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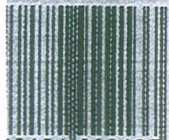
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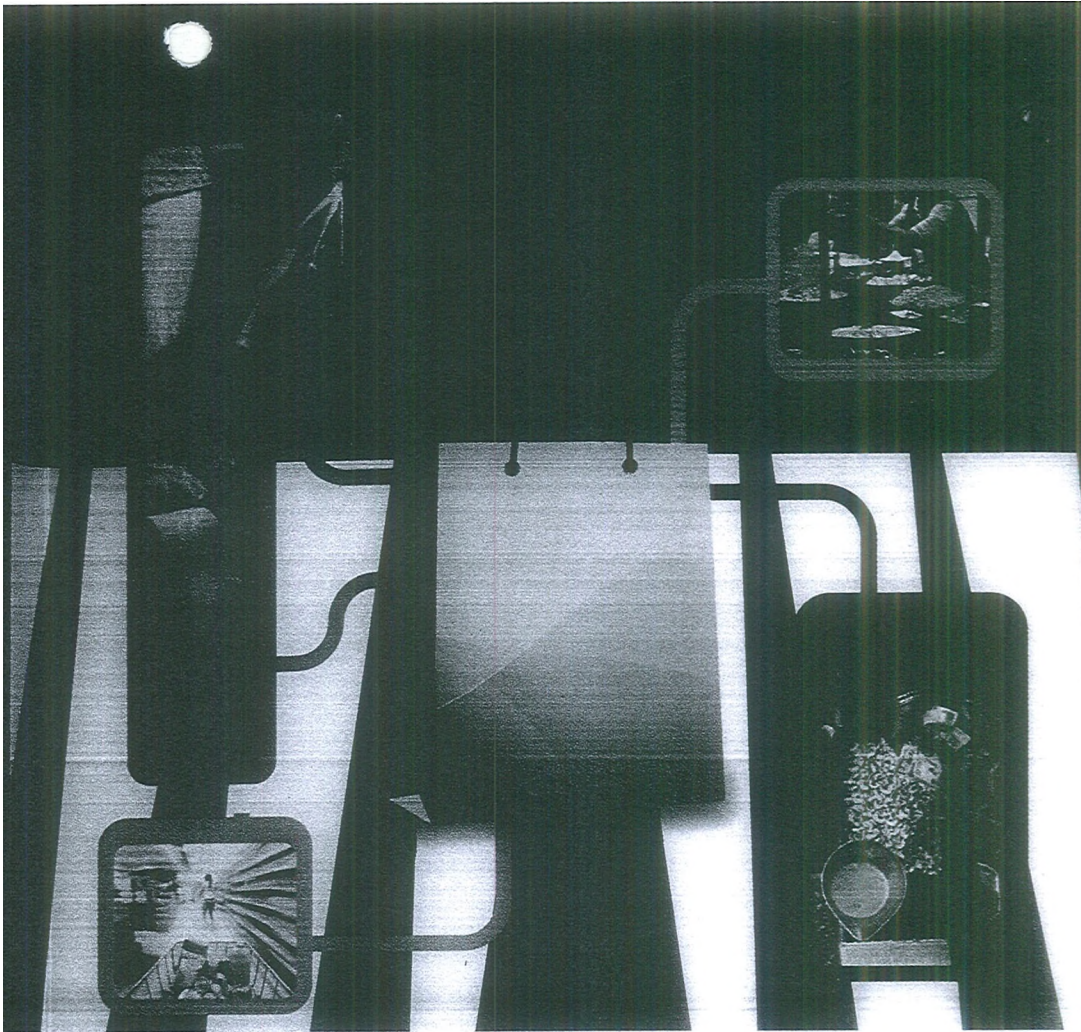
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Consumer in the Market

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Issues, Challenges, Problems & Solutions

2012

Suramya Joshi | Sarjoo Patel

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- (c) Choose a fuel efficient, low polluting car.
 - (d) Set concrete goals for reducing your travel.
 - (e) Whenever practical, walk, bicycle, or take public transportation.
2. **Food:**
- (a) Eat less meat.
 - (b) Buy certified organic produce.
3. **Household Operations:**
- (a) Choose your home carefully.
 - (b) Reduce the environmental costs of heating and hot water.
 - (c) Install efficient lighting and appliances.
 - (d) Choose an electricity supplier offering renewable energy.

Conclusion

“Encourage the development of market conditions which provide consumers with greater choice at lower prices with good quality for a healthy living”.

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Consumer Expectations and Satisfaction in the Hospitality Industry

Uma Mageshwari, S.

Introduction

The hospitality industry today is highly competitive and the secret to success lies in the ability to retain existing customers and augment the client base by providing services and value that are perceived by the client as important factors in their decision making process. The research was taken up with the objectives to study customer satisfaction in selected customers, assess the extent of customer satisfaction in the respective areas in the selected hotels and study the measures opted for customer satisfaction. A survey was conducted to assess the customer satisfaction in two star, three star and four star hotels in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. The survey revealed that the level of customer satisfaction was greater among three and four star hotels. An essential part of assessing satisfaction includes identifying dissatisfaction. Understanding when and why dissatisfaction occurs, helps to implement changes to gain and retain future customers and employees. The existing customers have to be made repeat guests who will advocate the products or services and this could be attained by delighting them beyond their expectation, not just satisfying them. Knowing the fact, that the cost of acquiring a new customer is usually five to seven times greater than retaining current customers, managers of the hotels offer various facilities and take measures to gain revenue. The customer satisfaction was found to be negligible in two star when compared to three star and four star as the steps taken by the management is not up to the expectations of the customers. Increased competition has also led to more consistent standards and has enhanced customer satisfaction. Value added services is what customer seek, so hotels must offer such services to beat their competitors.

Ranking third among the global industries, the roots of hospitality dates way back to 4000 BC. "Hospitable" as defined in the *Dictionary of Hotel, Tourism and Catering Management*, is friendly and generous entertainment of guests. Indian hospitality is legendary. "Athithi Devo Bava" meaning "the guest is truly your God" is a dictum of hospitality in India.

Hospitality is all about working for the complete gratification of the guest. Value added service to guests is vital for the growth of the hospitality industry and customer care and satisfaction are of top priority in the current scenario and is an integral part of the value added service.¹

Customers are individuals and as such will have different perceptions of the service they receive and therefore different levels of satisfaction.

It's at least five times more expensive to win a new customer than to keep a current customer. It is common knowledge in most industry including hotel industry that cost and effort to retain an existing customer is far less than the cost and effort required to identify a new one.²

Customer satisfaction survey is an integral part of total quality management strategy and the study was conducted to elicit information on customer satisfaction and expectations with the objective to

1. Study customer satisfaction, and
2. Assess the extent of customer satisfaction in selected hotels.

Methodology

Two, three and four star hotels situated in Chennai were identified to conduct the study. Two hundred and eighty-five customers visiting the various hotels were selected and interviewed.

A set of three questionnaires were formulated to be administered to the customers. The customers were categorized as diners, new guests and repeat guests. Diners are the customers who come only to the restaurant to dine, whereas new guests are the customers who visit the hotel for the first time and repeat guests are those who visit the hotel regularly.

The first questionnaire for diners comprised information regarding frequency of visit, reason for choice of hotel, basis for choice of hotel, level of satisfaction about décor, atmosphere, staff, cuisines and the food served.

The second questionnaire was given to new guests which comprised information regarding reason for choice of hotel, basis for choice, purpose of visit, whether he/she will be happy to return to the hotel and the level of satisfaction in the various departments of the hotel.

The third questionnaire for repeat guests elicited information regarding the frequency of visit, purpose of visit, reason for choice of hotel, basis for choice for hotel and level of satisfaction.

Satisfaction was measured using a score card on a three point scale such as Fully satisfied, Partially satisfied and Not satisfied. Chi-square analysis was applied to observe the level of satisfaction of customers among the six hotels.

Findings

The findings of the study show that the age group of 20-40 years (Table 1) visited the hotels frequently than the rest. Special occasions such as birthdays and other religious functions were the major purpose for visiting the hotels.

Table 1: Age Distribution of the Customers

S. No.	Age in Years	Hotels (N=6)								
		Two Star			Three Star			Four Star		
		D	NG	RG	D	NG	RG	D	NG	RG
1.	5 - 20	4	-	2	8	1	5	18	1	2
2.	20 - 40	23	6	13	14	12	17	13	13	17
3.	40 - 60	16	8	5	18	7	5	13	6	8
4.	60 and above	-	5	3	10	-	3	6	-	3

D—Diners; NG—New Guests; RG—Repeat Guests.

The basis for choice of hotels as given by the customers points out that the visit was mainly recommended by friends and peer groups.

Table 2: Basis for Choice of Hotel

S. No.	Basis for Choice	Hotels (N=6)								
		Two Star			Three Star			Four Star		
		D	NG	RG	D	NG	RG	D	NG	RG
1.	Recommendations	39	5	16	39	2	20	36	9	23
2.	Media	2	7	1	1	4	4	12	5	3
3.	Travel Agents	-	4	1	-	13	3	-	3	2
4.	Companies	-	3	5	-	1	3	-	3	2
5.	Walk-ins	2	-	-	10	-	-	2	-	-

D—Diners; NG—New Guests; RG—Repeat Guests.

The main recommended aspect was on the taste and quality of food served and accommodation facilities. Influence by media, namely, newspapers, city directories and magazines also formed the choice of the respective hotels. The reasons for choice of hotel was mainly related to the travel time and easy access (Table 3).

Table 3: Reasons for Choice of Hotel

S.No.	Reasons for Choices	Hotels (N=6)		
		Two Star	Three Star	Four Star
1.	Easy access	42	59	46
2.	Reasonable tariff	28	26	25
3.	Efficient employees	5	8	15

Less effort and time for travelling is a desirable factor which many customers prefer and hence hotels with easy access are usually popular. The second major reason pointed out was reasonable tariff (79).

The level of satisfaction based on amenities is showed in Table 4.

Table 4: Level of Satisfaction Based on Amenities

S. N.	Amenities	Hotels (N=6)								
		Two Star			Three Star			Four Star		
		FS	PS	NS	FS	PS	NS	FS	PS	NS
1.	Car parking	36	-	-	30	8	2	37	5	-
2.	Efficient staff	12	27	4	27	15	5	20	28	2
3.	Type of service	30	12	-	30	13	1	26	23	-
4.	Attractiveness of dining room	31	10	-	33	11	1	39	11	-
5.	Pleasing ambience	33	9	-	30	7	-	26	13	-

FS—Fully Satisfied; PS—Partially Satisfied; NS—Not Satisfied.

Car parking and the attractiveness of the dining room were found to be the major factor for the level of satisfaction. It was surprising to note that the type of service (86) and efficiency of staff (59) mentioned were comparatively negligible in number.

Eighty-seven per cent customers were impressed by the staff's attitude in the front office department. Among the repeat guests, 14 were not satisfied with handling of messages in four star hotels, the reason attributable to untrained employees in the respective hotels.

The ambience of the room was the most satisfactory reason expressed by 112 customers. On the contrary, five customers mentioned dissatisfaction with the condition of television, fridge and air condition kept in the rooms.

The level of satisfaction expressed by 69 per cent of the customers concerning housekeeping department showed that, the cleanliness of room to be the most satisfactory aspect.

Thirty-six repeat guests were satisfied with the banquet facilities offered by three and four star hotels.

Table 5: Chi-square Analysis on Overall Satisfaction

S. No.	Hotels (N=6)	Subjects (N=285) (in per cent)					
		Diners			Guests		
		Up to 80	80-90	90-100	Up to 80	80-90	90-100
1.	Two star	21	35	44	7	29	4
2.	Three star	22	20	58	20	28	52
3.	Four star	14	76	10	14	10	76

Chi-square analysis for diners and guests were significant at one per cent level and 5 per cent level respectively.

Conclusion

The survey revealed that the level of customer satisfaction was greater among three and four star hotels. An essential part of assessing satisfaction includes identifying dissatisfaction. Understanding when and why dissatisfaction occurs, helps to implement changes to gain and retain future customers and employees. The existing customers have to be made repeat guests who will advocate the products or services and this could be attained by delighting them beyond their expectation, not just satisfying them. Increased competition has also lead to more consistent standards and has enhanced customer satisfaction. Value added services is what customer seek, so hotels must offer such services to beat their competitors.

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