

A STUDY OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION TOWARDS HOTEL INDUSTRY IN KASHMIR VALLEY

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ABSTRACT

Customer satisfaction is the key driver for any organisation 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. The purpose of the present study is to measure customer satisfaction in the hotels of the Kashmir valley. The study will also provide various suggestions to the customers so as to make their services more efficient and effective. For conducting the survey a well structured Questionnaire is used to collect primary data from the respondents. The sample size for the study is 150. Sample variance and confidence methods are used for Determining sample size. Simple random sampling technique has been adopted by the researcher to collect the data. On the basis of results 40 % of the respondents are highly satisfied with safety and security of the hotel while 20 % are highly dissatisfied with the location of the hotel. With the every attribute the level of satisfaction changes, thus making it clear that customers rate their satisfaction differently with every single attribute. Finally it has been proved that the customer satisfaction in the hotels are high.

Keywords: Customer satisfaction, hotel industry, services

INTRODUCTION

Customer satisfaction is a growing concern within the hotel industry and a number of studies have been carried out in the same context by different researchers. Customer satisfaction has become an significant performance indicator for the hospitality industry/business, as it indicates the strength of relationship between the customer and the service provider. With the change in the lifestyles of the Customers, a significant shift has been observed in the demands and expectations of the customers. From a number of years the hospitality industry has shown a significant growth in its growth and diversification. As hospitality industry is a service industry a direct interaction between the customer and service provider is very prominent. The rationale of marketing is to know and understand the customer so well that the product or service fits him and sells itself. For successful operation of the firm a customer takes the centre stage in the management policy. It is on this background that the effective approach to customer retention is to ensure high level of customer satisfaction which is expected to yield customer loyalty (Kotler and Armstrong, 2009). In hotel industry the personalised services for the customers focus on Atleast three key elements: increased personalization, further

applications of technology and increased awareness of changing demographics. Customers in the hospitality industry will no longer stand for being treated as one demographic category and they will not tolerate a 'one-size-fits all' mentality. Thus the service organisations need to customise their services as per the needs and requirement of the customers in order to have a competitive advantage in the market.

The customers being aware of the market trends will look for individually designed products, services and communication and only successful hotels will manage to communicate with each customer as an individual with special needs and expectations. Hospitality industry consists of all those business operators that provide for their customers any combination of the three (3) core services of food, drink and accommodation, Foskett and Cesserani (2007). As many modern economies are dominated by services, building and maintaining close relationships with customers can evolve into rich and fulfilling partnerships. Customer satisfaction revolves around giving the customers what they expect, it is essentially about exceeding the customers' expectations so that they become and remain loyal towards the company brand. Business Essay (2013) defines customer satisfaction as a term used in measuring how products and services supplied by a company meet or surpass customer's expectations. Customer satisfaction is seen as a key differentiator and increasingly has become a key element of business strategy.

As per the Previous studies it is put forth that customers in hotels will utilize and assess service encounters in different departments, including reception, food and beverage and housekeeping, as the basis of evaluating the service and the results of those evaluations will have a major impact on the overall satisfaction with the hotel experience. In a competitive environment as the hospitality industry, where the quality of service is vital and with the increased access to information technology, customers have become more discerning and knowledgeable; the demand for customer satisfaction measurement and its influence on loyalty and retention is obvious. The difference between customer satisfaction and the attitude construct is that while guests hold preconsumption attitudes or expectations, consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction occurs only after the product/service has been consumed. The guests that completed the questionnaires were present at that moment in the hotel or visited the hotel at least once over the past three months. The present study is aimed at studying customer satisfaction with respect to Hotels in Kashmir valley. The study has also tried to come up with various suggestions for the service providers / managers in order to enhance their products and services.

REVEIW OF LITERATURE

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction may be defined the extent to which a firm fulfils a customer's needs and desires in relation to his expectations, prior to receiving the products or service (McCarthy and Perrault,2002). Thus customer expectation is the difference between the expectations of the customers before receiving the services and perceptions of the customers after receiving the services. Customer satisfaction mainly depends on the build-up of the perceived value to which the customers have concerning a product or service (Kotler and Armstrong, 2004; 2009). So customers' satisfaction can reflect a person's feeling of pleasure

or disappointment resulting from comparing a product's perceived performance or outcome in relation to the expectations. As per Liu and Yen (2010) Customer satisfaction is regarded as customers can get more benefits than their cost. Customer satisfaction is attaining the maximum out of the value invested for a product or a service.

Fournier and Glenmick (1991) concluded that the concept of satisfaction holds well only when the expectation is positive. Expectations from the customer's point of view are the reference points on which a customer forms a judgement about a service or a product. Customer satisfaction starts with the first contact an organization has with a customer and continues throughout the entire lifetime of the relationship i.e. the guest cycle(Reicheld, 1996). Customer satisfaction plays the most important role in total quality management. In comparison with other traditional performance measures, customer satisfaction is probably less sensitive to seasonal fluctuations, changes in costs, or changes in accounting practices (Kotler, 2006). So, for a hotel to carry on in business, it must ensure the satisfaction of needs and wants of the customers continuously, which will eventually lead to a strong customer base.

The hotel industry is a customer bound service and for hotel industries to market themselves as brands it is very important to be customer centric and make sure that their customers get the best of the values. The hospitality manager to ensure that their customers remain continuously satisfied, they must ensure that customers feel welcomed, courteously and efficiently served in a clean, safe and secured environment with the best quality of products sold at a reasonable price(Jones and Newton, 1997). Customer satisfaction is a business philosophy which tends to the creation of value for customers, anticipating and managing their expectations, and demonstrating ability and responsibility to satisfy their needs. Qualities of service and customer satisfaction are critical factors for success of any business (Gronoos, 1990; Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988). Chamayne (2013) enumerated the strategies that can be used to improve customer satisfaction as listening ears, (i.e. proper customer compliant handling procedure or technique) pricing (adequate and reasonable pricing policy), provision of adequate security and proper satisfaction management, quality service delivery, prompt service delivery courteous staff, employee training and retraining, etc. Hotels are increasing their investments to improve service quality and the perceived value for guests so as to achieve better customer satisfaction and loyalty, thus resulting in better relationships with each customer (Jones *et al.*, 2007).

As Valdani (2009) points out an enterprisesubstist only because they have customers to serve, thus making it clear that an organisation exists only because of its customers. The key to attain sustainable benefit lies in delivering high quality service that eventually leads to satisfied customers (Shemwellet al, 1998). As per the various carried out the major determinants of customer satisfaction vary from one individual to another. But many individuals/customers have been discovered to prefer nearly the same thing. Among the top three (3) determinants of customers satisfactions are: cleanliness, appearance and price.Knutson (1988) publicized that room cleanliness and comfort, prompt service, friendliness of employee's convenience of location, safety and security, and are important.Choi and Chu (2001) concluded that staff quality, room qualities and value are the

top three factors free breakfast, airport shuttle, car hire service, atmosphere, security and friendly staff. Atkinson (1988) found out that cleanliness, security, value for money and courtesy of staff.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the conducting the study primary data was collected through an administered questionnaire to collect the responses of the customers on the basis of various service attributes provided to them. The study uses simple random technique for the survey. For the study 200 questionnaires were distributed among the customers availing the hotel services and 150 responses were found useable for the study.

OBJECTIVES

1. To study the level of customer satisfaction towards hotel industry in Kashmir.
2. To suggests the service providers with various strategies so as to enhance customer services.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Demographic profile of the Respondents

Demographic Variables		Respondents (%)
Gender	Male	60
	Female	40
Age	Below 20	15
	20 - 25	35
	Above 25	50
Marital status	Married	70
	Unmarried	30
Family income	Below 20000	25
	20000- 25000	30
	Above 25000	45
Length of stay	Below 5 days	15
	5- 10 days	40
	Above 10 days	45

As per results revealed in table 1, 60 % of the respondents are males and 40% are females. 15% of the respondents fall in the age category of (below 20), 35% in (20- 25) and 50% of the respondents fall in the age category of (above 25). 70% of the respondents are married while as 30 % are unmarried. 25 % of the respondents fall in the income group of (below 20000), 30 % fall in (20000-25000) and 45 % of the respondents fall in the income group (above 25000). 15% of the respondents has the length of stay for (below 5 days) , 40 % for (5 – 10 days) and 45% above 10 days.

Table 2: Opinion about service provided(expressed in percentages)

Description	Highly satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Highly dissatisfied
Cleanliness and comfort	24	46	13	12	5
Safety and security	40	20	10	18	12
Staff performance	23	49	15	6	7
Prompt services provided	30	15	26	12	17
Staff knowledge	16	41	17	11	15
Price charged by the hotels	18	46	21	9	6
Ambience and interior decoration of the hotel	18	54	13	10	5
Parking facility provided by the hotel	12	50	22	12	4
Quality of the food provided	30	25	15	22	8
Products and services	22	34	15	18	11
Location of the hotel	18	25	15	22	20

RESULT AND INTERPRETATION

As per the results available in first segment 46% of the customers are satisfied with the cleanliness and comfort provided by the hotel. 20 % of the respondents are satisfied with the safety and security level provided by the hotels. 49% of the customers are satisfied with the staff performance of the hotels. 30% of the total customers are satisfied with the prompt services that are provided by the hotels. 41 % of the customers are satisfied with the staff knowledge of the hotel .46 % of the customers are satisfied with the price charged by the hotels. 54% of the hotels are satisfied with the ambience and interior decoration of the hotels. 50% of the customers are satisfied with the parking facility provided by the hotel. 34% of the customers are satisfied with the products and services provided with the hotel and 25 % of the customers are satisfied with the location of the hotel.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The result through the analysis showed that the customers are very much sensitive towards the various service segments and thus it is very much needed from the service provider's end that they should draft and present and their services in such a manner that maximum customer satisfaction is attained and a strong customer base is attained. The service providers thus need to augment their services in such a way that they meet the expectations of the customers at desired levels. The service providers need to enhance their services from time to time to meet the changing global scenario. The managers should make a provision for customized services which should be customer centric and should focus on complaint

handling and addressing grievances of the customers. The accommodation service providers must not forget this fact and must provide the services when asked for, so as to increase the image in the eyes of customers and gain loyalty. Hospitality industry must pay attention to potential failure points and service recovery procedures which becomes integral to employees training. In other words, it amounts to empowering employees to exercise responsibility, judgment and creativity in responding to guests' problems. Thus the service providers should make business more customer centric so as to maximum customer satisfaction is attained eventually.

The present study was taken so as to measure customer satisfaction in the hotels of the Kashmir valley and the study has been clearly analyzed with appropriate methodology based on the objectives. The study is an attempt to make the hotel industry more perfection towards the customer satisfaction much more effective way. On the basis of data analysis it is proved that the satisfaction level of the customers towards the hotel industry is good but certain attempts should be made by the managers to make the services more efficient and sustainable in the longer run.

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