

5 STAR HOTELS SERVICE QUALITY IN MONGOLIA

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Abstract: Service quality is considered substantial when it comes to define organizational success. The winning strategy is to deliver excellent quality service to customers. By providing quality service, organizations can sustain customers' confidence and competitive advantages over their competitors. This study scrutinizes the effects of various elements of hotel industry which affects customer satisfaction. The purpose of this exploratory study was to investigate and assess guest perceptions of service quality in 5 star hotels in Mongolia. A convenient sample of 285 guests drawn from four 5 star hotels was used in the analytical stage. Overall the clearly indicate significant differences between hotel guests' expectations and their actual experiences, thus highlighting managerial implications. The findings indicated, as a whole that the hotel customers' perceptions of service quality provided by the hotel industry were lower than their expectations and the gaps between customers' expectations and perceptions were significant.

Хураангуй: Байгууллагын амжилтыг тодорхойлохын тулд үйлчилгээний чанарыг бодитойгоор тоолох нь чухал юм. Бизнесийн өрсөлдөөнд давуу тал олох стратеги нь хэрэглэгчдэд маш сайн чанартай үйлчилгээ хүргэх явдал юм. Энэ судалгаагаар зочид буудлын салбарын хэрэглэгчийн сэтгэл ханамжид нөлөөлдөг үйлчилгээний чанарыг тодорхойлох үзүүлэлтийн үр нөлөөг судалж үзсэн. Энэхүү судалгааны зорилго нь монголын 5 одтой зочид буудлуудын үйлчилгээний чанарын талаарх зочдын ойлголтыг судлах, үнэлэх зорилготой байсан юм. Судалгаанд дөрвөн 5 одтой зочид буудлын нийт 285 зочноос судалгаа авч шинжилгээ хийсэн. Үр дүнд нь зочид буудлын үйлчилгээний чанарын талаарх гүйцэтгэл нь хүлээлтээс доогуур байгаа нь хэрэглэгчдийн хүлээлт, ойлголтуудын хоорондын зөрүү их байгааг харуулсан.

Key words: 5 star hotels, guest satisfaction, service quality, guest perceptions

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Introduction

Mongolia's economic performance improved dramatically in 2017 and at the beginning of 2018 with the GDP growth rate increasing from 1.2 percent in 2016 to 5.1 percent in 2017 and 6.1 percent during the first quarter of 2018. Strong growth was accomplished without excessive inflationary pressures. Indeed, the consumer price index (CPI) increased from 1.3 percent in 2016 to 6.4 percent in 2017 (6.1 percent in May 2018). The economic recovery was not due — at least initially — to strong growth in the mining sector.

Improvements in Mongolia's economic performance also had a positive impact on other sectors, as a tourism sector which Mongolian government has put forward objectives to develop tourism, as one of priority sectors of the Mongolian economy. Which directly contributed to GDP was MNT 586.9 billion which 2.4% of total GDP in 2016 and MNT 804.8 billion, 3.1% of total GDP in 2017 which we can see significant influence by increase of 0.7%.

Visitor exports generated MNT 732.4 billion, 7.5% of total exports in 2016 and it is increased by MNT 385,9 in 2017 but it was only 6.7% of total exports in 2017 compare to 2016. This is forecast to grow grow by 4.0% pa, from 2018-2028, to MNT1,704.2bn (USD699.9mn) in 2028, 6.8% of total.

By result of The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report of 2016 and 2017 that executed by the World Economic Forum, Mongolia was placing at 104th place from 140 countries in 2016, 102nd place out of 140 countries in 2017. In this case, Mongolia is most likely to achieving the complete missions to place within 80th place in the world by Tourism and Travel Competitiveness within 2020.

The hotel plays a significant role in developing the tourism, thus this paper to shows the opportunities to increase products and services well fitted to demands of visitors, hospitality industry trend, competitiveness, and current situation of Mongolian hotel even tourism industry.

Literature review

Service quality

Service quality is considered the life of hotel (Min&Min, 1996) and core of service management (Chen, 2008) Service quality is related with customer satisfaction (Shi &Su, 2007) and customer satisfaction is associated with customers revisit intention (Han et al., 2009). If an effective image is portrayed to customers, it will create competitive advantage for hotel. Service quality was defined by Zeithaml (1988) as “the judgment of customers about the overall superiority of a product or service.” Gronroos (1988) posited that perceived quality is considered

good when the experienced quality of customers meets the expected quality from the brand. They defined service quality as “a global judgment or attitude relating to the overall excellence or superiority of the service”. Based on this definition, they operationalized the concept by applying Oliver’s (1980) disconfirmation model of the gap between expectation and perception of service quality levels. Although SERVQUAL has been applied to a variety of service businesses, a number of dimensions and the nature of the construct were industry specific. Related researches showed that the dimensions were not replicable, and sometimes, the SERVQUAL scale was even uni-dimensional or ten-dimensional. These factors or dimensions are tangibles (physical facilities, equipment and appearance of personnel), reliability (ability to perform the promised service dependably), responsiveness (willingness to help and provide prompt service), assurance (knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence), and empathy (caring, individualized attention the firm provides its customers). The most famous model of service quality was proposed by Parasuraman et al., (1985, 1988). It had five dimensions and can be explained as:

1st - Reliability: “the degree to which a promised service is performed dependably and accurately”.

2nd - Responsiveness: “the degree to which service providers are willing to help customers and provide prompt service”.

3rd - Assurance: “the extent to which service providers are knowledge able, courteous, and able to inspire trust and confidence”.

4th - Empathy: “the degree to which the customers are offered caring and individualized attention”.

5th - Tangibles: “the degree to which physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of personnel are adequate.”

Mei et al.,(1999) studied service quality in the hotel industry in Australia, using SERVQUAL, and developed the HOLSERV scale. The results showed that “employees”, “tangibles”, and “reliability” were the three predictive dimensions of service quality, with “employees” as the best predictor. Another study conducted by Saleh and Ryan (1992) reported five dimensions of “conviviality”, “tangibles”, “reassurance”, “avoid sarcasm” and “empathy”, with “empathy” being the most important dimension of service quality. Sirra et al., (1999) designed a similar questionnaire of HOTELQUAL to examine customer’s perceptions of hotels and delineated three factors of “hotel facilities”, “appraisal of the staff”, and “functioning and organization of service”. Recently, Ekinci et al., (2003) found that tangible and intangible dimensions are the only two distinct dimensions measuring service quality of hotels. Lastly, Akbaba (2006) investigated the service quality expectations of business hotel’s customers and identified five service quality dimensions, namely

tangibles, adequacy in service quality, understanding and caring, assurance, and convenience.

In hotel industry, as service has direct interaction with customers, that is why customer satisfaction can be a reflection of service quality in hotels (Shi&Su, 2007). Hotel performance is directly allied to service quality improvement. There is a significant relationship exist between improvement in service quality and hotel performance change (Narangajavana and Hu, 2008). Customers revisit intention and emotions are mediated by customer satisfaction (Han et al., 2009). Customer satisfaction plays a role of mediator in perceived value of hotel and behavioral intention (Ryu et al., 2008). Customers revisit intention and emotions are mediated by customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction plays a role of mediator in perceived value of hotel and behavioral intention.

In every organization service and quality plays a vital role for every customer. Customer is the main person who defines the Quality. For providing good quality service to customers, it is necessary for hotel managers to understand the expectations of its customers and then develop such programs that can address issues of customers and bring improvement in service quality (Chen, 2008).

Hotel rating system

Hotel classification systems are widely used in the accommodation sector as a means of providing an indicator to both consumers and intermediaries on the standards to be found at individual establishments. This is particularly important in a sector where the product (i.e. the accommodation) is bought/listed sight-unseen (i.e. consumers/intermediaries are not able to see or test the product offering before the purchase/listing is made). Moreover, hotel classifications can provide useful marketing platforms for individual hotels and for destinations wishing to promote the quality of their offer.

There is a wide range of hotel types in Mongolia, and there is no clear global criterion for classifying hotels. However, combinations of principal criteria are used. Hotels are commonly referred to as being of different types, such as motels, guest lodges, residential, all suite, resort, commercial, transient and airport. As this does not describe the characteristics adequately, some other methods have been adopted. Hotels may be described by location, city, regional, resort, country; size, small, medium or large, in terms of room capacity; type of guest, corporate, leisure or convention; length of stay, short or long periods of time; transient or residential; and grading systems, such as the star rating system used in many country's such as Mongolia, Australia and the USA. This research has concentrated on collecting data in the field from five-star hotels as classified by the "Hotel service quality star rating criteria" MNS 5927:2008 /Mongolia National Standard/.

Table 1. Hotel star rating and summative quality reference

Star Rating	Overview of Criteria according to Star Ratings Mongolia
****	Expectations at this level include a degree of luxury as well as quality in the furnishings, decor and equipment, in every area of the hotel. Bedrooms will also usually offer more space than at the lower star levels, and well designed, coordinated furnishings and decor. The en-suite bathrooms will have both bath and fixed shower. There will be a high enough ratio of staff to guests to provide services like porter age, 24-hour room service, laundry and dry-cleaning. The restaurant will demonstrate a serious approach to its cuisine.
*****	Interior design should impress with its quality and attention to detail, comfort and elegance. Furnishings should be immaculate. Services should be formal, well supervised and flawless in attention to guests' needs, without being intrusive. The restaurant will demonstrate a high level of technical skill, producing dishes to the highest international standards. Staff will be knowledgeable, helpful, well versed in all aspects of customer care, combining efficiency with courtesy.

Source: Adapted from Abbott and Lewry (2006)

Hotel rating and Customer satisfaction

In the services sector industry, a key element of customer satisfaction is the nature of the relationship between the customer and the provider of the products and services. Thus, both product and service quality are commonly noted as a critical prerequisite for satisfying and retaining valued customers. A customer is satisfied when an offering performs better than expected and is dissatisfied when expectations exceed performance (Bolton & Drew, 1991).

Applying to the hospitality industry, there have been numerous studies that examine attributes that travelers may find important regarding customer satisfaction. Atkinson (1988) found out that cleanliness, security, value for money and courtesy of staff determine customer satisfaction. Knutson (1988) revealed that room cleanliness and comfort, convenience of location, prompt service, safety and security, and friendliness of employees are important. Barsky and Labagh (1992) stated that employee attitude, location and rooms are likely to influence travelers' satisfaction. A study conducted by Akan (1995) showed that the main determinants of hotel guest satisfaction are the behavior of employees, cleanliness and timeliness. Choi and Chu (2001) concluded that staff quality, room qualities and value are the top three hotel factors that determine travelers' satisfaction. Providing services that customers prefer is the starting point for providing customer satisfaction. A relatively easy way to determine what services customer prefers is simply to ask them. According to Gilbert and Horsnell (1998), and Su (2004), guest comment cards are commonly used for determining hotel guest satisfaction. Guest comment cards are usually

distributed in hotel rooms, at the reception desk or in some other visible place.

Hotel service quality

It is widely acknowledged that the survival of hotels in the current state of competition where most hotels possess similar luxurious physical facilities depends to a greater extent on the delivery of service quality that delights guests. Pallet et al. (2003) argue that quality has to be initiated, vision, planned, monitored, delivered and sustained. They propose that quality problems and key human resource issues in hotels can often be solved with a common "People and Quality" strategy which involves placing guest 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. Al-alak and Al-taie (2006) argue that service quality should be defined from the guest's perspective, and that it is the perceptions of these guests that really matter, hence, there seems to be a need to study hotel's guest perceptions. Akbaba (2006) investigated the service quality expectations of business hotel's customers and examined whether the quality dimensions included in the SERVQUAL model apply in an international environment. The findings of that study confirmed the five dimensional structure of SERVQUAL, but the components of some of the dimensions were different from it. The five service quality dimensions identified in that study were named as: tangibles, adequacy in service supply, understanding caring, assurance and convenience. The findings showed that respondents had the highest expectations for the dimensions of convenience followed by assurance, tangibles adequacy in service supply and understanding and caring. Assessing the service quality perceptions of customers of luxury hotels in New Delhi, India, Mohish and Lockyer (2009) used the importance-performance analysis and showed that, for responses relating to front desk office, room service and in-house café/restaurant, the importance score was statistically significant to and higher than the performance rating. Overall the results indicated significant differences between expectations of the guests and actual experiences.

Methodology

The main objective of this study is to assess; The expectations and factors of importance as perceived by guests of 5 star hotels in Mongolia. The actual experience and evaluation of guests of 5 star hotels in Mongolia. The disparity between the specific and overall components of importance and actual stay experience.

Management of four 5 star hotels in Mongolia, were approached to explain the purpose of this study and obtain consent to participate. Front desk, restaurant service were chosen for the study as being most representative of guest contact and

service delivery process representing maximum moment of truth opportunities where service provider comes in direct contact with the guest (Mohsin and Lockyer, 2009). The study was undertaken at different 5 star hotels consenting to participate. The convenient sample contained 375 respondents. Out of the 375 distributed questionnaires a total of 285 or a response rate of 85 percent was returned. After removing the invalid questionnaires, 285 questionnaires were used in the analytical stage.

The questionnaire comprised main two sections. Section one gathered data on importance attributed to different features of front desk office, in-house lounge/restaurant by guests. Section two sought an evaluation of how the establishment performed in the opinion of guests, as per the listed features of front desk office and in-house lounge/restaurant. Questions asked rate their degree of importance or agreement using a 5 point Likert scale, where 5 represents highest importance or agreement with the statement and 1 represents lowest importance or unacceptable level of service offered. Several statistical techniques including descriptive statistics, factor analysis and reliability test were used in this study. The period of distributing the questionnaire lasted from 1st of July, 2018 until the 25th of August, 2018.

Results

Demographics and statistical measures:

The data obtained from the survey were analyzed for frequency analysis. In gender variable, out of 285 respondents, male was 70.5 percent, and 29.5 percent female. Four categories were defined for age description ranging from 20 years to more than 50 years. Percentage of 20-30 years respondents is 25, 31-40 years is 34, 41-50 years is 24 and more than 50 years is 17 percent. While determining the education level of respondents, more percentage was observed of university education or below university education visiting hotels. Only 20 percent respondents in hotel have acquired above university education. Observation of respondent's profession showed that 9 percent were civil servant, 15 percent of enterprise staff and worker, 18 of institution staff and worker, 23.5 percent were trade/proprietor, 12 percent were retired and 22.5 percent were having some different profession. So, the highest percentile of respondents was trade/proprietor. Only 8 percent of respondents were Mongolian citizens. 50 percent of respondents were from Russia, China, Korea and Japan, rest from USA and European Union countries.

To assess data reliability measures were in access of 0.884, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of measure of sampling accuracy was 0.78. The Cronbach Alpha for all the Importance and Performance questions was 0.79.

Table 2. Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of items
.791	285

SPSS version 19 was used to accumulate information for analysis.

Descriptive analysis:

Descriptive analysis of front desk office features score for importance indicated that respondents consider “important” seven out of ten items listed, i.e mean score is over 4 from the maximum possibility of 5, In-house lounge/Restaurants features score for importance indicated that respondents consider “important” eight out of ten items listed, i.e mean score is over 4 from the maximum possibility of 5.

Table 3. Descriptive analysis of Importance

Items	Importance
FRONT DESK OFFICE	
Room layout, furnishings amenities	4.07
Speed of confirming reservation	4.21
Ease of making reservation	4.07
Better Hotel prices	4.07
Helpful and friendly staff	4.07
The check-in, out of the hotel	4.07
Your first image of the hotel	4.31
IN-HOUSE LOUNGE/RESTAURANTS	
Quality of restaurant served	4.30
Timely service	4.18
Complaint handling	4.20
Knowledgeable staff	4.18
Overall quality of room service	4.10
Better restaurant menu prices	4.10
Staff appearance	4.09
A variety of items on the menu	4.08

Source: Authors' calculation

Having recognized the importance scores and ranking given by the respondents, the next step was to analyze the actual experience or performance scores attributed by the respondents to different features of front deck office, in-house lounge/restaurant.

Importance-Performance analysis:

The importance-performance technique was originally developed by Martilla and

James (1997) for assessing the quality of service. It involves assessing different aspects of a firm's output in terms of customers' performance areas. Major parts of the survey in the current study include sets of importance performance type questions. Paired sample t-test was used to determine the difference, if any, between importance-performance.

Table 4. Importance-performance

	Importance		Performance		Mean difference	t-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
FRONT DESK OFFICE						
Room layout, furnishings amenities	4.31	0.70	3.08	0.72	1.23	1.33*
Speed of confirming reservation	4.07	0.61	2.92	1.08	1.15	1.32*
Ease of making reservation	4.21	0.79	3.14	0.88	1.07	1.25*
Better Hotel prices	4.07	0.87	3.02	0.81	1.05	1.20*
IN-HOUSE LOUNGE/ RESTAURANTS						
Quality of restaurant served	4.30	0.72	3.00	0.94	1.30	1.42*
Timely service	4.18	0.79	3.01	0.96	1.17	1.30*
Complaint handling	4.20	0.69	3.11	0.94	1.09	1.26*
Knowledgeable staff	4.18	0.70	3.16	1.16	1.02	1.16*
Overall quality of room service	4.10	0.68	3.02	0.89	1.08	1.12*
Better restaurant menu prices	4.10	0.70	3.04	0.78	1.05	1.24*
A variety of items on the menu	4.08	0.81	3.06	0.99	1.02	1.10*

It is evident from the above results that in almost all cases performance was rated lower than importance, indicating statistically significant disparity. This clearly means that respondent's expectations are not met, which has hotel managerial implications in improving quality.

Table 5. T-test

	Importance		Performance		Mean difference	t-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
FRONT DESK OFFICE						
Room layout, furnishings amenities	4.31	0.70	3.08	0.72	1.23	1.33*
Speed of confirming reservation	4.07	0.61	2.92	1.08	1.15	1.32*
Ease of making reservation	4.21	0.79	3.14	0.88	1.07	1.25*
Better Hotel prices	4.07	0.87	3.02	0.81	1.05	1.20*
Helpful and friendly staff	4.07	0.79	3.09	0.90	0.98	1.06*
The check-in, out of the hotel	4.07	0.82	3.10	0.89	0.97	1.05*

Your first image of the hotel	4.07	0.80	3.12	0.90	0.95	1.04*
Initial image formation about hotel	3.96	0.84	3.07	0.88	0.98	1.01*
Initial encounter with hotel staff	3.90	0.80	3.06	0.87	0.84	1.00*
Attractive and comfortable lobby area	3.79	0.83	3.03	0.91	0.80	0.91*
IN-HOUSE LOUNGE/ RESTAURANTS						
Quality of restaurant served	4.30	0.72	3.00	0.94	1.30	1.42*
Timely service	4.18	0.79	3.01	0.96	1.17	1.30*
Complaint handling	4.20	0.69	3.11	0.94	1.09	1.26*
Knowledgeable staff	4.18	0.70	3.16	1.16	1.02	1.16*
Overall quality of room service	4.10	0.68	3.02	0.89	1.08	1.12*
Better restaurant menu prices	4.10	0.70	3.04	0.78	1.05	1.24*
Staff appearance	4.09	0.86	2.95	0.92	0.89	0.92*
A variety of items on the menu	4.08	0.81	3.06	0.99	1.02	1.10*
Ambience of restaurant	3.97	0.76	3.11	0.78	0.86	0.98*
Order taker swift responsiveness	3.85	0.86	3.05	0.92	0.80	0.92*

Note: * t-test two – tail probability < 0.01

Factor analysis:

Factor analysis was conducted to identify underlying dimensions within list of separate items. Exploratory factor analysis was conducted using Principal Component Analysis with Varimax rotation. The KMO was 0.82, which indicates suitability for analysis.

Four factors emerged from this analysis. These are grouped and classified as follows:

1. In house lounge/restaurant food and beverage (F&B) service quality-this factor cover items such as the way the service is delivered to guests in terms of quality, variety and promptness (variance 39.03 percent).
2. Hotel ambience and staff courtesy-which covered items such as initial image formation about the hotel, initial encounter with hotel staff, front desk office staff empathy and all service encounters between staff and quests (variance 11.08).
3. Hotel reservation service-this factor covers all issues related to speed of confirming reservation, and ease of making reservations for all hotel facilities (variance 8.25).
4. Overall value for money-this factor covers items such as better hotel prices, better room service menu prices, and overall value impression of the hotel facilities (variance 6.25).

Table 6. Factor analysis - rotated component matrix

	Component			
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
A variety of items on the menu	0.72			
Quality of restaurant served	0.71			
Overall quality of room service	0.70			
Knowledgeable staff	0.70			
Better restaurant menu prices	0.69			
Order taker swift responsiveness	0.68			
Staff appearance	0.67			
Ambience of restaurant	0.67			
Initial image formation about hotel		0.77		
Helpful and friendly staff		0.65		
Initial encounter with hotel staff		0.61		
Your first image of the hotel		0.60		
The check-in, out of the hotel		0.60		
Room layout, furnishings amenities		0.59		
External atmosphere of the hotel		0.50		
Timely service			0.76	
Complaint handling			0.71	
Speed of confirming reservation			0.70	
Ease of making reservation			0.67	
Accuracy of bill/No errors found in the bill during Check out			0.65	
Hotel reservation system and equipment are always functioning			0.60	
Politeness responsiveness of staff			0.49	
Better hotel prices				0.80
Quality of service				0.75
Reasonable charge for room service				0.56

Note: Extraction method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in eight iterations.

Conclusion

The intent of this study was to increase the comprehension of the expectations and perceptions towards hotel service quality from the hotel customers' perspective. This study revealed that hotel customers' perceptions were consistently not meeting their expectations. It is quite evident from the results of the current study that

there exist significant differences between expectations of 5 star hotels guests and actual experiences in area relating to front desk office service, in house-lounge/ restaurant. This means that the surveyed hotels do not seem to meet the attributed importance by the guests, and that efforts should be exerted by management to meet or better exceed the importance expectation and achieve the desired guest delight through their performance. Being able to recognize considered important by the guests, hotel management should adopt enhanced marketing effort in order to make certain that guests' needs are met or exceeded. If the hotel fails to meet such attributed importance as perceived by the guests, then they will not be able to succeed or grow their business. Managerial implication in this context is to identify, prioritize and improve the areas of service flaws and allocate important resources to the most effective areas. It can easily be deduced from the findings of this study that high-quality 5 star hotels can play an important role in enhancing courtesy, leveraging guest knowledge, create value for money for guest satisfaction, and pursue best business practices and excellence in the field of hospitality and tourism. The findings of this study indicate that it is important for 5 star hotel staff to be courteous, empathetic, and friendly with their guests.

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