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STAKEHOLDERS' PERCEPTIONS OF SERVICE QUALITY IN HOTELS

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Abstract

Ghana is said to have the distinctive peculiarity of delivering poor service and anecdotal evidence suggests that hotel customers, both domestic and international guests have in one way or the other experienced shortfalls in the quality of services offered. Guests have expressed varied needs and expectations during their stay but hotels have not responded adequately. This study explored the perceptual interface between guests and service providers. The study gathered cross-sectional data using questionnaires from 172 hotel guests, 197 frontline employees and 125 management staff. The findings of the study reveal that there were significant differences between guests and service providers' perceptions of service quality. It is therefore recommended that managers of hotels put in extra effort to minimize the gaps between guests and frontline staff's perceptions by training employees and treating them as internal clients so that they understand and appreciate how the hotel works in order to satisfy and motivate employees to satisfy customers.

Key words

service quality, hotels, Ghana, guests, frontline staff, perception

INTRODUCTION

The hotel sector is a synthetic service industry because of the fact that severe competition results in little variation of facilities. Service quality has been identified as one of the main drivers of successful hotel business operations. But delivering quality service is a major challenge facing hotel managers (Carev, 2008; Lazer & Layton, 1999) because most services are characterized by an encounter between three parties; the customer, the frontline staff and the organisation represented by the manager. This interaction defines

the quality of service in the mind of the customer, and is called the "moment of truth" by Richard Norman (King & Cichy, 2005). The brief encounter, "a moment of truth", occurs when the customer evaluates the service and forms an opinion on its quality. It is during this moment of truth that the service provider has the opportunity to influence the customer's perception of service quality.

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(1994) posit that stakeholder perceptions of service quality may differ between employee, manager and the customer. These differences in perception may be due to various reasons. Managers and employees generally do not like to mention deficiencies in the quality of their services. In other words, they may tend not to downplay the work and services they have delivered (Grandey, 2000). In contrast, they may have a tendency to exaggerate the quality of their services (Mapes, New & Szwajkowski, 1997). As a result, the customer's perceptions of service quality may be ignored. Such differences among the stakeholders' approaches may be one of the reasons for different service quality perceptions.

However, Berry, Will and Carbone (2006) have argued that, it is one of the manager's responsibilities to anticipate the customers' demands and expectations and convey them to employees. As a result, it can be said that determining the existence of a service quality perception difference among customers, managers and employees is a requirement for success in a highly competitive hotel industry. In this context, it can be stated that the perceptions of stakeholders in the hotel business with regards to service quality performance are very important. Yet the mainstream literature in the field of services marketing ignores the service provider's perspective (Amissah, 2014; Chow-Chua and Komaran, 2002; Dedeke, 2003; Svensson, 2002; Tam and Wong, 2001), and only a few researchers have emphasised the importance of the interaction between actors in a service encounter (Svensson, 2002, 2001). The general perception is that in the absence of world service leaders and /or a benchmark competition,

the hotel industry in Ghana has leisurely ticked over with an "anything goes" service attitude, thus, resulting in the endemic nature of the issue of service quality in hotels in Ghana (Akyeampong, 2007). Anecdotal evidence suggests that hotel customers, both domestic and international guests have in one way or the other experienced shortfalls in the quality of services offered. Guests have expressed varied needs and expectations during their stay but hotels in Ghana have not responded adequately (Amissah, 2014; Bondzi-Simpson, 2012). This study will therefore seek to explore the perceptual interface between guests and service providers on service performance in hotels. It is expected that the study will bring to the attention of managers or service providers the reality about their performance- whether they are providing quality service from their own perspective or from customers' perspective by identifying the service delivery bottlenecks which are central to Ghana producing satisfied customers and eventually the success of the hotel industry. The study also seeks to contribute to the debate on service quality by providing an interface of perspectives of key actors. In the process, it hopes to provide firms with appropriate measures to improve service delivery and standards in Ghana's hospitality industry.

Literature Review

The subject of service quality is wide and varied. The concept of service quality has been greatly developed by many researchers. It was established after there had been a growing interest in the quality of services provided. Garvin (1984) was among the first

scholars who examined the quality concepts to cover both goods and services. He explained perceived quality as the subjective perception of quality through indirect measures of quality comparison. Much current service quality research is rooted in expectancy-disconfirmation theory (Bolton & Drew, 1991; Oliver, 1993) which holds that customers perceive service quality as the difference between the actual service performance and their expectations. Disconfirmation is positive when service performance exceeds expectations and negative, when the opposite is the case.

Based on the perceived service quality concept, Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry (1985) applied premises from other previous studies to form their model of service quality gaps. The model explored that a consumer had difficulty in evaluating service quality rather than goods quality, that a perception of service quality was developed from a comparison of consumer expectation with actual service performance; also quality evaluation involved the evaluation of both the process and outcome of service delivery. Therefore, service quality gap denotes the gap between customer's expectations or what the service should provide, and the customer's perception of what the service actually provides (Shahin & Dabestani, 2010).

In service quality the customer is the determinant of the level of service quality that is submitted (Parasuraman et al., 1985). If the customers are pleased with the quality of the services provided, they will choose the business again and will promote the business within their immediate surroundings. In fact, Gonzalez,

Comesaia and Brea (2007), Baker and Crompton (2000), Boulding, Kalra, Staelin and Zeithaml (1993) and Cronin and Taylor (1992) reaffirm this claim that customers who are satisfied with the business service quality are more likely to choose that business again. In the same way, Chowdhury (2011) and Harrison-Walker (2001) expressed that customers with the highest levels of perception of service quality contribute to the business image positively via word-of-mouth communications.

Managers are responsible for knowing customers' expectations and passing them on to their employees (Berry, Parasuraman & Zeithaml, 1988). Since they are in charge of their employees, managers first need an accurate perception of the quality of service offered. Indeed, managers will not be able to transmit/transfer a situation to their employees if they do not understand it properly. Employees, however, are the bridge between customers and the hotel business. Employees have a direct influence over customers' perceptions of service quality (Paulin, Ferguson & Payaud, 2000). Chao, Fu and Lu (2007), Tsaor and Lin (2004) as well as Chen, Ekinci, Riley, Yoon and Tjelflaat (2001) revealed that one of the influencing factors of customers perceptions of service quality is the employees. Employees who have higher service quality perceptions than customers may not meet their customers' expectations (Wang, 2011). This is why determining how employees perceive service quality becomes critical.

Apart from the issues mentioned above, how customers perceive the quality of services is also important for managers because

managers develop their own service quality standards regarding customers' evaluations and make employees meet these standards (source). However, managers and employees who think that the quality of the services they deliver is better than customers' perceptions may not strive to improve the quality of their service performance (source). In other words, their work motivation and performance decrease (Grandey, 2000). From this point of view, managers are primarily supposed to guide employees as they examine customers' service quality performance perceptions.

Thus, it can be said that the comparison of employees and managers perceptions regarding their services with customers' perceptions is a requirement for success. Moreover, it is important to know that the service quality perceptions of employees and managers may differ to a degree. But managers who have higher service quality perceptions than their subordinates are incapable of leading their employees to reach the desired level of service quality. Managers are supposed to perceive the quality of services more accurately than employees since they are the auditors of employees. Likewise, it would be impossible for managers to transfer things they did not perceive accurately to their subordinates (Dedeog̃lu and Demirer, 2015). That is why it becomes highly important to determine whether managers service quality perceptions differ from the perceptions of subordinates and customers. As Berry et al. (1988) stated, managers are responsible for knowing about the expectations of employees and customers.

While Parasuraman et al. (1988) identified five gaps that can result in unsuccessful service delivery, majority of the literature

has focused on the fifth gap, which is the difference between customer's expectation and perception of service quality. This study is not only limited to Parasuraman's fifth gap but to two other perceptual gaps identified by Zeithaml et al. (1985). Because according to Brown and Swartz (1989: 193), "when providers and consumers are operating under different perceptions there is a higher likelihood of a low quality evaluation resulting in dissatisfaction".

The difference between consumer expectations of service and what management believes they deliver, according to Zeithaml et al. (1985), is pertinent to the simple question, "Do managers overestimate their organisation's service delivery in meeting consumers' expectations in the hotel industry"? As mentioned in the literature review, some studies (Lewis, 1987; Coyle & Dale, 1993; Tsang & Qu, 2000) found that managers in the hotel industry tended to be very self-assured and they believed they knew best. Thus, they perceived their service delivery as being more successful than customers perceived it to be, in most cases.

The difference between management perceptions of consumer expectations and management's perception of its service delivery measures the internal situation: "Does management believe they deliver as much as they believe customers expect?" Measuring management perceptions of service quality is just as important as measuring consumers' perceptions, because management perceptions of service quality directly affect service quality standards. Measurement of the gap (Gap 7) between management perceptions of consumer expectations and employees' perceptions of an organization's service quality

delivery could bring to light whether or not management has confidence in meeting customers' expectations.

A number of studies have shown that there are considerable differences in expectations of service quality between customers and management in the hotel industry. Nightingale (1985) posited very strong evidence that management perceptions of service quality frequently differ from the perceptions of customers, colleagues and staff. Lewis (1987) measured the service quality gap in the hotel industry, comparing management perceptions of guest expectations and the actual expectations of the guests themselves, and found that, for the most part, management believed that guests expected more than they in fact did. Nel and Pit (1993) had a similar result as Lewis (1987) and found that management had a reasonably good understanding of customer expectations. Luk and Laytion (2002) study also revealed a gap between hotel guests, service providers (frontline staff) and managements' perceptions of service quality in the hotel industry. Tsang and Qu (2000) again made a similar finding to support this. All these gaps go a long way to impact guests' perceptions of service quality which studies like Amissah (2014), Amissah (2013) and Bondzi-Simpson (2012) concluded that guests' perceived service provided by the hotels in Accra suffered a shortfall.

Methodology

This study is part of a broader investigation on service quality in Ghana. A multi-stage sampling technique was employed for the study. First, there was a division of the population into strata using the Ghana Tourism

Authority (GTA) classification of hotels by star-rating (i.e. 1 star, 2 star, 3 star, 4 star and 5 star). Budget hotels and guest houses were not included on the basis that guests do not expect much from them (this needs a source). More so, most service quality research works studied luxury and top rated hotels (source). Secondly, the sample frame for each of the stratum was extrapolated from the GTA list of registered hotels in Accra. Thirdly, the proportional (50 percent) stratified random sampling technique was used to select 65 (29 and 36) from the 1-star and 2-star hotels respectively to ensure that they were adequately represented (the 50 percent has to be justified with literature). In addition, all hotels in the three, four and five star categories were selected due to the small size of the population. That is, a census was used to purposively select all the 3-5 star hotels. The individual samples from each stratum together constituted the sample size for the study (78). Then, a preliminary survey was conducted to get the total number of service providers (frontline staff, management and supervisory staff) from these 78 hotels by asking human resource managers or managers to indicate the number of supervisors, managers and service contact personnel (frontline staff) in their hotels.

The estimation of the sample size for service providers was based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table for the determination of sample size from a given population. From the table, a population of 594 and 356 yields 232 frontline staff and 182 managers respectively. While managers were purposively selected, front line staff were accidentally sampled due to the shift system they work. According to Hair, Anderson, Tatham and

Black (1998), reliable results estimates can be attained from samples that are between 100 respondents and 150 respondents. Pallant (2005) also stressed that 100-150 sample size is adequate for quantitative studies. In view of these assertions, 200 guests were accidentally sampled from the 78 hotels.

In developing the instrument to measure the factors responsible for service quality in Ghanaian hotels, a combination of issues from the literature (SERVQUAL instrument (Parasuraman et al., 1988) and views from hotel guests, service providers as well as academia were considered. The issues that emerged were grouped under seven main factors namely: tangibles, overall room value, food and beverage, empathy, reliability, responsiveness and availability of other hotel services. The questionnaire was divided into three parts; the first part was designed to measure the respondents' expectations regarding service quality in the sampled hotels. Respondents were to indicate their level of expectations of statements with responses that ranged from (1) very low expectation to (5) very high expectation or on a 5-point Likert scale. The second part of the questionnaire was also designed to examine the respondents' perceptions of service quality actually provided by the hotels. Again, the respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with statements with responses that ranged from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree (on a 5-point Likert scale). The third part of the questionnaire consisted of respondents' socio-demographic and classification questions such as age, gender, education level, income, religion, income among others. The items on the scale were subjected to reliability analysis. The Cronbach

alpha value of (0.9) was well above the limit of 0.70 required for the internal consistency of the constructs (Nunnally, 1978).

Pre-testing of the instrument was conducted in Cape Coast and Elmina, This exercise was very useful because it gave the researcher the opportunity to delete and modify some items, which would have otherwise affected the content validity and reliability of the research. The questionnaire was mostly self-administered because, according to Armstrong and Overton (1977) as cited in Mensah (2012), self-administered questionnaires yield relatively high response rates and avoid non-response bias associated with mailing questionnaires to respondents.

The data were coded and entered into the SPSS (version 20) software for analysis. The data were carefully edited to remove all outliers or extreme values which could have affected the validity of the results. Descriptive statistics such as averages and frequencies were employed to present background and travel characteristics of respondents among others. The mean perception score for guests and frontline staff were subtracted from that of managers. The paired-sample and independent sampled t-tests were employed to test for significant differences between stakeholders' expectations and perceptions of service in the hotel industry in Accra, Ghana. The demographics of the hotel guests, managers and frontline employees as well as the hotel information are presented as follows:

Profile of hotel guests

The data indicates that the sample of hotel guests (172) contained more males (63 per cent) than females (37 per cent). It was also

revealed that more than 80 per cent of the respondents had a university, college or graduate education. Majority of respondents (59 per cent) fell within the age group of 31-50, followed by below 30 (34 per cent) and 51 and above (7 per cent). In terms of occupation, about 72 per cent of the respondents were professionals, executives or salesmen and only 5 per cent were students. Most of the respondents were from various African countries (44 per cent), America (23 per cent) or Europe (21 per cent) and the rest of the respondents were from Asia and South America. About 54 per cent of the respondents indicated that the main purpose of their stay was business followed by vacation (30 per cent).

Results revealed that 28 per cent of guests stayed in 4 star hotels, 24 in 5 star hotel, 22 in 3 star, while 14 and 12 per cent stayed in 2 and 1 star hotels respectively. The majority of the respondents were travelling in groups of 1-5 (75 per cent) with more than 38 per cent of them staying in the hotel for less than one week, 33 per cent staying between one and two weeks. About 46 per cent of the respondents were first time visitors in the hotel with 54 per cent being repeat visits.

Profile of service providers

With regard to service providers, there were more females (53 per cent) than males (47 per cent), and in terms of the ages of respondents, 40 per cent were 30 years and below, 36 per cent were within 31-50 age category and 24 per cent can be considered as the late adults (51 years and above). Service providers' educational status revealed that majority (77 per cent) of them had completed tertiary education while 23 per cent also had

up to secondary education. It is evident from the results that 56 per cent of the employees worked in the front office section, 24 per cent were in the food and beverage department, 18 per cent in accounts and administration and only 2 per cent working in the security section.

Results

Guests' perceptions and management perceptions of actual service delivered

The results in Table 2 indicate that the perception scores by managers were generally higher than the perception scores by guests. Thus, resulting in the positive gaps between guests and managers' perceptions of service delivered. This indicates that hotel managers in Accra perceived their service delivery to be higher than hotel guests perceived it to be. The biggest gaps (>0.90) from tangibles were "the outside appearance of the hotel is attractive" (1.08), "the hotel has clean environment" (0.97) and "the hotel has attractive interior décor" (0.95) while the smallest gaps were "hotel staff appear neat and professional" (0.43) and "adequate parking space" (0.53).

The only attribute in overall room values that recorded the largest gap (>0.90) was "the hotel has clean and hygienic bathrooms and toilets" (0.98) and the smallest was "clean and comfortable rooms" (0.56). Front office services had the highest number of attributes with big gaps (>0.90). They are "efficient check-in process" (1.22), "convenient and efficient reservation system" (1.05), "advance and accurate information about prices" (1.02), "efficient handling of guests

complaints” (1.00), “staff perform services at promised time” (0.93), “accurate billing system” (0.92) and “efficient telephone and internet system” (0.90) while the rest had moderate gaps (0.6-0.8). Attributes such as “staff are always readily available to provide services” (1.34), “staff show sincere interest in solving guests problems” (0.93) and staff provide prompt service without delays” (0.99) had the biggest gaps in the responsiveness dimension with none of the attributes having small gaps.

Under the empathy dimension, the largest gaps were found in “staff call guests by their names” (1.87), “staff give guests special attention” (1.13) and staff understand guests specific needs (0.93) while “guests feel safe in their transactions (0.61) and “staff have guests best interest at heart (0.62) had the smallest gaps (<7). “The hotel has good eating and drinking facilities” (1.28), “high quality and hygienic food” (1.05), room services (0.99) and hotel offers prompt food service” (0.98) recorded the largest gaps while the rest of the attributes recorded moderate gaps. Finally, only the availability of adequate fire safety facilities had the biggest gap (0.94) while the rest recorded the smallest gaps ranging from 0.39 to 0.46. The independent

T-test results indicated that all the 58 service quality attributes exhibited a significant difference in the mean scores between guests perceptions of service delivered in the hotel industry in Accra and what hotel managers believed they delivered (all p-values<0.05). This implies that, overall, there was a statistically significant difference between guests and managers perceptions of actual service delivered.

Guests’ and frontline staff’s perceptions of actual service delivered

The gap analysis that was performed to compare frontline staff and guests’ perceptions of actual service delivered equally revealed that all 58 service attributes have significant mean differences between frontline staff perceptions and guests’ perceptions (Table 2). This finding suggests that there are significant differences in perception of service quality between guests and frontline staff. All attributes had high perception mean scores (M>4.00) for frontline staff than guests (M<4). This resulted in the positive gaps because the mean scores of guests were subtracted from the mean scores for frontline staff. It is worth noting that almost all the gaps (32) were very high (>1.00).

Table 2: Perception gaps in actual service delivered: Guests versus managers and frontline staff

Attribute	Management Perception (mean)	Frontline Perception (mean)	Guests’ Perception (mean)	Gap 6 (M per.- G per.)	Gap 9 (F per.- G per.)	Gap 10 (M per.- F per.)	Gap 6 t-value	Gap 9 t-value	Gap 10 t-value
Tangibles									
Clean environment	4.75	4.91	3.78	0.97	1.13	-0.16	8.31*	10.1*	3.37*

Outside appearance should be attractive	4.75	4.64	3.67	1.08	0.97	0.11	9.66*	8.89*	1.88
Attractive interior décor	4.61	4.43	3.66	0.95	0.77	0.18	8.07*	6.72*	2.57*
Modern looking equipment	4.35	4.19	3.65	0.70	0.54	0.16	5.72*	4.61*	1.95*
Modern and comfortable furniture	4.21	4.27	3.58	0.63	0.62	0.16	5.11*	6.07*	0.77
Hotel staff should appear neat and professional	4.09	4.65	3.63	0.43	1.02	-0.56	3.40*	9.01*	6.03*
Attractive and comfortable lobby area	4.42	4.24	3.66	0.76	0.58	-0.02	6.79*	7.09*	0.26
Adequate parking space	4.19	4.17	3.66	0.53	0.51	0.02	4.18*	4.17*	0.20

Visible physical facilities	4.31	4.31	3.55	0.76	0.76	0.00	5.96*	6.73*	0.03
Materials associated with service should be appealing	4.40	4.07	3.70	0.70	0.37	0.30	5.57*	2.93*	3.51*
<i>Overall score</i>	4.40	4.38	3.65	0.75	0.73	0.02	6.27*	6.63*	2.06
<i>Overall room values</i>									
Clean and comfortable rooms	4.08	4.52	3.52	0.56	1.00	-0.44	3.94*	8.86*	4.18*
Clean and hygienic bathrooms and toilets	4.53	4.60	3.55	0.98	1.05	-0.07	8.62*	9.78*	1.21
The lighting in the rooms should be adequate	4.52	4.74	3.66	0.86	1.08	-0.22	7.51*	10.0*	3.58*
Sufficient fixtures in rooms	4.50	4.48	3.65	0.85	0.83	0.02	7.21*	7.33*	0.33
Welcoming rooms	4.21	4.31	3.60	0.61	0.71	-0.10	4.54*	5.97*	0.97

Easy accessibility to hotel	4.04	4.54	3.36	0.68	1.18	-0.50	5.05*	10.1*	5.72*
Offer complementary services	4.27	4.61	3.44	0.83	1.17	-0.34	6.49*	10.2*	4.46*
Efficient business centres	4.31	4.21	3.44	0.87	0.85	-0.09	5.51*	7.44*	3.97
<i>Overall score</i>	<i>4.30</i>	<i>4.50</i>	<i>3.52</i>	<i>0.78</i>	<i>0.99</i>	<i>-0.20</i>	<i>6.10*</i>	<i>8.71*</i>	<i>3.05</i>

Front office services

Convenient and efficient reservation system	4.50	4.52	3.45	1.05	0.07	-0.02	9.56*	10.0*	0.31
Efficient check in procedure	4.75	4.73	3.53	1.22	1.20	0.02	11.7*	11.7*	0.27
Efficient check out procedure	4.44	4.64	3.56	0.88	1.08	-0.20	7.54*	10.1*	2.58*
Efficient telephone and internet system	4.19	4.59	3.29	0.90	1.30	-0.40	7.04*	12.3*	4.10*
Accurate billing system	4.30	4.55	3.38	0.92	1.17	-0.25	5.53*	10.6*	2.73*
Advance and accurate information about prices	4.37	4.57	3.35	1.02	1.22	-0.20	7.41*	11.4*	2.78*
Staff should be friendly	4.33	4.56	3.54	0.79	1.02	-0.23	6.93*	9.51*	3.29*
Staff should perform services right the first time	4.41	4.63	3.36	1.05	1.27	-0.22	9.15*	12.0*	3.11*
Staff should be well trained and knowledgeable	4.37	4.46	3.44	0.93	1.02	-0.09	7.89*	9.56*	1.09
Staff should be skilful and experience	4.07	4.58	3.46	0.61	1.12	-0.51	4.97*	10.4*	5.87*
Staff should have good communication skills	4.15	4.60	3.45	0.70	1.15	-0.45	5.86*	11.1*	5.54*

Handle guest complains efficiently	4.34	4.53	3.34	1.00	1.19	-0.19	8.33*	11.0*	2.26*
Accurate information about hotel services	4.15	4.44	3.47	0.68	0.97	-0.29	5.17*	8.88*	2.78*
Staff perform services at promised time	4.37	4.36	3.44	0.93	0.92	0.01	7.80*	8.47*	0.12
Overall score	4.27	4.55	3.49	0.78	1.12	-0.22	7.70*	10.5*	2.63
<i>Responsiveness</i>									
Show sincere interest in solving guest problems	4.34	4.49	3.36	0.98	1.13	-0.15	8.16*	10.8*	1.78
Always be willing to help guests	4.23	4.52	3.40	0.83	1.12	-0.29	6.72*	10.7*	3.20*
Never be too busy to respond to request	4.23	4.58	3.41	0.82	1.18	-0.35	7.15*	11.6*	4.53*
Readily available to provide services	4.75	4.68	3.41	1.34	1.27	0.07	13.0*	12.7*	1.33
Staff should provide prompt service without delays	4.27	4.45	3.31	0.96	1.14	-0.18	8.20*	10.7*	2.21*
Overall score	4.37	4.54	3.38	0.99	1.17	-0.18	8.65*	11.3*	2.61*
<i>Empathy</i>									
Staff should be friendly	4.33	4.56	3.55	0.78	1.02	-0.23	6.93*	9.91*	3.29*
Staff should be courteous and respectful	4.08	4.31	3.53	0.55	0.78	-0.23	4.62*	7.38*	2.71*
Behaviour of staff should instil confidence in you	4.21	4.69	3.46	0.75	1.23	-0.51	6.23*	12.5*	6.04*
Guests feel safe in their transactions	4.09	4.69	3.48	0.61	1.21	-0.60	5.29*	11.7*	8.42*
Staff call guests by name	4.75	4.79	2.88	1.87	1.91	-0.04	15.6*	16.4*	0.77

Convenient operating hours	4.30	4.67	3.47	0.83	1.20	-0.37	6.78*	11.1*	4.64*
Staff understand guest specific needs	4.35	4.04	3.42	0.93	0.62	0.31	7.65*	4.86*	2.98*
Staff have time to listen to guest complains	4.26	4.53	3.38	0.88	1.15	-0.27	7.29*	10.5*	3.35*
Give guests special attention	4.51	4.53	3.38	1.13	1.15	0.30	9.95*	10.7*	4.22*
Have their guests best interest at heart	4.06	4.56	3.44	0.62	0.12	-0.50	4.82*	10.8*	5.26*
Recognise customers as guest	4.37	4.59	3.48	0.89	1.11	-0.22	7.48*	10.3*	2.79*
Overall score	4.30	4.54	3.40	0.90	1.14	-0.22	7.51*	10.5*	4.04*
<i>Food and beverage services</i>									
Good eating and drinking facilities	4.75	4.58	3.47	1.28	1.11	0.17	12.2*	10.5*	2.75*
Should provide variety of food and drinks	4.21	4.52	3.50	0.71	1.02	-0.31	5.98*	9.29*	3.86*
Offer room services	4.38	4.52	3.39	0.99	1.13	-0.14	8.27*	10.2*	1.79
Offer prompt food services	4.26	4.64	3.28	0.98	1.36	-0.38	8.10*	12.8*	4.69*
Offer high quality hygienic food	4.40	4.60	3.52	0.88	1.08	-0.20	7.48*	10.5*	2.77*
Reasonable prices of food and drinks	4.30	4.74	3.25	1.05	1.49	-0.44	8.70*	13.2*	6.99*
Overall	4.38	4.60	3.40	0.98	1.20	-0.22	8.45*	11.1*	3.80*
<i>Availability of other facilities</i>									
Variety and quality of sports / recreation facilities	3.63	3.35	3.24	0.39	1.05	0.28	4.43*	11.22*	2.25

Efficient business centre	3.86	3.80	3.40	0.43	0.40	0.06	4.78*	9.98*	1.89
Up to date modern safety facilities	3.83	4.11	3.43	0.40	0.68	-0.28	5.86*	11.12*	3.44*
Adequate fire safety facilities	4.40	4.62	3.46	0.96	1.26	-0.21	8.43*	10.67*	4.44*
All year round swimming pool	3.75	3.33	3.36	0.39	-0.03	0.45	5.51*	11.74*	4.47*
Overall score	3.96	4.24	3.92	0.04	0.32	0.10	3.46*	7.23*	2.28*
Total gap	4.29	4.66	3.96	0.33	0.07		6.36*	12.65*	

Management and frontline perceptions of service performance

A total of 42 service attributes for frontline staff were higher than that of management staff. Overall, frontline staff perception of actual service performance was higher (4.36) than managers perception score (4.04), yielding a negative gap of -0.32. This finding points to the fact that frontline staff perceive their organizations' service performance to be far above what their managers perceive it to be. By using independent samples t-test, 46 of the 58 service attributes showed significant differences between managers and frontline staff perception of service performance.

On the whole, there was a statistically significant difference between managers and frontline staff's view of their hotels service performance. This gives the basis to reject the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between managers and frontline staff's perceptions of actual service delivered to guests and hence, the refusal to reject the alternative hypothesis that there is a significant difference between managers and frontline staff's perceptions of service quality. The eta square, however,

suggests that the magnitude of the difference is very small (0.03).

Discussions and Implications

Interactions between the customer and the service organization lay at the heart of service delivery and people who delivered the service were of key importance to both the customer they served and the employer they represented. The measurement of the perception gaps between guests, managers and frontline staff is pertinent in finding out how service providers think they performed in their organizations' service delivery in meeting customer expectations of service quality in hotel industry. As mentioned in the literature review, some studies (Coyle & Dale, 1993; Dedeog̃lu & Demirer, 2015; Lewis, 1987) found that managers in the hotel industry tended to be very self-assured and they believe they knew best. Thus, they perceived their service delivery as being more successful than customers perceived it to be, in most cases.

The finding buttresses Tsang and Qu's (2000) study which revealed that hotel managers in China were very self-assured and

overestimate their organisations' performance in meeting tourists' expectation of service quality in the hotel industry. It also confirms findings of Dedeog̃lu and Demirer (2015) and Bondzi-Simpson (2012). To the customer, the employee exemplifies the service (Arasli, Mehtap-Smadi & Katircioglu, 2005). Tsang and Qu (2000) posited that the larger the gap, the more serious the service quality shortfall from the point of view of guests. Assessment of this gap is critical because it helps to identify service shortfalls in the hotel industry. Zeithaml et al. (1993) intimated that poor performance by service firms is primarily due to not knowing what their customers expect from them. Hence, hotels in Accra can be said not to be customer focused. Also, their products are not tailored to meet guest demand. These differences will provide better insights for hotel managers to evaluate and identify service quality problems.

By understanding the extent and direction of these three gaps, managers should be able to identify whether their services were exceeding, meeting or falling below customers' expectations, and would gain clues about how to close any gaps. The most complicated situation in perception differences is when the service quality perceptions of employees and managers are higher than that of the customers. Generally, these kinds of unintended situations originate from employees emotional labour and surface acting (Hochschild, 2003) because employees and managers may tend to behave fallaciously for the sake of their company's reputation even though they do not believe in it. Alternatively,

people may pretend to have performed better than their actual performance. These are the cases where both managers and employees do not have an objective point of view. However, this may cause indolence and ignorance in employees with long term employment intentions. In fact, Wang (2011) stated the possibility of long term employees being overcome by complacency can be higher. Therefore, the service quality required cannot be obtained under these circumstances.

The biggest differences between the service quality perceptions of managers-employees and guests may be due to various reasons such as unresponsive and unwilling hotel service personnel, their commitment to the company, pay, emotional labour and job satisfaction. While Lam and Chen (2012) stated that service quality is affected by job satisfaction, Wei and Yan (2010) suggested that the productivity of people who have long term emotional labour experience decreases.

The reasons why managers and employees had a higher level of service quality perceptions than the customers may be because of organizational aspects such as emotional labor, personality characteristics and impression management techniques as posited by Dedeog̃lu and Demirer (2015). According to Ekinici and Dawes (2009), Kuşluvan, Kuşluvan, Ihan and Buyruk (2010) and Dedeog̃lu and Demirer (2015), employees may also have different service quality perceptions because of their personality traits. Because individuals with high self-efficacy beliefs have excessive overconfidence (Moores and Chang, 2009), they may tend to exaggerate their real performance.

Conclusion

The study has revealed differences between guests, managers and frontline employees' perceptions of service quality in the hotel industry in Accra. Frontline staff perceived actual service delivered to be higher than management and guests. These differences could be explained by the better-than-average effect which suggests that people appraise themselves more positively than they appraise others because it makes them feel good about themselves to believe they are above average.

Recommendations

Based on feedback from guests, practitioners should reframe their management strategies and tactics to redesign the service delivery system. The efforts made to improve service quality may increase customer satisfaction and their favourable behavioural intentions, and they can provide an opportunity for practitioners to remain competitive in a currently saturated market. As pointed out by Brady and Cronin (2001), a high level of service quality is associated with several key organizational outcomes, including high market share (Buzzell & Gale, 1987), improved profitability relative to competitors (Kearns & Nadler, 1992), enhanced customer loyalty, the realization of a competitive price premium and an increased probability of purchase (Zeithaml et al., 1996). Furthermore, service quality is positively related to customer satisfaction (Amisshah, 2013; 2014) and corporate image (Wu et al., 2011; Clemes et al., 2009; Grönroos, 1984), though the causal order of these relationships has produced

controversy. Therefore, the study of service quality can provide hotels with a powerful instrument to obtain their strategic goals. Managers of hotels also have to put in extra effort to minimize the gaps between guests and frontline staff's perceptions by training employees and treating them as internal clients so that they understand and appreciate how the hotel works in order to satisfy and motivate employees to satisfy customers (Kotler, 2005). Also, employees need to be empowered to instil confidence in guests. This can be achieved by giving them the authority and responsibility to operate when managers are not around. More so, in order to benefit from service quality, business owners and managers should have the control and the ability to modify employees' unresponsive, unwilling and insensitive behaviour towards guests.

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