

Quality service in the hotel industry: Evidence from Alisa hotel Ghana

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Abstract: The delivery of high quality services is one of the most important and most difficult tasks that any service organization faces due to its unique characteristics such as intangibility, Perishability, variability, inseparability and its labour intense nature. In most cases, service quality is judged by customers and as such it is the customers' perception of how well a service meets or exceeds their expectations that define service quality. Service quality leads to customer loyalty and higher profitability when other factors have been considered. It is against the back ground that the study was undertaken to assess quality service delivery in the hotel industry. The research therefore used SERVQUAL Model to assess service quality in the hotel industry using customers of the hotel as respondents. Primary data for the research was collected using a modified pretested questionnaire developed around the SERVQUAL model. Respondents assessed service quality on a Non-comparative Scaling Techniques (ranging from Extremely Good, Very Good, Good, Bad, Very Bad, and Extremely Bad) based on tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. The findings from the study depict various concerns from customers as to their expectation and experiences. However, customers overall assessment of the service quality of the hotel depicted that, 30% rate service quality as excellent, 36% as very good, 27% as good while 7% rated their service as average. This is an indication that service quality was acceptable by customers who patron.

Keywords: Service Quality, Hotel Industry, SERVQUAL Model, Customer, Alisa Hotel the Services of Alisa Hotel

1. Introduction

Service quality delivery has become an issue of great concern and major challenge facing service providers [1]. In the hospitality industry, it has received a lot of attention [2, 3, 4] due to the fact that the industry is becoming increasingly competitive. However, the delivery of quality services is one of the most important and difficult tasks that service organization faces due to its unique characteristics such as intangibility, variability, perishability, inseparability and its labour intense nature as well as the definition of quality which still remains a very subjective concept [5, 6, 7].

In most cases, service quality is judged by customers and as such, the definition for service quality is based on customers' perception of how well a service meets or exceeds their expectations. Despite the difficulties in evaluating

quality, service quality may be the only way customers can choose one service over another. Recent studies have shown that service delivery has changed dramatically due to globalisation, influx of new information and communications technology and growing demand by customers for quality goods and services [4].

The most central factor to sustainable competitive advantage is to provide the best possible service quality which will result in improved customer satisfaction, customer retention, and profitability [8, 9, 10, 11]. Research has shown that dissatisfied customers will proclaim negative word-of-mouth publication of his/her experience to eight to ten people about his/her experience [4, 12]. A service provider which does not deliver to meet the demands of its customers is likely to experience low patronage. It is therefore essential that service quality assessment which according to Codwell and Farrance [13] is a mean through which customers

existing perceptions, expectations and priorities can be determined in order to improve on service delivery. Service quality models such as SERVPERF [14] and the RATER/SERVQUAL Model [15] have been developed to assess and evaluate service quality performance in the traditional service environment. In view of issues associated with service delivery, the study therefore seeks to assess service quality in the hospitality using Alisa Hotels Ghana as a case study.

1.1. Service Quality Concept

Service quality involves a comparison of expectations with performance. According to Lewis and Booms [16], service quality is a measure of how well a delivered service matches the customers’ expectations. According to Carlzon [17], service quality is the major driving force for business sustainability and in today’s competitive global marketplace, it is recognized that high quality service is essential for the success of the firm. The central focus of the study of service quality is the customer gap, the difference between customers’ expectations and perceptions of the service received since expectations are the reference point customers have before experiencing the service whereas perceptions reflect their experience of the service that they have actually received. Hence, firms will strive to close or narrow this gap that is between what is expected and what is received, to satisfy their customers and to build long-term relationships with them.

Furthermore, Lehtinen and Lehtinen, [18] defined service quality in terms of physical quality, interactive quality and corporate quality. He further explains that physical quality relates to the tangible aspects of service whereas interactive quality which involves the interactive nature of services as well as refers to the two-way flow that occurs between the customer and the service provider including both automated and animated interactions. The interactive nature of the service process results in the consumer’s evaluation of quality immediately after the provision and performance of

that service. Also corporate quality refers to the image attributed to a service provider by its current and potential customers as well as other publics. They also suggest that when compared with other two quality dimensions, corporate quality tends to be more stable over time.

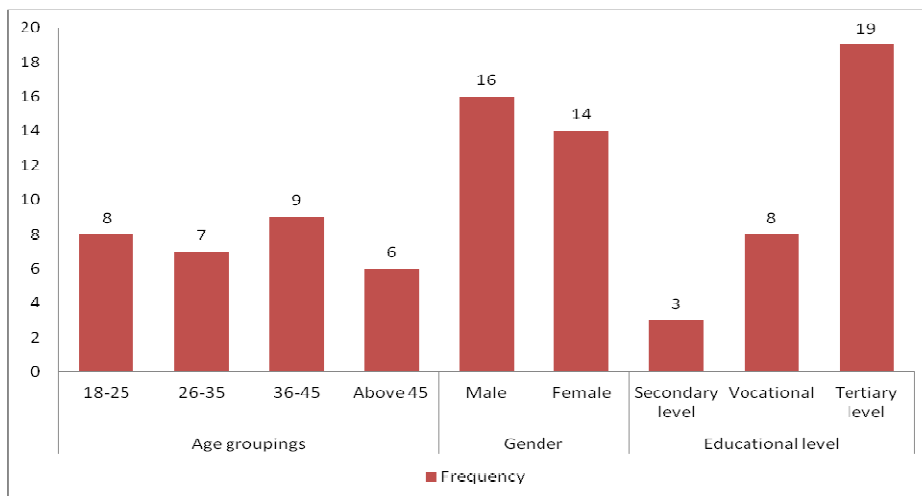
Service quality leads to customer loyalty [19] and higher profitability [20] when other factors have been considered. Thus, a key strategy for customer – focused firms is to measure and monitor customer satisfaction and service quality as well as customer loyalty as these are the three distinctive elements that service oriented firms should strive to achieve.

1.2. The Profile of Alisa Hotels

Alisa hotel is located within the capital city of Ghana, Accra. Established in 1999, it initially started with The Heritage Wing following subsequent expansions that consist of The Landmark and Pegasus Wing being the latest. According to the Ghana Tourist Board star rating criterion, Alisa Hotels is rated 3 star. It is 5 kilometers from the airport and close to some major landmarks such as the World Bank headquarters in Ghana, and the Republic of Denmark Embassy.

It has 173 guest rooms comprising standard, club (double and single), executive, ebony, pent house and presidential suites. Other ancillary services provided include: WiFi internet access, conference and meeting rooms which are: Asante Hall 1, 2, Botsio Auditorium, Volta Hall, Affram Hall, Bamfo Hall and Prins Hall as well as banqueting facilities for business guests. The hotel also has lounge bar, jazz bar, pool bar, oasis bar, gymnasium, fitness center, saloon, artifact shop, swimming pool car rental services, complimentary airport shuttle, Forex bureau and tennis court. The hotel has two restaurants Annabel’s and Homowo which has a seating capacity of 60 to 150 people.

2. Method



Source: Fieldwork 2013

Figure 1. Demographic characteristics of respondents

Measuring service quality and satisfaction, traditionally involves asking customers for subjective attitudinal evaluations that is, asking if they personally felt the service they received was satisfactory. The research therefore used SERVQUAL Model to assess service quality in the hotel industry using customers of the hotel as respondents.

Primary data for the research was collected using a modified pretested questionnaire developed around the SERVQUAL model by Parasuraman *et al.*, [21]. Respondents assessed service quality on a Non-comparative Scaling Techniques (ranging from Extremely Good, Very Good, Good, Bad, Very Bad, and Extremely Bad) based on tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy.

Secondary data were collected through peer reviewed journal, articles and other internet searches. The services of the hotel were stratified into lodging, food service and other extra services. Using purposive sampling technique, 10 customers were selected from each stratified group. Data collected were analysed using Microsoft Excel Window 7.

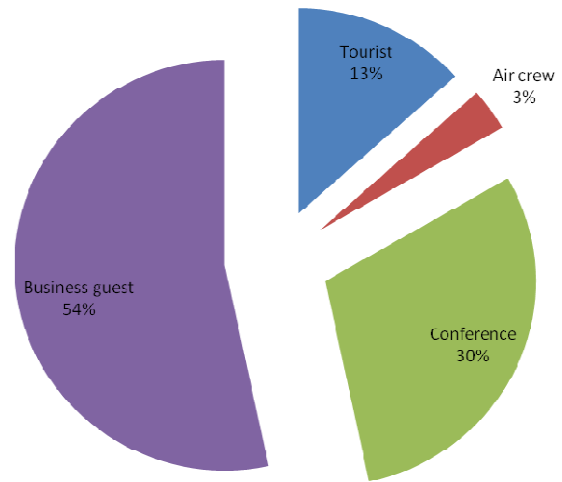
3. Results

3.1. Demographic Characteristics

Figure 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Out of the thirty (30) customers, 8 (26.7%) were between the ages of 18-25years, 7 (23.3%) were between 26-35years while 9 (30.0%) and 6 (20.0%) were between the age group of 36-35 and above 45year respectively. The results also revealed that 53.3% were male while 46.7% were female. The results also showed that majority (63.3%) had tertiary education, 26.7% had vocational education while

10.0% had senior high education.

3.2. Customer Mix of the Hotel



Source: Fieldwork 2013

Figure 2. Purpose of customers visit

Figure 2 depicts the purposes for which the customers were lodging at the hotel. The results indicates that 54% were business guests, 13% tourist 3% air crew while 30% were there for a conference.

3.3. Key Determinants of Service Quality

3.3.1. Service Quality Based on Tangibility

Table 1. The appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication materials

Variable	Responses					
	Extremely Bad	Very Bad	Bad	Good	Very Good	Extremely Good
Modern equipment	-	-	-	3	4	23
Physical appearance of facilities	-	-	-	5	9	16
Good service delivery materials	-	-	-	4	11	15
Reliability of equipments	-	-	-	4	20	6
Appearance of personnel	-	-	1	10	10	9

(-) No rating

Source: Fieldwork 2013

Customer's assessment on the tangibility of service quality of the hotel is as shown Table 1

3.3.2. Service Quality Based on Responsiveness

Table 2. The willingness to help customers and provide prompt service

Variable	Responses					
	Extremely Bad	Very Bad	Bad	Good	Very Good	Extremely Good
Check-in	-	-	-	3	13	14
Billing	-	-	-	8	11	11
Responsive attitude	-	-	2	6	10	12
Prompt response to customers request	-	-	1	9	12	8

(-) No rating

Source: Fieldwork, 2013

3.3.3. Service Quality Based on Assurance

Table 3. The knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence

Variable	Responses					
	Extremely Bad	Very Bad	Bad	Good	Very Good	Extremely Good
Confidence in staff	-	-	-	6	11	13
Behavior of employees	-	-	-	7	13	10
Knowledge of service being provided	-	-	-	8	13	9
Courtesy	-	-	-	2	6	22

(-) No rating

Source: Fieldwork, 2013

3.3.4. Service Quality Based on Empathy

Table 4. The caring visualized attention paid to the customer

Variable	Responses					
	Extremely Bad	Very Bad	Bad	Good	Very Good	Extremely Good
Convenience	-	-	-	2	14	14
Attention to customer's priority	-	-	-	8	14	8
Attention to the special needs of clients	-	-	-	11	10	9

(-) No rating

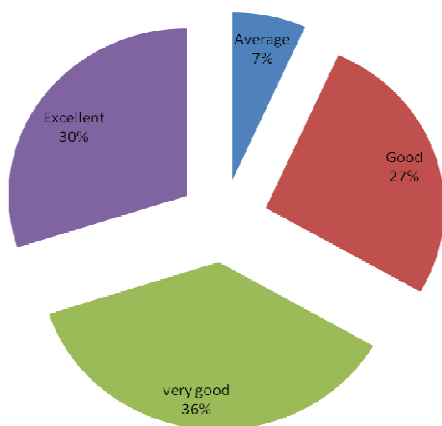
3.3.5. Service Quality Based on Reliability

Table 5. Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately

Variable	Responses					
	Extremely Bad	Very Bad	Bad	Good	Very Good	Extremely Good
Service reliability	-	-	-	4	20	6
Fast service	-	-	2	6	16	6
Timeliness when delivering service	-	-	1	10	10	9
Problem Management	-	1	3	7	7	12

(-) No rating

3.3.6. Overall Assessment of Service Delivery



Source: Fieldwork, 2013

Figure 3. Overall service quality assessments by customers

Customer's general assessment of the service quality of the hotel as shown in Figure 3 depicts that 30% rate service quality as excellent, 36% as very good, 27% as good while 7% rated their service as average. This is an indication that service quality was acceptable by customers who patronize the services of Alisa Hotel.

4. Discussion

Service quality is a measure of how well a delivered service matches the customers' expectations. The present study's assessment on service quality in the hospitality using Alisa hotel in Ghana revealed that most customers who patronize the services of the hotel were youths between the ages of 18 and 35years (Figure 1) with the customers being business guests (54%), tourist(13%), air crew (3%) and conference participants (30%).

Quality is a subjective concept [4] and customers generally have pre-encountered expectations of hospitality experiences which they use to evaluate their experiences against expectations [22]. The findings from the study depict various concerns from customers as to their expectation and experiences. Service quality based on tangibility revealed that, customers perceived this aspect of service (Table 1) to be at least very good with the exception of appearance where 3.3% rate it as bad. Similar rating was also observed in service responsiveness (Table 2). The study also revealed that no negative response was given in service assurance (Table 3) and empathy (Table 4). Customers overall assessment of the service quality of the hotel as shown in Figure 3, depicted that 30% rate service quality as excellent, 36% as very good,

27% as good while 7% rated their service as average. This is an indication that service quality was acceptable by customers who patronize the services of Alisa Hotel.

In this regard, management of hospitality facilities in Ghana needs to pay more attention to tangible aspect of service with respect to appearance of personnel and that of service responsiveness in terms of responsive attitude and prompt response to customer's request. The quality of these services does have adverse effect on service quality which can lead to customer loyalty and profitability.

5. Conclusion

Service quality as rated by customers of Alisa hotel is very good with the exceptions of those which have been highlighted by the study. Management should focus on measurement and monitoring of customer satisfaction and service quality as well as customer loyalty which are the three distinctive elements that service oriented firms should strive to achieve. There should be periodic training of staff and upgrading of facilities aimed at improvement of service quality. On the basis of the observations from the study, further research should be directed at a comparative study on service quality in other sections of the industry by foreign and local users.

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