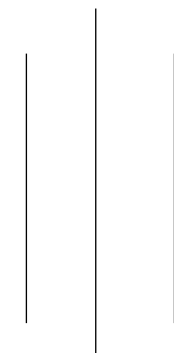


A PROJECT REPORT ON UNDERSTANDING CHANGING GUEST EXPECTATIONS IN NEPAL'S POST PANDEMIC HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY



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A project Work Report submitted to Pokhara University in partial
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this research report entitled “**Understanding Changing Guest Expectations in Nepal’s Post-Pandemic Hospitality Industry**” is my original work carried out under the guidance and supervision of my supervisor. This report has not been submitted either in whole or in part, to any other university or institution for the award of any degree or academic qualification.

I further declare that all sources of information used in this study have been properly acknowledged and cited in accordance with accepted academic standards.

I take full responsibility for the authenticity and accuracy of the information presented in this research report.

Pramita Jwarchan

July, 2026

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that **Ms. Pramita Jwarchan (23150243)**, a student of the **Bachelor of Hotel Management (BHM) program**, has satisfactorily completed the research report entitled **“Understanding Changing Guest Expectations in Nepal’s Post-Pandemic Hospitality Industry”** under my guidance and supervision.

I am satisfied with her dedication, initiative, and sincere efforts in the successful completion of this research report, which has been submitted as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Hotel Management program of Pokhara University.

.....

Suresh Raj Adhikari

Supervisor, PW

July, 2026

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BHM VI Semester

NTHMC

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The hospitality industry is one of the most dynamic and rapidly growing service industries in the world, contributing significantly to global economic development, employment generation, and cultural exchange. Hotels, restaurants, resorts, and other accommodation providers operate in a highly competitive environment where customer satisfaction and guest experience have become major factors determining organizational success. Unlike traditional industries that mainly focus on selling products, hospitality businesses provide intangible experiences where service quality, emotional connection, comfort, safety, and personalization influence guests' perceptions and decisions. Therefore, understanding and responding to changing guest expectations has become an essential requirement for hospitality organizations seeking long-term competitiveness Kotler et al. (2017).

Guest expectations refer to the beliefs, assumptions, and standards that customers develop regarding the quality and type of service they expect to receive from hospitality providers. These expectations are influenced by several factors, including previous experiences, online reviews, technological advancement, cultural background, lifestyle changes, and social trends. According to Parasuraman et al. (1988), service quality is evaluated by comparing customers' expectations with their actual experiences. When service performance meets or exceeds expectations, customers are more likely to experience satisfaction and develop loyalty toward the organization. However, when service fails to meet expectations, dissatisfaction may occur, negatively affecting reputation and customer retention.

Over the past decade, guest expectations in the hospitality industry have changed significantly due to globalization, increasing consumer awareness, and technological development. Modern travelers are no longer satisfied with only basic accommodation facilities; instead, they seek memorable experiences, personalized services, convenience, sustainability, and emotional value. The

development of online booking platforms, social media, and review websites has provided guests with greater access to information and increased their influence over hospitality businesses. Customers now compare hotels based on service quality, cleanliness standards, digital facilities, responsiveness, and overall experience before making purchasing decisions Kandampully et al. (2018).

The COVID-19 pandemic created one of the greatest disruptions in the history of the global hospitality industry. Travel restrictions, border closures, health concerns, and reduced consumer confidence caused significant declines in tourism activities worldwide. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2022), international tourism experienced an unprecedented decline during the pandemic, forcing hospitality businesses to reconsider their operational strategies and service approaches. Hotels were required to introduce stronger hygiene practices, contactless services, safety protocols, and flexible booking policies to rebuild guest confidence. The pandemic significantly changed the way guests evaluate hospitality services. Before COVID-19, guests mainly focused on factors such as price, location, facilities, and service quality. However, after the pandemic, health and safety considerations became important components of guest decision-making. Cleanliness, sanitation procedures, employee hygiene, social distancing measures, and transparent communication became essential expectations among travelers. Research by Jiang and Wen (2020) highlighted that health safety and hygiene practices became major determinants of hotel selection during and after the pandemic, influencing guests' trust and willingness to travel.

Furthermore, the pandemic accelerated the adoption of technology within the hospitality sector. Many hotels introduced digital check-in and check-out systems, mobile applications, online communication platforms, and automated services to reduce physical contact and improve operational efficiency. According to Buhalis and Moldavska (2021), technology-driven hospitality services have become increasingly important because guests now expect faster, safer, and more convenient interactions. Digital transformation is no longer considered only an innovation but has become a competitive necessity for hospitality organizations.

Along with safety and technology, personalization has become another significant aspect of changing guest expectation. Contemporary travelers

increasingly prefer services that recognize their individual preferences, lifestyles, and needs. Personalized recommendations, customized room experiences, flexible services, and meaningful interactions with employees contribute to stronger emotional connections between guests and hospitality providers. Kandampully et al. (2018) emphasized that customer experience management plays a crucial role in creating value and developing long-term relationships with guests. Hotels that understand individual customer preferences are more likely to achieve higher satisfaction and loyalty. Sustainability has also emerged as an important factor influencing guest expectations in the modern hospitality industry. Growing environmental awareness among travelers has increased demand for eco-friendly accommodation practices, responsible resource management, waste reduction, and community involvement. Many guests now consider sustainability practices when selecting hotels and travel destinations. According to Han, Hsu, and Sheu (2019), environmentally responsible practices can positively influence customers' attitudes, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions toward hospitality businesses.

Before the pandemic, Nepal's hospitality industry was experiencing steady growth, with increasing investments in hotels, resorts, and tourism-related services. Destinations such as Kathmandu, Pokhara, Chitwan, and the Everest region developed as major tourism hubs, attracting visitors from different parts of the world. However, the sudden disruption caused by COVID-19 created financial difficulties for hospitality businesses, leading to reduced occupancy rates, employee challenges, and operational uncertainty. According to Nepal (2023), the pandemic forced Nepal's tourism industry to reconsider traditional service approaches and develop adaptive strategies to survive in the changing business environment. The recovery period after COVID-19 has introduced new challenges and opportunities for Nepal's hospitality industry. Although tourism activities have gradually recovered, guest expectations have changed considerably compared to the pre-pandemic period. Modern guests are more conscious about hygiene, safety, service reliability, flexibility, and overall experience. They are not only seeking affordable accommodation but also expecting trustworthy services that provide comfort, security, and personalized attention. Therefore, Nepalese hospitality businesses need to understand these changing expectations to improve service delivery and remain competitive. Health and safety have become major concerns among guests visiting Nepalese hotels and tourism destinations. The

pandemic increased awareness regarding cleanliness, sanitation, food safety, and employee hygiene. Guests now consider hygiene practices as an important factor while selecting accommodation facilities. Basnyat and Sharma (2021) highlighted that Nepalese hotels faced significant operational challenges during COVID-19 and were required to introduce improved safety measures and service adaptations to regain customer confidence. Their study emphasized the importance of crisis management and organizational flexibility in maintaining hospitality operations during uncertain situations. Similarly, the post-pandemic period has encouraged Nepalese hospitality organizations to adopt technology-based services. Digital payment systems, online reservations, virtual communication, and contactless services have become increasingly common in hotels and restaurants. These technological improvements have helped businesses provide faster and more convenient services while reducing unnecessary physical interaction. Aryal et al. (2024) found that changing consumer behavior after COVID-19 influenced Nepal's hotel industry, as guests increasingly valued convenience, digital accessibility, and improved service efficiency. This indicates that technology has become an important factor shaping guest satisfaction and future hospitality practices.

Despite the importance of changing guest expectations, limited research has examined how Nepal's hospitality industry is adapting to these changes after the COVID-19 pandemic. Many previous studies have focused mainly on the economic impact of COVID-19 on tourism, employee challenges, or crisis management strategies. However, fewer studies have explored guests' changing preferences, expectations, and satisfaction factors in Nepal's post-pandemic hospitality environment. Understanding these aspects is necessary because guest expectations directly influence service improvement, customer loyalty, and business sustainability. Previous studies have provided valuable insights into the challenges faced by Nepal's tourism and hospitality industry during and after COVID-19. However, there remains limited research focusing specifically on how guest expectations have changed and how Nepalese hospitality organizations are responding to these changes. Most existing studies have concentrated on the economic impact of the pandemic, tourism recovery, and organizational challenges, while fewer studies have explored the guest perspective and the factors influencing satisfaction in the post-pandemic hospitality environment.

The hospitality industry has experienced significant transformation in recent years due to changing consumer behavior, technological advancement, and the long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Guests today are more informed, more connected, and more selective about the services they choose. Their expectations have expanded beyond basic accommodation facilities to include safety, cleanliness, personalized experiences, digital convenience, service reliability, and sustainable practices. These changes have encouraged hospitality organizations worldwide to rethink their traditional service approaches and focus more on creating meaningful guest experiences. In Nepal, the post-pandemic recovery of the hospitality industry has highlighted the importance of understanding these changing expectations. Although Nepal continues to attract visitors through its unique natural and cultural resources, hospitality businesses face increasing pressure to improve service quality and adapt to new customer demands. The pandemic has changed the way guests evaluate hotels and tourism services, making factors such as hygiene standards, flexible services, technology adoption, and employee professionalism more important than before.

Therefore, this study, titled “Understanding Changing Guest Expectations in Nepal’s Post-Pandemic Hospitality Industry,” aims to address this research gap by examining the evolving needs and preferences of guests in Nepal’s hospitality sector. The study focuses on important factors such as service quality, hygiene and safety practices, technological improvements, personalization, and overall guest experience. Understanding these factors can help hospitality organizations develop effective strategies to meet customer expectations and improve competitiveness. The findings of this research are expected to provide practical benefits to hotel managers, hospitality professionals, and tourism stakeholders by helping them identify current guest priorities and improve service delivery. Additionally, the study contributes to academic research by expanding knowledge about post-pandemic hospitality trends within the Nepalese context. As guest expectations continue to evolve, continuous research and adaptation will remain essential for ensuring the sustainable development and future success of Nepal’s hospitality industry.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The COVID-19 pandemic brought significant changes to the hospitality industry worldwide, including Nepal. During the pandemic, hotels, restaurants, and other tourism businesses experienced a sharp decline in guests due to travel restrictions, lockdowns, and health concerns. Although the industry has gradually recovered, the expectations of guests have changed considerably. Today, guests expect not only quality service and comfortable accommodation but also high standards of cleanliness, health and safety measures, contactless services, flexible booking policies, personalized experiences, and environmentally responsible practices.

To meet these changing expectations, many hotels in Nepal have introduced new health protocols, digital technologies, and customer-focused services. However, the level of adaptation differs among hotels because of variations in financial resources, technology, staff training, and management practices. As a result, some hospitality businesses are able to meet guest expectations more effectively than others, which can influence customer satisfaction, loyalty, and business performance.

Despite the growing importance of these changes, there is limited research focusing specifically on how guest expectations have evolved in Nepal's post-pandemic hospitality industry. Most previous studies have concentrated on the economic impact of COVID-19 or the recovery of the tourism sector rather than on the changing needs and preferences of guests. This creates a knowledge gap for hotel managers and policymakers who need reliable information to improve service quality and remain competitive.

Therefore, this study aims to understand the changing expectations of guests in Nepal's post-pandemic hospitality industry. It seeks to identify the key factors that influence guest satisfaction and examine how hospitality businesses are responding to these changing demands. The findings of this study will help hotel managers improve their services, enhance guest satisfaction, and support the sustainable growth of Nepal's hospitality industry.

1.3 Research Question

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How have guest expectations changed in Nepal's hospitality industry after the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What factors, such as health and safety measures, hygiene, digital services, and personalized experiences, influence guest satisfaction in the post-pandemic hospitality industry?
3. How are hospitality businesses in Nepal adapting their services to meet the changing expectations of guests?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the changes in guest expectations in Nepal's hospitality industry after the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. To examine the factors influencing guest expectations and satisfaction, including health and safety, hygiene, digital services, and personalized experiences.
3. To analyze how hospitality businesses in Nepal are adapting their services to meet the changing expectations of guests.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it provides a better understanding of how guest expectations have changed in Nepal's hospitality industry after the COVID-19 pandemic. As guests now place greater importance on health and safety, cleanliness, digital services, personalized experiences, and service quality, the findings of this study will help identify the key factors that influence their satisfaction and overall experience. The study will be beneficial to hotel owners, managers, and hospitality professionals by providing insights into current guest preferences and helping them develop effective strategies to improve service quality and enhance customer satisfaction. It will also assist policymakers and tourism stakeholders in formulating policies and initiatives that support the sustainable recovery and growth of Nepal's hospitality industry.

Furthermore, this research will serve as a valuable reference for students, researchers, and academicians who are interested in hospitality management, tourism, and consumer behavior. It will contribute to the existing literature on post-pandemic hospitality in Nepal and provide a foundation for future research in this field.

1.6 Literature Review

The hospitality industry has experienced significant changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has greatly influenced guest expectations and service standards. Before the pandemic, guests mainly focused on factors such as service quality, comfort, price, and location when selecting hotels. However, after the pandemic, their expectations have expanded to include high standards of cleanliness, health and safety measures, contactless services, flexible booking policies, personalized experiences, and environmentally sustainable practices.

Previous studies have shown that maintaining proper hygiene and ensuring guest safety are among the most important factors influencing customer satisfaction in the post-pandemic hospitality industry. Researchers have also found that the use of digital technologies, such as online reservations, mobile check-in and check-out, digital payments, and QR code menus, has improved convenience and increased guest confidence. In addition, personalized services and effective communication have become essential in creating positive guest experiences and encouraging repeat visits.

In the context of Nepal, the hospitality industry is gradually recovering as tourism activities continue to increase. Hotels and other hospitality businesses have introduced various strategies to meet the changing needs of guests. However, the level of adaptation differs among businesses, and there is still limited research focusing specifically on changing guest expectations in Nepal's post-pandemic hospitality industry.

Therefore, this study reviews existing literature on guest expectations, customer satisfaction, post-pandemic hospitality trends, and service quality to better understand current industry practices. It also aims to identify the research gap and provide valuable insights that can help hospitality businesses improve their services and enhance guest satisfaction in Nepal.

1.6.1 Guest Expectations in the Hospitality Industry

Guest expectations refer to the standards, preferences, and level of service that customers anticipate before experiencing hospitality services. These expectations are influenced by previous experiences, online reviews, service quality, technological advancements, cultural values, and market trends. In the

hospitality industry, understanding guest expectations is essential because meeting or exceeding these expectations leads to higher customer satisfaction, positive word-of-mouth, repeat visits, and long-term business success. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, guest expectations have expanded beyond traditional service quality to include health and safety measures, cleanliness, digital convenience, personalized experiences, and sustainable practices.

According to **Kotler et al. (2022)**, guest expectations play a vital role in determining customer satisfaction within the hospitality industry. The authors explain that customers evaluate hotel services by comparing their actual experience with their prior expectations. When hospitality organizations successfully meet or exceed these expectations, guests are more likely to remain loyal and recommend the business to others. They further emphasize that hotels must continuously adapt their services to changing customer preferences in order to remain competitive. Similarly, **Parasuraman et al. (1988)** introduced the SERVQUAL model, which identifies reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles as the five key dimensions of service quality that influence guest expectations and satisfaction. Their study found that customers expect hospitality businesses to provide reliable services, prompt responses, professional behavior, personalized attention, and well-maintained physical facilities. The researchers concluded that service quality is a major factor affecting guests' overall perception of hospitality services. **Kandampully et al. (2015)** examined changing customer expectations in the hospitality industry and found that modern guests increasingly seek personalized experiences, efficient service delivery, and the use of digital technologies. Their study highlighted that customer expectations continue to evolve due to technological advancements and changing lifestyles, requiring hotels to regularly innovate their services to remain competitive. Likewise, **Sigala (2020)** discussed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on hospitality services and reported that guest expectations have shifted significantly toward health, hygiene, safety, and contactless technologies. The study emphasized that maintaining high sanitation standards, providing flexible booking options, and using digital service platforms have become essential for rebuilding customer confidence in the post-pandemic hospitality industry.

In the Nepalese context, the hospitality industry has also experienced changes in guest expectations following the pandemic. Hotels have increasingly

adopted enhanced cleaning procedures, digital payment systems, online booking platforms, and customer-focused service strategies to respond to evolving traveler needs. However, the level of adaptation varies among hospitality businesses, creating a need to better understand the expectations of both domestic and international guests. The reviewed literature indicates that guest expectations are continuously changing due to technological, social, and environmental factors. It also highlights that hospitality businesses must regularly assess customer needs and improve service quality to ensure guest satisfaction and maintain a competitive advantage. Understanding these changing expectations is therefore essential for the sustainable growth of Nepal's post-pandemic hospitality industry.

1.6.2 Changing Guest Expectations in the Post-Pandemic Hospitality

Industry

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly transformed the hospitality industry by changing guests' preferences, behaviors, and expectations. Before the pandemic, guests mainly focused on factors such as service quality, comfort, price, and convenience. However, after the pandemic, they have become more concerned about health and safety, cleanliness, contactless services, flexible booking policies, personalized experiences, and environmental sustainability. These changing expectations have encouraged hospitality businesses to adopt new strategies and technologies to enhance guest satisfaction and rebuild customer confidence.

According to Sigala (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic has permanently influenced the hospitality industry by shifting guest priorities toward health protection and safety. The study found that travelers now expect hotels to implement strict hygiene protocols, provide contactless services, and maintain transparent communication regarding health measures. The author further emphasized that hospitality businesses must innovate and adapt to these new expectations to remain competitive in the post-pandemic environment. Similarly, Gursoy and Chi (2020) examined travelers' perceptions after the COVID-19 outbreak and found that health and safety have become major factors influencing travel and accommodation decisions. Their study revealed that guests prefer hotels that maintain high cleanliness standards, enforce sanitation measures, and demonstrate a strong commitment to protecting customer well-

being. The researchers concluded that visible health and safety practices increase guest trust and satisfaction. Jiang and Wen (2020) discussed the future of the hospitality industry in the post-pandemic era and highlighted that technology has become an essential part of guest service. The study reported that customers increasingly prefer online reservations, mobile check-in and check-out, digital payment systems, and QR code menus because these services reduce physical contact and improve convenience. The authors suggested that hotels should continue investing in digital innovation to meet evolving guest expectations. Likewise, Baum and Hai (2020) emphasized that guests now expect greater flexibility in booking and cancellation policies due to the uncertainty associated with travel. Their study found that flexible reservation options and responsive customer service help increase guest confidence and encourage future travel. The researchers also noted that personalized services and effective communication have become more important in creating positive guest experiences.

In Nepal, the hospitality industry has gradually adapted to these changing expectations by introducing enhanced cleaning procedures, contactless payment systems, online booking platforms, and improved customer service practices. However, the level of adaptation differs among hospitality businesses depending on their resources, technology, and management practices. Understanding these changing guest expectations is therefore essential for hotels to improve service quality and maintain customer satisfaction. The reviewed literature indicates that guest expectations have evolved considerably in the post-pandemic period. Health and safety, digital technologies, flexibility, and personalized services have become key factors influencing guest satisfaction. Therefore, hospitality businesses must continuously adapt their operations and service strategies to meet these changing expectations and remain competitive in the evolving tourism industry.

1.6.3 Hospitality Service Adaptation in Nepal

Hospitality service adaptation refers to the modifications and improvements made by hotels and other hospitality businesses to meet changing guest expectations and market demands. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, hospitality organizations in Nepal have introduced new operational strategies, including enhanced sanitation practices, digital technologies, flexible reservation policies, staff training, and personalized services. These adaptations are essential

for rebuilding guest confidence, improving service quality, and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the hospitality industry.

According to Buhalis and Law (2008), technological innovation has become an important factor in improving hospitality services and enhancing the guest experience. The authors explained that the adoption of online booking systems, digital communication, and electronic payment methods enables hotels to provide more efficient and convenient services. They further emphasized that technology helps hospitality businesses respond quickly to changing customer expectations and maintain a competitive advantage. Similarly, Pizam and Shani (2009) stated that the success of hospitality businesses depends on their ability to adapt to changing customer needs and market conditions. Their study found that hotels that continuously improve service quality, invest in employee training, and adopt innovative service strategies are more successful in achieving customer satisfaction and loyalty. The researchers concluded that service adaptation is a continuous process that requires strong management commitment. Ivanov et al. (2017) explored the role of automation and service innovation in the hospitality industry. Their research found that technologies such as self-service kiosks, mobile applications, and automated check-in systems improve operational efficiency while meeting guests' demand for faster and more convenient services. The authors suggested that integrating technology with traditional hospitality services creates a better overall guest experience. Likewise, Jones et al. (2016) emphasized that sustainable business practices have become an important aspect of hospitality service adaptation. Their study reported that guests increasingly appreciate hotels that adopt environmentally friendly practices, such as reducing waste, conserving energy, and supporting local communities. The researchers argued that sustainability not only benefits the environment but also strengthens customer trust and enhances the reputation of hospitality businesses.

In Nepal, many hotels have gradually adapted to post-pandemic challenges by implementing improved hygiene standards, expanding digital services, promoting domestic tourism, and providing flexible booking options. However, the extent of these adaptations differs depending on the size, financial capacity, and management practices of individual hospitality businesses. Continuous investment in service improvement remains essential to meet the evolving expectations of both domestic and international guests. The reviewed literature

suggests that hospitality service adaptation involves more than introducing new technologies. It requires continuous improvement in service quality, employee performance, innovation, and sustainable practices. These adaptations enable hospitality businesses to meet changing guest expectations, improve customer satisfaction, and strengthen their competitiveness in Nepal's post-pandemic hospitality industry.

1.6.4 Factors Influencing Guest Satisfaction in the Post-Pandemic Hospitality Industry

Guest satisfaction refers to the level of contentment experienced by guests after comparing the services they receive with their expectations. In the post-pandemic hospitality industry, guest satisfaction is influenced by several factors, including service quality, cleanliness, health and safety measures, digital services, staff behavior, value for money, and overall guest experience. Understanding these factors is essential for hospitality businesses because satisfied guests are more likely to revisit, recommend the hotel to others, and contribute to its long-term success.

According to Radojevic et al. (2017), customer satisfaction in the hotel industry is influenced by hotel attributes such as service quality, room facilities, staff performance, and overall guest experience. Their study found that both hotel characteristics and individual guest preferences play an important role in shaping customer satisfaction. The researchers concluded that hotels should continuously improve their services to meet the diverse expectations of guests.

Similarly, Prayag et al. (2018) reviewed studies on customer satisfaction in the hospitality sector and reported that service quality, perceived value, customer emotions, and fairness significantly affect guest satisfaction. The authors emphasized that hospitality businesses should focus on delivering consistent and customer-centered services to build long-term loyalty. Lee et al. (2020) explored guest satisfaction by analyzing online hotel reviews and found that service quality, room condition, and value for money were among the most influential factors affecting overall guest satisfaction. The study also highlighted that guest feedback collected through digital platforms provides valuable insights for improving hospitality services and customer experiences.

Likewise, Wang et al. (2021) examined hotel customer satisfaction in the post-pandemic period using online review data. Their study found that epidemic prevention measures, convenience, perceived value, service quality, and guest emotions significantly influenced customer satisfaction. The researchers concluded that maintaining effective health and safety measures alongside quality services has become essential for meeting the expectations of modern travelers.

In Nepal, guest satisfaction has become increasingly dependent on hotels' ability to provide safe, hygienic, reliable, and personalized services. Hospitality businesses that invest in employee training, technological innovation, and customer-focused service strategies are better positioned to satisfy the changing needs of both domestic and international guests. The reviewed literature indicates that guest satisfaction is influenced by multiple factors that have become even more important in the post-pandemic era. Service quality, health and safety, digital convenience, staff performance, and perceived value play a vital role in shaping guests' experiences. Therefore, hospitality businesses in Nepal should continuously improve these aspects to enhance customer satisfaction and remain competitive in the evolving hospitality industry.

1.6.5 Guest Satisfaction in Nepal's Hospitality Industry

Guest satisfaction is a key indicator of the success of hospitality businesses, reflecting how well hotels and other service providers meet or exceed guests' expectations. In the post-pandemic period, guest satisfaction has become increasingly dependent on factors such as service quality, cleanliness, health and safety measures, pricing, staff behavior, and overall guest experience. Understanding these factors enables hospitality businesses to improve their services, strengthen customer loyalty, and remain competitive in Nepal's growing tourism sector.

According to Aryal et al. (2023), service quality and price fairness are the two major determinants of customer satisfaction in Nepal's hotel industry. Their study, conducted among hotel guests in the Thamel area of Kathmandu, found that guests are more satisfied when hotels provide reliable services, maintain fair pricing, and consistently deliver quality experiences. The researchers concluded that improving service quality and ensuring reasonable pricing are essential for increasing customer satisfaction. Similarly, Adhikari et al. (2023) developed a

contextualized SERVQUAL model for Nepali resorts and found that responsiveness, reliability, cleanliness, empathy, and assurance are the most important dimensions influencing guest satisfaction. Their study emphasized that hotels should continuously evaluate and improve these service quality dimensions to meet the changing expectations of both domestic and international guests. Shah (2024) examined the relevance of Total Quality Management (TQM) in Nepalese hotels and reported that management commitment, continuous improvement, employee involvement, and quality planning significantly enhance service quality and customer satisfaction. The study concluded that implementing TQM practices enables hotels to improve operational performance while providing better experiences for guests. Likewise, Rajbanshi and Pandey (2025) investigated customer satisfaction in Nepalese resort hotels and found that recreation and entertainment, food and beverage services, accommodation quality, pricing, and front office services are the major factors influencing guest satisfaction. The researchers suggested that hospitality businesses should continuously improve these service areas to encourage repeat visits and strengthen customer loyalty.

The reviewed literature indicates that guest satisfaction in Nepal's hospitality industry is influenced by multiple service-related factors, including service quality, pricing, employee performance, accommodation facilities, and overall guest experience. These studies highlight the importance of continuously improving hospitality services to meet the changing expectations of guests in the post-pandemic era and support the sustainable growth of Nepal's hospitality industry.

1.6.6 Digital Transformation and Contactless Services in the Hospitality Industry

Digital transformation refers to the integration of digital technologies into hospitality operations to improve service efficiency, enhance guest experiences, and meet changing customer expectations. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the adoption of contactless services such as online reservations, mobile check-in and check-out, digital payments, QR code menus, and mobile communication has become increasingly important. These technologies help reduce physical contact, improve convenience, and increase guest confidence while enhancing overall service quality.

According to Buhalis and Sinarta (2019), digital technologies have transformed the hospitality industry by enabling hotels to deliver personalized, efficient, and customer-centered services. Their study found that online booking systems, mobile applications, and digital communication improve guest satisfaction by providing faster and more convenient services. The researchers concluded that technology has become a strategic tool for enhancing customer experiences and maintaining competitiveness. Similarly, **Mariani and Borghi (2021)** examined the role of digital innovation in the hospitality industry during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their study found that contactless technologies, including digital check-in, electronic payments, and virtual concierge services, significantly improved guest confidence and operational efficiency. The authors emphasized that digital transformation is essential for meeting the expectations of post-pandemic travelers. Gretzeld et al. (2022) explored the relationship between smart tourism technologies and customer experiences. Their findings revealed that guests increasingly prefer hotels offering digital convenience, real-time information, and personalized services through technology. The researchers concluded that the integration of smart technologies enhances both guest satisfaction and service quality.

In the Nepalese context, Shrestha and Poudel (2023) studied the adoption of digital technologies in Nepal's hospitality sector and found that many hotels have introduced online booking systems, digital payment methods, and contactless customer services to respond to changing guest expectations. Their study concluded that digital transformation not only improves operational efficiency but also strengthens guest trust and satisfaction in the post-pandemic environment. The reviewed literature indicates that digital transformation and contactless services have become essential components of the modern hospitality industry. The adoption of innovative technologies enables hotels to provide safer, faster, and more personalized services while meeting the evolving expectations of guests. Therefore, continued investment in digital innovation is essential for enhancing guest satisfaction and supporting the sustainable development of Nepal's post-pandemic hospitality industry.

1.6.7 Research Gap

The review of previous literature indicates that guest expectations and customer satisfaction have been widely discussed in hospitality and tourism research. Several studies have examined topics such as service quality, guest satisfaction, digital transformation, health and safety measures, and hospitality service adaptation. Previous writers emphasized the importance of understanding changing guest expectations and adapting hospitality services to enhance customer satisfaction and business performance.

Similarly, previous writers have explored service quality, guest satisfaction, and hospitality management in the Nepalese context. These studies provide valuable insights into the factors influencing customer satisfaction and the importance of improving hospitality services in Nepal.

However, most previous studies have focused on service quality, customer satisfaction, or the overall impact of COVID-19 on the tourism and hospitality industry. Limited attention has been given to understanding how guest expectations have specifically changed in Nepal's post-pandemic hospitality industry, particularly regarding health and safety, digital services, personalized experiences, flexibility, and sustainable hospitality practices.

Furthermore, only a few studies have comprehensively examined how hospitality businesses in Nepal are adapting their services to meet these evolving guest expectations. Existing research often emphasizes business recovery and tourism development rather than exploring the changing needs and preferences of guests in the post-pandemic period.

Therefore, this study seeks to address this research gap by examining the changing guest expectations in Nepal's post-pandemic hospitality industry. It aims to identify the key factors influencing guest expectations and analyze how hospitality businesses are adapting their services to meet these evolving demands. The findings of this study are expected to provide practical recommendations for improving service quality, enhancing guest satisfaction, and supporting the sustainable growth of Nepal's hospitality industry.

1.6.8 Summary

The literature review highlights that guest expectations in the hospitality industry have changed significantly over time, particularly after the COVID-19

pandemic. Previous studies emphasize that guest expectations are no longer limited to traditional factors such as service quality, comfort, and price but now include health and safety measures, cleanliness, digital convenience, personalized services, flexibility, and sustainable hospitality practices. Researchers have consistently found that meeting these evolving expectations is essential for improving guest satisfaction, building customer loyalty, and maintaining a competitive advantage in the hospitality industry.

The reviewed literature also indicates that hospitality businesses have responded to these changes by adapting their services through technological innovations, enhanced hygiene protocols, employee training, and customer-centered service strategies. In the Nepalese context, studies have shown that service quality, staff responsiveness, cleanliness, digital services, and sustainable practices are important factors influencing guest satisfaction. However, the level of adaptation varies among hospitality businesses depending on their financial resources, technological capabilities, and management practices. These findings demonstrate that continuous service improvement and innovation are necessary for the sustainable growth of Nepal's hospitality industry.

Although previous national and international studies provide valuable insights into guest expectations, service quality, and hospitality management, there remains a limited understanding of how guest expectations have specifically changed in Nepal's post-pandemic hospitality industry. Existing research has primarily focused on customer satisfaction, service quality, and tourism recovery, while relatively few studies have comprehensively examined the evolving expectations of guests and the adaptation strategies adopted by Nepalese hospitality businesses. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this research gap by providing a better understanding of changing guest expectations and offering practical recommendations that can help hospitality organizations enhance service quality, improve guest satisfaction, and strengthen the long-term competitiveness of Nepal's hospitality industry.

1.7 Research Methodology

This chapter describes the research methodology for the study titled "Understanding Changing Guest Expectations in Nepal's Post-Pandemic Hospitality Industry." It presents the research design, study area, target

population, sampling technique, data collection methods, data processing and analysis, ethical considerations, and limitations of the study. Since the study aims to understand how guest expectations have changed after the COVID-19 pandemic and how these changes influence the hospitality industry in Nepal, a qualitative research approach is considered the most suitable. The study collects data from hotel guests through structured questionnaires to identify their expectations regarding service quality, hygiene, safety, technology, pricing, and overall guest satisfaction.

1.7.1 Research Design

The study is designed as qualitative phenomenological research. Phenomenology is suitable because it focuses on understanding how people experience and make sense of a particular phenomenon in their everyday lives. In this study, the phenomenon is the changing expectations of guests in Nepal's post-pandemic hospitality industry. This research design is appropriate because it allows the researcher to explore guests' personal experiences and understand how their expectations of hospitality services have changed after the COVID-19 pandemic. It also helps examine guests' views on service quality, cleanliness, hygiene, safety, technology, personalized services, and overall hotel experiences. By understanding these lived experiences, the study provides deeper insights into the changing needs and expectations of guests in Nepal's hospitality industry.

1.7.2 Population and Participants

The participants of this study will be guests who have stayed in hotels or visited hospitality establishments in Nepal after the COVID-19 pandemic. They should have recent experience of using hospitality services and be willing to share their opinions and experiences voluntarily. Their responses will help understand how guest expectations have changed in the post-pandemic period.

The participants will be selected from different hotels and hospitality establishments in Nepal, with a focus on guests who have experienced services such as accommodation, food and beverage, and other hotel facilities after the pandemic. Their feedback will provide valuable insights into the changing expectations of customers in the hospitality industry.

1.7.3 Sampling Technique

This study will use purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is appropriate for qualitative research because it enables the researcher to select participants who have relevant experience and can provide meaningful information related to the research topic.

Since this is a phenomenological study, the focus is on understanding the lived experiences and perspectives of participants rather than collecting data from a large number of people. Therefore, 6 to 10 guests who have stayed in hotels or used hospitality services in Nepal after the COVID-19 pandemic will be selected as participants. These participants will be chosen based on their recent experiences and their willingness to share their views on how their expectations of hospitality services have changed in the post-pandemic period.

1.7.4 Data Collection Method

The primary method of data collection for this study will be in-depth semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires. Semi-structured interviews are suitable for phenomenological research because they allow participants to freely share their personal experiences while enabling the researcher to explore the main objectives of the study.

An interview guide will be prepared with open-ended questions related to:

- Guest expectations after the COVID-19 pandemic
- Experiences with hotel accommodation and food and beverage services
- Health, safety, and hygiene practices in hospitality establishments
- Service quality and customer satisfaction
- Changes in preferences and travel behavior
- Challenges faced during hotel stays
- Overall perceptions of hospitality services in Nepal after the pandemic

These questions will help the researcher gain a deeper understanding of how guests' expectations have changed and how hospitality establishments are responding to those changing needs.

1.7.5 Data Analysis Procedure

The collected data will be analyzed using thematic analysis within a phenomenological framework. This method is suitable because it helps identify

common patterns and themes from the participants lived experiences regarding their changing expectations of hospitality services in the post-pandemic period.

The data analysis process will follow these steps:

- Transcribe the interview recordings and organize the questionnaire responses.
- Read the collected data several times to become familiar with the participants' experiences.
- Identify significant statements related to guests' expectations and experiences with hospitality services after the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Group similar statements into meaningful categories.
- Develop themes and sub-themes based on recurring ideas and experiences.

1.7.6 Ethical Considerations

This study will follow the standard ethical principles of social research. Before collecting data, all participants will be informed about the purpose of the study, the data collection process, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

Written informed consent will be obtained from each participant before conducting the interviews or collecting questionnaire responses. To protect their privacy, participants' names will not be used in the study. Instead, pseudonyms or codes will be assigned to maintain confidentiality and anonymity. Any information that could identify the hotels or hospitality establishments will also be kept confidential when necessary.

All interview recordings, questionnaire responses, and transcripts will be stored securely and used only for academic and research purposes. The information collected from participants will not be shared with anyone outside the research without their permission.

1.7.7 Delimitations and Limitations

This study is limited to guests who have stayed in selected hotels or used hospitality services in Nepal after the COVID-19 pandemic. It does not include hotel managers, employees, or guests who have not used hospitality services during the post-pandemic period. The study focuses on understanding the lived

experiences and changing expectations of guests rather than evaluating the overall performance or financial success of hospitality establishments.

One limitation of this study is that the findings cannot be statistically generalized to all hotel guests in Nepal because it follows a qualitative phenomenological approach with a relatively small number of participants. In addition, the findings are based on the personal experiences and opinions of the participants, which may differ from one individual to another.

CHAPTER II

FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of the study entitled “Understanding Changing Guest Expectations in Nepal’s Post-Pandemic Hospitality Industry.” The findings are based on semi-structured interviews conducted with eight hotel guests who had stayed in hotels or used hospitality services in Nepal after the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants had different travel purposes, including leisure, business, and family visits, and shared their personal experiences regarding the changes they observed in hospitality services after the pandemic.

The interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis within a phenomenological approach. Similar experiences and viewpoints shared by the participants were carefully examined and grouped into meaningful categories. As a result, three major themes emerged:

- Changing Guest Expectations in the Post-Pandemic Period
- Experiences with Service Quality, Health, Safety, and Hygiene
- Customer Satisfaction and Future Expectations of Hospitality Services

These themes represent the participants lived experiences and perceptions of hospitality services in Nepal after the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings highlight how guests’ priorities and expectations have changed and how these changes have influenced their overall hotel experiences.

To maintain confidentiality and protect the identities of the participants, pseudonyms (P1–P5) are used throughout this chapter when presenting quotations and discussing the findings.

The purpose of this chapter is to present and interpret the participants lived experiences under each theme. Direct quotations from the participants are included to reflect their views and experiences in their own words, followed by the researcher’s interpretation to explain the significance of the findings in relation to the research objectives.

2.1 Changing Guest Expectations in the Post-Pandemic Period

The first theme that emerged from the interview data was Changing Guest Expectations in the Post-Pandemic Period. All participants explained that their expectations of hospitality services had changed after the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of them stated that they now pay greater attention to cleanliness, hygiene, health and safety measures, service quality, and the overall comfort provided by hotels. Many participants also mentioned that they expect staff to be more responsive, professional, and attentive to their needs than before the pandemic. Their experiences showed that guests have become more aware of the quality of hospitality services and now expect hotels to provide a safer, cleaner, and more personalized experience.

2.1.1 Greater Importance of Health, Safety, and Hygiene

Participants explained that health, safety, and hygiene have become some of the most important factors when choosing a hotel after the COVID-19 pandemic. Almost all participants mentioned that they now pay closer attention to the cleanliness of rooms, restaurants, washrooms, and other public areas before deciding to stay at a hotel. They also expect hotels to maintain proper hygiene standards and create a safe environment for all guests.

Participant 1 stated: “After the pandemic, the first thing I notice is whether the hotel is clean and well-maintained. If I don’t feel the place is hygienic, I won’t feel comfortable staying there, no matter how good the other services are.”

Participant 2 explained that cleanliness has become a major factor in choosing accommodation because it gives confidence that the hotel cares about the health and well-being of its guests.

Participant 3 mentioned that seeing clean rooms, sanitized facilities, and staff following proper hygiene practices makes them feel safe during their stay.

Participant 4 shared that they now expect hotels to maintain high standards of cleanliness every day, while

Participant 5 stated that they appreciate hotels that continue to follow good hygiene practices even after the pandemic has ended.

These findings suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly increased guests’ awareness of health, safety, and hygiene. Participants viewed

these factors as essential indicators of service quality and considered them one of the main reasons for choosing and trusting a hospitality establishment.

2.1.2 Higher Expectations of Service Quality and Staff Responsiveness

When participants were asked about their expectations of service quality and staff responsiveness after the COVID-19 pandemic, they shared similar opinions despite describing them in different ways. Most participants explained that they now expect hotel staff to be more attentive, polite, professional, and quick to respond to guest requests. They believed that quality service is not only about providing good facilities but also about making guests feel welcomed, respected, and cared for throughout their stay.

Participant 1 explained: “After the pandemic, I expect hotel staff to be more responsive and welcoming. When I ask for something, I appreciate it when they respond quickly and politely because it makes me feel valued as a guest.”

Participant 2 stated that friendly staff, prompt service, and good communication make a hotel stay more comfortable and enjoyable.

Participant 3 mentioned that employees should be well-trained, approachable, and willing to assist guests whenever needed.

Participant 4 shared that quick responses to requests and a positive attitude from hotel staff greatly improve the overall guest experience.

Participant 5 explained that professional behavior, respect, and personalized attention encourage guests to trust the hotel and make them more likely to return in the future.

These responses suggest that participants have higher expectations of service quality and staff responsiveness in the post-pandemic period. They believe that professional service, effective communication, prompt assistance, and a caring attitude are essential for creating a positive guest experience and increasing customer satisfaction.

2.1.3 Preference for Comfort, Convenience, and Personalized Services

Participants shared different views on what makes a hotel stay comfortable and satisfying after the COVID-19 pandemic. Although their preferences varied, all participants agreed that they now value comfort, convenience, and personalized services more than before. They explained that they prefer hotels

that provide a relaxing environment, modern facilities, easy access to services, and staff who understand and respond to their individual needs.

Participant 1 stated: “I prefer hotels that make my stay comfortable and stress-free. Small things like a clean and cozy room, fast check-in, and staff remembering my preferences make a big difference.”

Participant 2 explained that convenient services such as online booking, quick check-in and check-out, and easy communication with hotel staff make their stay more enjoyable.

Participant 3 mentioned that personalized attention, such as staff greeting guests warmly, remembering special requests, or providing recommendations based on their preferences, creates a memorable experience.

Participant 4 shared that comfortable rooms, quality amenities, and prompt service are important factors that influence their choice of a hotel.

Participant 5 stated that they appreciate hotels that understand guests’ individual needs and provide personalized services rather than offering the same experience to everyone.

These findings indicate that participants place a high value on comfort, convenience, and personalized services when choosing hospitality establishments in the post-pandemic period. They believe that hotels offering comfortable facilities, efficient services, and personalized guest experiences are more likely to meet their expectations, improve customer satisfaction, and encourage repeat visits.

2.1.4 Changing Travel Priorities and Decision-Making

Participants explained that their travel priorities and decision-making have changed significantly after the COVID-19 pandemic. They shared that they are now more careful when selecting hotels and pay greater attention to factors such as cleanliness, safety, service quality, online reviews, and value for money. Most participants mentioned that they spend more time researching and comparing hotels before making a booking to ensure they have a safe and comfortable stay.

Participant 1 stated: “Before booking a hotel, I now check online reviews, cleanliness ratings, and the services they provide. I want to make sure the hotel is safe, comfortable, and worth the money.”

Participant 2 explained that health and hygiene standards have become one of the main factors influencing their travel decisions, along with the quality of customer service.

Participant 3 shared that they prefer hotels with flexible booking policies and positive guest reviews because these provide greater confidence when planning a trip.

Participant 4 mentioned that they are now willing to pay slightly more for a hotel that offers better cleanliness, comfort, and reliable service.

Participant 5 stated that they carefully compare different hotels before making a reservation and choose those that consistently receive positive feedback from previous guests.

These responses indicate that participants have become more thoughtful and selective in their travel decisions after the COVID-19 pandemic. They believe that factors such as health and safety, service quality, guest reviews, flexibility, and overall value play an important role in choosing a hospitality establishment. These changing priorities reflect the evolving expectations of guests in Nepal's post-pandemic hospitality industry.

The findings under the theme Changing Guest Expectations in the Post-Pandemic Period show that guest expectations have changed significantly following the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants consistently emphasized the importance of health, safety, and hygiene, expecting hotels to maintain high standards of cleanliness and provide a safe environment throughout their stay.

The study also found that guests now have higher expectations of service quality and staff responsiveness. Participants valued professional, friendly, and prompt service, believing that staff behavior plays a major role in shaping their overall hotel experience. In addition, they expressed a stronger preference for comfort, convenience, and personalized services, highlighting that comfortable facilities, efficient services, and attention to individual needs contribute to greater satisfaction. Furthermore, the findings reveal that participants have become more careful and selective in their travel priorities and decision-making. Before choosing a hotel, they now consider factors such as online reviews, cleanliness, safety standards, service quality, flexible booking options, and value for money more carefully than before the pandemic.

Overall, the findings suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped guests' expectations of hospitality services. Participants viewed quality service, safety, personalized experiences, and trust as essential elements of a positive hotel stay. These changing expectations indicate the need for hospitality establishments in Nepal to continuously improve their services and adapt to the evolving needs of guests in the post-pandemic period.

2.2 Experiences with Service Quality, Health, Safety, and Hygiene

The second theme that emerged from the interview analysis was Experiences with Service Quality, Health, Safety, and Hygiene. While participants generally shared positive experiences with hospitality services after the COVID-19 pandemic, they also highlighted several areas where improvements are still needed. Most participants explained that the quality of service, cleanliness, health and safety measures, and staff behavior greatly influenced their overall satisfaction with a hotel stay. They emphasized that these factors determine whether they would revisit a hotel or recommend it to others.

Three sub-themes emerged from the analysis:

- Experiences with Service Quality
- Perceptions of Health, Safety, and Hygiene Practices
- Satisfaction with Staff Support and Hospitality Services

2.2.1 Experiences with Service Quality

Most participants shared that service quality has become one of the most important factors influencing their hotel experience after the COVID-19 pandemic. They explained that they now pay greater attention to how staff communicate with guests, how quickly requests are handled, and whether the services provided match the standards promised by the hotel. Although most participants had positive experiences, some mentioned that the quality of service is not always consistent across different hotels.

Participant 1 stated: "Good service makes me feel welcomed and respected. When the staff are polite, responsive, and willing to help, it makes my stay much more enjoyable. I also appreciate it when they handle my requests quickly without making me wait for a long time."

Participant 2 explained that friendly staff, prompt service, and clear communication create a positive impression from the moment they arrive at the hotel. They mentioned that employees who greet guests warmly and respond to requests with a positive attitude make the overall stay more comfortable and satisfying.

Participant 3 shared that professional and well-trained employees increase their confidence in the hotel. They believed that staff who have good knowledge of hotel services and can solve guest problems efficiently contribute greatly to a positive hospitality experience.

Participant 4 mentioned that quality service should remain consistent throughout the entire stay. They explained that while some hotels provide an excellent welcome, the service quality sometimes declines later, which affects their overall satisfaction and opinion of the hotel.

Participant 5 stated that personalized attention and genuine care from hotel staff make guests feel valued. They explained that when employees remember guests' preferences, provide helpful recommendations, and show a willingness to assist, it creates a memorable experience and encourages them to return to the same hotel in the future.

Findings indicate that participants consider service quality to be one of the most important aspects of the hospitality experience in the post-pandemic period. They believe that professional staff, timely service, effective communication, consistency, and personalized care are essential for meeting guests' expectations, improving customer satisfaction, and building long-term loyalty.

2.2.2 Perceptions of Health, Safety, and Hygiene Practices

Participants shared that their perceptions of health, safety, and hygiene practices have changed significantly after the COVID-19 pandemic. Most participants explained that they now pay close attention to the cleanliness of hotel rooms, restaurants, washrooms, and other public areas. They also observe whether hotel staff follow proper hygiene practices and whether the hotel maintains a clean and safe environment throughout their stay. These factors strongly influence their trust in the hotel.

Participant 1 explained: "After the pandemic, I always notice whether the rooms, bathrooms, and public areas are clean. If the hotel looks hygienic and

well-maintained, I immediately feel more comfortable and confident staying there.”

Participant 2 stated that they pay attention to whether hotel staff maintain good personal hygiene and keep the hotel environment clean. They mentioned that seeing clean facilities and organized surroundings makes them feel that the hotel genuinely cares about the well-being of its guests.

Participant 3 shared that proper sanitation and regular cleaning of guest rooms and common areas are now among the first things they look for when staying at a hotel.

Participant 4 mentioned that they appreciate hotels that continue to maintain high hygiene standards even after the pandemic. They believed that consistent cleanliness reflects the hotel’s professionalism and commitment to providing quality service.

Participant 5 explained that health, safety, and hygiene practices are now essential when choosing a hotel. They stated that they are more likely to trust and revisit hotels that consistently maintain a clean environment and follow proper safety measures because it makes them feel secure throughout their stay.

These findings indicate that participants consider health, safety, and hygiene practices to be essential components of quality hospitality services in the post-pandemic period. They believe that maintaining high standards of cleanliness and ensuring a safe environment not only improve guest satisfaction but also strengthen trust and encourage repeat visits.

2.2.3 Satisfaction with Staff Support and Hospitality Services

Participants explained that staff support and hospitality services play an important role in determining their overall satisfaction with a hotel stay. Most participants shared that they appreciate staff who are friendly, respectful, helpful, and willing to help whenever needed. They believed that good hospitality is reflected not only in the hotel’s facilities but also in the attitude, professionalism, and commitment of the employees.

Participant 1 stated: “I feel more satisfied when the hotel staff are welcoming, polite, and ready to help. Even simple things like greeting guests with a smile and responding quickly to requests make the stay much more enjoyable.”

Participant 2 explained that staff who communicate clearly and solve problems efficiently leave a positive impression. They mentioned that when employees listen carefully to guests and provide prompt assistance, it makes them feel valued and respected.

Participant 3 shared that genuine hospitality is shown when staff go beyond their basic responsibilities to ensure guests are comfortable. They appreciated employees who were approachable, patient, and willing to provide personalized support whenever required.

Participant 4 stated that they were more satisfied with hotels where staff consistently maintained a professional attitude throughout their stay. They explained that courteous behavior, prompt service, and attention to guest needs encouraged them to recommend the hotel to others.

Participant 5 mentioned that supportive and caring staff greatly influence their overall hotel experience. They explained that when employees remember guests' preferences, respond positively to feedback, and make extra efforts to ensure comfort, it creates a memorable experience and increases the likelihood of returning to the same hotel.

These findings suggest that participants consider staff support and hospitality services to be key factors in achieving guest satisfaction in the post-pandemic hospitality industry.

The findings under the theme Experiences with Service Quality, Health, Safety, and Hygiene reveal that these factors have become essential in shaping guests' overall hotel experiences in the post-pandemic period. Participants consistently emphasized that high-quality service, professional staff, and prompt responses greatly influence their satisfaction. They also highlighted that health, safety, and hygiene practices are no longer viewed as optional but as basic expectations when choosing a hotel.

The study further found that participants highly value supportive and hospitable staff who communicate effectively, respond to guest needs, and provide personalized care throughout the stay. Such positive interactions help guests feel comfortable, respected, and confident in the services offered by the hotel.

Overall, the findings show that guests now expect hospitality establishments to maintain excellent service standards while ensuring a clean, safe, and welcoming environment. Participants believed that consistent service

quality, strong health and hygiene practices, and genuine staff support not only improve guest satisfaction but also build trust, encourage positive word-of-mouth, and increase the likelihood of repeat visits. These findings highlight the importance of continuously improving hospitality services to meet the evolving expectations of guests in Nepal's post-pandemic hospitality industry.

2.3 Customer Satisfaction and Future Expectations of Hospitality Services

This section presents the findings related to customer satisfaction and future expectations of hospitality services in Nepal's post-pandemic hospitality industry. All participants shared their experiences regarding the factors that influenced their satisfaction during hotel stays and discussed what they expect from hospitality establishments in the future. While most participants were generally satisfied with their recent hotel experiences, they also believed that there is still room for improvement in several areas.

The participants explained that their satisfaction largely depends on service quality, staff behavior, cleanliness, health and safety standards, comfort, and the overall hospitality experience. They also emphasized that hotels need to continuously improve their services and adapt to the changing needs and expectations of guests in order to remain competitive in the post-pandemic period.

Based on the participants' responses, three sub-themes emerged:

- Factors Influencing Customer Satisfaction
- Future Expectations of Hospitality Services
- Suggestions for Improving Hospitality Services

2.3.1 Factors Influencing Customer Satisfaction

Most participants explained that customer satisfaction depends on several factors, including service quality, cleanliness, staff behavior, comfort, and the overall hotel experience. They shared that when these aspects meet or exceed their expectations, they are more likely to feel satisfied and recommend the hotel to others. Participants also mentioned that small details, such as prompt service and personalized attention, greatly influence their overall impression of a hotel.

Participant 1 explained: “For me, customer satisfaction depends on how the hotel treats its guests. A clean room, friendly staff, quick service, and a comfortable environment make me feel satisfied and encourage me to stay there again.”

Participant 2 also mentioned that professional staff, timely responses to requests, and good communication are important factors that improve their hotel experience.

Participant 3 stated that maintaining cleanliness, providing quality facilities, and offering consistent service create trust and increase guest satisfaction.

Participant 4 shared that they feel more satisfied when hotel staff pay attention to their needs and make extra efforts to ensure a pleasant stay.

Participant 5 explained that personalized services, comfortable accommodations, and a welcoming atmosphere leave a lasting impression and influence their decision to revisit the hotel in the future.

Findings suggest that customer satisfaction is influenced by a combination of service quality, cleanliness, staff support, comfort, and personalized hospitality. Participants believed that hotels that consistently provide high-quality services and create positive guest experiences are more likely to earn customer trust, encourage repeat visits, and receive positive recommendations from guests.

2.3.2 Future Expectations of Hospitality Services

Participants shared that their future expectations of hospitality services have increased after the COVID-19 pandemic. Most participants believed that the hospitality industry should continue adapting to the changing needs of guests to remain competitive and build long-term customer trust.

Participant 1 stated: “In the future, I expect hotels to maintain the same high standards of cleanliness and service that were introduced after the pandemic. I also hope they continue improving their facilities and make guests feel safe and comfortable.”

Participant 2 explained that they expect hotels to use more technology, such as online check-in, digital payments, and faster communication, to make the guest experience more convenient.

Participant 3 shared that hotels should continue training their staff so they can provide professional, friendly, and personalized services that meet guests' changing expectations.

Participant 4 mentioned that they hope hotels will regularly improve their facilities, maintain high hygiene standards, and introduce new services that enhance guest comfort.

Participant 5 stated that they expect hospitality establishments to listen to guest feedback, continuously improve their services, and provide experiences that make guests feel valued and appreciated.

These findings indicate that participants have higher expectations for the future of hospitality services in Nepal. They believe that continuous improvement in service quality, health and hygiene standards, staff professionalism, technology, and personalized guest experiences will play an important role in increasing customer satisfaction and ensuring the long-term success of the hospitality industry in the post-pandemic period.

2.3.3 Suggestions for Improving Hospitality Services

Participants shared several suggestions for improving hospitality services in Nepal's post-pandemic hospitality industry. They believed that hotels should continuously improve their service quality, maintain high standards of cleanliness, invest in staff training, and pay greater attention to guests' individual needs. Most participants emphasized that listening to customer feedback and making regular improvements would help hotels provide better experiences and increase guest satisfaction.

Participant 1 explained: "Hotels should continue focusing on cleanliness and service quality. They should also listen to guests' feedback because it helps them understand what customers really expect and where improvements are needed."

Participant 2 suggested that hotels should provide regular training for employees so that staff can improve their communication skills, professionalism, and ability to handle guest requests efficiently.

Participant 3 shared that hotels should adopt modern technology, such as online check-in, digital payment systems, and faster customer support, to make the guest experience more convenient.

Participant 4 explained that hospitality establishments should maintain consistent service quality, improve hotel facilities, and create a welcoming environment where every guest feels comfortable and valued.

Participant 5 stated that offering more personalized services, responding quickly to guest concerns, and continuously improving based on customer feedback would strengthen guest satisfaction and encourage repeat visits.

These findings indicate that participants believe continuous improvement is essential for the future success of Nepal's hospitality industry. They emphasized that maintaining excellent service quality, adopting modern technology, and giving importance to guest feedback are key strategies for improving hospitality services and meeting the changing expectations of customers in the post-pandemic period.

The findings reveal that Customer Satisfaction and Future Expectations of Hospitality Services indicate that customer satisfaction is influenced by several important factors, including service quality, cleanliness, staff behavior, comfort, safety, and personalized hospitality.

The study also found that guests have higher expectations for the future of hospitality services following the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants expect hotels to continuously improve their services by maintaining high standards of hygiene, providing professional and responsive staff, adopting modern technology, and offering more personalized and convenient experiences. They believe that the hospitality industry should continue adapting to changing customer needs in order to remain competitive and build long-term trust. They also suggested several ways to improve hospitality services, including investing in staff training, maintaining consistent service quality, upgrading hotel facilities, actively listening to guest feedback, and ensuring a clean, safe, and welcoming environment.

Overall, the findings indicate that customer satisfaction and future expectations are closely connected. Participants believed that hospitality establishments that consistently provide quality services, respond to changing guest expectations, and prioritize customer needs are more likely to achieve higher guest satisfaction, encourage repeat visits, and strengthen the long-term growth of Nepal's hospitality industry in the post-pandemic period.

2.4 Summary of the Findings

This chapter presented the findings of the study based on semi-structured interviews with eight hotel guests who had used hospitality services in Nepal after the COVID-19 pandemic. The interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis, resulting in three major themes: Changing Guest Expectations in the Post-Pandemic Period, Experiences with Service Quality, Health, Safety, and Hygiene, and Customer Satisfaction and Future Expectations of Hospitality Services.

The findings revealed that guest expectations have changed significantly after the COVID-19 pandemic. Most participants explained that they now place greater importance on health, safety, and hygiene when selecting a hotel. They also reported having higher expectations of service quality, staff responsiveness, comfort, convenience, and personalized services. Furthermore, participants stated that their travel priorities have changed, as they now carefully consider factors such as cleanliness, online reviews, service quality, safety measures, and value for money before making travel decisions.

The study further found that service quality, health, safety, and hygiene practices strongly influence guests' overall experiences. Participants emphasized that professional and responsive staff, effective communication, clean facilities, and a safe environment are essential for creating a positive hotel experience. They also explained that supportive and hospitable staff who provide timely assistance and personalized care increase their trust in hospitality establishments and improve their overall satisfaction.

Finally, the findings showed that customer satisfaction and future expectations are closely related to the quality of hospitality services provided. Participants explained that their satisfaction depends on factors such as service quality, cleanliness, comfort, staff behavior, and personalized hospitality. They also expected hotels to continue improving their services by maintaining high hygiene standards, investing in staff training, adopting modern technology, and providing more personalized guest experiences. Participants suggested that hospitality establishments should regularly seek customer feedback, improve service consistency, upgrade facilities, strengthen staff professionalism, and

continue adapting to changing guest needs in order to enhance customer satisfaction and encourage repeat visits.

Overall, the findings indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped guests' expectations of hospitality services in Nepal. Participants viewed quality service, health and safety, cleanliness, personalized hospitality, and continuous improvement as essential elements of a positive guest experience. Although hospitality establishments have made significant progress in responding to these changing expectations, participants believed that ongoing improvements in service quality, innovation, and customer-focused practices are necessary to strengthen guest satisfaction, build long-term customer loyalty, and support the sustainable growth of Nepal's hospitality industry in the post-pandemic period.

CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Conclusion

This study explored the changing guest expectations in Nepal's post-pandemic hospitality industry using a qualitative phenomenological approach. The findings revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly influenced the way guests perceive and evaluate hospitality services. Participants explained that they now place greater importance on health, safety, hygiene, service quality, staff responsiveness, comfort, convenience, and personalized services when choosing and staying at hotels. Their experiences show that guest expectations have become higher and more focused on receiving safe, reliable, and high-quality hospitality services.

The study also found that guests' overall experiences are strongly influenced by the quality of hospitality services they receive. Participants emphasized that professional and friendly staff, prompt responses to guest requests, clean and well-maintained facilities, and effective health and safety practices contribute greatly to customer satisfaction. They explained that positive interactions with hotel employees and a welcoming environment increase their trust in hospitality establishments and encourage them to revisit the same hotels in the future.

Furthermore, the study revealed that customer satisfaction and future expectations are closely connected. Participants expressed the need for hotels to continuously improve their services by maintaining high standards of cleanliness, investing in staff training, adopting modern technology, and providing more personalized guest experiences. They also highlighted the importance of listening to customer feedback and making continuous improvements to meet the changing needs of guests in the post-pandemic period.

Overall, the study concludes that the COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped guest expectations in Nepal's hospitality industry. Guests now expect not only comfortable accommodation but also excellent service quality, strong health and safety standards, personalized hospitality, and consistent customer care.

Hospitality establishments that continuously adapt to these changing expectations, focus on guest satisfaction, and maintain high service standards are more likely to build customer trust, encourage repeat visits, and contribute to the sustainable growth of Nepal's hospitality industry in the post-pandemic era.

3.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are suggested:

- Hotels and other hospitality establishments should continue to maintain high standards of health, safety, and hygiene by ensuring clean rooms, sanitized public areas, and proper hygiene practices to meet guests' post-pandemic expectations.
- Hospitality management should regularly provide training and professional development programs for employees to improve service quality, communication skills, customer care, and responsiveness to guest needs.
- Hotels should focus on providing personalized services by understanding guests' preferences, responding promptly to requests, and creating memorable experiences that increase customer satisfaction and loyalty.
- Hospitality establishments should adopt modern technology, such as online booking systems, digital check-in and check-out, digital payment options, and efficient customer support, to provide greater convenience and improve the overall guest experience.
- Hotel management should actively collect and use guest feedback through surveys, reviews, and suggestion systems to identify areas for improvement and continuously enhance service quality.
- Hotels should regularly upgrade their facilities and services to ensure guest comfort, convenience, and value for money while meeting the changing expectations of domestic and international travelers.
- Hospitality education institutions should strengthen practical training by placing greater emphasis on customer service, health and hygiene practices, communication skills, and guest relationship management to better prepare students for the evolving hospitality industry.

- Future researchers should conduct similar studies in different regions of Nepal or include a larger number of participants and diverse hospitality establishments to gain a broader understanding of changing guest expectations and customer satisfaction in Nepal's post-pandemic hospitality industry.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Interview Guide

Research Title: Understanding Changing Guest Expectations in Nepal's Post-Pandemic Hospitality Industry

Section A: Demographic Information

1. Could you please introduce yourself?
2. What is your age group?
3. What is your occupation/profession?
4. How frequently do you travel and stay in hotels or hospitality establishments?
5. How many years of experience do you have in the hospitality industry? (For hospitality professionals)
6. What type of accommodation facilities have you mostly experienced (luxury hotels, resorts, boutique hotels, budget hotels, etc.)?

Section B: General Experience and Guest Expectations

1. How would you describe your overall experience with hotels and hospitality services after the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. In your opinion, how have guest expectations changed compared to the pre-pandemic period?
3. What are the most important factors you consider when choosing a hotel or hospitality service after the pandemic?
4. Do you think guests have become more concerned about safety and hygiene standards? Why?
5. What changes have you noticed in guest behavior and preferences after COVID-19?

Section C: Health, Safety, and Hygiene Expectations

1. How important are cleanliness and hygiene practices when selecting a hotel?
2. What specific safety measures do guests expect from hotels nowadays?
3. Do you think hotels are effectively maintaining post-pandemic hygiene standards? Please explain.
4. How do hygiene and safety practices influence guest satisfaction and trust?
5. Section D: Service Quality and Personalization
6. What qualities do guests expect from hotel employees in the current hospitality environment?
7. How important is personalized service in creating a positive guest experience?
8. Do guests expect more customized services according to their personal needs and preferences? Please explain.
9. How does employee behavior and communication influence guest satisfaction?
10. What service improvements do you think hotels should focus on to meet changing guest expectations?

Appendix B

Participant Profile

Research Title: Understanding Changing Guest Expectations in Nepal's Post-Pandemic Hospitality Industry

Participant	Age	Gender	Occupation	Hotel/Hospitality Experience After COVID-19	Frequency of Hotel Stay	Experience Background
P1	26	Female	Private Employee	3 Years of staying in different	Frequently travels for	Shared experiences

Participant	Age	Gender	Occupation	Hotel/Hospitality Experience After COVID-19	Frequency of Hotel Stay	Experience Background
				hotels after COVID-19	work and leisure	regarding cleanliness, safety standards, and service quality
P2	31	Male	Business Owner	4 Years of using hotel and restaurant services after the pandemic	Regular traveler within Nepal	Provided views on technology, convenience, and personalized services
P3	24	Female	Student	2 Years of experiencing hospitality services after COVID-19	Occasional hotel guest	Discussed expectations related to hygiene, affordability, and customer care

Participant	Age	Gender	Occupation	Hotel/Hospitality Experience After COVID-19	Frequency of Hotel Stay	Experience Background
P4	35	Male	Tourism Professional	5 Years of interaction with hotels and tourism services after COVID-19	Frequent traveler	Shared professional and personal observations about changing guest behavior
P5	29	Female	Hospitality Employee	4 Years of observing guest expectations after COVID-19	Regular exposure to hotel services	Provided insights on service improvement, guest satisfaction, and changing demands

Appendix C

Sample Interview Transcript

Participant 1

Researcher: Could you please introduce yourself and share your experience with hospitality services?

Participant 1: I am a private employee and I frequently travel for both personal and professional purposes. I have stayed in different hotels after the COVID-19

pandemic, which has helped me observe many changes in hotel services and guest expectations.

Researcher: How do you think guest expectations have changed after the COVID-19 pandemic?

Participant 1: After the pandemic, guests have become more aware and careful about hygiene, safety, and service quality. Before, people mainly focused on price, location, and facilities, but now they also look for cleanliness, safety measures, and a comfortable environment before choosing a hotel.

Researcher: What factors are most important to you when selecting a hotel after the pandemic?

Participant 1: For me, cleanliness and hygiene are the first priorities. I also consider staff behavior, service quality, online reviews, and whether the hotel provides convenient facilities like digital payment and easy communication.

Researcher: How important are hygiene and safety practices in creating guest satisfaction?

Participant 1: Hygiene and safety practices are very important because they create trust between guests and hotels. When guests see proper cleanliness, sanitization, and professional staff behavior, they feel more comfortable and satisfied with their stay.

Researcher: Have you noticed any changes in hotel services due to technology after COVID-19?

Participant 1: Yes, many hotels have started using more technology, such as online booking systems, digital payments, and online communication. These services make the process easier and save time for guests.

Researcher: Do you think personalized services influence guest experience?

Participant 1: Definitely. Guests feel more valued when hotels understand their needs and provide services according to their preferences. Small things like remembering guest choices or providing quick responses can create a memorable experience.

Researcher: What improvements do you expect from Nepalese hotels in the future?

Participant 1: Nepalese hotels should focus more on maintaining consistent service quality, improving hygiene standards, adopting modern technology, and providing more personalized experiences. Understanding what guests actually need will help hotels improve and compete better.

Appendix D

Informed Consent Statement

I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study entitled “Understanding Changing Guest Expectations in Nepal’s Post-Pandemic Hospitality Industry.” I understand the purpose of this study and agree to provide information and share my experiences through an interview.

I understand that my participation will help in understanding how guest expectations have changed after the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly regarding service quality, hygiene and safety practices, technology adoption, personalization, and overall hospitality experiences.

I acknowledge that my identity and personal information will remain confidential, and the information provided by me will be used only for academic research purposes. I understand that my participation is completely voluntary, and I have the right to refuse to answer any question or withdraw from the study at any time without facing any negative consequences.

By signing this consent form, I confirm that I have understood the purpose of the research and agree to participate willingly.

Participant’s Signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher’s Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix E

List of Hospitality Establishments Visited

1. Hotel A, Lakeside, Pokhara
2. Hotel B, Lakeside, Pokhara
3. Hotel C, Pokhara
4. Hotel D, Pokhara
5. Hotel E, Pokhara