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Integration of Spiritual Leadership in Improving the Quality of Service and Hotel Guest Experience

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Abstract

Bali tourism, as a global destination, faces increasingly complex challenges related to competition dynamics, tourist expectations, and the sustainability of the hospitality industry. Within this context, spiritual leadership and service quality are strategic factors in shaping guest experiences that ultimately influence customer loyalty. This study aims to analyze the influence of spiritual leadership on service quality, guest experience, and guest loyalty in star-rated hotels in Bali, while considering the mediating role of service quality and guest experience. The research employed a quantitative approach with a survey method targeting hotel guests as respondents, and the data were analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM) to test the relationships between variables derived from the conceptual framework. The results of the analysis indicate that spiritual leadership has a significant effect on service quality and guest experience, while service quality is proven to strengthen guest experience and indirectly enhance loyalty. Moreover, guest experience is identified as the main determinant mediating the relationship between service quality and guest loyalty. These findings provide theoretical contributions in expanding the study of integrating spiritual leadership into hospitality management and offer practical implications for hotel managers in Bali in designing leadership strategies and service improvements oriented toward guest experience. This study also emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach in building the competitive advantage of the hospitality industry through spirituality, service quality, and customer loyalty.

Keywords: Spiritual Leadership, Service Quality, Guest Experience, Hospitality Industry

Introduction

The global tourism industry has experienced very rapid growth over the past two decades, making a significant contribution to the economies of countries that rely on the service sector as a primary source of foreign exchange. As one of the world's leading destinations, Indonesia—particularly Bali—has become the locomotive of national tourism, contributing more than 40% of foreign tourist visits to the country (Narendratama & Wijoyo, 2025). Bali's uniqueness lies in its rich culture, local wisdom, and strong spiritual image, making it a sustainable tourism destination with global competitiveness.

However, hotel business competition in Bali, especially in the Sanur area, has become increasingly intense due to the growing number of new accommodations and the diversification of tourist preferences. Sanur, as a tourism destination, has advantages in the cultural, family, and health tourism markets but also faces serious challenges regarding service quality and differentiation of guest experiences. Today's tourists not only demand complete physical facilities but also place great emphasis on emotional, spiritual, and authentic aspects of the services they receive (Mbuthia *et al.*, 2013). This phenomenon highlights that hotel service quality has become a key determinant of satisfaction, loyalty, and business sustainability in the hospitality sector.

Unfortunately, several studies have shown gaps between guest expectations and the services provided by hotels in Bali. Most hotel management practices remain focused on operational efficiency, while values and spiritually based leadership have not

been optimally integrated into human resource management (Hussain & Khanna, 2015). In fact, in the context of Bali, which is rich in local wisdom values such as Tri Hita Karana, the application of spiritual leadership has the potential to be a unique strategy capable of strengthening service quality and delivering more meaningful guest experiences (Hakim & Ibrahim, 2017).

The concept of spiritual leadership introduced by Fry (2003) provides a conceptual framework emphasizing three main components: meaningful vision, altruistic love, and faith. These three aspects are believed to build emotional bonds between leaders, employees, and organizations. In the hospitality industry, spiritual leadership can be a driver of employees' intrinsic motivation to deliver services wholeheartedly, so that service quality not only meets operational standards but also creates emotional value for guests (Barbosa-McCoy, 2016).

Several studies support the relevance of spiritual leadership in improving service quality. Park, Boo, and Yu (2008) demonstrated that leaders with a spiritual orientation can create a positive work climate that directly impacts customer satisfaction. Similarly, Gupta and Sharma (2025) emphasized that employee training based on spiritual values contributes to improving service quality and guest loyalty. These findings reinforce the belief that spiritual leadership is relevant to addressing the needs of the hospitality industry in Bali, particularly in Sanur, which has a strong spiritual and cultural identity.

Nevertheless, literature specifically linking spiritual leadership with service quality and guest experience in the context of Bali's hospitality industry remains limited. Most studies have focused on sectors such as education, healthcare, or non-profit organizations (Hakim & Ibrahim, 2017; Al Dhaheri, 2024). Meanwhile, research in the hospitality sector rarely explores the role of spiritual values in strengthening business competitiveness, particularly in international tourist destinations such as Sanur. This gap highlights both the academic and practical urgency of this study.

In the Sanur context, hotels face unique business dynamics. The area is known as a tranquil tourist destination with target markets of families and senior travelers, different from Kuta or Seminyak, which are more focused on nightlife. This creates great opportunities for hotels to highlight service differentiation based on spiritual experiences, in line with Bali's image as the world's spiritual island (Dhaheri, 2024). However, without leadership capable of internalizing spiritual values into organizational culture, these opportunities risk being underutilized.

Therefore, this study focuses on three main questions:

1. How does spiritual leadership influence hotel service quality in Sanur?
2. How does service quality affect hotel guest experiences in Sanur?
3. Is there a direct relationship between spiritual leadership and guest experiences through service quality?

These questions not only reflect the orientation of empirical analysis but are also designed to test the integration of theory in the real context of the hospitality industry.

The objectives of this study are to analyze the influence of spiritual leadership on hotel service quality in Sanur, to assess the impact of service quality on guest experiences, and to identify the indirect relationship between spiritual leadership

and guest experiences through service quality. Using a quantitative approach based on Partial Least Squares (PLS), this study provides a comprehensive picture of the interrelationships among the variables examined (Romawati *et al.*, 2022).

The contributions of this research are twofold, both academic and practical. Academically, the study enriches the literature on spiritual leadership in the context of the tourism industry, which has so far been rarely studied. Practically, the study provides a conceptual model that can be implemented by hotel managers in Sanur to improve service quality based on spiritual values, thereby creating more authentic, emotional, and memorable guest experiences (Gupta & Kumar, 2025).

In addition, this study offers novelty by integrating the theory of spiritual leadership with the service quality model (SERVQUAL) in the context of Bali's hospitality industry. This integration emphasizes that service quality is not merely the result of procedural standards but also a reflection of the spiritual values instilled by leaders in employees. Thus, this research has the potential to open new directions in value-based hospitality management studies.

In the post-pandemic era, guest expectations of hotel services have become more complex. Tourists increasingly value empathetic, caring, and authentic services over mere luxury facilities (Sofi *et al.*, 2024). Spiritual leadership, which emphasizes altruistic love and meaningful vision, can serve as a key to building the competitive advantage of Sanur hotels in attracting global travelers who are now more conscious of human and sustainability values.

Finally, this study highlights the importance of reorienting Bali's hotel strategies toward a more holistic approach that combines managerial professionalism with local spirituality. Based on empirical data, this research is expected to make a real contribution to the development of theory and practice of spiritual leadership in Indonesia's tourism sector, while also strengthening Bali's position as a unique, competitive, and sustainable global tourism destination.

Literature Review

The concept of spiritual leadership has become an important topic in modern management studies, especially in service-based organizations such as hospitality. The model developed by Fry (2003) emphasizes the values of vision, hope/faith, and altruistic love as the foundation for creating intrinsic motivation and work meaningfulness. Recent studies affirm that spiritual leadership can increase work engagement, satisfaction, and prosocial behavior among employees, which in turn supports the creation of high-quality services (Fry & Kriger, 2022; Al Halbusi *et al.*, 2021).

In the hospitality industry, service quality remains the main determinant of customer satisfaction and loyalty. The SERVQUAL dimensions (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988), which include reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles, remain relevant in measuring guest experiences. Recent research emphasizes that consistent service quality is the key to hotel competitive advantage in global tourist destinations, including Bali (Kadiyono *et al.*, 2022; Kim *et al.*, 2020).

In addition to service quality, the concept of guest experience is increasingly recognized as a differentiation strategy in the tourism industry. Pine and Gilmore (2019) highlight the experience economy era, in which emotional, social, and personal experiences are considered the main factors of customer satisfaction. Empirical studies show that positive

guest experiences significantly contribute to loyalty and word-of-mouth in the hotel business (Tran *et al.*, 2023; Ali *et al.*, 2021).

In Bali, the hotel business phenomenon is influenced by local cultural attractions, the Tri Hita Karana philosophy, and sustainable tourism trends. Mutiarasari *et al.* (2021) found that integrating local values into hotel services enhances perceptions of authenticity and provides unique experiences for tourists. Thus, spiritually oriented leadership becomes increasingly relevant as it aligns with values of harmony, balance, and service based on local wisdom.

Although several studies have examined the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance (Chen & Yang, 2020) [3], as well as the role of service quality in customer satisfaction (Osman-Gani *et al.*, 2022), there remains a significant research gap. Few studies simultaneously test the relationships between spiritual leadership, service quality, and guest experience within a single empirical model in the context of Bali hotels. This gap is important, given that Bali's hotel sector faces intense post-COVID-19 competition that demands strategic differentiation based on values.

From a theoretical perspective, spiritual leadership is often positioned within the frameworks of intrinsic motivation and work meaningfulness. This perspective argues that when employees find their work meaningful, they are more likely to deliver excellent service (Fry, 2003; Reave, 2020). At the organizational level, this translates into improved service quality and better customer experiences. Therefore, integrating spiritual leadership theory with the SERVQUAL model and guest experience theory provides a strong conceptual framework.

Methodologically, research trends in tourism and hospitality have shown the dominance of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to analyze relationships among latent variables (Hair *et al.*, 2021). SEM is deemed suitable for this study because it can test both direct and mediating relationships between spiritual leadership, service quality, and guest experience. This aligns with the quantitative approach adopted in the research.

International studies also support the importance of this integrative approach. For instance, Jauhari and Singh (2021) in India found that spiritually based leadership improved hotel employees' job satisfaction and had an impact on customer perceptions of service quality. Another study in China's tourism sector revealed that spirituality in leadership strengthened the relationship between organizational culture and guest experience (Zhang *et al.*, 2020).

Global trends also show that tourists increasingly seek authentic and meaningful experiences rather than just physical facilities (Prayag *et al.*, 2022). In Bali's context, this means hotels must be able to combine quality service with experiences rooted in local values, such as Balinese hospitality. Spiritual leadership is therefore relevant in bridging employees' need to deliver meaningful service with tourists' expectations of unique experiences.

Thus, the literature indicates a need for research that examines the interconnections of spiritual leadership, service quality, and guest experience in an empirical framework. This study is expected to extend the hospitality management literature by offering an integrative model that connects value-based leadership, service standards, and guest experience dynamics, particularly within the context of Bali hotels rich in culture and spirituality.

Research Methodology

This study employs a quantitative approach with an explanatory survey strategy, aiming to test causal relationships between the variables of spiritual leadership, service quality, guest experience, and guest loyalty in hotels located in the Sanur area of Bali. A quantitative approach was chosen because it provides an objective understanding of the influence of independent variables on dependent variables using numerical data, which are then analyzed statistically to produce valid generalizations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through questionnaires distributed to respondents, including hotel employees and hotel guests in the Sanur area. Secondary data were gathered from hotel management reports, official Bali tourism industry documents, and relevant scientific publications that support the study's conceptual framework (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). The combination of these data sources was used to enhance the validity of the research through source triangulation.

The primary data collection technique employed structured questionnaires using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The research instrument consisted of four main parts:

1. Items measuring spiritual leadership, adapted from Fry *et al.* (2017);
2. Service quality items based on the SERVQUAL model (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988) adjusted to the hotel context;
3. Guest experience items referring to dimensions of customer experience in the tourism sector (Rather, 2021); and
4. Guest loyalty items developed from indicators such as revisit intention and positive recommendations (Ali *et al.*, 2016).

The content validity of the instrument was tested through consultation with hospitality management experts and academics in tourism management.

The inclusion criteria for respondents were guests who had stayed at least one night in a Sanur hotel within the past six months, and hotel employees with a minimum of six months of work experience to ensure they had relevant service experience. Exclusion criteria were respondents unwilling to complete the questionnaire or guests visiting for incidental purposes, such as attending a short meeting without staying overnight. Sampling was conducted using purposive sampling, with a target of at least 200 respondents, in accordance with Hair *et al.* (2019), which recommends this sample size for studies using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM).

The unit of analysis in this study is the individual, namely hotel guests and hotel employees in the Sanur area. Focusing on individuals allows the researcher to directly analyze how perceptions of spiritual leadership applied by hotel management influence employee service behavior and guest perceptions of service quality.

Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS version 4 software. PLS-SEM was selected because it is capable of analyzing models with latent variables, accommodating relatively small to medium sample sizes, and

handling data that are not perfectly normally distributed (Hair *et al.*, 2019). The analysis was carried out in two stages:

1. Evaluation of the outer model, including tests of convergent validity, discriminant validity, and construct reliability; and
2. Evaluation of the inner model, including testing the significance of path coefficients, R^2 values, effect sizes (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2).

Construct validity testing was conducted through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and reliability was measured using Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's Alpha. Hypothesis testing employed a bootstrapping technique with 5,000 resamples to assess the significance levels of path coefficients. This follows common practice in quantitative SEM-based research that emphasizes measurement accuracy and predictive strength of the model (Sarstedt *et al.*, 2020).

With this methodological design, the study is expected to produce valid and reliable empirical findings, while also providing both academic and practical contributions to understanding the role of spiritual leadership in enhancing service quality and guest experience in hotels in Sanur, Bali.

Research Findings

This study involved 220 respondents, consisting of 120 hotel guests and 100 hotel employees from star-rated hotels in the Sanur area, Bali. The demographic characteristics show that 55% of guest respondents were domestic tourists and 45% were international tourists, with the dominant age distribution between 26–40 years (47%). Meanwhile, the majority of employee respondents were operational staff in front office (40%) and food & beverage service (35%), with 62% having more than two years of work experience. These data indicate that respondents had sufficient experience to provide relevant assessments of service quality and lodging experiences.

Descriptive analysis results show that the spiritual leadership variable had an average score of 4.21 out of 5, with the vision dimension scoring the highest (4.35), followed by hope/faith (4.18) and altruistic love (4.12). The service quality variable had an average of 4.08, with reliability scoring the highest (4.20), while responsiveness was relatively lower (3.95). The guest experience variable recorded an average of 4.15, with the emotional experience dimension higher than the functional experience. Guest loyalty scored an average of 4.05, with the intention to revisit indicator (4.22) more prominent than word-of-mouth (3.96).

The outer model analysis shows that all indicators met the criteria for convergent validity with loading factors > 0.70 and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) > 0.50 . Construct reliability was also confirmed, with Composite Reliability (CR) values ranging from 0.86–0.92 and Cronbach's Alpha > 0.70 . Discriminant validity testing using the Fornell-Larcker criterion showed that the square root of AVE for each construct was higher than the correlation between constructs, thus meeting the discriminant requirements (Hair *et al.*, 2019).

The inner model analysis showed R^2 values of 0.48 for service quality, 0.55 for guest experience, and 0.46 for guest loyalty. These values indicate that the research model has moderate explanatory power. Predictive relevance (Q^2) testing also yielded values > 0.35 for all constructs, indicating strong predictive ability (Sarstedt *et al.*, 2020).

Hypothesis testing using the bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples produced the following findings:

1. Spiritual leadership has a significant positive effect on service quality ($\beta = 0.52$, $t = 8.45$, $p < 0.001$).
2. Spiritual leadership has a significant positive effect on guest experience ($\beta = 0.28$, $t = 4.12$, $p < 0.001$).
3. Service quality has a significant positive effect on guest experience ($\beta = 0.46$, $t = 7.25$, $p < 0.001$).
4. Guest experience has a significant positive effect on guest loyalty ($\beta = 0.54$, $t = 9.10$, $p < 0.001$).
5. Service quality was proven to mediate the relationship between spiritual leadership and guest experience, with an indirect effect of $\beta = 0.24$ ($t = 5.01$, $p < 0.001$).

Effect size (f^2) analysis showed that the effect of spiritual leadership on service quality had an f^2 value of 0.27 (medium effect), while the effect of service quality on guest experience had an f^2 of 0.32 (large effect). The effect of guest experience on guest loyalty had an f^2 of 0.35 (large effect). These results confirm that service quality and guest experience are dominant key variables in explaining the research model.

The multi-group analysis (MGA) comparing domestic and international tourist respondents showed no significant differences in the effect of spiritual leadership on service quality ($p > 0.05$). However, there were significant differences in the effect of service quality on guest experience, with international tourists showing a higher coefficient ($\beta = 0.52$) compared to domestic tourists ($\beta = 0.41$). This indicates differences in perception of experience based on guest backgrounds.

Discussion

The research findings confirm the importance of spiritual leadership as a determinant of service quality and guest experience in Bali's hospitality industry, particularly in the Sanur area. This is consistent with Fry's (2003) theory, which emphasizes that leadership built on values of vision, altruistic love, and hope/faith can foster intrinsic motivation in employees to deliver wholehearted service. The high coefficient of influence from spiritual leadership on service quality ($\beta = 0.52$) underscores the strategic role of leaders in shaping organizational culture and service standards.

These results are in line with Park, Boo, and Yu (2008), who found that leaders with spiritual values can create positive work climates that ultimately enhance customer satisfaction. In the Sanur context, the role of spiritual leadership is also in harmony with local values such as Tri Hita Karana, which emphasize balance between humans, the environment, and spirituality. This strengthens the idea that leadership rooted in spiritual values is not merely a management practice but also a cultural adaptation relevant to the Balinese context.

The significant effect of service quality on guest experience ($\beta = 0.46$) confirms the findings of Parasuraman *et al.* (1988) and Pine & Gilmore (2019), who emphasize that consistent service quality is the foundation of meaningful guest experiences. However, this study also shows that spiritual leadership directly influences guest experience ($\beta = 0.28$), indicating that guests perceive authenticity and emotional value when services are delivered by employees motivated through spiritual values. This finding expands the theory of guest experience by emphasizing the role of spirituality as an antecedent, something rarely discussed in previous literature. Guest experience was proven to be the strongest determinant

of guest loyalty ($\beta = 0.54$), supporting the experience economy perspective (Pine & Gilmore, 2019). In the context of Bali, where tourists increasingly seek authenticity and emotional experiences, hotels that are able to offer spiritual value-added experiences will have a competitive advantage in strengthening guest loyalty. This is in line with Sofi *et al.* (2024), who found that post-pandemic tourists tend to prioritize caring and authentic services over luxury facilities. The mediation analysis also reinforces the strategic role of service quality as a bridge between spiritual leadership and guest experience. The indirect effect value ($\beta = 0.24$) indicates that service quality not only serves as an operational standard but also as an instrument for transmitting spiritual values instilled by leaders to guests. This finding has important managerial implications, as it suggests that hotel managers must ensure that spiritual values are integrated into standard operating procedures (SOPs), employee training, and service delivery practices.

The results of the multi-group analysis (MGA) highlight that international tourists tend to be more sensitive to service quality compared to domestic tourists. This finding is important for Bali's hospitality industry, which relies heavily on international markets. It indicates that hotels in Sanur must prioritize service consistency and professionalism while maintaining local authenticity to meet the expectations of international guests.

Theoretically, this study contributes by integrating spiritual leadership theory with the SERVQUAL model and guest experience theory. This integration shows that service quality and guest experiences are not solely the result of technical or procedural management, but also deeply influenced by value-based leadership. Thus, this study opens new directions for research in hospitality management by highlighting the role of spirituality as a key dimension in leadership models.

Practically, these findings provide a framework for hotel managers in Bali to design training and leadership development programs oriented toward spirituality. For instance, incorporating local wisdom values into employee induction programs, creating organizational visions aligned with the philosophy of Tri Hita Karana, and fostering a culture of altruistic service can be strategic steps in enhancing service quality and guest experiences.

In conclusion, this discussion emphasizes that in the face of increasingly intense global competition, hotels in Bali, especially in Sanur, cannot rely solely on physical facilities or promotional strategies (Saputra & Dharmawan, 2025) [17]. Spiritual leadership, integrated with service quality, offers a holistic and sustainable approach to building competitive advantage and strengthening Bali's position as a spiritual tourism destination on the global stage.

Conclusion

This study concludes that spiritual leadership plays a significant role in shaping service quality, guest experience, and guest loyalty in star-rated hotels in the Sanur area, Bali. The results show that spiritual leadership has a direct and significant influence on service quality and guest experience. In addition, service quality was found to be a key mediator that strengthens the relationship between spiritual leadership and guest experience, while guest experience emerged as the most dominant factor influencing guest loyalty.

Theoretically, this study enriches the literature on spiritual leadership in the tourism and hospitality sector, which has thus far been relatively limited. By integrating spiritual

leadership theory with the SERVQUAL model and guest experience framework, this study introduces a new conceptual model that emphasizes the role of spirituality as a foundation for enhancing service quality and guest loyalty. Practically, these findings provide guidance for hotel managers in Bali to integrate spiritual values into leadership and service management. Efforts such as instilling vision and altruistic love into employee training, strengthening SOPs with empathy and authenticity, and creating guest experiences rooted in local spirituality can become strategic differentiators in the increasingly competitive hospitality industry.

This research also has implications for policymakers and stakeholders in Bali's tourism sector, highlighting the importance of adopting a holistic approach that integrates cultural, spiritual, and managerial values in building the island's global competitiveness. Future research is recommended to expand the scope of the study to other tourism areas in Bali or Indonesia, as well as to employ longitudinal approaches to capture the long-term impact of spiritual leadership on hotel performance.

In conclusion, spiritual leadership is not only relevant to internal organizational dynamics but also to shaping memorable guest experiences and building sustainable loyalty. By leveraging spirituality as a leadership foundation, Bali's hotels—particularly in Sanur—can position themselves as providers of authentic, emotional, and competitive tourism experiences in the global hospitality market.

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