

WHAT ARE THE KEY DIMENSIONS OF RESTAURANT SERVICE QUALITY? AN EMPIRICAL STUDY IN THE CITY RESTAURANT SETTINGS

UDC 519.2:640.432

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Received 15 March 2011
Revised 21 April 2011
3 May 2011

Abstract

As customers are more exposed to different types of restaurant settings, they developed a complex set of attributes for selecting a restaurant for their excellent dining experience. The first competition, customers' changing lifestyles and growing desires are features that shape restaurant marketplace. Thus, restaurant managers should be prepared to meet these challenges. One approach in gaining competitive advantages and ensuring sustainable business performance is to focus on service quality.

The main purpose of this study is to empirically investigate service quality in Croatian city restaurant settings. The main goals are to assess restaurant customers' expectations and perceptions and to identify main dimensions of perceived and expected city restaurant service quality.

The data were collected using self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed in accordance with Stevens et al. (1995) and Andaleeb and Conway's (2006) research. It contained seven aspects of restaurant service, namely tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, price and satisfaction. The empirical research was conducted in March and April of 2010. Questionnaires were distributed in 31 restaurant settings in city of Rijeka. In order to meet study goals, descriptive, bivariate (t-test) and multivariate (exploratory factor analysis and reliability analysis) statistical analyses were conducted.

The sample contained both domestic and international restaurant customers. The findings imply that for the majority of service attributes customers' expectations scores are higher than their perceptions scores. The study also identified five factors that best explained expected service quality and eight factors that best explained perceived service quality in the city restaurants.

Keywords Restaurant service quality, Service quality dimensions, SERVQUAL, DINESERV, Statistical analysis