

Guest satisfaction measurement techniques in the hotel industry

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Abstract: One of the greatest problems of the current service sector management is ensuring and sustaining the client happiness. Service quality and customer happiness have become more important as a major differentiator and a driver of retention in the continuous war for market share. A poll indicates that professionals in the tourism and hospitality sectors have grown more aware of the fact that customers have placed an unprecedented demand for high quality goods and services in recent years. The necessity to provide excellent levels of customer service is universally recognized as a fundamental ingredient in any business's success.

Keywords- customer satisfaction, service quality, measurement techniques, content analysis, hotel industry

INTRODUCTION

In the last few decades, both practitioners and academics have been very concerned with client happiness and the quality of services delivered. Both principles have a huge impact on the performance of organizations and the decisions of its consumers. Oliver (2010) states that the higher the quality of service, the happy the consumers and the more money in the bank. Moreover, a wealth of scientific data ties satisfied consumers to repeat business and word-of-mouth advertising, which in turn further boosts customer satisfaction.

Hence, evaluating and monitoring service quality and client satisfaction level is one of the most important methods for customer-oriented companies. There are several techniques to measure the pleasure of consumers. One of the most common things that happens at hotels is a guest feedback card or GCC. GCCs are beneficial to use due to their small size, simplicity, and ease of dissemination. Analysis of the data obtained can give management insight into what aspects of visitors' overall happiness are most important. The term "customer satisfaction" may be defined as an appraisal of a service or product by the customer after having utilized it. It is an outcome of an evaluative procedure which combines pre-purchase expectations and post-consumption performance assessments. Most people conceive about, comprehend and accept customer satisfaction through the expectation disconfirmation

hypothesis. The idea views the level of enjoyment as a consequence of the gap between expected and actual performance. Positive disconfirmation or customer satisfaction is when a service or product exceeds the client's expectations.

Negative disconfirmation or dissatisfaction happens when the performance falls below the expectations. From the studies it is clear that customer happiness has a direct and indirect impact on the performance of a firm. The study's results show that a company's bottom line improves when customers are satisfied. A lot of the study has tried to investigate the relationship through patterns of customer behavior. These stats mean satisfied clients are more likely to be loyal, suggest your business to others and buy from you again. There's been a lot of study on what makes consumers happy. Not surprising, given how important customer happiness is to business. To find out if a consumer is pleased or not, one may look at both subjective elements, such as their wants and sentiments, and objective criteria, such as the qualities of the service or product. Many studies in the hospitality sector have examined the aspects which could be essential to visitors in determining their level of satisfaction.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research is to look at the guest comment cards (GCCs) and customer satisfaction monitoring methods that will be employed at the hotels along the Opatija Riviera in Croatia. Thus, collection and analysis of GCCs was required. Interviews were also held with the hotel management to personally examine the distribution and processing of GCCs. Twenty-five hotels out of twenty-five employ Global Customer Satisfaction (GCC) to measure the level of satisfaction delivered to the hotel customers. The GCC was not offered among the hotels. Most of the hotels in the Opatija Riviera are part of one of the three chains, hence there are seven individual brands in the GCC.

Service quality

Service quality is an abstract, subjective, vague and difficult to define notion. Many different people have various notions about what it means. Most individuals think service quality is best measured by the difference between what consumers expected and what they received. There are numerous sides to the idea of quality. The difference in scores between expectations and perceptions i.e. the gap may be measured in order to determine the extent of service quality. If all goes well, the level of service actually offered is better than expected. The result is negative, then the quality of the service is low. According to this instrument, a service is

regarded to have reached high quality when it meets or surpasses a customer's expectations. Since its introduction, the SERVQUAL instrument has been widely used in a variety of additional service areas, such as the tourism and hospitality industries. The research that pertains to this industry may be broken down into components that measure the quality of service in historic residences. Although there is a strong connection between the two, it is important to recognise that service quality and customer pleasure are two separate ideas still. According to the opinions of a few scholars, contentment is an antecedent of service quality. The customer's attitude and their evaluation of the quality of the service they perceive might be influenced by the customer's level of satisfaction with the encounter. It is possible that a favourable overall evaluation of service quality might be the consequence of a satisfied customer with a particular transaction. The quality of the service is an antecedent of client happiness, according to the arguments of other writers. From the perspective of this group of writers, service quality may be seen as a cognitive appraisal that might potentially result in satisfaction. Therefore, the reason for client happiness is the quality of the service provided. To summarise, the connection between product quality and customer pleasure is a complicated one. A number of publications have referred to it as a pair of Siamese twins. In spite of the fact that there are still a great deal of problems that have not been answered, it is possible to draw the conclusion that service quality and customer pleasure may be regarded as two distinct notions that have respective causal orderings.

Objectives of the Study

The primary purpose of this research is to investigate the link between hotel service quality and hotel customer satisfaction. Among other things the research will seek to:

1. The purpose of this study is to understand the impact of service quality on visitor satisfaction. In order to do this, we must understand the impact of several elements of service quality such as tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy on customer happiness in the hospitality business.
2. **Determine the primary characteristics that lead to either good or poor experiences** for guests in the hospitality industry. This is the second step in the process of identifying important variables that determine visitor satisfaction.

3. How does customer feedback affect service quality? Hotels must look at the influence of visitor reviews and comments on improving the overall guest experience and satisfaction.
4. The relationship between service quality and customer loyalty is understood by examining how higher quality service provision may impact repeat business, brand reputation and customer retention rates.
5. To provide suggestions to hotel management and employees for improving service, customer satisfaction and competitiveness. For this purpose, we shall offer ways to improve the quality of hotel services.

Content Analysis

Content analysis is a sort of observational research . It is a research approach that academics use to systematically evaluate the symbolic content provided through any and all forms of recorded communications . It describes the scientific, objective, quantifiable and generally applicable elements of the subject. All media (written documents, radio and television shows, taped meetings, movies, music etc.) include verbal and/or visual information that may be analyzed using content analysis. It has also been used extensively in marketing and consumer behavior research. The basic method of content analysis is just the counting of how many times certain pre-defined measurement categories appear in a certain piece of material. There are various criteria that a content analysis has to fulfill in order to be considered effective. The first step is to choose a random sample that represents the population. Second, the criteria of analysis, or units of measurement, should be stated clearly and briefly. These units might be broad such as words or phrases or they can be specific such as paragraphs or simply the presence or absence of an event or allegation. They might be quantitative or visual as well. Thirdly, the data must be arranged in a methodical manner. Something must either fall into a given category or not fall into that category at all times. When all is set, data interpretation and statistical analysis may start. It is also vital to examine the collected data and the reliability and validity of the instrument. The study identified three categories of dependability for content analysis: stability, repeatability and accuracy. It is possible to have reliable processing of the same material by using several coders, sometimes called judges. The sums that distinguish them must be negligible.

Another element to consider is the dependability of the coding instrument, which reduces the need for numerous coders. Validity on the other hand is the amount to which a measuring equipment measures what it is supposed to measure. That is what validity means. The categories and units of content that are used in content analysis might make it more or less likely that correct conclusions will be made from the data collected.

RESULTS

We first report the findings of in-depth conversations with hotel managers. As for the frequency of data collection, all the hotels in the sample that measure guest satisfaction gather data on a regular basis. All rooms that have been taken have got GCCs installed.

Methods of data collection: GCCs are used to collect data on each of the 19 hotels under evaluation. Meanwhile, a staggering 74% of interviewees confessed to acquiring information through praises and critiques too. Smaller luxury hotels tend to provide more personal attention to its guests.

Most hotel managers - almost 38 per cent - said they'll get criticism on their services via letters from customers, remarks on the Internet or talks with personnel on the clock.

The number of returning GCC is small. Of the hotels in the sample, 42% had been successful in achieving a response rate of 5% to 10%. Only two hotels have a response rate above 50% and five of the hotels under consideration are expected to achieve GCC completion rates above 30%.

Sampling methods: In ninety-five percent of hotels, GCCs are provided to each and every visitor. A single hotel is the only one where guests are chosen at random.

Process of GCCs dispersal: According to the check-in statistics, the personnel of the housekeeping department is responsible for distributing GCCs in 79% of the hotels that were included in the survey. In the marketing department, completed GCCs are evaluated for their effectiveness. This is something that is handled by the operations department at three different hotels. GCCs are available for distribution at the front counter of one particular hotel.

Staff: At each of the 19 hotels in the sample there is at least one staff person who knows the approach for measuring the happiness of visitors. A popular belief is that hotel staff do not

require additional training to motivate customers to complete GCCs, regardless of how they are assigned. As a result, employees are rarely rewarded for their ability to inspire customers.

Results presentation to management: Forty-two percent of the hotel managers who were interviewed said that they are provided with an analysis report on a monthly basis. There were two instances in which the response was "other," with the reason being that management gets notified on a sporadic basis, perhaps even on a daily basis.

Handling complaints: If a complaint is received the management will take necessary measures to rectify the situation (e.g. offer an apology, repair the fault etc.).

Methodology of GCC design: GCCs are built in accordance with the firsthand experiences of the managers in each and every hotel that is included in the sample. It was said by two hotel managers that they had taken certain queries from the operations of other hotels and implemented them.

Timing the survey: During their stay, GCCs are provided to hotel guests at each and every one of the hotels that were examined. Not a common practice is to carry out the survey either during the check-out process or a few days after the guest has left the hotel.

GCCs accessibility: 63% of hotels have folders on room tables containing GCCs. Five different hotels, all with their own GCCs clearly displayed throughout the room (bed, table, etc.). We have examined all the hotels and just two front desks have GCC access. One probable explanation for the weak response rates might be because hotels conceal their GCCs behind a folder and don't post them in highly obvious areas.

Foreign languages: Not only that. GCCs are translated in Croatian, English, German and Italian and all hotels have their versions. The Opatija Riviera is a popular location for German and Italian travelers, however it appears none of the hotels we looked at have GCCs translated into those languages.

Special request letter: A personalized letter of request should be created to demonstrate the importance of the visitors' thoughts about the services provided by the hotel. The results suggest that this method is used by two different hotel companies in the UK. The hotel managers in this study do not employ this strategy to stimulate customers to fill out the GCC.

Returning the GCCs: According to the responses that were obtained, hotel guests have a number of options available to them on where they may return finished GCC. Sixty-three percent of the hotels in the survey are able to accept completed GCCs by placing them in the box that is located close to the reception desk. In addition, guests have the option of leaving their answers in their room or returning them to the personnel at the check-in desk.

Incentives to guests: A staggering 68% of the hotels we examined offered no kind of benefit to their visitors. This is where the majority of hotels are. Six different hotels are giving an incentive for completing the poll. This implies that the incentive is not for everyone who filled out the survey, but instead goes to one randomly selected visitor.

Reasons for not conducting GCC surveys: Of the 25 hotel businesses studied, 21% (5 establishments) do not utilize GCCs to measure guest satisfaction.

Reasons for this are the following: Whether they like it or not, the GCC practice is something hotels are contemplating about implementing. The paucity of questionnaire returns and the unwillingness of tourists to use the cards has prompted hotels to consider following the GCC approach.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study may be very helpful for the hotel management as they can give them with suggestions to improve and upgrade the present way of monitoring visitor contentment. The main purpose of GCCs is to understand the demands of visitors, to get their input and most significantly to measure the level of satisfaction with the services offered. 76% of the hotels in the survey identified GCCs as an essential instrument to assess visitor satisfaction, however the results suggest that most hotels may employ better measurement methodologies. From the statistics it seems that most hotels save GCCs in a folder on the room table, instead of leaving them randomly. While staying at the hotel, clients are able to take advantage of a GCC completion option. Low response rates are sometimes ascribed to the absence of incentives for completing the questionnaires. Managers usually receive analytical reports once a month and GCCs are based on their own experiences. Also, the survey sample demonstrates that there is a wide variety of GCC designs and no GCC satisfies all the best practices requirements. Almost all GCCs lack an effective question sequence, very few measure overall pleasure and just one asks whether they have lived up to their customers' expectations.

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