Using the Expected Importance and Perceived Satisfaction of Tourists to Construct Indicators for Improvement of Resort Hotel Service Quality

Chun-Nan Lin[†], **Li-Fen Tsai**[††], **Pei-Wen Wang**[†††], **Wen-Jian Su**[††††]., **Jing-Chi Shaw**[†††††]

[†]National Pingtung University of Science and Technology, Taiwan, R.O.C.
[††]Department of Marketing Management, TransWorld University, Taiwan, R.O.C.
[†††]Department of Marketing Management, TransWorld University, Taiwan, R.O.C.
[††††] Graduate Study at the Graduate School of Somatics & Sports Leisure Industry, National Taitung University, Taiwan.
[†††††]Corresponding Author, Department of Marketing Management, TransWorld University, Taiwan, R.O.C

Summary

This study explored the extent of expected importance and perceived satisfaction of tourists regarding various services provided by resort hotels, focusing on resort hotels in significant scenic areas in Taitung. This study used the "SERVQUAL" scale to construct indicators for the improvement of resort hotel service quality. The results showed that gaps remain between the service quality of resort hotels and the actual perceptions upon staying at the hotels. Regarding service quality improvement, tourists remain the most concerned with safety, followed by external leisure environments, accurate and fast professional service provided by service personnel, and finally, the empathy of hotels and the entertainment facilities and provided activities. Tourists are concerned with service quality from the external to the internal, and it is necessary to first satisfy the basic needs of tourists, before intricate services provided by personnel can become meaningful. Resort hotel operators must also continuously provide more intricate service standards to enhance the satisfaction of tourists, or it will adversely affect the willingness of tourists to stay at hotels, and in turn lower corporate profit.

Key words:
resort hotels, expected importance, perceived satisfaction, indicators for improvement of service quality

1. Introduction

From this section, input the body of your manuscript according to the constitution that you had. For detailed information for authors, please refer to [1].

Compared to the manufacturing industry, the service quality of the leisure industry is more difficult to measure. Other than focusing on tourists, it is also necessary to continuously enhance tourist satisfaction [1]. Services are the products of the service industry, and quality is the perceived result of tourists regarding the services. With continued advancements in society, consumers have enhanced their demands and standards for service quality; rendering quality an essential point considered by consumers upon choosing services [2]. The extent to which
resort hotels can deeply understand the expectations and needs in the hearts of tourists would directly affect the loyalty of tourists to corporations, and in turn affect corporate profits; it is easy to see the significance of service quality.

This study aimed to explore the extent of expected importance and perceived satisfaction of tourists regarding the various services and products provided by resort hotels in order to analyze tourist needs, focusing on resort hotels in significant scenic areas in Taitung. The findings can provide resort hotels with directions for improving their endeavors in order to decrease the expectation gap in comparison to tourist needs, as well as the priority of improvements, which in turn enhance hotel service quality to help hotel operators with suggestions concerning service quality and marketing strategies.

2. Literature Review

Resort hotels are legal lodging facilities located in areas with natural scenery, which provide food, lodging, indoor and outdoor activities, leisure facilities, and natural resources to tourists seeking leisure, health, and entertainment [3]. Resort hotels have the basic character of the service industry, such as intangibility, heterogeneity, perishability, and inseparability of production consumption. Service quality is the extent to which the services provided at the travel site satisfy tourist needs and expectations [4]. The needs emphasized by customer in the experience of consumption implicate the difference between expected needs and actual consumption perceptions, and influences the extent of customer satisfaction with resort hotel service quality.

Service quality is the difference between the customer's subjective judgments regarding how much expectations and perceptions conform [5], and primarily comes from the result of comparison regarding expectations for services and actual feelings regarding the processes of services [6] [7]. Quality service is the conformity to expectations, or exceeding tourist expectations and needs [8]. According to literature, most dependent variables in service evaluations are "customer satisfaction." [9]. However, there are scholars who believe that the aspects of service quality and satisfaction are different, and while there is a causal relationship between service quality and satisfaction, service quality affects customer satisfaction, and would affect future willingness to purchase services [10].

It is impossible to standardize the services themselves, the processes of services, and the method of services, thus, there are no objective measurement standards, rendering the measurement of service quality more difficult. In 1985 Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (PZB) [6] proposed the "SERVQUAL" scale to measure service quality; and in 1998 the system was simplified to service quality bases for the five measurable aspects of "tangibility," "reliability,"

"assurance," "responsiveness," and "empathy." This study adds the aspect of "entertainment" of resort hotel leisure facilities, activities, and travel-related services, for a total of six aspects for measurement. Based on these definitions, a 22 item scale of reliability and validity is designed, and the survey method is used to measure service quality.

3. Research Design and Method

3.1 Research structure

This study used literature review to summarize the quality elements. The six service quality aspects of "tangibility," "reliability," "assurance," "responsiveness," "empathy,"and "entertainment," as measured by the SERVQUAL scale, are used to design a questionnaire to explore the differences between expected importance and perceived satisfaction of customers regarding the service quality of resort hotels in Taitung County. Indicators for improvement of quality are extracted to verify that priority quality elements are improved, based on customer needs.
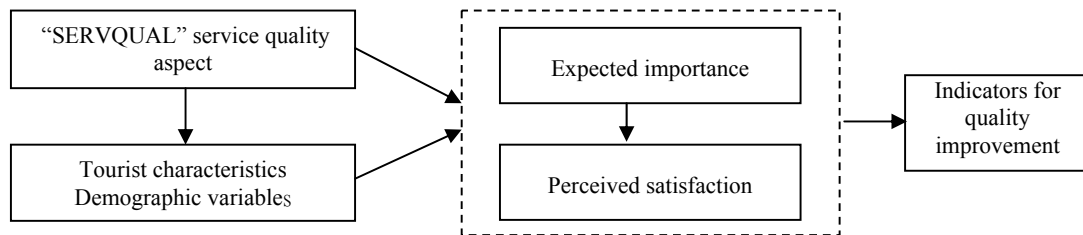

Figure 1 Research framework

Source: this study

3.2 Research scope and subjects

This study selected legal resort hotels with over 60 rooms in significant scenic areas of Taitung County for its research scope. The six selected hotels are the Rainbow Hotel, Toong Mao Resort & Hotel, Hoya Resort, Toyugi Resort, Lu Ming Hotel, and the Chief Spa Hotel.

4. Empirical Results and Analysis

4.1 Reliability and sample analysis

A total of 450 questionnaires were distributed, 386 valid questionnaires were retrieved; the rate of valid retrieval was 85.78%. The scale and construct reliability α values of

this study are both greater than 0.7, which shows that the questionnaire aspects and question items have high reliability. Frequency statistics were used to analyze subject data, where it was found that 57.5% were women, and 42.5% were men. Most, or 25.9%, were in the age group of 31~40, 32.6% were in the service industry, 37.6% had university educations, and 53.1% of traveling members were families or parents and children. Most tourists, or 49.2%, lived in the south, while most, or 64.2%, were staying in these hotels for the first time.

4.2 Differential analysis of expected importance and perceived satisfaction

The t-test results showed that, the P values of the 22 quality elements are lower than 0.05, which demonstrates a significant difference between tourists' expected

importance and perceived satisfaction in the service quality of resort hotels in Taitung. Furthermore, the T-test and One-Way ANOVA shows tourist differences, suggesting that there are significant differences in their education levels, experiences in lodging, and how these affect the "expected importance" of service quality. Tourist occupations, education levels, and experiences in lodging significantly affect the "perceived satisfaction" of service quality.

4.3 Analysis of importance, satisfaction, and indicators for improvement of quality

The values on the service quality scale are used to obtain the ranking for means of expected importance and perceived satisfaction, as well as service quality elements, and then, the QI values of indicators for improvement of quality are calculated. If the negative of QI is high, it means that the service element requires prioritized improvement. The items are also ranked according to QI values. (as in Table 1)

Table 1. Service quality importance, satisfaction analysis, and indicators for improvement of quality

Measured aspect	Quality elements	Expected importance		Perceived satisfaction		Quality gap	Relative importance (%)	Indicators for improvement of quality	
		Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank			QI value	Rank
Tangibility QI= -0.02018 ranking=2	1. The hotel has appropriate room facilities	4.329	4	3.780	10	-0.549	3.935	-0.0238	5
	2. The make-up quality of hotel rooms is sufficiently clean	4.521	1	3.964	2	-0.557	4.110	-0.0252	3
	3. The hotel can provide sufficient dining facilities and services	4.153	13	3.790	9	-0.363	3.775	-0.0151	17
	4. The service personnel are suitably dressed and are professional in appearance	4.130	14	3.806	8	-0.324	3.755	-0.0134	20
	5. Location of the hotel	4.088	18	3.516	18	-0.572	3.716	-0.0234	6
reliability QI= 0.01853 ranking=3	6. The service personnel can correctly provide service information	4.197	12	3.808	7	-0.389	3.815	-0.0163	13
	7. The service personnel completed services in the time promised	4.225	11	3.832	5	-0.393	3.841	-0.0166	12
	8. The service personnel is capable of resolving customer service problems	4.272	8	3.741	12	-0.531	3.884	-0.0227	7
responsiveness QI= -0.01823 ranking=4	9. The service personnel can quickly provide the services required	4.228	10	3.816	6	-0.412	3.844	-0.0174	11
	10. The service personnel will actively provide services	4.047	19	3.684	13	-0.363	3.679	-0.0147	18
	11. Fast treatment of customer complaint issues	4.352	3	3.832	5	-0.520	3.956	-0.0226	8
assurance QI= -0.0213 ranking=1	12. You are not concerned about hotel payment methods	4.326	5	3.992	1	-0.334	3.933	-0.0144	19
	13. Hotel provides stated services	4.298	7	3.860	4	-0.438	3.907	-0.0188	10
	14. You feel safe regarding the hardware and software of the hotel	4.321	6	3.676	14	-0.645	3.928	-0.0279	2
	15. The hotel facilities are legitimate	4.394	2	3.832	5	-0.562	3.995	-0.0247	4
	16. Hotel service personnel are professional	4.238	9	3.749	11	-0.489	3.853	-0.0207	9
empathy QI= -0.01463 ranking=5	17. The service personnel provides individual services based on your needs	4.031	20	3.632	16	-0.399	3.665	-0.0161	14
	18. The service personnel actively provide services and polite greetings	4.127	15	3.909	3	-0.218	3.752	-0.0090	21

entertainment QI= -0.012 ranking=6	19. You consider the open hours of hotel facilities are convenient	4.098	17	3.640	15	-0.458	3.725	-0.0188	**10**
	20. The hotel has sufficient leisure facilities	4.111	16	3.404	20	-0.707	3.737	-0.0291	**1**
	21. The hotel provides sufficient leisure activities (such as events in the evenings)	3.876	22	3.479	19	-0.397	3.524	-0.0154	16
	22. The hotel can arrange tourist travel services	3.915	21	3.518	17	-0.397	3.559	-0.0155	15

relative importance =(expected importance ÷5) × 100 ÷ 22
indicators for improvement of quality QI=(perceived satisfaction -- expected importance) × relative importance
Quality improvement aspect QI=indicator QI value/indicators for improvement of quality

Source: This study

5. Conclusions and Suggestions

This study suggests that there remain significant differences for tourists in their "expected importance" and "perceived satisfaction" toward services, which shows that gaps remain between the service quality of resort hotels in Taitung and actual perceptions upon staying in the hotel. Resort hotel operators in Taitung need to improve upon the service quality of stated services and actual operations. In addition, resort hotel operators should provide different service items to different types of tourists; by providing more customized services for tourists with different education levels, occupations, and experiences in lodging, they can increase tourist satisfaction.

The priority ranking for improvements, as shown by the QI values of the six service quality aspects in the SERVQUAL, are as follows: first, "assurance"; second, "tangibility"; third "reliability"; fourth "responsiveness"; fifth "empathy"; and sixth "entertainment." Seen from individual QI values, tourists feel that items that should have priority in improvement are "the hotel has sufficient leisure facilities", "you feel safe regarding the hardware and software of the hotel," and "the make-up quality of hotel rooms is sufficiently clean." This shows that tourists remain the most concerned with safety, followed by external leisure environments, accurate and fast professional services provided by service personnel, and finally, the empathy of hotels and the entertainment facilities and activities provided. Thus, tourists are concerned with service quality from the external to the internal, and it is necessary to first satisfy the basic needs of tourists before intricate services provided by personnel can become meaningful. Resort hotel operators must also continuously provide more intricate service standards to enhance the satisfaction of tourists, or it will adversely affect the willingness of tourists to stay at hotels, and in turn lower corporate profit.

References

[1] Deming, W. E. (1994), Report Card on TQM. Management review 83, no.1: 22-25.

[2] Duggirala, M., Rajendran, C., and Anantharaman, R.N. (2008), Provider-perceived dimensions of total quality management in healthcare, *Benchmarking*, Vol. 15, No. 6, pp. 693-722.

[3] Lai, Y. H. （2009）. A Study of Job Standardization on Service Encounter in Resort Hotel. Institute of Leisure, Recreation and Tourism Management, N CYU. Master paper.

[4] Chuang, Y.C., Chen, H.P., Chen, Y.R. (2010). The relationships among service quality, perceived value, and satisfaction – Using Xitou Natural Education Park as an example. Journal of Island Tourism Research, 3(3), 45-62.

[5] Wan, Y.S. (2004) "The impact of western-style fast-food chain store marketing and service quality satisfaction on customer satisfaction". Master's thesis, Graduate Institute of Business Administration, National Chung Cheng University.

[6] Parasuraman, A., Zithaml V.A., & Berry L. L. (1985), A conceptual model of service quality and its implications for future research. Journal of Marketing, 49(3) : pp. 41-50.

[7] Hsu, C.L. (2009) "Ideas and Methods to Enhance Service Quality", "Quality" Magazine, 45 (2), pp.29-37.

[8] Lin, C.C. (2008) "A Study on the Service Quality, Customer Perceived Values, Satisfaction and Marketing Intentions of Golf Courses in the Central Region", Journal of Management Practices and Principles, 2 (4), pp.196-214.

[9] Anderson, Claes Fornell, and Donald R. Lehmann (1994), Customer Satisfaction, Market Share, and Profitability: Findings from Sweden, *Journal of Marketing*, 58 (July), 53–66.

[10] Hurley, R.H, Estelami, H (1998), Alternative Indexes for Monitoring Customer Perceptions Of Service Quality : A Comparative Evaluation in A Retail Context. *Journal of Academy of Marketing Science*, 26, (3), 209-221.