

THE IMPACT AND TREND OF SERVICE QUALITY ON CUSTOMER LOYALTY TOWARDS FIVE STARS HOTELS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MALAYSIA AND JORDAN

Al-Sheick Ghaith Abdulraheem Ali^{*1}, Zukime Mohd Hj Mat Junoh², Safizal Muhammad Bin Abdullah³

^{*1} School of Business Innovation & Technopreneurship University Malaysia Perlis, Malaysia.

² School of Business Innovation & Technopreneurship University Malaysia Perlis, Malaysia.

³ School of Business Innovation & Technopreneurship University Malaysia Perlis, Malaysia.

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the impact of service quality (tangibles, reliability responsiveness, assurance, and empathy) on customer's loyalty in five stars hotels. To achieve the objectives of the study, a questionnaire was developed and distributed. The study population consists of all hotels customers in Malaysia and Jordan, and convenience sample was selected in this study pilot test 57 questionnaires. The study finds that there is a strong impact of service quality (tangibles, reliability responsiveness, assurance, and empathy) on customer's loyalty in five stars hotels in Malaysia and Jordan. Based on the above mentioned results, a set of necessary recommendations was formulated, which enable the hotels to strengthen the relationship between perceived service quality and customers loyalty. Providing services with confidence and accuracy, employees training, and strengthen the culture of service quality are key factors.

INTRODUCTION

In most industries, the success of a service provider is depend on the high quality relationships with customers (Oliver, 1993) . The service competition , the saturation of the markets , the soaring costs of promotional tools, and the changes in social norms, the rising customer expectations have all stimulated an active interest in service quality, customer satisfaction (Jones, Mothersbaugh, & Beatty, 2002). Within the service sector, significant measures have been implemented to enable the hotel industries to respond more efficiently and effectively to consumer for better quality service. The measures implemented in the financial sector have fostered a more competitive environment and have enable financial institutions to leverage more effectively on technology, economies of scale and operating synergies. This process has contributed towards market efficiencies that will continue to drive down costs and involve into a more diverse and efficient system that meets the needs of consumers, businesses and ultimately the economy (Source: <http://www.tradingeconomics.com>). Delivering service quality to customers is essential for success and survival in today's competitive hotel environment. The provision of services of high quality enhances reputation, improves customer loyalty, attracts new customers through word of mouth and increases financial performance and profitability. Research has shown repeatedly the service quality influence many important organizational outcomes such as performance superiority (Portela & Thanassoulis, 2005) , increasing sales, profit (Duncan & Elliott, 2002; Kish, 2000; Levesque & McDougall, 1996) promoting word of mouth (Fisher, 2001) and promote customer loyalty (Caruana, 2002; Osayawe Ehigie, 2006) .

In conclusion, to survive in this highly competitive hotel industry, it is apparent that the hotels need to provide customers with high quality service (Levesque & McDougall, 1996) . In line with this, hotels like any organization need accurate measure of service quality to assure their continued survival and success. hotels managers are first required to understand the attributes customers use to judge service quality. Then, steps need be taken to monitor and enhance the service performance.

Nowadays the rapid growth and increasing of hotel supply comes with higher competition, causing hoteliers try to capture the market share by using price cutting strategy. The intense price discounting could run a serious risk of having negative impact on the hotel's long-term profitability (Oliver & Swan, 1989) . The hotel segment that critically affected by this circumstance, is the luxury class hotel. The occupancy rate and room rate begin to go down.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Service Quality

A service is an economic activity that creates value and provides benefits for customers at specific times and places by bringing about a desired change in or on behalf of the recipient of the service. Although the process may be tied to a physical product, the performance is transitory, often intangible in nature and does not normally result in ownership of any of the factors of production (Lovelock, Wirtz, Lapert, & Munos, 2004). However, being able to satisfy given needs reflects the value (or quality) of the product or service to the customer, including the economic value, safety, reliability, and maintainability (Garvin, 1985). Therefore, a customer's evaluation of service quality and the resulting level of satisfaction are perceived to affect bottom line measures of business success (Iacobucci, Grayson, & Ostrom, 1994). To some, service quality can also be defined as the difference between customers' expectations for the service encounter and the perceptions of the service received (Munusamy, Chelliah, & Mun, 2010; Arun Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988; Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003). According to (Garg, Versteeg, & Buyya, 2013; Oliver, 1980) said it is thus predicted that customers will judge quality as `low` if performance does not meet their expectations and quality as `high` when performance exceeds expectations. This study adopted the five dimensions (SERVQUAL model) employed by (Arun Parasuraman et al., 1988) to measure service quality. They are assurance (knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence), reliability (ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately), tangibility (physical facilities, equipment and appearance of personnel), empathy (caring, individualized attention) and responsiveness (willingness to help customers and provide prompt service).

Service Quality Standards Measurements:

According to (Gilbert & Veloutsou, 2006), the SERVQUAL instrument consists of 21 statements of assessing consumer perceptions and expectations regarding the quality of a service. Respondents are asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with the given statements of a seven-point Likert scale. Consumers' perceptions are based on the actual service they received, while consumers' expectations are based on past experiences and information received. These statements represent the determinants or dimensions of service quality. Refinement of this work reduced the original service dimensions used by consumers to judge the quality of a service from ten to five, which include:

Table 1 : service quality dimension and their definition :

DIMENSION	DEFINITION
Tangibles	Appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personal, and communication materials.
Reliability	Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately
Responsiveness	Willingness to help (internal) customers and provide prompt service
Assurance	Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence.
Empathy	Caring , individualized attention the employees provide to each other

Source : adapted from (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry, 1990) .



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The model conceptualizes service quality as a gap between customer's expectations (E) and the perception of the service's providers performance (P). According to (Anantharathan Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985) , service quality should be measured by subtracting customers' perception scores from customer expectation scores ($Q = P - E$). The greater the positive score represents the greater the positive amount of service quality or vice versa. The gap that may exist between the customers' expected and perceived service is not only a measure of the quality of service, but is also a determinant of customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Measuring the gap between expected and perceived service is a routine method of utilizing customer feedback. (Zeithaml, 1988) , suggested a model that details a gap between customer expectations and actual service delivered. (Vavra, 1997) , identified a sixth gap namely the difference between the customers' desired service in their expected service.

Since its introduction in 1988, SERVQUAL has been used in hundreds of studies including numerous studies in the hospitality and tourism industries (Bojanic & Rosen, 1994; Fick & Ritchie, 1991; Lee & Hing, 1995; Luk, de Leon, Leong, & Li, 1994; Ryan & Cliff, 1997; Saleh & Ryan, 1991) . SERVQUAL was also used by (Knutson, Stevens, Wullaert, Patton, & Yokoyama, 1990) to create a lodging specific instrument called LODGSERV which is a 26 item index designed to measure consumer expectations for service quality in the hotel industry. LODGSERV, however is not as popular among hospitality tourism researchers as SERVQUAL and was used only in a limited number of studies (Ekinci, Riley, & Fife-Schaw, 1998; Patton, Stevens, & Knutson, 1994).

Customer loyalty

Hotel services organizations aware of creating customer loyalty importance and dealing with him as continuous and permanent profit source, and their success depends on their capacities and capabilities to ensure sound base of loyal customers, taking in consideration that many loyal customers often act as a source of attracting new customers through their positive recommendations ,suggestions and opinions that affect new or potential customers (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, & Gremler, 2002) . Modern organizations have realized the customer loyalty economic consequences importance. Since organizations who are enjoying a greater share of loyal customers achieve greater profits as a result of increasing repurchase rates and willingness to pay higher prices and positive nomination behavior (Al-Aali, Khurshid, Nasir, & Al-Aali, 2011). Literature agrees that loyalty is associated with customer's desire to continue in dealing with the organization. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2003) defined customer loyalty as customer's measure and his desire in exchange participation in organization interactive activities.

Customer loyalty is an important element to gain competitive advantage. It can save money to attract retaining customers than seek new customers. Further, Loyal customers are more potential to repurchase than non-loyal customers by the experience of the service , with no additional cost service providers creating word of mouth advertising potential (Shoemaker & Lewis, 1999) . Moreover, it is stable to build the connection of customer and hotelier, whenever there are many increasingly attractive competitive product facing to the customers, or the supplier's own shortcomings.

Customer Loyalty Measurement Standards:

There are a set of attempts that aimed to determine dimensions by which customer loyalty measurement can be carried out, but (Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996) , attempt is the most important of these attempts, they identified the following four dimensions as follows:

1. Word of mouth communication, which means recommending the product or organization to others.
2. The intention of re-dealing which reflect frequent dealing with organization.
3. Non price sensitivity through willingness by customer to pay higher prices.

Relationship between customer loyalty and service quality

Service providers must avoid being complacent since retained customers may not always be the satisfied ones and similarly not all satisfied customers may always be retained. Research has pointed out that perceived service quality has a positive impact on customer loyalty (Wong, 2011) . This is because service quality has been found to relate to behavioral outcomes, especially in the form of word-of-mouth, complaint, recommendation and switching (Huei & Easvaralingam, 2011) . Thus, customer satisfaction can be concluded to affect a customer's assessment of service quality and customer loyalty (LaBarbera & Mazursky, 1983). Further, (Min, Min, & Chung, 2002) argued that reaching and maintaining high level of customer satisfaction has many benefits for business



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organizations. Therefore, satisfied customers have potential to become loyal customers, who not only consume services again, but also spread positive word-of-mouth of the firm. Moreover, satisfied customers may be more tolerant for possible service failures .

Data Collection

The target population of this study consists of two groups of people. The first group will be the customers (guests) regardless their nationality who stayed at 5-star hotels in Malaysia. The second group will be the customers (guests) regardless their nationality who stayed at 5-star hotels in Jordan. The literature suggests the existence of a positive relationship between the number of items and the sample size, representing a ratio of at least 1:4 or 1:5 (Hinkin, Tracey, & Enz, 1997; Tinsley & Tinsley, 1987) . A large sample population is helpful for generating better results from factor analysis. Sampling error is expected to decrease as the size of the sample increases (Uhl & Schoner, 1969) .the research used a descriptive measurement method and a survey measurement. This descriptive research is used to describe the characteristics of hotel industry and customers, which is processed to determine the characteristics answer who, when, where and what kind of problems. Besides, this research is designed to apply a survey method to build questionnaires to get the response and to get more understanding about the customer attitudes and loyalty of the hotel industry in Malaysia and Jordan. According to (Z. Zikmund et al., 1994) , questionnaire is a measurement technique to collect data from a sample of people. Therefore, this survey collect data by using self-administered questions got from the respondents , The questionnaire also been published by two links on one online special five-star hotels in the Jordan and one special five-star hotels in the Malaysia.

METHODOLOGY

This study will adopt a quantitative method of research, which is the most appropriate research methodology for this study. The quantitative method encompasses a system of inquiring clarification through the association between distinct variables, which can be condensed to numerical data, and possibly could be generalized to superior populations (Finnerty et al., 2013) .

All research methods provide some benefits, and have certain drawbacks. This study requires a careful approach for the research and careful selection of the research options available to the researcher. The decisive factors for choosing the option were the subject of the research, availability of resources, hypotheses, research objectives, and research limitations. Social scientists choose from three major research methods when conducting their research: quantitative, qualitative, or mixed method.

This research is based on a quantitative research method. This type of research has focuses on input from the research participants or respondents. Quantitative results are easy to collect, comprehend, and relate to the subject matter (Creswell, 2012) . Quantitative results are based on the researchers' ability and arguments presented to support the theory and results provided. A quantitative research method is an approach that predominantly uses systematic empirical relationships for increasing information. Quantitative research employs basis and impression philosophy, leading to precise elements, hypotheses and concerns, use of evaluation and surveillance, and the analysis of theories (Creswell, 2012) .

(Tinsley & Tinsley, 1987) categorized quantitative research as those processes in which a survey is used for data collection and the subsequent analysis of the data collected. The research tool is a questionnaire designed to collect answers types of questions. These questions can be open-ended, where respondents are not provided any predefined responses, or closed-ended, where respondents are given opportunity to choose from the choices set for the question. The quantitative research method is based on questionnaires, surveys, and other data collection tools. The involvement of the researcher in the data collection process can be smallest in the case of online research to greatest in the case of personal data collection methods. The data collected can be analyzed with the help of data analysis tools (Herrmann & Thiede, 2009) .

Pilot test

A pilot test is a method to test the design, methods, or instrument before conducting the research. It involves an initial test of data collection tools and processes to identify and eliminate errors. According to (W. G. Zikmund, Babin, Carr, & Griffin, 2010) pilot test is a experimental testing of a small group of samples, the results are only preparation, and also just used to help to test the following study design. This test generated before a following survey. By pilot test, enable researcher to know is there any question that makes respondents feel uncomfortable.

Researcher also found that how long it would take to complete the questionnaire by the respondents. Furthermore, the pilot test measures the reliability and validity and determines the errors of problems in the survey. Cronbach's Alpha was employed to measure the internal reliability of the pilot test.

RELIABILITY TEST

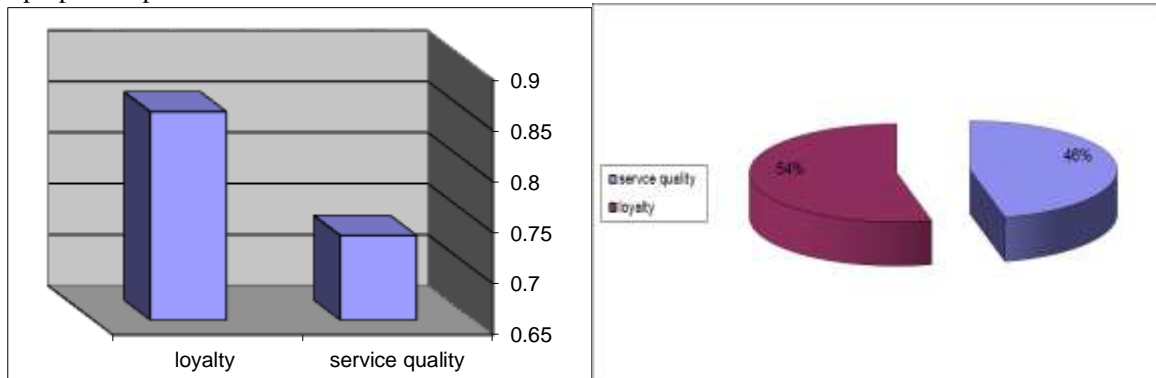
Reliability testing is to test the degree to which extent is consistent and stable in measuring what it is intended to measure. At the simply level, the test is reliable if it is consistent in itself and the whole time. Reliability test is used to measure the internal consistency so that it can determine all projects in the questionnaire whether each variable has highly relevant or reliable. In this research project, the scale items were tested by the reliability test. (Malhotra & Birks, 2007) mentioned that the reliability coefficient varies from 0 to 1. If the value of Cronbach's Alpha is less than 0.60, that shows not satisfied internal consistency reliability. However if the value of Cronbach's Alpha is more than 0.60, that showed satisfied internal consistency reliability.

The results of the Cronbach's Alpha on the sample that was taken at the beginning as shown in Table 2 .

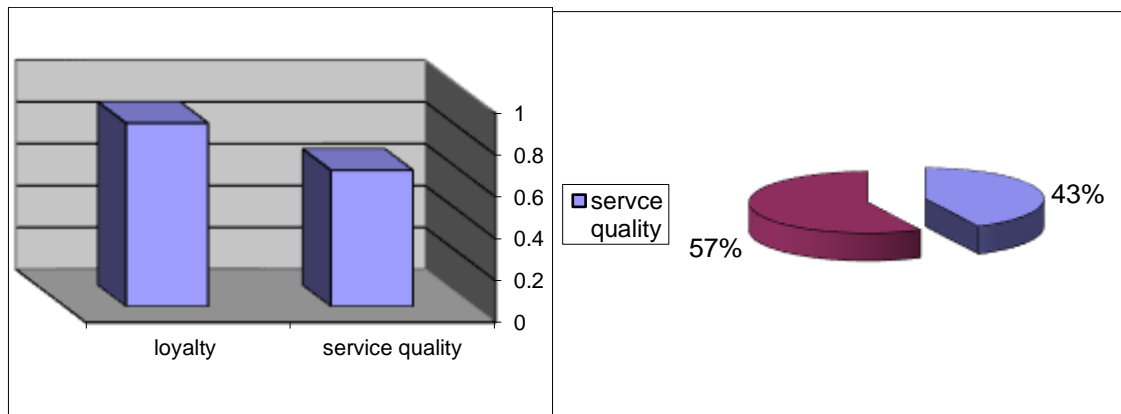
TABLE 2: RELIABILITY RESULT

Construct	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha in Malaysia	Cronbach's Alpha in Jordan
Tangible	6	0.781	0.754
Reliability	4	0.745	0.463
Responsiveness	3	0.692	0.641
Assurance	4	0.753	0.689
Empathy	4	0.692	0.706
Customer Satisfaction	4	0.821	0.941
Customer Loyalty	8	0.854	0.876

And used to measure the variable of this research before performing the data collection in order to measure the variable of this research before performing the data collection in order to achieve the objectives of this study . a total of 54 questionnaires were collected from customer 27 in Malaysia and 27 in Jordan and have been used for the purpose of pilot test .



Relationship between service quality and customer loyalty in Malaysia



Relationship between service quality and customer loyalty in Jordan

Table 3: Cronbach’s Alpha Value Internal Consistency

Cronbach's alpha	Internal consistency
$\alpha \geq 0.9$	Excellent (High-Stakes testing)
$0.7 \leq \alpha < 0.9$	Good (Low-Stakes testing)
$0.6 \leq \alpha < 0.7$	Acceptable
$0.5 \leq \alpha < 0.6$	Poor
$\alpha < 0.5$	Unacceptable

Source: (Malhotra & Birks, 2007)

Based on the analysis, all the main variables were reliable (service quality = 0.735; and customer loyalty = 0.854) in Malaysia , but in the Jordan (service quality = 0.651 and customer loyalty =0.876) Following rules of thumb of (Malhotra & Birks, 2007) the internal consistency of items in this study ranged from ‘acceptable’ to ‘excellent’. The Cronbach’s alpha The value of service quality is 0.735 That means good (Low-Stakes testing). The value of customer loyalty is 0.854This value means good (low stakes testing) in Malaysia. Cronbach’s alpha value in the Jordan service quality is 0.651 that means "Acceptable" and the customer loyalty is 0.876 that means good (Low-Stakes testing) .

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In summary, this research had attempted to simultaneously test the relationship between service quality customer loyalty in hotel industry in Malaysia and Jordan , It was found that the service provided to hotels acceptable It seems more important to hotel guests, and the loyalty rate high for the tangibility in Jordan and Malaysia, while the credibility in Malaysia is higher than Jordan so call hotel managers direct the staff to focus on the provision and delivery of services with confidence and accuracy in order to satisfy It consists of loyalty to them. Moreover, it can be one source for hotels in Malaysia and Jordan in providing a good direction for managers to design the marketing strategy especially pricing strategy to attract more customers to stand out of the competitors (Devi Juwaheer & Lee Ross, 2003) .

Due to measure the extent of the relationship between quality of service and customer loyalty in the future, we advise researchers to study the impact of each of the quality of service and customer loyalty, even more broadly and be clear about the reason for the existence of differences between the quality and loyalty.

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