From Customer Satisfaction to Customer Delight: A New Trend in Hospitality Industry

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Abstract

Hospitality industry is an ever growing industry; this is supported by the inflow of tourists’ figures from different parts of the world. This industry is extremely competitive as many trend setting hotels have made their entry in different parts of the world, thanks to the concept of globalization. This amount of competition does not allow any organization in the industry to be satisfied simply with customer satisfaction and this has been replaced with the more vibrant concept of customer delight. This paper elaborates on how the hospitality industry has moved over the period of time and is struck with the concept of customer delight. Delight has its impact on the firm’s financial statements as well, because it directly leads to customer loyalty. Customer loyalty is the outcome of customer delight and customer loyalty is the need of every firm for its successful operation. Hospitality industry is growing exponentially with the rate of 8% plus and therefore its imperative for every firm not just to generate new customers but also to retain them. Customer delight if maintained for a considerable period leads to the generation of goodwill which in turn increases the Brand value of the firm in hospitality industry.

Keywords: Customer Delight, Customer Satisfaction, Customer Loyalty and Hospitality Industry.
1. Introduction

Customer satisfaction is the perception of the customers towards the performance of the firm, based on the expectation and the perception gap the firm can analyse the degree of variation required to satisfy the customers in terms of the services. Hence it can be accepted as a parameter for improving the performance of the firm. But the current scenario does not just demand a parameter for measurement of the performance but requires a little more effort from the side of the managers and the firm itself. This is validated by the fact that most of the firms are in the constant business of strategizing to stand at an edge over their competitors. Market scanning and screening is an essential tool for assessing where one stands in the race. But those who actually understand the trend have realized that market has moved far ahead of the time where concepts like customer satisfaction were used. To delight guests, one must depart from the confines of hotel lobbies and rooms and take a journey into the minds of guests. With most of the firms’ stricking the bear minimum level of satisfaction one needs to give something extra to the customers, something more than just what is expected. That little extra brings in the delight factor. Delight determines the amount of extra efforts taken by the firms. “Customer delight involves going beyond satisfaction to delivering what can be best described as a pleasurable experience for the client”. Patterson (1997). Delight therefore entails a stronger emotion and a different physiological state than satisfaction.

As far as the hospitality industry of the world is concerned there are specific standards meant to be maintained by the firms that desire to be in a certain cadre in the industry. Therefore there would not be any difference if the firms stick to those bear minimum standards. The need is to challenge one’s own performance and improve it with constant efforts. Customer delight has to be the prime aim of the hospitality firms. Hospitality industry as such is known for its direct link with customers and it’s a known fact that this is the only industry to refer to them as the guests not the customers or the clients. With this distinction one can just not do without treating them as god. The valued association with these guests can not just fetch more customers but also generate a word of mouth publicity useful for the enhancement of the firms business. The customer delight is the primary factor responsible for the generation of customer loyalty factor, because the delighted customers only become the loyal ones.

In the hospitality industry interest in the subject of customer delight has recently emerged (Torres and Kline, 2006; Crotts and Magnini, 2010; Magnini et al., 2011). The hospitality industry has evolved as the primary industry of the world for the fact that it assists the second largest industry and that is the tourism industry. With the concepts like the sustainable tourism and eco tourism the hospitality industry has also been give new avenues for growth. The concept of globalisation which allows an equal opportunity to all the firms in the world to share a common platform, makes it even more indispensable for the firms to satisfy the end users to an extent that they become delighted and then loyal in future. this approach also back up the financial health of the firm which is bound to improve for the simple reason not enough resources will be used in developing new customers.
The customer loyalty works on the construct of:

- Generating a wow reaction
- Delivery of unexpected results
- Personal touch feeling
- Makes the customer feel valued
- Appear genuine
- First contact point

Unexpected positive service brings in a feeling which is magnificent and can be termed as wow. In this course of action, many activities are involved like a proper ambience, greetings, welcome, staff behaviour, security, etc. But many a times it could be brought by a simple gesture of appeasing them, by sending a subtle message through services— that you are important! Personal touch feeling is when guest gets to know that he is being treated as the king on an individual basis. When you value someone you would never want to miss an opportunity to make him feel important and that is how the guest in hospitality should be treated and this could be a delight factor. Of course not every demand can be met therefore it is the responsibility of the service provider to make an attempt to explain how interested he is in sorting out the problem area and meet the demand thereafter. To be genuine, try to associate with the guest by sharing a common platform and reporting exactly what can be delivered. There are special efforts taken on the part of the people from the industry to make the first impression on the guest because this is what will stay on with him forever.

2. Conclusion
Hospitality industry rests on the concept of delivering the best service possible to the guest or the client and if they fail to attempt, there can be serious implications because most of the market players have risen above the concept of satisfaction and are adamant in delivering services that may surprise the guest and bring about a feeling that he may live up with for a longer period. This length of the period will determine whether the customer would be loyal or not. There are several big wheels in the market and their presence has made it mandatory for every player or firm to be exceptionally efficient in service performance. If the customer is delighted and contended he would even be loyal to the firm in a longer course. This concept of customer loyalty is the outcome of customer delight.

Reference


