



SERVICE QUALITY ASSESSMENT USING SERVQUAL SCALE FOR GOLDFINCH HOTEL MANGALORE

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ABSTRACT

As delivering best service is the main motive of the Hotel industry, it is very important for a hotel to know the expectation and perception of the customers regarding the service provided by the hotel. Hence this study was conducted in Hotel Goldfinch Mangalore to assess the quality of service provided by the hotel to its customers. This study helps in finding the Gap between customer perceptions and actual service delivered to the customers. The main objective is to assess the Service Quality delivered by Goldfinch Hotel, Mangalore to its customer using Servqual Scale. This study made use of survey method for data collection form through questionnaire method followed by observation and interaction with 100 customers of the hotel. This research identified some important areas for improvement (a gap between prevailing and expectation) of customers towards service on all the five dimensions identified viz., tangibility, responsiveness, assurance, reliability, and empathy. The service quality measured using 5 dimensions of Serqual scale i.e Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance and Empathy indicated that there was a perceived gap between expectancy and actual delivery of service quality. It can be clearly seen that the hotel lacks in fulfilling the expectation of customers or rather satisfying the customer.

KEY WORDS: Servqual scale, perceived service quality, service quality, hotel industry

INTRODUCTION

Hotel Industry is a large and diverse sector, ranging from F & B Service to sales departments. It is a service industry geared towards rendering best services to their customers. The hotel industry is a sector of business that revolves around providing boarding, lodging and a host of other services for travellers. Success of this industry relies on catering to the needs of the targeted clientele, creating an ambience through providing a wide range of services and amenities. Managing hotels has grown from its modest roots in providing the bare essentials of lodging into a large, multi-faceted, and diverse

industry. In a developing economy like India, hospitality industry offers a great promise and its development plays an important and crucial role in the economic progress. In recent years, hospitality industry has shown lot of growth with many hotels coming up in India and the government taking initiatives to promote the tourism industry. Though there are many numbers of hotels coming up, the service which these hotels provide to their customers varies from one hotel to another. As the customers are diverse with different cultural backgrounds and service expectations this poses a great challenge to this industry in terms of training the service personnel to



meet these expectations. The service experience perceptions of the guest at hotels have undergone a drastic shift in light of technology and developments in the service industry combined with high knowledge and expectation of the customers and the competition. The service experience in case of hotel industry starts well before the arrival of the customer at the hotel. Today's customers are willing to spend extra money if they are delivered with the best quality of service. In this study, the service provided by the hotel is measured through a SERQUAL Scale.

OBJECTIVE OF THIS STUDY

To assess the quality of service offered by Goldfinch Hotel, Mangalore and to identify gap if any between perceived service and expected service.

METHODOLOGY

The study is exploratory in nature with data on service quality gathered through a structured questionnaire keeping in view the objectives of the study. The primary data was collected through a survey using a structured questionnaire which was administered to a sample of 100 customers at random. The responses were then analysed for inferences. Also secondary data pertaining to assessment of service quality for hospitality industries were referred to.

This study was conducted to find the difference between the expectation and perception of consumer towards service quality. The main objective was to study the service quality prevailing in Goldfinch Hotel, Mangalore. For this purpose, five dimensions of service quality were considered i.e. Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance and Empathy. This five dimensions were measured in 7 points likert scale (1 being the lowest and 7 being the highest). It was found that the expectation of the customers from Goldfinch Hotel is much higher than what they actually perceive. This resulted in negative gap. The gap or difference between expectation and perception is found by subtracting perception from expectation.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Customer expectations are beliefs about service delivery that function as a standards or reference points against which performance is judged. Since customer compare their perception of service performance after receiving the service, with these reference points for the purpose of service quality evaluation, it is important for the marketers to have full knowledge about customer expectation (Nene Avinash, 2007). The customer expectation changes with their demographic profile of

the guest. The age, education, gender, occupation and income group are some of the demographic parameters which influence the customer expectations on service quality. One of the main research instruments for measuring quality in service industries is the servqual model, developed by Parasuraman Berry and Zeithaml and Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985; 1988). The model contains 22 items for assessing customer perceptions and expectations regarding the quality of service. A level of agreement or disagreement with a given item is rated on a seven point Likert type scale. The level of service quality is represented by the gap between perceived and expected service. The servqual model is based on five service quality dimensions, namely tangibles (physical facilities, equipment and personnel appearance), reliability (ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately), responsiveness (willingness to help customers and provide prompt service), assurance (knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to gain trust and confidence) and empathy (providing individualized attention to the customers). During the last few years a variety of service quality studies have been conducted (Ladhari 2008). Among others, service quality was measured in: accounting and audit firms (Ismail 2006), health spas (Snoj and Mumel 2002; Markovič, Horvat and Raspor 2004), higher education (Russel 2005; Markovič 2006), hotels (Markovič 2003, 2004; Juwaheer 2004; Wang, Wang and Zhao 2007; Raspor 2009), insurance (Tsoukatos, Marwa and Rand 2004), public-transport (Sánchez Pérez 2007), restaurants (Andaleeb and Conway 2006; Namkung and Jang 2008), travel agencies (Martinez Caro and Martinez Garcia 2008), and web-sites (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Malhotra 2005; Nusair and Kandampully 2008). Despite its wide usage, the model has been criticized by a number of academics (Carman 1990; Babakus and Boller 1992; Teas 1994). Criticism was directed at the conceptual and operational base of the model, mostly its validity, reliability, operationalization of expectations, and dimensional structure. However, there is general agreement that servqual items are reliable predictors of overall service quality (Khan 2003). As a result of these criticisms, alternative measures of service quality for specific service settings were developed. In the tourism and hospitality industry, Knutson et al. (1991) developed lodgserv, a model utilized to measure service quality in the lodging industry. The model is based on five original servqual dimensions and contains 26 items. Getty and Thompson (1994) introduced another specific model for hotel settings, called lodgequal, as did Wong Ooi Mei, Dean and White (1999) who developed a holserv model. The

lodgement model identified three dimensions, namely tangibles, reliability and contact. On the other hand, the holserv model includes 27 items, grouped in five original service dimensions. Furthermore, dineserv is a model used for measuring restaurant service quality (Stevens, Knutson and Patton 1995). It contains 29 items and five service dimensions. O'Neill et al. (2000) developed the diveperf model for assessing perceptions of diving services. The model consists of five service dimensions and 27 items ecoserv was introduced by Khan (2003). It was utilized to measure service quality expectations in eco-tourism, using 30 items and five service dimensions. All of these models represent modifications of the service quality instrument, aiming to improve its original methodology.

The service quality construct is mostly conceptualized in the context of service marketing literature (Lee, Lee and Yoo 2000). Therefore, it deals with the concept of perceived service quality. According to Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry (1990), perceived service quality is the extent to which a firm successfully serves the purpose of customers. Customers determine the perceived or cognitive value of service based on their experience with the service delivered. Ghobadian, Speller and Jones (1994) stated that customers' expectations, service delivery process and service outcome have an impact on perceived service quality.

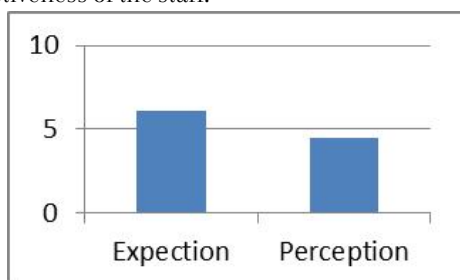
DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Perception of customer regarding Modern Infrastructure in The Goldfinch Hotel

Regarding the expectation and perception towards modern infrastructure the scores are 6.6 and 5.1 respectively. The modern infrastructure associated with Goldfinch Hotel includes Car park, Mini Bar, and Conference Office etc.

Expectation and perception of customer scores on Ambience:-

The average scores regarding the expectation and perception towards modern ambience is 6.3 and 4.7 respectively. This reveals that the hotel needs to improve upon its ambience which includes cleanliness, lighting, receptiveness of the staff.



Expectation and perception of customer scores on Appearance of Employees:-

The appearance of employees in the 3star boutique hotel should be neat. The employees are expected to be well groomed. Out of 100 respondents the average results regarding the expectation and perception towards grooming of employees is 6.1 and 4.5 respectively. This shows that the hotel needs to pay a lot of attention about grooming and appearance of the staff in the hotel.

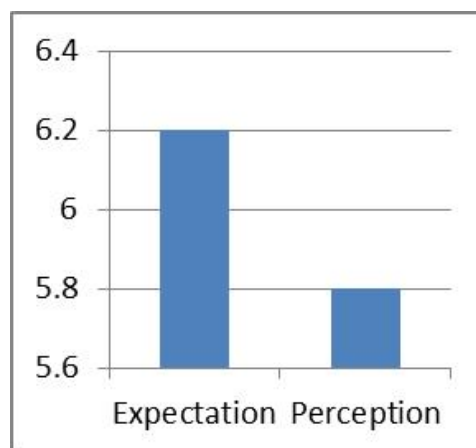
Expectation and perception of customer regarding Materials Associated with Service:-

The results regarding the expectation and perception towards materials associated with service is 6.6 and 5.1 respectively. This chart explains about expectation and perception of customers regarding Materials associated with service in hotel.

Average Expectation and Perception scores on the Tangibility Dimension:-

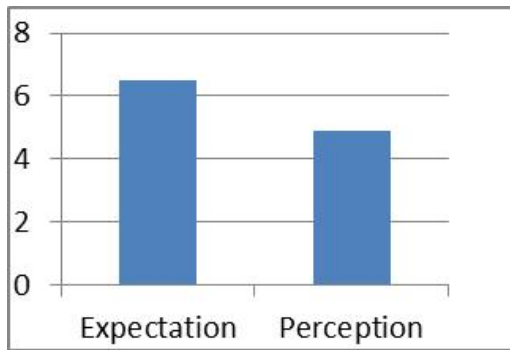
The average Expectation and Perception of the customer on the basis of Tangibility Dimension is 6.4 and 4.85 respectively. This chart shows the overall difference or gap between Expectation and Perception of the customer towards Tangibility dimension

Expectation and perception of customer scores on delivery of promise by the hotel staff:-



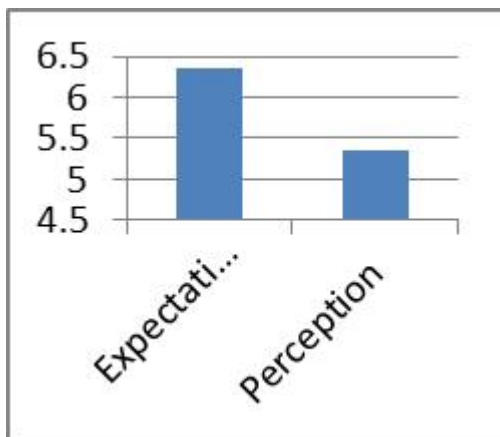
The results reveal that there is a huge discrepancy between what is promised and delivered as service by the hotel. The scores for expectation and perception towards delivery of promises by the hotel is 6.2 and 5.8 respectively. The hotel needs to focus on this area by keeping up the promises delivered and if possible over deliver above that what is promised, which is a quality for customer delight.

Expectation and perception of customer scores on Service performance for the first time:-



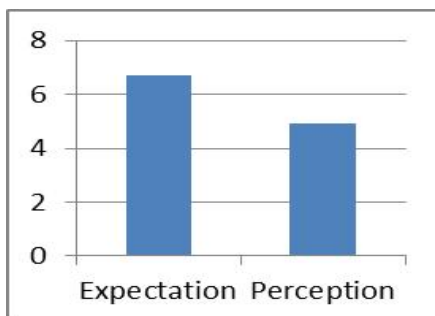
The scores reveal that there is a huge perceived gap between expected right performance of service by the customers and what is actually delivered.

Expectation and Perception of customers on service reliability Dimension:-



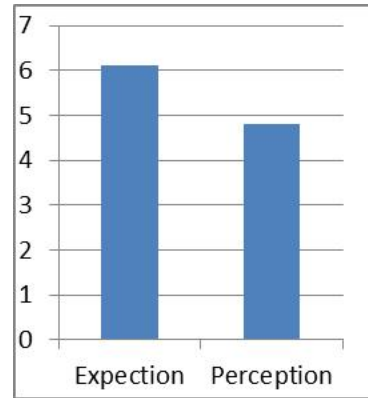
Average scores of customers on expectation and Perception on the basis of reliability dimension of service is 6.35 and 5.35 respectively. The above chart shows the overall difference or gap between Expectation and Perception of the customer towards Reliability dimension

Average expectation and perception scores of customer on Promptness of Service:-



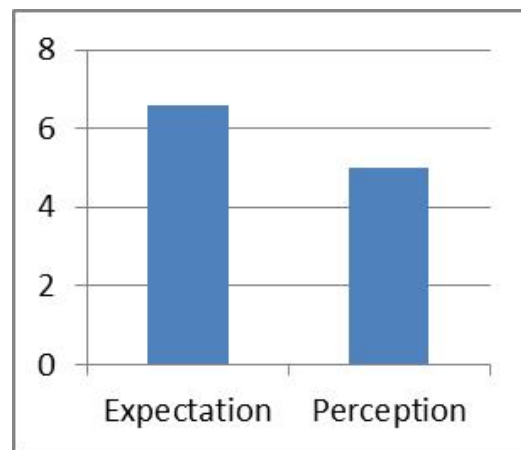
The average expectation and perception scores of the respondents is 6.7 and 4.9 respectively in 7 points likert scale rating. This shows that this area needs to be improved as the hotel is perceived to lack in this regard.

Expectation and perception of customer scores on response to request:-



The sole motive of all the service industry is to keep their customers happy. This can be done by properly responding to customer's request. The above chart shows that the expectation and perception of the respondents towards response of customers request by the hotel is 6.1 and 4.8 respectively in 7 point likert scale rating.

Average expectation and perception scores of customers on choice of Goldfinch Hotel as a Travel Destination

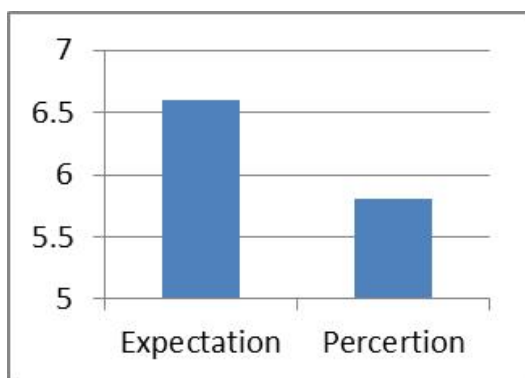


When the travellers chose a hotel for their hospitality destination, they are like to be sure regarding the bookings made in hotel. The above chart shows that the expectation and perception of the respondents towards choosing Goldfinch as their Hospitality destination is 6.6 and 5.0 respectively in 7 point likert scale rating.

Average expectation and perception scores of customer on Courtesy of staff:-

In a service industry, particularly in hotel, it is very important for the employees of the hotel to be courteous to their guests. The average expectation and perception of the respondents towards Courtesy of employees in Goldfinch Hotel is 6.5 and 4.8 in 7 point likert scale. This clearly reflects that the hotel needs to train and sensitise its staff to be more courteous in their interactions with the customers especially this is important in dealing with foreign guests.

Average expectation and perception scores of customer on employees Knowledge to respond to queries:-

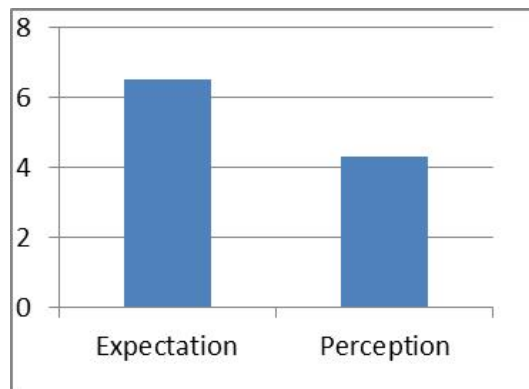


The research helps to understand that out of 100 respondents the average results regarding the expectation and perception towards employee’s knowledge to answer queries in the hotel is 6.6 and 5.8 respectively. The hotel needs to equip the staff with all the necessary information which the guests look forward to. Educating the staff in this regard is crucial for maintaining the service delivery.

Expectation and Perception on the basis of Assurance Dimension:-

The average Expectation and Perception of the customers on the basis of Assurance Dimension are 6.5 and 5.2 respectively. This shows the major gap in service with respect to assurance dimension.

Expectation and perception of customer regarding Individual attention given to customer



Out of 100 respondents, the average expectation and perception of customer regarding Individual attention given to them in the hotel is 6.5 and 4.3 respectively. Giving individual attention to the guest is an important parameter that makes them feel good and this perception tends to affect the customers perception on service quality significantly.

Average expectation and perception scores of customers towards empathy:-

The scores regarding the expectation and perception of customers on empathy is 6.1 and 5.2 respectively. Although the perceived gap is less, the staff must be more sensitive towards customers’ needs.

FINDINGS

Tangibility Dimension:-

With respect to tangibility dimension of service it was found that there was a significant difference between expected and perceived service by the customer. This is so because, the customers are not satisfied by the modern infrastructure used in hotel, ambience of hotel, appearance of hotel stalls etc. Customers expect a high level of service dimension on tangibility factor from a 3 star boutique hotel like Goldfinch.

Reliability Dimension:-

There is a perceived difference between the expected service and actual service delivered to the customer on the reliability dimension. From this it is evident that customers are unsatisfied with the reliability of service level provided by Goldfinch Hotel. Customers are unsatisfied with the promises which are made by the hotel but not delivered in terms of services.

Responsiveness Dimension:-

Responsiveness is the perceived time delay between a service request and its actual delivery. The perceived gap on this dimension was negative. Responsive dimensions include promptness of service to the customers, willingness of employees to be receptive and respond to the request of the customers etc. By this it can be inferred out that the hotel should be more responsive or prompt in delivering service to the customers. This may also call for a professional training of the staff.

Assurance Dimension:-

The average score on this dimension indicates perceived gap. This assurance dimension includes courteous behaviour of employees towards customers, greeting the customer, reassuring the customer about the availability of rooms in the Hotel, offering customers timely and reliable information when sought etc. This dimension is important in building up customer confidence and the hotel should look forward to building trust among the customers or making customers more assured.

Empathy Dimension:-

Empathy is thinking from the position of the customer. Like other dimensions, empathy also shows a negative difference between expected service and perceived service by the customer. Empathy dimension mainly refers to being empathic towards customer's needs and wants. It's more of understanding the customer's specific needs from their point of view and fulfilling the same.

Though all the five dimensions indicates a negative gap, the fact is that customer always expect higher levels of service from a hotel, which cannot be ignored. It is said that even if customer gets the best level of service, his/ her expectation always higher. Although the level of service offered might be of high level for the point of view of hotel staff, this industry has become so competitive that the only differentiator for hospitality industry is quality of service.

SUGGESTION

Some suggestions purely based on personal observation during this study and interaction with the customers and staff of the hotel is as follows:

- The goldfinch hotel should look into modernizing the infrastructure of the hotel such as Wi-Fi Facility, Mini bar etc. The hotel does not have facilities such as gym, swimming pool, spa etc which are the basic requirements for a 3 star boutique hotel. Modernization of infrastructure may also include adding these facilities.

- In any hotel, the first thing that attracts customer is the ambience in lobby, rooms, restaurants etc. The goldfinch hotel has somewhat failed in maintaining proper ambience in hotel. It would be better for the hotel if they increase the size of their lobby and make it more spacious.
- The lobby music played in lobby should also be properly monitored as it also plays an important part in ambience of the hotel. Some time the volume of the lobby music increases all of a sudden causing discomfort to the guests.
- There have been many instances where the guests are promised the room during their check-in but later they are made to wait for a long time in a lobby. The coordination between housekeeping department and front office should be improved. The house keeping employees should keep the room clean much before the guests arrives. This requires a bit of planning and coordination.
- And in cases of advance booking, room should be blocked and that room should not be allotted to any other guests till the actual guest arrives.
- The Gold finch hotel must have a proper transportation facility for their customers/guests. At present the hotel outsources its transportation which is not reliable and control over the quality of service is remote.
- The employees in the Goldfinch hotel should be well trained about all the operations of the hotel so that is any unforeseen situation arises, any employee will be capable of dealing with it.
- There should be decentralization of decision making power. At present all decisions are taken by the Goldfinch hotel, Bangalore. It should be decentralized and power should be given to each property.
- The Goldfinch hotel must understand the specific needs of the customers and deliver their services according to those needs.

CONCLUSION

The study was conducted to understand and assess the perceived gap between the level of customers' expectation and actual service delivered on various dimension of service which the hotel provides, and also to find out whether these quality dimensions have been well understood by the staff. Also the various ways in which the service could be improved is explored. The service quality measured using 5 dimensions of Serqual scale i.e Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance and

Empathy indicated that there was a perceived gap between expectancy and actual delivery of service quality. It can be clearly seen that the hotel lacks in fulfilling the expectation of customers or rather satisfying the customer. Hence it is clear that the hotel has to improve the quality of service it provides to its customers which calls for sensitising and training the staff.

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