Housekeeping, Human Resources: Competency Service Standard Management for Hotel Business in ASEAN

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Abstract. This research aimed to identify and study international benchmark service sequences for housekeeping room attendance and also investigated the housekeeping service quality via the gaps between guest expectation and actual perceived satisfaction. The objective of this research was to develop housekeeping room attendance human resources and increase the competitive advantage of Thai graduates so that they would be able to effectively work across the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC).

The conceptual framework is the study of housekeeping service quality based on five dimensions of SERVQUAL framework. Mixed methodology was used in this study. First, a qualitative study of standard housekeeping room attendance service sequences via the in-depth interview with professional housekeepers from Four Seasons Resort and Hotel Chiangmai, Banyan Tree Phuket and the Siam Kempinski Bangkok cooperated. Second, the quantitative study of gaps between satisfaction and the expectation on housekeeping service quality. Using 250 bi-lingual questionnaires to collect the data from non-probability samples, living in the hotels mentioned above. Mean and standard deviation were used to rank and compare each dimension of service quality. ANOVA inferential statistic was used to analyze guest expectation score according to different aims of stays.

From the professionals point of views, housekeeping room attendance service sequences were discussed and concluded into ten logical steps. The statistic result demonstrated that group business have average score on overall expectation less than others, they paid more attention into the tangible dimension. The expectation scores on each dimension a little bit higher than real perceived satisfaction. The customers rate the most importance service as housekeeping assurances, then housekeeping reliabilities, tangibility, empathy and responsiveness.(in decreasing order) This is can be seen as a gap and an opportunity for growth in housekeeping human resources.

Keywords: Housekeeping, Standard, Service Quality, Hotel Business

1. Introduction

Thailand is well recognized as one of the most attractive tourist destinations. The statistics of GDP of the country from Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) illustrate that tourism has pay a crucial role in the economic. The Tourisms Authority has spent many years creating the image and value of Amazing Thailand. Although, the political situation may weaken the image and reputation of the country, the government still attempts to push many tourism and service recovery programs including encouraging quality people to grow service industry. Developing and managing human resources, emphasize hospitality of Thai people was considered to strengthen service sector in Thailand.

Lancaster (2005) claimed not only Thailand but internationally acknowledged that hospitality industry, especially hotel business is generates great incomes for the industry. [1] Thailand offers a variety of destinations, resources and accommodation services. Hospitality and tourism businesses have grown and developed very rapidly in the last decade with many both internal and external investors (TAT, 2008). [2]

As Thailand will become a member of ASEAN economic community (AEC) in 2018, there will be many opportunities and also threats from competitors within the same market. The members are empowering their tourism strategies both individually and through partnership. ASEAN Tourism Ministers Meeting (M-ATM) (2009[3]; 2010)[4] refers to the adaptation of Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) on tourism professionals that will increase the equality of tourism human resource and will facilitate the mobility of tourism professionals within the region using the ASEAN Minimum Competency Standards for Tourism as the basis.

Delivering quality service is one of the major challenges facing hospitality employees. This challenge will be an essential condition for success in the emerging, keenly competitive, international hospitality market. Then, service quality in specific area of housekeeping was captured as housekeeping human resources managing and developing. Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report (Blanke and Chiesa, 2011) [5]claims included poor language ability, communication skills, lack of property maintenance, unreliable service, poor system and poor sanitation are consider as poor conditions comparing to direct counterparts in Asia such Singapore and Malaysia for examples. Offering consistent and excellent services will not help only Thailand's hotels to meet the international standard but also increasing its international competitiveness. China also challenging to complete the ASEAN segment as same market with competitors in Asia- Pacific regions, which highly esteemed on the sophisticated hotel industry with the similar product but better in services. (Tsang, N. and Qu, H., 2000)[6]

The hotels have also facing the situation of lacking qualified employee that could provide service on international service standard. The housekeeping staffs in Thailand are mostly unwell educated old generation woman. It affected to the image of housekeeping job which became lower leveled, hard and poor. Then the new generation avoids the area of housekeeping, affecting lack of skilled housekeeper resources.

The purpose of this paper was to offer the international housekeeping room attendant standard service sequences. Then assessing the gabs between expectation and actual perceive satisfaction when work on duty based on the concluded international housekeeping room attendant standard service sequences.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Service Quality and its Models.

The service is defined by many authors as interaction activities between server and the client which the server tries to fulfill needs, be over expectation, raise satisfaction and impression. (Gronroos, 1990[7]; Abraham and Taylor, 1999[8])

Nowadays, Economic, business and entrepreneurs vision have been constantly influenced by information technologies, communication technologies and the trend of service oriented business.(Martin, 2003)[9]

The literatures including Parasuraman at al. (1985) [10] and Lovelock and Gummesson (2004) [11] mention these characteristics of services that should be understood in order to study in service industry and service quality. There are services-intangibility, heterogeneity, and inseparability that should be understood in order to study further in service quality.

Purchasing goods and consumers employ tangible cues to judge quality: style, hardness, color, label, feel and package. On the other hand, consumers use intangible facts such satisfaction and expectation to judge quality. (Parasuraman at al., 1985)[10]

Some of the most influential models in the service management literature (Gronroos, 1990[7]; Parasuraman et al., 1985)[10] focus on the concept of service quality gap (SQG). Parasuraman at al. (1985)[10] and Brown and Swartz (1989)[23] define an exploring model with five SQGs, the concepts of which are amplified in Brogowicz at al.'s (1990)[12] model. The latter has five types of enveloping gaps: information and feedback-related gaps; design-related gaps; implementation-related gaps; communication-related gaps; and customers' perceptions and expectations-related gaps. (Clement and Selvam, 2006) [13] Parasuraman et al. (1985[10];1988[14];1991[22]) defined customers' perceptions and expectations-related gaps of service quality through SERVQUAL into 5 main dimensions, tangible, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. Much literature in the last decades has investigated and used the SERVQUAL to study the perception of service quality within the hospitality industry including the restaurant firms and tourism business. (Allan, 2011 [21]; Bojanic and Rosen, 1994[15]; Fu, 1999[16]; Fu, Cho and Parks, 2000[17]; Fu and Parks, 2001[18] ;(Riemer& Reichel, 2000)[19].

3. Methods

The relevant literature and surveys developed by past studies provided the basics for developing the questionnaire for this study. Through the review of the literature, only two of the seventeen service quality

attributes were used to developed the questionnaire and analysis the customers' perceptions and expectations-related gaps. They were SERVQUAL and Kano's Model. The questionnaire was divided into three parts. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of international tourist's demographic and classification questions. The second part designed to measure real respondent satisfaction on housekeeper room attendant service quality. And the third part was designed to measure respondents' expectation on the housekeeper room attendant service quality. Respondents indicated the level of importance and the level of satisfaction using Likert's rating scales from (1) the least satisfaction/ expectation to (5) the highest satisfaction/ expectation.

The target populations for this study was all international tourists living overnight in the three most popular destination in Thailand (ranked by Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2010)[20]; Bangkok, Chiangmai and Phuket. 250 bi-lingual questionnaires were used to collect the data from non-probability samples, living in the hotels. Although, there were 21 incomplete respond papers, 229 well completed questionnaires were collected and statistic analyzed.

Data analysis, the demographic data was first analyzed by the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17. After that, the Pair T-Test Inferential Statistic compared the statistic of expectation and satisfaction. ANOVA inferential statistic was used to analyze and compare expectation score by the group of customers with the different aims of stays.

4. Results and Conclusion

4.1. Demographic profile of the international guests

The sample of international tourists contained 59.8 percentages female and 40.2 percentages male. The research results demonstrate that majority of samples is female of Thai Nationality, between ages 21-40; they are single with a higher education, working for the private organization, with the average income of less than US$2000 USD per month.

4.2. Housekeeping room attendance service sequences

Ten steps of housekeeping service sequences were logically concluded by housekeeping professionals. The first step is greeting and asking for permission to get into the room. The second is start cleaning, clearing the rubbishes. The third is turn off the Air Conditioners and other electric tools. The fourth is opening the doors, windows and curtains to ventilate and let the air flow. The fifth is clearing old cloths, towels, foot scraper, bed sheets etc. Step sixth is bed Making. Step seventh is a bath room cleaning including refills all toiletries into the right places. Step eight is dusting off, Wipe all shelves with clean cloths, hovering and re-organize all items in the room back into the hotel standards. Step ninth is floor cleaning, including sweeping, mopping and hovering. And the last step is checking, including re-check all electric appliances and room conditions in the room and write the reports of any unpleasant condition.

4.3. Consumer perception of Service Quality: Gaps between expectation and real perceive satisfaction.

Table 1 demonstrates the gaps between tourist expectations and real perceived satisfaction of housekeeping service quality in hotel firms in Thailand.

The results of Table1 show that, for the most part, the average statistic of housekeeping service satisfaction is above the level of good. The satisfaction on tangibility measurement is in the very good level, housekeeping reliability is in good level, housekeeping responsiveness is in the average level, housekeeping assurance is in the good level and the housekeeping empathy is in the good level.

Expectation on overall housekeeping service quality is in the very good level. The customers rate the most importance service as housekeeping assurances, then housekeeping reliabilities, tangibility, empathy and responsiveness.(in decreasing order.)

By comparing the satisfaction mean score with the expectation rating score, the result illustrates that the statistic of the expectation score for every service dimension is higher than the satisfaction mean score.

The score of satisfaction could not meet the expectation. This illustrates that present housekeeping service sequences for housekeeping service quality remains at a good level satisfaction. This gap also means

that there is a potential development. The problem in housekeeping service quality may occur with the individual and not in the sequences.

Table 1: Gaps between expectation and real perceive satisfaction of housekeeping service quality

Variable	Sample Amount	Average	Standard Deviation	T-test
Overall Service Quality in Hotel Housekeeping				
Real perceived satisfaction	229	3.9524	0.35882	-15.665*
Guest Expectation on Housekeeping service quality	229	4.4225	0.21101	
Tangible				
Real perceived satisfaction	229	4.3926	0.47229	-2.208*
Guest Expectation on Housekeeping service quality	229	4.4780	0.32320	
Reliability				
Real perceived satisfaction	229	3.8908	0.36292	-17.885*
Guest Expectation on Housekeeping service quality	229	4.4873	0.33726	
Responsiveness				
Real perceived satisfaction	229	3.3004	0.64797	-18.448*
Guest Expectation on Housekeeping service quality	229	4.1328	0.31319	
Assurance				
Real perceived satisfaction	229	3.8632	0.62728	-19.506*
Guest Expectation on Housekeeping service quality	229	4.7031	0.42364	
Empathy				
Real perceived satisfaction	229	3.6114	0.83412	-10.729*
Guest Expectation on Housekeeping service quality	229	4.3130	0.46889	

Note: * p-value (sig) < 0.05

Table 2 illustrates the ANOVA results which demonstrate the difference propose of stay produce different expectation score.

Table 2: ANOVA paring different purpose and expectation score.

Purpose of Stay	Group of Business	Travelling as Group	Personal Travelling	Individual Business
Average Score	4.2571	4.4222	4.4269	4.4750

The ANOVA analysis comparing the expectation of tourists with different purpose of stay, discovered that the customers of group travelling, individual traveling and personal business scored the expectation on housekeeping service quality in the highest scale, while, the guest with group business purpose set the scoring differently. The customers with the purpose of group business had an average score on overall expectation less than other purposes but paid more attention into the tangible dimension. Therefore, the group business people present another challenge to the product development strategy.

5. Acknowledgements

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