Guest Satisfaction: Essential Feature For The Growth Of Hospitality Sector

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In the present scenario of cut throat competition it is utmost important to meet the expectations of the existing customers. If we fail in getting the good percentage of guest satisfaction, then it may lead to a question of existence in the market. Standard operating procedures must be developed for retaining the business. The basic phenomenon is to emphasize on guest satisfaction that can easily improve their loyalty, resulting into the massive growth of the hospitality sector. Hospitality attributes of the respective units holds lot of importance in the decision making of the potential clientele to select the best out of various alternatives. Guest retention strategy and its result play a vital role in the progress of the hospitality establishments. If such attributes and policies of guest retaining will be ignored, it may lead to an adverse situation for the respective hospitality establishment. This research paper represents that guest satisfaction is the essential factor in the growth of the hospitality sector.

Key words: Competition, Hospitality, Decision Making, Guest Satisfaction, Attributes and Policies.

I. INTRODUCTION

Guest satisfaction is the essence of hospitality sector which tends to fulfilling the needs of the guests, identifying the expectations and meeting their requirements, demonstrating the technical abilities and making the memorable moments for the guests. On the parameters of quality of service and value for money the success of any hospitality establishment can be predicted. In order to sustain the potential business we must emphasize on the aspect of guest satisfaction as it's truly said that hundred satisfied guests will bring only one prospective client but one dissatisfied guest will take away hundred prospective clients. Moreover, if we consider the expectation elements of the customer, then we find that it's too high to meet it 100%. This is because of the competition that has covered the entire industry. However the guest satisfaction is one aspect that if we succeed to meet, it will enable our business to reach to the altitude of success. In this context we need to understand the expectation of the guest satisfaction and then accordingly before demanding it we must be in a position to fulfill it. It's the mool mantra of our industry that "Atithi Devo Bhava" so how we can even think to dissatisfy the guest.

For the growth of the hospitality sector the best part is attracting the new clientele and transforming them to our permanent guests. This guest retention strategy really works in sustaining the business even in odd times. However, it seems to be easy to retain the guest and maintain good harmonious relationship but when we come on the reality grounds, our performances are far away from the estimated targets. Hence, we must keep a sound track on guest comments cards so that the performance of staff and guest satisfaction level can be evaluated.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE & CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

Considering the current scenario of ongoing market practice and requirements guest's satisfaction holds lots of weightage. Guest satisfaction is basically narrated as post usage evaluation judgment with reference to the specific product or the availed services. It is basically a comparison between the actual performances with the estimated standards expected by the guests. The basic concept of the guest satisfaction is the expectancy of the prospective clients. If the performance goes better to the expectations then the mission of guest satisfaction is accomplished and on the contrary if the actual performance does not meets the expectations then the situation is considered as adverse. This results into the direct influence on the business.

On the basis of submission to the above parameters we can say that guest's satisfaction enhances the loyalty of the guests, increases the sales and revenue to the hotel and generates the goodwill in the market. Satisfaction can be focused by highlighting customer's needs, sentiments and consumables and offered services. Various factors such as hygiene, sanitation, well mannered staff, ambiance, warm welcome by the front line staff, showing concerns for the guest, ensuring safety and security measures for the guests and offering value for money plays a vital role in guests satisfaction. These days time is utmost important aspect of guest satisfaction. Because of paucity of time guests wants quick services, if offered so, leads to major guest's satisfaction.

The expectation of the guest is to look after their expectations from the commencement of the hospitality operations. In this regards, the best way to identify what the guest will prefer is simply to ask about their preferences. Moreover in case of repeated clientele, guest history comments cards assist in building an image and generating

more guest satisfaction levels. Its very important to maintain guest history by maintaining the records of guest comments cards. This GCC are given to the guest at various areas of the hotels like reception area, restaurant, coffee shops, offered by IRD. However, the research paper reflects that many of the hotels and hotel chains use guest satisfaction evaluating methods based on insufficient practices to make simple and complex managerial decisions. Majorly the common faults can be segregated into three main aspects: quality of the sample, guest comments card design and format and collection of data and its analysis. Hence toward improving the validity of hotel guest satisfaction measurement practice the design of the format must be simple and must emphasise on all the relevant important aspects. The components of the questionnaire should be based on disconfirmation paradigm and expectancy-value. This will enable the guest to identify that whether the service was above or below to their expectation and whether they would like to avail the same service in the future or not or some amendment in that will meet their expectations. Furthermore, the GCC content analysis gives the direction towards clarity, scaling, validity, survey timings, question order and sample size.

III. EXCELLENCE OF SERVICE

The level of service is an important aspect and illustrates the satisfaction level of the guest. The satisfaction level also differs from person to person. In simple words the excellence in service can be identified by comparing the actual service with the expected service. Excellence meets the highest level of the expectations of the guests. However service can be identified in five key dimensions like reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles. A level of agreement or disappointment with respect to a given item or service is rated by the guest. These measuring results are used to identify adverse and favourable gaps. The gaps are measured by the difference between the perceptions and expectations scores and indicate that what the level of product or service offered is. If the results are favourable for the guests, performed service exceeds the expected service. An adverse results indicates that the performance does not meet to the expectations. This method of analysing reflects that service quality occurs when perceived service meets or exceeds customer's expectations. This method assists hotel employee's quality as well. It should be highlighted that service quality and guest satisfaction are distinct aspects, but they are closely associated. It is being experienced that satisfactory experience may affect guest attitude and quality of service can be perceived. Thus, satisfaction with a specific transaction may result with positive assessment of service quality. Service quality is a cognitive evaluation, which directly may lead to satisfaction. Hence, guest satisfaction is the result of service quality. Or else we can say that the relationship between quality and satisfaction is a complex. Although it's still does not get very clear in it

answers, we can sum up that service quality and guest satisfaction can be perceived as separate concepts that have casual sequence.

IV. CONTENT ANALYSIS

Content analysis is a methodology based on the observational research method that basically ensures to strategically scrutinize the symbolic content of all the pattern of recorded communications. It provides scientific, objective, quantitative and generalize description of content that is made available. Content analysis is majorly acted on virtually any medium based with either verbal or non verbal content for example print data, radio programs and television programs, recorded content of the formal gatherings such as meetings conferences, seminars, movies, songs etc. This aspect is used in the field of marketing and consumer behaviour extensively. The basic technique of content analysis entails counting the number of times pre-defined categories of measurement appear in a given content. An effective content analysis should meet several requirements. Primarily, a representative, randomly drawn sample should be selected. Secondly, the units of measurement, that is, the criteria of analysis must be clearly defined. These units can be specific a word, phrase, theme, paragraph, symbols, pictures, tables, or simply the existence or non- existence of some event or claim. Thirdly, data categorisation must be systematic. It must be clear that an item either belongs or does not belong to a particular category. Finally, statistical analysis and interpretation of data can be conducted. Reliability and validity of the instrument and collected data should be demonstrated as well. Mainly identified three types of reliability for content analysis are namely as stability, reproducibility and accuracy. Reliability can be achieved by using several coders (judges) for processing the same content. Discrepancies between them should be minimal. Another factor to consider is the reliability of the coding instrument, which reduces the need for multiple coders. On the other hand, validity is defined as the extent to which an instrument process what it is intended to measure. In the field of content analysis, choice of categories and content units enhances or diminishes the likelihood of suitable inferences.

V. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to examine hotel guest comment cards (GCCs) and customer satisfaction management schemes in hotels of Lucknow. In order to do this, GCCs were gathered and analysed. Furthermore, personal interviews with hotel managers were conducted to determine the ways GCCs were distributed and processed. Data were gathered from March to April 2018. This study adopts Gilbert and Horsnell's (1998) applied content analysis approach to examine GCCs of 5 hotels in Lucknow. Based on prior researches, GCC checklist with

32 categories was created. These categories, used to analyze the content of hotel GCCs, fall under five general areas of analysis:

(1) Focus and management value of GCC attributes,

(2) GCC attribute measurement techniques (attribute measurement scales),

(3) GCC measure of overall customer satisfaction and loyalty,

(4) GCC marketing measures (for identifying key market segments)

(5) Effective layout of questions.

Furthermore, Schall (2003) proposed the following categories:

- Not applicable response and
- The assessment of some of the main attributes of hotel services.

GCCs were personally gathered by the author. Of 5 hotels, 76% use GCC for measuring hotel guests' satisfaction, while 24% of them do not use GCC. In one hotel, GCC was not available. As the majority of hotels in the Lucknow are part of one of the three hotel chains, seven different GCC were gathered.

VI. RESULT

Firstly, the results of personal interviews with hotel managers are presented. Frequency of gathering information:

All hotels in a sample that measure 5 hotels guests satisfaction, gather information on a regular basis. GCCs are placed in every taken room.

Ways of gathering information: In all 5 analysed hotels, information is gathered using GCCs. 80% of interviewees answered that they gather information via complaints and praise as well. Personal contact with guests is used in small luxury hotels. Almost 40% of hotel managers revealed that they receive information on hotel services from guests' letters, comments on the hotel's web sites, or internal comments made by the hotel's employees.

Response rate: The number of returned GCC is low. The majority of the hotels in the sample 42% have a response rate from 15% to 20%. In three analysed hotels, the number of completed GCCs is estimated to be up to 30%, while in only two hotels is the response rate higher than 50%.

Sampling methods: In 80% of hotels, GCCs are distributed to all guests. Only in one hotel, guests are selected randomly. Out of five analysed hotel chains only in one are GCCs distributed randomly.

Process of GCCs dispersal: In 80% of hotels in the sample, GCCs are distributed by the housekeeping department staff according to the check-in data. Completed GCCs are analysed in the marketing department. In three hotels, this is conducted by the operations department. In one hotel, GCCs are distributed via the reception desk.

GCCs dispersal Staff: In all hotels in the sample (5), hotel staff is familiar with the process of measuring hotel guests satisfaction. Regarding the way GCCs are distributed, it is believed, that hotel employees do not need additional training in order to motivate their guests to complete GCCs. In accordance, employees are not rewarded for motivating guests.

Results presentation to management: 60% of the interviewed hotel managers claim that they receive an analysis report once a month. In two cases, the answer was "other", with the explanation that management is informed occasionally, sometimes even daily.

Handling complaints: In the case of a complaint received, management takes appropriate measures to fix the problem (apology, repair, etc.).

Methodology of GCC design: In all hotels in the sample, GCCs are designed according to the managers' personal experience. Two hotel managers indicated that they adopted some questions from the practice of other hotels.

Timing the survey: In all 5 analysed hotels, GCCs are distributed to hotel guests during their stay. Conducting the survey during checkout or a few days after leaving the hotel is not a practice.

GCCs accessibility: In three of the hotels, GCCs can be found in a folder on a room table. In one hotel, GCCs are placed in a visible place in the room (bed, table). And in one hotel analysed are GCCs accessible at the reception desk. One of the possible reasons for low response rates could be that the GCCs are not placed in visible places, considering that in the majority of hotels they are hidden in a folder.

GCC's language: All the GCC were in English, hence there are chances that few of the guests might not be well versed in English, hence they may not be a part of the feedback.

Special request letter: In order to indicate the importance of guests' attitudes about hotel services, it is recommended that writing a special request letter can be a good option. This practice is employed in two hotel chains in the Lucknow. Hotel managers in this study do not use this technique as a way of motivating guests to complete the GCC.

Returning the GCCs: According to the answers received, hotel guests have several queries of where to return completed GCC. In the majority of hotels in the sample (60%), completed GCCs can be put into the box near the reception desk. Guests can return their answers to the check-in staff or leave them in their room, as well.

Incentives to guests: In order to encourage guest response it is recommended that different incentives (e. g. discount, gifts). The majority of the analysed hotels (80%) do not provide any kind of incentive to the guests. In one hotel,

partial incentive is provided for returning the questionnaire. This means that instead of rewarding all the guests who took part in the survey, the incentive is given only to a guest who is randomly selected.

Reasons for not conducting GCC surveys: Out of 5 hotels in the sample, in 20% of them GCCs are not used for measuring guests' satisfaction. Reasons for this are the following: guests ignore the questionnaire, hotels do not want to disturb guests with the cards, hotels are considering the GCC practice, or are just not interested in it. Following the best practice criteria for assessing GCC, the content analysis was conducted.

Number of questions: The total sample indicates that GCCs have from 8 to 32 questions. The majority of GCCs contain up to 20 questions and one includes less than 10. It is recommended that GCCs contain between 40 and 60 questions in order to collect enough information for decision making. It can be concluded that all GCCs in the sample do not include enough questions to offer adequate management information.

Number of intangible and tangible delivery attributes: The majority of questions should be oriented towards intangible service delivery performance. In only 40% of GCCs analysed in this study, there was a positive ratio of tangible attribute questions to intangible attribute questions. Hotels in a chain have unique GCCs, so the standardization criteria are met.

VII. CONCLUSION

This research paper can be useful to the hotel operations managers in providing a direction on how to perform and change the current practices of measuring guest's satisfaction in the hotels. The primary objective of GCCs is to understand guests' needs, gather their opinions and comments, most importantly to assess guests' satisfaction with services provided. Although in 80% of analysed hotels, GCCs are recognized as an important tool for measuring guest satisfaction, results indicate that in most hotels measurement practice should be improved. Findings indicate that in most hotels GCCs can be found in a folder on a room table and are not distributed at random. Guests can complete GCCs during their stay at the hotel premises. Response rates are low and no incentives are provided for completing questionnaires. GCCs are designed according to manager's personal experience, and managers usually receive analysis reports once a month. Furthermore, the diversity of GCC design is apparent, and no solitary GCC within the survey sample meets all the best practice criteria. The majority of GCCs do not have effective question order, only a few of them provide measure of overall satisfaction, and only one includes the question about meeting guests' expectations.

In conclusion, this study combines an analysis of customer satisfaction management schemes and GCCs content analysis in the hotels of the Lucknow. It can be concluded that the efficiency of guest satisfaction measurement with GCCs depends on the measurement methodology. It is clear that guests should be additionally motivated and that GCCs should be designed with a greater impact of a scientific approach. Only reliable and valid data can provide valuable information for management decisions regarding a hotel's offering.

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