

Improving Service Quality of the Restaurant Staff: A Case Study of Deutsches Eck Pub & Restaurant

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Abstract

This study focused on improving the service quality of the restaurant staff in terms of communication, assurance and responsiveness at Deutsches Eck pub and restaurant. The researcher conducted the survey of the restaurant service by using questionnaires with 35 selected customers and conducted the interviews with two managements in the Pre-ODI and Post-ODI phases. Interview data was used as qualitative data. Mean and frequency were used as the quantitative data from the questionnaire. Paired Sample T – Test was used to determine the initial impact of ODI in improving the service quality in terms of communication, assurance and responsiveness. After the implementation of the OD interventions to 14 service staffs, those activities were found to be effective. The customers were more satisfied with their expected service in the restaurant. There was significant difference between the Pre and the Post ODI on communication, assurance and responsiveness. Thus, the continuous development is leading the restaurant service to go beyond customer's expectation.

Keywords: improving, service quality, communication, assurance, responsiveness

Introduction

Regardless of what type of business, every single one of them is an organization composing of people, product, service and process. World is changing every day. Many restaurants have to stop their business due to the economic crisis and new restaurants open. To survive high competition in the business, continuous improvement of the restaurant service is the important key.

To operate a successful restaurant, involves not only providing excellent food quality but also providing excellent customer service. The customer is the important and determines the success of the restaurant business. As Deutsches Eck pub and restaurant is well-known in Bangkok, customers expect to receive the excellent service. Therefore, this study focused on improving service quality in terms of communication, assurance and responsiveness through OD interventions.

Current situation of the restaurant

Table 1

SWOTAR Analysis

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-known German restaurant • Excellent product quality • Varied selection of menus • Continuous service improvement | <p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of English communication knowledge • Lack of menu knowledge • Lack of offering more selection • Lack of checking the accuracy of order receiving • Lack of customer attention |
| <p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New selection of German restaurant • New technology for service • Service staffs improvement | <p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments on social media about service that affect restaurant image • Competition in restaurant service |
| <p>Aspirations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The best service among German restaurants • Sustainable service improvement | <p>Results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve internal work process • Improve staffs performance • Customer-focused |

The researcher used SWOTAR to analyze the current situation and performance of the restaurant, goal and long term of future direction, as well as external factors through the discussion and information related to restaurant service quality.

Deutsches Eck Pub and Restaurant opened in 2014. However, it is a well-known German restaurant in Bangkok which provides excellent product quality in serving the customers with a varied selection of menus. The owner improves his restaurant service continuously in order to meet the customer’s expectation. This is a German restaurant in Bangkok where customers enjoy the meal and party. The new technology of service and the improvement of service staffs could help drive customer satisfaction . The owner aimed at providing the best service among the German restaurants in Bangkok.

These are the weaknesses in the service quality of the restaurant staff. Most of customers are foreigners so English is the common language. Customers complained that sometimes it was not easy to make staff understand what they want to order. The staff forget to offer special menu and new promotion to them. Sometimes the staff do not check the accuracy of order received . When customers need to order, there is no staff

nearby. Negative comments were posted on social media that affected the restaurant's image.

Research objectives and research questions

Table 2

Research objectives and questions

| Research Objectives | Research Questions |
|--|--|
| 1. To describe the current situation of the company's service in terms of communication, assurance and responsiveness. | 1. What is the current situation of the restaurant service in terms of communication, assurance and responsiveness? |
| 2. To identify and implement the appropriate OD interventions on communication, assurance and responsiveness. | 2. What are the appropriate OD interventions to improve service in terms of communication, assurance and responsiveness? |
| 3. To examine and analyze the initial impact of ODI on communication, assurance and responsiveness. | 3. What is the impact of ODI on communication, assurance and responsiveness? |
| 4. To compare the difference between the Pre and the Post ODI on communication, assurance and responsiveness. | 4. What is the difference between the Pre and the Post ODI on communication, assurance and responsiveness? |

Review of Literature

The researcher reviewed the literature related to service quality in three dimensions: communication, assurance and responsiveness which are elaborated.

Service quality refers to how well the staff delivers the service to meet customer's expectation under three variables which are communication, assurance and responsiveness.

Communication is the ability of staff to listen and comprehend what the customer asks for, to articulate clearly, to answer the customer’s question confidently and clearly, and to suggest different choices or options from the menu.

Assurance is the ability of staff to always check the accuracy of orders from customers including the delivery of food and beverages, to follow up the orders while customer is waiting, to serve food and beverages within the promised time, to serve clean food and beverages and ensure that there is no contamination.

Responsiveness is the ability of staff to be able to help right away when customer have questions about products and services, and do not wait to be asked, to be attentive while providing prompt service and enthusiastically help the customer to resolve any problem they are encountering.

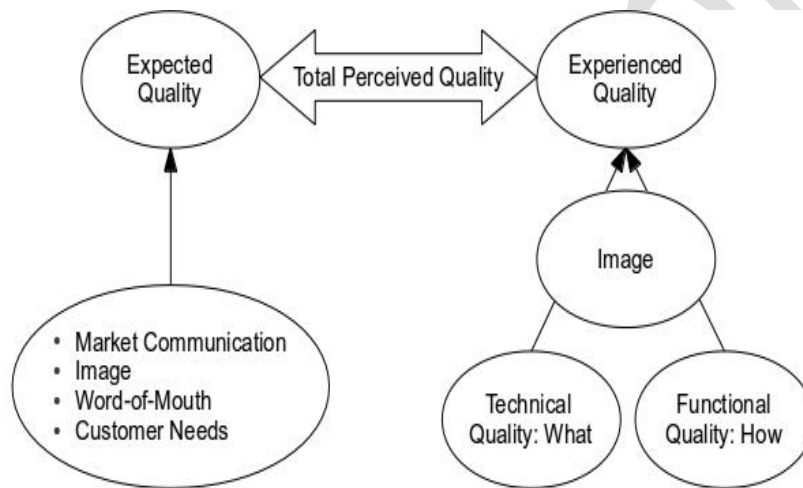


Figure 1 The Perceived Service Quality Model

Source: Grönroos, C. (1990). *Service management and marketing*.

From the perceived service quality model, expectations are functions of market communication, image, word of mouth and consumer needs whereas experience is a product of a technical and functional quality which filtered through the image (see Figure 1). The results between the expectations of the customer and his experience represented the quality of service as perceived by the customer. If the experiences exceeded the expectations then the perceived quality is positive. The perceived quality is low, in case the experiences do not reach the level of expectations.

There are three dimensions focused in this study and used to measure perceived service quality: communication, assurance and responsiveness. It is the evaluation that compared between customer perception and customer expectation . The gap is then considered as the need for future continuous improvement in order to meet customer satisfaction as well as to go beyond customer’s expectation.

Conceptual Framework

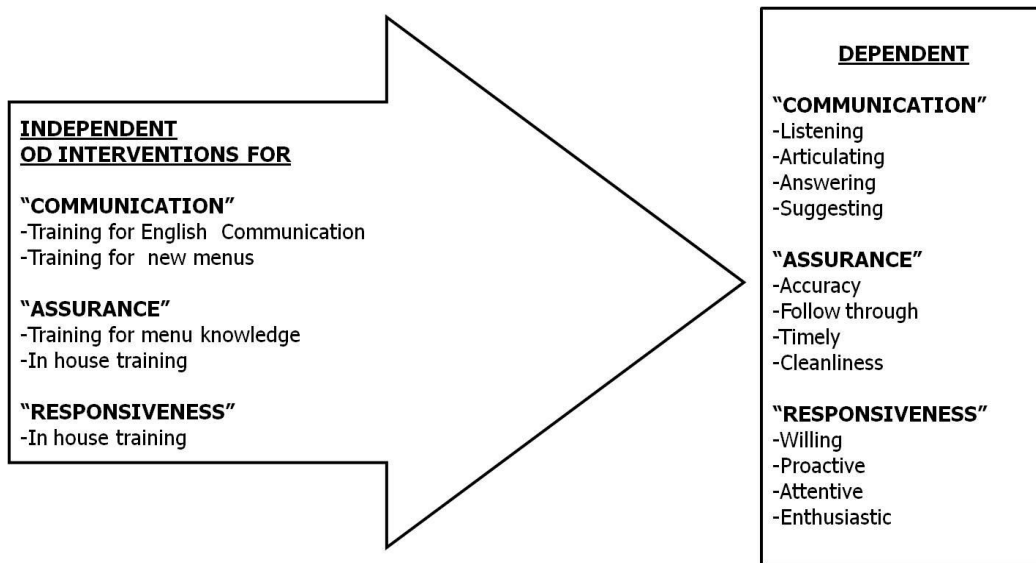


Figure 2 Conceptual Framework

Figure 2 shows the three dimensions which are communication, assurance and responsiveness. The ODI activities applied to the service staff were training for English communication, training for new menu as well as menu knowledge, and in house training. Then staff were expected utilize their ability for better service in order to go beyond customer’s expectation.

Research Methodology

The research process was divided into three states: Pre ODI, ODI and Post ODI. In the Pre ODI, the researcher requested permission from the restaurant owner to gather information, identify the problems, design the method, collect the data and analyze the current situation of the company. In the ODI phase, the researcher designed and implemented the OD interventions. In the Post ODI, the researcher collected, analyzed and interpreted the data by comparing the results and determining the impact.

In this study, data was collected through interviews and survey questionnaire. The interview was conducted with two management persons. The questionnaire was distributed to 35 selected customers. The ODI activities were implemented with 14 service staffs. T – Test was used to determine initial impact of ODI on improving service quality. (see Table 3)

Table 3

Data Collection Schedule

| <u><i>Pre ODI</i></u> | <u><i>ODI</i></u> | <u><i>Post ODI</i></u> |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| Interview | Implementation of activities | Interview |
| Questionnaire | | Questionnaire |
| June 2015 | July 2015 | August 2015 |

Pre ODI

From the interview data with managing director and restaurant manager, and the data from customers' comments, results show that customers were unhappy with the restaurant service. Sometimes customers argued with the staff as they got the wrong or double food and beverages which wasted their time and they were hungry as well, or they had to speak twice to explain about what they preferred. When customers needed to order something more, they had to wait for a while and look for staffs because there was no one around their table. The staff did not check the accuracy of orders from customers. Sometimes there were special menu offerings but the staff did not give information or recommendations to customers.

ODI

The OD Intervention activities were design based on the results and findings from Pre-ODI phase. There were three activities implemented to improve the staff service .

The first activity was training for English Communication for 14 service staffs on July 1, 6, 8, 2015 during the break time for an hour. The manual English for Service was used as a guideline for the staff to practice among themselves . This activity was expected to better the English communication skills of the restaurant staff and they would be more confident to communicate with foreign customers.

The second activity was training for new menu and menu knowledge . The restaurant menu was by the staff to share among themselves . This activity was expected that they were able to take the correct order, to explain clearly about the menu as well as to be confident in offering more choices to customers.

The third activity was in-house training with 14 service staffs where the standard of performance used as a guideline for the staff to practice among themselves . The trainer will be stood nearby and saw the process as well as the need to adjust some behavior. This activity was expected to improve the internal working process of staff, how they should behave and being proactive to provide the best service to customers .

Post ODI

From the interview data with managing director and restaurant manager, and the data from customers' comments, customers were happy and satisfied with the good quality of food as well as staff service who smile when they serve. There was a better

atmosphere in the restaurant. The communication between customers and staff were improved, they could understand each other well. Every one behaved according to the standard of performance. Staff had more knowledge of their service and were confident to suggest the best dishes to customers. The service was faster and there was no need to be asked from customers to follow up. There was almost no mistake in receiving orders and delivery. Staff were more polite to customers and paid them more attention. The customers felt like here was their home, where they could relax and enjoy great food.

Conclusion

The main purpose of this research focused on the improvement of the restaurant service. There was a gap between the current service and the customers' expectation. The ODI activities that implemented were basic, yet they positively impacted the restaurant. The restaurant's owner and staffs were satisfied with the workshops and the desired outcome. It helped them to realize that when everyone does the best to change something then it will be powerful. The results of the data analysis was positive change and customers were more satisfied with the restaurant service.

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