

Customer Perceptions of Service Quality in Luxury Hotels in Petra and Aqaba, Jordan: An Exploratory Study

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Abstract

The aim of the study is to assess customers perception of service quality in luxury hotels, in both, Petra (The iconic tourist attraction), and Aqaba (The commercial capital) on the Red Sea in Jordan and to help the hotel management identify how guest perceive the services and compare their performance against clients expectation. The study used a survey and interviews to accumulate information using SPSS version 20.0 for data analysis. The study sample consists of 271 participants of hotel guests at four- and five-star hotels in Petra and Aqaba. Findings results show that for responses relating to front office, room service, and in-house cafe/restaurant, the importance score is statistically significant to and higher than the performance rating. Overall, the results indicate significant difference guest expectations and actual experiences, thus highlighting managerial implications. The current study cannot claim to be wholly conclusive as it is limited to a small sample size from only two cities of Jordan. From a practitioner's perspective the study provides an opportunity to recognize, in ranking order, features that are considered important by the guests staying in luxury hotels of Petra and Aqaba, as well as to identify the areas of disparity in service quality. It is observed that this is a significant study regards to its contribution to the literature and hotel managers who plan to improve their performance and competitiveness through guest satisfaction.

Keywords

Hotel services quality, Guest satisfaction, Hotels, Jordan, Marketing.

Introduction

The importance of tourism to the socio-economic development of Jordan

Jordan experienced a steady increase in tourism during the first decade of the 21st century. Over 8 million visitors in 2010 of which 4.55 million were overnight visitors, a 20.3% increase in overnight visitors on 2009. Tourism revenue reached more than 2.423 JD billion which contributed 12.4% to the national gross domestic product. Direct employment reached 41,900 in 2010 and is estimated to support more than 150 thousand families (MOTA, 2011-2015, p 21).

This increase in travel has impacted occupancy ratios and average room rates in Jordan. Several international hotel chains Kempinski, Marriott, and InterContinental Hotel Group, etc. see this as an investment opportunity and have announced major investment plans in Jordan. The growth in international tourism generally and domestic tourism specifically have contributed in generating interest in Jordan. This interest has led to studying perceptions of people who use tourism and hotels facilities, particularly luxury hotels for the purpose of the current study. Based on participation and purpose of this study the term "luxury hotels" is used for five- and four-star hotels (Jordan Hotel Association, 2012).

To develop a background and theoretical framework for the current study, a literature review relating to service quality in hotels was undertaken. The review shows that service quality in hotels continues to be an area of wider global research. Its strong significance is related to customer satisfaction and repeat business, which are determinants of profitability of business according to several studies. Service quality, customer perceptions of quality, service failures, and service competitiveness, have long been

studied. However, for the current study reference is made to the literature of about the last 15 years.

O'Neil et al. (1994) mentioned in their study that international demand for products and services no longer happens automatically, but has to be created. In proposing that businesses typically lose 50% of their customers every 5 years, Mack et al. (2000) highlighted the need that businesses should talk to their customers, understand their expectations and make efforts to retain them, and sustain profits. Links between service quality and business profits have long been apparent as indicated by (Baker and Crompton, 2000; Zeithaml and Bitner, 2000; Chu and Choi, 2000; Tsai and Lockyer, 2002; Mohsin, 2003; Bates et al., 2003; Mohsin and Ryan, 2005; Han and Ryu, 2012; Ma et al., 2013). It is also recommended that irrespective of efforts positioned into producing quality service, it is the perceptions of customers that really matter (Getty and Getty, 2003). For this reason, there seems to be a need to study hotels' customer perceptions (Wall and Berry, 2007). The current study makes such an effort and surveys luxury hotel customers in Petra and Aqaba. The survival of hotels in the current competitive environment where most hotels have quite similar luxurious physical facilities much depends on delivery of service quality aiming to result in customer delight. Pallet et al. (2003) advice that quality has to be visioned, initiated, planned, delivered, monitored, and sustained. They explained that quality problems and key staff issues in hotels often can be solved with a common "People and Quality" strategy, which involves placing customer needs in the heart of the whole process, seeking suggestions from staff, developing corporate quality and people philosophy, training and empowering staff, benchmarking, and reviewing (Pallet et al., 2003, p 349).

Examining service quality across small, medium and large hotels in Scotland, Briggs et al. (2007) make a note of major inconsistencies in service quality performance across the sector. The study further suggests that most customers are not in fact overly demanding and are satisfied with a personal service that represents value for money and provides accurate information. The main difference between excellent and poor service for them relates to the absence of the personal touch and how staff deal with their complaints (Briggs et al., 2007; Brewster, 2012). Taking into consideration the Irish hotel industry, Keating, and Harrington (2003) recommended that many quality programs fail from lack of commitment on the part of senior and middle management, and front-line employees. The authors further suggested that the management of quality in contemporary hospitality organizations is lacking in involvement, communication, and teamwork dimensions. Similarly investigating the service quality in China's hotel industry, Tsang, and Qu (2000) find that tourists' perceptions of service quality provided to the hotel industry in China were consistently lower than their expectations and those managers overestimated the service delivery, compared to the tourists' perceptions of service quality. In this manner, it is noted that several studies of service quality in hotels continue to be undertaken in different parts of the globe.

Thus, the literature and research places significant emphasis on service quality, customer satisfaction, and its linkage with business profits. In view of this, what is the current situation in the hotels in Jordan? Are hotel guests satisfied with the services they receive? Is there a "disparity" or significant difference between their expectations and their actual experience from services offered by the hotel? Is a country like Jordan with a large trained workforce able to meet hotel guests' expectations? Is the traditional Jordanian hospitality embedded in the service attitude of hotel employees? Does the traditional Jordanian hospitality culture (Yick and Ho, 2009), Bedouin Culture possess any role in contemporary hospitality? How is the traditional Jordanian culture influencing the service to guests in luxury hotels currently? Such questions became the impetus for the current study.

Petra and Aqaba were chosen due to the support provided in data collection by a local Petra Hotel Association and Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority. The large number of luxury hotels eased selection when approaching and obtaining management consent to participate in the study, although it was quite a challenging task in Jordan. Only 10 hotels out of 18 agreed to participate and they were between in the five-star and four-star category. They were selected as major touristic destinations in the Kingdom attracting the majority of visitors (international and domestic) and hosting 16, 2% of the classified hotels in the country.

Methodology

According to the Jordan's Statistical Report from MOTA (2004) Petra and Aqaba account for 60% of hotel rooms in the five- and four-star categories. Accumulating data from all hotels in Petra and Aqaba was beyond the scopes of the current exploratory study.

The study offers an opportunity to determine a largely underresearched area of service quality, customer perceptions,

and their actual experience of luxury hotels in Jordan. The study also offers a possibility to compare and contrast with other similar studies undertaken with other destinations in the country.

The main objective of this study is to consider:

- Understanding the general expectations and factors of importance for customers who stay in various luxury hotels in Petra and Aqaba Red Sea Jordan.
- Comprehend customer actual experience and evaluation from the stay, how did the hotel perform aligned with a perception of the importance of relevant factors?
- The disparity between the specific and overall components of importance and actual stay experience.

Questionnaire construction and sample

Peterson and Wilson (1992) confirm that customer satisfaction appears most typically to be measured through surveys. Surveys provide formal feedback to a firm and send a positive signal to customers that the firm is interested in them. This framework approach is undertaken in the current study. Management of different luxury hotels in Petra and Aqaba, Jordan, were approached to explain the reason of this study and achieve their consent to participate. The retention of anonymity in the research report aided the acquisition of approval to administer the survey to guests staying in the participating hotels. This study was undertaken at different five- and four-star hotels willing to participate. The methodology is involved surveying guests in the hotel lobby, restaurants, bar, room service or other convenient location within the hotel. During the survey any comments made were illustrious and further explanation was presented where necessary, while participating guests filled the survey questionnaire. Some guests chose to take the survey and return it to hotel reception later. Guest had the option to withdraw from their participation at any stage of the survey. Front office, room service restaurant were chosen for the study as being most representative of guest contact and service delivery process demonstrating maximum moments of truth opportunities where the service provider comes in direct contact with the guest.

A questionnaire was structured for this study with input from local hotel managers and individual items were selected and modified based on studies such as Lockyer (2000), Mohsin (2003), Mohsin and Lockyer (2010) along with Mohsin and Ryan (2005). The questionnaire is comprised three sections. The first section gathered data on the importance attributed to different features of the front office, room service, and in-house cafe/restaurant by guests. The second section required an evaluation of how the establishment performed in the opinion of guests, as per the listed features of front office, room service, and in-house cafe/restaurant (Namkung and Jang, 2010). The third section accumulated demographic details in terms of gender, age, type of trip (business or holiday), and country of residence. The study uses a Likert scale of 1-7, where 7 represents highest importance or agreement with the statement and 1 represents lowest importance or unacceptable level of service offered; 0 represented no opinion, and was excluded from the analysis. A useable sample of 271 participants resulted over a period of almost 2 months.

The Results

The convenience sample comprised of Jordanian and international respondents and consists mainly of 168 male respondents (62.0%) aged 31-40 (39.5%) years followed by those aged 41-50 years (29.5%). The items, as previously noted, were derived from a sequence associated with guests checking in and using hotel facilities prior to departure.

For reliability statistics the Cronbach Alpha for all the importance and performance questions was 0.854. While Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sample adequacy was 0.819 as suggested by Ryan, 1995; Hair et al., 1998; Pallant, 2010. The usual "rule of thumb" of a minimum of five respondents per item used in a scale meant the sample size was found to be adequate. Such scores justified undertaking additional analysis. Additional analysis involves descriptive statistics for the two sections of importance and performance evaluation and factor analysis.

Descriptive statistics

Descriptive analysis of front office features' scores for importance showed that respondents consider "important" seven out of nine items listed, i.e., mean score is over 6 from the maximum possibility of 7:

- (1) Value for money of the hotel;
- (2) Receiving confirmation on reservation;
- (3) Making a reservation;
- (4) First impression of the hotel;
- (5) First contact with the hotel staff;
- (6) Helpful and friendly staff; and
- (7) Furnishings in the room.

Respondents consider three items from room service feature scores for importance in the hotels in Petra and Aqaba, Jordan, with mean scores of over 6 from the highest possible score of 7:

- (1) Overall quality of food;
- (2) Value for money for room service; and
- (3) Overall selection of beverages.

In case of in-house cafe/restaurant in hotels in Petra and Aqaba, all eight importance features scores were above 6 from the highest possible score of 7:

- (1) Timely service;
- (2) Quality of service;
- (3) Quality of the restaurant food;
- (4) Appearance of the staff;
- (5) Value for money of the restaurant;
- (6) Dealing with complaints;
- (7) Product knowledge of staff; and
- (8) Ambience of the restaurant.

After recognizing the importance scores and ranking given by the respondents staying in hotels in Petra and Aqaba, the next step was to analyze the actual experience or performance scores attributed by the respondents to different features of front office, room service, and in-house cafe/restaurant.

Importance-performance analysis (IPA)

Front office

The importance-performance technique has been widely used in tourism academic literature. It is defined as a model of

reasoned action by Sheppard et al. (1988). Recently, Ryan and Cessford (2004) disagree that in the context of measuring visitor satisfaction with sites of New Zealand Conservation Estate, there is indeed much merit in asking a simple question such as "To what degree are you satisfied with your visit?," and response analysis of the importance-evaluation matrix diagrammatically conveys important information to managers who can proceed to act on such research. Major parts of the survey in the recent study include sets of importance-performance type questions. Paired sample *t*-test was used to determine the difference, if any, between importance-performance.

The front office showed statistically significant difference in all the nine areas assessed when comparing the importance and actual performance of service quality.

Prominent areas with a mean difference of over 6, indicating a larger disparity between expectation and actual experience based on service performance, in ranking order given by the responding guests are as follows (Table 1):

- (1) The value for money of the hotel (mean difference 1.7)
- (2) The furnishings in the room (mean difference 1.13)
- (3) Receiving confirmation on reservation (mean difference 0.91)
- (4) Ease of making a reservation (mean difference 0.80).

The above features are perhaps reasonably easy to deal with provided the hotel management recognize the significance attributed to them by the respondents. The difference existing between scores of importance and performance as illustrated in the table identify managerial implications in those areas. If the hotels do not seek to meet the current attributed importance by the guests can they ever be able to work toward exceeding the importance expectation and achieving "customer delight" through their performance?

Room service

The IPA showed that in all room service responses the importance is higher than the performance and the difference is statistically significant (Table 1). Prominent areas with a mean difference of over 6, indicating a larger disparity between expectation and actual experience based on service performance, in ranking order given by the responding guests are as follows (Table 1):

- (1) Value for money for room service (mean difference 1.57)
- (2) The overall quality of food (mean difference 4.27)
- (3) The overall selection of beverages (mean difference 1.29).

Here again the scores illustrate the difference between importance and performance which has managerial implications in improving quality.

Cafe/restaurant (in-house)

Comparison of importance and actual performance of in-house cafe/restaurant reflects a similar experience showing statistically significant difference in all eight areas assessed. All eight areas except one showed mean difference of over 6, indicating a larger disparity between expectation and actual experience based on service performance. The following is the ranking order (Table 1):

- (1) The quality of the restaurant food (mean difference 1.25)
- (2) The quality of service (mean difference 1.29)

Table 1: Importance and performance

One-sample statistics					
Items	Importance		Performance		Mean difference
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Front office					
The value for money of the hotel	6.25	0.587	4.55	1.070	6.251
The furnishings in the room	6.07	0.525	4.94	0.913	6.074
Receiving confirmation of reservation	5.96	0.470	5.05	0.566	5.963
Making a reservation	5.87	0.438	5.07	0.574	5.875
Helpful and friendly staff	6.21	0.525	5.38	0.954	6.207
First contact with the hotel staff	5.94	0.404	5.04	0.739	5.945
First impression of the hotel	6.21	0.481	6.23	0.931	6.207
The check in and out of the hotel	6.03	0.547	6.00	1.054	6.026
Room service					
Value for money for room service	6.34	0.525	4.77	0.713	6.336
The overall quality of food	6.10	0.518	1.83	2.441	6.100
The overall selection of beverages	6.28	0.568	4.99	1.151	6.284
Prompt respond from order taker	5.98	0.590	5.16	1.107	5.978
Prompt room service if used	6.11	0.569	1.76	2.443	6.114
A variety of items on the menu	6.26	0.622	5.16	1.058	6.262
In house cafe/restaurant					
Quality of the restaurant food	6.53	0.595	5.28	1.345	6.528
The quality of service	6.21	0.563	5.01	1.120	6.214
Dealing with complaints	6.21	0.613	3.74	2.109	6.214
Timely service	6.45	3.741	4.77	0.903	6.446
The appearance of the staff	6.24	0.528	5.19	0.812	6.240
Value for money of the restaurant	6.30	0.599	4.72	1.033	6.299
Product knowledge by staff	6.17	0.611	4.54	0.881	6.173
Ambience of restaurant	6.20	0.526	5.52	0.910	6.196

SD: Standard deviation

- (3)Dealing with complaints (mean difference 2.47)
(4)Timely service (mean difference 1.68)
(5)The appearance of the staff (mean difference 1.05)
(6)Value for money of the restaurant (mean difference 1.58)
(7)Product knowledge of the staff (mean difference 1.63).

Table 1 illustrates that overall in almost all cases importance was rated more highly than performance and the mean score difference was higher than “6” indicating statistically significant disparity. It leaves a disturbing situation that participating respondents’ expectations were not met which usually impacts service quality perceptions of customers.

The survey participants were also asked to rank five features using a five-point scale, where 1 represented being not important and 5 represented very important in the selection of a hotel. Each number was to be used only once. Table 2 lists the responses in descending order of mean. The purpose was to compare responses of Jordanian and international hotel guests with findings of other studies by other researchers (Lockyer, 2002, 2003; Al Khattab and Aldehayyat, 2011). Cleanliness of the hotel (mean = 4:56) is listed as the most important followed

Table 2: Ranking descriptive statistics

One-sample statistics				
Feature	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
Cleanliness of the hotel	271	4.56	0.497	0.030
Value for money	271	4.62	0.517	0.031
Location	271	4.65	0.477	0.029
Friendliness of the staff	271	4.66	0.476	0.029
Outside appearance of the hotel	271	4.72	0.476	0.029

by value for money (mean = 4:62). Results indicate similarities when compared.

Factor analysis

Factor analysis was undertaken as it identify underlying dimensions within a list of separate items was found suitable for the importance data though here also couple of items loaded

heavily into more than one factor such as “prompt response from the order taker” and “staff presentation and manners.” Exploratory factor analysis was undertaken using Principal Component Analysis with Varimax rotation. The KMO was 0.905, which indicates suitability for analysis (Table 3).

The five underlying factors which emerge from this analysis could be classified and named as:

Hotel ambience and staff courtesy – which accounted for impression of the hotel, room conveniences, and front office staff courtesy (variance 28.974%).

Food and beverage product and service quality – this factor accounted for quality and promptness of service (variance 6.022%).

(1) Staff presentation and knowledge – this factor shows product knowledge, complaint handling, and presentation of staff (variance 5.258%).

(2) Reservation services – this factor reflects on all reservation services of the hotel including reservation for rooms and restaurant seating (variance 4.88%).

(3) Overall value for money – it accounts for overall value impression of the hotel facilities (variance 4.50%).

The above factors have a strategic meaning in identifying the features considered important by the customers. The features range

from simple “courtesy” to “overall value for money”. Jordan despite its traditional hospitality culture stating (Jordan’s Bedouin Culture) runs the risk of developing an average and casual service attitude. Such a practice in hotel industry could result in dissatisfaction of customers and few or no repeat visits. The resulting factors from the analysis reflect on the existing attitude and importance of guests staying in the local hotels, thus providing some insights for current hotels managers to consider when planning their services.

Discussion and Conclusion

A review of the literature suggests that quality continues to be an issue to debate and research. Hotels worldwide give importance to service quality as it reflects their standard and creates a positive image of their product and service. Analyzing the response of two hotel managers on does quality impact on hotel performance? Claver et al. (2006) discover that quality management system can have a positive effect on such areas as service quality, employee morale, reduction in working costs and waste, and customer satisfaction, which in turn can have a strong effect on sales and competitive position. Comparing the satisfaction among Asian and Western travellers with service quality in Hong Kong hotels, Choi and Chu (2000) recommend that Asian travellers’ overall satisfaction is primarily derived from the value factor, whereas their Western counterparts are influenced by the room quality and consider service quality as the most important factor.

Table 3: Factor analysis-rotated component matrix

Component matrix						
Items	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
First impression of the hotel	0.486	−0.354	0.168	−0.195	0.086	−0.083
Helpful and friendly staff	0.517	−0.059	−0.127	−0.098	0.339	−0.402
First contact with the hotel staff	0.395	−0.501	−0.134	0.123	−0.016	−0.076
Your first impressions of the hotel	0.266	−0.198	−0.349	0.366	0.174	0.481
The check in and out of the hotel	0.571	0.065	−0.199	−0.190	0.222	−0.482
The furnishings in the room	0.574	−0.057	−0.274	0.029	0.199	0.074
A variety of items on the menu	0.584	−0.093	0.092	−0.241	0.137	0.120
The overall quality of food	0.642	0.055	0.161	−0.074	0.160	0.216
The overall selection of beverages	0.649	0.061	0.154	−0.124	0.111	0.206
Prompt room service if used	0.635	−0.041	−0.111	−0.024	−0.030	0.284
The quality of service	0.506	0.120	−0.325	0.436	0.124	−0.104
Quality of the restaurant food	0.640	0.139	0.208	0.017	−0.312	0.032
Value for money of the restaurant	0.606	0.245	−0.062	−0.049	−0.151	−0.085
Prompt respond from order taker	0.564	−0.026	−0.219	0.006	−0.169	0.024
Product knowledge by staff	0.580	−0.007	−0.192	0.168	−0.347	−0.278
The appearance of the staff	0.402	0.146	−0.076	−0.460	−0.238	0.158
Dealing with complaints	0.639	0.273	−0.101	0.052	−0.439	−0.072
Timely service	0.133	0.724	0.156	0.214	0.152	0.091
Receiving confirmation of reservation	0.491	−0.377	0.187	0.252	−0.321	0.068
Ambience of restaurant	0.331	0.071	0.475	0.502	0.159	−0.190
Making a reservation	0.466	−0.242	0.531	0.026	−0.031	−0.088
The value for money of the hotel	0.644	0.135	0.004	−0.099	0.161	0.052
Value for money for room service	0.665	0.049	0.139	−0.062	0.246	0.148

Hotels in Jordan also take a similar come within reach of giving importance to service quality as per discussions with different hotel managers during the survey administration. What is the impression of the hotel guest in Petra and Aqaba Red Sea? The current study attempts to seek answer to this question. The responses and opinions of 271 participants about the quality of products and services offered by the five-star hotels in Petra and Aqaba Red Sea, Jordan are representative of the population of similar hotel guests in Petra and Aqaba Red Sea. The information was accumulated to determine – general importance perceptions of customers who stay in luxury hotels in Petra and Aqaba, Jordan, their evaluation from the stay; any disparity between the specific and overall components of importance and the experience of their actual stay.

The analysis of the results of the descriptive statistics shows statistically significant differences between importance and performance evaluations of the guests in every area within front office, room service, and in-house cafe/restaurant that needs constructive measures on the part of hotel managements. There was not a single feature in any of the areas studied where the evaluation of performance of the property exceeded the guest importance perception. Though statistical significance was noted in IPA of all front office features, some areas had a mean difference of over 6 such as – the value for money of

the hotel; the furnishings in the room, receiving confirmation on reservation, and making a reservation (Table 1). The results suggest significant efforts need to be undertaken from simple gestures of first contact on arrival to check in and out efficiency to improve and reflect on service quality being offered to match, if not exceed, the importance perception of the guests staying in local hotels.

The situation with respect of room service was no different; statistical significance was noted in importance-performance difference analysis of all room service features assessed in the study. Some areas had a mean difference of over 6 such as value for money for room service, overall quality of food, and overall selection of beverages. The in-house cafe/restaurant showed the worst results where statistical significance was noted in all eight features of IPA and all, but one feature i.e. ambience of the restaurant had a mean difference of <6. Some areas with a mean difference of over 6 are: Quality of food; quality of service; dealing with complaints; appearance of staff, etc. The IPA matrix in Table 4 summarizes areas of disparity and suggests managerial implications.

Implications for management

As discussed by Lockyer (2005a, b) the factors that impact on the repeat business in a hotel are very complex. To gain

Table 4: IPA matrix

Component matrix						
Rotated component matrix	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
First impression of the hotel	0.242	-0.394	0.354	0.237	0.066	0.469
Helpful and friendly staff	0.570	-0.147	0.186	-0.083	0.222	-0.231
First contact with the hotel staff	0.439	0.046	0.384	-0.296	0.241	0.007
Your first impressions of the hotel	0.175	-0.436	0.438	0.445	0.004	0.131
The check in and out of the hotel	0.361	0.197	-0.016	-0.607	-0.075	0.299
The furnishings in the room	0.537	-0.155	-0.199	0.236	-0.262	0.072
A variety of items on the menu	0.788	-0.202	-0.140	0.056	0.020	-0.073
The overall quality of food	0.767	-0.178	-0.375	0.134	0.081	-0.074
The overall selection of beverages	0.832	-0.151	-0.223	0.041	0.037	-0.022
Quality of the restaurant food	0.801	-0.045	-0.234	0.070	-0.008	0.047
Value for money of the restaurant	0.575	0.170	-0.083	-0.095	-0.175	-0.023
Prompt room service if used	0.269	0.788	0.251	0.257	-0.050	-0.174
Prompt respond from order taker	0.443	0.239	0.089	-0.001	0.091	0.462
Product knowledge by staff	0.571	0.349	0.123	-0.144	0.192	0.035
The appearance of the staff	0.593	-0.037	0.230	-0.189	-0.275	-0.029
Dealing with complaints	0.280	0.506	-0.090	0.209	0.229	0.291
Timely service	0.696	0.239	-0.118	-0.134	0.064	-0.123
Receiving confirmation of reservation	0.459	-0.091	0.254	-0.168	-0.219	0.200
Ambience of restaurant	0.314	-0.354	0.324	-0.154	0.017	-0.430
Making a reservation	0.463	-0.168	0.451	0.047	-0.216	-0.130
The quality of service	0.794	-0.134	-0.248	0.183	-0.082	-0.061
Value for money for room service	0.229	0.748	0.253	0.310	0.026	-0.195
Value for money	0.118	-0.259	0.008	-0.012	0.751	-0.050

IPA: Importance-performance analysis

an understanding of these factors, a factor analysis was undertaken which resulted in five underlying factors. The model in Figure 1 takes these five factors and suggests their impact on the selection of repeat business by guests. The model also introduces what is referred to as “modifiers” which as suggested could modify the factors and thus influences the repeat business. For example the factors in selection are modified by gender by purpose, etc. Five factors based on the importance data are being called - hotel ambience and staff; food and beverage product and service quality; staff presentation and knowledge; reservation services and overall value for money. Overall the results indicate statistically significant differences in importance and performance evaluation responses of the hotel guests. The study put forward to practitioners to record in ranking order features that are considered important by hotel guests and their actual experience evaluation of those features. An outcome of this finding points to the areas of disparity in service and product quality of the hotels. The managerial implication is to recognize disparity and undertake measures to improve with an approach of trying to exceed the expectations of the guests to build customer loyalty and repeat business. Developing a commitment to service quality is often a challenge faced by any service organization, studying customers’ attitude, seeking feedback, and accumulating that information to analyze along with research helps to identify areas of disparity in importance performance evaluation, thereby helping to develop appropriate actions and strategy to address such disparity. Something this study has attempted to facilitate.

Implications for literature

In response to the question – what has this study to contribute to the literature? It is observed that research in service quality of luxury hotels in Jordan is sparse; the current study has been the first attempt to measure the service quality perceptions of

guests staying in luxury hotels in Petra and Aqaba Red Sea. In that sense, the research has some value as it provides material to other local and international researchers for a comparative study of service quality perceptions of luxury hotel guests with other such studies undertaken in different parts of the world. Most luxury hotels worldwide can easily compete with physical evidence and comforts, but it is the service in the hotel that makes the difference. Moreover, it needs to be explored how hotels are working to achieve “customer delight?” This is possible through continuous research and contribution to literature and this is something this study has attempted to undertake.

The current study cannot claim to be wholly conclusive as it is limited to a small sample size from only two cities of Jordan and there could be subjectivity in responses. Additional study with a larger sample size accumulated from different cities of Jordan is suggested.

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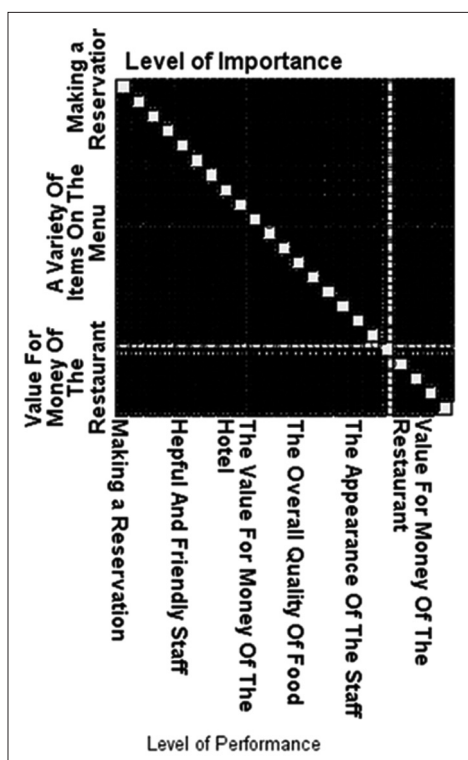


Figure 1: Factor impacting repeat business

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