

IEBMC 2019**9th International Economics and Business Management Conference****SERVICE QUALITY AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AT
INTERNATIONAL HOTELS IN KUALA LUMPUR**

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Abstract

Nowadays, service quality plays an important role to ensure that the customers are satisfied. Thus, hotel management must ensure their service is in top notch and use it a competitive advantage to help them facilitate their hotel in the market. The main objective of this research, therefore, is to see the relationship between service qualities attributes which includes its five (5) dimension namely Reliability, Responsiveness, Empathy, Assurance and Tangible with customer satisfaction in international hotel in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The prominent service quality model “SERVQUAL” is used in this research in order to understand the concept of service quality and customer satisfaction deeper and data collection as well. Hence, data were collected from 150 guests of international Hotels located in area of Kuala Lumpur, and a set of self-administered questionnaire was used. Data were analysed using SPSS version 24. This study looked into descriptive analysis, reliability analysis and Pearson correlation to test the hypothesis. The result shows that there is a significant relationship between service quality practice and customer satisfaction in international hotel. This research also contributes to the existing body of knowledge in the field of academics and findings are expected to provide guidelines for enhance service quality level in order to ensure customers ‘satisfaction of the international hotels in Malaysia.

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1. Introduction

In this 21st century, numerous of businesses saw that service quality and customer satisfaction is indeed important for their long-run survival. They are especially vital to the hospitality industry since the competitiveness in this industry is gradually increasing (Mubiri et al., 2016). With the constant increase in demand in hotel services in this century, it is no wonder that the competition goes intense in the market.

According to Okumus et al. (2010), the complication of accommodation industry and the fragmentation can be used to pinpoint to the challenges of operating the hospitality business. Based on Saleem and Raja (2014) however, the rapidity of competition and volume growth are the most prominent challenges a hotel industry must face. With the progressive economic development, the hotel industry had started to become more competitive. With more competition, the customer expectation and demands increase (Mubiri et al., 2016). This can be satisfied by meeting the wants and needs of customer and to provide good quality services.

To compete in the market, hotels need to identify on the factors that would make a customer satisfied and return to their hotels. Customer satisfaction comes from the emotional and internal feeling from the customer after their expectations have been fulfilled (Oliver, 1980). In the services industry, customer satisfaction related to the ability of the organization to attend to the customer's wants, needs, and ensure their service quality meet their expectations. This shows that service quality is closely linked to customer satisfaction.

Establishing a connection between service quality and customer satisfaction, could give a benefit towards the organizations, especially in hospitality industry because management could put in place proper strategies that could help in increasing the levels of service quality provided to their customer. The quality of service rendered towards the customer enable hotels to satisfied their current customers and consequently attracting new customers.

A few of the characteristics of the business organization's thriving activity are the demonstration and the continuous enhancement of quality services that meet customer expectations. It is even prominent for hospitality industry where customer satisfactions are very critical for the hotel success. The hotel options become one of the most important topics of the discussion which consist of the hotel services diversification, reliability, quality and price. Considering a lot of hotels offers identical or similar services in the market, it is vital for the hotel to attract customer but at the same time, sustain the customer. It is compulsory to offer quality services that keeps former customers while attracting new, potential customers in order to compete in future and to preserve the position held.

1.1. Service Quality in Hotel

The application of service quality can be seen in several different sectors. Service quality is also widely used in the hotel industry as there have been several of research that has been conducted and focused on the service quality of the hotel industry in the past years (Juwaheer, 2004).

Nowadays, the competitiveness in the hotel industry tends to grow as the number of hotels increases. Because of this competitiveness in the economy, hotels need to find a competitive advantage to differentiate themselves from the competitors as most hotels would provide similar physical facilities. Thus, to survive

in the economy, hotels depend on the service quality they provide which leads to customer satisfaction (Mohsin & Lockyer, 2010). It is important for international and domestic hotels to understand good values and instrument to be used to enhance the service quality in this competitive environment (Narangajavana & Hu, 2008).

Other than that, it is vital for them to apprehend and had the ability to recognize the service quality dimension and how it is important towards the customers (Fick & Ritchie, 1991). Managers could overcome the problem of increasing the service quality in hotels with a better understanding on these sector (Asubonteng et al., 1996).

The perception of service quality in the hotel industry varies among researchers. According to Wilkins et al. (2007) research, service quality in hotels consist of a few prime categories which are service experience, tangible product and the meal's and drink's quality. At the same time, a research by Kimpakorn and Tocquer (2009) emphasize that the amount of the staff's incentive needed to bear the hotel's brand image is seemingly important to enhance the role of service quality.

Other than that, Chang (2006) suggested that the customer's view on service quality has a relationship with the attitude of the front-end staff. Ineson et al. (2011) had other ideas on the perception of service quality. The research mentioned that employees whom had enthusiasm to carry out their work and to provide service, employees moral values and the capability to act during crisis are the factors for an outstanding service. In conclusion, because of these aspects, Vijayadurai (2008) expressed that the staff needs to undergo training to guarantee their courteous value and friendliness.

1.2. Customer Satisfaction in Hotel

Under the hospitality and tourism environment, customers are seen as guests that possesses the capacity of experiencing and using the services and products provided. In this context, the services and goods provided for the customer by the hotel has an effect on customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction has been deemed as important since years ago and is seen as a tool for an organization's success. According to Gronroos (1990), Customer satisfaction is one of the important factors that is needed in the business to achieve a favourable outcome. Customers who are pleased with the service provided are most probably would want to repeat their visit or repurchase to the service provider (Alam & Yasin, 2010). Thus, it is evident that the satisfaction by customer is need for the survival of the organization, even in the hotel industry.

The major complication that the organization encounter is the capability to generate profit and at the same time, maintaining the satisfaction of the customer (Dominici & Guzzo 2010). Thus, managers should be aware of the challenges that exist in the environment. As stated by researchers, the profitability of an organization is affected by the consumer's satisfaction (Luo & Homburg, 2007). Furthermore, the intensity of competitiveness in the economy enforces numerous of hotel services to provide quality services. The rivalry in the industry would help strengthen innovations that are concentrated on customer satisfaction. Hence, hotels need to develop a distinctive strategy as it is an essential tool to gain profit and satisfy customer demand at the same time.

In the tourism industry, the brand image of the hotel is crucial to ensure customers repetitive purchasing habit and at the same time delivering good word of mouth (Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000).

According to Ryu et al. (2008), the hotel's brand image has an effect on customer's behavioural intention because they represent the service experienced by customer and can influence the perception of customer while indirectly affect consumer's satisfaction.

1.3. Service Quality Dimension

In measuring service quality, many researchers use SERVQUAL model constructed by Parasuraman et al. (1988). This model has been widely applied in evaluating service quality in services of hotel such as in Taiwan (Su & Sun, 2007), Malaysia (Boon-Liat et al., 2013), Vietnam (Minh et al., 2015) and other countries. Parasuraman, et al. (1988) developed an instrument, the SERVQUAL model, which was among the first models used to measure provider quality. The model is based on five elements reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles. The SERVQUAL model is built round the gap that exists between the services supplied towards the predicted service satisfactory as perceived by the customer.

SERVQUAL scale by Parasuraman et al. (1988) is one of the most broadly used tools to measure quality in service in a variety of provider fields such as hotel commercial enterprise. As stated by Boon-Liat et al. (2013) and Kinderis et al. (2011), hotels need to pursue established classification requirements to make the services high-quality. The proposition for the enhancement of service quality in hotel was to execute it throughout three level which, the outcome of the quality, the improvement of quality procedure and quality structure all through the effect of a 'hard' and 'soft' service segments and the impact of the environment itself was taken into account. Other than that, it is fitting to implement some measures more broadly, such as the quality verification list, the regulations, ambiguous customer, distinctive examination, professional consultations, meetings, an ideal customer service system and methodologies for service evaluation. The enhancement of the hotel's management itself is an essential aspect to give an attention to, especially the enhancement of service supply culture and the generic management of quality. All personnel of the business are needed to be involved in this process.

2. Problem Statement

Over the years, tourism industry has grown rapidly and is becoming one of the biggest economic sectors around the globe (Liat et al., 2018). The tourism sector in a country can be developed by many factors but one of the evident factor that enables the progression of the tourism factor is by expanding the hotel industry. Based on a research by Mohajerani and Miremadi (2012), the hotel industry is one of the sectors that was known to make a significant contribution in countless of countries. The tourism sector in Malaysia is also deemed as important since it contributed to national gross domestic product (Yen & Othman, 2011; Zailani et al., 2011). Other than that, with the increasing number of tourist, the hotel industry in Malaysia made a consistent progress in tourism, resulting in a stable increase in profit during the years.

Nowadays, in the tourism industry context, customer satisfaction is perceived as a tool for a hotel's success and hotels will not be able to compete in the market if they failed to reach the customer's expectations (Forozia et al., 2013). However, according to Forozia et al. (2013), the research on the development of customer satisfaction itself in Malaysia is still limited. On top of that, a research that focuses on customer satisfaction on International hotel has yet to be conducted despite the number of studies that

has been made on customer's satisfaction in the hotel industry in Malaysia (Albattat & Amer, 2016, Lahap et al., 2016; Mohammed & Rashid, 2018; Rahimi & Kozak, 2017). It is vital for Malaysian hotel to know customer satisfaction context to ensure customer's sustainability not only in the tourism sector, but also to sustain the customer in their business.

Moreover, managers face difficulties in offering and maintaining customer satisfaction in the hotel sector (Dominici & Guzzo, 2010). There might be a few reasons that can cause this matter but as according to researchers, some customers may have liked the services offered by the hotels but not all customers think alike. It is noteworthy that different customers have different preferences and satisfaction. Thus, the hotel might take actions by adjusting their services so that it is appropriate with specific customer's cultural norms (Mubiri et al., 2016). The dissimilarity of culture makes it hard for the Hotel staffs to offer and maintain customer satisfaction. Based on several of research, it is challenging for employees to fully understand and satisfy customers from increasingly multinational backgrounds (Huang et al., 2017; Ounsri & Thawesaengskulthai, 2019).

3. Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction?
2. What is the relationship between reliability and customer satisfaction?
3. What is the relationship between assurance and customer satisfaction?
4. What is the relationship between tangible and customer satisfaction?
5. What is the relationship between empathy and customer satisfaction?
6. What is the relationship between responsiveness and customer satisfaction?

4. Purpose of the Study

Generally, this study is objectives are to determine the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction.

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3. To determine the relationship between assurance and customer satisfaction.
4. To determine the relationship between tangible and customer satisfaction.
5. To determine the relationship between empathy and customer satisfaction.
6. To determine the relationship between responsiveness and customer satisfaction.

5. Research Methods

In this study, quantitative research is use to test the hypothesis. This method uses statistic to analyse and is capable to create quantitative data that can be portrayed through numbers. Brynard and Hanekom (2005) had mentioned that techniques such as questionnaire and quantitative analysis could be incorporate in quantitative research methods. The rationale of using quantitative approach in this study is because it required proving cause-effect relationships that enables it to be generalized to the population flexibly.

For primary data, involves collecting information specifically for the study. Primary data for this study are questionnaire. Eventually for the quantitative method, the tool for the primary data was used from the self-completion questionnaire. Using self-completion questionnaire has its benefit because the questionnaire was a complete standardized measuring tool. This is because, all of the questions for the respondent were always phrased exactly in an identical way (Sapsford, 2007). Other than that, the cheapness of a questionnaire and the time saving for researcher in the self-completion questionnaires is also one of the advantages according to Sapsford (2007). Questionnaires were also frequently use marketing studies, psychological sociological and perspective (Richardson & Green, 2006).

For data collection, structured questionnaire was used which contains three sections. Section one contains demographical information, second two contains questions related to service quality, the independent variable which are reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance and tangible and final section contains questions related to customer satisfaction, the dependent variable.

Then, quantitative analysis of the question responses obtained from the questionnaire need to be summarized and depicted clearly. Method of analysis that was used for this study is the descriptive analysis, correlation analysis and reliability analysis

5.1. Research Framework

Based on the past literatures, the framework of this study is developed as figure 01.

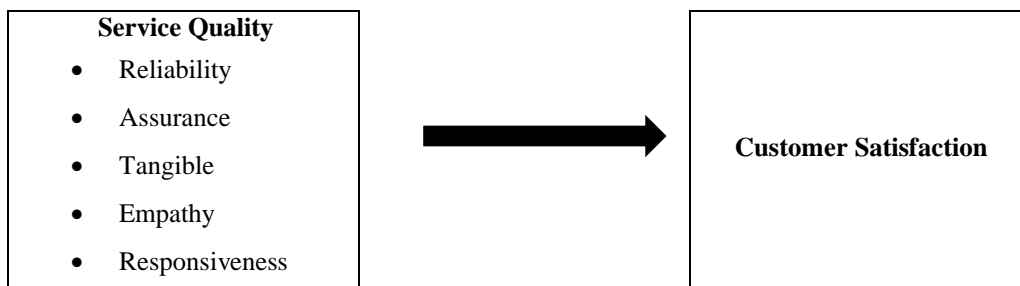


Figure 01. Research Framework

6. Findings

This study comprises three sections of data analysis. The first section is descriptive analysis based on the demographic information of the respondents. The second section discusses the reliability analysis, and third correlation analysis. A total of 200 set of questionnaire has been distributed to the respondent which consist of customers who had stayed at International Hotel in Kuala Lumpur. Out of the total amount, only 150 were collected and is able to use.

6.1. Descriptive Analysis

Out of 150 respondents, 66 respondents are female and 84 of them are male. Hence, it can be concluded that number of male respondent are more compared to female respondent that shown the percentages both 56% (male) and 44 % (female). There are four groups of age which consist of below 30 years, 31-40 years, 41-50years, and 51 years and above. The majority customers that stayed at international

hotels around Kuala Lumpur falls under the group of 31-40 years (26%) and 41-50 years (35.3%). From 150 respondents, 60.7%, 91 respondents are Malaysian peoples and 39.3%, 59 respondents are from International peoples and it can be concluded the Malaysian peoples are more attended the hotels than International peoples.

Moreover, the result shows that most customers at international hotels Kuala Lumpur have bachelor degree as their highest level of education which is 68 respondents (45.3%). However, customers with SPM, STPM, Diploma, Master's, PHD and others are the least amount. Second highest would be Master's with 37 frequency or 24.7%. Then, Diploma with 22 frequency or 14.7%. Followed by SPM with 9 and 6.0%, others with 6 and 4.0%, PhD with 5 frequency or 3.3% and lastly, STPM with frequency of 3 or 2.0%.

Meanwhile, the respondents gave their types of occupation and the results show that highest percentage of occupation that was encountered was professionals with 36.7% and 55 respondents. Followed by business and others with 22% and both respondents is 33. Then, Government employee followed suit with 9.3%, frequency of 14, Next is Student with 5.3%, frequency of 8 and last but not least is Lecturer with 4.7% and frequency of 7. Mostly of them stayed were professionals and businesses.

6.2. Reliability Analysis

Reliability is defined as the consistency of the measures. These tests regarded reliable if getting similar results repeatedly. Reliability test are used for this scale is through Cronbach Alpha. Cronbach Alpha Test was used because it is most acceptable tool reliability test applied by most researchers. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2010) in Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis, the closer it is to 1.0, the higher the internal consistency reliability. Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis, it measures reliability less than 0.6 considered poor.

Table 01 shows the reliability test for all variables of Cronbach's alphas for this study. The average Cronbach's Alpha of this research for six dimension is 0.893 which is an excellent good according to the previous author.

Table 01. Reliability test for all variables of Cronbach's Alphas

| Variables/ Dimension | Cronbach's Alpha (Expectations) | Number of Items |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| Reliability | 0.806 | 5 |
| Responsiveness | 0.836 | 4 |
| Assurance | 0.786 | 4 |
| Empathy | 0.879 | 5 |
| Tangible | 0.826 | 4 |
| Customer Satisfaction | 0.893 | 5 |
| All 6 Dimensions | 0.893 | 27 |

From the Table 01, the highest Cronbach's alpha is the dependent variable which is customer satisfaction with α value of 0.893. It is closely followed by the independent variable which is empathy with α value of 0.879, responsiveness with α value of 0.836, tangible with α value of 0.826, reliability with α value of 0.806 and last but not least, assurance with α value of 0.786.

6.3. Correlation Analysis

Correlation can be referred to how strong between a pair or more variables are related with each other. It summarizes the strength between the Independent Variable, which in this study is Service Quality (Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy and Tangible) and the dependant variable which is Customer Satisfaction. The Pearson correlation coefficient in the SPSS software was used to compute these variables.

Table 02. Relationship between independent and dependent variables using Correlation

| Variables/ Dimension | Reliability | Responsiveness | Empathy | Assurance | Tangible | Customer Satisfaction |
|--------------------------|-------------|----------------|---------|-----------|----------|--------------------------|
| Reliability | 1 | | | | | 0.605 |
| Responsiveness | | 1 | | | | 0.672 |
| Assurance | | | 1 | | | 0.679 |
| Empathy | | | | 1 | | 0.606 |
| Tangible | | | | | 1 | 0.688 |
| Customer Satisfaction | | | | | | 1 |

From the Table 02, it indicates that the correlation between reliability and customer satisfaction which is 0.605. It is positively related to the magnitude of 60.5%. This means the reliability has positive relationship with customer satisfaction. The second variable between responsiveness with customer satisfaction which is 0.672. It is also has positively significant relationship of the magnitude of 67.2%. Similarly, empathy (0.679), assurance (0.606) and tangible (0.688) also have positive significant relationship with customer satisfaction. The magnitude from each variable which is empathy (67.9%), assurance (60.6%) and tangible (68.8%).

Table 03. Hypothesis testing

| No. | Hypothesis | Remarks |
|-----|---|----------|
| H1 | There is significant relationship between reliability and customer satisfaction. | Accepted |
| H2 | There is significant relationship between responsiveness and customer satisfaction. | Accepted |
| H3 | There is significant relationship between empathy and customer satisfaction. | Accepted |
| H4 | There is significant relationship between assurance and customer satisfaction | Accepted |
| H5 | There is significant relationship between tangible and customer satisfaction | Accepted |

From the above Table 03, it shows that all five hypothesis are hypothetically accepted.

7. Conclusion

In this research, SERVQUAL is used to identify the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction in International Hotels in Kuala Lumpur. It shows the effect of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangible on customer satisfaction. The findings of this study helped to increase the understanding of this matter. It is proven that service quality has a positive relationship with the customers 'satisfactions since based on the findings, all of the hypotheses are accepted. It would act as

a competitive advantage and would ensure their survival in the long run. Hence, both theoretical and practical measure needs to endeavor service quality and took it into consideration.

Customer satisfaction are always inconstant as they changes easily, especially in a highly competitive surroundings. As the competition increases in the hospitality environment, the hotel organization have to find a way to consistently enhance their strategies and most importantly services. This study had shown that reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangible are affecting customer satisfaction. Not only that the service quality dimension can help them to survive in the industry for a long time, it also create a competitive advantage that diminishes them from competitors if they focus on their services quality. The hotels also must grasp both present and future customer's expectation to the service quality in order to ensure customer satisfaction. According to the result of the study, tangible has the highest correlation with customer satisfaction compared to other dimensions. Thus, the managers or the hotel staff should focus on tangible more as it provides the first impression to the customer.

There are few recommendations for further research. Future researchers might gain a much more understanding concept on service quality and customer satisfaction if the research had done in a different, not limited to only one, geographical area. Other places that are deemed to be popular for tourists in Malaysia is highly recommended. These might have a different result outcome on service quality and customer satisfaction as it might consist different and bigger sample groups. Other than that, a larger sample size is recommended for future research. It might even have an effect on the result of the study. Not only it can improve the result of the study, it may increase the reliability and might get a better insight on this field in the hospitality industry in Malaysia. Next, the study can be made not only in International hotel, but other types of hotel as well. Such as budget hotels or local hotels. This may help researchers to gain more in depth information and understanding on service quality and customer satisfaction in tourism section in Malaysia.

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