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FIVE PERCEPTIONS OF SERVICE QUALITY IN HOTEL MANAGEMENT: BANGKOK HOTELS CASE STUDY

The aims of this research was to investigate the concepts and measurements of service quality perceptions of Thai hotels in Bangkok. This was the case study on international tourists who visited Bangkok, Thailand during the first quarter of 2015. Service quality in this study is measured based on SERVQUAL model. The independent variables include gender, age, education levels, occupation, income, and frequency of visiting while the dependent variables covered the opinions on service quality provided by hotel management in Bangkok. A simple random sampling method was used to obtain 400 respondents. The findings revealed that the 5 perceptions of service quality of Thai hotel management were rated by international tourists in the following descending order (highest to lowest): reliability, responsibility, assurance, empathy and tangibility.
Keywords: service quality; hotel management; international tourists; Bangkok.

Сомдеч Рунгсрісават

П'ЯТЬ ПАРАМЕТРІВ СПРИЙНЯТТЯ ЯКОСТІ ОБСЛУГОВУВАННЯ В УПРАВЛІННІ ГОТЕЛЕМ: ЗА ДАНИМИ ГОТЕЛІВ БАНГКОКА

У статті досліджено концепцію якості обслуговування та його вимірювання на прикладі тайських готелів (м. Бангкок, Таїланд). Для збору первинних даних у першому кварталі 2015 р. було опитано міжнародних туристів в Бангкоку. Для оцінювання якості обслуговування в готелях використано модель SERVQUAL. Незалежні змінні дослідження — стать, вік, рівень освіти, дохід та частота відвідування країни, залежна ж змінна — оцінювання якості обслуговування в готелях Бангкока. Методом простої випадкової вибірки опитано 400 респондентів. Результати аналізу опитування виявили такий рейтинг параметрів якості (від найважливішого до найменш важливого): надійність, відповідальність, професіоналізм, емпатія та відчутний бік послуги.
Ключові слова: якість обслуговування; готельний менеджмент; міжнародні туристи; Бангкок.
Табл. 1. Літ. 10.

Сомдеч Рунгсрисават

ПЯТЬ ПАРАМЕТРОВ ВОСПРИЯТИЯ КАЧЕСТВА ОБСЛУЖИВАНИЯ В УПРАВЛЕНИИ ОТЕЛЕМ: ПО ДАННЫМ ОТЕЛЕЙ БАНГКОКА

В статье исследована концепция качества обслуживания и его измерения на примере тайских отелей (г. Бангкок, Таиланд). Для сбора первичных данных в первом квартале 2015 г. были опрошены международные туристы в Бангкоке. Для оценки качества обслуживания в отелях использована модель SERVQUAL. Независимые переменные исследования — пол, возраст, уровень образования, доход и частота посещения страны, зависимая же переменная — оценка качества обслуживания в отелях Бангкока. Методом простой случайной выборки были опрошены 400 респондентов. Результаты анализа опроса выявили следующий рейтинг параметров качества (от самого важного к наименее важному): надёжность, ответственность, профессионализм, эмпатия и осязаемая сторона услуги.
Ключевые слова: качество обслуживания; отельный менеджмент; международные туристы; Бангкок.

Introduction. Thai economy has been stimulated by tourism growth for many decades. Thailand is famous for food, good service, and low cost of numerous tourist

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destinations. Hospitality and tourism are among greatest strengths of Thai economy to which they bring substantial foreign revenues and also create jobs (Wongleedee, 2012). The growth of tourism logically correlates with the growth of hotel business and management (Kotler, 2000). There are many four- and five-star hotels in Thailand that offer high quality of service and accommodation to both domestic and international tourists. An important question here is how to measure service quality in hotel business and management? There are many researches on tourists' opinion about service quality but very little research about the actual measurement of service quality in Thai hotels from the perspective of international tourists. Moreover, the question is what is really needed to be done in terms of enhancement and improvement on service quality in this sector.

Service quality can be observed by the way in which customers are satisfied with a service or not. Therefore, customers' attitude to the experience on service quality they have received must be the key to measure the level of satisfaction (Kotler, 1997). Highly satisfied customers have a tendency to either revisit, or provide positive comments to friends and family as well as to other potential customers online. Since service is considered to be intangible, the major portion of service quality can be found within its delivery (Blesic, 2010). Service quality, however, can also be measured by the gap between customers' expectation and customers' perception, where the graph of perception should be higher than the initial expectation. When customers assess service quality by the level of satisfaction by service, high level of satisfaction means high standard of service quality and low level of satisfaction means low standard of service quality.

Service quality is thus accepted as the key factor in enhancing organization's competitive edge in contemporary hospitality and tourism industry. Service quality is the level of satisfaction based on customers' experience. Positive experience leads to a willingness to repurchase or recommend the service to other customers. Since hotel industry is one of the most important industries to offer services, it is desirable to study service quality from the perspective and experience of its customers. This study was aimed to investigate the concepts and measurement of 5 perceptions of service quality. This was the case study on international tourists who came to stay in hotels in Bangkok, Thailand during the first quarter of 2015. This research aims to study the experience of international tourists and their perception concerning service quality in the hotels in Bangkok, Thailand.

Literature review. Since SERVQUAL model is one of the widely acceptable tools to measure service quality in hotel industries, this study on service quality in hotel management in Bangkok will be also based on the theory of SERVQUAL developed by (Parasuraman, Zeithamal and Berry, 1993). SERVQUAL methodology offers 22 questions to measure customers' experience and perception of the services delivered. The theory is based on the difference between the expectation of service quality and the actual experience of service received by customers. In other words, the measurement of service quality is, in fact, the gap between customers' expectation and customers' perception. SERVQUAL is a concise and relatively easy technique to apply to many different types of services. The original theory used the Likert seven-point scale to measure 22 items of service in 5 dimensions which included assurance, empathy, reliability, responsiveness, and tangibility (Jariyachamsit and Wongleedee,

2013). In fact, A. Parasuraman, V.A. Zeithamal and L. Berry (1993) explained the 5 dimensions in connection to service quality as follows: Assurance means knowledge, courtesy and trustworthiness of employees. Empathy means understanding what customers' wants and needs. Reliability means the ability of employees to perform the service responsibly and accurately. Responsiveness means the willingness to help customers and provide prompt service. Finally, tangibility means availability of physical facility, equipment, personnel, and materials. Other researchers stated there should be three important questions to ask on quality (Hudson, 2008). The first question is what kind of service is important to customers? The second question is what is the main customers' expectation? Finally, the third question is how do customers define service quality in hotel business? It is important to define the meaning of service quality as well as to understand the factors influencing the decision to assess service quality. Factors influencing the quality perception may differ from one customer to other (Noland, 2003). S. Serirut (1999) explained that there are 7 simple questions to ask in order to comprehend consumer behavior as applicable to hotel business and management. These 7 important questions were: Who is at the target market? or Who are the main tourist customers?, What do tourists purchase? or What do they want?, Why do tourists purchase? or Why they want to purchase this particular service?, Who participate in the purchasing process? or Who is involved into the purchasing purchase?, When do tourists purchase? or What is the best time to provide service?, Where is the market? or Where do they need the service?, and How do tourists feel after purchasing? or What is the post service?

Methodology. Based on the model of SERVQUAL, a Likert five-scale questionnaire was applied as a tool for collecting data in order to find the level of importance of each factor in relation to service quality in hotels. This quantitative research aims to investigate international tourists' experience during their stay in various hotels of Bangkok, Thailand and to find out their opinions and comments about their perceptions of service quality in hotels. Moreover, it was also aimed to use the findings to improve customers' satisfaction in the future. The random sampling method and T. Yamane (1973) technique was performed to obtain 400 samples. The total of 400 English questionnaires were distributed in 20 hotels in various areas of Bangkok. The average time spent for filling out this English questionnaire was about 15 minutes. The independent variables of this study included gender, age, education level, occupation, and income, whereas, the dependent variables included international tourists' perception of service quality. Descriptive statistics utilized in this study included frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation and t-test.

Findings. The research was carried out in both three-star and four-star hotels around Bangkok. The findings revealed that the majority of the respondents were from Europe and Asia, especially from Russia and China. Male and female respondents were approximately of the same proportion of representativeness 51:49. The majority (75.25%) were in the age between 21—40 years old, with an undergraduate degree. The average income was about 30,001 USD to 50,000 USD per year. In other words, the majority of the respondents were typical middle class. The findings also revealed that the main reasons for choosing Thailand was low prices and unique tourist destination. The majority of the respondents had visited Thailand for the second time and spent about 5—7 days in Thailand. The average expenses for the trip

were about 35,000 baht, or approximately 1,000 USD. The respondents received tourist information about Thailand from both the Internet and tour agencies in their home countries.

Table 1. **Five dimensions of service quality,** *author's*

Level of importance	Mean	S.D.	Rank
1. The ability of employees to perform the service responsibly and accurately (Reliability)	4.58	0.794	1
2. Willingness to help customers and provide prompt service (Responsiveness)	4.52	0.852	2
3. Knowledge, courtesy, and trustworthiness of employees (Assurance)	4.32	0.904	3
4. Understanding what customers want and need (Empathy)	4.21	0.782	4
5. Appearance of physical facility, equipment, personal, and materials (Tangibility)	4.18	0.901	5
The average	4.36	0.846	

The findings in Table 1 reveal 5 different levels of importance in terms of service quality for the studied hotels in Bangkok: 1) "The ability of employees to perform the service responsibly and accurately" was rated as # 1 with the mean of 4.58 and 0.794 SD; 2) "The willingness to help customers and provide prompt service" was rated as # 2 with the mean of 4.52 and 0.852 SD; 3) "Knowledge, courtesy, and trustworthiness of employees" was rated # 3 with the mean of 4.32 and 0.904 SD; 4) "The understanding of what customers want and need" was rated # 4 with the mean of 4.21 and 0.782 SD; 5) "The availability of physical facility, equipment, personnel, and material" was rated # 5 with the mean of 4.18 and .901 SD. The overall mean was 4.36 with 0.846 SD.

Therefore, it could be concluded that the 5 perceptions of service quality of Thai hotel management were rated by international tourists in the descending order from the highest mean to the lowest as follows: assurance, empathy, reliability, responsiveness, and tangibility.

Limitations/future studies. The major limitation of this paper came from the use of English in a Likert five-scale questionnaire. Therefore, only international tourists who could read English were included into the samples. For instance, many Chinese tourists, who came in big tourists group, were not included into the sample group due to their inability to communicate in English.

The study also did not take into account the reasons behind the choices while measuring the level of importance for each service quality factor. Hence, future research should use a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in order to effectively measure service quality from the opinion of international tourists.

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