potentials and opportunities they receive. Hence, relevant to Alameeri, Ajmal, Hussain & Helo (2018) industry human resource management (HRM) practices rigorously seek their employees' innovative work behavior (IWB). Also referring to Farha, Al-Kwafi & Ahmed, Z., U., (2018) this innovative work behavior has correlations with the employee behavior, employee attitude, and their competency and employee relationships according to the analysis. When further referring to Farha, Al-Kwafi & Ahmed, Z., U., (2018) the salient of employee behavior associations in the consumers' minds, suppose the necessity of these associations as an element of tourists fascinating for the global five-star hotel brands services. Theoretically considered the importance of the employees to the services brands (Kotler & Armstrong 2016).

1.4.8 Employee Attitude (Dimension Factor that Expand the Management & Staff)

According to Simpson & Ayeh (2019) hotel ready ness to offer service is positively or negatively correlate & moderate the employees' attitude. Relevant to Farha, Al-Kwafi & Ahmed, Z., U., (2018) hoteliers should launch appropriate strategies and training programs for employees to face the innovative opportunities and to enhance employees' attitude positively as determinants of global five-star hotel brands services.

1.4.9 Employee Competency (Dimension Factor that Expand the Management & Staff)

As well as Al-Kwif, Frankwick & Ahmed, Z., U., (2019) discussing about operations under challenging conditions to achieve the service productivity service industries can train the current service staff to produce their maximum output by attaching the technological power to save the time and cost (Kotler & Keller 2017; Kotler & Armstrong, 2016).

1.4.10 Employee Relationship with Customers (Dimension Factor of Management & Staff)

According to the marketing analysis of Alameeri, Ajmal, Hussain & Helo (2018) successful service companies has given priority for their customers and employees both. According to Wu, Pearce & Dongto (2017) for achieving the service productivity service industries can train the current service staff to produce their maximum output or hire the skillful employees who can achieve the company productivity by developing the number of the service staff. Further can be attached the technological power to save the time and cost (Kotler & Keller 2017; Kotler & Armstrong 2016). When considering to Lo & Yao (2019), Liang, Schuckert & Law (2019) the employee staff encouragement and support is highly important in global five-star hotel brands. Guizzardi, Monti & Ranieri (2016) further clarified the negative side noted that participants could easily recognize the absence of personalized treatment from global five-star hotel brands employees' services. Referring to Sufi, T., & Shojale, N., (2018), Kapferer & Florence (2016) how luxury brands grow yet remain desirable, as a result of that marketers have taken into caring customers at the heart of their business development.

1.4.11 Service Process

According to Serna, Casellas, Saff & Gerrikagoitia (2018) principally address the convenience or reliability of service. From the intention of receiving the service until the work get done continue the service process. This service process goes on until the consumer leaves the hotel after spending the vacation. Hence, Zopiatis & Melanthiou (2019) explicated service process should be a courteous and cordial connection in between the consumer and the service provider to give them a memorable experience at hotel. When referring to Rosenzweig, Queenan, Kelley (2019) requires cooperation of three broad areas as external marketing success is based on preparing, pricing, distributing and promoting the services to consumers. The internal marketing describes the training and motivating the employees to serve the customers and the interactive marketing is keen on skills of the employees to serving the customers. Masa'deh, Alananzeh, Tarhini & Algudah (2018) clarifies customers' judge service not only the technical quality.

1.4.12 Convenience (Dimension Factor that Expand the Service process)

To purchase the global five-star hotel brands services how easy or felt difficult have been explicated by Shahijan, Rezaei & Amin (2018)

1.4.13 Reliability (Dimension Factor that Expand the Service Process)

The heterogeneous nature of services (Kotler & Armstrong, 2016) consumers hesitate whether the service providers supply the same standard services repeatedly. The dependability and repetitive quality are in the global five-star hotel brands service process was valued by the participants have been explicated by Ihtiyar, Gulsah Ihtiyar & Galay (2018).

1.5 Psychological & Cultural Influences (Mediating Variable)

The consumers' psychological aspiration mediates with the presented brand, and to the management & staff for catering services to the consumers and their satisfaction and loyalty. When look into Kapferer & Florence (2016) Sigmund Freud had explained that customers buying behavior is vastly unconscious and some subconscious motive may affect to make these decisions. According to Falcón, Santana & Pérez (2016), Iddamalgodha (2017), Fok & Yeung (2016) psychologically when the employees satisfied and happy with their services, they devote to enhance industry and supply the consumer satisfactory service and develop their loyalty. Rosenzweig, Queenan & Kelley (2019); Melhem, Zeffane & Albaity (2018); Umasuthan, Park & Ryu (2017) have clarified how important these psychological aspiration for employees for innovative behavior and expectations at service supply. Adzoyi, Blomme & Honyenuga (2018); Pérez & Manzano (2018) pointed out consumers expect for experiencing new foods, feel salubrious weather conditions, visit specific cultural items that inherited to the visited country, associate the native people, and entertain the indigenous cultural events during their tour. Kotler & Armstrong (2016); Lemy, Goh & Ferry (2019) noted internationally majority of employees who employ in global five-star hotel brands has been selected from their native population and they dress, behave and has attitude appropriate to their culture. Hence, Nordhorn, Scuttari & Pechlaner (2018) explicated if consumers or service providers or one of these parties may refuse to assume this cultural deviation will turn it to provide a negative influence.

1.6 Advertising and Symbols (Moderating Variables)

As moderators or one of the origins of selecting the global five-star hotel brands services in the modern world advertising has taken considerable priority. Hence advertising is a paid presentation that disperses by using electronic and print media to boost the publicity for the products and services. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2016; Kotler & Keller, 2017). As a result of that by advertising for a period of time can build the brand name, brand value and company image to recall the brand at a global recognition. Hence, advertising double the investments and get it direct experience of 99.7% and the rest commercials get 3% (Kotler & Keller, 2017). Referring to Samuel, Peattie & Doherty (2018) elaborated the informal communication such as rumors, gossips and personal views how they affect. When look into Yang & Mattila (2018) pointed out the advertisement campaign or commercials and symbols; some noted the slogans the way of receiving information.

Referring to Adzoyi, Blomme & Honyenuga (2018) the AIDA model in marketing communication exhibits this process of awareness, preference and associating the global five star hotel brands services across the attention (an awareness), interest (preference), desire (idea of associating to fulfill a need), and action (which decide the influential level of satisfaction).

1.7 Facilities (Moderating Variable)

According to Sheresheva, Polyanskaya & Matveev (2016) the facilities perceived with the opinion of global five star hotel brands consumers accessibilities, the layout, the plan of the building, the cleanliness, the lighting, the merchandising, and the influence of the foundation all of these links combine with global five star hotel brands services facility. As Scholz & Voracek (2016); Henderson (2017) prove that facilities have become a determinant of the global five-star hotel brand services awareness, services brand preference and services brand association.

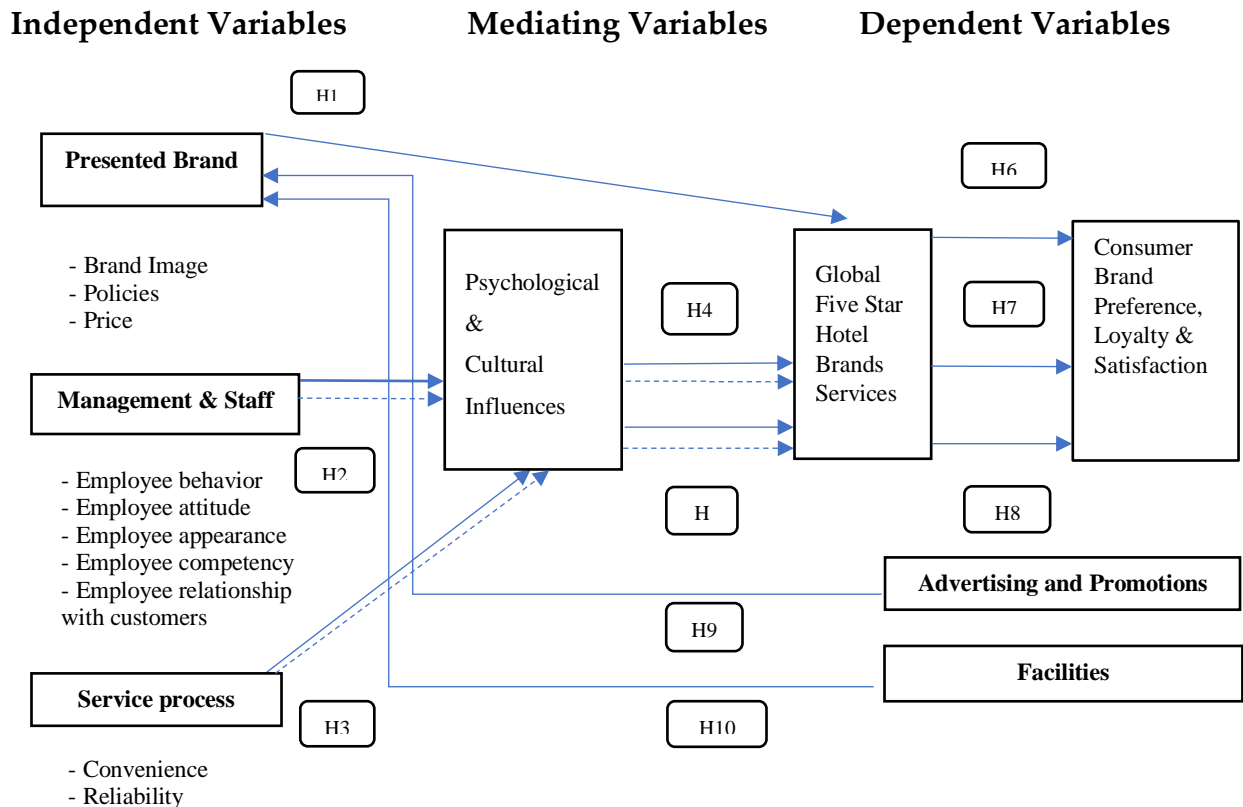
1.8 Global Five Star Hotel Brands Services

The global five-star hotel brands services have a direct correlation with the consumer satisfaction & Loyalty. Liang, Schuckert & Law (2019), Nordhorn, Scuttari & Pechlaner (2018) when describing the service quality had clarified the disadvantage of employees do not assume the customers cultural differences and aspirations. And Akroush, Jraisat, Kurdieh, Faouri & Qatu (2016) pointed employees and the management of the hotel industry should realize the prominence of their guests' requirements, needs and wants, cultural and psychological aspiration to provide successful service to enhance the industry as a determinant of the global five star hotel brands.

1.9 Research Model & Conceptual Framework

The model has been constructed in view of filling the gap between the global five-star hotel brands services and the consumer satisfaction & loyalty. The literature review also has been scrutinized according to the hypotheses that display in the conceptual framework in figure 1.10- I further elaborated the dimensions that attached with the independent variables.

Figure 1.10: I Conceptual Framework



1.10 Theory - Research Design and Rationale

Consumer attitude towards the brand represents another indicator of loyalty and brand strength. Do the customers like the brand? Or have a favorable attitude towards the brand? Generally accepted brand attitude measure is to simply ask consumers to rate their attitude towards the brand on a Likert scale very unfavorable attitude to very favorable attitude (Edell and Staelin, 1983; Gardner, 1985; Smith and Swinyard, 1983, 1988). Loyalty is a core dimension of brand equity (Aaker 1996). A basic indicator of loyalty is the amount a customer will pay for the brand in comparison with another brand offering similar benefits. Research reveals services supplier's relationship with the customers to choose the brand from the respondent's perspective that was vastly ignored in the literature. Hence this research is based on survey theory to collect primary data from the all participants who consume the global five-star hotel brands in Sri Lankan context approximately 100000. Sample size was decided by Krejcie & Morgan (Uma & Sekaran, 2013).

1.11 Research Methodology

This research is being explicated in a descriptive manner to develop the awareness for scrutinizing the determinants of global five-star hotel brands services. Further collected data by interviewing the sample units that selected out from the population those who consume the global five star hotel brands services in Sri Lankan context and forwarded them open ended several questions and close ended several questions to provide answers

by referring throughout the 3 sets of services categories. Also occupied the modern technical facilities for collecting data to save time and expenses such as video conferencing, telephone, social media facilities. Video conferencing was most useful for collecting data, because could identify at once their nonverbal cues and gestures for the directed questions. Their answers explicate which brand associations are most important, display the influential factors that consumers associated, the psychological background, the link of origin they associated and managerial influence for service quality improvement etc. Including number of association and valence of association also investigate qualitatively and quantitatively. And identified the sample size relevant to the Krejcie & Morgan (1970) by referring the Sekaran & Bougie (2013).

2. Discussion, Managerial Implications and Conclusion

Referring to Alrawadieh & Dincer (2019) reputation management fortifies to obtain the managers' experience and intuition for conveying the consumer perception on deciding the consumer preference and association of global five-star hotel brands. Accordingly, it became significant to notice whether the hypotheses can be accepted or rejected. Hence Bravo, Martinez & Pina (2019) noted to identify the consumer satisfaction and loyalty the managerial implications is highly beneficial. Aranda, Vallespín & Molinillo (2019), Sharma & Mishra (2018) explicated the consumers' links with the origin of global five-star hotel brands services associations, whether the origin is direct experience, word of mouth or across the commercials etc.

2.1 Ethical Considerations

Salazar (2018) noted challengers that arise in the research could solve in many ways by acknowledging the participants of this study and management & staff as noted below;

- 1) Informed about structured and unstructured preliminary data gathering.
- 2) assured the employees for keeping their responses confidential and will not be
- 3) Divulged to anyone made employees participate cooperatively in a positive manner.
- 4) Also encouraged by offering to win a lottery to have a meal at a five-star hotel brand.
- 5) Also protected from physical and psychological harm and did not note any except their demographic details that avoided misleading expressions. it led accurate data, and
- 6) Let the freedom and opportunity to decline of giving statements, expressions and allowed for revealing negative responses to do an accurate research successfully.

2.2 Data Analysis Plan

This research collects the primary data to develop the research and illuminate the criteria in a deductive approach with a positivist paradigm to elaborate the determinants of global five-star hotel brands. That high and low preference consumers received on global

five-star hotel brands services type have been analyzed & elaborated the influential level. And applied the SERVQUAL model & measured the validity with the help of conjoint analysis. The psychological distinguishes and the managerial implications were scrutinized for the increment of global five-star hotel brand preference. And applied the SPSS system 24 to justify these data and used Cronbach's alpha tests to check the reliability of these variable and hypotheses.

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