

# Implementation of SQ GapFil Model in Improvement of Service Quality of Hospitality Management Industries in Sylhet Region of Bangladesh

Jahanjeb Ibne Khaled & Rejaul Abedin

## Abstract:

Bangladesh's tourist attractions include archaeological sites, historical mosques and monuments, resorts, beaches, picnic spots, forests and tribal people, wildlife of various species etc. With the number of tourists coming to Sylhet growing by 8-10 % since 2005, the number has increased due to an increasing number of foreign tourists. Managing tourism, leisure and hospitality firms successfully requires an orientation into the conceptualization and implementation of essentials of service quality. Entirely satisfied foreign tourists shall return to the tourist spots they have visited and they will refer positive word-of-mouth to their near and dear ones. This research investigates some core factors that can affect satisfaction level of international tourists with specific reference to tourism & hospitality industry in Sylhet region of Bangladesh. Another objective is to investigate the reasons why local hotels are failing to attract more foreign tourists; what are the quality lacking for which foreign tourists are complaining about and for why they are not referring friends and families about the hotel. This study determines how SQ Gapfil model can be utilized to overcome such types of quality gaps in hospitality management industry.

**Keywords:** SQ GapFil Model, GAP, service Quality, hospitality management, international tourist arrival.



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## INTRODUCTION

Tourism & Hospitality Management is one of the largest growing industries around the world especially in South Asian region like Bangladesh and it has a tremendous role to the development of recent growing GDP trend in Bangladesh. This research investigates some core factors that can affect satisfaction level of international tourists with specific reference to tourism & hospitality industry in Bangladesh. Entirely satisfied foreign tourists shall return to the tourist spots they have visited and they will refer positive word-of-mouth to their near and dear ones. Hence it is essential to recognize which service quality gaps and factors around the tour destinations have impact on overall satisfaction of global tourists. Out of this research, primary data have been collected from 40 real tourists/ guests of different hotels located in Sylhet region using a well structured “ SQ GAPFIL QUESTIONNAIRE” consisting 6 (six) renowned local hotels. From the outcome of research, it is found that the foreign tourists’ satisfaction significantly depends on hotel service quality, languages, offered amenities in hotels websites, natural beauty, accommodation & transportation facilities, individual security, affordable costs and on different other factors . This research clearly discloses that global tourist satisfaction lies on a complex process where the role of all concern is elemental and those respective concerns should be coordinated with each other in anyway. The concerns are as such directly hotel authorities, tourist spots authorities, local municipalities, local Inhabitants, government of the state itself etc. Besides, this research entitles identifying the hotel & hospitality management’s service quality gaps in comparison with international hotel and tourism standards and weaknesses of hotel and tourism services in greater Sylhet region of Bangladesh.

The objective of this research is to identify the effects of international tourists’ arrival in South Asian region including specially Sylhet region of Bangladesh. Identifying the service quality gaps in hospitality and hotel sectors and implementation of “SQ GapFil Model” in improvement of service quality of hospitality management industries in Sylhet region of Bangladesh. Moreover, based on this research is to provide suggestions to improve service quality in all respective areas of hospitality industry.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

With the number of tourists coming to Sylhet growing by 8-10 % since 2005, the number has increased due to an increasing number of foreign tourists. Therefore tourism industry has become of greater economic importance of the economy of Sylhet region. The international tourism industry has experienced a significant growth in recent years and more hotels and motels are offering exquisite, high- quality and customized service. Therefore the hospitality industry faces more intense global competition from other supply industries. Many researchers have identified quality as critical issue for survival of organizations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Managing tourism, leisure and hospitality firms successfully requires an orientation into the conceptualization and implementation of essentials of service quality. The business environment in the hospitality management industry is highly competitive, each hotel or motel is directly or indirectly competing with each other. The highly competitive environment prompts hotel managers to meet their customer’s expectations as much as possible for the survival and success of the business. In order to develop a sustainable advantage, hotels or motels develop core competencies such as unique combination of processes, skills or assets, Maja Uran (2010). As competitor hotels and motels more closely to each other in terms of product quality, it is the service quality, developed by these core

competencies, which will be used more often to create a competitive distinctiveness, Zeithaml et al. (1990) While in other industries products are produced and consumed separately, in hospitality industry, products are produced and consumed at the same time. It is very tough to conceptualize service quality, as it is intrinsically an elusive concept in hospitality industry, Akbaba (2006). This is why a high quality standard is hard to achieve in this industry. Another point is, there is a direct contact between the employees and consumers that leads to errors that can be easily contributable. Actually these errors are inevitable and our ultimate objective is to minimize them. In the hospitality industry everyone needs to follow a path to fight for quality improvement. Hotel managers try to minimize errors and to improve the guest's perception by developing a quality improvement system. Since 1985, most of the debate has centered around the conceptualization and measurement of service quality based on gap theory system of research. It is evident that the literature of the most of the empirical work had been focused on the gap 5 perceptions – minus – expectations framework, Maja Uran (2010). Expectation of the real customers may not be in consistent with the hotel manager's perception of guest's expectation. Size of the positioning gap in any service firm like hospitality industry is a function of perceptions of managers, upward communication and marketing research etc. The positioning gap is defined as a management lack of understanding the customer's expectations and perception of the service. In two ways it may be minimized; i.e. first initiatives to listen to the customers and second correct understanding. The size of the specification gap in hospitality management is proposed to be a function of: HRM, upward communication of management, feasibility study, standardization of tasks, designing specification etc., Zeithaml et al. (1990). Torres et al. (2013) emphasized that studies are required in the field that include the examination of various kind of feedback i.e. guests, employees and managers. Different types of value provide the hospitality managers to adopt a more comprehensive strategy to collect and analyze data and to take proper action. Little empirical research has existed on the evaluation of service quality of hotels and motels from the perspective of customers in Sylhet. Design, development and delivery of services should be dependent upon the manager's understanding of customer's expectations. Recently service quality has received more attention and few studies have focused on how to establish a reasonable model of assessing service quality especially for 5 star hotels. There is very little empirical research in the arena of the consumer psychology of tourism and leisure. Issues involving eco-tourism or the sustainability perception are relatively neglected. Employees contact with consumers directly should offer consistent quality service that would attract and maintain consumer's loyalty. Thus it is important to understand the perceptions of consumers in relation to the perceptions of employees and managers.

### Perceived Value

Perceived value is the customer's overall assessment of the utility of product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given, Zeithaml (1988). It should be measured from the worth resulting from, or perceived utility from the trade-off between "received" and "given-up". It has a substantial effect upon consumer's purchase decision. It is defined as a direct antecedent of purchase decision and a consequence of perceived service quality. Value is defined as the difference between perceived quality and perceived psychology as well as monetary sacrifice. The system of delivering value through service quality in hospitality management industries is a critical issue for firms competing in the highly competitive tourism market. In this context sacrifice is defined as a broad difference comprising of monetary and non-monetary costs, such as time, effort and risk.

Table 1: Bangladesh as a tourist destination, 2010 - 2016(million) UNWTO

Destinations	International tourist arrivals					International tourism receipts									
	(1000)	Change (%)				Share (%)	(US\$ million)				Share (%)				
		2010	2014	2015	2016*		14/13	15/14	16*/15	2016*		2010	2014	2015	2016*
South Asia		14,741	22,918	23,446	25,273	12.9	2.3	7.8	8.2	20,078	29,758	31,554	33,847	9.2	
Afghanistan		..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	86	84	82	49	0.0	
Bangladesh	TF	303	125	..	..	-15.5	..	..	..	87	153	150	175	0.0	
Bhutan	TF	41	133	155	210	14.9	16.	35.1	0.1	40	84	94	90	0.0	
India	TF	5,776	13,107	13,284	14,569	88.1	1.4	9.7	4.7	14,490	19,700	21,013	22,427	6.1	
Iran	VF	2,938	4,967	5,237	4,942	4.2	5.4	-5.6	1.6	2,438	3,841	3,868	..	..	
Maldives	TF	792	1,205	1,234	1,286	7.1	2.4	4.2	0.4	1,713	2,696	2,569	2,730	0.7	
Nepal	TF	603	790	539	753	-0.9	##	39.7	0.2	343	487	481	446	0.1	
Pakistan	TF	907	965	..	..	70.8	..	..	..	305	282	317	323	0.1	
Sri Lanka	TF	654	1,527	1,798	2,051	19.8	17.	14.0	0.7	576	2,431	2,981	3,518	1.0	

Source: World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) ©.

(Data as collected by UNWTO, July 2017)

**Series of International tourist arrivals and departures:**

TF = International tourist arrivals at frontiers (overnight visitors, i.e. excluding same-day visitors)

VF = International visitors arrivals at frontiers (tourists and same-day visitors)

THS = International tourists arrivals at hotel and similar establishments

TCE = International tourists arrivals at collective tourism establishments

TD = Departures of tourists (overnight visitors, i.e. excluding same-day visitors)

VD = Departures of both overnight and same-day visitors

\* = Provisional figure or data

.. = Figure or data not (yet) available

I = Change of series

n/a = Not applicable

. = Decimal separator

, = Thousands separator

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

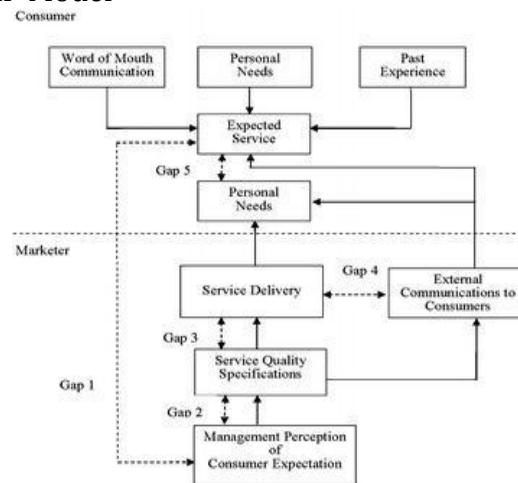
Based on the literature above, an instrument was designed to assess organizational gaps in the hospitality industry of Sylhet region, Bangladesh. A standard questionnaire was prepared containing 25 (Twenty Five) questions and a survey was conducted in top ranked 6 (six) hotels of this greater region. From the research findings and the results of qualitative analysis provided the basis for the operationalization of the formula proposed. Data were collected through survey administered in Sylhet region of Bangladesh. 6 top ranked hotels were included. Altogether 40 questionnaires were prepared and answers were collected from the guests who stayed in these hotels. The gathered data were analyzed with SPSS software. Exploratory Factor Analysis was used with the support of SPSS software. To confirm the gap structures Structural Equation Modeling was employed. Each gap was explored individually by EFA until the appropriate structure was reached. The result was divided into different parts. First the formula was presented. Then the confirmation process of the construct is presented. Finally at the end result of the organizational gap assessment of hospitality management industry of Sylhet region is presented.

**Research GAP**

The basis of SQ GapFil model is the GAP model. Service quality is defined and measured by the formula of perception minus expectation. This formula is known as inferred disconfirmation measurement. According to this computation, the higher the score, the better the quality of services and vice-versa, Parasuraman et al. (1985). The model presented in the figure -1 identifies 5 gaps. The difference between the customer's expectation and the management perception of customer expectation is the GAP-1. The difference between the management perception of customer expectation and the service quality specification is the GAP-2. GAP-3 is the deviation between service quality specification and services actually

delivered. The differentiation between service delivery and external communication is the GAP-4. And lastly GAP-5 is the difference between customer’s expectation on the services and their perceptions of service performance.

Figure 1 Service Quality GAP Model



**Demographic Profile of the Hotel Tourists**

A total of 40 tourists were invited to complete the questionnaire. The gender breakdown of the respondents was 75% male and 25% female. Out of the respondents 100% were related with hospitality management and tourism industry. The questionnaire survey sites selected were six top class hotels of Sylhet region named Rose View hotel, Hotel Star Pacific, Hotel Noorjahan Grand, Nirvana Inn, Grand Sultan Tea Resort and Golf and The Palace Luxury Resort. 42% Respondents had a Graduation degree and 58% had an undergraduate degree from university, college. Approximately 48% of the tourists were professionals, executives or sales people. 68% was aged from 21-30 years, 12% was from 31-35 years, and 20% was from more than 36 years old.

Table 2: International Tourist Arrivals by Regions, 1990 - 2016(million) UNWTO

	International tourist arrivals (million)							Market share (%)	Change (%)	Average a Year (%)		
	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2016*					
<b>World</b>	435	526	674	809	953	1,189	1,235	100	4.0	4.5	3.9	3.9
Advanced economies <sup>1</sup>	299	337	424	470	516	654	685	55.5	5.7	5.0	4.8	3.5
Emerging economies <sup>1</sup>	136	189	250	339	437	536	550	44.5	2.1	4.0	2.7	4.5
By UNWTO regions:												
Europe	261.5	303.5	386.6	453.2	489.0	603.7	616.2	49.9	1.7	4.8	2.1	2.8
Northern Europe	28.7	36.4	44.8	59.9	62.8	75.4	80.2	6.5	5.3	6.5	6.4	2.7
Western Europe	108.6	112.2	139.7	141.7	154.4	181.4	181.5	14.7	2.2	3.5	0.0	2.3
Central/Eastern Europe	33.9	58.9	69.6	95.3	98.5	121.4	126.0	10.2	-9.1	5.4	3.8	2.6
Southern/Medit. Europe	90.3	96.0	132.6	156.4	173.3	225.5	228.5	18.5	6.9	4.9	1.3	3.5
-of which EU-28	230.1	266.0	330.5	367.9	384.3	477.8	500.1	40.5	4.7	5.3	4.7	2.8
Asia and the Pacific	55.9	82.1	110.4	154.1	208.1	284.0	308.4	25.0	6.1	5.4	8.6	6.5



North-East Asia	26.4	41.3	58.3	85.9	111.5	142.1	154.3	12.5	7.3	4.3	8.6	5.5
South-East Asia	21.2	28.5	36.3	49.0	70.5	104.2	113.2	9.2	2.9	7.4	8.6	7.9
Oceania	5.2	8.1	9.6	10.9	11.4	14.3	15.6	1.3	6.1	7.6	9.4	3.3
South Asia	3.2	4.2	6.1	8.3	14.7	23.4	25.3	2.0	12.9	2.3	7.8	10.7
Americas	92.8	108.9	128.2	133.3	150.1	192.7	199.3	16.1	8.5	5.9	3.5	3.7
North America	71.8	80.5	91.5	89.9	99.5	127.5	130.5	10.6	9.7	5.5	2.4	3.4
Caribbean	11.4	14.0	17.1	18.8	19.5	24.1	25.2	2.0	5.5	8.1	4.7	2.7
Central America	1.9	2.6	4.3	6.3	7.8	10.2	10.7	0.9	5.6	6.8	4.9	5.0
South America	7.7	11.7	15.3	18.3	23.2	30.8	32.8	2.7	7.1	5.9	6.6	5.4
Africa	14.8	18.7	26.2	34.8	50.4	53.4	57.8	4.7	0.6	-2.9	8.1	4.7
North Africa	8.4	7.3	10.2	13.9	19.7	18.0	18.6	1.5	-1.4	-12.0	3.5	2.7
Sub-Saharan Africa	6.4	11.5	16.0	20.9	30.7	35.4	39.2	3.2	1.9	2.4	10.5	5.9
Middle East	9.6	12.7	22.4	33.7	55.4	55.6	53.6	4.3	8.7	0.6	-3.7	4.3

Source: World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) ©.

(Data as collected by UNWTO, July 2017)

1 Classification based on the International Monetary Fund (IMF); see the Statistical Annex of the IMF *World Economic Outlook* of April 2017, page 176, at [www.imf.org/en/publications/weo](http://www.imf.org/en/publications/weo).

Source: UNWTO

In South-East Asia (+9%), results were driven by top destination. Thailand (+9%), which enjoyed a second year of strong growth, and Vietnam (+26%). Archipelago destinations Indonesia (+15%) and the Philippines (+11%) also reported double-digit growth in 2016 after similarly strong results a year earlier. International arrivals in Singapore were 7% higher, while Cambodia reported 5% growth and Malaysia 4%. South Asia recorded an 8% increase in international tourist arrivals in 2016, driven by India (+10%), the sub-region's top destination. Nepal reported a significant 40% increase in arrivals, rebounding from poor results in 2015 after the Gorkha and Kodari earthquakes. Sri Lanka (+14%) enjoyed its seventh consecutive year of double-digit growth, while island destination the Maldives reported an increase of 4%.

### SQ GAPFIL Model

SQ GAPFIL Model stands for Service Quality Gap Fill up Model. In this model it is assumed that, there are Gaps in the service quality that is offered by a service organization. In every organization resources are limited but Gaps are unlimited. So first the organization should identify the Gaps in its service areas then it should fill up the Gaps one by one. The filling up of gaps in the service quality is called GapFil. Priority based quality improvement is required in consideration with its competitors in the market. Now a days customers or guests or users want innovative and quality service as well as swift delivery through an economy price. So there is a continuous pressure for improvement of the service quality for the concerned organization. Each and every organization or institutions holds more or less quality gaps in terms of ensuring top quality service to its customers or end users. So there are below mentioned potential areas where the firm should try to identify the gaps or to be searched to find Gaps. The Steps of GapFil model are -

At first the top management of the hotel should identify the areas of service quality where weaknesses exist. In tourism industry competition is very rigorous and each hotel is competing with another. There must exist weakness because if there was no weakness then the hotel should be the market leader of the industry and should be able to do monopoly business. Next step was identifying the Gaps from the offered service area of an institution and try to solve it as quickly as possible. Service quality is measured by the formula of

perception minus expectation. Perception minus expectation is ideally called Gap. This formula is also known as inferred disconfirmation measurement. According to this formula the higher the score, the better the quality and the lower the score the worse the quality. After that as quality improvement is a shared activity; so it needs active involvement of all the members of the hotel such as shareholders, management board, officers, staffs etc. Once identified the quality improvement progresses through a series of steps and is completed with the implementation of corrective actions, taken in the process due to reach and maintain the new and improved level of performance. As one set of quality improvement initiatives are completed, new quality improvement activities are selected and implemented. Next Audit operation process of the concerned hotel and understand & improve operational process if there is any barrier found. For successful quality improvement, it is essential that staffs, administrative personnel and overall the Board of Directors should be involved in appropriate quality improvement process. The members of the hotel, who will be involved in implementing these actions, should examine advantages and disadvantages of each change request. A successful implementation depends on the cooperation of all concerned of the hotel those involved directly. Lastly as generally during selling, quality service along with other facilities is offered, so, after sales being executed then check whether it is ensured or not? In GapFil stage, the concern hotel management should check and ensure these offers before introduction services in to the market by concerned hotel with top given priorities.

### **SQGAPFIL Model Formula**

**SQGAPFIL = G - F, Where, G=GAP** (Identify the Weakness/ Deficiencies/ Problems/Lacking etc.), **F = Fill** the GAPS after identifying the gaps.

Say for instance, QA Manager found Three (3) GAPS and now should fill up those gaps to maintain the quality service standard. Therefore, the below action should be taken so far:

Stage 1:- SQ GAPFIL = G 3 - F 1 (Attempt no. 1 on initial focus area of services for improvement).

Stage 2:- SQ GAPFIL = G 2 - F 2 (Attempt no. 2 on initial focus area of services for improvement).

Stage 3:- SQ GAPFIL = G 1 - F 3 (Attempt no. 3 on initial focus area of services for improvement).

### **Gaps Filled Up or No GAP Exists.**

### **FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

From the survey 2018 the following reasons are found responsible for quality gaps in hotels and motels of Sylhet region in Bangladesh:-

Some staffs and hotel boys are not able to understand European languages such as French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, etc. Very limited hotels like five star rated can understand European languages (Survey data, 2018). 37% of the respondents reported that, the service staffs don't have professional attitude. 30% of the respondents reported that, employees and staffs don't have enough knowledge to answer the questions. Foreign tourists are looking for liquor, alcohol, wine etc. But as Bangladesh is a Muslim majority country, this facility is not commonly available but some licensed hotels may provide this product (Survey data, 2018). 35% of the respondents reported that, the hotel don't understand the guests' special needs. Food quality according to the advertisement on newspaper, online news portals and hotels websites are not accurate. Chef or cooks are not habituated to produce international cuisine like French, Italian and Spanish in local all hotels but only five star marked hotels may ensure this through quality (Survey data, 2018). 25% of the respondents reported that, the

equipment and facilities were not clean enough. Offered services are not up to the mark according to the international tourism standard. Arrangement of the swimming pool environment, cleanliness, water condition etc. is not suitable as per international tourists' standard and demand. Food quality according to the advertisement on newspaper, online news portals and hotels websites are not accurate (Survey data, 2018). 37% of the respondents reported that the hotel didn't provided services and facilities as per promises on the website. Local made products are not accessible in most of the rural tourist spots to buy for the tourists where global tourists may purchase local made products. For shopping language barrier is a great problem. Because, the shopkeepers are not accustomed to communicate with foreign tourists (Survey data, 2018). Female tourists from USA, Britain and E.U. usually wear two parts and wear bikinis in beach areas. But as a Muslim majority country the local people don't warmly accept the Western and European dress code. Thus some international female tourists may feel nervous in this situation (Survey data, 2018). Lastly security problems found as the international tourists are not able to move to their desired spots without protocol. In the incident of Holy Artisan Bakery tourists from Japan, Italy and Europe become victims of terrorists attack. So, international tourists feel that there are lack of security in hotel and motels (Survey data, 2018). 33% of the respondents reported that they didn't referred friends and families about the hotel.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The significance of tourism is viewed from many viewpoints like economic, social, cultural, political, etc. Hospitality is now the fastest growing and single largest industry in the world. This industry has attained impressive growth now, world-wide in terms of tourist arrivals and forex earnings which has led the ever increasing competition among the destination countries and gained top priority in most of the destination countries. Tourism sector in Bangladesh is a gradually developing foreign currency earner. The country has much to attract foreigners. Bangladesh's tourist attractions include archaeological sites, historical mosques and monuments, resorts, beaches, picnic spots, forests and tribal people, wildlife of various species etc. Bangladesh offers ample opportunities to tourists for water skiing, river cruising, angling, hiking, rowing, yachting, sea bathing as well as bringing one in close touch with pristine nature. It ought to be noted that development of tourism industry does not mean merely an increase in earning of foreign currency off this sector. Rather, the number of international tourists that enter to a particular country is taken as the yardstick worldwide for measuring the development level of tourism industry judged by any standard. Thus, it is indispensable to rightly recognize and explore the potentials of this industry in Bangladesh instantaneously. Hotels should improve international cuisine and proper training should be provided in this regard for the chefs and cooks. Hotels should not promise about amenities in their website which are not actually available. Local made products should be available in the rural tourist spots. The hotel authority should arrange available guide/ interpreter/ translator facilities to the foreigners who would like to visit in those areas. Overall, Bangladesh needs to establish domestic tourism industry which is socially and psychologically acceptable, environmentally and ecologically sustainable, and economically viable. All the benefits that are gained from tourism should be fairly computed, distributed, then only will tourism be participatory, and, therefore, the rights of local residents will be properly recognized, and tourism will be responsible and sustainable. It is desired that Bangladesh will swiftly move forward to exploit the potentials of tourism in favor of its national development.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

First and foremost, the hotel should strive for improvement of language proficiency of the managers, officers and service staffs. In case of recruitment language proficient employees should be hired. Employee training and development program for language such as English, French, Spanish and Portuguese etc. should be conducted on a regular interval. Secondly, Non five star hotels should open bar, casino etc. for foreign tourists. This facility will be available only for foreign passport holders. Thirdly, Hotels should improve international cuisine and proper training should be provided in this regard for the chefs and cooks. Chefs should visit abroad and foreign hotels in Maldives, Singapore, Thailand, and Malaysia etc. Then, Hotels should not promise about amenities in their website which are not actually available. Hotels should not encourage the foreign tourists to visit them providing suspicious and fabricated information. Then, local made products should be available in the rural tourist spots. The hotel authority should arrange available guide/ interpreter/ translator facilities to the foreigners who would like to visit in those areas. Thereafter, to mitigate the dress code problem exclusive tourist spot should be created separately only for foreigners where entrance of local people will be strictly prohibited. Lastly, to minimize the menace of terrorist attack, foreign tourist may take help from tourist police. Latest model CC camera and CC TV should be installed. Top trained securities should be employed also. In this regard the local hotel authorities cooperate with the foreigners whole heartedly.

## Limitations and future research direction

There are some limitations of this research that must be recognized. The international tourists hotel surveyed in this study were situated only in Sylhet region. These results might not represent the quality of hotel services all over Bangladesh. Secondly, the sample size was quite small (N=40). Future research should collect a larger number of samples and include a more diverse range of tourists. Thirdly, this study conducted empirical survey only in hotel services. Thus the findings can't be generalized to other sectors like banks, insurances, airlines, call centers etc. Finally findings of this study were based on qualitative analysis. Hence further studies should apply a quantitative design to obtain in depth understanding about SQ GapFil model.

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