

QUALITY EVALUATION OF SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE RESTAURANT “PRESIDENT” FROM MANGALIA BY ANALYZING CUSTOMER’S SATISFACTION REGARDING THE WAITER’S TAKING ORDER

*Mihaela CONSTANDACHE¹, Elena CONDREA², Anghelina DUDAN³

¹„Dimitrie Cantemir” Christian University, Faculty of Touristic and Commercial Management Constanta, 90A
Dezrobirii Street, 900234 Constanta, Romania,

e-mail micky_eve68@yahoo.com

* Corresponding author

²„Ovidius” University, Faculty of Economics, 1 University Alley, Constanta, Romania

³„Carol I” Commercial College, 15 Decebal Street, 900665 Constanta, Romania

Received 2 December 2010, accepted 6 April 2011

Abstract: *Service features assessment of their quality has certain characteristics. The quality of services and hence the satisfaction degree of consumers’ needs are determined by the qualifications, competence, discipline of personnel serving, but also by the organizing capacity of the sector. For consumers the serving time is a quality aspect of live, an element that indicates the satisfaction degree of consumers’ needs. To assess the satisfaction degree of President restaurant customers regarding the takeover order by waiters we used a specific quality management tool that allows comparison of trial results with the requirements set out above and identification of the extent to which the process has good results and to which point there are deviations to the limits set in requirements. After the selection of analyzed process and variables respectively, the time (in minutes) needed to take order we proceeded to collect relevant data during the period 1 to 2 May 2010, when 54 observations were made. The scheduled requirement was that making order should be performed within no more than 10 minutes from a list-menu presentation. The results showed a relatively large number of observations that have not met the target. Measures are necessary to reorganize the serving activity in order to reduce the waiter’s taking order time so that they fall within specified limits.*

© 2011 University Publishing House of Suceava. All rights reserved

Keywords: *taking order time, customer’s satisfaction, histogram, services quality*

1. Introduction

Catering and tourism businesses release a specific product, especially that of industrial and retail trade specific food and non-food sector, a more complex goods and services. The quantity, quality and various combinations of good and services ensures a certain product specificity and within it each unit of product [1].

Thus, for a catering unit, a product may include a first level of analysis, providing food services. At the second level of product analysis, all foods and food goods of a full meal and dining services are required by the process according to the type of establishment (restaurant, bar,

cafeteria, fast food, etc.) and the category that is assigned to the unit requested by consumer [2].

The management of public catering unit is to ensure proper aggregation of components produced, so that the unit provides a product to be distinguished from other types of units (keeping the unit production of those specific foods, maintaining the quality of preparation and serving drinks, etc.); so after a certain period the product’s image in top management is confused with the image of unity that offers it. For this purpose the unit management uses a complex set of continuous control means of the activities for each group of the unit, coordinates

sections activity (components of the retail sector – reception, bar, buffet, kitchen, serving staff) in order to ensure prompt serving and consistently higher quality level.

The level of service and hence the degree of satisfaction of consumer needs are determined by qualifications, competence, discipline of the personnel serving, but also by the organization quality of the sector. Establishing an optimal degree of work tasks to be entirely achieved during work, in terms of ensuring a prompt and good quality serving, is one criterion by which the management in determining the staff's needs, size of work teams, work schedule and duties for each worker should be carried out .

Given the large consumers' fluctuations in public catering establishments in different moments of the day, the waiters serving are faced with a number of problems in terms of rational organization, scientific and efficient work. This requires the use of work teams organized on variations of graphs; for example, hourly gradual chart (workers come to work slowly, so this working band is minimum in low activity periods and maximum in those of peak), totalizing monthly schedules (allow differentiation of daily working hours in condition to achieve the legal number of working hours during the month), double brigade charts (homogeneous brigades alternating on different days) and incomplete working day schedules (for workers employed at peak times).

Services features' assessment of their quality has certain characteristics.

Firstly, production is simultaneous with the delivery service. This prevents the achievement of service quality control before it reaches the customer to have the opportunity to reject those features that do not meet the standards required.

If these do not meet the standards, the customer receives a defective service, and usually is not possible to rectify it.

Therefore, quality must be assessed continuously throughout the process, including design phase. This principle is already applied in industrial production because it is less expensive to avoid manufacturing defects through control process than to reject products already completed [3].

Secondly, in services' sector the quality control subject is not the physical dimensions but another type of features such as service integrality, time, lead time. On the other hand, a consequence of defining quality in terms of meeting the customers' needs and expectations is placing the customer satisfaction assessment in a central point to assess the real quality (achieved or actual quality). It is not only to verify compliance with quality standards, but also to understand to which point the customer feels satisfied with the product or service received. This, moreover important in any business, is especially relevant in services because they involve many subjective factors related to customers' satisfaction.

The criteria that should be considered in service assessment, are the criteria established by customers. Therefore an organization interested in quality will able to:

- identify its customers' needs and expectations;
- assess the perception they have about the service and about its various components;
- identify their errors and causes;
- act to improve quality.

Knowing the customers' expectations is essential, both for quality planning and for quality assessment. In fact, there is satisfaction when the service perception will be at least equal to expectations. The success of this correlation even if the perception would exceed expectations is essential for the quality of service acquisition.

A service as a whole can not be considered favorably in terms of a quantitative component failure. At the same time, the quantitative component itself can not only leave the customer a neutral impression. For example, favorable comments about a clean restaurant or quick service are rare while a slow service, a spotted tablecloth or an unrelieved table often leads to customers' complaints.

2. Materials and methods

The staff – customer relationship, staff behavior, their attitude, how to act and react is the key criteria for assessing the quality of services as a whole, elements that generate customer satisfaction.

Serving time is the time elapsed between the time of the service requested by consumer - dining - and the beginning of consumption "[2]. Serving time has multiple meanings, both for enterprise and consumer.

For enterprise its reduction is an important way to increase labor productivity of serving staff (during a period when more customers are being served), so a means by which the company carries out its planned sales volume.

Also, the company gets extra security in achieving its planned objectives because by completing a short time serving, a permanent consumer demand for its products and services is registered. For consumers the serving time is a qualitative aspect of life, an element that indicates the satisfaction degree of their needs.

Therefore, there are sufficient arguments for the enterprise to propose time serving as research object and to find the optimal solution since unlimited higher of serving staff is not an optimal solution because it generates pay expenses and uneconomic service facilities.

Careful studies should be made in order to optimize the serving time and the sales sector management determine the adequate

form of sales (classical, self serving), reduce the optimal need of sales staff, prepare work schedule of band staff.

To assess the degree of President Restaurant customers' satisfaction regarding the waiters' taking order time a specifically quality management tool, a histogram, was used. This tool allowed the comparison of trial results with the requirements outlined above and identification of the extent to which the process produces good results and to what point there are deviations to the limits set in the requirements. For a frequency histogram development the following stages were taken:

a) Data collecting and recording: To ensure the sample authenticity, its size is calculated. For this statistical population effectiveness should be known. Between 1 and 2 May 2010 at President Hotel were accommodated 56 tourists who had lunch at the restaurant. Our sample size is calculated for a non exhaustive survey:

$$n_e = t^2 \times p \times (1-p) / \Delta\omega^2$$

n_e – the sample size for a non exhaustive survey;

t - coefficient corresponding to the probability guarantee of outcome;

p – the sample proportion that has the feature ($p=0.5$);

$\Delta\omega$ - acceptable error limit [4].

Considering the probability of guaranteeing the outcome of $P = 95\%$, $t = 1.96$, $p = 0.5$ the proportions of the sample components and the error limits on $\Delta\omega = + / - 3\%$, we calculate $n_e = 1067$ persons.

Then we calculate the final size of the sample corresponding to exhaustive survey:

$n_f = N \times n_e / (N + n_e)$, were N – effectiveness of statistical population investigated.

$$n_f = 56 \times 1067 / (56 + 1067) = 59752/1123 = 53.2 \sim 54 \text{ persons.}$$

After selection of the analyzed process variables, respectively *time (in minutes) needed to take command*, we proceeded to

collect relevant data corresponding to the staying period, 1 to 2 May 2010, when 54 observations were made (table 1).

Table 1.
Time (minutes) required by the waiter taking order

4	6	11	13	5	2	8	13	10	20
6	9	18	17	4	9	3	7	23	5
10	2	7	5	15	8	5	11	4	9
2	5	12	29	18	15	4	16	24	22
3	19	6	12	25	13	7	8	11	15
7	3	26	2	-	-	-	-	-	-

The scheduled requirement was that order making should not take more than 10 minutes from a list-menu presentation.

b) Determining the rank of data sets: the achievement gap between the maximum and minimum data sets.

c) Setting the number of intervals and their amplitude: the number of intervals (k) is determined according to the number of available data. 10 intervals were used. To calculate the magnitude intervals (h) the rank was divided by the number of selected intervals.

d) Determining the interval limits: this allows final grouping of data. We took into account that the extreme values within each interval can create confusion about which they belong to. Therefore it is necessary to clarify the limits very well. We calculated the starting point of the first interval by applying the formula:

$$\text{Starting point} = \text{Minimum value} - \frac{1}{2}$$

Starting from here, we summed amplitude value range (h) to obtain the next interval limits.

e) Table of frequencies: records the intervals limit values by calculating the elements belonging to each class, noting them down in the "verification column" and accounting the total observations for each interval in the frequency column.

f) Draw the histogram by drawing vertical bars starting at each interval.

3. Results and Discussion

Among President Restaurant customers during 1 to 2 May 2010, 54 observations were made (table 1). The data sets rank was then calculated by making the difference between the maximum and minimum values recorded:

- maximum value: $L = 29$;
- minimum value: $S = 2$;
- rank $(L - S) = 27$.

The number of intervals (k) was determined according to the number of available data. 10 intervals were used. To calculate the intervals magnitude (h) the rank was divided by the selected number of intervals rounding the result of the greater whole.

$$(h) = (L - S)/K = 27/10 = 2.7 = 3$$

The starting point of the first period is calculated by:

$$\text{Starting point} = \text{minimum value} - \frac{1}{2} = 2 - \frac{1}{2} = 1.5$$

Table 2.
The frequency table

No.	Intervals	Check	Frequency
1	2 - 5		11
2	5 - 8		12
3	8 - 11		8
4	11 - 14		8
5	14 - 17		4
6	17 - 20		4
7	20 - 23		2
8	23 - 26		3
9	26 - 29		1
10	29 - 32		1
			N = 54

Then we draw the frequency table (table 2) recording the intervals of limit values, calculating the elements belonging to each class and accounting the total observations for each interval in the frequency column.

The histogram of quality process analyzed is shown in figure 1.

The requirement was set that the waiter's taking order should be performed in less than 10 minutes after the customer's arrival in.

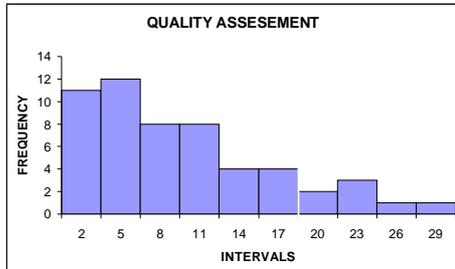


Figure 1. Histogram of the process quality

By analyzing the histogram, one can see that a large number of observations to the right of the additional line (which marks the limit requirement), did not meet this goal. Therefore, the efforts should be geared to move the histogram to the left so that data from the extreme to be within the specified limits.

One of the reasons leading to these results might be that, while the questionnaires were applied to, even at the beginning of the summer season (1-2 May 2010) the unit has a staff shortage which means that the waiting time has not complied with the customer's expectations. Nor the waiter's professionalism was at high level since the staff was supplemented by workers without special experience.

4. Conclusions

Establishing an optimal degree of work tasks to be entirely achieved during work, in terms of ensuring a prompt and good quality serving, is one criterion by which the management in determining the staff's needs, size of work teams, work schedule

and duties for each worker should be carried out .

Optimizing human resources management in the President Restaurant will depend on the success of the following activities:

- approaching human resources policy at the company level in an integrated system with other aspects of society management activity, the basic condition for ensuring positive results;
- flexibility of organizational structure and adapting to current stage of society development;
- attracting necessary qualified staff suitably to the requirements of providing services;
- creating conditions for maximum use of training, experienced and skilled staff;
- professional training to maintain high service standards;
- providing cooperation atmosphere based on interpersonal and inter-professional relationships that stimulate employees to produce positive results at the firm level;
- motivate employees to better cover the staff needs and attract those with best experience.

5. References

1. MICU, A., *Commerce economy*, Didactic and Pedagogical Publisher, Bucharest, 2005;
2. ALEXANDRESCU, M., *Public food units management*, lecture notes, 2006;
3. SIMIONESCU, G., *Product and services quality study*, Niculescu ABC Publisher, Bucharest, 2005;
4. CATOIU, I., BALAN, C., ONETE, B., POPESCU, I.C., VEGHES, C., *Methods and technics used in marketing surveys – Applications*, Uranus Publisher, Bucharest, 1999