CRITICAL FACTORS INFLUENCING QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN HOTEL INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT: Hotel industry has become highly competitive during recent years as the quality of the services is constantly increasing to satisfy the customer, attract them and also to retain them. This paper aims to determine how well the hotels are competent to fulfil the customer's expectation on the dimensions of service quality, the effect of service quality on the performance of the hotel and new factors which contribute for increasing the quality of the service in the hotel industry. Data has been collected from 10 star hotels in Bengaluru from 400 customers to identify the factors influencing the service quality and performance of the hotels. An exploratory factor analysis has been conducted to summarise 28 attributes into relevant 9 components keeping quality management as basis.

KEYWORD: Hotel Industry, SERVQUAL, Customer Satisfaction

JEL CLASSIFICATION : L83, L80, Z31

INTRODUCTION

Quality suffice the expectations of the customer by providing valuable services and products for worthy price by focusing on important aspects and execution of great teamwork. (Allin & Gibson, 2000). Tourism is one of most significant contributors to GDP after oil and transport as it is growing at a rapid rate, therefore comes the need for quality in rendering service to the tourists visiting our country.

Karnataka, a standout amongst the most dynamic and all around created mechanical states in the nation is seeing massive growth in tourism in the past decade. According to the economic survey report released in 2012-2013 flow of tourists to Karnataka was whopping 8.41cr. As indicated by an estimation of the tourism department, the guests count has been incrementing to 62 billion domestic tourists and 7 billion foreign tourists in the year 2015. Tourism is being seen as the stage for showing the wealth of our social legacy and friendliness. "Karnataka tourism policy 2014-2019" by the tourism department has aimed to accelerate and facilitate private investments in this sector. They've also set some rules and guidelines to be followed by the service providers to ensure quality in service.

For satisfying the customer quality of the services play a critical role in pervasive service enterprise (Zeng et al., 2010). Customer's satisfaction is a factor to be focused on for the growth and success of the hotel, and consider customer as the king in the service industry. Customer's life cycle starts from analysing what a customer would look for in a hotel, acquiring the targeted customer, development of those customers and finally retaining them by gaining their loyalty. (Bhavani, 2013). Analysing the needs of the customer requires the help of some technical tools which include SERVQUAL, HOLSERV, LODGING QUALITY INDEX, etc. In the service industry, customers expect quality in service in factors such as empathy, reliability, responsiveness, and assurance but some study has revealed that tangible factors also has an impact on satisfaction. (Kleynhans and Zhou, 2012).

After the downfall in 2008, the hotel industry has been trying hard to recover since 2009 and also been successful in doing so (LE, 2010). Service sector like any other sectors has realised the importance of the customer-oriented philosophies and are bending more towards the quality management approaches to have an edge over their rivalries (Shahin, 2004). The Government has taken several steps to privatise this sector to bring quality in service and also promote healthy competition. As a result, the numbers of service providers have increased over the years and so the competition. Hotel's management has to periodically analyse the changes in trend and adapt to it to meet the needs of the customer and stay ahead of their competitors. In the present competitive market competitive advantage can be gained only by meeting the demands of the customer and providing quality service (Istudor, 2009).

It becomes essentially important for a hotel to evaluate the demands of the customer or what they are seeking out of the services being provided to meet their needs in such a way that their loyalty will be retained. These demands vary from customer to customer and trend in

these demands have evolved over the years, which require a team of analysts in a hotel to keep a regular check on changing trends. Hotels should not only plan strategies to maximise profits but also to ensure repeated customers in order to achieve long-term success (Singh, 2014). Majority of the studies have found out that quality an intangible factor affects customer satisfaction but some studies have shown that tangible factors also have impact on customer satisfaction.

This paper studies the star hotel in Bangalore city and also identifies new factors that influence quality of the service as well as customer satisfaction.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. (Karunaratne & Jayawardena, 2010) To assess the performance of the hotel, customer satisfaction is one of the important factors which make hotel's survival for sure. Organisations certified under ISO 9000:2000 are required to identify parameters to measure customer satisfaction level, based on that, the study was made in five-star hotels of Kandy district Sri Lanka. According to the study made service has been categorised into 2 dimensions. Tangibility, responsiveness, and assurance were the satisfied factor dimension whereas reliability and empathy were the dissatisfied factor dimension of the hotel. Perception regarding satisfaction varied based on the cultural and religious background of customers, therefore suggested hotels to consider these factors while providing service to the customers.

2. (Singh, 2014) Service quality helps in attaining the competitive advantage over other hotels through which one can gain importance in the industry.
    In this way, it turns into a huge thought process of this paper to demonstrate the significance of the service quality. This study uncovered that the customer's desires for service quality were higher than their observation (P-E gap). The author suggested that managers should monitor changes in the expectations of customers and take corrective measures to achieve long-term business success and repeated customer.

3. (Gržinić, 2007) This article talks about SERQUAL model and how it causes managers to decide the gap between clients' desire and discernment Service factor which the managers' thinks is vital does not match with those of the customers. This model not only shows the quality of service provided but advises managers about the needs of

the customer and their expectations and sets quality standards accordingly. This model will help them to sustain in the competitive market.

4. (Shahin & Dabestani,2010) This paper studies correlation analysis of service quality gaps in four-star hotels in Isfahan, Iran and the analysis is used to find the relationship amongst SQD's and to prioritise the dimensions. The result showed that all SQD's were positive, price and communication as dimensions had the highest positive value, including responsiveness, creditability, courtesy and flexibility were amongst the top.

5. (Bhavani,2013) Study on customers' expectation says that customer use to choose the hotel which fulfil his requirements and which is personalised to his taste. The study reveals that the hotels fails to retain their customers primarily due to rendering service of poor quality and not in view of the contenders who are on par. The investigation says that there is a connection between consumer loyalty and services provided and furthermore cost charged by them. The author suggests that the hotels should keep a close look on customers' satisfaction to increase their profits.

6. (Humnekar & Phadtare,2011) SERVQUAL model was utilized to quantify service quality in this study, and it was progressively reclassified and made 22 items scales to gauge the gap between customers' desire and their understanding about service quality the study revealed that it failed to take into account the local background of the sector and it used a 7-point scale which was not reliable enough. Further research can be made to find a suitable scale in the Indian context of the hotel industry. This study conducted a reliability test of the SERVQUAL model.

7. (Ramphal & Nicolaides,2014) Customers for the most part will in general select the most astounding quality service, in this manner they have a propensity for pre-making a decision about a hotel dependent on their past encounters of how they were dealt with. It is the duty of all levels of managers that is operational, strategic and functional managers to fulfil their demands. Quality in service has to be given importance, and the scientific approach to strategic decision making has to be followed.

8. (Li & Jarinto,2012) The argument behind this study is to comprehend the nature of service quality in Yunnan's hotel industry and to investigate the impacts of changes in service quality on customers' satiety, trustworthiness and hotels' image. They have suggested many facilities to be provided to improve their service quality which includes the gym, meeting hall, etc. This study revealed that there is a positive impact of service quality on customer satisfaction, customer loyalty and brand image.

Customer satisfaction has a positive impact on customer loyalty & brand image, and customer loyalty has a positive impact on brand image.

9. (Naik et. al, 2010) This paper evaluates the gap between perception and expectation using the SERVQUAL model and studies the before and after events of service rendering in selected retail outlets in Hyderabad city. It showed that expectations of the customers were high on promptness of service, security issues and accuracy in transaction and expectations were low on ambiance and cleanliness. They were exceptionally happy with readiness and speed of service alongside precision in transactions and were minimum happy with the eagerness of staff to help clients.

10. (Minh et. al, 2015) This study was conducted to reveal the connection between the quality of the service and the satisfaction of the customer in Vietnamese hotels using the SERVQUAL model. Various intangible factors (Empathy, Reliability, Responsiveness, and Assurance) were taken as test variables and data was collected, results showed that the customer satisfaction was positively impacted by the service quality. Tangible items did not assume an indispensable job in consumer loyalty and thus identified with the accomplishment of the hotel to consumer loyalty.

11. (LE, 2010) This article measures service quality and customer satisfaction using three models which are SERVQUAL, HOLSERV, and LODGING QUALITY INDEX. It has considered opinions of both genders from Asia and Europe and shows their respective differences in expectations. It also suggests the opinions of the customers who are physically disabled. Results showed that expectations of women are more compared to men and also men are less satisfied when compared to women. It also showed that expectations of Asian customers are higher than European customers.

12. (Kleynhans & Zhou,2012) This article has been examined in Pretoria which demonstrated an alternate result, says that the normal rating of expectations by customers was higher than their perception in each of the five elements of service quality. This paper's result showed that customer satisfaction was impacted by the tangible elements of the hotel rather than the five intangible elements (SERVQUAL model). Compared to all the other articles this one had the opposite outcome as generally, people choose intangible factors as the reason for satisfaction.

13. (Abu Khalifeh & Som,2012) In this paper, they have considered service quality and its impact on consumer satiety in the food and refreshments department and expressed its significance in dealing with an inn. Parasuraman's approach can be analysed in two ways, at first it says guests gain loyalty from the quality in five service quality

dimensions and second, it says they have a higher level of satisfaction, and by applying this model they can improve the quality in service and bring success to the F&B department and also gain their loyalty.

14. (Oh,1999) In this article, the author proposes a new model focused on moral values concerning customer value, quality of the service and the level of the satisfaction of customer. This model will comprehend customers' choice process; customer's esteem is an imperative factor in consumer satisfaction and service quality This study says that perceived price as a factor will not make any impact on customer value and perceived service quality.

15. (Shahin, 2004). This article has considered service quality and has confirmed the model of service quality gaps. The difference in customer expectation and satisfaction has been analysed with respect to SERVQUAL model. The findings say that SERVQUAL model can also be used to close major gaps in external customers' service as in internal customers who are employees and service providers and design the service accordingly.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Bengaluru being fourth most populated city in India with population of 10.8 million is home to people from all over the country as well as the world. With growing IT sector, people adapt to the foreign culture, changing their taste and preferences in all aspects. In our case, the old SERVQUAL model which was used to measure customer satisfaction is found to be impractical due to the changes in trend and so our study is made in order to identify new factors which are appropriate to the present scenario.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The primary objective of this paper is to identify the prevailing factors impacting service quality of the hotels in the Bangalore City.

A self-managed questionnaire, a modified form of quality management, was utilized to break down the service quality desires and view of the hotel's visitors. Questionnaire has been designed in the form of 5- Likert scale rating, 1 as very low to 5 as very high. Data has been collected from 10 star hotels of Bengaluru. 400 questionnaires were sent for survey. 389 were received, out of which 5 incomplete questionnaires were removed and 384 were finalised as fit for analysis.

The designed questionnaire has been split into 3 sections. The first section inquires the customers for their service expectation from a particular attribute and in second section they were asked about their service perception from the hotel.

In the last section, the customers were asked for the overall opinion for the service quality of a hotel and in the last section 6 demographic questions were asked.

Questionnaire consisting 28 questions were exposed to factor analysis and it has been rotated to 9 iterations with the positive loading more than 0.4. By performing exploratory factor analysis, 28 questions were summarized into 9 relevant components, the expectation of the customer of the hotel has been determined. To determine the number of the components, principal component analysis with varimax rotation has been conducted.

Keeping SERVQUAL instrument as a basis some of the component is similar but modified, and additional components has been ascertained to cover a particular area. Simple random sampling method has been applied for selecting the customers and analysis has been done by exploratory factor analysis method. Cronbach Alpha Reliability was greater than 0.7 which depicts questionnaire is reliable. For the accurate assessment of population coefficient alpha, the minimum sample should be 400 **Charter (1999).**

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS:

From the analysis it was clear that all the variables were more than 0.5 and hence, considered fit and were accepted for variable extraction.

In the below table 1.0, all the 28 questions have extraction value more than 0.5 so each item can explain the variance well and components retained.

Table 1.0 Rotated Component Matrix for Service quality

Table Rotated Component Matrix for Service quality									
Rotated Component Matrix[a]									
	Component								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Cumulative %
Q1	0.813									24.218
Q2	0.806									37.334
Q28	0.804									100
Q17		0.798								91.982
Q22		0.788								96.475
Q24		0.678								97.631

Q25	0.675								98.12
Q20		0.543							94.919
Q21		0.677							95.725
Q23		0.765							97.107
Q26		0.768							99.876
Q3			0.567						49.582
Q4			0.658						56.391
Q5			0.656						61.473
Q6				0.654					66.25
Q7				0.767					70.183
Q18				0.778					93.124
Q9					0.786				76.653
Q10					0.876				79.539
Q12					0.665				84.17
Q11						0.667			82.008
Q13						0.545			86.032
Q14						0.456			87.751
Q8							0.675		73.547
Q19							0.865		94.032
Q27							0.556		99.945
Q15								0.677	89.315
Q16								0.875	90.761
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.									
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.									
a. Rotation converged in 9 iterations.									

Interpretation: From the extraction method 28 question statements were exposed to a factor analysis using SPSS 22.0 Version and it has been rotated to have 9 iterations with positive loadings more than 0.4 which is accepted for a factor analysis. Based on the common domain names have been given.

COMPONENT 1	**Visual Outlook & Décor**
COMPONENT 2	**Hotel Convenience**
COMPONENT 3	**Employee Commitment to Guest**
COMPONENT 4	**Proper Equipment**

COMPONENT 5	**Adequate Service Associated Materials**
COMPONENT 6	**Prompt Hotel Services**
COMPONENT 7	**Staff Attentiveness**
COMPONENT 8	**Employee Skills**
COMPONENT 9	**Information and Documentation**

Naming the variables after EFA: The following names were given for the clubbed factors

The prosperity of any business highly influenced by the services provided as well as its service quality. (Lewis and Booms, 1983; Gronroos, 1984; Parasuraman et al., 1985, 1988) has defined the better quality of services as "results derived by comparing the expectation of the customer for services which should be provided and the actual services which have been provided." Service quality has been measured from the perspective of the customer, therefore customer has due importance in defining quality of the service. Parasuraman et al., 1988 has given SERVQUAL model which consist of 5 dimensions "tangibles, reliability, assurance, responsiveness and empathy" measures the service quality in any business or organization.

Tangibles: This dimension measures the physical appearance of the facilities, equipment, personnel.

Reliability: This dimension measures the accuracy of services being performed as promised.

Responsiveness: This dimension measures the promptness of the services and willingness to help the customer.

Assurance: This dimension measures the ability, courtesy, and knowledge of the employees to instill confidence & trust to the customer.

Empathy: This dimension measures the level of care and attention provided to its customer.

Though the SERVQUAL method is quite useful, the quality of the service needs to be measured with several other specific components to enhance the services in several regions with more precision.

The analysis of the study showed 9 components named as "visual outlook & decor", "adequate service associated material", "staff attentiveness", "hotel convenience", "employees' skills", "prompt hotel services", "proper equipment", "employee commitment to guest", "information and documentation" which as explained below,

- **Visual Outlook and Decor**:

 This component deals with the physical appearance, infrastructure and the interior decoration of the business. It also deals with the location where the business stays, transportation accessibility, easier mobility, parking area & loading and unloading area. The infrastructure of the business includes appealing buildings, the capacity of the service units like the dining room, swimming pools, meeting rooms, etc.

 According to the perspective of the customer, one expects the visual outlook to be appealing, eye-catching & fascinating. The location of a hotel should be prime and transportation facilities should be easily accessible, parking lot should be spacious and space should be available at times when needed. As it has been said that the first impression is the last impression, the visual features of a hotel play act as a crucial factor to attract customers at first sight. According to the Croatian & Slovenian sample, the customer has highest expectation when hotel are clean and tidy & neat staff **(Suzana Marković 1*, 2013).**

- **Hotel Convenience:**

 This component deals with the services demanded by the guest and the flexibility of the service provider in fulfilling those demands. Safety and security of the guest should be priority of the hotel. The hotel should work in convenient operating hours where most of the guest can be served according to their need.

A hotel will operate according to its target customer; therefore it is essential for hotels to fix their operating hours according to the customer targeted and ensure maintenance of the safety in order to cope accident for the worst-case scenario. Also, the customer expects to be served in odd timings and flexible services for unusual demands.

- **Employee Commitment to Guest:**

This component deals with the level of attention paid by the employees towards an individual customer, understanding their specific needs, inculcate the trust & confidence in them and how friendly they behave with the customers.

An employee should be competent to anticipate the specific needs of the customer to gain their confidence. Every customer should be considered as important and should be given due attention for the appropriate time in a friendly manner. The hotel should uphold the policy that the customer is the king of the market. If the trust is inculcated in a customer, the hotel is expected to survive for a longer span of time. The distinguished service quality is successful only when it fulfills the goal of the customers (**Zeithaml** *et al.,* **1990**)

- **Proper Equipment:**

This component deals with the level of appropriateness and comfortability of the equipment utilized while receiving services by the customer. Equipment generally consists of basic equipment as well as attractive equipment; basic equipment includes beds, chairs, rooms, etc. whereas attractive equipment includes furniture, communication devices, air conditioner, elevator, etc. This equipment should have a modern look and should work properly without any breakage.

The customer expects the equipment attached to their services to be well-maintained, function properly and easy to handle. It is inevitable that the room provided to the customer should be neat, clean, and same as that was promised. Since these equipment are directly in use with the services for the customer, it becomes important to ensure the presence of proper equipment.

- **Adequate Service Associated Material:**

This component deals with all the material which are provided with services while serving the customer. These materials can be provided for making the services better and will help to achieve the customer's satisfaction. Materials associated with the hotel industry services can be daily use products like soaps, shampoo, towels, food & beverage, etc. Service quality also depends on providing adequate and sufficient material with consistency.

This component has been given weighed importance as services not only consists accommodation but also in providing complementary material associated with them. This influences the customer satisfaction to a great extent as the customer expects high quality product presented in a perfect manner.

- **Prompt Hotel Services:**

This component deals with the level of accuracy with which services are provided to the customer as they were promised. Also, the services which have been promised should be

provided at the right time without any delay. Those promised services should be provided in the right manner at the very first time to avoid discontent of the customer.

With the end goal to accomplish consumer loyalty, it is vital for a hotel to serve them at the ideal time or pre-timings, if there is a delay customer might switch to another hotel. Basic services like serving water should be provided essentially without even bothering the customer.

- **Staff Attentiveness:**

This component deals with the services provided by the employees of any organization which should be prompt and accurate, high alertness level to deal with the customer request, willingness to serve them, and their availability as and when needed.

Employees should themselves have the urge to assist the customer; the urge will make a good impact on the customer. Also, the customer expects employees to be active whenever a demand has been put and should fulfill it as soon as possible. The lesser the response time, the greater the customer satisfaction.

- **Employees Skills:**

This component deals with the ability, competence, knowledge, and skills of employees working in an organization. It considers how well an employee is groomed and appearing. Their physical appearance & communication skills can have a long-lasting effect on customer's mind. Employee's knowledge generally includes professional knowledge, knowledge of the different foreign language, knowledge to provide information and assistance to the customer.

Employees directly deal with customers, so it is essential for an employee to be well dressed, well behaved, and polite, present themselves professionally, and communicate in the language in which customer is comfortable. It has been found out that employees can play an important role in a service process and are significant for boosting service quality (**Yoo & Park, 2007**)

- **Information and Documentation:**

This component deals with the level of accuracy of the organization in maintaining the records of the customer at the time of reservation, orders, billing, etc. The organization should also provide the necessary information to the customer in such a way that they will be

able to locate and reach the hotel easily and conveniently via phone, internet, directions, signs, etc.

It will be convenient to the customer if the details and information are available easily to them online as well as offline with appropriate transparency. It should ensure the availability of the hotel, on an online portal which helps a lot of customers to get informed about them, reach to them easily and book the rooms in advance. This will give an edge to hotels to deal with the customers. **Amin et al. (2013)** have focused on to ease out the reservation services for the customers.

Since this component is more than just reservation services, it covers a broad area of documentation of records and information broadcast in a particular way, this component holds good.

CONCLUSION

This research aims to delve into the factors associated with the quality of the services provided. There are many researches in the area of service quality in various industries and sectors but with regard to hotels in Karnataka **very few research papers** have been published across various databases.

Since the trend of the customers taste and preference is changing with the changing scenario there is a need of the study to focus on each and every area specifically to gain their confidence. This study has contributed new dimension in the field of the hotel industry to increase the quality of the services provided to the customer. For the study, the customer response has been analysed from the time of customer entering into the hotel till time of checking out. For assessing the service quality, the nine components used are "Visual Outlook and Décor", "Hotel Convenience", "Employee Commitment to Guest", "Proper Equipment", "Adequate Service Associated Material", "Prompt Hotel Services", "Staff Attentiveness", "Employees Skills", "Information and Documentation".

The study suggested that each and every component is equally important and should be focused while serving the customers to enhance their experience. Not only the factors that is visible is important but also the intangible factor associated with service providing is important. The 9 components have been developed keeping SERVQUAL as a base but differs from it as SERVQUAL model needs modification according to the changing scenario. Also, SERVQUAL model stands out for many service industries whereas this study specifically stands out for hotel industry.

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