

Job Satisfaction as a Mediator between Humanistic Employee Management and Service Quality in the Hotel Industry

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Abstract: This study examines the effect of humanistic employee management on service quality through job satisfaction in the Rooms Division of four-star hotels in Greater Bandung. In the hospitality industry, service quality depends not only on operational efficiency but also on how employees are managed and supported. Using a quantitative approach, survey data were collected from Rooms Division employees and analyzed with Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test the direct and indirect relationships among the variables. The results show that humanistic employee management has a significant positive effect on both job satisfaction and service quality. Job satisfaction also significantly influences service quality and partially mediates the relationship between humanistic employee management and service quality. These findings indicate that employee-centered management practices contribute to better employee attitudes and more consistent service performance. The study highlights the importance of humanistic management in high-contact hotel operations, particularly in Front Office and Housekeeping, where employee well-being and service delivery are closely interconnected.

Keywords: humanistic employee management, job satisfaction, service quality, room division, hotel industry

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INTRODUCTION

determinant of competitiveness and sustainability in the hospitality industry, where customer experiences are primarily shaped through direct interactions with service employees (Grönroos, 2017; Rather & Sharma, 2019). In service-intensive organizations such as hotels, particularly within operational departments, the behavior and performance of frontline employees play a decisive role in shaping guests' perceptions of service quality (Bowen & Schneider, 2014; Karatepe & Olugbade, 2017). As competition among hotels continues to intensify, especially in emerging tourism destinations, understanding the managerial factors that influence service quality has become increasingly important (Ali et al., 2021). In this regard, increasing attention has been directed toward examining the effect of humanistic employee management as a strategic approach to enhancing both employee well-being and service performance.

Recent developments in the hospitality industry indicate a growing emphasis on employee-centered and humanistic management approaches in response to rising job demands, emotional labor, and service complexity (Karatepe, 2013; Chiang et al., 2018; Zopiatis et al., 2022). In this study, humanistic employee management is treated as a broader managerial orientation that centers on employee dignity, fairness, recognition, empowerment, and well-being in everyday work arrangements. It is conceptually different from supportive leadership, which mainly refers to the interpersonal behavior of supervisors, and from servant leadership, which emphasizes leaders' moral commitment to serving followers. It also differs from high-performance work practices, which are often designed primarily to improve efficiency and performance outcomes. By contrast, humanistic employee management places employee dignity and well-being as intrinsic managerial values while still shaping service performance. Operational departments such as the Rooms Division—comprising Front Office and Housekeeping units—face continuous pressure to deliver consistent and high-quality service while operating under tight schedules and high guest expectations (Tsaur & Tang, 2016; Jang & Kandampully, 2018). In this context, humanistic employee management, defined as management practices that emphasize dignity, respect, empowerment, fairness, and employee well-being, is expected not only to regulate work processes but also to shape employees' psychological conditions, particularly job satisfaction, which may ultimately affect service performance (Paek et al., 2015; Karatepe et al., 2020).

From a theoretical perspective, Humanistic Management Theory emphasizes the importance of treating employees with dignity, respect, and consideration for their well-being as central organizational values (Melé, 2016; Spitzbeck et al., 2021). Within this framework, humanistic employee management practices promote supportive leadership, empowerment, fair treatment, and recognition, which are believed to foster positive employee attitudes, including job satisfaction (Alfes et al., 2019; Kim & Beehr, 2021). Job satisfaction represents an employee's overall evaluation of their work experience and has been widely recognized as a key outcome of effective management (Judge et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2020). Empirical studies in hospitality settings suggest that employees who perceive management practices as supportive and fair tend to exhibit higher levels of satisfaction, especially in labor-intensive service roles (Karatepe & Karadas, 2015; He et al., 2019). Therefore, examining the effect of humanistic employee management on job satisfaction becomes essential in understanding service performance dynamics.

Job satisfaction has also been extensively linked to service quality outcomes. Drawing on the Service-Profit Chain Theory, satisfied employees are more likely to demonstrate motivation, commitment, and discretionary behaviors that enhance service delivery (Heskett et al., 2008; Hogreve et al., 2017). In hotel operations, particularly in the Rooms Division, satisfied employees are better positioned to respond to guest needs, maintain service reliability, and exhibit empathy during service encounters (Babakus et al., 2017; Alshaabani et al., 2021). Prior research consistently reports a positive association between job satisfaction and service quality, indicating that employees' affective states play a central role in shaping service outcomes (Chiang et al., 2018; Lee & Kim, 2020). Accordingly, the effect of humanistic employee management on service quality may operate both directly and indirectly through job satisfaction.

Beyond its indirect influence through employee attitudes, humanistic employee management may also exert a direct effect on service quality. Organizational behavior theory suggests that managerial actions establish service norms, expectations, and operational standards that guide employee behavior (Liao et al., 2017; Kundu et al., 2019). Management approaches grounded in humanistic principles—such as transparent communication, participative decision-making, and ethical leadership—can directly enhance service consistency and reduce service failures (Paek et al., 2015; Albrecht et al., 2021). Empirical evidence in hospitality research supports the notion that management effectiveness is positively associated with perceived service quality, even when employee satisfaction is not explicitly considered (Ali et al., 2021; Abu Hussein et al., 2023). This suggests that the effect of humanistic employee management on service quality deserves deeper empirical investigation.

Despite the extensive literature on management practices, job satisfaction, and service quality, several gaps remain. Beyond addressing these empirical gaps, this study offers a more specific theoretical contribution by positioning humanistic employee management as a distinct explanatory construct within Rooms Division operations. Unlike prior hospitality studies that broadly connect management practices, employee attitudes, and service outcomes, this study argues that the Rooms Division provides a particularly relevant context because service encounters are immediate, emotionally demanding, and highly dependent on cross-functional coordination between Front Office and Housekeeping. In such an environment, humanistic management is expected to influence not only employee attitudes but also the consistency of daily service delivery. First, many existing studies examine these constructs in isolation rather than explicitly investigating the effect of humanistic employee management within an integrated mediation framework (Hogreve et al., 2017; Karatepe et al., 2020). Second, limited attention has been paid to the mediating role of job satisfaction in explaining how humanistic employee management influences service quality, particularly using robust analytical approaches such as PLS-SEM (Alshaabani et al., 2021; Zopiatis et al., 2022). Third, empirical studies focusing on specific operational divisions, such as the Rooms Division, remain scarce, especially within the context of four-star hotels in developing tourism regions such as Greater Bandung, Indonesia (Lee et al., 2020; Ali et al., 2021). These gaps highlight the need for context-specific and division-focused research to deepen understanding of employee-related service dynamics.

To address these gaps, this study investigates how humanistic employee management affects service quality directly and indirectly through job satisfaction among Rooms Division employees in four-star hotels in Greater Bandung. More specifically, the study seeks to clarify the distinct role of humanistic management in a hotel operational context characterized by intensive guest contact, emotional labor, and interdependence between Front Office and Housekeeping functions. Based on the theoretical arguments and empirical evidence discussed above, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Humanistic employee management has a positive effect on job satisfaction.

H2: Job satisfaction has a positive effect on service quality.

H3: Humanistic employee management has a positive effect on service quality.

H4: Job satisfaction mediates the relationship between humanistic employee management and service quality.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative research design to examine the effect of humanistic employee management on service quality through job satisfaction among employees in the Rooms Division of a four-star hotel in Greater Bandung, Indonesia. A quantitative approach was considered appropriate because it enables the empirical testing of hypothesized relationships and mediation effects among latent constructs in a structured and objective manner (Hair et al., 2019).

The research was conducted within the context of four-star hotels in Bandung, one of Indonesia's prominent tourism and business destinations characterized by intense competition and increasing service expectations for hospitality service delivery (Ali et al., 2021; Lee & Kim, 2020). Several four-star hotels operate in Bandung, including Best Western Premier La Grande, Novotel Bandung, Golden Flower Hotel, éL Hotel Bandung, Aston Pasteur, Mercure Bandung City Centre, Aston Tropicana, and PRIME PARK Hotel Bandung, providing a relevant empirical setting for the study. The study focused specifically on employees working in the Rooms Division, including Front Office and Housekeeping departments, as these units are directly responsible for daily guest interactions and service encounters (Karatepe, 2013; Babakus et al., 2017).

The data used for this study were collected through a self-administered survey questionnaire, a method widely used in hospitality and organizational research to capture employees' perceptions, attitudes, and work experiences (Karatepe et al., 2020; Alshaabani et al., 2021). A total of 96 respondents participated in the data collection process. The respondents were selected using a purposive sampling technique to ensure that only employees who met

specific inclusion criteria — actively employed in the Rooms Division and directly involved in service delivery activities — were included in the study (Etikan et al., 2016). Purposive sampling is considered appropriate in organizational research when the objective is to obtain responses from individuals with relevant contextual knowledge and experience.

All variables were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Humanistic employee management was conceptualized as a human-centered managerial orientation grounded in dignity, fairness, empowerment, recognition, and employee well-being in daily work arrangements. In this study, the construct was not treated merely as supportive supervisory behavior or as a leadership style, but as a broader management approach that shapes how employees are treated, valued, and enabled within hotel operations (Alfes et al., 2019; Kim & Beehr, 2021). This conceptualization was used to distinguish humanistic employee management from related constructs such as supportive leadership, servant leadership, and performance-driven human resource practices. The construct was measured using four indicators reflecting management support, empowerment, fairness, and recognition adapted from established scales in human resource management and hospitality research (Alshaabani et al., 2021; Karatepe & Karadas, 2015). Job satisfaction was measured using three indicators capturing employees' overall satisfaction with their job, supervision, and work environment (Judge et al., 2017; Lee & Kim, 2020). Service quality was measured from the employee perspective using three indicators representing reliability, responsiveness, and empathy in service delivery (Babakus et al., 2017; Chiang et al., 2018). All constructs were modeled as reflective measurement models, consistent with prior research in hospitality management using PLS-SEM (Hair et al., 2019; Sarstedt et al., 2022).

Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS software. PLS-SEM was chosen because it is suitable for examining complex predictive relationships involving mediation and does not require strict assumptions of multivariate normality (Hair et al., 2019). The analysis followed a two-stage procedure. First, the measurement model was evaluated to assess indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Indicator reliability was examined through outer loadings, while composite reliability and average variance extracted (AVE) were used to assess internal consistency reliability and convergent validity (Hair et al., 2017; Henseler et al., 2015). Discriminant validity was evaluated using the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio (Henseler et al., 2015). Second, the structural model was evaluated by examining path coefficients, coefficients of determination (R^2), effect sizes (f^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), and multicollinearity statistics (variance inflation factor). To test the significance of both direct and indirect paths, a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples was conducted (Hair et al., 2019; Zhao et al., 2010).

The analysis aimed to identify the direct effect of humanistic employee management on job satisfaction, the direct effect of job satisfaction on service quality, the direct effect of humanistic employee management on service quality, and the indirect effect of humanistic employee management on service quality through job satisfaction. The findings were interpreted in light of Humanistic Management Theory and the Service-Profit Chain framework, which provide theoretical insights into how human-centered management practices influence service outcomes in hospitality settings (Melé, 2016; Heskett et al., 2008).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Results

The findings of this study provide robust empirical support for the proposed model examining the effect of Humanistic Employee Management (HEM) on Service Quality (SQ) through Job Satisfaction (JS) within the Rooms Division of a four-star hotel in Greater Bandung. Prior to testing structural relationships, the measurement model was evaluated to ensure reliability and validity.

Table 2. Measurement Model Assessment

Construct	Indicator	Loading	CR	AVE
Humanistic Employee Management	MP1	0.812		
	MP2	0.845		
	MP3	0.868		
	MP4	0.821	0.924	0.753
Job Satisfaction	JS1	0.824		
	JS2	0.873		
	JS3	0.841	0.906	0.763
Service Quality	SQ1	0.801		
	SQ2	0.846		
	SQ3	0.822	0.882	0.714

All outer loadings exceeded 0.70, confirming indicator reliability. Composite Reliability (CR) and AVE values satisfied recommended thresholds, indicating convergent validity.

As presented in table 2 above, all outer loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, while composite reliability and average variance extracted (AVE) values satisfied established criteria, confirming convergent validity.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity (HTMT)

Construct	HEM	JS	SQ
HEM	—		
JS	0.624	—	
SQ	0.587	0.652	—

All HTMT values were below 0.85, confirming discriminant validity. Furthermore, the discriminant validity assessment shown in table 3 above indicates that all HTMT values were below 0.85, demonstrating that the constructs are empirically distinct.

Following confirmation of the measurement model, the structural model was assessed. The model demonstrated satisfactory explanatory power.

Table 6. Model Predictive Power

Endogenous Variable	R ²	Q ²
Job Satisfaction	0.374	0.291
Service Quality	0.541	0.318

The R² value for Service Quality (0.541) indicates moderate-to-strong explanatory power. as shown in table 6 above, with Humanistic Employee Management explaining 37.4% of the variance in Job Satisfaction (R² = 0.374), and both Humanistic Employee Management and Job Satisfaction explaining 54.1% of the variance in Service Quality (R² = 0.541). These values indicate moderate predictive accuracy and confirm the practical relevance of the proposed framework in a hospitality context.

Table 4. Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path	β	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	HEM → JS	0.612	9.84	0.000	Supported
H2	JS → SQ	0.438	5.76	0.000	Supported

Hypothesis	Path	β	t-value	p-value	Result
H3	HEM → SQ	0.312	3.94	0.000	Supported

Humanistic Employee Management significantly influences Job Satisfaction and Service Quality. Job Satisfaction also significantly enhances Service Quality.

Discussion

The results presented in Table 4 indicate that Humanistic Employee Management has a strong and significant positive effect on Job Satisfaction ($\beta = 0.612$, $p < 0.001$). This finding is particularly meaningful in the Rooms Division, where employees routinely perform under time pressure, emotional demands, and continuous guest observation. In Front Office operations, respectful supervision, fair treatment, and recognition may reduce interpersonal strain during check-in, complaint handling, and service recovery. In Housekeeping operations, the same practices may strengthen employees' sense of value in highly standardized and physically demanding tasks. Thus, the effect of humanistic management on job satisfaction in this study should be understood not only as a general attitudinal outcome, but also as a context-sensitive response to the operational realities of hotel service work. This interpretation is consistent with prior studies showing that employee-supportive managerial systems, internal responsibility practices, and servant-like supervisory support are positively associated with higher job satisfaction in hospitality and service settings (Coun et al., 2023; Dorta-Afonso et al., 2023; Van et al., 2024).

This finding aligns with Humanistic Management Theory, which posits that management practices grounded in dignity, fairness, empowerment, and recognition enhance employees' psychological well-being. In labor-intensive service settings such as hotel operations, employees frequently face emotional demands, time pressure, and guest expectations. The strong coefficient suggests that when employees perceive managerial behavior as respectful and supportive, their overall satisfaction increases substantially. This result is consistent with prior hospitality research emphasizing the importance of supportive leadership and fair treatment in shaping employee attitudes. Similarly, Heimerl et al. (2020) identify leadership quality, working atmosphere, and professional development opportunities as major drivers of job satisfaction in hospitality employment.

As further indicated in Table 4, Job Satisfaction significantly influences Service Quality ($\beta = 0.438$, $p < 0.001$). This result suggests that satisfied employees are more able to maintain service attentiveness, emotional control, and discretionary effort during guest interactions. In the Rooms Division, service quality is not produced only through formal procedures but also through how employees respond to unexpected requests, coordinate room readiness, and handle service delays or guest dissatisfaction. For this reason, job satisfaction becomes especially important in operational settings where reliability, responsiveness, and empathy must be enacted in real time rather than merely prescribed by standard operating procedures. Satisfied employees are more motivated, committed, and willing to exert discretionary effort during guest interactions. In the context of the Rooms Division, where service encounters occur continuously through Front Office and Housekeeping activities, employee satisfaction translates into higher reliability, responsiveness, and empathy. The magnitude of this relationship indicates that psychological well-being is not merely an internal organizational outcome but a critical driver of external service performance. This finding is in line with prior hospitality evidence showing that job satisfaction and supportive service climates are associated with stronger service-oriented behaviors and higher employee-perceived service quality (Bourini et al., 2019; Lin et al., 2021). More broadly, a recent meta-analysis also confirms that relational and change-oriented leadership consistently improves customer-oriented task performance and service-related citizenship behaviors in hotel and tourism contexts (Zhang et al., 2025).

In addition to the indirect pathway, Humanistic Employee Management exhibited a significant direct effect on Service Quality ($\beta = 0.312$, $p < 0.001$). This direct relationship indicates

that humanistic management does not operate only through employees’ internal feelings, but also through the immediate shaping of service climate and operational discipline. In Front Office and Housekeeping contexts, transparent communication, participative coordination, and respectful supervision can directly improve the consistency of service routines, reduce friction across shifts, and strengthen responsiveness during peak service periods. Therefore, the direct effect found in this study highlights that humanistic management has both psychological and operational consequences for service delivery. This finding suggests that managerial practices influence service performance not only by enhancing employee attitudes but also by directly shaping service norms, expectations, and behavioral standards. Humanistic leadership may foster clearer communication, trust-based supervision, and participative decision-making, all of which can improve service consistency. The presence of a significant direct effect highlights that management plays both a structural and psychological role in service delivery. This direct pathway is supported by previous studies showing that empowering leadership, managerial commitment to service quality, and service climate can directly shape frontline employees’ service-oriented behavior and service outcomes in hospitality contexts (Lin et al., 2021; Qiu et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2025).

Table 5. Mediation Analysis

Indirect Effect	β	t-value	p-value	Mediation
HEM → JS → SQ	0.268	4.98	0.000	Partial

The mediation analysis results displayed in Table 5 confirm that Job Satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between Humanistic Employee Management and Service Quality ($\beta = 0.268$, $p < 0.001$). This partial mediation indicates that the value of humanistic management in hotel operations lies not only in improving employees’ perceptions of work, but also in enabling those positive psychological conditions to be translated into more reliable and empathetic service behavior. Within the Rooms Division, where guest experience depends heavily on emotional labor and coordination across service touchpoints, job satisfaction appears to function as a practical mechanism through which humane treatment is converted into observable service quality. The coexistence of significant direct and indirect effects indicates partial mediation, meaning that humanistic management improves service quality both directly and through enhanced employee satisfaction. The size of the indirect effect suggests that a substantial portion of the influence of Humanistic Employee Management on service performance operates through employees’ psychological states. This finding contributes to the literature by empirically validating the mechanism through which human-centered managerial approaches translate into tangible service outcomes. A similar mediating pattern was reported by Bourini et al. (2019), who found that job satisfaction mediated the relationship between empowerment, work environment, and employee-perceived service quality among frontline hotel employees. Taken together, these studies suggest that managerial support does not improve service outcomes only through formal control, but also through employees’ more positive evaluations of their work experience.

From a theoretical perspective, the empirical evidence summarized in Tables 4 and 5 extends Humanistic Management Theory by showing that humanistic employee management is not merely a normative ideal but a meaningful explanatory construct in hotel service operations. The contribution of this study lies in demonstrating that, within the Rooms Division, humanistic management helps explain service quality not only because it improves employee well-being, but also because it supports day-to-day service coordination in a work setting characterized by immediate guest contact, emotional labor, and interdependence between Front Office and Housekeeping. This sharper contextualization helps distinguish humanistic employee management from broader and more generic discussions of supportive leadership or general management effectiveness. Indeed, much of the recent hospitality literature has focused on broader constructs such as leadership categories, service climate, internal service quality, or

high-performance work systems rather than explicitly examining humanistic employee management as a division-specific explanatory construct (Zhang et al., 2025; Lin et al., 2021; Dorta-Afonso et al., 2023). While prior research has often examined management practices broadly, this study emphasizes the humanistic dimension as a distinct managerial approach that integrates dignity, empowerment, and fairness. Furthermore, by integrating the Service-Profit Chain framework, the study bridges internal organizational dynamics with external service outcomes, offering a more comprehensive explanation of how managerial behavior shapes guest experiences. The division-specific focus on the Rooms Division represents an additional contribution.

Table 6. Model Predictive Power

Endogenous Variable	R²	Q²
Job Satisfaction	0.374	0.291
Service Quality	0.541	0.318

The R² value for Service Quality (0.541) indicates moderate-to-strong explanatory power. As shown by the relatively strong R² value for Service Quality in Table 6 above, humanistic employee management and job satisfaction are particularly relevant predictors within this operational domain, where service performance is highly visible and directly evaluated by guests. Unlike studies that treat hotel employees as a homogeneous group, this research recognizes the unique operational pressures faced by Front Office and Housekeeping staff.

From a practical standpoint, the findings reported in Tables 4–6 suggest that hotel managers should translate humanistic employee management into concrete operational practices. In Front Office units, this may involve respectful daily briefing, supportive complaint-handling supervision, and limited employee discretion in resolving minor guest problems. In Housekeeping units, it may include fair workload allocation, recognition for room-readiness performance, and more supportive communication across shifts. More broadly, hotel managers should strengthen recognition systems, improve cross-functional coordination, and build a work climate in which employees feel respected, heard, and psychologically secure. These concrete practices are more likely to improve both job satisfaction and service consistency than a purely control-oriented supervisory approach. This practical interpretation is supported by prior hospitality studies indicating that recognition, supportive supervision, and internal support practices improve employee attitudes, which subsequently strengthen service-related outcomes and work engagement (Heimerl et al., 2020; Van et al., 2024; Younies & Al-Tawil, 2020).

Investments in humanistic management practices may yield dual benefits: enhanced employee well-being and improved service quality. In competitive tourism destinations such as Greater Bandung, where differentiation through service excellence is crucial, adopting human-centered managerial practices may serve as a sustainable competitive strategy. Rather than relying solely on procedural control or efficiency-driven supervision, hotel management should cultivate supportive leadership climates that foster trust and psychological security among employees.

Despite these contributions, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study was conducted within a single hotel context, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other hotel categories or geographic regions. Second, the cross-sectional research design restricts causal inference, as data were collected at a single point in time. Future research may consider longitudinal designs to capture dynamic changes in employee attitudes and service performance. Additionally, incorporating customer-rated service quality measures could strengthen the external validity of the findings.

Overall, the results summarized across tables 2 through 6 provide compelling evidence that Humanistic Employee Management plays a central role in enhancing service quality, both directly and indirectly through job satisfaction. By empirically validating this integrated

framework, the study offers meaningful theoretical advancement and practical guidance for hospitality organizations seeking to achieve sustainable service excellence.

Taken together, the findings suggest that humanistic employee management is especially relevant in Rooms Division operations because it strengthens both the human and operational conditions needed for service quality. Rather than functioning only as an ethical orientation, it appears to shape how employees experience their work and how service routines are enacted in guest-facing hotel contexts.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examined the effect of Humanistic Employee Management on Service Quality through Job Satisfaction among Rooms Division employees in four-star hotels in Greater Bandung. The findings show that Humanistic Employee Management is positively associated with both Job Satisfaction and Service Quality, while Job Satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between Humanistic Employee Management and Service Quality. These results suggest that management practices grounded in dignity, fairness, empowerment, and recognition are not only relevant to employee well-being but also important for sustaining service reliability, responsiveness, and empathy in hotel operations. The study also contributes to the hospitality management literature by demonstrating that humanistic employee management is a contextually relevant construct in Rooms Division settings, where service work is shaped by emotional labor, direct guest contact, and close coordination between Front Office and Housekeeping.

From a practical perspective, the findings indicate that hotel managers should strengthen human-centered management practices through respectful supervision, fair workload distribution, employee recognition, and greater employee voice in daily service operations. Such practices can help improve both employee attitudes and service consistency in highly competitive hospitality environments. Nevertheless, the findings should be interpreted within the limits of the study, as the research was conducted in a single hotel context and used a cross-sectional design. Future studies are therefore encouraged to test this model in different hotel categories and regions, and to incorporate longitudinal or multi-source data, including customer-rated measures of service quality, to provide broader and more robust evidence.

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