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# TO DETERMINE THE LEVEL OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND CHALLENGES TOWARDS HOTEL ORGANIZATIONS AT TOURIST DESTINATIONS IN HIMACHAL PRADESH.

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## **Abstract**

The hotel industry has been one of the most competitive industries especially in the 21st century. For this reason, enhancing customer loyalty is one of the key aspects of enhancing competitiveness in the industry as well as ensuring business continuity. Lake Kivu Serena Hotel is one of the major players in the hospitality industry in Rwanda. The hotel has the advantage of operating under the prosperous Serena group of hotels that enables global marketing of the brand and developing universal strategies to improve its competitiveness globally. However, operating under the Serena Group of hotels is not a guarantee that Lake Kivu Serena Hotel will remain prosperous forever. In the event that customers are satisfied with products or brands, they most likely become loyal customers and keep spreading good word of the hotel. In that manner, in the event that they are disappointed, they will probably switch off brands and talk bad of the brand to different customers about the hotel. The brand of the hotel is an essential factor that emphatically or contrarily influences advertising exercises and the image is the main thing that creates a good impression of the hotel.

**Keywords:** Customer Satisfaction, Challenges towards Hotel Organizations, Tourist Destinations

## Introduction

Tourism has gained worldwide recognition as a significant economic player, particularly for developing nations, providing livelihoods for over thirty countries. According to the WTTC's 2015 report, tourism contributes 10% of the global GDP, 7% of total world exports, 30% of service exports, and 9.09% of global employment. In India, tourism accounts for 4.90% of GDP and 6.78% of total employment. This economic activity takes place in various destinations globally, ranging from leading cities to remote areas, creating job opportunities, wealth, and generating exports and taxes. As one of the world's most significant industries, it contributes trillions of dollars annually to the global economy while stimulating capital investment.

According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), Travel & Tourism is a critical industry that supports almost 200 million jobs globally, either directly or indirectly. These jobs not only sustain the livelihoods of workers but also benefit their families and the communities

where they reside. Travel & Tourism is a major contributor to the global economy, representing a significant source of GDP. The sector is projected to contribute almost US\$6 trillion to the global economy in 2014, which amounts to 9% of global GDP. Moreover, tourism generated US\$1.5 trillion in world exports in 2015. The industry's growth has been fuelled by rising living standards and increased affordability of air travel, resulting in a significant increase in international arrivals since 1990, as reported by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). Many countries, including the USA, UK, Germany, France, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, India, and others, recognize the industry's socioeconomic contribution and promote and develop tourism in a systematic and scientific manner. In India, tourism is a vital segment of the economy, with the potential to create significant employment opportunities and make a substantial impact on the local economy

Many countries including the USA, UK, Germany, France, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, and India are recognizing the socio-economic benefits of tourism and are focusing on developing this sector in a systematic and scientific manner. In India, tourism has emerged as an important contributor to the economy and has the potential to generate significant employment opportunities. According to India Tourism statistical data from 2014, the number of foreign tourists visiting India was 7.68 million, with an annual growth rate of 10.2% as compared to 6.97 million in 2013, which had an annual growth rate of 5.9%, and 6.58 million in 2012, with an annual growth rate of 4.3%. By August 2015, total tourist arrivals had reached 5.89 million, with a growth rate of 4.5% compared to the previous year. The Ministry of Tourism's report in 2014 also showed that India's annual growth rate in foreign tourist arrivals was higher than the world's annual growth rate in 2013, 2014, and 2015, which were 4.6%, 4.2%, and 4.6%, respectively

## **About Tourism**

Tourism is a highly complex phenomenon and can be fully understood only by adopting a multidisciplinary approach (Candela & Figini, 2012). Tourism as a social force and institution is impacting the life of people and many are associated with the industry directly or indirectly (Mathur, 2011). Concordantly, while tourism causes some changes and transformations in many subject (such a cross-cultural interaction, free from prejudices, contribution to peace environment etc.), it also changes in itself. In this study, it is focused on some essential definitions, which are "travel", "tourism" and "tourist", referring to chancing meaning of travel, tourism and tourist.

When looking at classical definitions of tourism, travel and tourist, it is understood that it is necessary to revise them according to the current changes. In this regard, "travel" refers to the activity of travelers. A traveller is someone who moves between different geographic locations, for any purpose and any duration. Travel comprises all journeys from one place to another. It includes all journeys made by people who enter a country for leisure, to work, reside, study or who just pass through a country without stopping. "Tourism" means the temporary short-term movement of people to destinations outside the places where they normally live and work, as well as their activities during their stay at these destinations. It should be noted that all tourism should have some travel, but not all travel is tourism. "Tourist" is a person who travels to

destinations outside his/her residence and working place, and stays for at least 24 hours, for the purpose of leisure or business.

## **Tourism Sectors in India**

Many people from all over the country are attracted to India because of its scenic beauty which spreads from Kashmir in the North to Kanyakumari in the south and Arunachal Pradesh in the East to Gujarat in the West. Tourism in India has a strong relevance to economic development cultural growth and national integration. As mentioned earlier India is a vast country of a great beauty and diversity and tourist potential. It also helps in maintaining the ethical culture and integrity of the country. India tourism offers all-time favorite destinations to millions of international and Indian visitors. There are 40 World Heritage sites in India visitors, that are recognized by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural organization (UNESCO) as of August 2019. Besides India offers geographical diversity, attractive beaches, 37 World Heritage sites, 10 bio-geographic Zones, 80 national parks and 441 sanctuaries. Agra is home to several historic monuments, making it one of the most visited places in India. Of course, top of the list of places to see in Agra is the Taj Mahal. One of the most famous buildings in the world. World 'Leading Luxury Train Maharajas' Express takes the guest to various famous destinations. Every foreigner has a dream to visit this fascinating country. India Tourism campaign was promoted by many Indian celebrities and its tagline "Atithi Devo Bhava" which means honoring the guest as God.

There are several sectors in India where the worth and potential of their assets have not really been fully utilised or harnessed. The tourism sector is one of them. Tourism accounts for 6.8% of India"s GDP and is the third largest earner of foreign exchange with earnings of \$18.13 billion in 2013. India ranks 42 in foreign tourists arrivals as per the United Nations World Tourist Organisation. If many in the world still have a picture of India being a dirty and often unsafe place, they have only half the story. There has been considerable progress since the days when India was seen as a land of beggars, snake charmers and elephants. Admittedly there's much we need to do to get rid of this image by enhancing levels of hygiene and security especially for women visitors, but we have been blessed with many positives. For the first time in our history, a nationwide Government backed initiative close to the heart of our Prime Minister has been launched for a Clean India. The Swachh Bharat campaign is still in a nascent stage but should show positive results over the next few years. The tourists can enjoy different kind of tourism i.e; Eco Tourism, Health Tourism, Adventure Tourism, Cultural Tourism, Heritage Tourism, Wildlife Tourism, Religious tourism, etc. Only in India the tourists can enjoy all these kinds of tourism together.

## **Different Tourism Types**



# **Customer Relationship Management (CRM)**

Customer satisfaction has become an important aspect of the hotel industry. Unlike other industries, the hotel industry prospers due to customers' retention. It is only through customer satisfaction that a hotel can retain its customers. Basically, customers' loyalty is dependent on the quality of the services that they get in a hotel. Moreover, the hospitality industry has experienced the entrance of many investors who are willing to meet all the needs of their customers. Therefore, if customers are not satisfied by the services they receive in one hotel, they will look for better services elsewhere. For a hotel to remain competitive in terms of customers' satisfaction, it must track the levels of customers' satisfaction. This is where technology comes in. Technology has been growing over the years and it has helped the management of the hotel industry to track statistics regarding customer satisfaction. One of the main strategies used by hotels to enhance customer satisfaction is benchmarking. Benchmarking enables hotels to learn from other players in the industry and learn what makes their competitors competitive. In some cases, some hotels may not reveal their secrets to their competitors. However, the hotel industry does not involve sensitive information. For this reason, most hotels are willing to share the secrets behind their success. Nonetheless, the only thing that makes some hotels prosper as com-pared to others is hotel innovativeness. Hotel innovation enables prosperous hotels to create new strategies that enhance a competitive advantage over their rivals.

## (i) Service Quality

The quality of service in hotel industry is a significant factor of successful business. The existing trend of complete quality management in hotel industry ensures the achievement of competitive advantage and is therefore the subject of contemporary research into service quality in hotel industry. In the highly competitive hotel industry, service becomes one of the most important elements for gaining a sustainable competitive advantage in the marketplace. With Indian hospitality emerging as a chief growth driver for services industry, hotel sector is poised for further growth. Though economic slowdown has resulted in low occupancy and average room rates for hotels across certain major countries, Indian hotel sector is still expected to show healthy prospects compared to global hotel growth. The Indian hotel industry is the largest

among all the industries, accounting for over 10 per cent of the country's gross domestic product and around 8 per cent of the employment.

## (ii) Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction has become an important aspect of the hotel industry. Unlike other industries, the hotel industry prospers due to customers' retention. It is only through customer satisfaction that a hotel can retain its customers. Basically, customers' loyalty is dependent on the quality of the services that they get in a hotel. Moreover, the hospitality industry has experienced the entrance of many investors who are willing to meet all the needs of their customers. Therefore, if customers are not satisfied by the services they receive in one hotel, they will look for better services elsewhere. For a hotel to remain competitive in terms of customers' satisfaction, it must track the levels of customers' satisfaction. This is where technology comes in. Technology has been growing over the years and it has helped the management of the hotel industry to track statistics regarding customer satisfaction. One of the main strategies used by hotels to enhance customer satisfaction is benchmarking. Benchmarking enables hotels to learn from other players in the industry and learn what makes their competitors competitive. In some cases, some hotels may not reveal their secrets to their competitors. However, the hotel industry does not involve sensitive information. For this reason, most hotels are willing to share the secrets behind their success. Nonetheless, the only thing that makes some hotels prosper as com-pared to others is hotel innovativeness. Hotel innovation enables prosperous hotels to create new strategies that enhance a competitive advantage over their rivals.

## Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction Relationship

Several recent studies agree on the fact that customer satisfaction has a significant positive effect on both customer retention as well as brand loyalty (Nazir et al., 2016; Krystallis & Chrysochou, 2014; Yang et al., 2017; Feng & Yanru, 2013). Moreover, the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction is often mentioned in previous literature (Ali & Raza, 2015; Angelova & Zekiri, 2011; Kuo, Chang, Cheng & Lia, 2013; Naik, Gantasala & Prabhakar, 2010; Siddiqi, 2011). Kuo et al., (2013) states that companies often enhance their service quality as a way to increase customer satisfaction. It has become a popular trend to retain a high service quality throughout several different industries, and the market is moving more and more towards a state where consumers demand better quality, regarding both services and products, in order for them to be satisfied (Angelova & Zekiri, 2011). Furthermore, Siddiqi (2011), as well as Naik et al., (2010), demonstrated that there is a positive correlation between service quality, more pecifically SERVQUAL, and customer satisfaction. The study conducted by Siddiqi (2011) determined that utilizing all five dimensions of SERVQUAL increases customer satisfaction, while the study performed by Naik et al., (2010) established that consumers view the promptness of service and service quality as one of the most important factors contributing to them being satisfied. The relationship was further established in more recent research, such as Ali and Raza (2015), which determined that the elements of SERVQUAL has a significant and positive impact on how satisfied customers feel.

#### **Himachal Pradesh Tourism**

Himachal Pradesh is a State in Northern India that was anciently known as Dev Bhumi (The abode of Gods) and is abundant with natural beauty. The literal meaning of Himachal Pradesh is Region of snowy mountains. The top tourist places of Himachal Pradesh are Shimla, Kullu Valley, Manali, Dharmshala and Chamba. SHIMLA is the only urbanized city of the Himachal, its tranquility and peaceful atmosphere makes it different from many urban cities in India. It is famous for its temples, parks, valleys and trekking trips. The KULLU VALLEY offers breathtaking natural beauty. Its temples, apple orchards, gardens, and the festivals make it a worthwhile destination to visit. For shoppers Kullu provides handicraft textile (shawls, caps and other woolen accessories). Himachal Pradesh has scores of beautiful towns and hamlets all over the state, which offers tourists a variety of destinations to go and relax and also explore both during summers – when it offers respite from the heat in the plains and during winter – when snow covered terrains delight one and all. Other places in Himachal Pradesh are Dalhousie, which is ornate with beauty spots like Khajjiar, Satdhara springs and Kalatope. Tours to Dalhousie sets you on the gateway to the enchanting Chamba Valley. Chamba,

#### **Tourist Arrivals in Himachal Pradesh**

Himachal Pradesh is located in the northern region of India. The state is surrounded by Jammu and Kashmir on the north, Punjab on the west and the south-west, Haryana on the south, Uttar Pradesh on the south-east, and China on the east.

At current prices, Himachal Pradesh's gross state domestic product (GSDP) is estimated to be Rs. 1.92 trillion (US\$ 24.84 billion) in 2022-23. The state's GSDP (in Rs.) increased at a CAGR of 7.70% between 2015-16 and 2022-23. The tertiary sector witnessed the fastest growth at a CAGR of 10.76% between 2011-12 and 2020-21.

Total exports from Himachal Pradesh stood at US\$ 2,147.46 million in FY22, and US\$ 909.47 million in FY23 (until August 2022).

As of August 2022, Himachal Pradesh had a total installed power generation capacity of 4,473.10 MW, comprising 2,013.39 MW under private utilities, 1,062.21 MW (state utilities) and 1,397.50 MW (central utilities). Himachal Pradesh has immense potential for hydropower as it is naturally blessed with abundant streams and rivers flowing down from towering mountains.

## Statement of the Problem.

TOURIST SATISFACTION IN RELATION TO SERVICE QUALITY OF HOTELS: STUDY OF SELECTED TOURIST DESTINATIONS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE OF HIMACHAL PRADESH, INDIA.

#### **Objectives**

• To determine the level of customer satisfaction and challenges towards hotel Organizations of Himachal Pradesh.

• To identifying the correlation between service provided & customer perception regarding the services.

# Method

In the present study the descriptive survey method is used.

# Sample

The sample is taken by using stratified random sampling technique in which 415 responds are

selected from 35 hotels and destinations tourist destinations of Himachal Pradesh.

# **Tools**

Self-constructed questionnaire. Interview schedule and observations of tourist is used.

**Table**Demographic Analysis

Characteristic	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	319	65.9%
Femal	165	34.1%
Marital Status		
Single	182	37.6%
Married	302	62.4%
Age		
18-29 Years	159	32.9%
30-39 Years	186	38.4%
40-49 Years	81	16.7%
50+ Years	58	12.0%
Purpose of the Stay		
Business	128	26.4%
Leisure	234	48.3%
Visit to Friend	122	25.2%
Income Level		

< Rs. 10,000	51	10.5%
Rs. 10,000 - 20,000	203	41.9%
> Rs. 20,000	230	47.5%
Total	484	100%

Figure 1

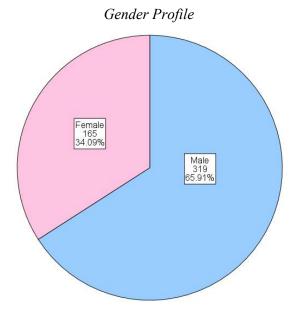
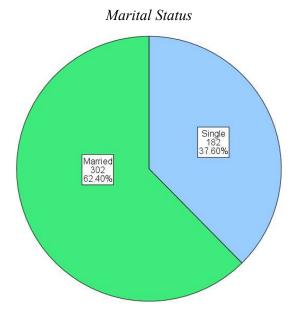
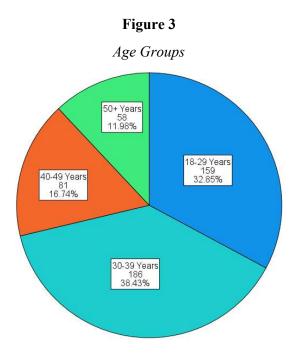


Figure 2





**4.2.2 Central Tendency:** The primary focus of this analysis centers around the mean (M), standard deviation (SD), and correlations among the variables under study. Examining the M and SD values of the study variables offers valuable insights into respondents' responses to the questionnaire items and the effectiveness of the scales and their respective entries in drawing upon relevant theories (Sekaran, 2003). For specific information on the M and SD values, please refer to Table 2.

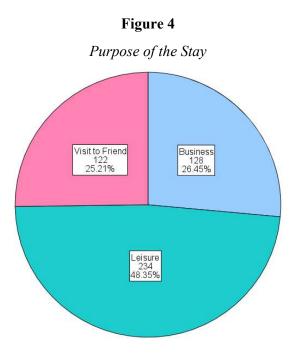
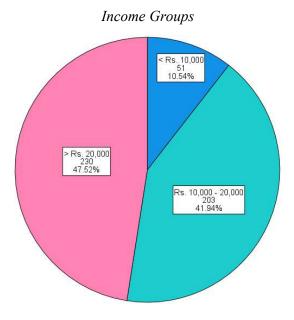


Figure 5



Tangibility had mean of 3.57 suggests that, on average, services being evaluated may be moderately tangible. The standard deviation of 1.07 indicates that there is some variability in how tangible different products or services are perceived to be. Assurance had a mean of 3.62 which suggests that, on average, visitors might had felt a moderate level of assurance. The standard deviation of 1.15 indicates that there is some variability in the level of assurance visitors have in different companies or products/services. Responsiveness had a mean of 3.26 which suggests that, on average, visitors may perceive the responsiveness of hosts to be somewhat acceptable. The standard deviation of 1.12 indicates that there is some variability in the level of responsiveness perceived by visitors. Reliability had a mean of 3.50 which suggests that, on average, visitors may perceive hosts / services to be moderately reliable. The standard deviation of 1.02 indicates that there is some variability in the level of reliability perceived by visitors. Empathy had a mean of 3.25 which indicates that, on average, visitors may perceive hosts or their services to be somewhat acceptable empathy. The standard deviation of 1.20 indicates that there is some variability in the level of empathy perceived by visitors. Customer satisfaction had a mean of 3.90 which suggests that, on average, visitors may be moderately satisfied. The standard deviation of 0.87 indicates that there is relatively low variability in the level of satisfaction perceived by visitors. Revisit intention had a mean of 3.70 which suggests that, on average, visitors may be moderately likely to revisit. The standard deviation of 0.97 indicates that there is some variability in the likelihood of repurchasing perceived by visitors. The correlation coefficients between this variable and the others suggest that it is strongly related to assurance, responsiveness, reliability, empathy, and customer satisfaction.

**4.2.3 Correlations:** The interrelationships between research variables provide valuable insights into their associations, specifically the extent of linear correlation among the variables (Sekaran, 2003). In order to determine the nature of these correlations, calculations were performed on the study variables, and the results can be found in Table 2. Upon reviewing Table 1, it becomes evident that all correlations between predictor and outcome variables were not only positive but also statistically significant (p < .05). Furthermore, these correlations

exhibited varying degrees of strength on the Cohen's scale, ranging from moderate to strong (Cohen, 1988).

The correlation between customer satisfaction (CS) and tangibility was moderate and positive (r = .478, p < .01), suggesting that visitors who perceived the services more tangible were more likely to be satisfied. The correlation between customer satisfaction (CS) and assurance was moderate and positive (r = .509, p < .01), suggesting that visitors who had confidence and trust in hosts' services were likely to be satisfied. The correlation between customer satisfaction (CS) and responsiveness was moderate and positive (r = .494, p < .01), suggesting that visitors who perceived the hosts being responsive to their needs and inquiries were more likely to be satisfied. The correlation between customer satisfaction (CS) and reliability was moderate and positive (r = .485, p < .01), suggesting that visitors who perceived the hosts / services being reliable and consistent were more likely to be satisfied. The correlation between customer satisfaction (CS) and empathy was moderate and positive (r = .490, p < .01), suggesting that visitors who perceive hosts showing empathy towards them and understanding their needs and concerns were more likely to be satisfied.

The correlation between revisit intention (RI) and tangibility was moderate and positive (r = .525, p < .01), suggesting that visitors who perceive services as tangible were more likely to have an intention to revisit. The correlation between revisit intention (RI) and assurance was moderate and positive (r = .591, p < .01), suggesting that visitors who have confidence and trust in the received services were more likely to have an intention to revisit. The correlation between revisit intention (RI) and responsiveness was moderate and positive (r = .592, p < .01), suggesting that visitors who perceived hosts as being responsive to their needs and inquiries are more likely to have an intention to revisit. The correlation between revisit intention (RI) and reliability was moderate and positive (r = .537, p < .01), suggesting that visitors who perceived the services more consistent with respect to desired quality were more likely to have an intention to revisit. The correlation between revisit intention (RI) and empathy was moderate and positive (r = .540, p < .01), suggesting that visitors who perceived hosts showing empathy towards them and understanding their needs and concerns were more likely to revisit. The correlation between revisit intention (RI) and customer satisfaction (CS) was strong and positive (r = .654, p < .01), suggesting that visitors who were highly satisfied with the services were more likely to have an intention to revisit.

 Table 2

 Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

	Mean	SD	TANG	ASSU	RESP	RELI	EMP	CS	RI
TANG	3.57	1.07	1						
ASSU	3.62	1.15	.505**	1					
RESP	3.26	1.12	.443**	.469**	1				

RELI	3.50	1.02	.439**	.514**	.474**	1			
EMP	3.25	1.20	.504**	.522**	.431**	.505**	1		
CS	3.90	0.87	.478**	.509**	.494**	.485**	.490**	1	
RI	3.70	0.97	.525**	.591**	.592**	.537**	.540**	.654**	1
$N = 484$ , ** = $p < .01$ , $SD = standard\ deviation$									

# 4.3 Data Analysis Assumptions

Before conducting the proper analyses, data was examined to fulfill the following prerequisites usually known as data analysis assumptions. Researchers should always be testing these such as normality, linearity and collinearity (Hair et al., 2019).

**4.3.1 Data Normality**: In order to assess the departure of the data from normality, the skewness and kurtosis values were calculated. The absolute values of skewness and kurtosis for all items in the present study fell within an acceptable range of +1 (Hair et al., 2019), with a few exceptions within +2 (George & Mallery, 2021). Therefore, there was no significant concern regarding univariate non-normality of data in terms of skewness and kurtosis, as indicated in Table 3.

To evaluate the multivariate normality, a crucial requirement for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using the Maximum Likelihood Estimation (MLE) method, the multivariate kurtosis value (also referred to as Mardia's coefficient) was computed. As shown in Table 3, the multivariate kurtosis value (Mardia, 1970) indicates that the combined distribution of variables follows a multivariate normal distribution. The value of 299.65, with a critical ratio of 72.87, is smaller than the cut-off point value of 1023 derived from the p (p + 2) formula, where p = 31 represents the number of observed variables in the model (Kline, 2005).

According to Byrne (2016), when it comes to SEM, kurtosis holds more significance than skewness because it affects tests of variances and covariances, while skewness has a greater impact on means. Thus, it is crucial to focus on addressing the issue of kurtosis rather than skewness when assessing the extent to which the data deviates from normality.

Table 3
Assessment of Data Normality

Variable	Minimum	Maximum	Skewness	Kurtosis
TANG1	1.00	5.00	-0.562	-0.665
TANG2	1.00	5.00	-0.576	-0.645
TANG3	1.00	5.00	-0.595	-0.528

TANG4	1.00	5.00	-0.561	-0.557
Tangibility	1.00	5.00	-0.579	-0.379
ASSU1	1.00	5.00	-0.539	-0.787
ASSU2	1.00	5.00	-0.517	-0.884
ASSU3	1.00	5.00	-0.589	-0.852
ASSU4	1.00	5.00	-0.634	-0.727
Assurance	1.00	5.00	-0.594	-0.454
RESP1	1.00	5.00	-0.317	-0.991
RESP2	1.00	5.00	-0.353	-0.963
RESP3	1.00	5.00	-0.388	-0.884
RESP4	1.00	5.00	-0.358	-0.929
Responsiveness	1.00	5.00	-0.408	-0.843
RELI1	1.00	5.00	-0.468	-0.621
RELI2	1.00	5.00	-0.494	-0.621
RELI3	1.00	5.00	-0.418	-0.744
RELI4	1.00	5.00	-0.441	-0.724
RELI5	1.00	5.00	-0.428	-0.743
Reliability	1.00	5.00	-0.562	-0.339
EMP1	1.00	5.00	-0.147	-1.264
EMP2	1.00	5.00	-0.115	-1.274
EMP3	1.00	5.00	-0.188	-1.274
EMP4	1.00	5.00	-0.173	-1.184
EMP5	1.00	5.00	-0.136	-1.243
Empathy	1.00	5.00	-0.114	-1.218

Customer Satisfaction  Mardia's Coefficient	1.00 5.00 299.651		-0.473 C.R.	-0.199 72.871
CS5	1.00	5.00	-0.513	-0.502
CS4	1.00	5.00	-0.584	-0.434
CS3	1.00	5.00	-0.697	-0.254
CS2	1.00	5.00	-0.568	-0.405
CS1	1.00	5.00	-0.596	-0.404
Revisit Intension	1.00	5.00	-0.333	-0.812
RI4	1.00	5.00	-0.422	-0.866
RI3	1.00	5.00	-0.557	-0.653
RI2	1.00	5.00	-0.356	-1.005
RI1	1.00	5.00	-0.425	-0.730

## **Conclusion:**

Finally, concluded that the hotel has the advantage of operating under the prosperous Serena group of hotels that enables global marketing of the brand and developing universal strategies to improve its competitiveness globally. However, operating under the Serena Group of hotels is not a guarantee that Lake Kivu Serena Hotel will remain prosperous forever. In the event that customers are satisfied with products or brands, they most likely become loyal customers and keep spreading good word of the hotel. In that manner, in the event that they are disappointed, they will probably switch off brands and talk bad of the brand to different customers about the hotel. Customer satisfaction level is too good with the tourist destinations in Himachal Pradesh.

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