



SAMPLE MANAGEMENT RESEARCH PAPER

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Introduction

The hotel industry thrives on customers' satisfaction in order to be successful. It is not enough to attract customers but it is imperative to retain these customers for the success of the business. This is possible through the implementation of effective customer service policies. In the hospitality industry, customer satisfaction is largely dependent upon the quality of the service that the industry offers.

Customer service policies aim at ensuring that customers are satisfied with the services provided by businesses. In the hospitality industry, hotels, motels, restaurants, diners, pubs and cafes are the main service providers and their main focus of attracting customers is the quality of the room, comfort, staff services, security and amenities. Hotels therefore have developed and strive to adhere to the customer service policies to ensure that customers are taken care of in the best way possible.

Prior to developing customer service policies, research shows that customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry is more likely to guarantee the return of the customer to that particular establishment. In the hospitality industry, customer satisfaction is very important therefore it is of utmost necessity that the needs of the customer should be attended to promptly. This applies right from the reservation or booking and extends throughout the customer's stay until the time of departure. The staff should be professional at all times and be able to handle customer needs efficiently and with courtesy. This polite approach ensures that the customer is comfortable and feels welcomed.

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In this regard, it is very important for the various players in the customer service industry to maintain customer service policies. A strong customer service policy will determine the success of the business. The implementation of these policies should be based on procedures that encourage strong relationships with customers but at the same time able to protect the interests of the establishment. This is a simple way of ensuring customer loyalty.

1.1 Usage of customer service policies

In the hospitality industry, a customer expects that the moment they walk in, there is a certain level of service to be offered. It is important that the customer understands this very well and there is no better way to spell it out than in the customer service policy. Basically, a customer service policy states the company's details, including contact details and customer service contacts. It spells out the roles of the staff and the level of courtesy that is expected of them towards the customers. Good staff training in customer service ensures the success of the implementation of the customer service policies.

Customer service policies create value for the customers by anticipating and managing their expectations as well as demonstrating the ability and responsibility to satisfy customer needs. Customers are key to the existence of any business. As such, it is important that the staff and management of the premises strive to deliver high quality service that will ensure ultimate customer satisfaction. In the highly competitive

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hospitality industry, excellent customer service gives a business a competitive advantage and customer retention over other establishments. Satisfied customers have the tendency of coming back for the guarantee of good service.

Customer service policies also aim at reducing the operational costs. Research shows that the cost of attracting new customers is higher than the cost of retaining the existing ones. The use of these policies ensures that customer satisfaction is achieved by all means so that the customers keep coming back. In addition, positive reviews play the role of marketing that will keep customers streaming in to experience the services first hand. Customer loyalty is the key to success in the hospitality industry.

The organizational goals and objectives are defined in the customer service policies. First of all, it is important that the customer needs and requirements are identified. Customers usually go for quality products and services. Creating a good customer relationship is an important asset to the business. In this context, positive relationships are guaranteed to create higher levels of commitment in the customers, thereby increasing their return-rate. Research shows that there exists a correlation between customer satisfaction and their probability of returning to the same hotel. This explains the importance of maintaining long-term relationships with customers that will be advantageous to the establishment as well.

1.2 Evaluation of customer service policy

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It has already been established that maintaining a positive customer relationship is important in any industry, but most importantly in the hospitality industry where customers determine the success of the business. The policies are developed to encourage customer loyalty and also to generate continuous feedback on how the hotel staff and management can better serve the customers.

Customer service policy is evaluated by a number of things. Staff training in customer service is at the top of the list. It is imperative that all staff members are trained on the importance of being courteous to customers. Service delivery should also aim at being efficient. The company policy should strongly spell out the expectations of customer service which should not only be discussed during meetings but also included in training sessions for new inductees. Employees should always be ready to tackle customer complaints and if possible, they should be escalated to higher authority in order for quick solutions to be found.

The customer service staff should be encouraged to record all calls that are directed to them. This is for the purpose of evaluation and is very helpful for training purposes. The problems that are directed to the customer service desk can be used for future solutions to similar problems as the complexity of each problem can be reviewed. The professionalism of the staff who handled the customer's problems can also be evaluated.

Online surveys are an efficient way of assessing customer satisfaction with the products and services offered. Websites are the most common interactive tool between the hotel industry and their customers. Customers can post their reviews, whether negative or positive and this motivates the establishment to improve or maintain their standards. Customer response cards

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also work in the same way, only that the response is achieved immediately to capture the customer response to the services provided.

Customer complaints should be resolved in the shortest time possible. Evaluation comes in the sense of following up the resolution of customer complaints within a week. This helps in determining whether these solutions served to meet the customer needs.

2.1 Evaluation of the different communication methods

In many business industries, communication is an important aspect that oversees the success of the business. In the hospitality industry, communication is a skill that is mostly used since the industry involves a lot of customer-facing roles. Communication begins from the moment the customer makes contact with the staff of the hotel. It continues as long as the customer relationship lasts and it overlaps with the marketing promotions used by the industry players. Good communication means that the message is conveyed properly, using the correct channel and that it reaches the intended recipient. When proper communication is not achieved, the result is misunderstandings that may result in greater conflicts. A breakdown in communication also has the same results as incorrect communication. In this regard, it is important to ensure that the communication process is carried out

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effectively between the sender and the recipient. In addition, the message must be very clear and simple to execute to ensure successful completion of the communication channel.

Generally, communication is divided into verbal communication, on-verbal communication, written communication, representative visual and representative aural. In the hospitality industry, all these forms of communication apply since it is mostly a customer-facing industry.

Verbal communication is the most common method of communication in the hospitality industry and it applies to both the staff and the customers. Verbal communication simply means that when the sender speaks to the receiver, he does so by speaking directly to the receiver either face to face or by use of a telephone. For instance, when a customer walks into a hotel to check in, he or she heads straight to the front office desk. The staff at the front office will speak directly face to face with the customer to establish his needs. Alternatively, verbal communication can also take place when the customer calls up the hotel to make a reservation or make an enquiry.

Non-verbal communication is very common in the hospitality industry. On-verbal communication involves sending the message between two groups, either directly or indirectly. Direct non-verbal communication involves the use of signs or gestures to send a message. An example is the sign that is used to warn of a wet or slippery floor. Indirect non-verbal communication involves sending the message through expressions, physical attitudes and body language. Staff members in the hospitality industry are taught to always smile with the customers. When a staff member sees a customer passing by and he or she smiles at the customer that is an example of an indirect non-verbal communication.

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The action of smiling to the customer simply translates to welcoming the customer.

Written communication means that the messages are sent through letters, notes, instructions and manuals. For example, the hotel management can send the customer a complimentary note in honor of an occasion. Similarly, the customer can write a note and drop it off at the customer service desk. Both these forms of communication denote written communication.

Representative visual communication is also another form of communication common within the hospitality industry. This involves sending the message through the use of paintings, posters or advertisement displays. All forms of advertisement that can actually be perceived visually are representative visual communication. An example is a promotional advertisement posted in the newspaper or a large display billboard. The advantage of this method of communication is that it communicates important information to the target market and can also be used for promotional purposes. As a result, it becomes an effective marketing tool that may see the number of customers increasing in the premises.

Representative aural communication comes close to the advertisements used in the representative visual communication. This is where a particular hotel creates a unique musical or jingle that is identifiable with it. This is especially effective when using the radio or television as a media for communication. Most hotels use this form of communication when there is a promotion that they would like the general public to be aware of.

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2.2 Analysis of the influence of customer perception by customer service provision

Customer perception refers to the way customers usually view or feel about certain products and services. The way a customer develops his or her perception is largely influenced by the quality of the customer service provision. The quality of service is important for the hospitality industry to maintain a competitive edge in the market. This ensures that requirements such as customer satisfaction and customer loyalty are achieved. In addition, high quality service attracts new customers and increases the market share and profitability of the business. Customer perception and customer satisfaction go hand in hand. The type and quality of the service offered helps build on the customer's evaluation. It helps him make up his mind about the product or service. In the hospitality industry, the customer defines the nature, quality and the importance of customer service. The services that are offered in the hospitality industry are as varied as they are unique. For this reason, what sets different business premises apart is the quality they offer. Actually, the customer determines the quality by the perception he develops from his experience. This evaluation starts right from the first point of meeting, the staff behavior, quality of the meals, cleanliness and general organization of the place. Among the service industry, the hospitality industry is among the largest that

caters for the needs of people from all walks of life. The way the industry provides its customer services leaves an indelible impression on the mind of the customer.

In the hospitality industry, the goal is to maintain satisfied customers. This is the key towards achieving success. Customer satisfaction forms the core of organizational goals, objectives, practices and policies such as customer services provision. In order to achieve and even maintain high levels of customer satisfaction, the service providers within the hospitality industry continually monitor and analyze the experiences, opinions and suggestions of their customer's. Services are then altered to fit the needs of individual customers. In this way, customer service actually influences the customer perception. This industry serves to attract and satisfy its customers and as such, the customers hold the ultimate decision. Customer satisfaction is dependent upon the customer expectations and the treatment they receive. Staff members are trained to offer exceptional customer service. A customer who meets quick, efficient, courteous, high quality service is more likely to develop the opinion that the business premises is of high quality and having been satisfied, is more likely to return to the same premises on future occasions. It is mandatory for the staff to display professionalism at all times when handling the customer. In this way, even in case of complaints or concerns raised by the customer, the problem resolution is sure to earn the premises good reviews in terms of problem-solving efficiency. By making their own choices, the customers have the power to decide which organizations is rated high quality and which ones are rated below par. Customers determine the type of service offered to them. This is the purpose of effective communication. Customers shape the kind of service offered to them by communicating their experiences and their preferences to the organizations. Customer concerns are acted upon.

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On the other hand, consider a guest at a hotel who makes a reservation for a deluxe room. On reaching the hotel, he finds that the hotel is overbooked and the customer service staff refers him to another hotel across town without making the necessary arrangements to transport or compensate the guest. The result is an angry guest who will probably give the hotel bad reviews that is bound to cause potential customers to keep off. Overbooking is a common phenomenon in the hospitality industry. However, in this example, the guest is disappointed to find that despite his calling to make a reservation, he falls a victim of overbooking. The hotel refers him to another hotel that is all the way across town and does not bother to compensate the angry guest. The staff of the hotel lack professionalism in handling the customer complaint. as a result of the bad service offered to the customer, he is likely to form a negative perception of the hotel. These results in negative reviews and in some extreme cases, lawsuits can be lodged against the hotel management.

3.1 Assessment of sources of information on customer requirements and satisfaction levels

It is not an easy task to gauge customer needs ,especially in the vast hospitality industry which provides services to a wide cross-section of people.as earlier established, it is more expensive to entice new customers into a business and the cheaper alternative is to retain the existing customers. This too, does not come easy.

It is important to know exactly what customers expect from the business so as to be able to meet their needs satisfactorily.

The main source of information on customer requirements is talking to the customers to get firsthand information on what services they would like to get from the organization. Customers can be asked to fill questionnaires or to drop off notes describing their experiences. Information can also be gotten by asking the customers about their experiences during face to face encounters. They can also feel free to indicate their expectations and to give ideas on how best the customer service can be improved to suit their expectations. This is an excellent way of knowing what aspects of customer service to improve on. This information is also important in developing questionnaire surveys for future customers to take in order to determine the levels of customer satisfaction. From first hand customer experience, it is easy to formulate surveys that will help to better understand customer requirements.

Comparison surveys of other businesses within the hospitality industry can also provide valuable information as to customer requirements and expectations. Customer service policies differ from one organization to another. Through sampling, one can come up with ideas on how best customers can be served to ensure their loyalty as well as satisfaction.

Conclusion

A strong customer service policy is the key towards the success of businesses within the hospitality industry. The first step is to determine the goal for the customer service policy. The overall

goal of the customer service policy is to retain customers. These policies can also provide education to customers on the services provided. Comparing different customer service policies is important in identifying industry standards. This not only conforms to the set standards but also helps in the formulation of policies that exceed those of competitors. The goals of the customer service policies must be aligned to the organization's mission. This makes it easy to lay down procedures that go a long way in determining customer requirements and their satisfaction levels. As long as the customer service policies are tested and found relevant to the industry, the staff can be trained on the specifics of these policies so as to deliver excellent customer service.

Reference

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