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CUSTOMER SATISFACTION WITH SELECTED ASPECTS OF HOTEL MANAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF THAILAND

The purpose of this research were to explore the level of customer satisfaction in five important areas: satisfaction with hotel facilities, satisfaction with food and beverages, satisfaction with prices, satisfaction with service quality and satisfaction with general atmosphere. A stratified and random sampling of 200 customers was used. A questionnaire was designed to collect data and perform small interviews to obtain customers' opinions about positive and negative evaluations of experience while staying in hotels in Thailand. Almost all of the participants in the study were overall rather satisfied with the hotels, especially in terms of service quality as well as food and beverages. When examining in detail, the level of satisfaction can be ranked from highest to lowest according to the mean average as follows: service quality, food and beverages, facilities, atmosphere, and prices.

Keyword: hotel management; customer satisfaction; service quality; Thailand.

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ЗАДОВОЛЕНІСТЬ КЛІЄНТІВ РІЗНИМИ АСПЕКТАМИ УПРАВЛІННЯ ГОТЕЛЕМ: НА ПРИКЛАДІ ТАЇЛАНДУ

У статті задоволеність постояльців готелів у Таїланді досліджено в контексті 5 ключових аспектів: інфраструктура готелю, їжа та напої, цінова політика, якість обслуговування та загальна атмосфера. Типологічна випадкова вибірка для опитування склала 200 респондентів. Проведено опитування, а також невеликі інтерв'ю з малою групою обраних респондентів. По виборці в цілому спостерігається досить високий ступінь задоволеності клієнтів досвідом проживання в готелі в Таїланді, найвищі оцінки при цьому отримали якість обслуговування, а також їжа та напої. Більш детальне оцінювання відповідей дозволило розподілити фактори задоволеності клієнтів таким чином, від найбільш важливих до найменш: якість обслуговування, їжа та напої, інфраструктура готелю, загальна атмосфера та цінова політика.

Ключові слова: управління готелем; задоволеність клієнтів; якість обслуговування; Таїланд.

Табл. 1. Літ. 10.

Буалак Наксонгаев

УДОВЛЕТВОРЕННОСТЬ КЛИЕНТОВ РАЗЛИЧНЫМИ АСПЕКТАМИ УПРАВЛЕНИЯ ОТЕЛЕМ: НА ПРИМЕРЕ ТАИЛАНДА

В статье удовлетворённость постояльцев отелей в Таиланде исследована в контексте 5 ключевых аспектов: инфраструктура отеля, еда и напитки, ценовая политика, качество обслуживания и общая атмосфера. Типологическая случайная выборка для опроса составила 200 респондентов. Были проведены как опрос, так и небольшие интервью с малой группой выбранных респондентов. По выборке в целом отмечается достаточно высокая степень удовлетворённости клиентов опытом проживания в отеле в Таиланде, самые высокие оценки при этом получили качество обслуживания, а также еда и напитки. Более детальная оценка ответов позволила расположить факторы удовлетворённости клиентов следующим образом, от большего к меньшему: качество обслуживания, еда и напитки, инфраструктура отеля, общая атмосфера и ценовая политика.

Ключевые слова: управление отелем; удовлетворенность клиентов; качество обслуживания; Таиланд.

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Introduction. Thai hotels' business and management have developed rapidly in the last 4 decades as many more customers appear at both domestic and international markets (Ministry of Tourism and Sport, 2008). With the fast grow the of tourism industry in Thailand, the number of new hotels has been increasing to serve larger number of customers. Success in hotel business and management depends on the level of customer satisfaction. Satisfaction can be defined as post-consumption evaluated by customers concerning with a specific product or a service (Westbrook and Oliver, 1991). The topic of customer satisfaction has been studied by many experts and researchers within a variety of dimensions. The goals of many studies were to develop instruments to measure satisfaction while visiting hotels (Shoemaker and Lewis, 1999). Many studies on customer satisfaction often focus on how to identify what make customer have this high level of satisfaction, how exactly satisfied customers are, and how to comprehend the consequences of high and low satisfaction (Wongleedee, 2014). In fact, there are two key things that can happen after customers evaluate a service or a product and assess the level of their satisfaction: customers may consider to recommend friends and family members to purchase the particular service or product or they show intent to repurchase this particular service or product in the future (Wongleedee, 2012).

Literature review. There are many already classical books on hotel and hospitality industry which often pinpoint that customer satisfaction is, in fact, the result of a positive experience from purchasing particular service of product. The gap between customer expectation and customer real experience often plays the most important role in the assessment of satisfaction. A small gap means there is higher level of satisfaction than with a large gap. Customer satisfaction is the proper way to evaluate the future of any business organization as such. The positive result leads to high satisfaction while the negative result leads to low level of satisfaction. C. Chi and H. Qu (2008) studied tourism hospitality and found there are 7 keys factors in it which were lodging, dining, shopping, attraction, activities, and events. K. MacKay and J. Crompton (1990) on the other hand, coined the term "satisfaction" as the sum of experience of all the attributes. M. Fishebein and I. Ajek (1975) explained that consumers often evaluate the level of satisfaction based on the ability of a hotel or a tourist destination to provide positive outcome. The augmented product of tourism focuses on the experience received by tourists and evaluated by tourists to be positive or negative. Therefore, after a careful analysis of previous studies for this research we have chosen 5 areas of satisfaction for inbound tourists namely: satisfaction with visit, satisfaction with tourist image, satisfaction considering value of money, satisfaction with service quality, and satisfaction when compared with expectation.

Methodology. Even though there are many studies on satisfaction, few studies have been focused on hotel business and management. This study tries to gain more detailed information and investigate the level of satisfaction in 5 specific areas which were: satisfaction with hotel facilities, satisfaction with food and beverages, satisfaction with prices, satisfaction with service quality and satisfaction with atmosphere overall. This research aims to use the questionnaire technique to examine the level of satisfaction from the perspective of hotel customers in Thailand. It is important here to use indepth interviews to search for the reasons behind customers' positive and negative evaluation of experience with hotels of Thailand. Taro Yamane technique

was used here to get a proper sample group. Stratified and random sampling technique was performed to obtain the sample group that included 400 customers. However, since we were limited in both time and resources, only 200 samples were used. Descriptive statistics used in this research includes percentage, mean, and standard deviation. Before the survey and interviews, 20 pilot studies were tested to ascertain they could pass the Cronbach alpha criteria with at least 0.70.

Findings. The demographic characteristics of the participants revealed that male and female international tourists were represented in the sample in the ratio of 74:26. The majority of the respondents was male and were aged between 31—40 years old, working at mostly at the management level. About 56% of the respondents were single and 32% of the respondents were married, other 12% were divorced. 78.5% of the respondents had college master degree or higher. For the focused group, the total of 10 selected customers were chosen for the discussion group. Among these 10 customers, 3 were female.

The findings in Table 1 reveal 5 different satisfaction levels from the perspective of chosen customers as follows: 1) the respondents overall rated the service quality as the highest level of satisfaction with the mean of 4.87 and 0.897 S.D.; 2) the respondents overall rated food and beverages as the # 2 level of satisfaction with the mean of 4.83 and 0.874 S.D.; 3) the respondents overall rated facilities as the # 3 level of satisfaction with the mean of 4.74 and 0.956 S.D.; 4) the respondents overall rated general atmosphere as the # 4 level of satisfaction with the mean of 4.56 and 1.005 S.D.; 5) the respondents overall rated prices as the # 5 level of satisfaction with the mean of 4.54 and 0.867 S.D.

The overall mean for 5 areas was 4.70 with 0.924 S.D. which is a rather high indicator as such, for the services sector specifically.

Table 1. **Level of importance,** *authors'*

Level of various satisfaction points	Mean	S.D.	Rank
1. Service quality	4.87	0.897	1
2. Food and beverages	4.83	0.874	2
3. Facilities	4.74	0.956	3
4. General atmosphere	4.56	1.005	4
5. Prices	4.54	0.867	5
Overall	4.70	0.924	

Conclusions. From the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the majority of customers of hotels in Thailand had rather high level of satisfaction since all the means were more than 4.70. When examined in more detail, the level of satisfaction can be ranked according to the mean average as follows: service quality, food and beverages, facilities, general atmosphere, and prices.

From the indepth interview with the customers, it was found that almost all of the focus group participants in the study were high overall satisfied with the hotels, especially in terms of service quality as well as food and beverages.

Future studies. The main limitation of this research paper is the size of the sample group which included only 200 customers. It would be of interest to include more customers at different kinds of hotels around Thailand such as Pattaya which is the beach hotel city to get better representation of opinions from a variety of customers

in Thailand. Hence, the findings may not be properly generalized to find the level of satisfaction of hotel customers in Thailand as such.

Therefore, future research should focus on a proportion sampling technique with a more diverse group of customers. Multivariate techniques such as factor analysis might be a good way to deepen the insight in the study on the level of satisfaction in tourism.

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