



Study on the Service Quality Evaluation and Improvement for Medium and Small Sized Hotels

Fan Chen

Commercial College

Tianjin University of Commerce

Tianjin 300134, China

E-mail: pzhcf117@126.com

Abstract

The tourism industry is in the important state in the national economy, and the hotel industry is the important part of the tourism industry, and the medium and small sized hotels occupy certain market share because of the numerous quantity. Because the service qualities of medium and small sized hotels are different, so the service quality of the hotel is the nuclear content of hotel management. At present, the supply exceeds the demand in the global hotel market, and the competitions among hotels are very intense, and who can supply excellent service for customers, who can obtain predominance in the market and attract more customers and get good benefits, and so the service quality is the life of hotel. In China hotel industry, especially for medium and small sized hotels, their management methods are dragged and there service qualities are relatively low, so many problems exist in this industry. As viewed from customers, this article discusses the satisfactory degree measurement about medium and small sized hotels based on the SERVQUAL method put forward by Parasuraman and the domestic scholars' opinions about hotel service research, and analyzes the service quality problem of medium and small sized hotels and puts forward the project of improvement.

Keywords: Medium and small sized hotels, Service quality evaluation, SERVQUAL

1. The research meaning and definition of service quality

The service quality is the core of service management, and the early researches about service quality mainly are focused in the domain of service marketing. After that, the researches are gradually extended to the service operation, human resource management and other relative domains. The service quality presents the character across many subjects. And according to one literature search made by US scholar, Raymond Fisk, the service quality is the most centralized problem in the research of service management so far.

2. The model of service quality evaluation: SERVQUAL

2.1 The theoretic basis of SERVQUAL scale

In 1985, US scholars Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry established a sort of new service quality evaluation scale, SERVQUAL, and constructed the five-points difference theory based on Gronroos's research, i.e. manager service quality perception difference, service quality rule standard difference, service process difference, market communication difference and customer service quality perception difference. Whether the difference exists in the expectation of customer service quality and the actual perception of service quality is the important part to implement the service quality evaluation and advance the improvement of service quality. The service quality comes from the difference that customers compare their actual perception of service quality with the expectation of service quality offered by the service providers. If customers' actual service perception equals to or exceeds the expectation, they will think the service quality is high. And if customers' actual service perception is under the expectation, they will think the service quality is unsatisfactory.

2.2 The structure system of SERVQUAL scale

The SERVQUAL scale is established based on the fifth point difference in the difference theory, i.e. the perception difference of customer service quality. In 1988, Parasuraman and other scholars reestablished this evaluation system, and they centralized and reduced 10 evaluation dimensions to 5 dimensions, i.e. reliability, assurance, tangibility, empathy and responsiveness. In order to effectively evaluate these 5 dimensions, they designed a questionnaire table

including 22 problems in 1988, which was called as the SERVQUAL scale afterward. The questionnaire includes the customer expectation for service quality and the customer actual perception for service quality. In these 22 problems containing 5 dimensions, every dimension contains 4-5 problems, and the answer of every problem is denoted by the method of 7 point Likert scale, where 1 represents very disaccording and 7 represents very according. The questionnaire must implement two times investigation to same one informant, and require him answer two parts of problems in the questionnaire in order to respectively measure the expectation and the actual perception of customer service quality, and the result of two times evaluations will decide whether the difference exists in the service quality.

3. The actual application of SERVQUAL in medium and small sized hotels

The SERVQUAL method put forward by Parsuraman can be applied in China medium and small sized hotels, but it should be implemented some adjustments according to Chinese actuality, for example, the national current investigation scale is 7 point scale and the medium value is 4, but in China, most groups have not clear recognitions to these concepts, and the 7 point scale is difficult to be differentiated clearly, which will influence the reality of the investigation, so the reasonable investigation scale is 5 point scale in China, which is easily differentiated and accepted by the public and which result will more reflect actual situation. The investigation showed that in five attributes of service quality in SERVQUAL scale for China hotels, the customers' satisfactory degree of materiality (including dish taste, disposal of guest room, staff dress, menu print, establishment and restaurant position) is lowest. After evaluating the hotel service quality through SERVQUAL scale, we should implement the equal index analysis of SERVQUAL evaluation through the weighted formula

$$SQ = \sum_{k=1}^5 W_k \sum_{i=1}^R (\overline{P_i} - \overline{E_i})$$

Where, SQ denotes the total perception quality in the SERVQUAL scale, W_k denotes the weight of every attribute, R denotes the problem amount of every attribute, P_i denotes the mark of customer's perception to the i 'th problem, E_i denotes the mark of customer's expectation to the i 'th problem.

This method can quantify the effects of various attribute levels to the customer evaluation service quality through evaluating mutual influences and functions among main attributes of product or service.

4. The limitation of SERVQUAL in the application in medium and small sized hotels

For the industry management, following problems exist in the application of SERVQUAL quality evaluation system, and they will influence the veracity and reliability of service quality evaluation.

4.1 The structure limitation of SERVQUAL questionnaire

In the questionnaire of "difference" theory of SERVQUAL, every dimension is composed by 4-5 questions, and all dimensions form the evaluation questionnaire composed by 22 questions. However, 4-5 questions can not completely contain all connotations of one dimension. So when we design the questionnaire, we can not copy the structure of the former questionnaire, we should add, delete or modify the content of the questionnaire according to the specific characters of tourism industry, restaurant industry and catering industry.

Because the inquirer needs evaluating the expectation and actual perception of service quality, so two questionnaires are needed, and one checks the expectation and the other checks the actual perception. After the customer completes the first questionnaire, because the second one is very similar with the first one in the aspects of structure, sentence form and diction, so it will make customer usually confuse these two questionnaires, and he would think two questionnaires are same and reject filling in the second questionnaire or fill in part of the questionnaire, which will induce the reduction of reliability and creditability of questionnaires.

4.2 The SERVQUAL system can not fully consider the weights of 5 dimensions which compose the service quality of the hotel industry

Wong pointed out that the hotel service quality evaluation should emphasize the differences of 3 dimensions including employee, creditability and materiality, not the differences of 5 dimensions. Domestic scholars had pointed out that the materiality was the dimension which was urgently solved to improve and enhance the hotel service quality in the comparative research of service quality in many three-star or four-star medium and small sized hotels. The difference of chain hotel service quality consists in that the perceptions of empathy and responsiveness are under the expectations, but the evaluations of creditability and materiality are good (Antony & Ghosh, 2004). Because the management characters of the hotels with different ownerships, different levels and different objectives are different, so the evaluation of the hotel service quality should consider the management character of this hotel, especially we should confirm the various weights of 5 dimensions which form the service quality aiming at the management character of medium and small sized hotels, and accordingly scientifically evaluate the service quality of medium and small sized hotels.

4.3 The characters of medium and small sized hotels influence the authenticity and creditability of SERVQUAL scale evaluation

Carman (1990) pointed that the real point in the hotel service process, the complexity and the occurrence frequency of service transfer process would influence the authenticity and creditability of SERVQUAL evaluation result. First, the hotel management possesses the character of complexity and diversity, and the customer needs experiencing the services of various departments including gatehouse, guest room and catering, and any one bad service quality of single department in the whole service process will influence customer's satisfactory degree to the service quality of this department, and accordingly influence the veracity of the service quality evaluation of the whole hotel. Second, the service occurrence frequency also will influence the validity of the SERVQUAL scale. For example, the difference exists in the expectations of service quality between familiars and the customer who first patronizes this hotel, and they will give different evaluation results for the service quality.

5. The service quality management and countermeasure analysis of medium and small sized hotels

When we complete the discussion of hotel service quality evaluation, we will put forward the service quality management and countermeasure analysis aiming at some problems possibly occurred in the evaluation in order to obtain the actual effects of finding and solving problems. This article will improve the service quality from following three aspects.

5.1 Satisfying customers' demands and enhancing customers' perceptive values

Facing customers' continually mature consumption concepts and demands, only we timely know customers' changes of demand, we can develop the service project according with the market and customer satisfaction aiming at customers' demands. For example, add network equipment in the guest room to enhance customers' convenience to the demand of information. In the hotel industry, customers' consumption habits and mentalities are different, and they require services with more individualizations, so we should enhance customer's perceptive value and satisfactory degrees when satisfying customers multi-levels demands. And only the perceptive service achieves or exceeds expectative service, the customer will satisfy.

5.2 Service standardization

The variance exists in the service quality, and the main reason is that the service has not been standardized, and employee's service always bases on his will. So the effective service standard must be established. But the establishment of service standard should follow following principles including (1) fulfilling customer's expectation, (2) science, (3) quantification and concretion, and (4) the character of characteristic and times. The service standardization mainly includes three aspects, i.e. the service quality standardization, the service method standardization, and the service process proceeding. To achieve the quality standard of the service, there need not only the method to ensure the service quality, but a set of strict procedure in the service process, and these procedures must be fit for the normal services, which is the proceeding of service process. Every service work, whether the direct service or the indirect service, must be performed according to the regulatory procedure, so the service quality can be guaranteed basically. At the same time, the service standardization must combine with the service individualization.

5.3 Adopting objective management and implementing team cooperation

The essential of objective management is to emphasize that the organizational members participate the objective project themselves, realize self control and work surrounding the objective. The objective management also can make the right of process management transfer to a lower level, make employees consider nothing when they independently solve customers' problems, and make the hotel service more individualization and people-oriented under the premise keeping the whole effective control. We can utilize the team cooperation such as department work team, trans-functional work team and specially appointed work team which can quickly produce responses to customers' continually changeable demands and expectations according to the limitation of traditional class system to the decision ability, and establish effective performance objective and achieve this objective.

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