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Customer Service Satisfaction among Hotels and Restaurants in Tandag City, Surigao Del Sur, Philippines

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Abstract:

Customer satisfaction is the key driver for any organization to sustain in current competitive era. Service providers need to understand their customers and design their services in such a way that maximum possible satisfaction is attained by the customer. This paper assesses the quality of customer service satisfaction among hotels and restaurants in Tandag City, with an end view of formulating a customer service training design to improve the level of customer service satisfaction. Guided by the SERVQUAL study to ascertain the findings, the paper utilizes descriptive survey research design. A total of 200 survey questionnaires are distributed to 35 hotel and restaurant employees and 155 customers. Primary data are collected using the drop-off and pick-up method of self-administered questionnaire through convenience and purposive sampling technique. The types of analyses conducted were descriptive, frequency, weighted mean and Pearson correlation. Results reveal that both the employees and customers are very satisfied with the service quality afforded by the hotels and restaurants in Tandag City. Findings from the correlational analysis reveal that both employees and customers deemed the components of assurance, reliability, tangibility, empathy and responsiveness as important aspects in the delivery of services.

Keywords: Customer satisfaction, service quality, SERVQUAL model

1. Introduction

Customer satisfaction is a business philosophy which tends to the creation of value for customers, anticipation and management of their expectations, and demonstration of the ability and responsibility to satisfy their needs. Hence, service quality and customer satisfaction are critical factors for success of any business (Gronoos, 1990; Parasuraman et al., 1988 as cited by Dominici and Economia, 2010). On the same manner, Valdani (2009) points out that enterprise exists because they have a customer to serve. Therefore, the key to achieve sustainable advantage lies in delivering high quality service that results in satisfied customers (Shemwell et al., 1998). Service quality and customer satisfaction are key factors to achieve competitive advantage and win customer loyalty. Customer satisfaction is the outcome of customer's perception of the value received in a transaction or relationship, where value equals perceived service quality, compared to the value expected from transactions or relationships with competing vendors (Blanchard & Galloway, 1994; Heskett et al., 1990; Zeithaml et al., 1990).

In order to achieve customer satisfaction, it is important to recognize and anticipate the customers' needs and to find means to satisfy them. Enterprises which rapidly understand and satisfy customers' needs, make greater profits than those which fail to do so (Barsky & Nash, 2003). Since the cost of attracting new customers is higher than the cost of retaining the existing ones, successful managers must concentrate on retaining existing customers implementing effective policies of customer satisfaction and loyalty. This is especially true in the hotel industry.

Nowadays, one of the biggest challenges for managers in the hotel and restaurant industry is to provide and sustain customer satisfaction. Customer requirements for quality products and service in the tourism industry have become increasingly evident to professionals (Lam & Zhang, 1999; Yen & Su, 2004). Guest relationships are a strategic asset of the organization (Gruen et al., 2000) and customer satisfaction is the starting point to define business objectives. In this context, positive relationships can create customer's higher commitment and increase their return rate. Long-term and reciprocally advantageous relationships between customers and the hotels and restaurants are becoming progressively important because of the highly positive correlation between guests' overall satisfaction levels and the probability of their return to the same hotels and restaurants (Choi & Chu, 2001). Hotels and restaurants are increasing their investments to improve service quality and the perceived value for guests. All these initiatives are geared towards achieving better customer satisfaction and loyalty, thus resulting in better relationships with each customer (Jones et al., 2007). Relationship quality has a remarkable positive effect on hotel guests' behavior: it creates positive word of mouth (WOM) and increments repeated guest rates (Kim et al., 2001).

Despite the vast amount of research done in the area of service quality and customer satisfaction, quality related issues have received little research attention within the hospitality context especially in Tandag City, Surigao del Sur. In Tandag City, it has been observed that most hotels and restaurants are neither particular, nor sensitive on the issue of customer service. Since there are only a few hotels and restaurants in the locality, competition among these

establishments are not very much observed. Therefore, quality customer service is sacrificed. One notable customer service failure is the serving time of the hotels and restaurants. Most customers in the locality observed that food service would take more than one hour to be served on the table.

For this particular reason, the researcher was motivated to conduct a study on the customer service satisfaction of the various consumers and customers among hotels and restaurants in Tandag City, Surigaodel Sur with the end view of formulating a training design to improve customer service satisfaction. This study gathers information to evaluate the influence of customer oriented business philosophy on customer satisfaction. We analyze the results to highlight eventual gaps among employees' expectation and results and to evaluate the overall customer satisfaction level for the hotels and restaurants and the specific one for each service supplied.

2. Theoretical Background

This paper is anchored on the SERVQUAL Model developed by Parasuraman et al. (1988) which releases a widely distinguished five set of service quality dimension (SERVQUAL). These service quality dimensions are amongst the frequently applied and quoted elements in the writing works of service quality (Othman & Owen, 2001). These dimensions namely tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy have been applied in many service firms to measure quality performance.

Tangibles relate to material characteristics like gadgets, equipment and how staffs carry themselves (Seo, 2012). This component deals with the existence of the physical facilities and the perceived quality of the materials, personnel and equipment used by the service giver (Kandampully, 2007). Reliability is defined as the dependability, consistency and accuracy with which the service is performed by the provider (Kandampully, 2007). It is about the business keeping its word. It is "the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately" or delivering its promises" (Zeithaml et al., 2006). Responsiveness relates to the zeal in the service personnel to serve customers in a well-timed, effective fashion and it incorporates elements like cooperativeness, kindness and tenderness of the service staff (Kandampully, 2007). It is the desire of the service giver to be supportive and quick in rendering the service (Prayuhda & Harsanto, 2014). Assurance is the extent to which the service personnel stimulates faith and credence among the customers of the firm (Kandampully, 2007). It is the "employees' knowledge and courtesy and the service provider's ability to inspire trust and confidence" (Zeithaml et al., 2006 p.119). If the customers don't find the service and staff of the company pleasant, the chances of them returning back will be slim (Delgado-Ballester, 2004). Empathy has to do with the "caring and individualized attention" granted to customers besides the degree of understanding personnel manifests in relation to customer needs (Kandampully, 2007). It has been ascertained to be more desirable and significant in magnifying the quality of service in industries where establishing relationships with customers and clients guarantees survival (Andaleeb & Conway, 2006). The likelihood of clients returning back to a company provided they were given special care and attention is very high (Delgado-Ballester, 2004).

3. Statement of the Problem

This paper assesses the quality of customer service satisfaction among hotels and restaurants in Tandag City, with an end view of formulating a customer service training design to improve the level of customer service satisfaction. Specifically, this paper aims to answer the following problems:

What is the profile of the respondents in terms of:

- Age;
- Sex;
- Civil Status;
- Educational Attainment
- Occupation;
- Frequency in checking-in or dining-in?

What is the extent of customer service satisfaction among hotels and restaurants in Tandag City in terms of:

- Reliability;
- Assurance;
- Tangibility;
- Empathy;
- Responsiveness?

Is there a significant relationship between the personal profile of the respondents and their level of perceptions?

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design

The paper uses descriptive survey research design. Descriptive is a form of a cross-sectional survey which uses survey questionnaire as the primary instrument to gather data. This paper aims to describe and analyze the customer service satisfaction and the variable which are the five essential dimensions customers look for.

2.2. Research Locale

The paper is conducted among the twelve different hotel and restaurant establishments in Tandag City namely; Villa Maria Luisa Hotel, Shacene Pension House and Selades Apartelle, Haguisan Inn, Tindalo Hotel, Donelle's Haven, Muyco's Resort, Gold Bar Restaurant, Cortesanon Grill, Goryo's Restaurant, Jin's Catering, Aplaya Catering.

2.3. Research Instrument

The paper utilizes an adopted questionnaire composed of five (5) parts. Part I contains general background which included age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, occupation, and frequency in checking-in or dining-in. Part II includes adopted the SERVQUAL instrument to assess consumer perceptions and expectations regarding the quality of a service. The original service dimensions used by consumers to judge the quality of a service include: (1) assurance which refers to their knowledge and courtesy of all employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence in hotel guests; (2) empathy which includes consideration, individualized attention the hotel provides to its guests; (3) reliability which is the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately; (4) responsiveness which refers to a sincere willingness to assist guests and provide timely service; and (5) tangibles which is the ambience and general appearance of the physical facilities, rooms, restaurants, equipment, personnel, and communication materials (Na, 2010).

2.4. Research Respondents

There are two groups of respondents of this paper. The first group comprises of the customers who stay and dine in at the hotel and restaurant establishments in Tandag City at least once while the duration of the study is conducted. From this group, convenience purposive sampling is applied to get the one hundred sixty five (165) customers who were the actual number of respondents. A drop-off and pick-up method is further applied.

The second group is composed of the hotel and restaurant employees in Tandag City. They are the hotel and restaurant managers and staff. From this group, purposive sampling is applied to get the thirty five (35) actual respondents. The study has a total of 200 combined respondents. Table 1 shows the distribution of the respondents.

Hotel / Restaurant	Customers	Employees	Total
Villa Maria Luisa	60	7	67
Shacene Pension House	25	5	30
Selades Apartelle	15	3	18
Haguisan Inn	8	2	10
Tindalo Hotel	8	2	10
Donelle's Haven	8	2	10
Muyco's Resort	6	2	8
Gold Bar Restaurant	8	4	12
Cortesanon Grill	8	2	10
Goryo's Restaurant	8	2	10
Jin's Catering	6	2	8
Aplaya Catering	5	2	7
Total	165	35	200

Table 1: Distribution of the Respondents

2.5. Data Analysis

After retrieving the survey questionnaires, the respondents of the respondents are treated using frequency counting and simple percentage for calculating and analyzing the personal profile of the respondents. Moreover, weighted mean is used for the customer service satisfaction in terms of the five identified dimensions. Kendall Coefficient of Concordance Correlation is further employed in comparing means between the significant relationship of the personal profile and the level of perceptions score of the respondents.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Profile of the Respondents

Profile of both the customer-respondents and employee-respondents are described in terms of age, sex, civil status, occupation and frequency of checking-in and dining-in.

Age	Employees (Frequency)	Customers (Frequency)	Total	Percentage (%)
Below 25 years old	8	18	26	13
26 – 35	8	34	42	21
36 – 45	15	72	87	43
46 – 55	4	30	34	17
Over 55 years old	0	11	11	6
Total	35	165	200	100
Sex	Employees	Customers	Total	Percentage
Male	14	64	78	39
Female	21	101	122	61
Total	35	165	200	100
Civil Status	Employees	Customers	Total	Percentage
Single	18	37	55	27.5
Married	16	128	144	72
Widow	1	0	1	.5
Total	35	165	200	100
Educational Attainment	Employees	Customers	Total	Percentage
Elementary level	0	2	2	1
Elementary graduate	0	6	6	3
High School level	0	15	15	7.5
High School graduate	4	26	30	15
College level	10	46	56	28
College graduate	20	48	68	34
Graduate level & Graduate degree holder	1	22	23	11.5
Total	35	165	200	100
Occupation	Employees	Customers	Total	Percentage
Gov't Official	0	32	32	16
Owner of Private Business	5	41	46	23
Employee	30	39	69	34.5
Student	0	19	19	9.5
Others	0	34	34	17
Total	35	165	200	100
Frequency in Checking in and Dining in	Employees	Customers	Total	Percentage
Always	0	4	4	2
Oftentimes	5	20	25	12.5
Sometimes	5	47	52	26
Seldom	10	30	40	20
Once	15	64	79	39.5
Total	35	165	200	100.00

Table 2: Profile of Respondents

The table shows majority or 43.5% of the respondents fall in the age bracket of 36 to 45 years old while the least number of respondents (5.5%) fall under the ages of over 55 years old age bracket. The respondents are dominated by females comprising 61% of the respondents. Twenty one (21) of them are employees while 101 are customers. From this result, it can be inferred that most female customers patronize restaurant and hotels because these places as well while enjoying the company of friends, family or simply with peers at work. The males only comprise 39% of the total respondents or 78 of the total 200 respondents. Of these 78 male-respondents, 14 are employees while 64 are customers. It can be deduced from this result that male-respondents are not observant as to where they mingle; this also entails that they are not mindful of details and ambiance unlike their female counterparts.

Most of the respondents are married encompassing to 72% or 144 of the total 200 respondents. Of these 144 married-respondents, 16 are employees and 128 are customers. This group is followed by respondents who are still single gaining 27.5% or 55 out of the 200 respondents. From the findings, it can be deduced that this is closely related with the age bracket of the respondents. Since most of them are middle-aged, it is assumed that they are now in an age bracket where they are already wedded.

In terms of educational attainment, majority or 34% of the respondents (20 employees and 48 customers) are college graduates. It can be inferred from the results that most of the customers have gone to formal schooling and even gained post graduate studies. It can be construed further that these customers have wider perspective and have come across various experiences giving them ample viewpoint on what to look for when choosing places to go and patronize.

As to occupation, most of the respondents are employees comprising 34.50% or 69 of the 200 total respondents. Of the 69 working respondents, 30 are employees while 39 are customers. This result explains that restaurant and hotel industries cater to those who are already employed because they can better afford the services and food products of these hotels and restaurants.

Relative to the frequency of checking-in or dining-in to the identified hotels and restaurants included, results show that majority 39.5% of the respondents (15 employees and 64 customers) has dined in or checked in only once in the hotel and restaurant establishments in Tandag City. This entails that hotel and restaurant industry in the locality of Tandag City has become popular and thriving because of the high customer value they afford their patrons. The quality service reinforces loyalty and dedication on the part of the customers as evidenced by their habitual visits revealed in the findings of this study.

3.2. Extent of Customer Service Satisfaction

Five dimension of customer service are assessed in this study based on the SERVQUAL Model postulated by Parasuraman et al. (1988). These dimensions are reliability, assurance, tangibility, empathy and responsiveness.

Indicator	Employees		Customers		Combined Responses	
	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
Reliability	4.09	VS	3.71	VS	3.90	VS
Assurance	4.08	VS	3.77	VS	3.93	VS
Tangibility	3.60	VS	3.64	VS	3.62	VS
Empathy	3.87	VS	3.74	VS	3.80	VS
Responsiveness	3.96	VS	3.72	VS	3.84	VS
Overall Weighted Mean	4.9	VS	4.64	VS	4.77	VS

Table 3: Employees and Customers' Service Satisfaction

Legend: 4.51 – 5.00 Outstanding (O)

2.51 – 3.50 Satisfactory (S)

1.00 – 1.50 Poor (P)

3.51 – 4.50 Very Satisfactory (VS)

1.51 – 2.50 Fair (F)

The table shows that both the employees and the customers are very satisfied with the service quality of the hotels and restaurants in terms of the identified dimensions as reflected on the overall weighted mean of 4.77. This implies that the hotels and restaurants understudy give important consideration to these five dimensions and observe the proper implementation of these dimensions. Being able to practice service quality is very crucial to achieve customer satisfaction and to ensure customer loyalty. These in return, generate profit that will make the business successful (Gegziabher, 2015). Service quality has been regarded as a major factor for the achievement of organizations due to the close relation it has with customer satisfaction particularly in the service industry (Gilbert & Veloutsou, 2006). In addition to it being a preceding factor to acquire positive buying behaviors, it is also viewed as a vital component to the hotel industry's achievement and success (Min, Min & Chung, 2002). Service quality has been believed to have direct impact on customer satisfaction, recurrence of buying behavior and security of a company's profit in the long-run (Wilkins, Meerilees & Herington, 2007).

In terms of the perception on the reliability, both employees and customers rated this component with an adjectival rating of very satisfactory having a combined weighted mean of 3.90 respectively. This shows that the hotels and restaurants understudy attend to the needs of the customers immediately. According to Aldehayyat (2010), service operations and organizations' performance are necessary in gaining the approval of its customers. Responding to the needs of the customers with immediacy gives the customers the notion that they are highly valued in such establishment. In this manner, they also manifest their desire and willingness to go back to such establishments for future functions. This findings postulate that employees, the hotels and restaurant management provides speedy services and customer's needs are immediately acted upon. In a hyper-competitive business, success comes from customers patronizing the services offered by the industry. In totality, the finding in the reliability aspect runs parallel to the assertion of Crick and Spencer (2010) who said that fine-tuning the services by responding to the needs of the customers immediately can gain reliability from among its customers.

In the perception on the Assurance aspect, both employees and customers also rated it with a very satisfactory adjectival description having an overall combined weighted mean of 3.93. This implies that customers feel safe in transacting with Hotel management and employees. This connotes that because of the safety afforded by the food and hotel establishments in the locality, customers are assured that they will not be put at risk when they avail the services of these restaurants and hotels. Quality of services, food safety, attitudes, customer focused and accommodation are not the only tangent that customers consider but also the hazard that they might encounter in a certain location or service availed; hence, when they feel that their safety becomes the concern of the service provider they also give their loyalty to such establishment as asserted by Yilmaz (2008). The assurance aspect is also manifested in the study by (Torress & Kline, 2013) which postulated that customers have become sensitive as to who will give them the appropriate level of health protection: thus in considering their loyalty with establishments, health protection and safety becomes a salient factor that

they take into consideration. As to the customers, safety is a requirement that they have to consider in choosing the establishment that they will patronize.

On the other hand, the perception on tangibility provides the combined overall weighted mean of the employee and customer respondents is 3.62 with described as very satisfactory. These shows that the hotel management and employees are well dressed, neat and well groomed and reflect the core values of the hotel and the physical facilities of the hotel match with the services provided. On this area, it can be delineated that customer satisfaction has something to do with the overall assessment of the performance of the various attributes that constitutes a product or a service. The physical environment of the restaurants and hotels as well as the physical grooming of its staff becomes part of the bundle of services and experiences of the clientele which will largely contribute to the latter's satisfaction (Murphy, 2000). In addition, neat and well-groomed service providers also entice appreciation from the clientele because this is part of the excellence that they habitually seek and evaluate when they decide which establishment they should patronize. As opined by L. Dube, J. Bel, and D. Sears (2010) that when describing comforting products, guests most often commented about their rooms, ambience in particular the room's design, a comfortable bed and, physical facilities, convenience and special amenities. Additional product-oriented attributes are good food, an engaging atmosphere, noise control and safety. It was further stressed that many guests commented that it was comforting when the staff approached their stay with a responsive, attentive, and enthusiastic attitude. As such guests mentioned efforts made to personalize their services as a contributing factor to their comfort.

On the respondents' perception on the empathy, both employees and customers rated it with a very satisfactory adjectival description having a combined overall weighted mean of 3.80. This shows that the hotel management and employees give individual attention to the customers. As an integral part of the hospitality experience, it is vital that hotel management and employees give high regard to their customers by giving them significance and distinct attention. Services therefore, are personalized making the customers feel that a special attention is directed to them (Choi, 2004). When customers are indulged and attended with such attention, they have the tendency to value the services offered by the hotel or restaurants. In this manner, they also regard these establishments as a kind of place where they can spend their time with family, friends and co-workers. This means that establishments in the locality especially food and hotels puts premium and understanding the needs of their customers, making sure that they engage with the clients with humility and openness. According to Yuksel and Yuksel (2002), service providers go the extra mile so that their clientele will appreciate not just the food and other services that they offer, but more importantly the great hospitality that they offer alongside the service that these customers can experience from them.

In terms of the respondents' perception on the aspect of responsiveness, both respondents rated it with a very satisfactory rating having a combined overall weighted mean of 3.84. This shows that the hotel management and employees are willing to help customers. This is parallel to the study made by Sit et al., (2007), who averred that customers will select establishments who meet their value standards and who are sensitive to the needs of their customers. The intangible component offered by the industry adds to the satisfaction level of the customers. Fundamentally, the heart of satisfaction is seen when customers' of others needs are met. This may include the need on the physical environment such as a ramp for those who are physically disabled customers or offering non-meat food for those whose culture prohibit them from eating this type of food. Wicks and Roethlein (2009) claimed that profit is made through the process of satisfying the demands of the consumers such as those stated above. In addition, Xu (2009) professed that product developers and service providers should be aware of what is normally included in a product or service – both tangible and intangible.

3.3. Correlational Analysis between Respondents' Personal Profile and Their Level of Customer Service Satisfaction

Source of Variance	Computed(w)	P-value	Decision	Conclusion
Personal profile Vs Level of Perception	0.321	0.168	Reject H ₀	Negligible or Not significant

Table 4: Kendall Correlation Result

The study of perception that correlates with personal profile to the level of perception is a valuable pursuit. In this study the level of perceptions has a 0.321 computed value of (w) The P-value of (w) is also 0.168 as Table 4 discloses. It has accepted the hypothesis. The conclusion is negligible or not significant. This entails that both employees and customers deemed the components of assurance, reliability, tangibility, empathy and responsiveness as important aspects in the delivery of services. These components assure client satisfaction; thus, profit is increased. Continuous patronage is thereby attributed not just to a single aspect but rather it is a multi-determinant factor (Brady, 2002).

4. Conclusion

The intent of any hotel and restaurant is to create a customer. By constantly delivering high levels of service quality, customer retention will take place which will in turn result in a loyal customer in the long haul. Overlooking the power of customer satisfaction especially their needs and requirements could wreck the power of customer retention and loyalty. Therefore, hotel managements' biggest challenge lies not just behind attracting customers but also on recognizing customer satisfaction individually. Customers have different expectations and they are different in the way they perceive things. No two customers perceive the same service in the same way and nor do they have the same needs. Thus, there is

no one best way of improving service quality in the hotel industry. It all depends on the country where the hotel is located and the culture of the people. Because culture influences the way people perceive things, it is best to study the culture of the people prior to commencing a hotel business and render the service exactly in the way they find it fit and satisfying.

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