SERVICE QUALITY AMONG KURDISTAN HOTELS

Nyaz Abdulla ✉

Ishik University, Sulaimani, Kurdistan Region of Iraq

mawlan.abdullah97@gmail.com

Hozak Wirya

Ishik University, Sulaimani, Kurdistan Region of Iraq

hozak.d94@gmail.com

Cemil Top

Ishik University, Kurdistan Region of Iraq

cemil.top@ishik.edu.iq

Abstract

The aim of this research was to investigate the significant determinants of ServQual on the customer satisfaction in hotel management in Sulaimani, Kurdistan Region of Iraq. We have initially conducted a survey questionnaire to 80 hotel visitors in various hotels. Secondly, we have proposed the regression analysis in order to indicate the significant factors that influence the customer satisfaction in this sector. The results show that tangibles, responsiveness, and assurance are the significant determinants of customer satisfaction in hotel service sector. Besides, reliability and empathy didn't impact the customer satisfaction significantly. Further, the strategic advices have been given to the managers in the hotels.

Keywords: ServQual, Service Quality, Hospitality Management, Hotel Management

INTRODUCTION

Importance of the service quality does not come into discussion. Its direct effects on customer satisfaction and indirect effects on customer loyalty has been searched since years by a lot of scholars in marketing field of study (Aydin& Demir, 2015; Budur, 2018; Demir, 2017). In order to

gain effectiveness in the organization managers have to be careful about the quality of the provided services in the workplace, which have a direct correlation on the perception of the customers. For the long-term business performance and profitability organizations need satisfied customers and further loyal customers who like to keep their relationship with their current organizations (Demir and Guven, 2017).

Tourism sector can be the future of KRG's economy, so improving this sector including the quality of hotels is very crucial because lodging services makes a big part of tourism. Thus, in order to improve the quality of hotels in Kurdistan we should know about the level of the quality hotels that exist in the region. Therefore, we interviewed guests who stay at least one night in the hotels and observed the quality.

The importance of the study emerges as; firstly, there isn't similar research in the city. Second, results of the study should provide a clear understanding of the importance of the service quality for the practitioners in the region. For this aim the students have visited 4 hotels in the city and collected 80 questionnaires from the customers of the residential hotels. Results of the study evaluated through Regression analysis. The results have been declared in the conclusion part and strategic suggestions have been given to the managers in the region.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Service quality provides productivity in the organization and competitive advantage in the market (Demir, Talaat, and Aydinli, 2015). On the other hand, it effects customers perception positively and cause satisfaction according to meeting customer's expectations (Budur et al., 2018; Tsaur& Lin, 2004; Demir and Eray, 2015; Demir and Mukhlis, 2017).In the organizations customer contact employees have more impact on the customers perception of quality service (Bitner, 1990; Demir and Aydinli, 2016). Grönroos (1984) noted service quality depends on expected service and perceived service. And he divided service quality as Technical Quality (the result of customers interaction with the company) and Functional Quality (the style or shape of the service that customer become) into two dimensions. Later, Parasuraman et al. (1985) have developed a new model to measure quality of the services in the organizations, which named as SERVQUAL. The new model has five sub dimensions of reliability, tangibles, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy (Demir, Eray, and Erguvan, 2015; Nadiri and Hussain, 2005; Parasuraman et al., 1985):

tangibles – the physical equipment or materials that cover the environment in the hotel (tables, decorations, employees' attires, materials in the rooms or restaurants).

reliability – the service givers ability to meet required service or giving sufficient and trustable responses to customers' needs or questions.

responsiveness – customer contact employees eager to provide efficient service performance.

assurance – providing confidence to customers (polite and trustworthy behaviors).

empathy – employees understanding of customer needs and providing personal care.

Similar studies in the field, Tsaur and Lin (2004) revealed that employee performance is crucial factor to foster service quality and employee's performance is directly and positively affected by training programs and well payments. Nadiri and Hussain (2005) investigated service quality dimensions in North Cyprus and found that tangibles and intangibles have significant and positive effect on customer satisfaction. Wilkins et al. (2007) noted that three factors are very important for the Australian customers to accept a quality service in Hotel sector, which are physical product, service experience and quality food and beverage. Similarly, Briggs et al. (2007) defined high performance, personal service and the value of money are important factors for quality perception and customers satisfaction among small, medium and large hotels in Scotland. Additionally, Ojekalu et al. (2019) found that gender and education of the customers playing important role to define a quality for the received services.

METHODOLOGY

Data for this study were collected from the customers of three- and five-star hotels located in Sulaimanyah_Kurdistan. Hotel guests were interviewed using a structured questionnaire to find out about their perception of the quality of the service offered by the hotel, perceived value, level of satisfaction, and their behavioral of employee in the hotel regarding the service they perceived. Due to the fact that both Kurdish and Arabic are official languages in Iraqi Kurdistan and many foreigners stay in hotels, structured questionnaires were prepared in Kurdish, Arabic, and English.

In this research modified version of SERVQUAL, was used to analyze the service quality expectations and perceptions of the hotel's guest. Parasuraman et al. (1988) defined service quality as "a global judgment or attitude relating to the overall excellence or superiority of the service" overall service quality performance could be determined by the measurement scale SERVQUAL that uses five generic dimensions: tangibles (the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communications materials); reliability (the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately); responsiveness (the willingness to help customers and provide prompt service); assurance (the competence of the system and its credibility in providing a courteous and secure service); and empathy (the approachability, ease of access and effort taken to understand customers' needs). The development of the gap model by Parasuraman et al. (1985) opened new horizons to the understanding of service quality. We

collected data from 4 different hotels in sulamnaiyah/Kurdistan, the final sample of 4 hotels consist of 80 responses an average of 20 guests for each unit, the sample for customers composed 47% female, and 53 of respondents were male. Of the samples, 50 % were Kurdish 35% were Arabic 4% were Turkish and Persian and 7% were other nationality. Table 1 Shows the Further Details about the demographic information of the sample population.

Table 1 Demographic information about sample population of the study

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Age					
Valid	18-25	5	6.3	6.3	6.3
	26-35	25	31.3	31.3	37.5
	36-45	21	26.3	26.3	63.8
	46-55	12	15.0	15.0	78.8
	56-60	7	8.8	8.8	87.5
	60+	10	12.5	12.5	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	
Gender					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	43	53.8	53.8	53.8
	Female	37	46.3	46.3	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	
Nationality					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Kurdish	40	50.0	50.0	50.0
	Arabic	4	5.0	5.0	55.0
	Other	36	45	45	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Further, we used regression analysis method to evaluate and analyzing the data in order to get the result of perception of the customer and knowing the level of satisfaction of the guests in hotels. Basis on these five dimensions which is (tangibles, Reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy) which effect on customer satisfaction. The Figure 1 shows the proposed model of the study.

Figure 1 Model of the Study
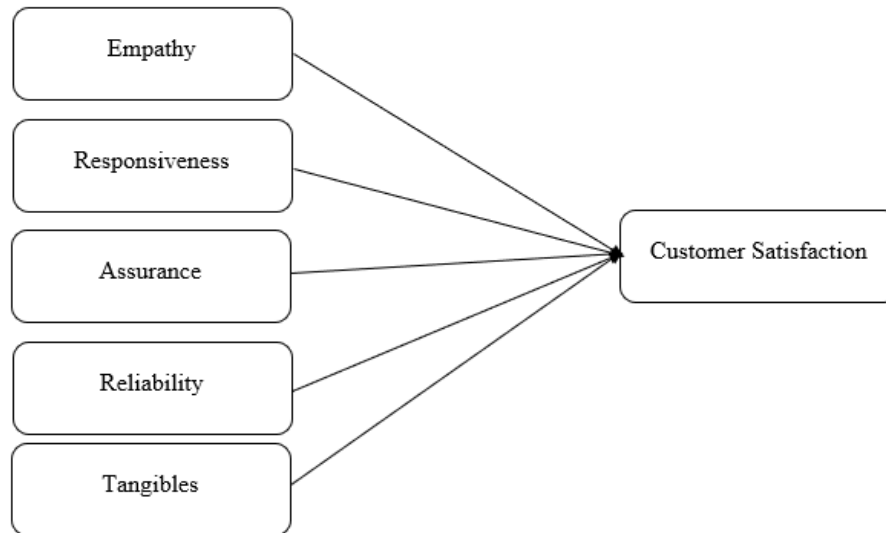
ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Reliability analysis was first done in order to validate the questionnaire. Secondly, we have proposed the regression analysis to understand the significant determinants of service quality which impact the customer satisfaction in the hotel industry in Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The reliability analysis has been conducted through Cronbach's Alpha. Based on the literature, Cronbach's Alpha value must hold minimally value of 0.7 to be considered as reliable (Demir and Bulut, 2018). The results of Cronbach's Alpha in this study show that the constructs hold minimum 0.851 and maximum 0.923. According to these results, it can be revealed that the questionnaire was reliable.

Secondly, we have proposed the regression analysis to investigate the dimensions of service quality which significantly impact the customer satisfaction (Table 2).

Table 2 Results of the regression analysis

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.693	.420		1.651	.103
	Tangibles	.173	.125	.161	1.985	.040
	Reliability	.011	.145	.010	.077	.939
	Empathy	.073	.112	.073	.653	.516
	Assurance	.309	.086	.366	3.611	.001
	Responsiveness	.441	.117	.408	3.779	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Satisfaction						

Given in the Table 2, tangibles, assurance, and responsiveness are the main significant parameters that impact the customer satisfaction initially. Besides, reliability and empathy didn't impact the customer satisfaction significantly.

Based on the observed adjusted R square, it can be said that tangibles, assurance, and responsiveness explain 54 percent of the overall variance. Wisely, 46 percent of the remaining reasons of the satisfaction is considered in the other determinants which is the topic of another study.

Among the significant influencers, it has been observed that responsiveness is the most significant and the highest influencing determinant (0.408) which impacts the customer satisfaction. Further, Assurance is the second important factor (0.366) that impact the customers' satisfaction in this industry. Finally, tangibles are the last significant factor (0.161) that influence the customer satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this research was to investigate the significant determinants of ServQual on the customer satisfaction in hotel management in Sulaimani, Kurdistan Region of Iraq. We have initially conducted a survey questionnaire to 80 hotel visitors in various hotels. Secondly, we have proposed the regression analysis in order to indicate the significant factors that influence the customer satisfaction in this sector.

The results indicate that the customers' priority from the hotel management is to solve their problems, act proactively in case of any risk…etc. Secondly, customers are precise about their privacy during their stay and want hotel staff to keep it private. Finally, the customers are wiling hotel management to purchase hotel room furniture, decoration, facilities, and design of the layout convenient and appropriate for the customers' desires. Moreover, cleaners, chives, waiters, etc. must wear neat and modern for the customer satisfaction.

Results of the study are very important for the Sulaymaniyah city hotel managers, who want to understand the quality perceptions of the customers in the region. The managers may plan their strategies partially based on these results. Secondly, they can benchmark their service quality based on these parameters.

The study contains some imitations. Initially, as the customers are precise about their privacy, they haven't been willing to fill the survey questionnaire. Thus, we have collected only 80 data among various hotels. The further studies must contain more data for more reliable analysis. Secondly, the study is limited only in the Sulaimani, Kurdistan Region of Iraq and cannot be generalized for all Iraq.

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