

## THE INFLUENCE OF EMPLOYEE'S PROFESSIONALISM, COURTESY AND PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND LOYALTY

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### Abstract

In today's competitive landscape, customer satisfaction and loyalty are essential for the success of the service industry. This study explores how employee professionalism, courtesy, and problem-solving abilities influence customer satisfaction and foster long-term loyalty in the hotel. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research combines quantitative data from questionnaires filled out by 391 employees and customers at budget hotels, Delhi NCR region. The results indicate a strong positive relationship between employee professionalism, courtesy, and problem-solving skills with customer satisfaction then gain the customer loyalty. The results also underscore the importance of investing in employee development, particularly in areas of professionalism, courtesy, and problem-solving. Enhancing these skills can directly improve customer satisfaction, which, in turn, fosters stronger customer loyalty.

**Keywords:** [Professionalism, Courteous, Problem-Solving, Service quality, Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty]

### Introduction

Hospitality is frequently seen as a type of service that exceeds the usual standards, reflecting not only the way the service is provided but also the attitude behind it. (Macmillan, 2010) The dictionary presents two related definitions of hospitality. The first describes it as "the display of friendly and generous behavior towards customers, aimed at creating a welcoming environment." Conversely, the second defines hospitality as "the provision of food, beverages, and entertainment by hotels to their guests." (Lashley C. M., 2001) described the concept of hospitality requires that guests recognize the host's warmth through acts of kindness, a genuine desire to please, and respect for the customer. Employee behavior encompasses the various actions that hotel staff undertake while carrying out their responsibilities. (Hanna et al., 2004). Some of these behaviors can be positive, involving employees taking proactive steps that benefit the hotel, their colleagues, and the customers. On the other hand, there may also be negative behaviors that could disrupt a productive work environment. (Bowen & Shoemaker, 1998). In the service industry, employee behaviors are essential for creating connections with customers. They are a key factor in developing successful working relationships with clients. (Grönroos, 2015). The primary factors affecting customer satisfaction and loyalty are employees' professionalism, courtesy, and problem-

solving skills. Therefore, a strong brand presence in the service industry is largely built through the interactions of service employees, especially those on the frontlines who directly interact with customers. The attitudes, skills, behaviors, and personal traits of employees play a significant role in shaping customer loyalty. (Bowen, 1985) This study explores how three key employee traits—professionalism, courtesy, and problem-solving skills—impact customer satisfaction and loyalty. **Professionalism** refers to the skills, behavior, and attitude displayed by employees when engaging with customers. **Courtesy** encompasses the politeness, respect, and attentiveness that employees demonstrate during interactions. **Problem-solving skills** involve an employee's ability to manage customer complaints, resolve issues effectively, and provide solutions that address customer needs. While the connection between employee performance and customer outcomes has been widely acknowledged in service management research, there is limited focus on how specific employee attributes directly influence customer satisfaction and loyalty. Existing studies often address these qualities separately or as part of broader concepts like service quality, but there is a gap in research that examines the individual impact of professionalism, courtesy, and problem-solving skills on customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Given the growing competition in today's market, understanding how these employee attributes affect customer satisfaction is essential for companies aiming to retain customers. Loyal customers contribute not only to repeat business but also to positive word-of-mouth, enhancing the brand's reputation. Moreover, satisfied customers are more likely to overlook service failures if they believe the employee is professional, courteous, and capable of resolving issues effectively. Therefore, this research aims to investigate the influence of employee professionalism, courtesy, and problem-solving skills on customer satisfaction and loyalty. The insights gained will offer practical guidance for businesses seeking to improve employee-customer interactions, optimize service delivery, and foster lasting customer relationships that support long-term organizational success.

#### Literature Review

Fostering and maintaining customer loyalty is essential for sustaining and enhancing the frequency of services or business operations. (Kumar & Shah, 2004) Loyalty can be divided into two distinct types: behavioral loyalty and attitudinal loyalty. Behavioral loyalty includes actions like making repeat purchases, sharing recommendations through word of mouth, and promoting the organization. (Nadiri et al., 2008). In addition, behavioral loyalty can also be defined as re buying of a (Yang & Peterson, 2004) and the regularity of purchases by existing customers and the degree of brand switching observed over a specific timeframe. (Lewis & Soureli, 2006). (Liu-Thompkins, Y., Williams, E. V., & Tam, L., 2010) Attitudinal loyalty refers to a positive assessment that is strong and consistent enough to consistently generate favorable responses toward a product or hotel. Maintaining relationships with current customers is crucial, as the costs of acquiring new customers are generally quite high. (Jahanshahi, Gashti, Mirdamadi, Nawaser Khaksar, 2011) describe one can also attempt to meet customers' unanticipated requirements, as this can result in customer satisfaction and subsequently foster their loyalty to the hotel.

Furthermore, customers tend to maintain a positive outlook and remain loyal to their current service providers. (Szymanski & Henard, 2001). While numerous studies offer empirical proof of a favorable connection between customer satisfaction and loyalty (Kumar et al., 2013), The strength of the satisfaction-loyalty relationship varies significantly in different settings. (Liljander, 2000) The significance of employees' professionalism, courtesy and problem-solving skill during hotel service interactions was highlighted, underscoring the crucial role of personal connections between service providers and customers. It was suggested that greater emphasis should be placed on employees, including front desk, waitstaff, door and bell personnel, as well as cleaning and stewarding staff, who directly interact with customer (Arnett et al., 2002) In the hotel industry, it is noted that since the majority of hotels depend on their employees to provide excellent service, hotel employees can serve as a competitive advantage. (Seiied Mohammad Aghapour Hasiri a\*, Mona Afghani, 2016) investigating and examining customer loyalty in the service sector pointed out that traits like behaviour, attentiveness and problem solving skills in staff members were found to play a significant role in influencing hotel customer loyalty." In the same vein, (Tweneboah-Koduah & Yuty Duweh Farley, 2015) identified that employee assurance, expertise, courtesy, and their capacity to instill trust and confidence were the key elements contributing to satisfaction and served as crucial catalysts for customer loyalty.

#### Research Gap

Previous research has also suggested a connection between a hotel's star rating and customer satisfaction (Zhou et al., 2014a) Previous studies have demonstrated that cultural distinctions, such as geographic location, have a noticeable influence on customer loyalty (Rhee et al., 2016). (Padma & Ahn, 2020) discovered that patrons of upscale hotels possess particular expectations concerning room quality, hygiene and sanitation, and service standards and (Zhou et al., 2014b) explained that most perishable product room and apartment (such as

quality of room), hygiene, location (such as close to monument places and convenience travel mode) and worth (such as tariff of room) are dissatisfiers for customers of luxury hotels. No research has been carried out on the influence of employee's professionalism, courtesy and problem - solving skills on customer satisfaction and loyalty.

### Research Conceptual Model

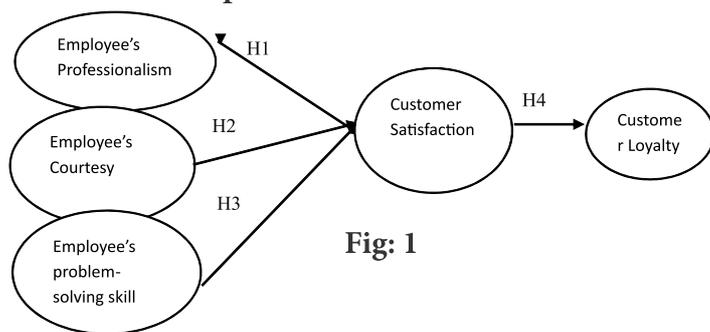


Fig: 1

### Hypothesis

From the above-mentioned model, the following hypotheses are developed:

- H1: Employee's professionalism positively influences customer satisfaction.
- H2: Employee's courtesy positively influences customer satisfaction.
- H3: Employee's problem-solving skill positively influences customer satisfaction.
- H4: Customer Satisfaction Influence Customer Loyalty.

### Research Methodology

Employee Professionalism, Employee Courtesy, and Problem-Solving Skills are typically exogenous variables (independent variables). Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty are endogenous variables (dependent variables). This research can be categorized as descriptive research based on the method of obtaining the considered data and is of correlative type (Harandi,

2008). Since these data are made for studying the distribution of statistical population characteristics through sampling of population, this research is a survey done on the basis of judgmental sampling.

### Data Collection & Analysis Tools

In this research, the design of the questionnaire with 30 questions was primarily based on multiple-item measurement scales taken from previous researches. 16 questions are designed to evaluate employee's professionalism, Courtesy and Problem - solving skills; 14 questions are designed to evaluate customer satisfaction and loyalty. Questionnaire was measured by a seven-point Likert scale, Extremely, Very, fairly satisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, Fairly, Very and extremely dissatisfied. 5 questions are related to personal information of the respondents. For analyzing data derived from questionnaire descriptive analysis and coefficient correlation and Chi square test has been used and the software which have been used for analyzing the data is **Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS)**.

### Validity and Reliability of the study

The degree of systematic or inherent error in a questionnaire is referred to as validity. This will be assessed using SPSS through Pearson correlation (r), where the calculated r value is compared with the critical table value of Pearson correlation. The correlation matrix in Table 1 is aligned with the overall score provided. The significance value for the total score must be less than 0.05 to be considered significant. Table 1 illustrates the correlation matrix, indicating that the total score for all constructs contributes sufficiently to the questionnaire, as its significance value exceeds the minimum threshold (Odom, 2006).

Table 1:

	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
Employee's Professionalism	.449	.000	60
Employee's Courtesy	.610	.000	60
Employee's problem-solving skill	.631	.000	60
Customer Satisfaction	.557	.000	60
Customer Loyalty	.648	.000	60

Cronbach's alpha coefficient is a measure of internal consistency reliability, also referred to as the coefficient alpha technique or dependability alpha coefficient. The dependability value of Cronbach's Alpha for the 30 items/constructs was found to be 0.913 (see Table 2.1). According to (George, 2003), the constructed constructs

demonstrated suitable consistency metrics. If the value of any individual item is lower than the overall reliability value, the scale's Cronbach's alpha for internal consistency is shown in Table 2.1 (0.913). Notably, none of the items in this table were removed.

**Table 2: Reliability Testing**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.913	30

**Data Analysis and Interpretation**

**Table 3:**

<b>Section A</b>		
<b>Domain Wise Employee behaviour</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Employee's Professionalism	12.52	2.79
Courtesy	10.16	3.34
Problem Solving Skill	13.01	4.27

**Employee Professionalism:** With a mean score of **12.52** and a relatively low standard deviation of **2.79**, professionalism is identified as the strongest aspect of employee performance. The moderate positive correlation ( $r = 0.5359$ ,  $p < 0.00001$ ) between employee professionalism and both customer satisfaction and loyalty indicate that employees who demonstrate a high level of professionalism are more likely to improve customer satisfaction, thereby fostering greater loyalty. This relationship is highly statistically significant, further confirming the robustness and reliability of the link between professionalism and positive customer outcomes.

**Employee Courtesy:** Courtesy, with a mean score of **10.16** and a standard deviation of **3.34**, also shows a moderate positive correlation ( $r = 0.5477$ ,  $p < 0.00001$ ) with customer satisfaction and loyalty. While this correlation is slightly stronger than that of professionalism, it still reflects a significant relationship.

The statistical significance of this correlation reinforces the idea that warm, respectful, and courteous interactions are essential in promoting both customer satisfaction and loyalty.

**Problem-Solving Skills:** Employees' problem-solving skills received a mean score of **13.01** with a standard deviation of **4.27**, reflecting a high level of competency in this area. The strong correlation ( $r = 0.6689$ ,  $p < 0.00001$ ) between problem-solving skills and both customer satisfaction and loyalty indicate that employees who can effectively resolve customer issues and provide solutions play a crucial role in improving customer experiences. This moderately strong correlation highlights the importance of equipping employees with strong problem-solving abilities to enhance customer outcomes and build lasting loyalty.

**Employee's professionalism, courtesy and problem-solving skills influence customer satisfaction and Loyalty.**

**Table 4:**

	Mean	SD	r value	p value	Correlation
<b>Employee's Professionalism</b>	12.52	2.79	0.5359	< .00001	moderate positive correlation
<b>Customer Satisfaction</b>	10.83	4.54			

Table 4.1 data analysis reveals a moderate positive correlation between employee **professionalism** and **customer satisfaction**, with a correlation coefficient of **0.5359** and a highly significant p-value of **< 0.00001**. The mean score for employee professionalism is **12.52**, with a relatively low standard deviation of **2.79**, indicating that employees are consistently perceived as professional. In contrast, the mean customer satisfaction score is **10.83**, with a higher standard deviation of **4.54**, suggesting greater variability in how

customers experience satisfaction. This moderate correlation indicates that higher levels of professionalism among employees are linked to increased customer satisfaction, though other factors may also influence overall satisfaction. The extremely low p-value confirms the statistical significance of this relationship, supporting the robustness of the connection between professionalism and customer satisfaction, and minimizing the likelihood that the results are due to chance.

**Table 5:**

	Mean	SD	r value	p value	Correlation
Employee's Courtesy	10.16	3.34	0.5477	< .00001	moderate positive correlation
<b>Customer satisfaction</b>	10.83	4.54			

Table 5 analysis reveals a moderate positive correlation between **employee courtesy** and **customer satisfaction**, with a correlation coefficient of **0.5477** and a highly significant p-value of **< 0.00001**. The mean score for employee courtesy is **10.16**, with a standard deviation of **3.34**, indicating that while employees generally exhibit courteous behavior, there is some variability in how this trait is perceived. Customer satisfaction has a mean score of **10.83** and a higher

standard deviation of **4.54**, suggesting a broader range of satisfaction levels among customers. The positive correlation implies that as employees demonstrate more courtesy in their interactions, customer satisfaction tends to improve. The extremely low p-value confirms the statistical significance of this relationship, underscoring that courteous behavior is a crucial factor in boosting customer satisfaction.

**Table 6:**

	Mean	SD	r value	p value	Correlation
Problem Solving Skill	8.26	4.27	0.6689	< .00001	moderate positive correlation
<b>Customer satisfaction</b>	10.83	4.54			

Table 6 analysis shows a moderate positive correlation between **problem-solving skills** and **customer satisfaction**, with a correlation coefficient of **0.6689** and a highly significant **p-value of < 0.00001**. The mean score for problem-solving skills is **8.26**, with a relatively high standard deviation of **4.27**, suggesting some variability in how employees' problem-solving abilities are perceived. While employees generally demonstrate strong problem-solving skills, the effectiveness of their

solutions may differ across situations. The moderate correlation indicates that employees' capacity to resolve customer issues directly impacts customer satisfaction, with higher problem-solving skills leading to greater satisfaction. The extremely low p-value confirms the statistical significance of this relationship, supporting the conclusion that the positive effect of problem-solving skills on customer satisfaction is substantial and unlikely to be due to chance.

**Table 7:**

**Relationship between Customer satisfaction and Customer Loyalty**

	Mean	SD	r value	p value	Correlation
Customer Satisfaction	8.16	3.56	0.57	0.003	Positive Correlation
Customer Loyalty	10.59	4.63			

**Table 7** shows the correlation between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty (**r = 0.57**, **p = 0.003**) shows a significant positive relationship. This indicates that customers who are more satisfied with the service provided are more likely to become loyal, which has important implications for long-term business success.

**Conclusion**

This study investigates the influence of employee professionalism, courtesy, and problem-solving skills on customer satisfaction and loyalty. The findings reveal that all three employee attributes—professionalism, courtesy, and problem-solving skills—positively impact customer satisfaction and loyalty. Specifically, employee professionalism showed a moderate positive correlation with customer satisfaction (**r = 0.5359**, **p < 0.00001**), suggesting that customers who interact with professional employees are more likely to report higher satisfaction and, consequently, greater loyalty. Similarly, employee courtesy had a moderate positive correlation (**r = 0.5477**, **p < 0.00001**) with customer satisfaction, emphasizing the importance of respectful, polite, and attentive behavior in fostering positive customer experiences. Problem-solving skills displayed the

strongest correlation (**r = 0.6689**, **p < 0.00001**) with both customer satisfaction and loyalty, indicating that employees' ability to effectively resolve issues significantly contributes to customer retention and long-term loyalty.

The results underscore the importance of investing in employee development, particularly in areas of professionalism, courtesy, and problem-solving. Enhancing these skills can directly improve customer satisfaction, which, in turn, fosters stronger customer loyalty. The study aligns with existing literature that highlights the critical role of employee behavior in shaping customer perceptions and outcomes (Hennig-Thurau, 2002); (Zeithaml, 1996) Given the strong correlations observed, organizations that prioritize training employees in these key areas are more likely to experience higher levels of customer satisfaction and enhanced loyalty, ultimately leading to long-term business success. These findings provide actionable insights for companies seeking to improve their service delivery and customer retention strategies in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

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