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FOOD AND BEVERAGE SERVICE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT FOR HOTEL IN THAILAND AFTER COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT:

COVID-19 is all effect to economic of the country as a whole, especially tourism industry. To proposes the improvement guidelines for the service of food and beverage in hotel after pandemic. This research studied the service quality of food and beverage service in hotel. The mixed methodology is employed for this research. The in-depth interview was used for data collecting from top management of three sample hotels in Bangkok, Chiang Mai, and Phuket. There were three parts of modified questionnaires to measure service quality and guest's satisfaction including service facilities, attentiveness, responsibility, reliability, and circumsppection related to COVID-19 preventive measures. This study used sample random sampling to derive subjects with the return rate of the questionnaires was 70 percent or 280 respondents. Data were analyzed by SPSS to find arithmetic mean, SD, percentage, and comparison by t-test, One-way ANOVA, and content analysis. The research results showed that the service quality related to COVID-19 preventive measures of the three hotels can create high guest satisfaction. Suggestions for conducting research are to maintain good quality of service and to improve service quality, especially its reliability. There should be regular training of service standards, product knowledge, technology, food safety and hygiene to employees in order to build trust.

Keywords: Service quality, Food and beverage service, COVID-19

Introduction

All COVID-19 cases detected in Thailand were among those who had been infected from outside the country and were diagnosed on their return to Thailand (no cases of COVID-19 pandemic within the country were reported). People still have to follow preventive measures, including personal spacing, regular hand washing, avoiding touching the face, wearing a mask when in

crowded places, and protect mouth and nose with elbows properly when coughing or sneezing or use tissue paper (WHO Thailand, 2020).

Regarding the crisis, it is all effect to economic of the country, especially tourism industry. However, when comparing the impact of the SARs in 2002 and the COVID-19 virus, it was found that the economic impact of tourism arising from the COVID-19 outbreak had far greater impacts than the SARs outbreak (Economic Tourism and Sports Division, Office of the Permanent Secretary for Tourism and Sports, 2020). Therefore, Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) and Department of Health have proposed the Campaign of Amazing Thailand Safety and Health Administration (SHA) to certify the safety standards of each establishment. The safety checklist for 10 businesses has been developed. More than 10,000 business establishments nationwide have applied for SHA certification, and more than 4,000 have passed assessments, most of them are hotels and resorts. Food safety and public toilet cleanliness and waste management in tourist sites are the key areas of the SHA program, as most Thai tourists travel by private vehicles (Economic Tourism and Sports Division, Office of the Permanent Secretary for Tourism and Sports, 2020).

The hotel business is a highly competitive business with an emphasis on excellent service to impress their guests. All hotels must focus on the guest's satisfaction by developing employee service attitudes and potential. Service quality of all departments is also considered as the heart of the business, with one key strategy being the goal of retaining existing guests. Especially in food and beverage service section, after the pandemic of COVID-19, the service quality is not the only one factor to focus on anymore, but safety and hygiene related to COVID-19 preventive measures are the most considered. In this case, the prevention measures of the pandemic might effect on service standard, consumption atmosphere, and convenience of the guests. In order to maintain the service quality and guest satisfaction, it is necessary to develop their form of services at all time and focus on guests hygienic and safety, however, few of them can achieve the ultimate objective. Therefore, this research tends to suggest the improvement guidelines for the service quality of food and beverage service. This research is interested to study the service quality of food and beverage in three hotels of three provinces in Thailand related to prevention measures: Bangkok, Chiang Mai, and Phuket. Data from this study can reveal the service quality of food and beverage service in hotel, which can be used as a guideline to reach global standards. In addition, the results of this research could be used as a teaching model for students in the field of hotel studies.

THE AIM OF STUDY

This research aims to study the service quality of food and beverage service in hotel which related to COVID-19 preventive measures, and to propose the improvement guidelines for the service quality of food and beverage service in hotel.

METHODOLOGY

This research investigated the quality of service in food and beverage service in three international hotels chain in Bangkok, Chiang Mai, and Phuket. Questionnaires and in-depth interview were used for data collecting. The 400 questionnaires were distributed to the hotel guests and only 280 were returned. In-depth interview was used to interview three top management of the hotel. The simple random sampling method was used for this study. The independent variables in this research were gender, age, educational level, occupation, income and marital status. The modified questionnaires were used to measure service quality and guest satisfaction, including amenities, service, attentiveness, responsibility, reliability and circumspection which related to COVID-19 preventive measures. To analyze the international service standards of food and beverage service, triangulation research such as quantitative, qualitative and survey are employed. IOC was used to test the content validity introduced and evaluated by three professionals. The reliability of the questionnaires was analyzed by Cronbach's coefficient alpha with the range between 0.70 for the content of service quality and 1.0 for the content of guest behavior.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Corona virus 2019, or COVID-19, is a virus that can cause respiratory disease after infection. It may have no symptoms, or it may have symptoms ranging from mild, similar to the common cold, or may cause severe pneumonia and death. It enters people through coughing, sneezing, direct contact with secretions such as saliva so there are three entrances to be aware of 1) do not rub the eyes. The eyes have an eye drainage channel that pathogens can pass through 2) do picking up the nose, the pathogens can enter through the nasal cavity and enter the respiratory tract, and 3) do not touch the mouth. The mouth is a common channel through which germs can enter the respiratory tract (Department of Disease Control, 2020). Practice for COVID-19 protection 1) Daily temperature measurement must not exceed 37.5 degrees Celsius 2) Wash hands with water and bleach soap or alcohol gel 3) Cover nose with a tissue every time cough and sneeze. Leave the tissue in a plastic bag, seal the bag tightly, and clean hands immediately 4) If meeting with other people is necessary, use a mask, keep a distance of not less than 1-2 meters and take as short as possible 5) The secretion of waste such as a mask, tissue paper, is separated by a double-layer garbage bag, topped with bleach and tightened with bleach before throwing away 6) Clean the toilet and sink after use, and 7) Abstain from outdoor activities, stop work, stop studying, or do not go to the community and use public transport (Department of Disease Control, 2020).

The hotel industry is a business that provides activities such as accommodation, food and beverage and recreation for leisure travelers and business purposes. It consists of guest rooms, food & beverage, and the service according to the guests' requirement with the returned benefit to the hotel owners. In this pandemic situation, hotels have been affected directly. Therefore, the preventive measures should be considered as the guidelines for

hotel service application. The food and beverage department must satisfy hotel guests mentally and physically by providing happiness and satisfaction during their consumption (Pimonsompong,2007). Food safety and hygienic are the main idea for service providing. This supports the idea that guest expectations and perceptions are indicators of good service quality(Suksutdhi, 2020, Kandampully,2006; King and Cichy,2005).The service in the hotel is a presentation of activities for benefit and happiness that are sold together with products.The product can be divided into two categories: tangible product, and intangible product whichcannot be separated, uncertain, difficult for standardizing, and cannot be stored (Samerjai,2002) Hotel service refers to continuous, accurate, and flexibility. In addition, service is an activity to facilitate the guests and generate profit for the hotel. Hence, hotel marketers try to study guest behavior in order to plan marketing to meet their purchasing decisions.Three factors that influence the guest decisions are culture, social, and personal factors with the different type of guest, leisure and business travelers.Purchasing decisions aware of their need are criticize by searching, evaluation, change, purchasing decisions, and post-purchase behavior(Lancaster, 2005).

The experts such as Parasuraman,Berry& Zeithaml(1990), Phungnga(2010) and Zineldin(1996) have a consistent mention of service quality that guests will rate or satisfy the overall service excellence based on the comparison between expectations and the perceived quality of performance of the actual service received. Hence, the difference between the level of expectation and the level of perception of the guest is a measure of the service quality that brings to the guest satisfaction, impression, and value for money.The expertsalso have classified the level of hotel service quality in five areas: 1) Reliability is the service that meets the commitment given to the guest 2) Assurance, is to create confidence in the service and meet the needs of the guest 3) Responsiveness; it must be willing to serve promptly, indicating full attention and care, 4) Empathyshould be given to customers thoroughly, taking the best interest of the customer as a priority, and 5) Tangibles, physical appearance and facilities.Service quality measurement can be set as a standard as a guideline for service quality management, as it is an important factor affecting the satisfaction of the hotel and accommodation businesses(Kingand Cichy, 2005). Therefore, measuring the level of service quality determines the strategy of operators to develop better quality services.

RESULT

The results showed that 60.7% of the respondents were foreigners and 71.8% were male, 33.6% of the age of 31 to 40 years old, the majority had a bachelor's degree, 48.6% worked in the private sector. 44.6 % have a salary of more than 50,000 baht, 47.1% are married and 58.6% are married.Most of them reported that the highest agreement on the service quality on five aspects; the place of service, attention, reliability, circumspection related to COVID-19 preventive measures averaged score at4.29 in customer satisfaction. Customers over 60 years old reported very high agreement, while

other groups reported score 3.76. Customers reported no statistically significant difference in service standards for the three hotels at 0.05. However, according to One-way ANOVA, the statistical significance level was 0.05 on customer behavior and satisfaction by age, educational level, occupation, salary and marital status. In-depth interviews revealed that the hotel has its own basic characteristics of food and beverage service guidelines which related to COVID-19 preventive measures were: good work attitude of employees, patience, work under high pressures, able to cope well with unexpected problems, able to communicate well in English, have good communication with co-workers, and strictly follow food safety and hygiene procedures.

DISCUSSION

In conclusion, most of the guests of these three hotels are male foreigners between the ages of 31 and 40. They are graduates and work in the private sector and earn more than 50,000 baht per month. As the three hotels are luxury and the price is high, the majority of customers with high purchasing potential are found. Overall, the service quality of the three hotels in Bangkok, Chiang Mai, and Phuket are excellent. In terms of customer satisfaction with all three hotels related to COVID-19 preventive measures, the customer was highly satisfied.

SUGGESTIONS

From the study, recommendations regarding food and beverage services related to COVID-19 preventive measures are as follows:

1. Hotels should maintain this high quality standard and provide services that focus on their customers' safety in order to reflect their efficiency and should have regular staff training, so professional service will help customers can feel more trust.
2. The quality of service of the reliability is good, which is lower than in other areas, so hotels should provide training and staff development to provide services that can create more credibility as it influences customers revisit decision.
3. As all three hotels have a high standard and good practice of service quality related to COVID-19 preventive measures, there should be collaboration between the hotel and the educational institution to provide students with the opportunity to gain quality professional experience in hotels to improve workers quality in the hotel industry to meet international standards.

FURTHER STUDY

1. Further study should be conducted with larger, more varied, and longer collection intervals. The questionnaire should focus on service procedures, including customer feedback, rather than service quality checks.
2. There should be a study on the same topic in different hotels sizes to understand the behavior of different groups of guest and to compare the

service standards of different hotel to develop a better quality of service.

3. The service behavior and other characteristics of hotel staff should be studied to identify strengths and weaknesses in order to develop their potential.

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