

Article

Unboxing the Complex between Job Satisfaction and Intangible Service Quality: A Perspective of Sustainability in the Hotel Industry

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Abstract: The quality of service is one of the key assumptions of a sustainable and profitable business in the hotel industry. On the other hand, employees as direct providers of hotel services have a direct impact on the perceived quality of service. Establishing a relationship between job satisfaction and perceived intangible service quality is of great importance for customer relationship management and sustainable competitive advantage. For the collection of primary data, questionnaires were distributed to two groups of respondents, namely hotel employees and guests. Thus, 456 paired questionnaires were obtained. The testing of defined hypotheses and relations between constructs and latent variables was completed using the PLS-SEM approach. The results of the study showed that all validated constructs, namely pay, promotion, supervision, fringe benefits, contingent rewards, coworkers, communication, and the nature of work, contribute positively to job satisfaction. A positive relationship between job satisfaction and intangible service quality constructs was confirmed for reliability, assurance, and responsiveness but not for empathy. The study confirmed that perceived intangible service quality can be influenced by increasing job satisfaction and that payment and communication can achieve the most significant influence.

Keywords: job satisfaction; intangible service quality; hotel industry



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1. Introduction

Competition between hotel organizations is increasing, and employees are becoming one of the most important factors for gaining a sustainable competitive advantage and the guest's trust in a highly competitive market. Nowadays, the hotel industry focuses on employees and guests [1], which requires an effective management of human resources and strengthening the quality of the relationship between employees and guests as a crucial strategy for long-term success. Consequently, employees (human resources) play a central role in the hotel sector since it is a labor-intensive activity, where employees and guests as service users are directed at each other and there is a high level of interaction between them [2,3]. One of the elementary service characteristics is that services are produced and consumed simultaneously, and the process of providing services highlights the importance of employees who directly provide services to guests and communicate with them. Their experience is shaped based on the result of this relationship, and the employee's behavior toward guests during service delivery is key to service quality. Harvard professors [4] proposed the concept of a "service-profit chain", suggesting that growth and service organization profits come from loyal customers and their satisfaction with service quality. Satisfied, loyal, and productive employees provide quality services. It starts with the social exchange theory [5], which emphasizes the

significance of interpersonal interaction and considers social behavior as an exchange. The outcome of the action–reaction relationship is the perceived benefit, which is represented in our study by intangible service quality. The hotel industry employees are the agents of action in social exchange. Frontline service employees are important because it is essential for hotel organizations to manage human resources effectively to ensure that employee attitudes and behaviors positively influence service quality perception. Job satisfaction has become a crucial issue in the hotel industry because the ability to attract and manage human resources is considered a critical element of success [6]. In the not-too-distant future, when intelligent machines can replace human resources in certain operations, the aforementioned is of particular importance. In this manner, it is possible to attain certain benefits through cost reduction, but recent research has demonstrated that productivity is more dependent on the availability of human resource than on automation [7]. In addition, it is highly questionable whether intelligent machines can completely supplant employees in the communication and psychological interaction with guests.

The hotel industry has a relatively bad reputation in the labor market because it is characterized by low employee job satisfaction and high employee turnover rates [8–10]. Furthermore, the hotel industry is known for low earnings, poor work–life balance, extended working hours, unsatisfactory job security, and the deficiency of professional development and qualified staff [11–14]. Other factors are responsible for the low satisfaction level and high turnover in this sector, such as the rapid growth of the hotel industry and the high expectations of young workers [15]. Owing to these characteristics, job satisfaction is a critical issue for employers and managers in the hotel industry. Satisfied employees provide high-quality services and tend to be more productive, creative, and positive [8].

In the context of service activities such as the restaurant industry [16], the health sector and health tourism [16,17], trade [18–20], logistics [21], and other service activities [22,23], a larger number of empirical studies have been conducted to understand the relationship between job satisfaction, service quality, and consumer satisfaction. The research was conducted in Croatia [24], the USA [25,26], and China [27], and it examined the links between employee job satisfaction, consumer satisfaction, and service quality in the context of hotel industry. No research has been conducted on the concept of service quality as a multidimensional construct. As a result, a comprehensive analysis and empirical verification of the effects of employee job satisfaction on service quality in the hotel industry is needed, primarily on the intangible components of service quality that are the most important in quality assessment. This study aims to fill this research gap by determining job satisfaction's effect on intangible service quality components in the hotel industry. Our study focuses on an integrative approach that includes a wide range of predefined constructs for both the independent variable and the dependent variable, which is in contrast to other studies that contain individual variables related to job satisfaction and intangible components of service quality. As a consequence of such an approach, our study establishes a large number of relationships between constructs and thereby contributes to a better comprehension of the relationship between job satisfaction and intangible service quality. By analyzing indirect effects, a deeper understanding of the relationship between the constructs comprising the research model was obtained. This study aims to better understanding of the complex relationship between employee job satisfaction and service quality.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Job Satisfaction

Researchers have adopted various approaches to define the concept of job satisfaction. Locke's value theory is the theoretical foundation of job satisfaction, which has spawned numerous other concepts, studies, and research in related areas, including goal setting and employee performance [28–30]. According to this theory, job satisfaction exists insofar as employees are satisfied with the outcome of their work. In addition, discrepancy and deviation of satisfaction from expectations regarding certain aspects of the job also influence overall job satisfaction [31]. There is no general agreement about the definition

of job satisfaction [32]. In this study, the definition given by Spector is used [33]: job satisfaction is the way employees feel about work and different aspects of work. Spector identified nine aspects of work: pay, promotion, supervision, benefits, rewards, operational procedures, coworkers, nature of work, and communication [33]. To predict job satisfaction, an employee's satisfaction with certain job aspects and expectations from that job must be determined. Job satisfaction has become one of the most important issues the hotel and tourism industries face [34]. This thesis is confirmed by earlier studies that indicated that service organizations must pay special attention to job satisfaction [4,35–37]. The results of empirical research identify plentiful positive effects associated with job satisfaction: employee retention [38–40], satisfied consumers [21,25,41], market share, increased competitiveness [42–44], and profitability [19,25,45,46].

2.2. Service Quality

On the basis of Richard Oliver's theory of expectations–confirmation [47,48], service quality is defined. In accordance with this theory, service quality entails reaching or exceeding consumer expectations. According to Parasuraman et al. [49] and Grönroos [50], service quality represents the difference between consumer expectations and perceptions of the delivered service. From the guest's perspective, hotel service is an experience. In addition to the specific service characteristics (intangibility, inseparability, heterogeneity, and impermanence) [51], which are generic, Hsu and Powers [52] highlight the participation of people in the service delivery process as an important hotel service characteristic. Initially, Parasuraman et al. [49] contributed significantly to the study of service quality. These authors identified ten dimensions upon which consumers evaluate the quality of a service. A few years later, based on empirical research in the context of five service activities, they concluded that tangibility, reliability, responsibility, and safety best explain the perceived quality of services [53]. Wakefield and Blodgett [54] point out that tangible dimensions of service quality can be categorized as tangible (tangibility) and intangible dimensions of service quality (reliability, responsibility, safety, and empathy). Intangible components represent the overall relationship in the process of providing and using hotel services, which is how the hotel guest experiences and receives the service. Hotel employees play a dominant role in hotel service delivery, and the way an employee provides a service to the guest affects the guest's perception of quality. Employees are considered the hotel organization's most important resource, and the quality of their services depends on their job satisfaction, knowledge, skills, and abilities [15].

2.3. Effects of Employees' Job Satisfaction on Perceived Service Quality

Employees who provide a service represent an important factor in guest satisfaction, and that is related to the concept of “chain of services—profit” developed by Harvard professors [4], who emphasize that an employee's job satisfaction creates superior service value, guest satisfaction, loyalty, profit growth, and profitability. Son et al. [55] investigated this concept in the coffee shop industry using a sample of 263 employees and 973 consumers. The results of this study indicate a positive relationship between organizational identification and employee satisfaction. Employee satisfaction positively affects a service's perceived value, which in turn affects consumer satisfaction.

The theory of equity in social exchanges [5,56,57] posits that employee job satisfaction is related to the improvement of the quality of services, particularly intangible components, which depend primarily on human resources. Interpersonal interactions are the foundation of the theory of social exchange, primarily because exchange necessitates a two-way transaction. The employee consciously calculates the costs and benefits of prospective outcomes and bases his decisions and behavior on these estimates [58]. The fundamental premise of equality in exchanges is that the majority of employees anticipate fairness or equality to prevail in interpersonal transactions [57]. In the context of the social exchange theory, when a manager provides employees with favorable working conditions (good salary, opportunity for advancement, reward system, and good communication), employees tend

to exert more effort as a form of reciprocity [19], resulting in a higher level of service quality provided by employees in the hotel industry.

The hypothesis that employee job satisfaction affects service quality and guest satisfaction in service activities was confirmed by the results of numerous empirical studies. Namely, Ong'unya et al. [16] observed the influence of internal marketing and job satisfaction on the quality of health services provided in Uganda. A total of 635 respondents (employees and health service consumers) participated in this study. The results showed that internal marketing and job satisfaction positively affect the provided health services quality. Karatepe et al. [22] examined the effect of job standardization and employee job satisfaction on service quality in service industries in northern Cyprus. Research results confirm that job standardization and employee job satisfaction have significant positive effects on service quality and that job standardization has a significant negative effect on employee satisfaction [22]. A study in Hong Kong [21] examined the relationships between employee job satisfaction, service quality, customer satisfaction, and profitability in service organizations (travel agencies, beauty salons, restaurants, and retail stores). A total of 203 service organizations and 618 respondents participated in this study. The results show that employee satisfaction is significantly correlated with service quality and consumer satisfaction, implying profitability [19]. Sohail and Young [18] examined internal marketing practices, employee satisfaction, service quality, and customer satisfaction in the context of service industries in Saudi Arabia from the perspective of employees. The results show that employees' perceptions of internal marketing are positively related to employee satisfaction. Additionally, the results indicate that service quality plays a mediating role in the relationship between employee job satisfaction and consumer satisfaction. Satisfied employees believe that the only way to return to their organization is to provide quality services equal to the satisfaction they receive, which implies that employee job satisfaction is vital for achieving service quality, customer satisfaction, and loyalty [18].

Research conducted in the hotel industry indicates that employees contribute to service quality and guest satisfaction [58]. Research conducted in the hotel industry also shows that human resource management practices create an environment that encourages positive employee behavior and improves service quality [46,59–61]. Previous research in the hotel industry has not dealt sufficiently with determining the effects of employee satisfaction on service quality and consumer satisfaction. Spinelli and Canavos [26] confirmed the effect of employee job satisfaction on guest satisfaction with service quality. The findings of studies conducted in the USA hotel industry [24] and the Croatian hotel industry [25] confirmed the hypothesis that there are statistically significant relationships between employee job satisfaction and guest satisfaction. A study conducted in the Chinese hotel industry [27] did not identify the effect of employee satisfaction on service quality. Based on the above, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: *Employees' job satisfaction has a positive effect on reliability as an intangible component of service quality;*

H2: *Employees' job satisfaction has a positive effect on responsiveness as an intangible component of service quality;*

H3: *Employees' job satisfaction has a positive effect on assurance as an intangible component of service quality;*

H4: *Employees' job satisfaction has a positive effect on empathy as an intangible component of service quality.*

The research model, which incorporates the specified hypotheses, is presented in Figure 1.

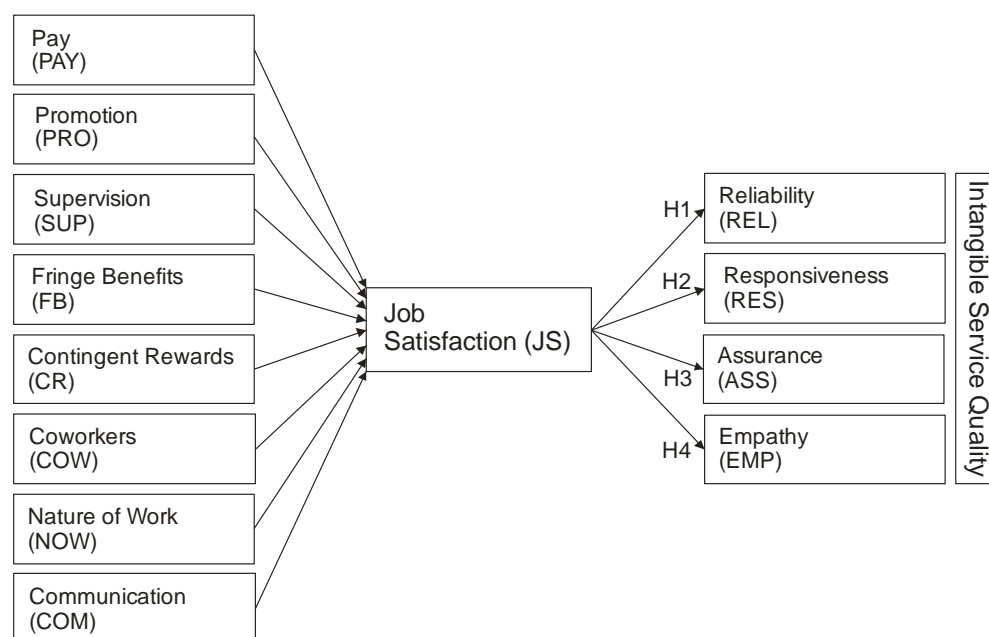


Figure 1. Research model.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants and Procedure

The key informant approach was used for sampling in the study. Starting from the fact that the research is based on two latent variables, in order to obtain objective observations for the selected measurement scales, two groups of informants were identified. For the observation of the job satisfaction scale, hotel employees were targeted as respondents, while the observations for the intangible service quality scale were aimed at hotel guests. We estimated that this approach will contribute to the prevention of the common method bias problem in accordance with the recommendations proposed by Podsakoff et al. [62]. In 2021, the conceptualization of the study was initiated, while the sorting of the data acquired through sampling, the development of the research model, and the modeling of the relationships between the variables began at the end of 2022. The sampling procedure was started by creating a list of hotels that consisted of five-star hotels, four-star hotels, and three-star hotels. Using the official reports of the Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications in Serbia, we identified 215 hotels that meet the stated criteria. The next step was to send an initial email in which hotel managers were invited to participate in the research. All participants were firstly informed of the academic purpose of the research and were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality. Also, in accordance with ethical standards, all potential respondents were assured that their demographic data will not be available to any other party. The managers were supplied with two links that led to the pages of two different questionnaires: the first, which contained statements related to job satisfaction, and the second, which contained statements for the observation of intangible service quality. Additionally, managers were asked to participate in the research collecting from three to seven employees and an equivalent number of guests. A total of 93 hotels accepted participation in the study and sampling procedure. The final result was 456 valid paired questionnaires with the same number of completed questionnaires by employees and guests. The response rate was 43.2%, which can be assessed as an average response rate [63] and adequate for collecting primary data [64]. The characteristics of the sample are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Respondents' characteristics: employee.

Category	Frequency	%
Gender		
Female	218	47.9
Male	238	52.1
Age		
<30	125	27.4
31–40	192	42.1
41–50	128	28.1
>51	11	2.4
Education		
Elementary school	7	1.5
High school degree	151	33.1
High school diploma and graduates	220	48.2
Master and PhD	78	17.2
Years within hotel		
0–10	182	39.9
11–20	201	44.1
21–30	68	14.9
>31	5	1.1
Notes: $n = 456$		

Table 2. Respondents' characteristics: guests.

Category	Frequency	%
Gender		
Female	221	48.5
Male	235	51.5
Age		
<30	2	0.4
31–40	91	19.9
41–50	266	58.3
>51	97	21.4
Education		
Elementary school	15	3.3
High school degree	294	64.4
High school diploma and graduates	115	25.3
Master and PhD	32	7.0
The purpose of accommodation at the hotel		
Vacancy	257	56.4
Business	94	20.6
Seminar/Conference	58	12.7
Other	47	10.3
Notes: $n = 456$		

The number of female respondents is nearly proportional to the number of male respondents in both samples. In the composition of the employee sample, most respondents were aged 31 to 40, with a high school diploma or higher, and with 11 to 20 years of service at the hotel, comprising 42.1%, 48.2%, and 44.4%, respectively. The second sample exhibits a predominant composition of guests aged 41 to 50, possessing a high school education, and engaging in vacation stays, accounting for 58.3%, 64.4%, and 56.4% of the total, respectively.

3.2. Measurements

To test the hypotheses, two structured questionnaires containing statements about job satisfaction and intangible service quality were utilized. Each of the previously mentioned questionnaires had three sections. The first section included instructions for completing the questionnaire, while the second and third sections contained statements and demographic

information, respectively. In the second section, a seven-point Likert scale ranging from “totally disagree” (represented by 1) to “totally agree” (represented by 7) was posted next to each statement. Both the independent latent variable and the dependent latent variable were assessed using established measurement scales. The objective was to increase the study’s predictive value [65] and assure psychometric properties. These measurement instruments are employed for the observation of latent variables:

Job satisfaction. This latent variable was measured using the Job Satisfaction Survey developed by Spector [33]. All constructs contained in this survey are included in the study, namely PAY: pay; PRO: promotion; SUP: supervision; FB: fringe benefits; CR: contingent rewards; COW: coworkers; NOW: nature of work; COM: communication.

Intangible Service Quality. This latent variable was observed through four constructs, namely REL: reliability; RES: responsiveness; ASS: assurance; EMP: empathy. The well-known Servqual measurement scale developed by Parasuraman et al. [49] was used. The Servqual questionnaire, as commonly used, includes the tangibles construct, which pertains to tangible assets. However, for the purpose of our study, we have chosen not to include this particular construct.

4. Results and Analysis

The study employed the partial least squares approach to structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) in order to assess the statistical significance of established relationships between constructs and to test the formulated hypotheses. Two primary justifications have been identified for the implementation of this approach. According to Hair et al. [66], the initial implementation of the partial least squares method in structural equation modeling exhibited favorable characteristics when dealing with data that do not follow a normal distribution and complex models. The present study exhibits the attributes of a sophisticated second-order model that is based on an extensive array of constructs, encompassing interrelationships and indirect effects among them. Furthermore, the research encompasses two latent variables, specifically job satisfaction and intangible service quality, which are intrinsically interconnected with concepts in human resource management and marketing. The partial least square approach to structural equation modeling has been extensively validated in previous studies, as evidenced by the strong support for both concepts [67,68]. The statistical data processing and analysis were conducted utilizing the SPSS v.23 software package and SmartPLS 4.0.

4.1. Measurement Model Assessment

The standard PLS-SEM algorithm was used for measurement model assessment and confirmatory factor analysis. The results showing consistency reliability and convergent validity are presented in Table 3. Results that verified the constructs were obtained by using confirmatory factor analysis [69]. Validity was achieved by all proposed constructs, except for the construct operating conditions, which was an integral part of the latent variable job satisfaction. Several statements did not pass the reliability test, namely “Keeping customers informed about when services will be performed”, “Making customers feel safe in their transactions”, “Giving customers individual attention”, and “Convenient business hours”, which are contained in the following constructs which represent intangible service quality, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, respectively. Composite reliability for all constructs is above 0.7, which is marked as the lower limit of acceptability, while convergent validity, measured by AVE (average variance extracted), is greater than 0.5. For all constructs, the average variance extracted records values between 0.580 and 0.786.

Table 3. Measurement model and constructs.

Construct and Item Description	Convergent Validity	VIF	Composite Reliability	α	AVE
JS: Job satisfaction (Spector, 1997) [33]					
PAY: Pay			0.936	0.909	0.786
PAY01: I feel I am being paid a fair amount for the work I do.	0.853	2.297			
PAY02: Raises are too few and far between. (R)	0.895	4.439			
PAY03: I feel unappreciated by the organization when I think about what they pay me. (R)	0.900	2.935			
PAY04: I feel satisfied with my chances for salary increases.	0.899	2.985			
PRO: Promotion			0.877	0.814	0.641
PRO01: There is really too little chance for promotion on my job. (R)	0.771	1.703			
PRO02: Those who do well on the job stand a fair chance of being promoted.	0.782	2.616			
PRO03: People get ahead as fast here as they do in other places.	0.750	2.320			
PRO04: I am satisfied with my chances for promotion.	0.883	2.183			
SUP: Supervision			0.912	0.872	0.722
SUP01: My supervisor is quite competent in doing his/her job.	0.825	2.876			
SUP02: My supervisor is unfair to me. (R)	0.870				
SUP03: My supervisor shows too little interest in the feelings of subordinates. (R)	0.872	2.630			
SUP04: I like my supervisor.	0.831	2.492			
FB: Fringe benefits			0.878	0.814	0.645
FB01: I am not satisfied with the benefits I receive. (R)	0.850	1.915			
FB02: The benefits we receive are as good as most other organizations offer.	0.660	1.402			
FB03: The benefit package we have is equitable.	0.852	3.333			
FB04: There are benefits we do not have which we should have. (R)	0.833	1.985			
CR: Contingent rewards			0.895	0.841	0.682
CR01: When I do a good job, I receive the recognition for it that I should receive.	0.678	1.350			
CR02: I do not feel that the work I do is appreciated. (R)	0.866	2.280			
CR03: There are few rewards for those who work here. (R)	0.857	2.215			
CR04: I don't feel my efforts are rewarded the way they should be. (R)	0.887	3.713			
COW: Coworkers			0.914	0.882	0.726
COW01: I like the people I work with.	0.869	2.632			
COW02: I find I have to work harder at my job because of the incompetence of people I work with. (R)	0.817	3.023			
COW03: I enjoy my coworkers.	0.872	3.668			
COW04: There is too much bickering and fighting at work. (R)	0.849	3.326			
NOW: Nature of work			0.890	0.835	0.669
NOW01: I sometimes feel my job is meaningless. (R)	0.791	2.844			
NOW02: I like doing the things I do at work.	0.820	1.833			
NOW03: I feel a sense of pride in doing my job.	0.816	2.458			
NOW04: My job is enjoyable.	0.843	2.059			
COM: Communication			0.919	0.882	0.738
COM01: Communications seem good within this organization.	0.831	3.306			
COM02: The goals of this organization are not clear to me. (R)	0.880	2.508			
COM03: I often feel that I do not know what is going on with the organization. (R)	0.857	3.313			
COM04: Work assignments are not fully explained. (R)	0.867	2.353			
SERQUAL (Parasuraman, Ziethaml and Berry, 1985) [49]					
REL: Reliability			0.851	0.790	0.538
REL01: Providing services as promised.	0.854	1.947			
REL02: Dependability in handling customers' service problems.	0.749	1.470			
REL03: Performing services right the first time.	0.781	1.783			
REL04: Providing services at the promised time.	0.654	1.407			
REL05: Maintaining error-free records.	0.600	1.355			
RES: Responsiveness			0.807	0.646	0.582
RES02: Prompt service to customers.	0.741	1.194			
RES03: Willingness to help customers.	0.802	1.298			
RES04: Readiness to respond to customers' enquiries.	0.745	1.358			
ASS: Assurance			0.805	0.635	0.580
ASS01: Employees who instill confidence in customers.	0.822	1.420			
ASS03: Employees who are consistently courteous.	0.788	1.308			
ASS04: Employees who have the knowledge to answer customer questions.	0.667	1.169			
EMP: Empathy			0.821	0.680	0.605
EMP02: Employees who deal with customers in caring fashion.	0.858	1.365			
EMP03: Having the customer's best interest at heart.	0.739	1.310			
EMP04: Employees who understand the needs of their customers.	0.731	1.299			

Collinearity statistics measured by VIF (variance inflation factor) indicate that multicollinearity is not a concern in the measurement model, as all items have values greater than five. The variance inflation factor records values ranging from 1.169 to 4.439 for all constructs.

4.2. Structural Model Assessment and Hypothesis Testing

The PLS-SEM bootstrapping procedure was used to test the statistical significance of the relationships established between the constructs included in the study and which meet the criteria of reliability and validity. Path coefficients and two-sided bias-corrected 95 per cent confidence intervals (CIs) were calculated for each of the listed relationships. The results of the statistical analysis for the direct association between the constructs and the latent variable are presented in Table 4. The results revealed that payment (PAY) positively contributes to job satisfaction (JS) ($\beta = 0.162, p < 0.001$) as well as promotion (PRO) ($\beta = 0.113, p < 0.001$). Other constructs, namely supervision (SUP) ($\beta = 0.157, p < 0.001$), fringe benefits (FB) ($\beta = 0.130, p < 0.001$), contingent rewards (CR) ($\beta = 0.141, p < 0.001$), coworkers COW ($\beta = 0.153, p < 0.001$), nature of work (NOW) ($\beta = 0.129, p < 0.001$), and communication (COM) ($\beta = 0.160, p < 0.001$) also recorded positive relationship to job satisfaction (JS). Job satisfaction (JS) is positively related to reliability (REL) ($\beta = 0.249, p < 0.001$) as well as responsiveness (RES) ($\beta = 0.249, p < 0.001$). A positive and statistically significant relationship was recorded between job satisfaction (JS) and assurance (ASS) ($\beta = 0.131, p < 0.01$). The most effective contribution to job satisfaction is achieved by payment ($\beta = 0.162, p < 0.001$) and communication (COM) ($\beta = 0.160, p < 0.001$), while the lowest contribution is achieved by promotion (PRO) ($\beta = 0.113, p < 0.001$). Job satisfaction has the greatest impact on (REL) ($\beta = 0.249, p < 0.001$) as a component of intangible service quality. Summarizing the results of the statistical analysis that includes the mentioned relations, it can be concluded that the hypotheses H1, H2, and H3 are supported. The relationship between job satisfaction (JS) and empathy (EMP) is not statistically significant, and therefore, hypothesis H4 is rejected.

Table 4. Results of testing the direct effects.

Relationship	Path Coefficient	t-Value	95% (Bias Corrected)	Results
PAY → JS	0.162 ***	29.924	[0.153, 0.173]	Supported
PRO → JS	0.113 ***	21.278	[0.103, 0.123]	Supported
SUP → JS	0.157 ***	28.878	[0.147, 0.167]	Supported
FB → JS	0.130 ***	30.980	[0.122, 0.138]	Supported
CR → JS	0.141 ***	30.564	[0.133, 0.151]	Supported
COW → JS	0.153 ***	28.552	[0.143, 0.163]	Supported
NOW → JS	0.129 ***	18.839	[0.117, 0.142]	Supported
COM → JS	0.160 ***	34.067	[0.151, 0.169]	Supported
JS → REL	0.249 ***	7.507	[0.171, 0.304]	Supported
JS → RES	0.141 ***	4.029	[0.060, 0.200]	Supported
JS → ASS	0.131 **	3.265	[0.045, 0.201]	Supported
JS → EMP	0.065	1.294	[−0.189, 0.111]	Not supported

Notes: PAY: Pay; PRO: Promotion; SUP: Supervision; FB: Fringe benefits; CR: Contingent rewards; COW: Coworkers; NOW: Nature of work; COM: Communication; REL: Reliability; RES: Responsiveness; ASS: Assurance; EMP: Empathy. ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

4.3. Other Results

Testing the indirect influence of the elements that form job satisfaction on the constructs that constitute intangible service quality should provide better insight into individual effects. The same bias-corrected bootstrapping analysis at 95% CI was applied to test indirect effects, and the results are shown in Table 5. Summarizing the overview of the results, it can be concluded that the absence of an indirect effect between all paired relationships is related to the empathy construct (EMP). Payment (PAY) ($\beta = 0.040, t = 7.510, p < 0.001$) and communication (COM) ($\beta = 0.040, t = 7.246, p < 0.001$) achieve the strongest individual indirect effect on reliability (REL). Responsiveness (RES), as an

element of intangible service quality, is most affected by payment (PAY) ($\beta = 0.023$, $t = 4.166$, $p < 0.001$) and communication (COM) ($\beta = 0.023$, $t = 3.893$, $p < 0.001$). Indirect effects with the strongest positive prediction for the construct assurance (ASS) are related to payment (PAY) ($\beta = 0.021$, $t = 3.369$, $p < 0.01$), supervision (SUP) ($\beta = 0.021$, $t = 3.084$, $p < 0.01$), and communication (COM) ($\beta = 0.021$, $t = 3.206$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 5. Results of testing the indirect effects.

Relationship	Path Coefficient	t-Value	95% CIs (Bias Corrected)	Results
PAY → JS → REL	0.040 ***	7.510	[0.029, 0.050]	Supported
PAY → JS → RES	0.023 ***	4.166	[0.010, 0.032]	Supported
PAY → JS → ASS	0.021 **	3.369	[0.007, 0.032]	Supported
PAY → JS → EMP	0.011	1.298	[−0.032, 0.018]	Not supported
PRO → JS → REL	0.028 ***	8.076	[0.021, 0.034]	Supported
PRO → JS → RES	0.016 ***	4.309	[0.007, 0.022]	Supported
PRO → JS → ASS	0.015 ***	3.534	[0.005, 0.022]	Supported
PRO → JS → EMP	0.007	1.309	[−0.021, 0.012]	Not supported
SUP → JS → REL	0.039 ***	6.730	[0.027, 0.049]	Supported
SUP → JS → RES	0.022 ***	3.387	[0.009, 0.031]	Supported
SUP → JS → ASS	0.021 **	3.084	[0.007, 0.032]	Supported
SUP → JS → EMP	0.010	1.273	[−0.030, 0.018]	Not supported
FB → JS → REL	0.032 ***	7.710	[0.023, 0.039]	Supported
FB → JS → RES	0.018 ***	4.167	[0.008, 0.025]	Supported
FB → JS → ASS	0.017 **	3.379	[0.006, 0.026]	Supported
FB → JS → EMP	0.008	1.302	[−0.024, 0.014]	Not supported
CR → JS → REL	0.035 ***	7.944	[0.025, 0.042]	Supported
CR → JS → RES	0.020 ***	4.234	[0.009, 0.028]	Supported
CR → JS → ASS	0.019 **	3.432	[0.007, 0.028]	Supported
CR → JS → EMP	0.009	1.306	[−0.026, 0.016]	Not supported
COW → JS → REL	0.038 ***	6.973	[0.026, 0.047]	Supported
COW → JS → RES	0.022 ***	3.837	[0.009, 0.031]	Supported
COW → JS → ASS	0.020 **	3.153	[0.006, 0.031]	Supported
COW → JS → EMP	0.010	1.283	[−0.028, 0.017]	Not supported
NOW → JS → REL	0.032 ***	6.670	[0.022, 0.040]	Supported
NOW → JS → RES	0.020 **	0.667	[−0.085, 0.040]	Supported
NOW → JS → ASS	0.017 **	2.996	[0.006, 0.027]	Supported
NOW → JS → EMP	0.008	1.273	[−0.025, 0.015]	Not supported
COM → JS → REL	0.040 ***	7.246	[0.028, 0.049]	Supported
COM → JS → RES	0.023 ***	3.893	[0.010, 0.033]	Supported
COM → JS → ASS	0.021 **	3.206	[0.007, 0.033]	Supported
COM → JS → EMP	0.010	1.286	[−0.030, 0.018]	Not supported

Notes: PAY: Pay; PRO: Promotion; SUP: Supervision; FB: Fringe benefits; CR: Contingent rewards; COW: Coworkers; NOW: Nature of work; COM: Communication; REL: Reliability; RES: Responsiveness; ASS: Assurance; EMP: Empathy. ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

According to the results of the direct effects and indirect effects, it can be concluded that our study supports most of the established direct relationships and indirect relationships. Additionally, the study confirmed hypotheses H1, H2 and H3, while hypothesis H4 was rejected.

5. Discussion and Implication

5.1. Discussion

This study examines the effect of employee job satisfaction on the intangible components of service quality in the hotel industry. The results of the empirical research confirmed the significant effect of job satisfaction on the intangible components of service quality: reliability (H1), responsibility (H2), and safety (H3), while no significant relationship between job satisfaction and empathy was confirmed (H4). It can be stated that the findings are consistent with the results of previous studies conducted in the hotel industry [24–26]. These results complement those of previous studies and show that employee job satisfaction is the key to achieve service quality in the hotel industry. The correlation

between employee job satisfaction, service quality, and consumer satisfaction has been confirmed in other relevant studies conducted in the service industry. Ong'unya et al. [16] identified that job satisfaction is positively related to the provided health services' quality. Yee et al. [19] showed in their study that job satisfaction significantly and positively affects service quality. Gazzoli et al. [70] found that job satisfaction significantly impacts perceived service quality. Their study was conducted in the restaurant industry. The findings of Karatepe et al. [22] are in agreement with the results of the above-mentioned studies. It is impossible to compare these findings since there are no studies on the relationship between job satisfaction and intangible components of service quality, especially because in the above-mentioned studies, service quality was examined as a one-dimensional construct.

5.2. Theoretical Implications

The research findings validate the foundation of the theory of equity in social exchanges, which is examined through the prism of reciprocal transactions and employees' expectations that fairness or equality will prevail in these exchanges. The study's findings indicate that when employees are satisfied, they will exert more effort, resulting in a higher level of service quality. A special feature of this research is reflected in the comprehensive measurement of job satisfaction [33] and the observation of service quality as a multidimensional construct (the tangibility component is excluded) [49,53], considering that in previous studies, service quality was observed as a one-dimensional construct [19,22,71]. The study makes a noteworthy theoretical addition by addressing a research gap in the hotel industry, namely the absence of prior investigations into the relationship between employee job satisfaction and intangible aspects of service quality. A significant theoretical contribution of this study is reflected in the fact that no previous research in the hotel industry has examined the relationship between employee job satisfaction and intangible components of service quality. In particular, we consider the current situation and the need for empirical analysis and confirmation. The gap in research is solved and allows better understanding of job satisfaction and the intangible components of service quality in the hotel industry as well as to what extent the intangible components of service quality are affected by that employee job satisfaction.

5.3. Practical Implications

The results of empirical research show that employee job satisfaction is important for ensuring the perception of service quality. This result leads hotel managers to recognize the importance of job satisfaction in quality service delivery. The way a hotel organization treats employees affects their satisfaction, ultimately affecting service quality perception. The results of the empirical research represent a good information base for formulating future business strategies, which will help managers in the hotel industry better identify the needs and desires of employees and guests. Guests' needs will be met only after employees' needs are satisfied. Hotel organizations must create a positive work environment and establish good human resource management practices to satisfy their employees, who will provide what guests want: high-quality services.

The results of the study revealed that payment and communication have the greatest contribution in increasing job satisfaction. An attractive payment policy with good communication channels can achieve the greatest effect on the satisfaction of employees in the hotel industry. These two elements of job satisfaction simultaneously have a significant indirect impact on intangible service quality, indicating that a proactive payment policy and communication achieve not only a positive impact on employees but also indirectly on guests.

6. Conclusions

The study confirmed the assumption that the Job Satisfaction Survey and Serqual measurement scales achieve satisfactory composite reliability and convergent validity in the hotel industry within the Serbian context. Except for the operating conditions construct, all other constructs were validated through the study. By testing relationships between constructs

using the partial least square approach to structural equation modeling, it was discovered that payment and communication have the greatest contribution to job satisfaction. The results showed that the perceived intangible service quality can be directly influenced by employee satisfaction, that is, by appropriate human resource management policies and practices. A significant advantage of the study is reflected in the application of two questionnaires, which were filled out separately by hotel employees and guests, which provided additional objectivity in the measurement of independent and dependent variables.

Despite the significant advantages, the study notes certain limitations. First, the results of the confirmatory factor analysis showed that the construct operating conditions should be excluded from further analysis on the side of the latent variable job satisfaction. This shows that a more detailed analysis of working conditions in hotels is needed in order to measure their contribution to job satisfaction. Second, the study was conducted in the Serbian context, which in terms of economic conditions is characterized by wages that are lower than in Western countries and which can be assessed as insufficient. Therefore, conducting a comparative study between countries with different levels of economic development has been identified as a future research direction. Finally, the study in assessing the relationships between the constructs does not take into account categorical variables that can be associated with employees, guests and the hotels themselves. Therefore, it is possible to perform additional analyses based on the comparison of groups in the future period.

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