

Improving Service Quality in Hotels in Buea Subdivision before the African Nation's Cup (Afcon - 2016 and 2019): The Public Sector Role

Abam EN*

Department of Hospitality Management, Catholic University Institute of Buea, Cameroon

Abstract

The delivery of service quality within the tourism, hospitality and leisure industry is located firmly within marketing. Since services within the tourism, hospitality and leisure industry are intangible, the only option that can easily provide a competitive advantage to these restaurants and other sectors in this industry is the quality of service provided to clients. Human contact are necessary for the delivery of service, it is at this moment that front line staffs or employees need to show their best in order to sell the image or reputation of the firm, and there will be a repeat of purchase by the customers when they feel satisfied with the quality of services rendered to them. Quality enhancement is increasing and that service quality and customer satisfaction is central and vital to any business. The Ministry of Tourism and Leisure in collaboration with some proprietors have been carrying-out nationwide training to improve on guest satisfaction during the 2016 and 2019 African cup of Nations for female and male respectively.

Keywords: Service; Quality; African nation's cup; Public sector

Introduction

Consumers have many attributes such as personality traits, gender, number of consumptions, and the level of involvement on service recovery expectation. As consumers become increasing aware of their expectation, service industries too are faced with pressure to have new customers and maintain or keep existing ones. As far as customer retention is concern, most of the unsatisfied customers may not complain but they still however expect service recovery. When some of them do notice service failure, they automatically switch over. As long as there exist a gap between will-expectation and should - expectation shrinks or diminishes, consumers turn to feel positive about service quality.

Therefore employees have to develop stronger role in customer's loyalty and performance and need to have best skills and feel competent in their jobs, whereas managers have to use feedback to evaluate employee's performances and correct them when need do arise through short courses and training. It is critical for managers to understand their customer's perceptions of services. What distinguishes the features of its service styles are the power on which an organisation's image and its brand are build, its services must be consistent.

Background of the study

Buea, according to social scientists was founded by a hunter in search of game; Eye Njie Tama Lifanje came from the Bomboko clan behind the Buea Mountain (Mount Cameroon or Mount Fako). On that fateful day he founded Buea, he had set out in search of animals but there were no game to be hunted only a vast peace of hospitable land that could harbor his family. Eyé Njie named it "Mwea", meaning, hospitable land for farming. The settlement soon grew into a clan but made tardy progress until the later part of the 19th century, when there was an influx of Europeans into Africa for exploration and colonialism purposes (www.bueacouncil.com).

Buea is presently the headquarters of the South West Region with an estimated population above 200.000 inhabitants. It is a highly complex community caught between a blend of urban, semi urban, rural and traditional settings and it covers 870 square kilometers surface area. Visitors to Buea are marveled by the town's picturesque landscape, iridescent vegetation, unique weather, and most especially its strategic

position accentuated by the Majestic Mount Cameroon (4100m above sea level).

Buea has a booming economy with the agricultural, administrative, business, tourism and the financial sectors taking the central stage. Agriculture is the main occupation of the people; the rich volcanic soil, the equatorial climate and an almost all-year-round rainfall make Buea a fertile land for agriculture. The Muea Market, one of the biggest foodstuff markets in Cameroon, attracts traders from West and Central Africa. Two locally based Agro- Industrial Companies produce tea and banana for export. While tea is produced and marketed by the Cameroon Tea Estate (CTE), the Cameroon Development Corporation, (CDC), operates the Banana plantations. The tertiary sector is also witnessing an impressive growth with banks, corporative societies and other financial houses dotted around the town. There has been a rapid emergence of small and medium size enterprises especially in the Molyko neighbourhood (www.bueacouncil.com).

Literature Review

The importance of service quality in the Hospitality and Tourism industry is of paramount important to customers who expect or deserved to be treated well in relation to the money they pay.

Service quality, customer's satisfaction and price are important selection tools or criteria for a customer or guest and the key determinants of post-purchase or after purchase behaviour such as word- of -mouth and repurchase. Lots of research has been carried out all aimed at satisfying the customers expectation that is how the customer judge the services rendered to him or her.

***Corresponding author:** Evaristus Nyong Abam, MSc. in International Hospitality Management, Department of Hospitality Management, College of Business, Catholic University Institute of Buea, Cameroon, Tel: 00237 650214212; E-mail: enyongabam@yahoo.com

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Hayes and Miller in their study on the revenue management for the hospitality industry concludes that service quality is perceived by most customers as more critical to value than is the product quality. Service industry is related to the importance of product quality and that service quality is the guests or customer's perceptions of value and to the prices they are charged [1].

According to Tesone service consists of the interaction and transactions that occur between customers and members of staff from the time they enter the restaurants through the time of departure from the restaurants, this is called the customer relationship [2].

Bowie and Buttle revealed that some hotels and restaurants claim that their product is so unique that they don't have competitors; the reality is that all hospitality businesses compete against a variety of different types of competition which could be micro and macro-competition and what will make the difference is the quality of service they do offer [3].

Ahmed et al. thinks that the concept of service quality represents the social interaction between the service provider and the customer, and that the provider plays an important role in the delivery of product to the customer [4].

Helgadottir et al. believes that it is better to know whether the guest likes to be treated as a customer and knowing which methods adds more value to the experience of the guest [5].

Lee and Chen suggest that most service quality has both poor and versatile characteristics because service quality is based on the customer's feeling [6]. When a customer feel that he or she was well cared for or served, this will surely encourage the customer to come for a another purchase, he or she may encourage his friends and relatives through word- of -mouth to come to this restaurant. In the case where the customer feels unsatisfied with the services offered to him or her, it will discourage them from coming and the customer can also to discourage friend and relatives from coming to patronised your business.

Barrows and Powers believed that service quality is often the best way to differentiate you from competitions [7]. Good services give an added advantage over new comers and it help to maintain your reputation. Customers perceptions of service quality is more directly linked to the morale, motivation, knowledge, skills and authority of front line staffs that are in direct contact with customers, than in the case of product selling organisation. Since the front line staffs are in constant or direct contact with customers, this researcher is suggesting that it would be good for managers to try to motivate these staffs and this will go a long way to providing best services hence increasing customer's perception.

Kattara et al. believes that employees behaviours which could be negative or positive, are highly correlated to the customer overall satisfaction [8]. When the customer leave satisfied, the employee too will be happy as he or she knows that the customer will one day surely come back for another purchase or service.

Mohanty revealed that each customer regards various service attributes as more or less important and various service characteristics as more or less desirable while management ways of perception of quality of service frequently differs from that of customers [9]. This researcher is suggesting that Management should at times come and observe for some time what the front line staffs are doing in order to understand how customers feel about their services. This will in a long

run help management to see the areas that need attention and therefore make necessary training [10].

Research Methodology

Veal indicated that an empirical approach is the collection and analysis of data; it could be quantitative or qualitative, primary or secondary. No research is purely empirical; it is usually informed by some sort of theory or conceptual frame work. Some researchers are of the opinion that a single research method may use both quantitative and qualitative techniques and procedures in combination as well as use primary and secondary data. The quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques and analysis procedure each have their own strength and weaknesses.

For this research work, the researchers used only secondary data that was information collected from documents and websites.

Analysis and Finding

The Government of Cameroon through its Ministry of Tourism and Leisure on November 25-26th 2015 in collaboration with some proprietors organised a five day workshop on the training of hotel managers, housekeeping managers, waiters/waitresses, bar tenders on the importance of good customer services, welcoming of guests, waste management in hotels and restaurants, good bar tending practices etc. This seminar or workshop was hosted in Mountain hotel - Buea and it is geared towards the hosting of the 2016 and 2019 African cup of Nations for female and male respectively.

On July 11th-15th 2016 another workshop for the training of hotel staff of the South West Region in view of the organization of the 2016 Female African Cup of Nations was organized by the Ministry of Tourism and Leisure at Buea - Mountain Hotel.

Also on September 15th-17th 2016 the same Ministry of Tourism and Leisure organized a seminar on the security of tourists, reception techniques, hygiene and quality of service for tourism actors in the South West Region at Buea Mountain Hotel.

Conclusion

Customers today expect a very high overall level of services, institutions that are able to better serve them; will have loyal customers and a better turnover. Every competitive organisation seeks some sort of advantages over its rivals; it seeks some way to distinguish itself in the eyes of its customers. This challenge is therefore to find an advantage that is long lasting and not easily copied. There is much competition in this field and this will be driven by the strategies or ways that focus on the quality of service to adding value as opposed to product.

The need of the customer is very important in the error reduction process in various areas and quality improvement leading to customer's satisfaction should be identified and implemented.

Service quality is largely based on reliability and responsiveness. This reliability and responsiveness in the hospitality industry (hotels and restaurants) have made significant and positive impacts on customer's satisfaction. The evaluation of service quality should not embrace only the service delivered, but also the manner in which this service is delivered.

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