

Beyond Job Satisfaction: Work Engagement as a Key to Service Quality

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Abstract. This study presents a bibliometric analysis of research on employee engagement and service quality in the hospitality industry from 2020 to 2025 using the Three-Field Plot method. By examining 100 scholarly articles, the analysis explores the interconnections between abstract terms, contributing authors, and keywords to identify dominant themes, influential researchers, and emerging trends. Results indicate that core concepts such as emotional engagement, employee commitment, and service performance are central to the field, reflecting a strong focus on psychological and organizational dimensions of employee experiences. Key authors, including Wang Y., Zhang X., Hassan TH, and Sobain AEE, serve as pivotal nodes linking multiple conceptual areas, demonstrating thematic overlaps and research cohesion. Keywords such as employee engagement, service quality, and customer orientation further highlight the alignment between theoretical frameworks and practical applications in hospitality management. Emerging topics, including sustainability, social responsibility, and COVID-19, suggest responsiveness to contemporary challenges and indicate avenues for future research. Overall, this study underscores the dynamic and interconnected nature of hospitality research, providing insights for academics and practitioners seeking to enhance employee engagement, service quality, and customer satisfaction in organizational contexts.

Keywords: employee engagement, service quality, hospitality, bibliometric analysis, Three-Field Plot, customer satisfaction

I. Introduction

The hospitality sector has emerged as a key contributor to economic growth in both developing and developed countries, including Japan, China, and Australia. Hotels, in particular, play a substantial role in national development and employment generation, especially in developing countries such as Indonesia (Olawuyi & Kleynhans, 2025; Horwath HTL, 2025). In Indonesia, the hotel industry has shown a notable post-pandemic growth trend, particularly among three-star hotels, and this growth is expected to continue with economic recovery, improved tourism infrastructure, and enhanced service facilities (CNBC Indonesia, 2023).

Nevertheless, the hotel industry remains highly sensitive to government policies. Its performance is influenced not only by guest volume and facilities (Singgalen et al., 2024) but also by taxation, mobility regulations, and broader tourism trends. For instance, a survey by the Indonesian Hotel and Restaurant Association indicates that hotels may face declining visitation due to the 2024 government budget austerity, potentially affecting overall sector performance (Horwath HTL, 2025). Similarly, in China, insufficient attention to customer satisfaction among hotel management teams has led to significant operational challenges (Yang & Campos, 2020). In contrast, international tourism in Turkey has expanded rapidly since the 1980s, placing the country among the top ten globally in tourist arrivals, but also intensifying competition and triggering unhealthy price wars (Moslehpour et al., 2012).

These trends underscore the importance of examining organizational dynamics in intangible service sectors, where user perception and satisfaction play a pivotal role. Customer satisfaction is a critical factor in hospitality, as the perceived value—reflecting service quality relative to price—determines whether guests regard their experience as worthwhile (Parapanos & Michopoulou, 2023; Singgalen et al., 2024). Moreover, satisfaction serves as a cornerstone of marketing strategy, offering a potential competitive advantage to businesses in this sector (Moslehpour et al., 2012).

Furthermore, literature indicates that human resources represent one of the most valuable assets influencing the quality of service provided by hotels to their guests (Sheta et al., 2023; Leontes et al., 2024). Consequently, numerous studies have explored the relationship between service quality and work engagement (Barnes et al., 2014; Puspitawati & Yuliawan, 2019; Leontes et al., 2024). When an organization has employees who are not only physically and cognitively engaged but also emotionally invested in their work, they are more likely to demonstrate empathy, high motivation, and a willingness to exceed guest expectations or put forth their best effort (Pasya & Berliyanti, 2024). This, in turn, strengthens customers' perceptions of service quality.

II. Literature Review

Work Engagement towards Service Quality

It is no longer a secret that service quality is critical to the success of the service industry, particularly in hospitality (Leontes et al., 2024). Fundamentally, hotels offer experiences centered on hospitality (Puspitawati & Yuliawan, 2019). Beyond this, the helpfulness of employees serves as a key indicator in customer evaluations, especially regarding customer satisfaction (Barnes et al., 2014). To ensure that service is delivered effectively, organizations need employees who are fully engaged in their work. Supporting this, Sheta et al. (2023) emphasize that employee engagement is crucial for organizational performance across various domains, including customer satisfaction, innovation, profitability, productivity, loyalty, and service quality.

III. Research Method

This study employs a bibliometric approach to systematically analyze the existing literature on hospitality, service quality, and employee engagement. Bibliometric analysis allows researchers to identify trends, patterns, and relationships within a body of scholarly publications, providing quantitative insights into research productivity, influential authors, and thematic development over time (Donthu et al., 2021).

The data for this study were obtained from 100 peer-reviewed articles published between 2020 and 2025, selected based on their relevance to the topics of hospitality, service quality, and employee engagement. Only articles published in English, focusing on hotels or the broader hospitality industry, and containing full bibliographic information including authors, keywords, abstracts, and references were included. The bibliographic data were exported in BibTeX (.bib) format, which is compatible with Biblioshiny, the web interface for the R package Bibliometrix.

Data analysis was conducted using Biblioshiny, which facilitates bibliometric mapping, visualization, and network analysis. The analysis included descriptive statistics to examine annual scientific production, most productive authors, countries, and sources. Citation analysis was performed to determine the most influential articles, authors, and journals. Keyword co-occurrence analysis and thematic evolution mapping were also conducted to identify dominant research themes and trends over time. Additionally, three-field plots and network mapping were used to explore relationships among authors, keywords, and sources, highlighting research clusters and collaborations.

To ensure validity, only peer-reviewed journals indexed in recognized databases were included, and duplicate or irrelevant records were removed manually. The reliability of the analysis is reinforced by Biblioshiny's standardized data processing and visualization tools, allowing reproducible results (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). Despite its strengths, bibliometric analysis primarily provides quantitative insights into trends and patterns, without capturing the qualitative depth of individual studies. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted as indicative of overall research directions rather than definitive evaluations of content quality.

IV. Results and Discussion

The Three-Field Plot visualizes the interconnections between three dimensions of the bibliometric dataset: the most frequent abstract terms (AB_TM), authors (AU), and keywords (DE). This visualization enables a multi-level understanding of how research themes, contributors, and conceptual focuses are interconnected within the field of hospitality, service quality, and employee engagement from 2020 to 2025.

Starting from the left field, AB_TM represents the terms most frequently extracted from article abstracts. Notable terms include *emotional*, *workplace*, *engagement*, *management*, *employees*, *service*, *hospitality*, and *customer*, among others. These terms reflect the primary topics and conceptual focus of the research corpus. For instance, *emotional*, *commitment*, and *engagement* suggest a strong focus on the psychological and affective dimensions of employees, while terms such as *service*, *hospitality*, and *hotel* indicate the applied context of these studies. Moreover, the presence of terms like *training*, *motivation*, *performance*, and *strategy* implies that scholars are not only examining conceptual frameworks but also the practical managerial implications for the hospitality industry.

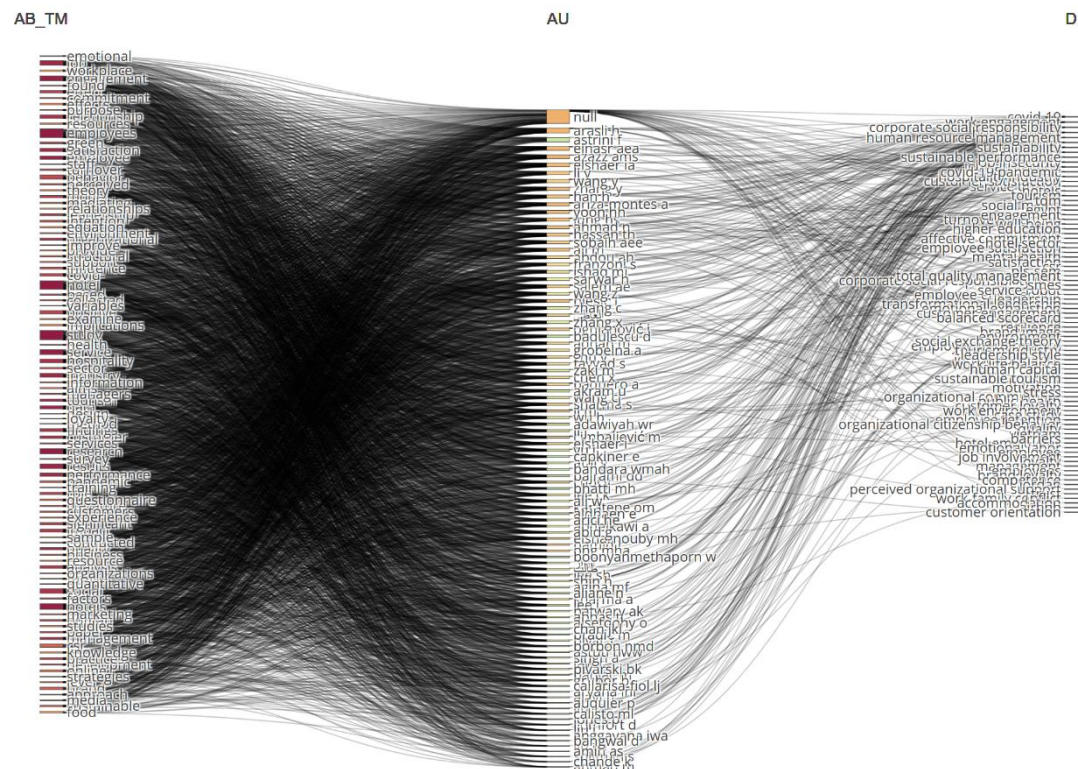


Figure 1. Sankey diagram.
Source: authors' creation (2025).

The middle field, AU, lists the authors contributing to the research corpus. Each author is linked by lines to both the abstract terms and the keywords, illustrating which authors focus on which topics and conceptual areas. Although some author labels appear as *null* or partially truncated—likely due to formatting or BibTeX import issues—patterns of co-occurrence are still observable. Several authors, such as Wang Y., Zhang X., Hassan TH, and Sobain AEE, appear to be central nodes with multiple connections, suggesting their works are highly influential or they publish extensively on topics like employee engagement, service quality, and customer satisfaction in the hospitality sector. The density of lines connecting authors to multiple abstract terms indicates a high degree of thematic overlap, suggesting that many authors address similar constructs, such as emotional commitment, workplace motivation, and service performance.

The right field, DE, represents the keywords assigned to each article, often reflecting the conceptual focus or research objectives. Keywords such as *customer orientation*, *perceived organizational support*, *employee engagement*, *service quality*, *hotel sector*, *leadership style*, and *human capital* dominate the map. These keywords align closely with the abstract terms, reinforcing the importance of employee-related psychological constructs and service quality indicators in hospitality research. The mapping also reveals the thematic diversity of the field: some studies focus on organizational behavior and internal human resource practices (*employee engagement*, *leadership style*, *organizational citizenship behavior*), while others emphasize outcomes relevant to customer experience (*customer orientation*, *perceived service quality*, *hotel performance*).

By examining the connectivity between the three fields, several insights emerge. First, abstract terms like *emotional*, *engagement*, and *commitment* are linked to multiple authors and keywords, highlighting their centrality as conceptual anchors in the field. Second, there is a strong alignment between author contributions and the keywords used to index their work, indicating that researchers maintain a coherent thematic focus, with employee engagement and service quality serving as bridging constructs between theory and practice. Third, less frequent abstract terms such as *sustainability*, *COVID-19*, *tourism*, and *social responsibility* are connected to fewer authors and keywords, suggesting emerging or niche topics that may represent recent trends or context-specific studies within the dataset.

Overall, this Three-Field Plot underscores the complexity and interconnectedness of research in hospitality service quality and employee engagement. It illustrates that while core topics like emotional engagement, employee commitment, and customer satisfaction dominate the literature, there is substantial

thematic variation, with multiple authors contributing to overlapping areas of study. Furthermore, the visualization allows identification of both prolific contributors and key conceptual themes, providing a foundation for mapping research trends, identifying gaps, and framing future studies. The plot's dense network of lines reflects a high degree of intellectual cohesion, suggesting that the field is both well-established and dynamically evolving, particularly in response to contemporary issues such as workplace well-being, customer-centric service delivery, and organizational adaptation to external challenges.

The Three-Field Plot analysis of bibliometric data from 2020 to 2025 offers a comprehensive visualization of the interconnections between abstract terms (AB_TM), authors (AU), and keywords (DE) within the domains of hospitality, service quality, and employee engagement. This multifaceted approach provides valuable insights into the evolving landscape of research in these fields, highlighting both established themes and emerging trends.

Conceptual Landscape: Dominant Themes and Their Implications

The left field of the Three-Field Plot, representing the most frequent abstract terms, reveals a strong emphasis on psychological and organizational constructs. Terms such as *emotional*, *engagement*, *commitment*, *employees*, and *workplace* underscore a predominant focus on the affective and behavioral dimensions of employee experiences. This aligns with existing literature that emphasizes the critical role of emotional engagement in enhancing service quality and organizational performance (Schaufeli, 2021; Albrecht, 2020).

Additionally, the presence of terms like *training*, *motivation*, *performance*, and *strategy* indicates a practical orientation in the research, with scholars exploring managerial interventions aimed at fostering employee engagement and improving service outcomes. This reflects a growing recognition of the need for evidence-based human resource practices that align employee well-being with organizational objectives (Kang et al., 2022).

The inclusion of terms such as *sustainability*, *COVID-19*, and *social responsibility* suggests an emerging interest in contextual factors influencing employee engagement and service quality. These topics point to a shift towards examining how external challenges and societal expectations impact organizational practices and employee experiences in the hospitality sector.

Authorial Contributions: Central Figures and Thematic Overlaps

The middle field of the Three-Field Plot, representing authors, highlights key contributors to the literature. Authors like Wang Y., Zhang X., Hassan TH, and Sobain AEE emerge as central nodes, indicating their significant influence in shaping the discourse on employee engagement and service quality in hospitality. The density of connections between these authors and various abstract terms suggests a high degree of thematic overlap, reflecting a shared focus on constructs such as emotional commitment, workplace motivation, and service performance.

This clustering of authors around specific themes underscores the importance of collaborative research efforts in advancing knowledge within these domains. It also points to the development of specialized subfields where interdisciplinary approaches are employed to address complex issues related to employee engagement and service quality.

Keyword Analysis: Bridging Theory and Practice

The right field, representing keywords, reveals the conceptual focus of the research corpus. Keywords like *employee engagement*, *service quality*, *customer orientation*, and *perceived organizational support* dominate the landscape, indicating a strong alignment between theoretical constructs and practical applications. This congruence suggests that researchers are not only developing theoretical frameworks but are also concerned with their applicability in real-world settings, aiming to bridge the gap between academic inquiry and industry practice.

Moreover, the presence of keywords such as *hotel sector*, *leadership style*, and *human capital* points to a sector-specific focus, with studies examining how organizational characteristics and leadership practices influence employee engagement and service quality in hospitality contexts. This sectoral lens is crucial for developing targeted interventions that address the unique challenges and opportunities within the hospitality industry.

Emerging Trends and Niche Topics

The Three-Field Plot also highlights less frequent abstract terms, such as *sustainability*, *COVID-19*, and *social responsibility*, which are connected to fewer authors and keywords. These emerging topics reflect the field's responsiveness to global challenges and societal shifts. The inclusion of these terms

suggests a growing interest in understanding how external factors influence employee engagement and service quality, prompting researchers to explore new dimensions of organizational behavior and performance in the hospitality sector.

This trend aligns with broader societal movements towards sustainability and corporate social responsibility, indicating that the hospitality industry is increasingly integrating these considerations into its operational and strategic frameworks. Researchers are thus called to examine how these factors intersect with employee experiences and service delivery, contributing to a more holistic understanding of organizational success.

V. Conclusion

The Three-Field Plot analysis provides a nuanced perspective on the interconnections between abstract terms, authors, and keywords in the fields of hospitality, service quality, and employee engagement. It reveals a rich tapestry of established themes, such as emotional engagement and service performance, alongside emerging topics like sustainability and social responsibility. The visualization underscores the dynamic nature of research in these domains, highlighting the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration and sector-specific focus in addressing the complex challenges facing the hospitality industry. As the field continues to evolve, future research should aim to deepen the understanding of how external factors, such as global crises and societal expectations, influence employee engagement and service quality. Additionally, exploring the role of leadership and organizational culture in shaping these outcomes can provide valuable insights for developing effective strategies to enhance both employee well-being and customer satisfaction in the hospitality sector.

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