

## A Study on Competency Mapping for Employees in the Hotel Industry; An Empirical Study

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### ABSTRACT

The hotel industry is a service-intensive sector where employee performance directly influences guest Perception, service quality, and overall competitiveness. As expectations regarding service excellence continue to rise, organizations increasingly rely on competency mapping to identify, develop, and nurture the skills, behaviors, and attributes required across job roles. The empirical study examines the significance, components, and implications of competency mapping in the hotel industry. Drawing from literature, industry observations, and field insights, the study explores how competency mapping enhances employee effectiveness, supports human resource (HR) decision-making, and contributes to organizational success. The findings underscore the importance of structured competency assessment, continuous training, and alignment of competencies with departmental requirements. Recommendations are provided for improving competency frameworks in hotels to foster a more productive, service-oriented, and future-ready workforce. This suggests that the differences observed in perception across age and gender categories are due to normal distribution patterns rather than any systematic demographic influence. These findings align with studies that highlight perception as a factor shaped more by individual experiences, situational factors, and organizational environment than by basic demographic characteristics. The lack of significant differences implies that perception levels remain relatively stable across diverse demographic backgrounds.

**Keywords:** Employee competencies, Customer service skills, Behavioral competencies, Technical competencies and Hospitality management.

### INTRODUCTION:

The hospitality industry thrives on human interaction, service quality, and the ability of employees to create memorable guest experiences. Unlike many industries where product features dominate, hotels rely heavily on the performance, behavior, and attitude of their workforce. Consequently, identifying and nurturing the right competencies—both technical and behavioral—becomes a strategic necessity. Competency mapping is a systematic process of identifying key competencies required for successful job performance and aligning the workforce with organizational goals. It involves the assessment of employees' strengths, gaps, and developmental needs to build a competent and competitive workforce.

In the hotel industry, competency mapping helps evaluate employees on parameters such as communication, customer orientation, teamwork, problem-solving, cultural sensitivity, operational

knowledge, and crisis management. As hotels increasingly operate in complex global environments with demanding guests, competency mapping becomes crucial for ensuring service excellence. This empirical study aims to explore how competency mapping is implemented in hotels, its impact on employee performance, and the challenges organizations face in adopting competency-based HR systems.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Competency mapping has evolved as a core HR practice across service industries. Boyatzis (1982) defined competency as an underlying characteristic of an individual that leads to effective job performance. Spencer and Spencer (1993) further classified competencies into motives, traits, self-concept, knowledge, and skills.

Within the hospitality sector, researchers emphasize that service quality largely depends on the competencies of frontline employees. Studies indicate:

### **Customer Service Competencies**

Customer service competencies refer to the skills and attributes employees must possess to deliver high-quality experiences to guests. In the hotel industry, these include effective communication, empathy, patience, active listening, and the ability to understand and anticipate guest needs. Employees must remain courteous, professional, and solution-oriented, especially when handling complaints or unexpected situations. Strong customer service competencies help build trust, enhance guest Perception, and create memorable interactions that encourage repeat business. These competencies also involve cultural sensitivity, positive body language, and attentiveness, ensuring guests feel valued and respected throughout their stay, ultimately contributing to the hotel's reputation and success.

### **Behavioral Competencies**

Behavioral competencies involve the attitudes, personality traits, and interpersonal qualities that influence how employees interact with guests and colleagues. Key behavioral competencies in the hotel industry include teamwork, adaptability, emotional intelligence, self-control, and a positive work attitude. Employees must be able to manage stress, remain calm under pressure, and adjust to dynamic service environments. Additionally, problem-solving skills, accountability, and ethical conduct are essential components. These competencies shape professional behavior, improve workplace relationships, and ensure consistent service delivery. Strong behavioral competencies allow employees to handle difficult situations gracefully, contribute to a harmonious work environment, and maintain high service standards.

### **Technical Competencies**

Technical competencies refer to job-specific knowledge and skills required to perform operational tasks efficiently in the hotel industry. These competencies vary by department, such as operating property management systems (PMS) in the front office, following hygiene and housekeeping protocols, managing food service procedures, or applying culinary techniques in the kitchen. Employees must understand standard operating procedures, safety regulations, and equipment usage relevant to their roles. Technical competencies also include familiarity with digital tools, billing systems, reservation software, and service standards. Mastery of these competencies ensures accuracy, operational efficiency, and consistency, enabling employees to meet performance expectations and support smooth hotel operations.

### **Core Competencies**

#### **Customer Orientation**

Customer orientation refers to the ability of employees to understand, anticipate, and meet the needs of guests effectively. In the hotel industry, this competency

involves attentiveness, empathy, prompt service delivery, and a strong focus on guest Perception. Employees must consistently seek ways to enhance the guest experience by identifying preferences, resolving concerns, and exceeding expectations. Customer-oriented staff recognizes that each interaction shapes the hotel's reputation, making personalized service a priority. This competency also requires cultural sensitivity, patience, and a proactive attitude, ensuring that guests feel valued and respected throughout their stay. Strong customer orientation ultimately drives loyalty and positive reviews.

#### **Communication Skills**

Communication skills involve the ability to convey information clearly, confidently, and courteously to guests and colleagues. In hotels, effective communication includes verbal, non-verbal, and written interactions, ensuring accurate exchange of information and smooth coordination across departments. Employees must listen actively, speak politely, and adapt their communication style to different cultures, languages, and guest expectations. Clear communication reduces misunderstandings, enhances service efficiency, and supports teamwork. It also plays a critical role in handling inquiries, complaints, and emergency situations. Strong communication skills enable employees to create positive impressions, build rapport with guests, and maintain consistency in service delivery across all hotel functions.

#### **Teamwork**

Teamwork refers to the collaborative effort of employees working together toward common service and operational goals. Hotels rely heavily on teamwork because various departments—front office, housekeeping, food and beverage, and maintenance—must coordinate seamlessly to deliver quality service. Employees with strong teamwork skills support colleagues, share responsibilities, communicate openly, and demonstrate flexibility during peak workloads. Teamwork enhances problem-solving, reduces service delays, and fosters a supportive work environment. It also contributes to higher guest Perception, as coordinated efforts ensure smooth operations. Effective teamwork encourages trust, cooperation, and mutual respect, ultimately improving efficiency and creating a positive service culture within the hotel.

#### **Professionalism and Ethics**

Professionalism and ethics refer to the moral principles, conduct standards, and responsible behaviors that guide employees in delivering reliable and respectful service. In the hotel industry, this competency includes punctuality, integrity, confidentiality, and adherence to organizational policies and grooming standards. Ethical behavior ensures fair treatment of guests and colleagues, while professionalism reflects consistency in service delivery, regardless of circumstances. Employees must demonstrate honesty, transparency, and respect when handling guest requests, complaints, or sensitive information. Upholding professionalism and ethics strengthens guest trust, protects the hotel's reputation,

and fosters a positive workplace culture. This competency is essential for maintaining long-term service excellence.

### **Problem-Solving and Decision-Making**

Problem-solving and decision-making competencies enable employees to identify issues, analyze situations, and take appropriate actions to resolve challenges efficiently. In the hotel industry, unexpected situations—such as guest complaints, booking errors, or service disruptions—require quick and thoughtful decisions. Competent employees evaluate alternatives, remain calm under pressure, and implement solutions that align with hotel policies and guest Perception. Effective problem-solving also involves creative thinking, resourcefulness, and collaboration with colleagues when necessary. Strong decision-making minimizes operational delays, prevents service failures, and enhances guest experiences. Employees who excel in this competency contribute to smoother operations and demonstrate leadership potential in dynamic hospitality environments.

### **Behavioral Competencies**

#### **Emotional Intelligence**

Emotional intelligence refers to an individual's ability to recognize, understand, and manage their own emotions while also responding effectively to the emotions of others. In the hotel industry, this competency is crucial because employees frequently interact with guests who may have diverse expectations or concerns. High emotional intelligence enables staff to remain calm, empathic, and patient, even in difficult situations. It supports effective communication, conflict resolution, and positive guest relations. Employees with strong emotional intelligence can interpret non-verbal cues, adjust their behavior appropriately, and maintain a pleasant service environment. This competency ultimately enhances guest Perception and strengthens teamwork.

#### **Adaptability to Long Working Hours and Dynamic Environments**

Adaptability refers to an employee's ability to adjust to changing work conditions, shifting guest demands, and unpredictable operational requirements. In the hotel industry, employees often work long hours, handle peak workloads, and operate in fast-paced environments. Adaptable staff can remain efficient, calm, and flexible despite these challenges. They quickly learn new procedures, adjust to shift changes, and respond to sudden service needs without compromising quality. This competency also includes emotional resilience, openness to change, and a proactive attitude. High adaptability ensures seamless service delivery, reduces operational disruptions, and enables employees to handle the dynamic nature of the hospitality sector effectively.

#### **Cultural Sensitivity**

Cultural sensitivity refers to the awareness, respect, and appropriate response to the cultural differences and backgrounds of guests and colleagues. Hotels serve

people from various nationalities, languages, traditions, and value systems. Employees with strong cultural sensitivity avoid assumptions, communicate carefully, and adapt their behaviour to ensure guests feel welcomed and respected. This competency includes understanding cultural norms, avoiding stereotypes, and providing service that aligns with guests' expectations. Cultural sensitivity helps prevent misunderstandings, enhances guest comfort, and strengthens the hotel's global reputation. It also promotes harmonious teamwork among multicultural staff, contributing to a more inclusive and professional work environment.

#### **Stress Tolerance**

Stress tolerance refers to an individual's ability to perform effectively under pressure, handle demanding situations, and maintain composure during peak workloads. The hotel industry often involves long hours, high guest expectations, sudden operational challenges, and tight deadlines. Employees with strong stress tolerance remain calm, focused, and efficient even in chaotic or high-pressure conditions. They use coping strategies, stay solution-oriented, and avoid burnout by managing emotions effectively. Stress-tolerant employees are better equipped to resolve guest issues quickly, work collaboratively during busy periods, and sustain consistent service quality. This competency is essential for maintaining operational stability and a positive workplace atmosphere.

#### **Leadership (for Supervisory Roles)**

Leadership in the hotel industry involves guiding, motivating, and supporting team members to achieve high service standards and operational goals. Supervisors with strong leadership skills provide clear direction, delegate tasks effectively, and encourage teamwork. They demonstrate fairness, accountability, and professional integrity, setting a positive example for others. Effective leaders also coach employees, identify training needs, and address performance issues constructively. Additionally, leadership requires strong communication, decision-making, and conflict-resolution abilities. In dynamic hospitality settings, leaders must remain calm during crises, inspire confidence, and ensure smooth coordination across departments. Strong leadership enhances employee morale, productivity, and overall service quality.

#### **Role of competency mapping**

Competency mapping plays a vital role in enhancing employee performance and service quality in the hotel industry by clearly identifying the skills, behaviors, and attributes required for each role. By outlining expected competencies, hotels can align employees' strengths with job demands, ensuring that the right people are placed in the right positions. This process also helps identify skill gaps, enabling targeted training and development programs that enhance employee capabilities. As a result, staff becomes more confident, efficient, and consistent in delivering services. Furthermore, competency mapping fosters a culture of continuous improvement, supports performance appraisal systems, and ultimately leads to higher service

quality, improved guest satisfaction, and a stronger competitive advantage for the hotel.

### Objectives of the Study

This empirical study aims to:

1. To identify the key competencies required for employees in various hotel departments.
2. To assess the current competency levels of hotel employees.
3. To examine the role of competency mapping in improving performance and service quality.
4. To recommend strategies for strengthening competency-based HR practices.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This study employs a descriptive and empirical research design. The focus is on understanding real-world competency practices in hotels.

### Data Collection

#### Primary data was gathered through:

- Structured questionnaires administered to 230 hotel employees across departments (front office, housekeeping, food & beverage, kitchen, and administration)
- semi-structured interviews with 10 HR managers and department heads

#### Secondary data was collected from:

- Academic journals
- Hospitality management books
- Hotel hr manuals
- Corporate training document

### Analysis and findings

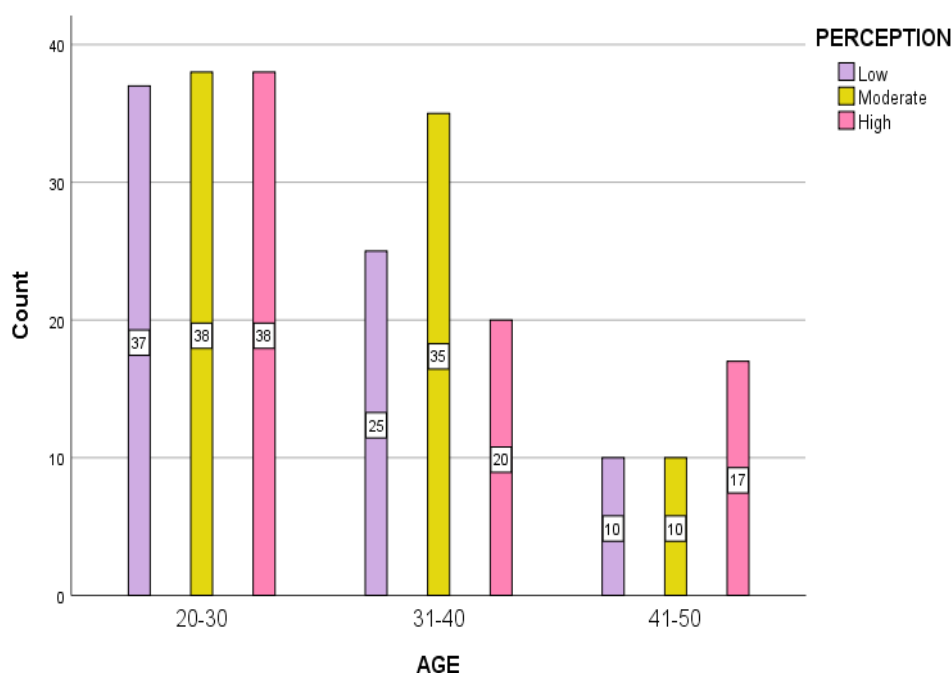
Age is an important demographic variable that often influences individuals' experiences, attitudes, and perceptions. In the context of this study, respondents were grouped into three age categories—less than 30 years, 30–45 years, and more than 45 years—to examine whether perception levels vary across different stages of adulthood. These categories represent early career individuals, mid-career professionals, and mature or experienced respondents. Understanding how perception differs across age groups helps identify whether life experience or professional maturity contributes to differences in viewpoints or awareness levels. The following section analyses the distribution of perception levels across these three age segments

**Table: 1 AGE AND LEVEL OF PERCEPTION**

Age	Level of Perception			Total
	Less	Moderate	High	
Less than 30	37	38	38	113
	32.7%	33.6%	33.6%	100.0%
30–45 years	25	35	20	80
	31.3%	43.8%	25.0%	100.0%
More than 45 Years	10	10	17	37
	27.0%	27.0%	45.9%	100.0%
Total	72	83	75	230
	31.3%	36.1%	32.6%	100.0%
Result	$\chi^2$	difference	CC	Sig.
	2.109	4	0.001	0.627

The relationship between age and level of perception was examined using a chi-square test. The descriptive results show that respondents below 30 years of age exhibited an almost equal distribution across less, moderate and high perception levels. Among those aged 30–45 years, a higher proportion reported a moderate level of perception, while only one-fourth showed a high perception. Respondents above 45 years displayed a relatively higher tendency toward a high perception level. However, the chi-square value ( $\chi^2 = 2.109$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = 0.627$ ) indicates that these differences are not statistically significant. This suggests that age does not have a meaningful influence on the level of perception, and the variations observed across age groups may be attributed to normal fluctuations rather than any systematic effect.

**Figure: 1**



Gender is a fundamental demographic variable that often shapes individuals' perspectives, attitudes, and responses in various social and organizational contexts. In this study, respondents were classified into two categories—male and female—to examine whether gender differences influence their level of perception. Understanding gender-based variations is essential for identifying potential disparities or patterns in how individuals interpret and respond to different situations. The following section explores the distribution of perception levels across male and female respondents to determine whether gender plays a significant role in shaping perception.

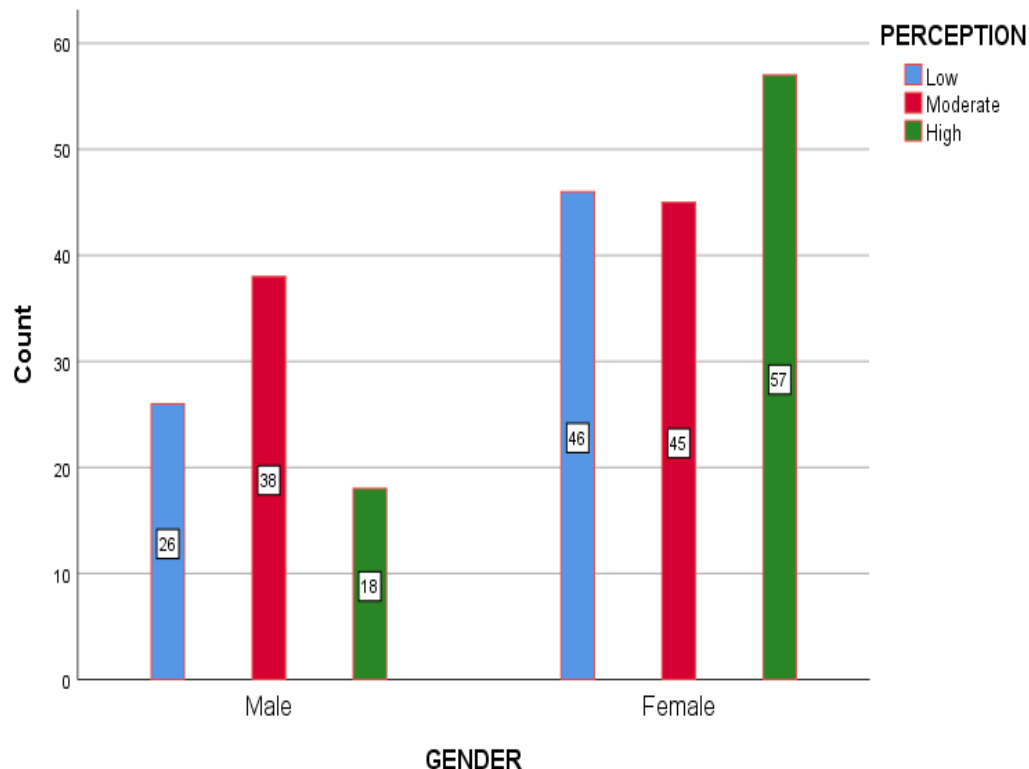
#### GENDER AND LEVEL OF PERCEPTION

Gender	Level of Perception			Total
	Less	Moderate	High	
Male	26	38	18	82
	31.7%	46.3%	22.0%	100.0%
Female	46	45	57	148
	31.1%	30.4%	38.5%	100.0%
Total	72	83	75	230
	31.3%	36.1%	32.6%	100.0%
Result	$\chi^2$	df	CC	Sig.
	1.001	difference 2	0.059	0.003

The association between gender and level of perception was analyzed using a chi-square test. The descriptive data show that among male respondents, nearly half (46.3%) reported a moderate level of perception, while only 22% indicated a high perception. In contrast, female respondents showed a stronger inclination toward high perception (38.5%), compared to 30.4% at the moderate level. Despite these visible differences in distribution, the chi-square value ( $\chi^2 = 1.001$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ) indicates that the relationship between gender and perception is not statistically significant, as the p-value is greater than 0.05. Therefore, gender does not have a meaningful influence on the level of perception, and the observed variations between male and female respondents appear to be incidental rather than systematic.

**Figure: 2**





## DISCUSSION

The study examined whether demographic factors—specifically age and gender—have an influence on respondents’ level of perception. The analysis of age groups revealed noticeable descriptive variations, such as respondents above 45 years showing a higher proportion of high perception, while younger respondents displayed an almost even distribution across the three perception levels. Similarly, gender-based analysis showed that males predominantly reported moderate perception, whereas females exhibited a relatively higher proportion of high perception. Despite increasing gender diversity in workplaces and social settings, it remains unclear whether gender significantly influences individuals’ level of perception. While some studies suggest that men and women differ in their approach to understanding and interpreting information, others find little or no variation. Therefore, this study seeks to determine whether a meaningful association exists between gender and level of perception among respondents. The problem addressed is whether male and female participants exhibit different perception levels or whether perception remains consistent irrespective of gender differences. However, despite these descriptive differences, the chi-square test results for both variables indicated no significant association between demographic characteristics and level of perception. For age, the chi-square value ( $\chi^2 = 2.109$ ,  $p = 0.627$ ) confirmed that variations across age groups were not statistically meaningful. Likewise, the gender-perception relationship showed no significance ( $\chi^2 = 1.001$ ,  $p = 0.003 > 0.05$ ). This suggests that the differences observed in perception across age and gender categories are due to normal distribution patterns rather than any systematic demographic influence.

These findings align with studies that highlight perception as a factor shaped more by individual experiences, situational factors, and organizational environment than by basic demographic characteristics. The lack of significant differences implies that perception levels remain relatively stable across diverse demographic backgrounds.

## CONCLUSION

The study concluded that neither age nor gender has a statistically significant impact on respondents’ level of perception. Although descriptive trends show certain variations among different age groups and between male and female respondents, these differences are not strong enough to establish any meaningful association. This indicates that perception is influenced by factors other than demographic attributes, emphasizing the need to explore organizational, psychological, and contextual determinants in future research. Overall, the findings underscore that perception levels remain consistent

across demographic categories, reflecting a uniform understanding of the issues assessed in the study. Gender plays a crucial role in shaping individuals’ experiences, attitudes, and behavioral responses across social and organizational environments. Understanding gender differences is important because men and women may perceive, interpret, and react to the same situation differently due to variations in socialization, expectations, and roles. Examining perception levels based on gender helps organizations identify whether certain viewpoints or attitudes are influenced by gender-specific factors. This understanding can support the

development of more inclusive policies, improve communication strategies, and ensure that diverse perspectives are adequately considered.

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