Examining the Correlations of Hotel Service Quality with Tourists Satisfaction

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the correlation of hotel service quality (i.e. assurance, reliability, responsiveness, tangibles and empathy) with tourists' satisfaction. Results via correlation analysis, among 200 respondents who have already experienced the tourism product and services in Federal Territory of Labuan, Malaysia revealed that service quality is significantly correlated with empathy, reliability, responsiveness and tangibles. The first served as the best predictor of tourists satisfaction followed by the latter. The findings imply the need for hotel providers to strategically leverage on these factors in its pursuit of tourists satisfaction. Direction for future study of study is also mentioned.

Key words: Assurance · Reliability · Responsiveness · Tangibles · Empathy · Service Quality

INTRODUCTION

Tourism status as a scientific object in the academic field is still in question [1]. Tourism industry is profitable and yet still can be further developed. According to the Ministry of Tourism Malaysia [2], Malaysia has recorded the highest domestic visitors in September 2010 with 12.5 million visitors and 14.7 million trips. Tourist experience provides visitors with a bonding experience with the product and helps them increase their relative knowledge [3]. Service quality at the destination comprises all those attractions, facilities and services used or visited during a stay that comprises everything that the visitors had experienced. The environment for service does influence customer in making any purchasing decision. In order to meet customer expectations and later satisfies them, customer needs are required to be recognized and met first. Hence, this study aims to examine the correlation of hotel service quality (i.e. assurance, reliability, responsiveness, tangibles and empathy) with tourists' satisfaction.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Tourists are more knowledgeable in evaluating the quality of hotels by making comparisons with other hotels. Meeting of customer needs by creating product and services with great benefits and features is the key to every successful business. Preceding literatures related to the assurance, reliability, responsiveness, tangibles and empathy factors that have relationship with tourists concern are elaborated as follows.

Assurance: Assurance is related to the knowledge and courtesy of the employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence to its customer. Customers compare their expectations towards services with actual performance outcomes [4]. Customers will always expects a high quality services in tourism product before experiencing them. Thus, the service personnel play an important role that effects customers' perception in service settings [4]. Tourists need a freedom from doubt or hesitation about the tourism product that the travel agency's offer. Accordingly, the study hypothesizes that:

H1: Assurance of hotel service delivery significantly correlated with tourists' satisfaction.

Reliability: Reliability refers to the ability of employees to perform the promised service timely and accurately. The overall structure of the businesses is determined by the characteristic of the core element together with

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the feature of each of the separate elements [5]. In the other hand, Ariffin and Maghzi [6] stated that hospitality involves interactions between a provider and receiver to deliver a better service to customers. Reliability also refers as competence which means knowledgeable and confident staff who are able to handle questions and requests accurately [7]. Competence has significant influence with customer satisfaction [8-9]. Therefore, the study posits:

H2: Reliability of hotel service delivery significantly correlated with tourists' satisfaction.

Responsiveness: Responsiveness is related to the willingness of the employees to assist guests and provide prompt service. Tourism companies are responsible to provide better experience to the customers along their vacation period. Thus, a product must appeal to travelers seeking either business or leisure activities [10]. It is the extraordinary level of hospitality that can actually play the role to help bring back the tourists to a particular hotel in the future [6]. Prior research noted that responsiveness is positively related to customer satisfaction [11]. Hence, the study hypothesizes that:

H3: Responsiveness of hotel service delivery significantly correlated with tourists' satisfactions.

Tangibles: Tangibles which refers to the physical appearance of the public companies, inclusive of the available facilities. Tourism sector attracting tourists by focusing on a particular business/leisure purpose such as accommodation (hotel and chalet), attraction (the museum, art gallery, beach, etc), amenity (restaurant, public facilities, etc.) and ancillary (travel agents, guide/organizer). Kumar, Mani, Mahalingam and Vanjikovan [12] have noted that the tangibles dimension play a significant role in influencing customer satisfaction. Accordingly, the study hypothesizes that:

H4: Tangibles of hotel service delivery significantly correlated with tourists' satisfaction.

Empathy: Empathy which is related to the caring, individualized attention that the employee of the company provides to clients. Richins [13] stated that many specific consumption experiences involve a broad range of mixed emotions or ambivalence. Consumer might experience a high level satisfaction that consists of both positive (i.e. pleasure, happiness) and negative feelings (i.e. sad,
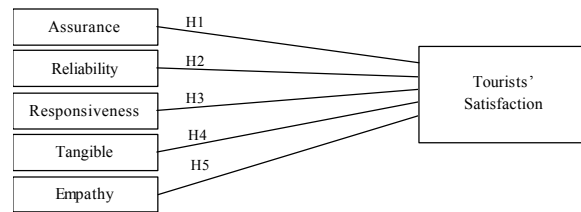

Fig. 1: Proposed Theoretical Framework

regretful). Therefore, a service is of value to an individual consumer if it makes his/her life pleasurable, more tranquil, safe and/or harmonious [14]. This can be determining once consumers assess the trade-off between the benefits that he/she receives and the cost to be paid [15-16]. Therefore, the study hypothesizes that:

H5: Empathy of hotel service delivery significantly correlated with tourists' satisfaction.

The proposed research framework is illustrated Figure 1.

Methodology: Quantitative research via questionnaire distribution was performed to achieve to the research objective. Two-hundred usable and completed questionnaires were received from total samples of 230 respondents (i.e. response rate of 87 percent). The respondents were drawn from population that have already experienced the tourism product and services in Federal Territory of Labuan, Malaysia. The questionnaire comprises of three sections: Section A designed on demographic characteristics and Section B measured on perceptions of hotel service quality attributes (i.e. assurance, reliability, responsiveness, tangibles and empathy), adapted from Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry [17]. The Section C is related to tourist satisfaction towards the hotel service quality. All of these questions were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer program version 17 was utilized in order to calculate the descriptive analysis and correlation analysis.

Data Analysis: Demographic profile of the respondents is presented Table 1. Out of 200 respondents, 58% were male and 42% were female tourists, make almost equal response. More than two-quarter (69.5%) of the respondents aged less than 26 years old and earned monthly income of less than Malaysia Ringgit 4000. These data infers that the study sample was well representative of the target tourist that has experience tourism product.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

	Demographic Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	117	58.5
	Female	83	41.5
Age (years old)	< 20	57	28.5
	21-23	43	21.5
	24-26	39	19.5
	27-29	38	19.0
	Other	23	11.5
Monthly Income in	1000 and below	54	27.0
Malaysia Ringgit	1001 – 2000	50	25.0
	2001 – 3000	46	23.0
	3001 – 4000	25	12.5
	4001 and above	25	12.5

Table 2: Reliability Test

Variable	No of item	Cronbach's Alpha
Assurance	4	0.943
Reliability	5	0.834
Responsiveness	4	0.926
Tangibles	4	0.871
Empathy	5	0.887

Reliability Analysis: Reliability analysis of constructs was checked via Cronbach's alpha.. Nunnally [18] has suggested 0.70 as the acceptable level for reliability measure. Alpha values ranged from 0.834 to 0.943, thus indicating an acceptable level of reliability (Table 2).

Correlations Analysis: Pearson's correlation analysis was presented to examine the inter-relationships between the six variable measurements. The average score of the multi-items for a construct was computed beforehand since a single construct in the questionnaire was measured by multiple items. All of the Pearson's correlations between variables were less than 1 (Table 3). Hence, multicollinearity is absent.

H1 proposed that assurance of hotel service delivery is significantly correlated with tourists' satisfaction. Table 3 exhibited that results were not significant ($r=0.092$, $p>0.05$). Thus, H1 is not sustained.

H2 posited that reliability of hotel service delivery is significantly correlated with tourists' satisfaction. A significant result was found ($r=0.296$). Its $p<0.05$, hence, H2 is significant and secured. Next, H3 proposed that responsiveness of hotel service delivery is significantly correlated with tourists' satisfaction. A significant result was also existed ($r=0.149$, $p<0.05$), implying H3 is supported. The next hypothesis, H4 posited that tangibles of hotel service delivery are significantly correlated with tourists' satisfaction. Correlation coefficient for this pair of association is 0.171 with p-value less than 0.05. Thus, bring support to H4. Similarly, H5: empathy of hotel service delivery is significantly correlated with tourists' satisfaction was also supported as its $p<0.05$ ($r=0.326$).

DISCUSSION

This research empirically examined the correlation of hotel service quality (i.e. assurance, reliability, responsiveness, tangibles and empathy) with tourists' satisfaction. Results produced imperative findings where empathy was the most significant predictor of tourists' satisfaction as it has highest correlation coefficient value. Customer felt that the hotel staffs understands specific needs of clients, show sincere interest while delivering the service. Indeed, the hotel staff does offers personalized attention and looks for the best for the guests' interests. Kumar *et al*. [12] and Ladhari [19] supported this relationship as well. Therefore, hotel managers should pay particular attention to how tourists' feel during the service delivery process to better realize and articulate client needs in creating a pleasurable and happiness emotions or ambivalence for better hotel productivity.

Reliability was the next factor that hotel provider should put into focus in creating a reliable, pleasant and entertaining experience for customers via fulfilling the promised service accurately and dependably in its service delivery. Customers continuously look for reliable delivery of services the first time and delivery of promised

Table 3: Correlations Analysis between Variables

	Assurance	Reliability	Responsiveness	Tangibles	Empathy	Satisfaction
Assurance	1					
Reliability	0.141(*)	1				
Responsiveness	0.235(**)	0.331(**)	1			
Tangibles	0.184(**)	0.193(**)	0.285(**)	1		
Empathy	0.249(**)	0.241(**)	0.207(**)	0.505(**)	1	
Satisfaction	0.092	0.296(**)	0.149(*)	0.171(*)	0.326(**)	1
Mean	3.256	2.915	2.883	3.010	2.985	2.968
Std. Deviation	0.695	0.671	0.783	0.838	0.756	0.971

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

service by the hotel providers. The hotel management should continuously keep its promises to deliver a wholesome quality service to clients. By doing so, hotel providers can effectively position and distinguish their hotel services than their nearest competitors competitively. This finding prior studies [20-22].

Next, consumer also concerned on the responsiveness of the service delivery as the timely reaction towards their need is an important issue. The wholesome quality hospitality delivery rendered by the hotels can enable the tourists to develop a strong bonding.These findings support the findings of Mengi [11]. The result from the research also postulated that the tourists' put some attention with the tangibles dimension in evaluating the service quality delivery of the hotel. The appearance of the physical facilities, equipment and staff members of the hotel does influence their satisfaction levels. This result is parallel to the finding reported in Kumar *et al*. [12], in which the tangibles dimension play a significant role in influencing customer satisfaction.

The study divulged that the tourists' seemed to put less concerned on the assurance factor with regards to hotel service quality. They were less concern on the communication and social interactions delivered by the service personnel. Assurance was clearly not a strong source of tourists' satisfaction that they expect of the service settings. The comparable findings also found in Mokhlis [23] and Munusamy, Chelliah and Mun [24]'s study.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Empathy, reliability, responsiveness and tangibles did influence tourists' satisfaction on hotel service delivery. The first was the most powerful predictor of tourists' satisfaction where focus should be put forward on providing employee training programmes to enable them to offer personalized service to strengthen and nurture long-term customer relationships. Besides, prompt and reliable services delivered to the standards expected and promised were also vital to attract, serve and retain the customers to visit the hotel again. The hotel providers should be ready to serve the customers with the environments and services to enrich their travel experiences. This study has some limitations that open rooms for future research. The results stemming from the sample might not be generalized beyond the specific conditions of this study due to the small samples coverage. Further research should be conducted on a larger population with more diversified random samples. It could also be interesting to perform multivariate data analysis such as multiple regressions or structural equation modelling analysis to investigate relationship between variables.

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