

International Journal of Integrative sciences, Innovation and Technology

(A Peer Review E-3 Journal of *Science Innovation Technology*)

Section A – Basic Sciences; Section B –Applied and Technological Sciences; Section C – Allied Sciences

Available online at www.ijit.webs.com

CUSTOMERS PERCEPTION TOWARDS THE LAUNDRY AND BAR SERVICES OFFERED IN STAR HOTELS IN SALEM

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ABSTRACT

Hotels which purely operate with a commercial business purpose consider the customer is the king! And, if we believe this it is also important to know how to make them happy. Recent days customers expect lot of good services more than their expectations Hence, it is mandatory that employees approach and interaction with the guests play a predominant role in the satisfaction and retention of them. The study focused on identifying the customers' perception towards the laundry and bar services that are provided by the leading star hotels in Salem city, Tamilnadu, South India from the 300 customers who had stayed in the said hotels. Descriptive research design with exploratory approach and non-scientific sampling method with purposive sampling technique was used in this study to get the actual perception of the customers. Concrete suggestions and measures to be implemented are suggested.

Keywords: Bar services, Customer perception, laundry services and satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

Customers who stand as real pillars in any business not only bring an immediate profit to the organization but they will be the source to keep the business going smooth continuously and for the development of the same rapidly. Hospitality or hotel business is one among the customer oriented business where satisfaction plays a key role for its sustainability. Customers will not just simply satisfy on seeing the appearance or the infrastructure of the hotel premises whereas they will obtain satisfaction only if they are properly treated and their expectations are fulfilled. Customers expectations may be fulfilled or it may even over cross or exceed by the means if the employees of the hotels are well trained and are able to understand the expectations of the customers and make them feel not only satisfied but making them delighted by their approach, behaviour and the friendly and quality service

approaches. Salem which is located in the central part of Tamil Nadu attracts many visitors to this district throughout the year. In 2013, the number of foreign arrivals to Tamilnadu was amounted to 3.99 million, the second-highest in the country, and the combined aggregate gives it the most popular state for tourism in the country further Manual of the administration of the Madras presidency By Madras and Tamilnadu.com (2014) states that more than 15000 visitors visit this district every year. In this context Salem districts contribution to Tourism is awesome as it has varieties of attractions with the combination of manmade and natural scenic beauties. The customers irrespective of tourists or businessmen come to this district often stay in the prestigious star hotels. The researcher had made a study on the perception of customers towards the laundry and bar services that are offered in the star hotels in the Salem as it is also one among the important services that are utilized by the customers in the hotels which they stay.

Statement of the problem:

Providing quality services is very essential in satisfying and attracting customers and also for increasing/bringing a new customer in the customer oriented business. The absence of standards in rendering the services will cause the following problems to an organization:

- Reduced customer turnover especially the repeated customers.
- Reduced income through fewer customer arrivals.
- Failure in establishing a brand and reputed name among general public.
- Hesitation for the new customers in selecting the hotels for their stay.
- Competence in the hospitality field and the poor survival.
- Guest dissatisfaction towards services and not utilizing.

It is observed that, the hotels in Salem are providing lots of facilities and services to the customers and it is found that there is a need in providing it in a quality oriented and professional manner to satisfy their existing as well as new customers.

There were a lot of research reports related to customer satisfaction especially in hotel services are mentioned as follows

Thanika Devi Juwaheer and Darren Lee Ross (2003) studied on the **hotel guest perceptions in Mauritius** and identified the difficult times during the 1990s because of changing customer demands and country's hospitality and tourism sectors are trying to augment and offer more than the traditional "sea, sun and sand" concept which, until recently, has formed the core of the tourism product. Hotels have also not responded satisfactorily to the demands of customers owing to lack of management and staff training in service quality. The results also showed that customers' perceptions of service quality in the hotel industry for Mauritius fell short of their expectations, with the "empathy" dimension having the largest gap.

Marianne Abramovici & Laurence Bancel-Charensol (2004) had an action research on How to take customers into consideration in service innovation projects and find out in industrialized services activities, the success of the innovation depends on the way the customer deals with the innovation, all the more so when the innovation introduced has modified the tasks conferred upon him in the service production process. In these conditions, how can the validation of innovation by the customer from concept

definition to the implementation of the evaluation methods are integrated.

Eric S. W. Chan and Simon C. K. Wong (2006) focused on **Hotel Selection: When Price is not the issue** and identified to maintain desired room occupancy rates, one of the common strategies a hotel will normally adopt is cutting price. This trend greatly affects a hotel's profits and may result in the deterioration of a hotel's status. Many hotels consequently discover new competitors and fail to retain guests in the long run as the guests tend to be sceptical about the level of the advertised price reduction. This implies that hoteliers need to have a better understanding of how such factors beyond 'price', such as the quality of their services and their facilities, influence the booking behavior of customers.

Marianna Sigala (2003) studied on **Implementing Customer Relationship Management in the Hotel Sector: Does "IT" always matter?** in which they had proposed a model for managing and integrating ICT capabilities into CRM strategies. The model argues that successful CRM implementation requires the management and alignment of three managerial areas: ICT, relationship (internal and external) and knowledge management. The model is applicable and useful for all industries, but by gathering data from a dataset of hotels in Greece, its validity is tested while interesting contextual findings regarding CRM implementation are revealed.

Jun Jian Sui and Seyhmus Baloglu (2003) investigated **the role of Emotional Commitment in Relationship Marketing and explained about Loyalty Model for casinos**. They developed a model of loyalty and tested to understand the behavioral outcomes (benefits) of building relationships with local customers and what elements contribute to these behavioral outcomes. The results showed that emotional attachment is a key mediating variable between attitudinal antecedents (trust and switching costs) and behavioral variables (proportion of visit, word of mouth, cooperation, time spent in casinos, and other product usage). The most influential variables on behavioral outcomes of loyalty were found to be trust and emotional attachment.

Gill Maxwell, Sandra Watson and Samantha Quail (2004) investigated on **Quality Service in the International Hotel Sector: A catalyst for strategic human resource development** and identified that the nature of, and relationship between, a quality service initiative and the concept of strategic human resource development. Hilton International is the case study used for this analysis. The principal finding is that the quality

initiative is acting as a catalyst for a strategic approach to human resource development to emerge in the case organization. However although many of the factors identified with the concept of strategic human resource development are evidenced, it is proposed that the standards set by academics in the field of human resource development may be too aspiration for the hotel sector

Vincent P.Magnini and John.B.Ford (2004) carried out a study on **Service Failure recovery in china** wherein they analyzed in the hotel industry; exceptional service failure recovery is a key determinant of customer satisfaction and loyalty. Western-based hotel corporations should adapt their failure recovery training programs for their properties in China. Adjustments are necessary because of differences in cognitive processing. Modifications are also required due to various Chinese cultural characteristics.

The literature states that the importance of customer satisfaction by providing more facilities and services in hotel business that supports to take over the current research, this study is slightly modified as per the need and demand to carry out market research which mainly concentrating the star hotels in Salem City and giving importance to the laundry and bar services provided to customers in hotels.

Hence, this research study focuses to identify the customers' perception towards the laundry and bar services that are provided in the star hotels in Salem.

Objectives of the Study:

The following are the prime objectives of the research study:

- To examine the customers perception/satisfaction level in the following customer oriented facilities provided along with the hotel
 1. Laundry
 2. Bar services

METHODOLOGY

The researcher had used “Descriptive Research” approach in generating the information’s from the guests staying in hotels by providing relevant limited/descriptive statement/questions to collect information. Further, this study also focused on the information’s collected from books, journals, magazines, websites and putting them into a detailed explanatory approach for better and easy understanding.

Sampling Techniques:

The researcher had utilized non-probability method and selected samples which are a “Convenience Sampling” from the guests interviewed who were found in different places especially in hotels.

Method of Data Collection:

In this study data’s were collected using both the sources by formulating an interview schedule and collected information from many guests. In addition to this, these data’s were also collected from books, journals, magazines and websites etc.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Socio economic Background of the Customers

This study was conducted among the customers visited the star hotels in Salem. The Socio Economic Background of the respondents is as follows:

S. No	Socio Economic Background	No. of Respondents	%
1	Age		
	Above 50 years	18	6
	Below 25 years	72	24
	25-50 years	210	70
2	Gender		
	Male	207	69
	Female	93	31
3	Occupation		
	Business	36	12
	Private Employment	249	83
	Government Employment	15	5

Table 1 Socio economic details of the respondents

Interpretation

From the above table it is inferred that 18 respondents fall in above 50 years category with the percentage of 6, 72 respondents in below 25 years with percentage of 24 and 210 respondents occupy the major percentage in age with 70. It is also inferred that with regard to the gender the majority respondents are male with total of 207 having a percentage value of 69; female respondents are 93 with a percentage of 31. With regard to occupation, private employment respondents are majority in number of 249 with percentage of 83, business people of 36 numbers with percentage of 12 and least respondents are the

customers of Government employment ranging in 15 with percentage of 5.

Customers Satisfaction Level among the Facilities Provided along with the Laundry Services In A Hotel

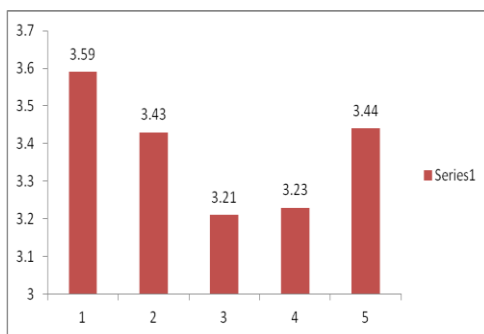
In the Housekeeping department laundry is a section operated in standard luxury hotels. Some of the hotels have in-house laundry and few hotels use outside sources for laundering the guests/hotel clothing's. The below table points out the satisfaction level of customers with regard to facilities provided along with the laundry services in a hotel.

S. No	Laundry Services	HS	S	UD	DS	HDS	Mean Value	Rank
1	Time taken in delivery	36	135	102	24	3	3.59	I
2	Cleanliness	33	132	72	57	6	3.43	III
3	Care for the garments	18	120	93	45	24	3.21	V
4	Cost	15	138	69	57	21	3.23	IV
5	Mode of delivery	36	144	57	42	21	3.44	II

Table 2 Level of Customers Satisfaction in relation with the Laundry Services in a Star Hotel

Interpretation

From the above table it is inferred that majority of the respondents are satisfied in time taken, mode of delivery and cleanliness with a mean value of 3.59, 3.44 & 3.43 respectively. Few respondents have dissatisfaction with cost and care for the garments.



Graph 1 Customers satisfaction level among the facilities provided along with the laundry services in a hotel:

Perception of Customers Among The Facilities And Services Provided In The Bar

Bar is a place where it requires a cool and comfortable atmosphere, pleasant music and ample service. In addition to these, the expectations of customers are due to the following facilities. Their preferences are tabulated as follows

S.No	Bar Facilities	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	Mean Value	Rank
1	Seating arrangements	6	12	9	33	27	24	2.78	V
2	Lights	9	6	24	24	39	9	3.05	IV
3	Quality of drinks	42	33	15	12	6	3	4.75	I
4	Availability of brands	36	45	9	6	9	6	4.67	II
5	Complimentary snacks	15	15	42	3	24	12	3.62	III
6	Temperature inside bar	3	3	12	33	3	57	2.18	VI

Table 3 Customers Perception towards the Facilities and Services provided in the Bar

Interpretation

From the above table it is inferred that with regard to bar services, customers perception focuses by specifying quality of drinks in Rank I position, availability of brands in Rank II position and complimentary snacks in Rank III position with a mean value of 4.75, 4.67, 3.62 respectively.

Research Highlights:

The research on customers' perception towards the bar and laundry services offered in the star hotels in Salem has the following highlights:

- The sample respondents for this study where chosen from the customers who stayed in the leading star hotels in Salem using a non-probability sampling method with convenience sampling approach.
- The study focused on the key aspects in the hotels such as bar and laundry services where these two are considered to be very sensitive and hence, adequate care has to be given so the research study has driven towards to these.
- Descriptive research design with exploratory approach was used in this study as this method is more appropriate

to identify and explain the concept in a meaningful manner.

- Study was limited to the star hotels in Salem and focusing on the bar and laundry services alone and hence, there is a room for further researches in other aspects in the hotels or in the same concept in other places.
- Recommendations for improvement are suggested by the researcher for implementation.

Limitations of the Study:

Although the study has been conducted in a systematic manner there are few limitations:

- The Study is restricted to customers staying in the three leading star hotels in Salem, there by this result cannot be generalized to other cities.
- Sample size is restricted to 300 respondents.

FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSION

Findings

From the analysis it is lime lighted that among the various facilities associated with the laundry services majority of the respondents are satisfied with the facilities like time taken in delivery, cleanliness, care for garments, cost and mode of delivery. It is evident with the mean value of 3.59, 3.44, 3.43, 3.23 and 3.21 respectively. But averagely 30% of the respondents are dissatisfied with the facilities provided in the laundry.

Among the facilities expected by the customers in the bar, majority of the customers are bothered about the quality of the drinks, availability of brands, and complimentary snacks. This is evident with the mean value of 4.75, 4.67 and 3.62 respectively.

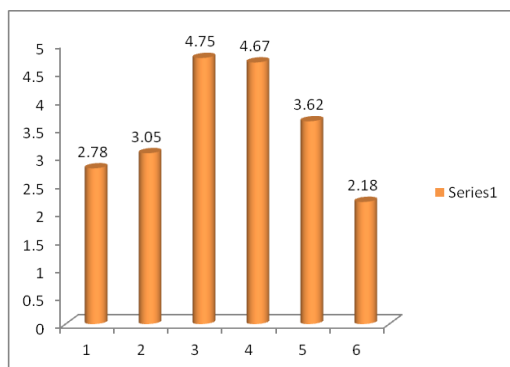


Fig-2- Preference of customers among the facilities provided in the bar

Recommendations

Almost all the star hotels are providing the laundry facility; in case of laundry facilities customers are bothered about the delivery time, cleanliness, and care for the garments, cost & mode of delivery. So, these factors to be taken into consideration while taking in account about delivery time the hotel may guarantee the time so that the customer may decide to make use of it.

Regarding the care for garments, the hotels may pay their attention in the usage of detergents and the persons handling the garments. As this is not a prime profit centre for the hotels so the cost may be considerable which may considered as a service.

Regarding the bar services the hotels in Salem have to concentrate about the quality of the drinks by avoiding the fake drinks and moreover the availability of various brands should be ensured. In this regard the hotels may try to find out the regular customers choice with regard to the varieties and make them available. Along with the bar services the hotels may also consider about providing complimentary snacks instead of using monotonous varieties, they may have to shuffle the varieties frequently.

Conclusion

The study has recommended various suggestions which may be helpful for the hotels in Salem to attract more potential customers and to sustain the existing customers. As of the hotels in Salem are concerned, it is not a primary tourist spot and it cannot depend on a floating customers, but instead of that, it should purely depend upon the regular customers, whom may be the business men or the employees associated with any organization or institutions within the local limit. So, the hotel must consider in retaining the customers by providing quality services.

When these suggestions are taken into account that will convert the hotels in Salem as profit centres. So, the hotels in Salem should try their possibilities and pay keen attention in the bar services, Laundry services and other amenities. Moreover, they should implement the customer retention strategies by maintaining the smooth relationship with the customers.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

The authors are very grateful to thank Dr. Saravananaraj for his effective guidance, timely help and the material support for systematically undergoing this research study; also thankful to the managers of the respective hotels in Salem for their excellent co-operation to carry out this study in

their premises, and also indebted to extend our gratitude for the respondents for sparing their precious time.

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