

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

The high competition among the lodging industry indicates the importance of retaining customers as much as possible as is refreshing and rewarding good staff performance. Serviced apartments are a part of the industry looking for effective and efficient ways to identify, select, improve and develop staff in order to increase and retaining loyal and valuable customers. The role of customer service staff in serviced apartment industry is considered the essential element of service quality besides accommodation feature. The research expresses the customer service standard performance in lodging industry that applied to customer service performance in serviced apartment industry, by studying how customer service performance affects customer satisfaction. The study analyzed customer satisfaction based on customer satisfaction processes by Lovelock (2007) and SERVQUAL model by Parasuraman and Berry (1988).

Findings

The result indicates that most of customers in Bangkok Garden Apartment were satisfied with customer service staff performance as the data analysis addressed most of average mean of customer satisfaction with five customer service performances dimensions at only the satisfied level. Customers are most satisfied with response time, English communication, and problem solving & decision making action of staff than leadership & performance management and adaptability. This result can be supported by the participant observation where the researcher found that most of customers who stay in Bangkok Garden Apartment come by word of mouth and through the invitation of their friends or relatives, thus their expectation would not quite distinction from their actual experiences. Since, the data was analyzed by customer satisfaction process (Lovelock, 2007). He suggested the level of customer satisfaction depends on how service performance achieve customer's expectation.

Using customer satisfaction formula (expectation – perception) by Lovelock, et al (2007) the findings show that most customers were satisfied. As we can seen the difference between customer expectation and customer perception is quite close to

zero with all five dimension of customer service standard performance, namely Response Time, English Communication, Leadership & Performance Management, Problem Solving & Decision Making, and Adaptability. Therefore, it means customers feel satisfied with overall customer service performance. Due to, Lovelock (2007) expressed that if the performance matches the expectations means the difference between customer expectation and perception is zero, the customer is satisfied.

The thematic coding analysis classified the data into 4 crucial themes by using the interview information from customer service staff at Bangkok Garden Apartment. The findings present responsiveness is the important characteristics for customer service staff, especially **respond time**. Response Time can show how much customer service staff are concerned with customer's problems that affect customer's feelings. According to Nicholas (2010) noted that customer service should not leave customer waiting long time, when they want supporting, but should respond immediately with every comment by polite manner. This statement presents respond time is important action that customer service staff should do. The result shows most of customer service staff at Bangkok Garden Apartment have good performance in term of reacting to customers immediately and on time.

Moreover, **Adaptability (or flexibility)** is another important characteristic that impacts on customer service performance. Nicholas (2010) addressed adaptability as one of the customer service standard performances that is customer service staff should be flexible in various problem solving situations and able to create solutions for variety of customer problems, also understanding about the differences of customer needs and having ability to adept for many customer's styles as well. The study explored customer service performance in Bangkok Garden in positive way as the results show that most of customers were satisfied with staff who are flexible. Also researcher had categorized this kind of performance as the theme called "Collaboration" those respondents pretty much said when they need to work with other department for solving complex issues.

In addition, skills of **emotion control** are required for customer service staff, due to routine tasks that they have to interact with various issues of customers that need many skills to implement in order to reach each issue. The word **emotion controlling** arose when respondents spoke about the way they are sometimes faced

with angry customers and complex situations and working with other departments. Good emotional management is an essential skill that helps staff avoid inappropriate performance to customers. According to **problem solving & decision making** is addressed in customer service standard performance that customer services should have ability to classify customer problems and creating effective solutions. Also make a decision with factual and suitable support is considered (Nicholas, 2010). Most respondents used the word emotion control and flexibility as the important skill when they face difficult cases and angry customers. From this interview information, researcher found that customer service staff has to maintain customer feeling as well as overcoming customer problems in difficult cases by using problem solving and decision-making skill. Avoiding extra unexpected problems from customers such as bad mood and complaints, customer service staff has to do things that help to retain customer's feeling in positive way. Therefore, solving problem skill and emotion management is a crucial skill that impact on service performance and customer satisfaction as well.

Moreover, in participating within the workplace process, the researcher observed that most of customers were satisfied with customer service staff who have to do more than solving the problems, they need to offer some special things or condition that reasonable, if the problem occurred by the organization mistake in order to maintain customer feeling in positive way. According to the important of customer service staff is not only the person who serve customer, also they have to deal with customer's complaints and problem by tactful and working collaboration in order to keep customer feeling in positive way and benefits of the organization as well (Claridy, 2009). **English communication** is another essential skill of customer service because they must contact with customers daily, since listening, speaking and writing skill are important. Due to customer service need to clarify customer requirement and problems by using communication skill to communicate each other (Nicholas, 2010). In addition, the results show most of respondents said that in some cases customer service have to use body language as a communication way with some customers who cannot speak English properly.

Leadership and Performance Management help foster customer service performances through good teamwork as Nicholas (2010) addressed. Leadership skills build up a team work atmosphere that impacts on effective collaboration between staff to solve customer problems and satisfy customers. The findings found that customer service staffs have to work as team in order to solve customer problems because some cases they cannot solve it by themselves such as internet problems, electricity problem, and water system problem. Sometimes, the customer service department is well placed to act as the broker or communication center to transfer the jobs to involved department such as engineering, housekeeping and sale and marketing. Since, working in collaborative is a necessary skill for customer service staff.

Moreover, **performance management** is another important skill for customer service as the method to look after their personal appearance and characters. Therefore, both of leadership and performance management is important skill that helps to motivate and retain working performance of staff in positive way and generating good feedback from customers as well.

From customer service perspectives in Bangkok Garden Apartment, the study found that most of staff mentions to emotional controlling, problem solving communication, and collaboration are the important skills that customer service staff should have for effective works well and they are the majority factors that impact on customer satisfaction as well.

Discussion

Service Apartment can bring the results of customer satisfaction to be the influenced factors for developing the customer service function role in order to retain good staff performance, fixing weakness of staff performance, and generating more satisfied customer. This study applied the Service Quality Assessment (SEARVQUAL) model by Parasuraman Z. et al (1988) as the guideline to create new Good Practice Customer Service model by considering 7 gaps of SEARVQUAL to be development factors. The detail of 7 gaps of SEARVQUAL is described below.

The organization has to understand customer expectation by considering customer experiences, word of mouth, and customer' needs because they are influent factors on customer perception as well as service performance. As the model shows

how service provider's actions affect consumer perception, also present SERVQUAL Gaps between each process of the model. There seven gaps can be identified as following (Shahin, 2012);

Gap1: The difference between management perceptions of what customers expect and what customers really do expect.

Gap2: The difference between management perceptions and service quality specifications the standard gap.

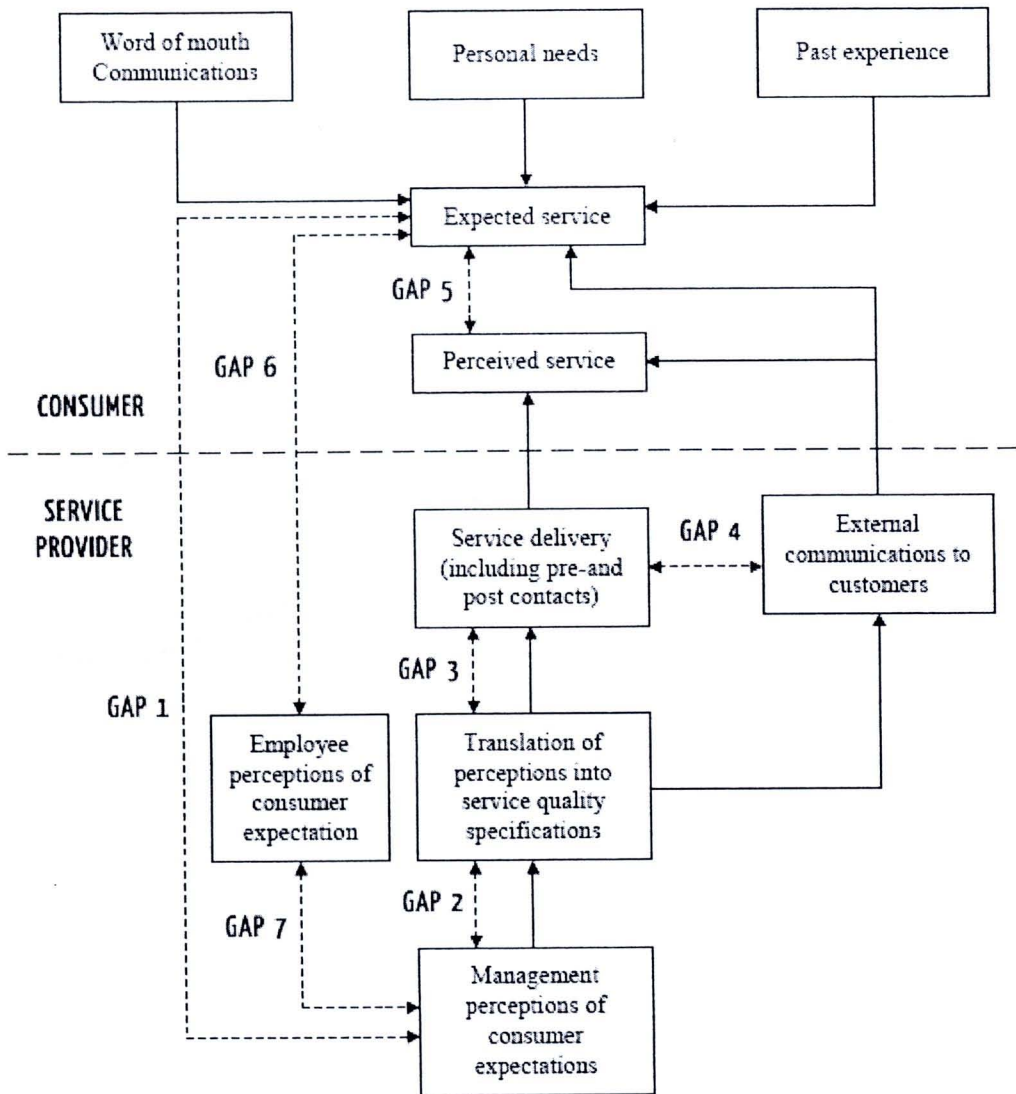
Gap3: The difference between service quality specifications and actual service delivery are standards consistently met?

Gap4: The difference between service delivery and what is communicated externally are promises made consistently fulfilled?

Gap5: The difference between what customers expect of service and what they actually receive.

Gap6: The discrepancy between customer expectations and employees' perceptions as a result of the difference in the understanding of customer expectations by front-line service providers.

Gap7: The discrepancy between employee's perceptions and management perceptions as a result of the differences in the understanding of customer expectations between managers and service providers.



SERVICE QUALITY ASSESSMENT (SERVQUAL)
Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988

Figure 4 Service Quality Assessment

Source: Parasuraman and Berry, 1988

The organization can bring SARVQUAL 7 gaps information as considerable factors in order to fulfill the gaps between customer service staff performance and customer satisfaction. Due to, the results present that customer service performances are satisfied by customers, since the organization can find out another factor to

develop staff performance to be more effective in order to retaining high quality performance of staff and generating high customer satisfaction level.

Therefore, as a consequence of these statements, the researcher created a new model for the customer service of service apartments as called the flower of good practice model for customer service in service apartment.

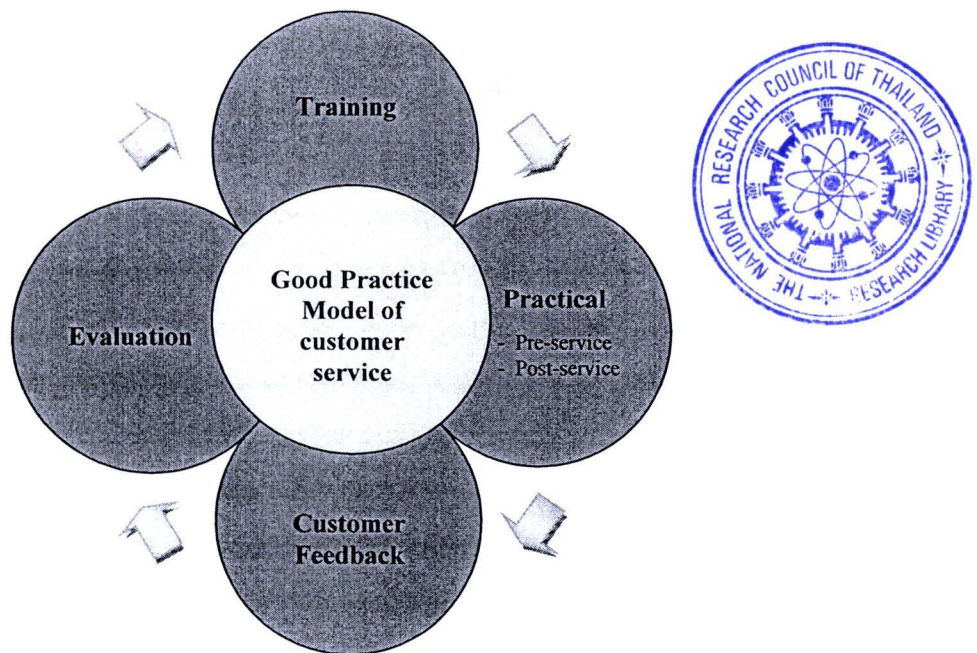


Figure 6 The good practice model of customer in service apartment flower

According the flower of good practice model of customer staff for service apartment which created by basing on customer satisfaction process theory which mentioned by Lovelock et al (2007) and SERVQUAL model by Parasuraman & Berry (1988). The model will be classified into 5 dimensions as follow;

1. Training

The organization need to create effective training program for new customer service staff in order to produce high quality employees. Effective Training Program should focus on service quality and working attitude by providing service standard performance as the working standard in order to produce staff with positive attitude and high standard performance to service customers. Besides that the

organization should prepare maintenance performance program as the tool for keeping good performance staff as well.

2. Practical

Customer service staffs need to pay attention to customer feeling on both of before and after taking services. In addition, Customer service staffs need to practice five dimension of customer standard performance properly because they are the essential skills of this function. Moreover, customer service staffs have to evaluate their performance by themselves as self-development process in order to maintain the service quality performance. The practical process of customer service in service apartment can be divided into 2 mains operation which are pre and post service delivery. The process detail is described as follow;

Pre-service delivery

Customer service function has to work in collaboration with sale department in order to know new customer requirement information, then assign jobs to involved department such as housekeeping and engineering department for preparing the room for coming customers. Next, customer service need to re-check facilities in rooms to ensure that everything is completely and no broken stuff, also room keys and key card would be check and collected by customer service staff as well.

Post-service delivery

After greeting customers and bring them to the room, customer service staff need to present warm service and attention to customer's livelihood during their stay. In addition, staffs should prepare themselves to ready for any customer problem and willing to listen to customer's requirements with professionally and good manner as well.

3. Customer Feedback

Customer service should prepare feedback box or online feedback for customers who have experienced service by staff in order to know customer feeling and comments toward staff performance. Then consider those information to develop or improving customer service staff performance.

4. Evaluation

Managers need to evaluate staff performance every appropriate period (6 months/ 1 year) in order to maintain the quality of service performance. Moreover, this stage helps to motivate staff to develop and improving their performance to be more effective by giving reward to good staff performance.

Moreover, peer review can be another evaluation process that help staff know their working performance in terms of team and flexible characteristics. This kind of performance evaluation will generate understanding between staff and build up more effective teamwork in the organization as well.

Lodging industry can apply the model as the tool of refreshing staff performance and training new customer service staff to be effective workers in the organization.

In conclusion, customer service staff is more than a function of productive selling; it is about direct serving services which satisfy customer and direct communication center between the organization and customers. The good practice model of customer service in serviced apartment can be a potential role for operational efficiency in lodging industry. The entrepreneurs can apply the result as a part of service staff training strategy and customer satisfaction evaluation in order to retain valuable human resources, loyal customers and developing service quality as a marketing key among high competition in lodging industry.

Recommendations

According to the results illustrated, the five dimensions of customer service standard performance can jointly predict customer satisfaction with customer service and summarizing into the new good practice of customer service in service apartment. This model could be broadly guideline for service apartment business to develop their customer service function. Therefore, in order to be beneficial for service apartment industry, this research could be continued study by another study which relevant to hospitality industry and other businesses that need to deal with many customers in terms of understanding and developing service quality. The following is recommendations which might be possible topics for another study.

1. The study of the relationship between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction in accommodation service industry.
2. Examine the study of customer satisfaction and customer royalty in long stay accommodation.
3. Exploring customer service job description in long stay accommodation.
4. Evaluating customer satisfaction with the stared hotels in Bangkok.
5. The study of service employee satisfaction affects service performance.
6. Evaluate service performance, tourist satisfaction, and customer royalty in the stared hotel.

In addition, the future research should consider research limitation carefully in order to collecting data properly and less effect on the result.

Limitation

The study found that there are some influencing factors of how some customers impacted on the collected data in terms of inappropriate information because the time taken for the study was limited., The timeline involved only three months to finish this research, therefore the sample size is limited into small group from the actual number that might affect the result differently.