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Measuring service quality perceptions of hotel management institutes on hotel recruiters' hiring intentions: effect of sacrifice, satisfaction and service value

Pratik Ghosh ^a, Deepika Jhamb ^b and Larry Yu ^c

^aDr. Ambedkar Institute of Hotel Management Catering & Nutrition, Chandigarh, India; ^bChitkara Business School, Chitkara University, Punjab, India; ^cDepartment of Management, School of Business, The George Washington University, Washington, DC, USA

ABSTRACT

This study examined how service quality by institutes of hospitality management (IHM) in India affected hotel recruiters' behavioral intentions of returning to campus for sustained recruitment activities. It further examined the underlying mechanisms of service value perceived by hotel recruiters, affected by the sacrifice made by hotel recruiters, as well as the satisfaction of hotel recruiters with IHM service quality and their behavioral intentions. A sample of 132 hotel recruiters from four international and domestic hotel organizations in India participated in a survey. Outcomes of structural equation modeling revealed that service quality, service value, and satisfaction were all predictors of behavioral intentions of the hotel recruiters. Sacrifice of hotel recruiters positively influenced their service value; service value perceived by hotel recruiters and their satisfaction were positively impacted by service quality; satisfaction and service value were the significant underlying mechanisms between service quality and behavioral intentions; and the relationship between service value and satisfaction was insignificant. These findings emphasize that IHMs improve performance by developing effective administrative policies and procedures that enhance the hiring intentions of hotel recruiters and in turn can elevate the reputation of the institutions with closely aligned academia-industry collaborations to achieve the sustainable development goals related to quality education.

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Introduction

Universities create high impact by working with multiple stakeholders, e.g., faculty, students, alumni, industry, and public policy makers (Aguinis et al., 2021). Among external stakeholders in hospitality education, industry recruiters are considered key, as they directly employ graduates (Kim & Jeong, 2018). Due to this critical stakeholder relationship and the perceived gaps in knowledge, skills, and mindset needed by graduates to excel in their careers, many studies have investigated industry recruitment standards and hospitality recruiters' views on academic curriculum, internships, and graduate

CONTACT Pratik Ghosh  callpratikghosh@yahoo.co.in  Dr. Ambedkar Institute of Hotel Management Catering & Nutrition, Sector 42 D, Chandigarh 160036, India

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characteristics (Huang et al., 2016; Nachmias et al., 2017). For example, Christou (2002) identified that hotel recruiters ranked soft skills as the significant element for management trainees seeking employment in hotels. Kwok et al. (2011) and Talawanich and Wattanacharoensil (2021) explored the benchmarks employed by hotel recruiters to select management trainees for their organizations. The interviews with the recruiters in branded hotels highlighted that decisions to hire depended on perceptions of students' leadership, personality, past job or internship experiences, and person-job fit. The study by Kim and Jeong (2018) underlined interpersonal relationships, human resource skills, and problem-solving skills as expected from hospitality recruiters for entry-level managerial positions in hotels. M. J. Lee et al. (2019) focused on the industry's need for educational institutions to update their curriculum due to the heightened competition for quality students in the hospitality industry. Recently, Zenner-Höffkes et al. (2021) identified interpersonal skills as one of the primary competencies recruiters look for in a potential employee in a hospitality position.

However, most previous studies on industry recruiters have focused on one or two dimensions of hospitality education, primarily student competencies and curriculum fit (Huang et al., 2016), e.g., recruiters' hiring decisions based on student characteristics and competencies (Kwok, 2012; Kwok et al., 2012), and comparative analysis of different views on internships and curriculum by students, recruiters, and faculty (Alexakis & Jiang, 2019; Yiu & Law, 2012). As education is considered a "service" delivered by the institutes of higher learning (Kankhuni et al., 2022; Latif et al., 2019) and the quality of the graduates embodies the service quality of the respective institutes, therefore, institutional education quality manifested in the competency of the graduates directly affects the satisfaction and service value perceptions of industry recruiters and will significantly influence their behavioral intentions to return to campus for recruitment (Sahney, 2016). Furthermore, the interactions among the recruiters with students, faculty and administration and the use of the institutes' facilities during on-campus recruitment influence recruiters' perceptions of the institute's service quality.

Few studies have explored recruiters' perceptions of and experience with service quality by hospitality management programs from a consumer behavioral perspective and further determined their satisfaction with the quality of services from the hospitality management institutions and their behavioral intentions (Ghosh & Jhamb, 2022a, 2022b; Kahraman & Alrawadieh, 2021; Löfgren et al., 2020), i.e., to return to the campus for future recruitment, affirming their choice for choosing the same institute and recommend the services of the institute to their colleagues. Moreover, there is a scarcity of research combining the effect of service quality, satisfaction, and service value on behavioral intentions of the customers in hospitality research (Oh & Kim, 2017). In this vein, the present study on the perceptions of hotel recruiters explores the linkages between these variables, contributing to the extant literature on consumer behavior.

Therefore, this study explored the multidimensions of education service quality from the perspective of hotel recruiters to understand their behavioral intentions, using the Institutes of Hotel Management (IHM) in India as an example. There are currently 21 IHMs funded by the central government and administered by the National Council for Hotel Management and Catering Technology. The IHMs offer a six-semester undergraduate program, and the hotel recruiters are invited to the IHM campus from the start of the fifth semester. Once selected for the management training program, the selected students

have to undergo 18- to 24-month in-house training in one or more properties of the hotel organization to become job ready. In this study, we attempted to examine if IHMs were providing expected service quality, satisfaction, and service value to influence the hotel recruiters' hiring intentions by examining the following questions: Which of these constructs – service quality, service value, and satisfaction – predict hotel recruiters' behavioral intentions? How is the service quality of IHMs perceived by hotel recruiters? Do satisfaction and service value act as mediators between the service quality of IHMs and the behavioral intentions of hotel recruiters? Do hotel recruiters perceive service value in their sacrifice (cost, time, and effort expended) to hire and train students from the IHMs?

This research is significant and provides three contributions to the hospitality education literature and present hospitality education administration. The study expands previous studies on gap analysis between recruiters' expectations/requirements and student competencies/IHM curricula. It takes a holistic perspective to examine hospitality education service quality of IHMs from recruiters' lens. Identifying industry recruiters as an external stakeholder (Sahney, 2016), we studied both the direct and indirect influence of service quality delivered by the institutes on behavioral intentions of hotel recruiters mediated through service value impacted by sacrifice and mediated through satisfaction. Therefore, this study provides new understanding of the predictors of hotel recruiters' behavioral intentions for repeated campus recruitment. Next, the evaluation of service quality, service value, and satisfaction of hospitality education perceived by hotel recruiters and the direct and indirect effects of the variables on recruiters' hiring intentions provides insightful feedback to the IHMs for improving their infrastructure, curriculum, education delivery, and academia-industry collaborations. Lastly, at the national level, the study also supports the overall objectives and targets of the National Education Policy 2020, which is inspired by the details of sustainable development goals (SDG 4.3) related to quality education leading to employability and entrepreneurship after pursuing technical and vocational programs in India by the year 2030 (United Nations in India, n.d.).

Literature review and hypothesis development

Service quality

Service quality concentrates on the distinction of perception related to the supposition and actual feeling towards the service provided and has been measured through SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Later, the performance (actual perception) based measure was found to be a superior method of measuring the service quality construct explained with SERVPERF (Cronin & Taylor, 1992). This construct cannot be assessed without the dimensions representing different aspects, divisions, or distinct areas of quality required to assess and comprehend the holistic service quality perceptions of key stakeholders. The above scales are universal, and none was developed for evaluating higher education service quality.

Realizing a strong need to develop an instrument in the higher education context, Abdullah (2006) proposed the Higher Education Performance (HEdPERF) scale to measure students' perception by customizing the generic SERVPERF instrument. It was recently used for measuring hospitality management student perceptions of higher education service quality and its effect on student engagement, attachment, satisfaction, and loyalty

in Malawi (Kankhuni et al., 2022). Recently, Abbas (2020) proposed a modified HEdPERF model in the higher education context for measuring students' perceptions. It included not only the traditional items of service quality already included in the SERVPERF and HEdPERF scales, but also new elements such as personality development, safety and security, and employment opportunities from the students' perspective. As Quinn et al. (2009) stressed, industry recruiters are the end users of higher education, and the efforts of other stakeholders must be aligned with the end user. That is, the service quality efforts of all stakeholders should be linked to the attributes inculcated in the students by imparting the knowledge and skills required to be successful in the industry.

With the institution delivering education as a "service," the value for investment and satisfaction with service quality are the core factors impacting the behavioral intentions of industry recruiters. In the context of hotel recruiters in hospitality education, this could mean that inadequate service quality, service value, or satisfaction may lead to negative behavioral intentions of the recruiters, e.g., switching to other universities and discontinuing hiring from the same university (Sahney, 2016). Considering higher education service quality from a total quality management perspective, Sahney (2016) conducted a comprehensive study by listening to the voices of all stakeholders of higher education in order to ensure service quality, including internal stakeholders, e.g., education administrators and faculty, and external stakeholders of students and industry recruiters.

By customizing SERVQUAL according to the needs indicated by industry recruiters in a higher education context, Sahney (2016) adopted and tested a measurement scale for understanding the perception of industry recruiters for higher education service quality. The items in this instrument has four dimensions: (1) *tangibles*, which include primarily infrastructure and organizational support, visually attractive campus surroundings, adequate resources, facilities for conducting recruitment interviews, and proper support of career center coordinators of the institute in coordinating their campus visits; (2) *competence*, which requires high academic standards of faculty qualifications, such as imparting basic and advanced knowledge to the students, developing their communication skills, and making them industry-ready; (3) *attitude*, which shows institutes' efforts in developing business ethics, willingness to learn, and risk appetite among the students of the institute; and (4) *delivery*, which encourages cross-disciplinary education and practical applications and to synthesize knowledge among students in the institute through learning activities like capstone projects and industry participation. The scale was verified by a group of industry recruiters who regularly visited Indian management and engineering institutes for campus recruiting (Sahney, 2016). We adopted this measurement scale with the four dimensions for this study.

Satisfaction

Satisfaction is defined as "an evaluation of an emotion" (Hunt, 1977, pp. 459–460). It specifies the arousal of consumers' positive feelings when products or services are possessed or consumed by them (Rust et al., 1993). According to Olsen and Johnson (2003), customers' service experience and evaluation of a particular service encounter or event can be determined by transaction-specific or evaluative-based measures of satisfaction. In this study, the satisfaction construct was examined through evaluative-based measures comprising items related to the choice of purchase,

justification of choice, and exactness of facilities (Cronin et al., 2000), leading to the overall satisfaction of hotel recruiters. The satisfaction dimension following the evaluative-based measures is grounded on equity theory, which emphasizes impartiality related to social exchange (Homburg et al., 2005; Kollmann et al., 2020; Lim, 2020). In the context of this study, the theory assumes the customer (hotel recruiter) receives a certain amount of satisfaction from the service provider (IHMs) for the quality of services delivered in exchange for a specific cost (sacrifice). The theory also acknowledges that the higher the level of satisfaction perceived from the service provider, the more he or she is willing to pay for the cost (Bolton & Lemon, 1999; Kollmann et al., 2020; Lim, 2020). In this case, recruiters' satisfaction relates to selecting the IHMs with competent students, justifying the choice, and encountering facilities that provide functional and comfortable meetings and interviews.

Sacrifice

Sacrifice is the disutility perceived by customers in terms of money, time, and effort (Hackman et al., 2006). The customer viewpoint indicates that, to receive a product or service, the cost is given up or sacrificed. For example, previous studies have identified sacrifice as both monetary cost (Monroe & Chapman, 1987) and non-monetary cost in examining the relationship between perceived sacrifice and perceived value (Pura, 2005). Sacrifice associated with monetary and non-monetary cost for perceived value of education by undergraduate students was also explored in higher education (Sheu, 2010). Items considered monetary in nature are considered the monetary cost, and items considered nonmonetary in nature are the time and effort expended to receive service in return (Cronin et al., 2000).

In the context of sacrifice, the perceived cost in terms of money, effort, and time has greater meaning than the actual monetary cost or price of a product or service (Zeithaml, 1988). In the present study, the sacrifice construct was measured from the perspective of hotel recruiters of IHMs. The direct monetary cost for providing in-house training for 18 to 24 months was the cost to company (CTC) packages offered to the selected student trainees, whereas the time and effort expended to complete in-house training program to make student trainees job-ready were measured as the nonmonetary component of sacrifice.

Service value

Service value refers to the balance between what individuals get and what individuals sacrifice to get the service. What customers receive can be different based on service quality, volume, convenience, etc.; what they sacrifice can relate to money, time, effort, etc (Zeithaml, 1988). The study defined perceived service value as customers' assessments in the context of a product or service's usefulness formed by the perceptions of what was gained and given. "As the level of perceived gain (service quality, volume, and convenience) and what is given (money expended, time, and effort) varies across buyers, perceived service value shows a trade-off between the most important 'gained' and 'given' prospects" (Zeithaml, 1988, p. 14). In this study, the anticipated value of

service was considered a balance between the quality of service (what was gained) and sacrifice (what was given) perceived by the hotel recruiters of the IHMs.

Behavioral intentions

Behavioral intentions include perceptions of customers related to repeat purchases, sharing their experiences with others, and loyalty toward a service organization (Cronin et al., 2000; Shukla, 2010). Research has suggested that constructive behavioral intentions are depicted when the service provider facilitates customers' loyalty, enables referrals and recommendations to other customers, and builds repurchase intentions. In the present study, the behavioral intentions of hotel recruiters were measured through their intention to participate in future campus recruiting, recommend the services of IHMs to other hotel organizations or to their colleagues, and affirm their intentions of choosing the same institute again for quality services.

Organizations are focusing on the behavioral intentions of stakeholders (Ghosh et al., 2022; Prentice et al., 2018). Though service quality is a key measurement tool to assess the firm's competitive reputation (Widianti et al., 2015), the rise in customer demand and intense competition has led to the understanding that service quality may not be the only factor that provides a firm with a competitive edge. Likewise, customer value is an important source of advantage to firms in market rivalry (Zeithaml et al., 1996). Merely satisfying customers may not lead to positive behavioral intentions, and service value has equal importance (Zauner et al., 2015). In the hospitality literature, service quality, satisfaction, and service value are well recognized as key precursors of behavioral intentions (C. F. Chen & Chen, 2010). Therefore, the present study also intended to understand the behavioral intentions of hotel recruiters to comprehend the overall competitive position of IHMs in India.

Relationships between variables

Studies have shown different effects of service quality on behavioral intentions. Though various studies provided empirical evidence of a direct significant association (Cronin et al., 2000; Shah et al., 2020; Shukla, 2010; Trivellas & Santouridis, 2016; Ghosh et al., 2023), some studies reported this impact to be insignificant (C. F. Chen & Chen, 2010; Cronin et al., 2000; Jen et al., 2011; Kuo et al., 2009; Prentice et al., 2018; Widianti et al., 2015). In studying higher education service quality, a similar disagreement has been observed. While a study in higher education undertaken from students' perspective by Shukla (2010) found a significant relationship between the two constructs, research conducted by Prentice et al. (2018) found an insignificant association between the two variables. Recently, a study based on faculty perspective by Ghosh et al. (2022) revealed this relationship as insignificant. It is thus evident that a lack of clarity in the above relationships still exists, and exploring such relationships from the hotel recruiters' viewpoints will help IHMs understand the respective perceptions and develop strategic and policy decisions accordingly. The past studies we reviewed consistently support a considerable indirect link between the two variables (Cronin et al., 2000; Ghosh et al., 2022; Shah et al., 2020; Shukla, 2010; Trivellas & Santouridis,

2016; Widianti et al., 2015). As one of the objectives of this study was to evaluate how service quality of IHMs affects the behavioral intentions of hotel recruiters, the first hypothesis is asserted as follows:

H₁: *The service quality of IHMs directly impacts the hotel recruiter's behavioral intentions positively and significantly.*

Similarly, the associations between service value, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions are diverse in the literature. Many studies have established only a direct significant linkage between service value and behavioral intentions (Z. Chen & Dubinsky, 2003; Hackman et al., 2006; Tuncer et al., 2021; Zeithaml, 1988). At the same time, while several other studies highlighted only the mediated relationship between these two variables through satisfaction (Hume & Mort, 2010; McDougall & Levesque, 2000; Wahyuningsih, 2011), many reported both significant direct and indirect effects (through satisfaction) between these two variables (Cronin et al., 2000; W. T. Lai & Chen, 2011; F. Lai et al., 2009; Shukla, 2010), and others found the relationship between them insignificant (Ghosh et al., 2023; Ghosh et al., 2022; Hossain et al., 2021). This study assumed that the service value offered by IHMs would positively and significantly impact the behavioral intentions of hotel recruiters.

In addition to the above relationship, past studies have also supported a strong positive linkage between satisfaction and behavioral intentions (Cronin et al., 2000; De Oña, 2021; Shah et al., 2020; Slack et al., 2021; Tuncer et al., 2021). As such, we also assumed that the satisfaction of hotel recruiters would influence their intentions to hire students from the IHMs. Therefore, we hypothesize:

H₂: *The service value obtained from IHMs directly impacts the hotel recruiter's behavioral intentions positively and significantly.*

H₃: *The satisfaction obtained from IHMs directly impacts the hotel recruiter's behavioral intentions positively and significantly.*

The idiosyncratic linkage between service value and satisfaction has also been evident in prior studies. Though the value as a driver of satisfaction is asserted in many studies (Al-Ansi & Han, 2019; C. F. Chen & Chen, 2010; Cronin et al., 2000; Hackman et al., 2006; Hossain et al., 2021; Jen et al., 2011; H. Lee et al., 2019; Shukla, 2010; Slack et al., 2021), few of the studies established an insignificant linkage between the two latent variables (Ghosh et al., 2023; Ghosh et al., 2022; Ledden et al., 2011; Wahyuningsih, 2011). This study considered that service value perceptions of hotel recruiters would significantly influence their satisfaction. Accordingly, we propose the following hypothesis:

H₄: *The service value obtained from IHMs directly impacts the hotel recruiter's satisfaction positively and significantly.*

At the same time, many studies have found a significant influence of service quality on satisfaction directly as well as indirectly via service value (De Oña, 2021; Tuncer et al., 2021; Žabkar et al., 2010). For example, De Oña (2021), while comparing the service quality perceptions of transport users in five European cities, established a strong linkage of service quality with satisfaction directly and through service value as a mediator. Another study by Tuncer et al. (2021) established similar relationships while studying customer perceptions in a fine dining restaurant. These studies advocate that the positive perceptions of service quality evoke positive feelings leading to satisfaction for the product or service directly or mediated through service value. As such, the hypotheses are as follows:

H₅: *The service quality of IHMs directly impacts the hotel recruiter's satisfaction positively and significantly.*

H₆: *The service value obtained from IHMs is a significant mediator in the association between service quality and satisfaction.*

Empirical evidence of service quality positively influencing service value is adequate (Kuo et al., 2009; Slack et al., 2021; Tuncer et al., 2021; Widiанти et al., 2015). On the other hand, idiosyncrasies prevail in the linkage between sacrifice and service value. Many studies have shown a direct negative effect of sacrifice on service value (Jen et al., 2011; Oh, 1999; Prentice et al., 2018). Still others have found a positive direct or insignificant association between these variables (Ghosh et al., 2023; Cronin et al., 2000; Ghosh et al., 2022; Sheu, 2010; Shukla, 2010). The present research assumes the former. Therefore, we assume that the impact of service quality of IHMs would positively influence service value perceptions, while the hotel recruiters would feel the service value diminished with the influence of greater sacrifice. The hypotheses are stated as follows:

H₇: *The service quality of IHMs directly impacts the hotel recruiter's service value positively and significantly.*

H₈: *Sacrifice made for IHMs impacts the hotel recruiter's perceived service value negatively and significantly.*

The significant mediating roles of satisfaction and service value between service quality and behavioral intentions were cited in many previous contributions (C. F. Chen & Chen, 2010; De Oña, 2021; Kuo et al., 2009; W. T. Lai & Chen, 2011; Shah et al., 2020; Shukla, 2010; Trivellas & Santouridis, 2016; Tuncer et al., 2021; Widiанти et al., 2015). In the present study involving hotel recruiters, satisfaction as well as service value were also assumed to act as mediators in the connection between service quality and behavioral intentions. As such, the remaining hypotheses are delineated as:

H₉: *The satisfaction obtained from IHMs is a significant mediator in the association between service quality and hotel recruiters' behavioral intentions.*

H₁₀: *The service value obtained from IHMs is a significant mediator in the association between service quality and hotel recruiters' behavioral intentions.*

Conceptual model development

The research model involving service quality, satisfaction, sacrifice, service value, and behavioral intentions by Cronin et al. (2000), which is grounded in many theories, was used in the study (Figure 1). First, the adapted research model can be attributed to the *multi-attribute attitude model* suggested by Wilkie and Pessemier (1973). The model differentiates service quality as a cognitive theme and satisfaction as an affective theme and proposes a sequence: cognition (service quality) influencing affect (satisfaction) and then leading to conation (behavioral intentions). According to the model, positive perceptions of service quality led to satisfaction that in turn trigger favorable behavioral intentions (Jen et al., 2011). Also, the study finds support in *means-end theory*, where the trade-off between sacrifice (monetary and nonmonetary) and service quality results in service value, which further impacts the behavioral intentions of customers (Zauner et al., 2015; Zeithaml, 1988). In other words, service value is a transaction between service quality (get aspects) and sacrifice (give aspects) of the customers.

Several studies in varied domains have applied the research model with these variables to understand consumer behavior (Ghosh et al, 2023; De Oña, 2021; Ghosh et al., 2022; Tuncer et al., 2021). In this vein, the present study adopted this model and aimed to add to

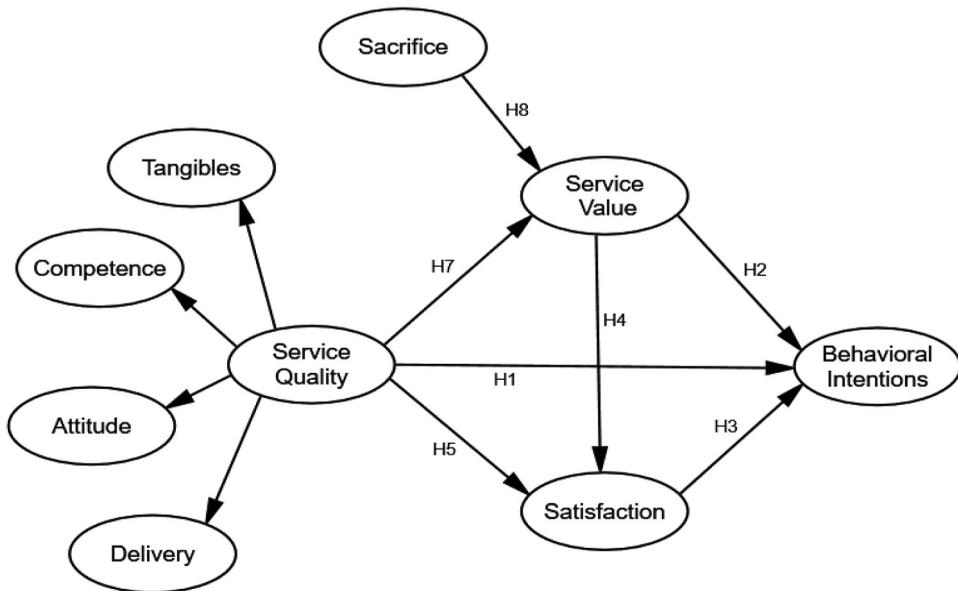


Figure 1. Conceptual model showing hypothesized relationships (direct effects).

the existing literature on consumer behavior that evaluates the effect of service quality, satisfaction, and service value on behavioral intentions of the hotel recruiters (external customers) of IHMs. Furthermore, we attempted to study service quality as an improved hierarchical factor structure through the model to comprehend the complexities (Dabholkar et al., 1996; Ghosh et al., 2022) of hotel recruiters' perceptions of service quality by IHMs.

Methods

Survey design

Hypotheses were tested using a quantitative study deploying a descriptive research design. Existing scales were used to develop the final questionnaire. The 15 items by Sahney (2016) were applied in the study. Service quality perceptions were evaluated with the four components of tangibles, competence, attitude, and delivery. For the other four latent variables (satisfaction, service value, sacrifice, and behavioral intentions), three observed variables per construct were adapted from Cronin et al. (2000). The final questionnaire was reviewed by experts from the hotel industry, which included a team of six recruiters from reputed hotel chains in India. The team included general managers, learning and development managers, and the head of the department of these hotel organizations. The standard instrument was modified, customized, and aligned with the feedback of these experts, which included not only rewording the items, but adding three new items to and deleting four existing items from the competence dimension, and adding a new item in the delivery dimension. After establishing content validity, the total statements consisting of all variables remained at 27 items. Table 1 presents the scale items finalized for this study. The final instrument started with a section for demographics, gathering data on name, designation, hotel chain, Tier 1 city, and contact information. A 5-point Likert scale, from 1 as *strongly disagree* to 5 as *strongly agree*, was applied to the rest of the questions.

Selection of respondents

General managers, departmental managers, learning and development managers, human resource managers, and training managers of four hotel organizations in Tier 1 cities were selected as the sample frame for the study. Four leading hotel chains (Care Ratings, 2019), i.e., two domestic – Indian Hotel Company Limited and ITC Hotels Limited – as well as two international – Marriott International and Accor – were considered based on the number of properties in India and their repeat visits for campus recruiting at selected IHMs. As the sample was limited to 132 hotels affiliated with the four hotel chains, only one response was solicited from the sample frame consisting of the general manager, departmental manager, learning and development manager, or training manager. Therefore, a total of 132 hotel recruiters were invited. The sampling frame included only the highly experienced senior managers to participate in the survey since they visited the IHMs for campus recruitment interviews as a part of the recruiting team for management trainee programs (inclusion criteria). However, responses were collected based on the availability and willingness of the recruiters to participate in the survey. To reach out to the potential

Table 1. Measurement model: Results of confirmatory factor analysis.

Construct	Dimension/Item	Factor loadings	M (SD)	R ²	Cronbach α	AVE	CR
Service Quality	Tangibles	0.852**		0.727	0.807	0.944	
	Competence	0.845**		0.720			
	Attitude	0.953**		0.907			
Tangibles	Delivery	0.938**		0.874	0.752	0.510	0.757
	The IHMs have the appropriate infrastructure for conducting placement drives.	0.755**	4.20 (0.77)				
	The IHMs possess a visually appealing environment.	0.723**	4.01 (0.88)				
Competence	There is sufficient faculty/staff support for the placement drive in IHMs.	0.663**	4.29 (0.76)		0.840	0.517	0.841
	The faculty of IHMs are experts in delivering basic knowledge appropriate for the hospitality industry.	0.738**	4.33 (0.73)				
	The students are imparted specialized/ advanced knowledge in addition to basic knowledge.	0.840**	3.93 (0.89)				
	The soft skills of the students are appropriate for the hospitality industry.	0.673**	3.82 (0.85)				
	The performance of the students during their industrial training is satisfactory.	0.637**	3.88 (0.78)				
	The performance of the alumni chosen from IHMs is satisfactory.	0.688**	4.23 (0.74)				
	The IHMs develop the risk-taking ability of the students.	0.760**	3.81 (0.89)				
Attitude	The IHMs motivate the students to learn continuously.	0.871**	4.06 (0.87)		0.853	0.666	0.857
	Ethics and morality are built into the culture of IHMs.	0.814**	4.19 (0.90)				
	The IHMs encourage knowledge flexibility among students through cross-disciplinary applications.	0.764**	3.90 (0.92)				
Delivery	The IHMs inculcate an environment of appropriate courtesy and manners.	0.710**	4.25 (0.84)		0.834	0.571	0.841
	The placement coordinator of IHMs coordinates well with me to provide easy access for conducting placement interviews.	0.725**	4.39 (0.82)				
	The IHMs encourage collaboration among students, faculty, and hotels.	0.816**	4.14 (0.84)				
	The decision to recruit students from IHMs was a wise one.	0.915**	4.43 (0.71)				
	The recruitment of students from IHMs was the right decision.	0.957**	4.39 (0.73)				
Satisfaction	The facility in the IHMs is exactly what is required by the industry.	0.547**	4.33 (0.70)		0.835	0.684	0.861
	The average cost to the company offered to the students during in-house training is high.	0.667**	2.89 (1.11)				
	The time required to get the in-house training completed is long.	0.789**	3.01 (1.08)				
Sacrifice	The effort required to get the in-house training completed is high.	0.738**	3.59 (1.11)		0.771	0.537	0.776

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued).

Construct	Dimension/Item	Factor loadings	M (SD)	R ²	Cronbach α	AVE	CR
Service Value	Compared to the cost to the company paid to the IHM students during in-house training, the performance of the students is high.	0.754**	3.80 (0.92)		0.924	0.822	0.932
	Compared to the time required by the IHM students to complete the in-house training, the performance of the students is high.	0.981**	3.66 (0.93)				
	Compared to the effort required by the IHM students to complete the in-house training, the performance of the students is high.	0.956**	3.72 (0.86)				
Behavioral Intentions	The probability of coming back to recruit students again at IHMs is high.	0.708**	4.36 (0.74)		0.820	0.620	0.830
	The likelihood of recommending the IHMs to my colleagues/other hotel brands within the chain is high.	0.855**	4.46 (0.60)				
	If the entire recruitment process for the students needs to be repeated, the probability of choosing the same IHMs is high.	0.793**	4.36 (0.66)				

respondents effectively, we contacted the placement coordinators of selected IHMs and industry colleagues in the chosen hotel organizations in Tier 1 cities for assistance. The importance of the study was explained to the hotel recruiters with an invitation to participate in the survey. The scope of this study was limited to only Tier 1 cities in India. In this context, 72% of the branded hotels in India are located in these cities (Thadani & Mobar, 2019). Moreover, these cities are preferred by students, as a high concentration of branded hotels provides close access to the industry (Ghosh & Jhamb, 2021).

Preliminary model testing

The study solicited responses from hotel recruiters over a period of 6 months using a single method. As the study was cross-sectional, the impact of common method bias on the measurement model had to be checked (Ghosh et al., 2022; Gligor et al., 2016). This bias was verified in the study according to Flynn et al. (2010), Gligor et al. (2016), and Lii and Kuo (2016). Exploratory factor analysis with all items in the study was performed in Harman's one-factor test. Two conditions were examined for the presence of common bias: (1) extracting a single factor by exploratory factor analysis that includes all items, or (2) having an overall variance of the total scale of less than 50%, which implies that a single unrotated factor's variance dominates that is greater than 50% (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986; Podsakoff et al., 2003). In this study, the test extracted five factors, and the single unrotated factor indicated 39.46% variance, thereby verifying the nonexistence of common method bias in the survey.

Table 2. Measures of discriminant validity.

	CR	AVE	MSV	SAC	BI	SAT	SV	SQ
Sacrifice (SAC)	0.776	0.537	0.270	0.733*				
Behavioral intentions (BI)	0.830	0.620	0.415	0.393	0.788*			
Satisfaction (SAT)	0.861	0.684	0.411	0.321	0.641	0.827*		
Service value (SV)	0.932	0.822	0.270	0.520	0.498	0.373	0.906*	
Service quality (SQ)	0.944	0.807	0.415	0.454	0.644	0.589	0.463	0.898*

Note: CR, composite reliability; AVE, average variance extracted; MSV, maximum shared variance.

*Square root of AVE.

Structural model

Structural equation modeling was used to test the conceptual model in two parts (Hair et al., 2018). The first part tested the measurement model involving confirmatory factor analysis to reflect the effectiveness of observed variables to measure the separate constructs (E. A. L. Lee et al., 2010). Confirmatory factor analysis was performed to assess the construct validity of the model to ensure that the model should evaluate and reflect what it was intended to measure (Bagozzi, 1992). At first, the Cronbach alphas, ranging between 0.752 and 0.924 for all constructs and subconstructs, showed the data reliability to be satisfactory (Hair et al., 2018). Thereafter, construct validity was assessed through convergent and discriminant validity on first- and second-level constructs (Awang, 2012). Table 1 shows acceptable convergent validity for all the constructs through the measures of composite reliability and average variance extracted above 0.7 and 0.5, respectively (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Discriminant validity (Table 2) measures were also established: not only did the average variance extracted for each factor exceed the maximum shared variance, but absolute correlation values for the constructs were less than the square root of the average variance extracted for that construct (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In the second stage, the structural model was tested to ascertain the relationships between the constructs for hypothesis testing.

Even for a smaller sample size of 100 to 150 respondents, the data analysis applying structural equation modeling was satisfactory (Anderson & Gerbing, 1984; Ghosh et al., 2022; Kyriazos, 2018). Overall, the model adequately depicted evidence of fitness (Figure 2), with a χ^2/df of 1.444; comparative fit index of 0.951; Tucker – Lewis index of 0.937; goodness of fit index of 0.906; root mean square error of approximation of 0.058; and standardized root mean squared residual of 0.073. All these measures satisfied the criteria of Hair et al. (2018).

Results

Respondent details

The hotel recruiters' overall response rate was 82.57%. Bengaluru (Bangalore) accounted for most responses, at 23.9%, whereas Kolkata (Calcutta) had the least responses with 8.2% (Table 3). Marriott International had the most responses of 38.5%, and Accor had the least with 15.6%. General managers accounted for 14.7% of the responses; learning and development managers, 36.7%; and department managers, 48.6%.

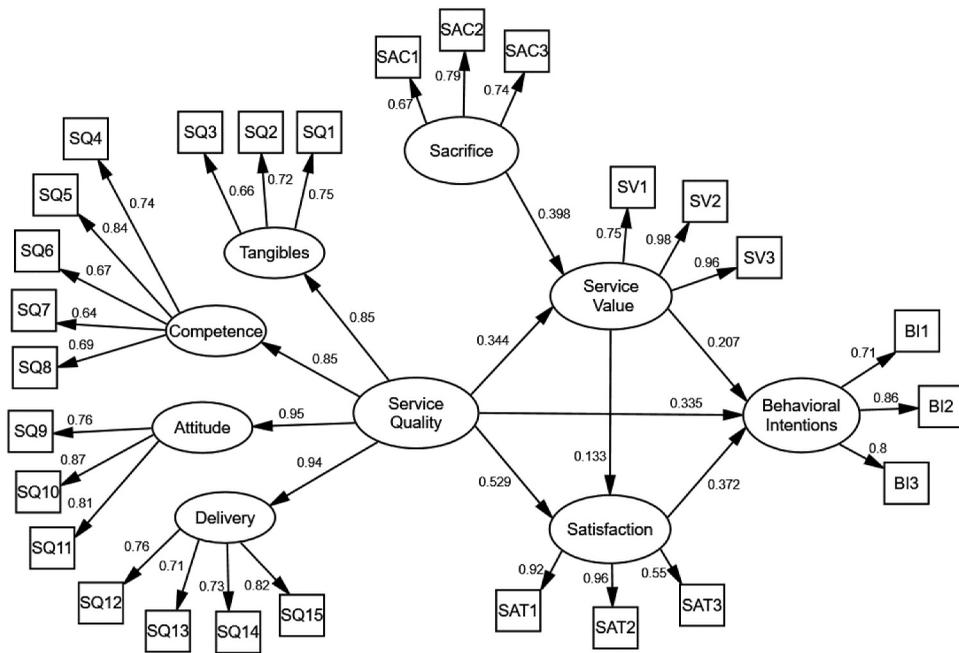


Figure 2. Structural model.

Table 3. Profile of participating hotel recruiters from six Tier 1 cities in India.

Tier 1 cities	Responses invited	Responses collected	Marriott	Accor	IHCL	ITC	General managers	Dept. managers	L&D managers
Mumbai	22	18	6	2	6	4	2	9	7
Delhi	27	24	8	3	5	8	4	12	8
Chennai	23	17	8	4	3	2	2	8	7
Kolkata	11	9	3	1	2	3	1	6	2
Bengaluru	31	26	12	4	4	6	4	12	10
Hyderabad	18	15	5	3	4	3	3	6	6
Total	132	109	42	17	24	26	16	53	40
Percentage		82.57%	38.5%	15.59%	22.01%	23.85%	14.67%	48.62%	36.69%

Note: IHCL, Indian Hotel Company Limited; ITC, ITC Hotels Limited; L&D, learning and development.

Service quality dimensions of hotel recruiters

Table 1 indicates that factor loadings of four dimensions of service quality as the overall service quality perceptions of IHMs were effective. The tangibles, competence, attitude, and delivery dimensions of service quality loaded with 0.852, 0.845, 0.953, and 0.938, respectively. Further, the R² value for the above dimensions (0.727, 0.720, 0.907 and 0.874) indicated that the total variance in overall service quality was adequately attributed to all the dimensions.

Test of hypotheses

This section provides detailed discussions of the results of hypotheses testing (Table 4). H1 tested the relationship between service quality and behavioral intentions. This hypothesis

Table 4. Results of hypothesis testing.

Impact	Outcome	Measures	P value
<i>Direct effects</i>			
H1. Service Quality → Behavioral Intentions	Supported	Struc. coeff. = 0.335; SE, 0.114; t = 2.784	0.028
<i>Indirect effects</i>			
<i>Total effects</i>			
H2. Service Value → Behavioral Intentions	Supported	Struc. coeff. = 0.285; SE, 0.082 Struc. coeff. = 0.620; SE, 0.107 Struc. coeff. = 0.207; SE, 0.07; t = 2.297	0.001 0.002 0.002
H3. Satisfaction → Behavioral Intentions	Supported	Struc. coeff. = 0.372; SE, 0.08; t = 3.324	0.001
H4. Service Value → Satisfaction	Rejected	Struc. coeff. = 0.133; SE, 0.08; t = 1.463	0.148
H5. Service Quality → Satisfaction	Supported	Struc. coeff. = 0.529; SE, 0.139; t = 4.535	0.001
H7. Service Quality → Service Value	Supported	Struc. coeff. = 0.344; SE, 0.128; t = 3.321	0.001
H8: Sacrifice → Service Value	Rejected*	Struc. coeff. = 0.398; SE, 0.105; t = 3.523	0.001
<i>Mediation effects</i>			
H6: Service Quality → Service Value → Satisfaction	Rejected	Est. = 0.046; lower = -0.007; upper = 0.179	0.075
H9: Service Quality → Satisfaction → Behavioral Intentions	Supported	Est. = 0.186; lower = 0.081; upper = 0.385	0.001
H10: Service Quality → Service Value → Behavioral Intentions	Supported	Est. = 0.067; lower = 0.014; upper = 0.220	0.015

Note: Est. indicates estimate; Struc. coeff. indicates structural coefficient.; SE indicates standard error.

*Impact was not negative as assumed, but positive.

was supported, as evidenced by a significant direct effect (structural coefficient = 0.335; $p = 0.028$) and a significant total effect (structural coefficient = 0.620; $p = 0.002$) of service quality on behavioral intentions. The finding suggests that service quality is an important predictor of recruiters’ behavioral intentions towards an IHM. Further, using bootstrapping, the indirect effect (0.285) of service quality of IHMs on the recruiters’ behavioral intentions was measured. The p value for the indirect effect was 0.001, respectively, indicating that along with the direct impact, there was also significant indirect impact of service quality of IHMs on behavioral intentions of hotel recruiters. However, with a total impact of 0.620 of service quality on behavioral intentions, the strength of the direct effect (0.335) surpassed the indirect effect (0.285) between the two constructs.

H2 tested the effect of service value on behavioral intentions. This hypothesis was also supported, with a significant direct effect (structural coefficient = 0.207; $p = 0.002$) of service value on recruiters’ behavioral intentions. This finding indicates that service value is an important determinant of hotel recruiters’ intentions to patronize an IHM. H3 tested the effect of satisfaction on behavioral intentions and this hypothesis was supported, with a significant direct effect (structural coefficient = 0.372; $p = 0.001$) of satisfaction on behavioral intentions. This finding reveals that satisfied hotel recruiters are more likely to exhibit positive behavioral intentions towards choosing an IHM for recruitment. Interestingly, among these two predictors of behavioral intentions, the perception of service value was weaker than satisfaction.

H4 was designed to examine any direct effect of service value on satisfaction. This hypothesis was rejected, as there was no significant direct effect (structural coefficient = 0.133; $p = 0.148$) of service value on satisfaction. This finding suggests inconsistency between these two constructs, inferring that service value may not necessarily translate

to customer satisfaction. H5 was set up to detect any direct effect of service quality on satisfaction. This hypothesis was supported, as illustrated by a significant direct effect (structural coefficient = 0.529; $p = 0.001$) of service quality of IHMs on satisfaction of hotel recruiters. This finding shows that service quality is an important determinant of hotel recruiters' satisfaction with an IHM.

H6 explored the intervening effect of service value between the relationship of service quality and satisfaction. This hypothesis was rejected, as there was no significant mediation effect (estimate = 0.046; $p = 0.075$) of service value on the relationship between service quality and satisfaction. This finding suggests that service value perceived by hotel recruiters does not mediate the relationship between service quality of IHMs and satisfaction perceived by them.

H7 tested the effect of service quality on service value. This hypothesis was supported, with a significant direct effect (structural coefficient = 0.344; $p = 0.001$) of service quality of IHMs on service value perceived by hotel recruiters. This finding exhibits that service quality is an important factor for hotel recruiters' perceptions of service value. For H8, the effect of sacrifice on service value was tested and the result showed that this hypothesis was rejected, as the impact was not negative as assumed, but positive (structural coefficient = 0.398; $p = 0.001$). This finding reveals that hoteliers may perceive sacrifice as a positive attribute of a recruitment experience, rather than a negative one. This is another deviation supporting idiosyncrasy in the literature between the two constructs.

Using satisfaction as an intervening mechanism, H9 examined the mediating effect on the relationship between service quality and behavioral intentions. This hypothesis was supported, as evidenced by a significant mediation effect (estimate = 0.186; $p = 0.001$) of satisfaction on the relationship between service quality of IHMs and behavioral intentions of hotel recruiters. This finding highlights that satisfaction plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between service quality and hotel recruiters' behavioral intentions towards an IHM. Lastly, H10 tested the mediating effect of service value on the relationship between service quality and behavioral intentions. The test result was significant (estimate = 0.067; $p = 0.015$), therefore, the mediating role of service value was supported on the relationship between service quality of IHMs and behavioral intentions of hotel recruiters. This finding indicates that service value plays a mediating role in the relationship between service quality and behavioral intentions of a hotel recruiter.

Discussion

Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 were supported, indicating that service quality, service value, and satisfaction have a positive direct effect on hotel recruiters' behavioral intentions. The findings of Hypothesis 1 are consistent with previous research suggesting that customers' perceptions of service quality influence their behavioral intentions towards an organization (Cronin et al., 2000; Ghosh et al., 2022; Shah et al., 2020; Shukla, 2010; Trivellas & Santouridis, 2016; Widianti et al., 2015). Similarly, the testing results of Hypothesis 2 support previous findings that revealed a significant relationship between service value perceptions of customers and their behavioral intentions (Z. Chen & Dubinsky, 2003; Hackman et al., 2006; Tuncer et al., 2021; Zeithaml, 1988). Hypothesis 3 also finds support in literature with the satisfaction of customers influencing their behavioral intentions (Cronin et al., 2000; De Oña, 2021; Shah et al., 2020; Slack et al., 2021; Tuncer et al., 2021).

Contrastingly, Hypothesis 4 and Hypothesis 6 were not supported in model testing which affirmed the previous findings on the peculiarity of both direct effect of service value on satisfaction and the mediated effect (through service value) between service quality and satisfaction (Ghosh et al., 2022; Ledden et al., 2011; Wahyuningsih, 2011). Hypothesis 5 and Hypothesis 7 were supported, indicating that service quality has a positive direct effect on customer satisfaction and service value. These findings align with previous research of De Oña (2021), Tuncer et al. (2021), Žabkar et al. (2010), Slack et al. (2021) which highlights the importance of service quality in shaping customer satisfaction and service value perceptions. Hypothesis 8 was rejected, indicating that the relationship between sacrifice and service value is contrary (positive and significant) to the assumption (negative and significant) in this study. The finding supports few past studies that have highlighted the importance of higher sacrifice in shaping customers' perceptions of positive service value (Dodds et al., 1991; Ghosh et al., 2022; Sheu, 2010). Finally, Hypotheses 9 and 10 were both supported, indicating that customer satisfaction and service value mediate the relationship between service quality and customers' behavioral intentions. The results of these mediated relationship are well established in the literature of services marketing (C. F. Chen & Chen, 2010; De Oña, 2021; Kuo et al., 2009; W. T. Lai & Chen, 2011; Shah et al., 2020; Shukla, 2010; Trivellas & Santouridis, 2016; Tuncer et al., 2021; Widiанти et al., 2015). Further, as the relationship between service quality and behavioral intentions was already statistically significant, the nature of mediation was complementary (Zhao et al., 2010).

All the above results showed that the service quality of IHMs has a positive influence on the satisfaction, service value (monetary and non-monetary) and behavioral intentions of hotel recruiters (intention to hire from these institutes). The findings provided corroboration to Sahney's study (Sahney, 2016) which depicted that the quality of education will positively impact satisfaction and behavioral intentions of all stakeholders. Our study also confirmed that not only service quality of IHMs positively impact the behavioral intentions, but also service value and satisfaction are significant predictors of hiring intentions of recruiters in IHMs. This revealed the significance of Oh and Kim's work (Oh & Kim, 2017), where the importance of combined study of service quality, service value, satisfaction and behavioral intentions were indicated. Further, an interesting finding was the positive and significant impact of sacrifice on service value of recruiters, which is unique. This affirmed that the recruiters perceive higher value for money, time and effort, even when they expended the same in these measures. However, both the direct influence of service value on satisfaction and mediated effect of service value between service quality and satisfaction of recruiters were not significant, which highlights the inconsistency of the construct; owing to the trade-off between the net effect of service quality and sacrifice perceptions. Finally, whereas both satisfaction and service value mediated in the relationship between service quality and behavioral intentions of hotel recruiters, the mediating effect of satisfaction was much stronger than service value.

Overall, the conceptual model was well justified as it included several well-established relationships that are aligned to previous research. The model in the study adequately depicted evidence of fitness and the above results provided adequate support for the hypothesized relationships between service quality, sacrifice, service value, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions of hotel recruiters.

Conclusion and implications

The study focused on the need to understand the role of hotel recruiters as a noteworthy external stakeholder in hospitality education. First, the research confirmed that the behavioral intentions of hotel recruiters can be predicted through all the variables, i.e., service quality, satisfaction, and service value, and reinforced the extant literature that service quality may not be the only criterion for enhancing the behavioral intentions of consumers. In this study, satisfaction was the strongest predictor of hiring intentions of hotel recruiters, followed by the other two constructs, i.e., service quality and service value. Next, the study showed that the overall service quality perception of hotel recruiters toward IHMs was affected by all four dimensions of perceived service quality. The R^2 for all dimensions was high (0.727, 0.720, 0.907, and 0.874), verifying the four dimensions' contribution to service quality. Furthermore, the findings suggest that satisfaction and service value mediate the relationship between service quality and behavioral intentions, extending past studies. However, the inconsistent mediation of service value was justified in the linkage between service quality and satisfaction, as the path among the three variables remained insignificant. Moreover, the service value of IHMs did not influence the satisfaction of hotel recruiters. Lastly, the impact of sacrifice on the service value relationship was positive and significant, contrary to the assumption of a negative significant relationship between these two variables.

Theoretical implications

The results of the study support the theory regarding the presence of four service quality dimensions in hospitality education and reaffirm that details of service quality perceptions can be measured accurately if a hierarchical model is adopted. The *multi-attribute attitude model* supports the findings for hotel recruiters in this study, wherein service quality is considered a cognitive construct, whereas satisfaction and behavioral intentions are measured as an affective and a conative construct with a proposed causal sequence: cognition (service quality) influencing affect (satisfaction) leading to conation (behavioral intentions). In the case of hotel recruiters, a similarly significant relationship was observed between these three variables. Surprisingly, the *means-end theory* in this study was partially supported, wherein the impact of service value on behavioral intentions was statistically significant. Alternatively, it is interesting to note that the perceptions of sacrifice on service value of hotel recruiters were significant but positive, contrary to the principles of this theory. However, the observed positive and significant relationship between sacrifice and service value finds support from an empirical study related to university students (Sheu, 2010). This corroborates the literature that the unusual relationship is due to campus recruiters perceiving the students of these popular and familiar IHM brands similar to products which are conspicuous and offer exceptions to the law of demand (Dodds et al., 1991; Ghosh et al., 2022; Sheu, 2010). In this situation, while the hotel recruiters sacrifice monetarily and nonmonetarily during in-house training of the recruits, they still appreciate having selected these students, competing with other hotel and retail organizations and inducting them as employees of their hotel organizations.

Managerial implications

Positive significant relationships exist between service quality, satisfaction, service value, and behavioral intentions of hotel recruiters. Therefore, the management of IHMs should attempt to elevate service quality in terms of tangibles, competence, attitude, and delivery, leading to overall recruiter satisfaction and service value. In turn, the higher perceptions of these variables will further influence the hotel recruiters' behavioral intentions. It is also noted that the attitude dimension had the maximum variance of 90.7% in the service quality construct, as perceived by the recruiters, suggesting that they highly value risk-taking abilities, continuous learning, and ethics and morality, which is consistent with the findings of Marneros et al. (2020). Next, the more monetary and nonmonetary prices the hotel recruiters have sacrificed to recruit and train the students from IHMs, the greater these recruiters relish the opportunity for having selected the students for their hotel organizations. This may have resulted from the positive effect of sacrifice on service value. At this stage, the administrators of IHMs should formulate strategies to encourage the feeling of higher competition among recruiters by attracting more hotel organizations for campus interviews and negotiating better CTC packages for the students. On the other hand, the non-monetary price in the form of time (0.789) and effort (0.738) contributes more to the sacrifice feelings of hotel recruiters than their perceptions of monetary price (0.667) devoted to facilitating the in-house training for the selected IHM students. Consequently, the value for time (0.981) and value for effort (0.956) are highly appreciated by hotel recruiters. As such, IHMs should focus on preparing students to compete for management trainee opportunities by meeting the rigorous selection standards by the hotel recruiters. The need for initiatives by IHM administrators to elevate the perceptions of service value among hotel recruiters is further fortified, as the mediating strength of satisfaction (0.186) was far more than the service value (0.067). The results provide ample scope for improving the perception of service value both as a direct predictor of behavioral intentions and as a mediator between service quality and behavioral intentions of the hotel recruiters. For example, an initiative taken by the IHMs for facilitating short quality internship experiences (as a part of the curriculum in IHM) along with adequate industry outreach can better align the students with the needs of the hotels (Ghosh & Jhamb, 2021). This may create higher value for the hotel recruiters by reducing their time and effort perceptions of sacrifice for the students undergoing in-house training.

Limitations and future research directions

Future research can address the limitations in the present study. First, the study was limited to the perceptions of hotel recruiters of four reputed hotel organizations in Tier 1 cities in India. Out of the four brands selected for the study, two of them, comprising nearly half of the total response collected in the survey, belonged to the domestic hotel chains of the country. Next, the "sacrifice" in the context of this study considers the monetary and non-monetary cost involved in the in-house training of management trainees in hotels, but not the monetary and non-monetary cost incurred for recruitment visits to the IHMs by the recruiters and other related recruiting activities.

Future research should include recruiters from more hotel organizations and other cities, which would provide greater insights into service quality perceptions of IHMs. The study identified hotels as the primary recruiters of IHMs. Future studies could involve other recruiters from quick-service restaurants and retail organizations that regularly visit the IHMs for recruitment interviews as well as their perception of monetary and non-monetary sacrifice for on-campus recruiting activities and in-house training programs. Comparative studies of different recruiter perceptions toward IHMs could provide direction to the administrators of IHMs regarding monitoring and balancing their service quality standards and optimizing their resources.

In the background of National Education Policy 2020 and Sustainable Development Goal 4.3, which pledges to provide enhanced employability through quality vocational education in India by 2030, the study strove to sensitize IHM administrators to how the hotel recruiters' hiring intentions were triggered by their perceptions of service quality, satisfaction, and service value of IHMs. In this manner, the study also endeavored to develop talented hospitality professionals in IHMs through the lens of hotel recruiters.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

ORCID

Pratik Ghosh  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8217-6071>

Deepika Jhamb  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9407-9674>

Larry Yu  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7126-2364>

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