



# International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality

Publisher's Home Page: <https://www.svedbergopen.com/>



Research Paper

Open Access

## Corporate Images Influence on Tourists' Experience and Satisfaction in Hospitality Industry

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### Article Info

Volume 2, Issue 2, July 2022

Received : 08 March 2022

Accepted : 22 June 2022

Published : 05 July 2022

doi: [10.51483/IJTH.2.2.2022.41-50](https://doi.org/10.51483/IJTH.2.2.2022.41-50)

### Abstract

The essence of the hospitality industry depends on the right kind of service at the right time to make the customer happy. It is like anyone's experience of how would like to be treated once he is out of his home. The perseverance of this research paper is to study how corporates in the hospitality industry affect tourists' experience during stay and time of receiving services from organizations. To ensure customers positive experiential value is the main aim of any hospitality organization in terms of their operation and management. In hotels such as Taj group of hotels in Kolkata-West Bengal, different heads from various departments must interact with guests directly by checking various aspects and their experiences during stay including; room experience, dining experiences, maintenance and front desk experiences including various entertainments. Considering the importance and applicability of this research in the mentioned area of the corporate image on tourists' satisfaction, the purpose of this study is for identifying the guests' perception/ experience during their stay in Taj group of hotels—Kolkata, West Bengal—India and for suggesting the strategic interventions for future needs. In this process, the researcher collected primary data from 165 respondents in the study area and further analysis has been undertaken using different statistical tools like- SPSS AMOS 20, MS excel, percentage method and descriptive analysis to conclude. These hotels/outlets offer unique stay and food experiences to tourists and guests and are considered one of the popular chains in India. The outcomes of this research recommend that; the corporate image, services offered by hospitality staff and tourists interactions with others in hotel outlets that jointly influence tourists' experiential values.

**Keywords:** *Corporate Image, Customer Satisfaction, Service Quality, Tourists' Experiential Value*

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### 1. Introduction

The hospitality industry around the world has meaningfully settled and technologically advanced where creators and customers are broadly spread. Customer experience is the linkage between brand potential and business feat where corporate image enriches brand positioning in a suitable way. Taj group of hotels known for their hospitality services all over the world and is one of the first-born five star hotel chains in India started their first five star hotel (Mumbai city) in the country more than hundred years back. This chain experienced robust expansion during 2017-18 with 10 new hotels and 20 more in pipeline and 10 new contracts also signed. This group is also experiencing positive customer

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experience with 30% customer loyalty revenue and more than 40% member base (own company and associated companies). The group is witnessing more than 64% average occupancy with 30.56 lakh customer arrival (2018-19- Taj group review). In Kolkata this group has, two five star hotels and one catering outlet and a couple of more hotels are in pipeline. Tourists' satisfaction can be evaluated from various attributes: infrastructure and beauty of attractions, impression with arts and cultures, safety and security measures of organization, shops and restaurants available within attractions, friendliness and hospitality of staffs, and, reasonability of service values (Crompton and Love, 1995; Qu and Li, 1997; Chi and Qu, 2008; Neal and Gursoy, 2008; Wu and Liang, 2009). Gallarza and Gil-Saura (2006), identified a close familiarity of experiential value with the satisfaction of tourists', which having a direct relationship, i.e., positive and fruitful experiences results in more pleasure (Gallarza and Gil-Saura, 2006). However, the realistic involvement, experienced by tourists generally got from the quality product and services but the exact effect of the same on guests satisfaction in different parameters are not known (Wu and Liang, 2009). As per Nguyen and LeBlanc (1998), customers with several service encounters and a perceived positive influence of the same brings more satisfaction and positivity on a firm's performance. To maximize customer satisfaction, therefore hospitality organizations should offer better services to their guests. Kandampully and Suhartanto (2003), managers of the hospitality industry believe that satisfying customers will increase profitability and the same lead to success of business. Role of housekeeping, however, was found to be an essential and central concern along with hygiene for tourists of hotel chains as cleanliness, overall aesthetic, design and décor are the crucial factors during the guests visit, and proper arrangement of the same could bring the satisfaction (Kandampully and Suhartanto, 2003). Entertainment, aesthetic and fun are unavoidable essence in making a comfortable hospitality taste in various sectors of hospitality organization. Various leisure based activities, and recreation in the organization brings joy and pleasure amongst the tourists where the housekeeper, decorator/designers plays an important part in creating the right exchanges with customers (Wu and Liang, 2009; Lin and Matilla, 2010; Ryu and Han, 2011). Kuroshima (2010), and Zopiatis (2010), recommend that a chef's practical skills and capabilities to communicate with other staff and customers are crucial to a hotel's performance. According to Muturi *et al.* (2013), the services, including food and beverages, maintenance, that match or surpass customers' value anticipation influence customer to come back again or procurements in future. Several researchers from the field of hospitality have indicated, tourists' dining experiences and satisfaction largely depend on the quality of food as a result of creativity of staff, which is one of the important parts during stay and spending time for tourists (Nam and Lee, 2011; Kye-Hong and Timothy, 2014).

## 2. Problem Statement

At present time, hospitality corporates are experiencing heightened competition within and outside their own business environment where all are very aggressively marketing their own services, trying for extra profit and more business. Taj group of hotels and catering (three properties) in Kolkata changed the business strategy due to competition and to cater a wide range of customers (Leisure, business, flight catering etc.) is a challenge to maintain the same quality and serve the need for the customers. Keeping the guests happy with better service delivery should be the ultimate motto of any organization to make profit rather than compromise on service standard. Corporate image and consumer satisfaction must be highlighted on a favorable note to assure the positive linkage in the commercial domain in this rapidly growing and economically viable industry. Major problem that hotels are facing is creating a proper blueprint and applying quality management incorporating corporate image against customer experience and satisfaction. Operational issues like; increase of staff problems, lapses in recruitment procedure – policy and staff development, developing competition in market and crisis management are also the issues of corporates that affect customers' stay experience and satisfaction.

## 3. Objectives

1. To study the impact of corporate image on customers experiential value.
2. To examine how the interaction with others is important for better stay experience.
3. To study the customer experience on the quality of employees and services offered by them.

## 4. Hypotheses

1. Tourists' experience depends on the positive influence of corporate image.
2. Tourist's interaction with others in hotels found a noticeable influence on their stay experience.
3. The knowledge and skill for quality service of hospitality staff affects tourists' realistic experience positively.

## 5. Literature Review

Various studies recommended that the images of corporates acts as a clarifying process that influences customer's satisfaction and also the overall stay experiences (Andreassen and Lindestad, 1998; Grbnroos, 1984). Corporate image represents the technical skills, interactive skills and unique creativity of staff and top leadership team and its impact on customers' overall perceptions and experience (Zopiatis, 2010). Many research scholars have proposed the experiential value of tourists is an important factor of their happiness on actual experience largely depends on corporate image and the same observed during their investigation on tourists experiential value (Wu and Liang, 2009; Ryu and Han, 2011). The involvement and understanding in any destination, organization and outlets during the tour or visit of tourists largely influences their realistic experience (Chang *et al.*, 2010; Mok and Iverson, 2000). Literature has suggested that staff and top leadership teams create a favorable tourist experience by applying their knowledge and skills in different areas like; food, services, aesthetics, customer relationship with appropriate exchange with guests (Lin and Lin, 2006). There are several indicators of corporate image like; innovation, product and services, supervision and coordination, leadership, professionalism and financial performance influences tourists experience and satisfaction (Santawee, 2017). The evaluation of the firm/organization depends on its corporate image (Bitner *et al.*, 1990), and is appraised by the customer whenever the name and services of that organization are remembered and they are in a position of sharing experience with others (Nguyen, 2011). It is very difficult to establish a proper relationship between corporate image and services offered by the organization considering the intangible nature of hospitality services, therefore transforming it into tangible aspect need effective high-end communication and coordination related to each offerings in terms of its quality and price to its customers (Kandampully and Hu, 2007). Thus, the services offered by the hotels to its customers and in turn customer's experience is considered one of the significant factors which is decisive for customers to rate the image of the organization (Echtner and Ritchie, 2003). Based on studies, store images have two types of images, like; "holistic" and "attributes" (Echtner and Ritchie, 2003). The holistic dimension refers to a person's mental ability to portray the occurrences as a whole (Bitner, 1992). The attribute dimension relates to the infrastructures, aesthetics and physical environment that forms and effects the occurrences (Echtner and Ritchie, 2003). Creation and delivery of services may be considered as synonymous where service providers should consider the same for better customer satisfaction (Surprenant and Solomon, 1987). Various research studies (Marin and Ruiz, 2007; Wu and Liang, 2009; Dion *et al.*, 1972) suggested that the attractiveness and facilities of the organization and imageries of people creating positive influence for customer behavior that in turn brings the pleasing effect and overall satisfaction in business. Luxurious atmosphere and related infrastructure also enhance corporate images where food image of a particular outlet also enhance the experiential value of guests' (Chen and Peng, 2018).

Service is the most important factor in the domain of hospitality and is categorized as intangible, perishable and variable which is subjected to human interactions where customer's direct interaction with service provider is important to complete the cycle (Bitner *et al.*, 1990). The customer decision generally observed by their experience with actual taste on service interaction and solution for their satisfaction (Carlzon, 1987). As per Wu (2007), the totality of service depends on collaboration and act among staff and guests. Interaction with employees for better services enhances guest satisfactions and can ensure profitability for the hotels (Mazanec, 1995; Lin and Lin, 2006; Kuroshima, 2010). Studies also suggested that a positive attitude and validation can be drawn by the customers about their satisfaction or stay experience when they interact with others and discuss different parameters of product and services offered by the organization (Peng *et al.*, 2015). It is also important how one guest may react after the service received and how he/she behaves with others, discuss/communicate with others about his/ her experience and satisfaction (Wu and Liang, 2009).

As per the various studies it has been cleared that the knowledge of staff on different outlets of hotels and services; accordingly shows their level of helpfulness and trustworthiness which influence the guest (Jang and Namkung, 2009; Fang *et al.*, 2013). Positive attitude plus right behaviour among staff, not only juniors but also corporate and senior levels; mainly answering customers' questions and interactions about services greatly influence on experiential values of customers and brings the benefit for hotel groups (Fang *et al.*, 2013; Kuroshima, 2010). Ritz Carlton known as their service superiority because of their qualified and skilful employees (Bacon and Pugh, 2004). Different studies identified that the quality of services depend on qualified staffs both in terms of staffs knowledge and skills (Martin *et al.*, 2008; Wu and Liang, 2009; Sandra, 2010; Kakyom and Denver, 2011) and the same influence on customer purchase behaviour and stay experience (Ladhari *et al.*, 2008). Oliver (1997), defined that happiness as a decision depends upon goods and assistance together, or individually, offers pleasing intake associated with accomplishment and the same was adopted by many researchers for identifying the customers experiential value on quality service and staff (Ryu *et al.*, 2008; Wu and Liang, 2009). The essence of exceptional service experience depends on quality services offered by staff and at the same time making and keeping the relationship intact through individual calibre as and when the situation demands (Kotler and Keller, 2006). Measuring the perceived service quality helps the organization to identify the priority areas to

give attention and need for the improvement to maximize customer satisfactions and enhance stay experience (Mohsin and Lockyer, 2010). As service is the integral part of the hotel industry and customers are the prime focus, realistic experiences and satisfaction is formed in the quality service manner (Hill, 1986), hence, it is important to evaluate hospitality staff's service quality for assessing customers experiential value (Lawton, 1991).

## 6. Research Design

The study opportunity focused on tourists' perception concerning corporate image and their satisfaction/stay experience in Taj group of hotels and catering in Kolkata. The type of data was collected directly from the tourists/ guests of three properties of the mentioned hospitality group in the area of investigation. Trained interviewers were selected (final year hospitality students and faculty members) to collect data from tourists/guests of above-mentioned organizations (Two five star properties and one flight catering of Taj group-Kolkata). This organisation (Taj group of hotels) is known for better service to customers and one of the reputed brands of India which was inspected and rated as five star from several of years so, the quality and performance of the organization is consistent for the study (Wu and Liang, 2009). Potential participants were all-adult and stayed or visited the properties/same group in Kolkata to share the experience in better a way. After two months (February and March-2022) of information collection, 165 completed questionnaires were considered real in all aspects out of 195 initial distributions (equally distributed in three organizations), ensuring a valid 84% completion rate. Different demographic parameters like, age, marital status, gender, visit frequency and profession of the visiting guests (study sample) in Taj group of hotels, Kolkata sample was considered and the status depicted in Table 1. The survey participants (hotel guests/tourists) were evaluated on their overall experiential value (Chen and Peng, 2014; Echtner and Ritchie, 2003). Participants also evaluated on service staffs quality (Wu and Liang, 2009; Chi and Qu, 2008), communication with other guests (Peng *et al.*, 2015) and corporate profile (Bacon and Pugh 2004; Lin and Lin, 2006) by giving their opinion on a point scale and rating accordingly (Table 2). The participants in this study have given their feedback on a 5-point Likert scale about their satisfaction/experience on mentioned parameters (1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree and 5= strongly agree).

Calculation and analysis was done with the help of statistical tool-SPSS AMOS (20), referring Anderson and Garbing 1988 measurement model, using confirmatory factor analysis. A good construct validity depends on two measures of related construct (convergent validity) and unrelated construct (discriminant validity); and the reliability was established with the factors extracting sufficient variables, construct reliability and average changes extricated for each construct were taken together.

## 7. Findings and Analysis

This study is confined to the tourists' perception / opinion towards their experiential values during stay and receiving services in the organization and use of various facilities. A profile base of survey populations (hotel guests) is depicted in Table 1.

Out of the total 165 respondents, about 28% of the tourists were found in the age group of 18-30 years, then above 30 years, which comprised 30.90%, and the remaining part of survey populations i.e. above 50 years represents about 41% of the respondents. Surveyed tourists represent more married people (70.90%) than unmarried (29.10%) In the gender category, male (55.75%) representations are more than female 44.25%, as it was difficult to interact with female tourists during their stay. The majority of tourists visit star hotels once in a year (74.54%) than more times in a year (25.46%). Survey tourists represents more numbers associated with service professions (44.24%) than business people (37.57%) as profession.

Table 2 presents the opinion of respondents (guests) towards their experiential value during their stay or having facilities/services from hospitality organization (Taj group of hotels/outlets-Kolkata) in relationships of 16 sub-heads broadly categorized under three main heads of corporate image, interactions and staff quality. Influences/effects measured using eight statements on corporate image, and four statements equally on two heads, i.e., interactions and staff quality. The first variable (experiential value) measures the overall impact with four statements of guests' experience. Of the total variables, all statements have achieved mean value more than mid value on five-point scale, along with the overall experiential value mean also accorded above mid-level value.

Further, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was considered to study the joint effect of all three independent variables (corporate image, communication and better interaction and quality of staff) on tourists' experiential value.

Description		No. of Respondents	Percentage of Respondent
Age	Below 18-30 Years	46	27.87
	30-50 Years	51	30.90
	Above 50 Years	68	41.21
Marital Status	Married	117	70.90
	Unmarried	48	29.10
Gender	Male	92	55.75
	Female	73	44.25
Frequency of visit (star hotels)	Once in year	123	74.54
	Twice in year	42	25.46
Profession	Service	73	44.24
	Business	62	37.57
	Others	30	18.18

Variables (Heads- A, B, C and D) and sub-heads considered	Mean	SD	$\alpha$	AVE	CR
<b>A. Tourists' Experiential Value (Related to other hosp. organizations)</b>			.82	.81	.93
1 Taj group of Hotels-Kolkata are uncommon	3.47	1.24			
2 Taj group of Hotels-Kolkata are irreplaceable	3.31	1.17			
3 Taj group of Hotels-Kolkata are spectacular	3.74	0.99			
4 Taj group of Hotels-Kolkata are pennyworth		3.11	1.29		
<b>B. Corporate Image</b>			0.93	.65	.95
1 Corporate-Inventive and openness	3.72	1.01			
2 Corporate-Good interpersonal skills	3.37	1.16			
3 Corporate-Complain handling and problem solving	3.13	1.29			
4 Corporate-Explain the facilities and uniqueness of services	3.63	1.14			
5 Corporate-Professionalism in dealing	3.41	1.05			
6 Corporate-Operation and service standard	3.31	1.17			
7 Corporate-Overall maintenance and aesthetics	3.27	1.26			
8 Corporate-Good communication ability	3.23	1.31			
<b>C. Interaction with other guests</b>			0.77	.54	.76
1 Other guests are elegant	3.41	1.21			

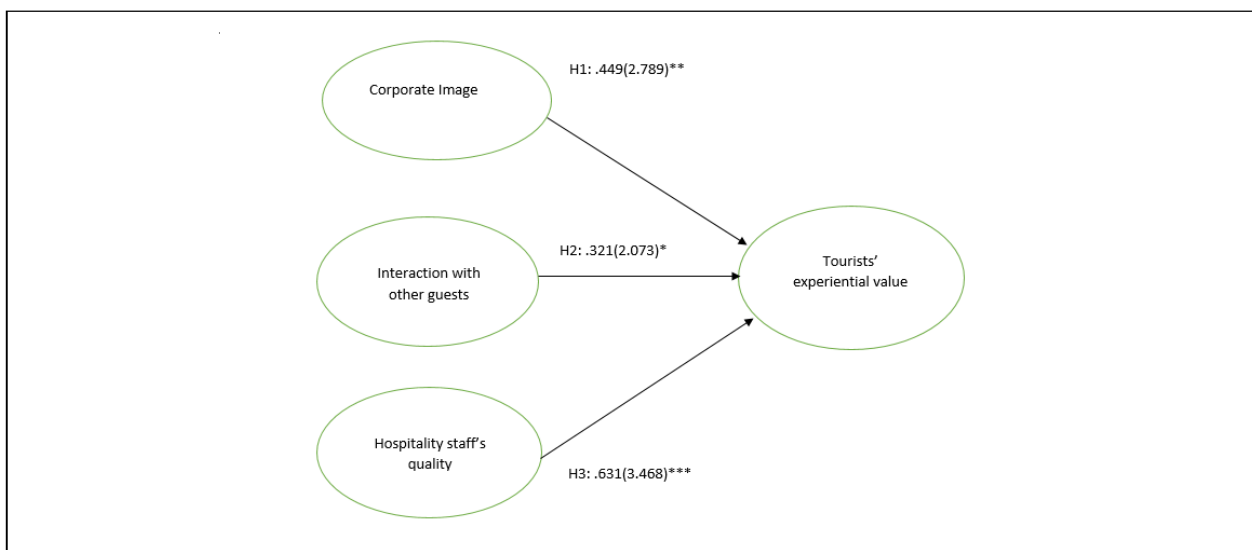
Table 2 (Cont.)					
Variables (Heads- A, B, C and D) and sub-heads considered	Mean	SD	$\alpha$	AVE	CR
2 Other guests have good etiquettes	3.21	1.27			
3 It is nice to interact with other hotel guests	3.64	1.00			
4 Interactions with other guests bring a good learning experience	3.53	1.07			
<b>D. Hospitality staffs quality</b>			0.81	.60	.82
1. Hospitality staffs deliver a systematic and satisfactory service	3.73				
2. The hospitality staffs are trustworthy	3.67				
3. The hospitality staffs are professional	3.37				
4. The hospitality staffs possess good knowledge and skill	3.49				

The first hypothesis examines how tourists’ realistic experiences are influenced by corporate image. In this study, tourists’ experience is measured by what means corporates—top leadership team can play a unique role to deal with care and induce fantasies, emotions, and enjoyment (Chen and Peng, 2014).

The second hypothesis examines the effect of interaction with other guests on overall tourists’ experiential value. In Taj group of hotels – Kolkata, departmental heads serves and interacts various tourists in Restaurants, Bars, Room service, Health clubs and tourists/guests gathered in same places in numbers, therefore, a good interaction with other guests in presence of staffs is one of the normal occurrences which contribute sharing experiences when staying at Taj group of hotels. Various studies; like, (Peng and Hung, 2015; Wu, and Liang, 2009) have established how other guest’s manner and behaviour impacts customer experience.

The third hypothesis examines how the knowledge and skill for quality service of hospitality staff effects tourists’ realistic experience positively. Service staff quality is focused by this study for the examination of guest and host interaction. The comparative inferiority or supremacy is indicated by service staff quality on perceptions of customers (Parasuraman and Berry, 1985).

Model 1 shows the power of association among the dependent variable (experiential value) and all other independent variables (image, interaction and staff quality) considered for this study.



**Figure 1: Research Framework Model (N=165 )**

**Note:** \*  $p \leq 0.05$  (moderately significant); \*\*  $p \leq 0.01$  (Significant); and \*\*\*  $p \leq 0.001$  (very significant).

To check the strength and to measure the indirect influence of mentioned parameters bootstrapping was performed. Structural equation modeling presented the results indicated good match between the information and actual framework ( $\chi^2/df = 2.68, p < 0.001$ , the root mean square error of approximation- RMSEA = 0.08; RMSEA 0.05 to 0.10 suggests good fit, CFI = 0.928, NFI = 0.91). Depending on numerical calculations, *Hypothesis 1* “Tourists experience depends on positive influence of corporate image”- is proved. The structural estimation measured is 0.449 ( $t = 2.89, p < 0.01$ ). Tourists experience and satisfaction depends on corporate image. *Hypothesis 2* “Tourist’s interaction with others in hotel found a noticeable influence on their stay experience.”- is proved. The structural assess measured, .321 ( $t = 2.073, p < 0.05$ ). Talking/communicating with others in same organization (Hotel) impacts stay experience of tourists’. *Hypothesis 3* “The knowledge and skill for quality service of hospitality staff effects tourists’ realistic experience positively”- is also verified. The structural assess measured, 0.631 ( $t = 3.468, p < 0.001$ ). Employees’ knowledge and skills means the overall quality impact tourists stay experience.

## 8. Conclusion

After examining various available literatures, this present study suggests that the hospitality organization and corporates evoke tourists/guests’ imaginations and experiences by their different skills like, interpersonal skills, technical skills, communication skills, creativity skill and overall services. Creation of right infrastructures mixed with modern technology also enhance the hospitality/ hotel products and the functional and operational aspect of all facilities is also one of the guiding parameters for corporates to enhance guest satisfaction. The outcome of this research will be helpful for industry experts to realize the importance of corporate engagement and guest satisfaction, the ultimate goal of operation and management of any hospitality business. First, the leadership team should offer the best to their customers by explaining the uniqueness of facilities and real services. Here, creation of something new as per the need and based on competitors’ performances provide the unique experiences for customers is one important parameter on the corporate part for betterment and improvement. Second, innovative approach and openness to reach, serve and solve customers’ issues on all aspects including modernizations and use of technology also brings the service standard higher to enhance guest satisfaction. Taj group of hotels in Kolkata, corporate team members are very cooperative by involving themselves with guest interaction, identifying guests’ problems, preferences, and with right solutions ensure their better stay/food experiences. If guests perceive that, the staff have a confident and helpful image with required knowledge and skill set, they are also affectionate and in turn, the experiential value during this stay is satisfactory. Apart from conventional development the team should be encouraged to take part in different cultural activities, technology based events, motor skill or skill based activities in production of food and services resulting in more creative, skillful and service oriented employees while serving guests.

Taj group of hotels-Kolkata, tourists/guests from all over the world visit the property, uses various facilities in F& B outlets, bars, health club, swimming pool, etc., sit next to one another share the same outlet also sharing their experiences on product and services with each other’s also influence their understandings. Outlet managers should ensure right kind of leisure, right kind of interactions throughout and should not leave the area until and unless all vacated the place with a satisfactory note. Good interaction and positive experiences from others on staffs, services and facilities are also the factor for experiential value. Hotel managers can provide effective and practical sitting arrangements for fruitful interactions with each other’s also organize some events with maximum participations and interactions. Taj Group of Hotels-Kolkata, tourists always expect maximum care, convenience and staffs to be reliable and professional at the time of dealing, servicing and solving.

Knowledge and skills of the service staff of Taj group of hotels having a huge impact on customer satisfaction and realistic experience in Taj group of hotels in Kolkata. Actually the staff of this group is known to all over the world specially after the incident of terror attack in India (2008), where not a single staff left the hotel in spite of life risk (although all knew about several exit routes) and served the guests with ultimate priority the whole night. In Kolkata, also the HR policy, recruitment and developmental activities made the staffs unique and special where they deal all the required aspects with required knowledge, skills and more on hospitality touch. Mental as well as emotional development is very important nowadays in hospitality services, which requires more off the job training for better service. This group is now operating hotels considering the market segment and business and the trend started from the late 80s due to competition from some multinational companies. Group also changed the policy where they are encouraging young and talented blood in their team for better service and guest satisfaction. Only concern, the group should focus on same service standard in every brand category of hotels and outlets to boost the experiential value of the customers. Considering persisting limitations in this research and could have been better if considered different theories so, future/ further research may examine various interactions and tourists experiences considering symbolic interface models and theories.

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**Cite this article as:** Pralay Ganguly (2022). [Corporate Images Influence on Tourists' Experience and Satisfaction in Hospitality Industry.](#) *International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality*. 2(2), 41-50. doi: 10.51483/IJTH.2.2.2022.41-50.