Level of Satisfaction Along Dimensions of Service Quality of Accredited Hotels in Baguio City During the Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

While the hospitality industry is slowly recovering, the COVID-19 crisis continues to exert profound impacts on how hospitality businesses operate. This study aimed to the explore quality of service and customer satisfaction of DOT accredited hotels in Baguio City during the COVID-19 pandemic on the basis of Service Quality Model. In addition, the study tried to find out the challenges faced by the hotel employees during the pandemic. The study adopted a descriptive-survey research design to determine the level of satisfaction of the hotel guests during the pandemic along tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, confidence and communication. From the 10 hotels in the city, a total of 387 respondents answered the questionnaire floated between the peak months of September and October. Results showed that hotel guests are very satisfied in all the dimensions of the SERVQUAL model in relation to customer satisfaction. Assurance/Confidence has the highest overall mean while Tangibility has the lowest overall mean. Furthermore, poor communication with guests, lack of employees and maintenance of cleanliness and sanitation were identified as the challenges encountered by the hotel employees in their service delivery. A Proposed Program to improve the level of satisfaction of the hotel guests in Baguio City was prepared as the output of the study.

Keywords: Service quality, customer satisfaction, SERVQUAL model, hospitality, COVID-19 pandemic

INTRODUCTION

The majority of human mobility in the modern world is due to tourism. Today, worldwide tourism has shown development. There were 1.5 billion foreign visitors in 2019 and an expected 1.8 billion foreign visitors by 2030, according to the World Tourism Organization (2020). The tourism sector is quickly emerging as a significant employer that significantly boosts the GDPs of several nations throughout the world.

United Nations World Tourism Organization emphasized that as countries gradually relax travel restrictions and tourism slowly resumes in many parts of the world, health must remain a top priority, with coordinated health measures in place to safeguard workers, communities, and travellers while also supporting businesses and workers. Further, tourism is one of the most affected industries by the COVID-19 pandemic, affecting economies, livelihoods, public services, and opportunities across all continents. While the hospitality industry is slowly recovering, the COVID-19 crisis continues to exert profound impacts on how hospitality businesses operate.

According to Gossling et al. (2020), hospitality businesses were faced with substantial adjustments to their operations in order to uphold employees' and customers' health and safety and to enhance customers' willingness to support their businesses.

Customer satisfaction is defined as a positive experience after receiving any service (Sultana et al., 2016). According to Parobek et al. (2015), one of the most important factors in a successful business is customer satisfaction. They went on to say that increasing customer satisfaction leads to increased competitiveness. Customer satisfaction is monitored and measured using detailed information about the customer (Parobek et al., 2015).

Ramya et al. (2019) defined service quality as a service provider's ability to satisfy customers in an efficient manner, which can improve business performance. Quality is an important factor in business success in the service sector as well. It is due to the recognition of its positive relationship with profits, increased market share, and customer satisfaction (Ramya et al., 2019). Customer satisfaction and loyalty are impacted by service quality, according to Aladwan et al. (2022). They found that levels of loyalty rise as satisfaction with the quality of provided services rises. The majority of clients and respondents are content with the caliber of the services provided by the hotels they most recently stayed in during this pandemic, it has been discovered (Aladwan, et al. 2022).

In order to increase customer satisfaction with the airline service, Hapsari et al. (2016) found that airline practitioners should concentrate on providing a superior service quality and a high value of service. The survey also reveals that customer happiness is strongly impacted by service quality and perceived value. Bello and Bello (2017) provided a succinct explanation of the idea of service quality as a mentality and a long-term, comprehensive assessment of product(s) or service(s). Contrarily, customer satisfaction reveals a person's opinion of how well the product(s) or service(s) performed in comparison to his or her expectations.

According to Zalatar's research from 2017, service quality dimensions can be used to predict overall customer happiness. His research adds fresh findings to the body of knowledge compared to earlier investigations, while also supporting those from earlier studies. The Philippines' fast-food industry was the focus of his research, though. Tan (2019) came to the conclusion in his study that by consistently providing high levels of service quality, customer retention will occur, which would then produce a long-term loyal client. He continued by saying that failing to consider the power of customer happiness, particularly their demands and requirements, could destroy the power of consumer loyalty.

Baluyot and Pampolina (2021) assert that how patrons are handled throughout their eating experiences has an impact on those patrons. Customers at the restaurant must be treated with respect, just as you would want to be treated. The hospitality sector, which includes bookings through check-out, has its own stages of service experiences. According to Yadegaridehkordi et al. (2021), a growing percentage of travellers are using computerized customer reviews to assess the caliber and effectiveness of hotels. The lack of in-person interactions between hotel guests and staff raised the demand for online venues for feedback. These reviews on social media platforms can have a significant impact on tourists' decisions (Nilashi et al., 2021).

One of the findings of the study cited by Nilashi et al. (2021) was that one of the key factors in customer satisfaction is service quality. The study also demonstrated a strong correlation between service quality and customer happiness during COVID-19. There are more hotels opening up all the time in Baguio City, which has added to the worries about service quality. This eventually means that financial performance will improve. On the other hand, Presbury (2005) claimed that businesses around the world

had dramatically increased their attention to quality issues. This came about as a result of the quality mind set, which has become a key determinant in the selection, purchase, and consumption of hotel services. Ivanauskiene and Volungenaites (2014) claim that the goal of operators in the hotel industry's greater emphasis on service quality is to satisfy customers.

There are number of studies that have been conducted to examine the service quality and customer satisfaction in the service industry in the Philippines. However, most of them focus on the food and beverage sector. Also, the SERVQUAL model is not considered suitable for the evaluation of some distinctive features of the hotel industry since it was not designed specifically for the industry. This presents a research gap that this research aims to fill. To discover the service quality and customer satisfaction at this time, Lodging Quality Index (LQI) will be used. Unlike SERVQUAL model which can be used in all the service industries, Juliet et al., (2003) was able to design service quality dimensions based on the LQI model.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

SERVQUAL Model

Ramya et al. (2019) underlined that quality in the case of tangible commodities by looking at the products. Specifications can be checked through quality control, and defective products can be rejected. However, due to certain characteristics of services like intangibility and inseparability, they cannot be evaluated in the same way as a tangible product (Ramya et al., 2019).

In the service-based sector, the SERVQUAL model is thought to be the most widely used paradigm for assessing service quality. It is a model based on how customers rate the quality of the services they receive, showing a comparison of the expected and actual value as well as taking into account any gaps in the service delivery process (Parasuraman et al., 1985). Consequently, the gap model serves as the basis of the SERVQUAL scale. The SERVQUAL measure includes five qualities—tangibles, dependability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy—from ten categories of ideal service characteristics (Parasuraman et al., 1985).

The concept of service quality is diverse, and different perspectives among scholars on how it is measured in the hotel business led to the development of the Lodging Quality Index Model (LQI). The SERVQUAL model's shortcomings in measuring service quality in the hotel business are addressed by the LQI.

While the SERVQUAL model can be applied to any service-based industry, the LQI model is more appropriate to the hotel industry (Bello & Bello, 2017). The SERVQUAL model was used to create the LQI model, which borrowed its scale from the main structure and eight-step procedure (Parasuraman et al., 1985; Churchill & Carol, 1982).

The model presents service quality in the hotel industry as consisting of five dimensions and 27 items. These are; tangibility, reliability (including original reliability and credibility dimensions), responsiveness, assurance/confidence and empathy/communication. Hapsari et al. (2016) identified ten characteristics that influence service quality. These characteristics were determined by customer perception. Reliability, communication, responsiveness, and tangibility are among the ten determinants. Furthermore, the author elaborates on other dimensions such as credibility, comprehension, security, courtesy, and competence.

Tangibility was defined by Hapsari et al. (2016) as the physical evidence of service (facilities, tools, and equipment); responsiveness was defined as the willingness or readiness to provide service. Reliability

was defined as getting it right the first time, keeping promises, and being dependable, while communication was defined as keeping customers informed in language that they can understand.

According to Othman et al. (2019), tangibles include physical facilities, equipment, and personnel appearance; reliability includes the ability to perform the promised service consistently and accurately; and responsiveness is the willingness to assist customers and provide prompt service. In this context, confidence refers to employee's knowledge and courtesy as well as their trustworthiness and assurance (Rajaguru & Hassanli, 2018).

**Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory of Customer Satisfaction**

The expectancy disconfirmation theory is frequently used to explain how consumers assess the real product or service before making satisfaction judgements. Adee (2004) asserts that the theory roughly divides the satisfaction process into three categories: dissatisfaction, satisfaction, and extreme satisfaction. According to the notion, evaluating whether a product or service performed as intended is the satisfaction process.

According to the Expectation-Disconfirmation Model, citizen satisfaction results from a process in which people assess how well a public service performed in comparison to their prior expectations. The marketing material is where the Expectation-Disconfirmation Model first appeared (Oliver, 2010). Customer satisfaction is a key concept in this literature and can refer to a variety of aspects of a consumption experience, including the process of consumption and what happens during it (for example, the comfort of the room and the check-in experience for a hotel stay), the results of consumption (for example, increased relaxation after a stay), and a reflective assessment of whether the level of satisfaction obtained matches or does not match what the customer expected (Oliver, 2010).

As applicable to this study, the Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory of Customer Satisfaction suggests that hotel guests in Baguio City would form expectations prior to arrival at the hotel's front office. According to Eid (2015), one of the main factors predicting and determining consumer satisfaction and loyalty, which leads to consumer retention to a service firm, is consumer perceived value. Similarly, consumers' perceived values are critical to understand, especially for high-performing firms that prioritize customer satisfaction.

For the purpose of this study, service quality was measured based on the five variables; tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance/ confidence and empathy/ communication which make up the streamlined service quality dimensions in order to determine how each of the dimensions can influence the dependent variable (customer satisfaction) in the DOT accredited three-star hotels in Baguio City.

Figure 1. Paradigm of the study
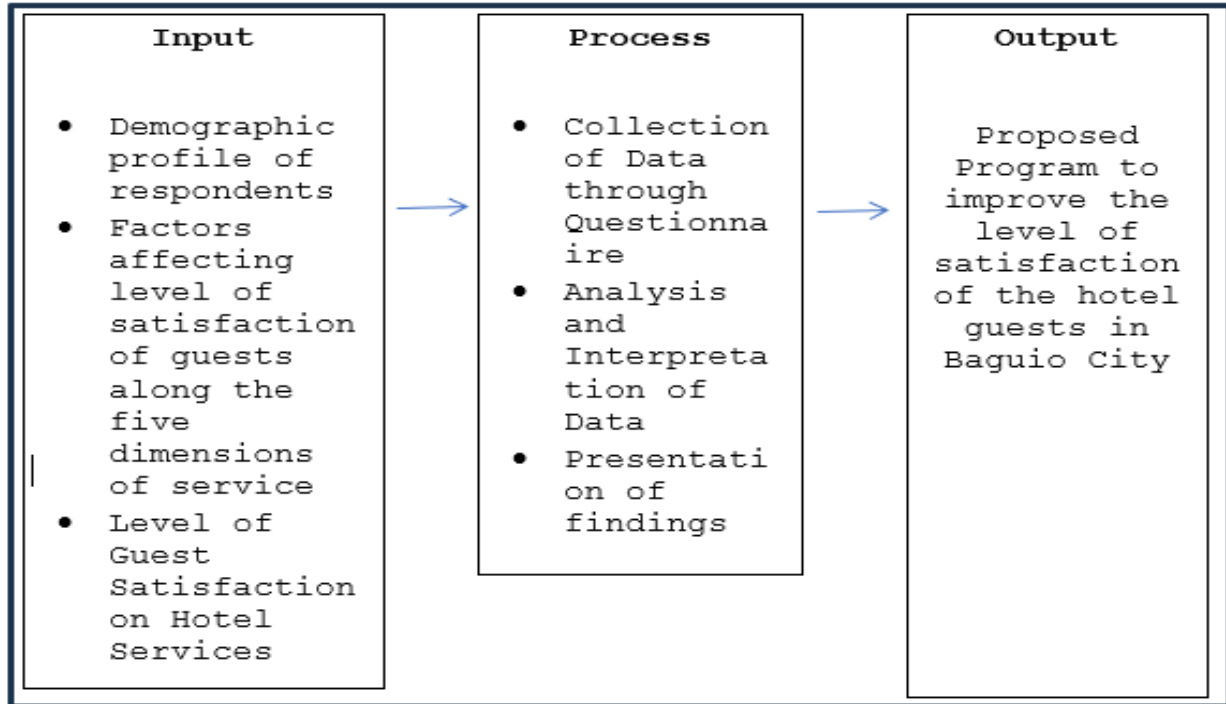
Significance of the Study

Because the core of SERVQUAL is to evaluate the quality of service provided by businesses in order to improve customer satisfaction (Balinado et al., 2021), the need to consider the new normal living condition should be investigated in order to create a baseline for how businesses should be run during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the pandemic altered public life in all areas worldwide, the researcher wishes to concentrate on service quality and customer satisfaction in the hotel industry in particular. The goal of this thesis is to find out how satisfied hotel guests were during the pandemic. Furthermore, it examined what actions hotels took to mitigate the immediate impact of the crisis in the short term, as well as how they plan to recover in the long run. Also, the thesis highlights what hoteliers have learned from this specific scenario in order to be crisis-ready for potential future shocks.

This thesis is relevant for DOT accredited hotels in Baguio City, as data from guests' perceptions of service quality and customer satisfaction were received. Additionally, employees were interviewed to gain insight from those who provide services. As a result, there was a balance of acquiring perceptions from both service providers and guests. In addition, the researcher hopes to assist the hotels in developing programs to deal with the COVID-19 crisis and similar crises in the future. The findings of the study can be applied to other DOT accredited hotels in Baguio and throughout the Philippines.

It is crucial to measure the level of service quality and client happiness among customers, not just in the food and beverage sectors but also in the hotel industry, since the situation has returned to the new normal. According to Ismail et al. (2006), various management programs showed that if service providers can successfully implement quality, it will also have a good effect on stakeholders' attitudes and individual employee behaviour.

Sherman (2019) argues that improving service quality will have a significant positive impact on sales, operating costs, and lowering barriers to purchase. This is in addition to the obvious demonstration of the importance of service quality through customer attrition. Businesses have been figuring out ways to

differentiate themselves from their rivals through the services they offer. With all the risks and difficulties at hand, the research topic can be useful in understanding the current service quality and consumer satisfaction among hotel visitors.

Statement of the Problem and Hypothesis

This study focused on the quality of service and customer satisfaction of DOT accredited hotels in Baguio City on the basis of Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction Model for Lodging Industry. The main objectives of the present research are:

1. What is the level of satisfaction of the hotel guests during the pandemic along tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, confidence and communication?

1.1 Is there a significant difference in the level of satisfaction along the five dimensions of service quality considering the hotel guests' demographic profile?

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in the level of satisfaction along the five dimensions of service quality considering the hotel guests' demographic profile.

1. What are the challenges encountered by the hotel employees in their service delivery?
2. What program may be proposed to improve the level of satisfaction of the hotel guests during the pandemic?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study used descriptive-survey research design. A structured questionnaire was used as the principal survey instrument to measure the relationship between service quality and customer's satisfaction. The target population were the guests who stayed in DOT accredited hotels in Baguio City. The questionnaires were distributed to guests of the hotels in Baguio City between September and October which were considered peak months. Through this method, the researcher aimed to float enough questionnaires to be able to gather enough data for the research. The data gathered were tallied and placed in tables for description, analysis and interpretation.

Population of the Study

The study's target population were unknown number of Baguio City hotel guests. According to Kanyama et al. (2021), a typical survey has a 95% level of confidence. At p=0.05, a minimum of 385 cases with a sample error of 5% and a precision level of 95% must be collected using convenience sampling (Ayele, 2017). The population focused on the guests of the accredited hotels. According to Department of Tourism - CAR (2022), there are 38 accredited hotels in Baguio city categorized as regular, premium, and star rating accreditations.

Data Gathering Tools

The primary tool that was used is a structured questionnaire together with a covering letter that was developed based on the service expectations (adequate and desired) and service perceptions. The questionnaire comprised of two sections. The first section focused respondent's demographic data. The second section highlighted the dimensions of service quality adopted from Kanyama et al. (2021). The adopted instrument contains five (core themes) dimensions of service quality, with 27 corresponding items. Demographics of the research were derived from the study of Kanyama et al. (2021).

The questionnaires were endorsed to the front desk of each hotel. Also, pre-testing was conducted to a hotel which was floated by the researcher with the permission of the hotel manager during the last week of September 2022. As per the result of the reliability testing, the Cronbach alpha value is 0.941. Hence, the questionnaire has a very high reliability.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher asked permission to float the questionnaires to the selected hotel managers of the hotels in Baguio City through phone calls or through email. The researcher waited for the approval from the hotels. The researcher then made a formal letter to be signed by him and noted by his Adviser and the Dean. After the approval of the hotel managers, the researcher formulated the questionnaire, printed it out, photocopied it, and gave it to the front desk staff of each hotel. The questionnaires were distributed to the hotels in the first week of October 2022. They were retrieved after three weeks which was during the third week of October 2022. Once collected, the data gathered was tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted. The researcher then finalized the results.

Treatment of the Data

The data and information that were gathered and collected were properly interpreted and presented in an objective manner.

Table 1: Data for specific problem number one level of satisfaction of the hotel guests during the pandemic along tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, confidence and communication

Rating	Range	Description			Descriptive Interpretation
1	1.00-1.75	Strongly Disagree	SD/VD	Very Dissatisfied	The idea or statement is totally different from the hotel services provided.
2	1.76-2.50	Disagree	D	Dissatisfied	The idea or statement is slightly different from the hotel services provided.
3	2.51-3.25	Agree	A/S	Satisfied	The idea or statement is true from the hotel services provided.
4	3.26-4.00	Strongly Agree	SA/VS	Very Satisfied	The idea or statement is true and that I was fully satisfied from the hotel services provided.

Ethical Considerations

Respondents of the study were adequately informed of the purpose of the study as indicated in the cover letter of the questionnaire and in the informed consent. They were informed that the information gathered were treated with utmost confidentiality even if they wrote their name. In this regard, respondents had to be identified using codes like letters or numbers. This kept their answers private to guarantee the confidentiality of information. Furthermore, the data collection procedures were dealt with the anonymity of the respondents. Respondents were assured that it will not be taken against them if they fail to answer every item in the questionnaire. Hence, respondents were made to understand that they can withdraw anytime.

The respondents were assured that there were no risks in participating in the research. Instead, they will be able to help improve the services of the hotel. Also, the respondents were assured that the information they provided does not affect their future stays in the hotel as the research will be dealt with in general. No information regarding their responses were shared to any hotel staff to avoid any possible risk of their stay in the future. The result of the study will be disseminated in research colloquia including but

not limited to the Department of Tourism Cordillera Administrative Region and hospitality organizations in Baguio.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2: Level of Satisfaction of the Hotel Guests during the Pandemic along Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Confidence and Communication

TANGIBILITY	Mean	Standard Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
1. The furniture and room in the hotel are modern and comfortable.	3.44	0.62	Very Satisfied
2. The interior decoration in this hotel is appealing.	3.39	0.65	Very Satisfied
3. The exterior decoration in this hotel is appealing.	3.40	0.66	Very Satisfied
4. The employees have a neat appearance and are well-groomed.	3.48	0.60	Very Satisfied
5. The hotel facilities are up to date.	3.39	0.63	Very Satisfied
6. The hotel has a great view.	3.55	0.60	Very Satisfied
7. The hotel room is clean.	3.63	0.53	Very Satisfied
Overall Mean/ Standard Deviation	3.47	0.48	Very Satisfied
RELIABILITY	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**	**Verbal Interpretation**
1. The hotel staff can provide accurate service information.	3.48	0.59	Very Satisfied
2. Hotel staff offer services following the customers' requests in advance.	3.50	0.59	Very Satisfied
3. The reservation systems are easy to use and informative.	3.47	0.60	Very Satisfied
4. Checking-in and checking-out are not too long.	3.44	0.62	Very Satisfied
5. Hotel staff comply with COVID-19 health protocols.	3.61	0.54	Very Satisfied
Overall Mean/ Standard Deviation	3.50	0.48	Very Satisfied
RESPONSIVENESS	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**	**Verbal Interpretation**
1. The staff are courteous.	3.55	0.55	Very Satisfied
2. The hotel staff are dedicated and ready to provide the service.	3.57	0.55	Very Satisfied
3. The hotel staff are flexible in handling requests.	3.53	0.57	Very Satisfied
4. The hotel staff are willing to perform their duty.	3.58	0.56	Very Satisfied

5. The hotel staff provide the service required.	3.58	0.58	Very Satisfied
6. The hotel staff can solve problems.	3.50	0.58	Very Satisfied
Overall Mean/ Standard Deviation	3.55	0.47	Very Satisfied
ASSURANCE/CONFIDENCE	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**	**Verbal Interpretation**
1. The hotel staff are professional.	3.57	0.56	Very Satisfied
2. The hotel staff are knowledgeable in answering the customer question.	3.47	0.58	Very Satisfied
3. The hotel staff understand English and can communicate well.	3.55	0.55	Very Satisfied
4. The hotel staff are sufficient to support the hotel operation.	3.54	0.57	Very Satisfied
5. The hotel staff have the skills and abilities to provide the service.	3.58	0.52	Very Satisfied
6. The hotel has a security system to ensure customer safety.	3.61	0.55	Very Satisfied
7. The hotel is cleaned and disinfected regularly to prevent COVID-19.	3.66	0.53	Very Satisfied
Overall Mean/ Standard Deviation	3.57	0.44	Very Satisfied
Empathy/Communication	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**	**Verbal Interpretation**
1. Hotel staff pay great attention to the customers during the whole period of stay.	3.63	0.56	Very Satisfied
2. Hotel staff treat every customer equally.	3.56	0.55	Very Satisfied
3. Hotel staff can assist customers without any request.	3.52	0.57	Very Satisfied
4. Hotel staff can provide service beyond customer expectations.	3.51	0.60	Very Satisfied
5. The hotel staff listen to customers' complaints and sincerely correct their service.	3.56	0.56	Very Satisfied
Overall Mean/ Standard Deviation	3.53	0.49	Very Satisfied

This study found that assurance, reliability, empathy, tangible, and responsiveness were all substantially related to customer satisfaction. These findings confirm with those of Baluyot and Pampolina's (2021) study, which suggested that the evaluation degree of relationship of service quality as assessed by the respondents in the reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy, and responsiveness, the respondents are consistent in ranking the service characteristics as "AGREE."

According to the study of Flores et al. (2020), service quality has a substantial association with customer satisfaction. This means that dimensions such as tangibility, dependability, accountability, assurance, and empathy have a positive and significant impact on customer satisfaction, which is reflected in individuals, facilities, prices, and service quality in hotel room division. As a result, the result confirms that superior service quality will have a beneficial impact on customer satisfaction. Customers are always more satisfied with the presence of the five factors of the SERVQUAL model, according to the

research paper and survey result, because it has been discovered that customers are more satisfied when hotel staff is friendly and polite, the rooms are clean and comfortable, and there are fast services and rapid check-in processes (Aladwan et al., 2022).

Assurance/Confidence has the highest overall mean of 3.57. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the level of professionalism is significant in terms of hotel workers and employees because it can establish whether or not the hotel cares about quality (Aladwan et al. 2022). This is a clear indication of how guests value the treatment of the employees to the guests especially during the trying times. In addition, guests want to be assured that there is adequate process in preventing COVID-19 virus in the hotel during their stay.

On the other hand, Tangibility has the lowest overall mean with 3.47. Though it is evident that the DOT accredited hotels in Baguio City are clean and has a great view, the present study suggests that guests do not prioritize the physical aspects of the hotel like its exterior and interior decorations. This also means that the guests during the pandemic would rather look into the hotel's ability to ensure the safety and security during their stay rather than on the things that they see. The study finding is consistent with findings of Ngaliman et al. (2019) who noted that tangibles have no direct impact on consumer satisfaction.

Significant Difference in the Level of Satisfaction along the Five Dimensions of Service Quality Considering the Hotel Guests' Demographic Profile

Table 3: Level of Satisfaction along the Five Dimensions of Service Quality Considering the Hotel Guests' Gender

Group Statistics					
	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
Level of Satisfaction on Tangibility	Male	184	3.45	.47	Very Satisfied
	Female	203	3.47	.49	Very Satisfied
Level of Satisfaction on Reliability	Male	184	3.50	.42	Very Satisfied
	Female	203	3.49	.51	Very Satisfied
Level of Satisfaction on Responsiveness	Male	184	3.56	.42	Very Satisfied
	Female	203	3.53	.51	Very Satisfied
Level of Satisfaction on Assurance/Confidence	Male	184	3.60	.39	Very Satisfied
	Female	203	3.53	.47	Very Satisfied
Level of Satisfaction on Empathy/Communication	Male	184	3.54	.45	Very Satisfied
	Female	203	3.52	.51	Very Satisfied

The data showed that all the hotel guests regardless of their gender are Very Satisfied in all dimensions of the SERVQUAL Model. Assurance/Confidence has the highest overall mean of 3.60 and 3.53 for males and females respectively. On the other hand, Tangibility has the lowest overall mean of 3.45 for males and 3.47 for females. The data shows that both genders were satisfied with the ability of the hotel staff to convey trust and confidence. However, hotels need to work on improving their physical features.

Table 4: Level of Satisfaction along the Five Dimensions of Service Quality Considering the Type of Guest

Group Statistics					
	Type of Guest	N	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
Level of Satisfaction on Tangibility	Local	357	3.47	.48	Very Satisfied
	Foreign	30	3.37	.49	Very Satisfied
Level of Satisfaction on Reliability	Local	357	3.49	.47	Very Satisfied
	Foreign	30	3.50	.44	Very Satisfied
Level of Satisfaction on Responsiveness	Local	357	3.54	.47	Very Satisfied
	Foreign	30	3.61	.42	Very Satisfied
Level of Satisfaction on Assurance/Confidence	Local	357	3.57	.43	Very Satisfied
	Foreign	30	3.52	.45	Very Satisfied
Level of Satisfaction on Empathy/Communication	Local	357	3.53	.49	Very Satisfied
	Foreign	30	3.58	.44	Very Satisfied

The data showed that all the hotel guests regardless of their types are Very Satisfied in all dimensions of the SERVQUAL Model. Assurance/Confidence has the highest Overall Mean of 3.57 for local guests and Responsiveness for foreign guest with an overall mean of 3.61. Guests of different backgrounds have their own interpretation of customer satisfaction based on the SERVQUAL model. According to the study of Li et al. (2020), guests' expectations of hotel performance differ depending on their origins (domestic and international guests), thereby moderating the asymmetric impact of hotel attributes on customer satisfaction.

Table 5: Level of Satisfaction along the Five Dimensions of Service Quality Considering the Hotel Guests' Age Group

Descriptives					
		N	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
Level of Satisfaction on Tangibility	(18 - 24)	91	3.45	.49	Very Satisfied
	(25 - 34)	84	3.44	.47	Very Satisfied
	(35 - 44)	105	3.50	.45	Very Satisfied
	(45 - 54)	81	3.48	.49	Very Satisfied
	(55 and over)	26	3.41	.58	Very Satisfied
	Total	387	3.46	.48	Very Satisfied
Level of Satisfaction on Reliability	(18 - 24)	91	3.47	.48	Very Satisfied
	(25 - 34)	84	3.47	.51	Very Satisfied
	(35 - 44)	105	3.49	.42	Very Satisfied
	(45 - 54)	81	3.54	.45	Very Satisfied
	(55 and over)	26	3.52	.55	Very Satisfied
	Total	387	3.49	.47	Very Satisfied
Level of Satisfaction on Responsiveness	(18 - 24)	91	3.57	.45	Very Satisfied
	(25 - 34)	84	3.44	.59	Very Satisfied

	(35 - 44)	105	3.55	.39	Very Satisfied
	(45 - 54)	81	3.61	.42	Very Satisfied
	(55 and over)	26	3.58	.52	Very Satisfied
	Total	387	3.55	.47	Very Satisfied
Level of Satisfaction on Assurance/Confidence	(18 - 24)	91	3.58	.43	Very Satisfied
	(25 - 34)	84	3.52	.46	Very Satisfied
	(35 - 44)	105	3.58	.42	Very Satisfied
	(45 - 54)	81	3.59	.41	Very Satisfied
	(55 and over)	26	3.49	.51	Very Satisfied
	Total	387	3.56	.43	Very Satisfied
Level of Satisfaction on Empathy/Communication	(18 - 24)	91	3.55	.47	Very Satisfied
	(25 - 34)	84	3.48	.54	Very Satisfied
	(35 - 44)	105	3.54	.47	Very Satisfied
	(45 - 54)	81	3.55	.43	Very Satisfied
	(55 and over)	26	3.52	.53	Very Satisfied
	Total	387	3.53	.48	Very Satisfied

The data showed that all the hotel guests regardless of their age bracket are Very Satisfied in all dimensions of the SERVQUAL Model. Assurance/Confidence has the highest Overall Mean of 3.58 while Tangibility has the lowest Overall Mean of 3.45 for guests age 18-24. For guests aged 25-34, Assurance/Confidence has the highest Overall Mean of 3.52 while Tangibility has the lowest Overall Mean of 3.44.

Assurance/Confidence has the highest Overall Mean of 3.58 while Reliability has the lowest Overall Mean of 3.49 for guests age 35-44. This shows the consistency of Assurance to be of the priority of younger age bracket. Due to the fact that younger guests to be price-sensitive, it is pivotal to consider that the hotel is safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, previous research looked at the different roles of age in consumer behavior, such as the variance in hotel choosing attributes by age (Chua et al. 2019). For guests age 45-54, Responsiveness has the highest overall mean of 3.61 while Tangibility has the lowest overall mean of 3.48. Responsiveness has the highest overall mean of 3.58 while Tangibility has the lowest overall mean of 3.41 for guests age 55 and over. The older the guests, the more they are concern on how the hotel respond to them. Most of the guests travelled to Baguio City during the pandemic expecting to have the same treatment before the pandemic. This indicates that customers of different ages not only see and respond differently to external cues, but also act differently. As a result, age may mitigate the effect of hotel selection criteria on customer experience. Moreover, Consumers' needs, tastes, and responses to offerings change throughout their lives (Khan et al. 2020).

Table 6: Level of Satisfaction along the Five Dimensions of Service Quality Considering the Hotel's Category where the Guests Stay

Group Statistics					
	Hotel Category	N	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
Level of Satisfaction on Tangibility	Regular	302	3.43	.50	Very Satisfied
	Star Rating	85	3.58	.39	Very Satisfied
Level of Satisfaction on	Regular	302	3.47	.48	Very Satisfied

Reliability	Star Rating	85	3.58	.42	Very Satisfied
Level of Satisfaction on Responsiveness	Regular	302	3.53	.49	Very Satisfied
	Star Rating	85	3.62	.40	Very Satisfied
Level of Satisfaction on Assurance/Confidence	Regular	302	3.56	.44	Very Satisfied
	Star Rating	85	3.58	.41	Very Satisfied
Level of Satisfaction on Empathy/Communication	Regular	302	3.51	.49	Very Satisfied
	Star Rating	85	3.60	.45	Very Satisfied

The data showed that all the hotel guests regardless of where they have stayed are Very Satisfied in all dimensions of the SERVQUAL Model. Assurance/Confidence has the highest Overall Mean of 3.56 for guests in the regular hotel and Responsiveness for guests in the star rating hotel with an Overall Mean of 3.62. The price of the hotel rooms plays an integral part in the satisfaction of guests. While regular hotels tend to have lower room rates, star rated hotels are likely to have higher room rates. Hence, the higher the levels of accreditation, the higher the expectations are from the guests. This is supported by Nunkoo et al. (2020) saying that higher ratings echo higher service standards. Rhee and Yang (2015) also suggests that customers in higher rating hotels persuaded towards value, whereas guests of hotels with lower-ratings are concerned about room features.

On the other hand, Tangibility has the lowest Overall Mean of 3.43 for regular hotel guests and 3.58 for star rating hotel guests. The data showed that regular hotels were able to show that they are expert in the service they deliver. Also, star rating hotel was able to help the customers and provide them prompt service.

Challenges Encountered by the Hotel Employees in their Service Delivery

The data gathered from the informal interview and sentence completion portion of the questionnaire as most of the staff in the hotel were busy were interpreted and analyzed. The results are the following:

A. The Usage of Protective Barriers in the Front Desk and in the Restaurant

The different hotel employees had problems communicating with the guests with the presence of the protective barriers. One of the hotel employees wrote, "Hard to hear the guest and communicate with them;" and another employee wrote, "it's very hard to communicate w/ guests you need to speak loud so loud so they can hear you clearly." In addition, few hotel employees supported this based on their answers, "Hardship in communicating due to barriers (protective), some guests are having a hard time understanding or hearing what the front desk says;" "Communication is affected & the proper delivery of message/concerns". There was a clear challenge on communication using the protective barriers. However, Bonfat, et al.' model (2021) presented that hygiene and protection measures are essential in providing effective customer experience during the COVID-19.

B. The Process of Booking Reservations

Bookings reservations during the pandemic are essential for the continuous operations of the hotels. With the lack of employees, most staff needs to multitask. Hotel employees wrote, "Guest queries are not being answered immediately since we're on skeletal schedule during the first quarter of the pandemic; all reservations were cancelled and they only accepted health worker guests; not able to assist guests with their reservation would result to lost business."

C. Providing Prompt Service to Guest Request with Lack of Employees

The hotel employees encountered guest dissatisfaction, poor service and limited guest service because of their lack in number. The ideas are supported with the answers wrote by the employees, "Resulted to

Guest dissatisfaction, poor service, limited guest service & delays;" "lots of follow-ups both restaurant and hotel;" "The staff is confused with the guest's request as he/she can't provide all of their request because of the poor staff's schedule system." The hotel employees also mentioned, "Lack of employees invoked fatigue to the employees and inefficient service towards requests or complaints." The present study clearly presents dissatisfied employees. This should be addressed as Baquero (2022) confirmed that high employee job satisfaction is a predictor of greater rates of overall customer satisfaction.

D. The Cleanliness and Sanitation Implemented in the Hotel Rooms

Maintaining cleanliness and sanitation is a must during the pandemic. During COVID-19, hotel hygiene and cleanliness have become a main feature in the rehabilitation plan (Pillai et al. 2021). However, there were trials that hotel employees have experienced. These are, "providing a sanitize and well cleaned hotel is not easy since you need to maintain to avoid guess complain;" and "The sanitation process on our establishment was doubled due to the pandemic, so we needed more time to sanitize every part of the establishment before proceeding to the restaurant operations." Another employee wrote, "Window hour to clean & sanitize for the next guest." Though sanitation was doubled as mentioned in the present study, the research of Ko (2021) presented that hotel that uses UVC light sanitation was a "low priority" or of less importance to guests.

E. Handling Guest Complaints with Limited Face-to-face Interaction

Challenges in handling guest complaint especially without face-to-face interaction during the pandemic are very evident with what the hotel employees wrote. They answered, "Handling complaints like through call is much hard to handle since you cannot see or control the guess what's in his/her mind so mostly we gave an action or a complimentary;" and "Most of the complaints were told through the phone or on our social media pages, so it was hard for us to explain the real situation, but we still tried our best to attend to these complaints." The hotel employees also answered, "It's not that easy especially we are encountering a hard time because of this pandemic so patience and professionalism is a must."

Proposed Program to Improve the Level of Satisfaction of the Hotel Guests during the Pandemic in Baguio City

The findings of this study served as the basis for the proposed program or strategies to improve the level of satisfaction of the hotel guests during the pandemic in Baguio City.

Phase	Key Activities	Person/s in charge	Time Frame/ Measurement
1. Analyze	A. Identify the need to prevent the occurrence and effective management of suspicious cases in order to limit the exposure of staff and guests, always in accordance with the current guidelines of the Department of Health. B. Determine the objectives of the hotel in improving the level of satisfaction of the hotel guests during the pandemic in Baguio	Hotel Manager/ General Manager Department Heads	First Month of the occurrence of suspicious cases Evaluation: In-depth review and testing

	City. C. Assess the existing resources and identify any gaps in knowledge or skills.		
2. Design	A. Create a program on improving the level of satisfaction of the hotel guests during the pandemic in Baguio City outlining the instructional methods and materials that will be used to meet the objectives. B. To support the objectives, create instructional content such as program manuals, presentations, and other instructional resources. C. Define the assessment methodologies and any evaluation instruments required to assess the program's success. D. Establish the program and logistics, including staff involved and the duration.	Hotel Manager/ General Manager Department Heads	First Month of the occurrence of confirmed cases Evaluation: In-depth review and testing
3. Development	A. Create any images, movies, or multimedia materials required for the program content. B. Generate role-playing exercises and other interactive components for the program. C. Based on input from stakeholders, revise and improve the instructional content. D. Conduct a pilot test of the program and make any necessary changes.	All employees of the hotel Stakeholders	First Month till the second month of the occurrence of confirmed cases Evaluation: In-depth review and testing
4. Implementation	A. Provide person-in-charge for the program. During the program, provide any essential assistance or feedback to the hotel staff. B. Monitor the progress of the program including the staff and handle any concerns that occur.	Hotel Manager/ General Manager Department Heads	During the occurrence of the pandemic Evaluation: In-depth review and testing

| 5. Evaluation | A. Collect feedback from hotel staff and guests on the program's effectiveness.
B. Examine the findings to detect any deficiencies in providing better services during the Covid-19.
C. To determine the success of the training, compare the existing guest satisfaction survey to the new guest satisfaction survey. | Hotel Manager/
General Manager
Department Heads | During the occurrence of the pandemic
Evaluation:
In-depth review and testing |

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the data, hotel guests are very satisfied in all the five dimensions: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, confidence and communication of the Service Quality Model during the pandemic. It was evident that the guests pay more attention the Assurance/Confidence dimension where employees should know and provide correct information to them as well as maintain trust and confidence on the employees. On the other hand, the Tangibility dimension which refers to the physical attributes and décor of the hotel is of the least importance. All the SERVQUAL model dimensions are substantially related to customer satisfaction. Also, customer satisfaction can be measured using the service quality dimensions.

Clearly, there was no significant difference in the level of satisfaction along the five dimensions of service quality considering the hotel guests' demographic profile namely: gender, type of guest, age group and hotel category where the guests stayed. However, there was a significant difference in between regular and star rating hotel by which guests staying in a star rating hotels had higher tangibility satisfaction than guests staying in a regular hotel. This is a clear indication that the DOT accreditation works to the advantage of guests in relation to Service Quality in reference to star rating hotels as compared to regular hotels.

There were challenges that the hotels and their employees faced during the delivery of their quality service during the pandemic. In general, there were difficulties of communicating with the guests because of the presence of the barriers, guest queries that were not attended immediately because of the lack of staff, cancelled rest days and extended shifts. In addition, most of the hotels also had to extend the standard check-in time because of the needed for the cleaning and sanitation of the guest rooms. Eventually, hotels had a hard time handling guest complaints to the extent that full guest satisfaction was not being achieved.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has greatly impacted the hotel operations that have been pivotal in preparing as for the future. Customer preferences for wellness, health, and safety will persist in a post-pandemic environment, whether through spa and yoga programs, sleep programs, in-room exercises, F&B activations, or overall wellness building. To ensure general cleanliness, sanitization, and wellbeing, the hotel business will continue to establish programs or seek third-party accreditation like from the Department of Tourism especially in the new normal.

Recommendation

After careful review of the conclusions, the following are recommended:

1. Regular hotels should enhance their physical attributes as well as to give attention to their aesthetic areas. For example, regular repainting the hotel should be every after 5 years or as needed and investing in new furniture and fixtures.

2. Hotels should provide special training to improve the communication skills and customer handling skills of the employees on a quarterly basis or as needed to enhance their service delivery. Hotel owners and managers need to hire a specialist in communication to train the employees.

3. There should be a standard guide based on the proposed program that the hotel managers will create to guide new and tenured employees on handling challenges in times of pandemic in the future.

4. There should be empirical studies to be conducted with other types of accommodation like Mabuhay accommodations to have various contexts to be measured.

5. Further research should be conducted with other cities in the Philippines and sample size can be increased to get more effective results.

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