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QUALITY OF SERVICE OF HOTEL AND LODGING BUSINESSES IN SAMUTSONGKRAM PROVINCE, THAILAND

Abstract:

The objectives of this study were to examine the level of the quality of Service of the hotel and lodging businesses in Samut Songkram province, Thailand to develop the guidelines for the development of their quality of service. The period of study was between October and November 2017. This study suggests that the entrepreneurs of the hotel and lodging businesses should focus on providing continuously development programs for their staff members. They should also utilize modern technologies in enhancing their service in all aspects to maximize the customer satisfaction.

Keywords:

Quality of service; hotel and lodging businesses; Samut Songkram province

JEL Classification: Y80

Background and Significance of the Research

The hotels in Samut Songkram realize that one of the key factors to success for their business are to create customer base and customer loyalty, and to enhance their image. In order to create customer loyalty, the hotel businesses have to do their best to improve their quality of service in all aspects. The customer loyalty also leads to repurchase behavior (Kotler, 2003). As it is known that the enhancement of the quality of service is a key factor leading to the customer loyalty, a number of hotels have been using it as a main strategy. However, many hotels still lack proper system or mechanism to ensure the quality of their service.

Upon realizing the significance of the hotel and lodging businesses and the importance of the quality of service as a key factor for the success of the operation of the hotels, the researchers conducted this study with the aim to examine the level of the quality of service of the hotel and lodging businesses and to develop the guidelines for the enhancement of the quality of service. It employed the case of the hotel and lodging businesses in Samut Songkram province, Thailand.

Research Methodology

This research used a quantitative research approach as a framework for the investigation. The research population were people who used to have experiences in staying at one or more hotels or other types of accommodation in Samut Songkram province. As the total number of the population could not be obtained, the researchers determined the sample size by setting at the size at .05 percent, the reliability level at 95 percent, and the discrepancy level at 5 percent. As a result, the research sample size was determined at 385 individuals. However, in order to prevent any errors, another 4 percent was added, making the sample size to be 400 individuals. The sample was selected by using an accidental sampling. The study was conducted over the two-month period between October and November 2017,

The main research instrument was a questionnaire which was designed by the researchers. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part contains five checklist questions about the demographic background of the respondents including gender, age, education background, occupation, and average income per month. The second part of the questionnaire contains the questions about the quality of service which were designed according to the concept of the quality of service proposed by Parasuraman et al. (1990). There are a total of 24 questions asking about the performance of the hotels in providing the service to the guests in terms of their ability to respond to the customers' needs/wants, the reliability of their service, their physical attributes, their empathy to customers, their confidence to provide service, and the security service. These questions are in a form of five Likert-scale questions, ranging from 1 (referring to the least) to 5 (referring to the most). Suksutdhi.T (2012)

Before collecting the data, the researchers tested the content validity of the questionnaire by having it tested by three experts. The questionnaires was tried and tested to ensure that all the questions in the questionnaire can measure what they aim to measure. As a result, theIOC or Index of Item-Objective Congruence of all the questions in the questionnaire was at .06. As for the reliability of the questionnaire, the researcher ensured its reliability by testing the Cronbach's Alpha with 30 copies of the questionnaire. The testing result showed that the coefficient of reliability of the questionnaire was at .742.

After the data were collected with the questionnaire, the data were analyzed by the statistics including mean, standard deviation and multiple regression analysis with the coefficient of reliability of 95 percent. The collected data were then analyzed by descriptive statistics including mean (\bar{x}), and standard deviation (SD).

Research Findings

Following the analysis of the data, the following results were reported

(1) In terms of an ability to respond to the customers' needs and wants, the study showed that overall, it was rated at a moderate level. The four aspects including, sorted in a descending order based on mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (SD), service providers having an ability and knowledge to work on assigned tasks; service providers having an ability to create trust to customers, service providers being polite and courteous, and service providers providing service to customers with willingness, were rated in a moderate level. The mean and standard deviation of all these aspects were displayed in Table 1.

Table 1 Mean and standard deviation of the quality of service in the aspect of an ability to respond to the customers' needs and wants.

Ability to respond to the customers' needs and wants	Mean (\bar{x})	Standard deviation (SD)	Interpretation of the data
Service providers having an ability and knowledge to work on assigned tasks	3.35	0.99	Moderate
Service providers having an ability to create trust to customers	3.23	0.85	Moderate
Service providers being polite and courteous	3.23	0.85	Moderate
Service providers providing service to customers with willingness	2.92	1.17	Moderate

(2) In terms of the reliability of the service of the hotel and lodging business in Samutsongkram province, the four aspects including, sorted in a descending order based on mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (SD), service providers being reliable, the organizations paying attention to details, the organization providing service according to time promised, and the organization providing service to customers perfectly as promised, were rated at a very high level. The mean and standard deviation of all these aspects were displayed in Table 2.

Table 2 Mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation of the quality of service in the aspect of the reliability of the service.

The reliability of service	Mean (\bar{x})	Standard deviation (SD)	Interpretation of the data
service providers being reliable	4.49	0.65	Very high
the organizations paying attention to details	4.42	0.71	Very high
the organization providing service according to time promised	4.40	0.79	Very high
the organization providing service to customers perfectly as promised	4.37	0.81	Very high

(3) In terms of the physical attributes of the place of service and surrounding, it was found that the two aspect including, sort in a descending order following mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation, the place of service and surround being clean and beautiful, the organization keeping developing new forms of service, were rated at a high level, whereas the equipment and technology being modern was rated at a moderate level. The mean and standard deviation of all these aspects were displayed in Table 3.

Table 3 Mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (SD) of the quality of service in the aspect of the physical attributes of the place of service and surrounding

The physical attributes of the place of service and surrounding	Mean (\bar{x})	Standard deviation (SD)	Interpretation of the data
the place of service and surround being clean and beautiful	3.66	0.92	High
the organization keeping developing new forms of service	3.41	1.17	High
the equipment and technology being modern	3.02	1.32	Moderate

(4) In terms of the empathy to the customers, it was found that the organization being honest to solve the problems for the customer was rated at high level, whereas the other three aspects including, sorted in a descending order based on mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (SD), the organization focusing on the most benefits of the customers, the organization being able to communicate with the customers clearly, and the organization being able to understand the real needs and wants of the customers, were rated at a moderate level. The mean and standard deviation of all these aspects were displayed in Table 4.

Table 4 Mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (SD) of the quality of service in the aspect of the empathy to the customers

The empathy to the customers	Mean (\bar{x})	Standard deviation (SD)	Interpretation of the data
The organization being honest to solve the problems for the customer	3.70	0.75	High
The organization focusing on the most benefits of the customers	3.37	0.84	Moderate
The organization being able to communicate with the customers clearly,	3.23	0.84	Moderate
The organization being able to understand the real needs and wants of the customers	2.84	1.34	Moderate

(5) In terms of the ability of the hotel to create trust towards the customers, the study reported that only one aspect which was service providers being ready to provide service whenever the customers want was rated at a very high level, whereas the rest of the aspects including, sorted in a descending order based on mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (SD), the service being easy and convenient to be accessed by the customers, service providers being willing and pleased to provide service to the customers, and service providers being able to provide service promptly, were rated at a high level. The mean and standard deviation of all these aspects were displayed in Table 5.

Table 5 Mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (SD) of the quality of service in the aspect of the ability to create trust towards the customers

The ability to create trust towards the customers	Mean (\bar{x})	Standard deviation (SD)	Interpretation of the data
Service providers being ready to provide service whenever the customers want	4.24	0.76	Very high
The service being easy and convenient to be accessed by the customers	4.12	0.88	High
Service providers being willing and pleased to provide service to the customers,	3.97	0.75	High
Service providers being able to provide service promptly	3.75	0.78	High

(6) In terms of the security and safety of the hotel and lodging businesses, the study reported that all of the five aspects including, sorted in a descending order based on mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (SD), the organization focusing on safety and security, service providers being able to use equipment proficiently, staff providers being careful when providing service, equipment being checked for their safety on an on-going basis, and the place of service and surrounding areas facilitating the customers' main purposes of visiting were rated at a high level. The mean and standard deviation of all these aspects were displayed in Table 6.

Table 6 Mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (SD) of the quality of service in the aspect of the security and safety of the hotel and lodging businesses

The security and safety of the hotel and lodging businesses	Mean (\bar{x})	Standard deviation (SD)	Interpretation of the data
The organization focusing on safety and security	3.92	1.27	High
Service providers being able to use equipment proficiently	3.85	1.27	High
Staff providers being careful when providing service	3.75	1.17	High
Equipment being checked for their safety on an on-going basis	3.66	0.99	High
The place of service and surrounding areas facilitating the customers' main purposes of visiting	3.49	1.28	High

(7) As for the guidelines for the improvement of the quality of service, entrepreneurs of the hotel and lodging businesses in Samutsongkram province should focus on the ability to respond to the customers' needs and wants by providing the employees with a training on how to enhance their personality and how to motivate themselves to work. In addition, they should also employ modern technology in providing service to the customers. Last but not least, the entrepreneurs should also monitor the needs and wants of customers on an on-going basis.

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