REVIVAL MEASURES TO REGAIN MONUMENTAL IMAGE & BUSINESS OF GOOD OLD HOTELS IN ONGOLE – A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Hotel business in India is in a growth stage with the development in the economy and income of the people. To succeed in the hotel business in the ever increasing competition one needs to provide the better food, variety, uniqueness, value for money, many more along with service quality. The present study is about once good hotels in Ongole city of Andhra Pradesh established in 1970's and 80's which are known for doing good business, became land mark to that particular place. This once good old hotels lost its charm and business with the emergence of new players, reasons for the same are studied by administering SERVQUAL and other factors. From the study it came to know that there is a wide gap between customers' expectations and perceptions who visit these hotels. The author has given suggestions relating to how to improve the business of this good old hotels.

Key words: Good old hotels, service quality (SERVQUAL), Tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy

1. Introduction to Service Industry and Hotel Business in India

The services sector is the dominant sector in India's GDP (India, 2016). It has attracted substantial foreign investment flows, contributed significantly to exports as well as provided large-scale employment (India, 2016). India's services sector covers a wide variety of activities such as trade, transport, hotel and restaurants, storage and communication, financing, insurance, business services, real estate, social, social & personal services, and services associated with construction. India is one among the top tourist destinations of the world and one of the upcoming economies (Bajpai, 2016). These factors make it the leading options when it comes to the hospitality business. India has great diversity in terms of its regions and cultures and there are plenty of man-made and natural resources. Its cities, towns and hill stations are well connected in terms of transportation options and thus attract tourists from all over the world. This means that there are plenty of opportunities to achieve success as far as new hotels in India are concerned. For the success and growth in hotel business, many factors need to be considered like unique features, food quality, better service, price, value for money, location, brand name and many more. One among all the factors which is considered to be a key factor for the success of hotel business is service quality.

2. Review of Literature

Service quality is recognized as very important factor leading to the successful performance of customer-focused business. Service quality applied in a variety of service industries represents an important issue to academic researchers and managers. Service quality is very difficult for the consumer to evaluate than product quality, because of the lack of material evidence associated with services (Bojanic, 1994). Therefore, a service firm needs systematic, standardized, and qualitative measurement to assess performance. Service quality is defined as "an assessment of how well a delivered service conforms to the client's expectations. Service business operators often assess the service quality provided to their customers in order to improve their service, to quickly identify problems and to better assess client satisfaction." Service quality leads to higher profitability for a firm (Gundersen, 1996) and customer satisfaction (Oliver, 1997), managers invest tremendous effort to measure and improve the service quality in their business.

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As customers visit different types of hotels and restaurants they have developed a set of attributes for selecting a hotel for their excellent dining experience. Similar studies on customer expectations and service quality perception in a food-service industry have found out certain important attributes such as food quality, price, service, value of money, brand name, location and image (Hau-siu Chow. et al., 2007). A variety of measurement tools and techcniques exist for assessing service quaility. One of the popular and widely used is the SERVQUAL(service quaility) instrument. In resturant/hotel settings, service quality is measured with an adapted version of SERVUQL, called DINESERVE (Stevens, 1995). For the present study a modified version of DINESERVE is applied and the study is divided in to several sections. Firstly a brief review of service quality measurement in hotel industry. Next about the profile of ongole city and hotel business in ongole city, followed by rationale for the study, methodology, findings and implications of the study. Finally, the conclusion with main research findings, are described.

3. Introduction to Hotel Business in Ongole

Ongole is the head quarter of Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh and one of the largest city with a total population around 4.3 lacks (review, 2016). Its strategic location in Andhra Pradesh map and rich natural resources available had become a preferred destination for various industrialists, business centers leading to establishment of various hotels and restaurants. In ongole city around 150 hotels of all types were been setup and operated. Among them few are very old, big in size, having rich heritage and established in 1970s.

Sipping morning coffee in 'central café' hotel which is at old market in Ongole city, Andhra Pradesh is a usual practice for majority of the office going people and many small business people for a long time. For many people having a lunch at Hindustan Hotel, which is in the trunk road of Ongole city, is a prestigious habit in the past. Mani's café near Kalakshethram had

attracted crowds for several decades. It is a noted thing that central café hotel in court center is noted for political meetings and the centre turned be a land mark for making important political decisions, as all the political parties prefer to organize a public meeting in that hotel. Similarly, tea at Manasa hotel is familiar for several decades. All the hotels used to provide the choicest food with each hotel famous for one dish or other. There are many such hotels established during the 70s and 80s which gained the prominence since their establishments. These hotels stood as a land mark in the city for many years.

In a country like India many use the word hotel in conversation when they are simply going out to have dinner or lunch at a restaurant. Most would be surprised to see signboards of roadside eating joints claiming to be hotels (olivia, 2011). In the present research, for the sake of simplicity and easy understanding the word hotel have been used, as there is a less difference between Hotel and Restaurant at rural and semi-urban areas in India. **Good old hotels** have been coined because, the above said hotels in Ongole, were considered to be doing good business for so many years and many had become land mark to that place.

4. Rationale of The Study

Emergence of Fast Food Centers

India's population stands around 1.3 billion among them 356 million people are within the age group of 10 to 24 years (guide, 2016). With more young people entering the work force daily, growth in the economy, a rising female work force, impact of western culture among growing Indian youth and mobility among customers, the traditionally different Indian market has become hungry for a more diverse menu. This has resulted to the emergence of many fast food centers in many parts of Andhra Pradesh. CNC, OFC, KFC, BFC has entered into the Ongole market in a big way to attract the young generation customers with wide variety of items in its menu list. It is estimated that the

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total fast food business in India will be around $1.12 billion according to Economic Intelligence unit (Gauba, 2015). The fast food centers in Ongole despite dominated homegrown business in the city, introduced its 30 – minute delivery. Fast food centers once hesitant to try business in Ongole, had brought sea change in the culture of the people (especially young generation) in Ongole city. By creating a very attractive look and ambiance, this centers could able to pull the crowd and thus able to generate business and make it as only option among the young generation youth in Ongole town as far as getting out and eating is concerned.

5. Statement of the Problem

People are deprived of such good old hotels which stood as a land mark in the city for several decades. For many old people it is very difficult to digest that many of the old hotels have closed down for one or the other reason. With the mushrooming of fast food culture and establishment of luxury star rating hotels with rich look, better amenities and services the existing old ones have lost its business to them. Its business turnover had decreased and they had lost its charm and vigor. Eighty percent of the old hotels had vanished, many more are struggling to do stay in the business and still the centers are familiar with the names of the hotels like central café. The present study is intended to know about the expectations and perceptions of the people who visit the hotels for refreshments and for food in ongole city relating to food & service quality, price and to suggest measures for the improvement of the identity and business of the old hotels.

6. Research Methodology

The main purpose of the study is to empirically investigate service quality in good old hotels in ongole city and provide revival measures for the hotels to increase its business. The study examines the level of expectations and perceptions regarding quality of service

provided in the hotels. The research questions intended to answer is given below:

1. What is the level of customers' expectations & perceptions regarding food & service quality, price of the good old hotels in Ongole city?
2. What are the differences between expected and perceived service quality in the good old hotels in Ongole city?

In order to answer the above questions, research hypothesis is proposed and is given below:

H_1: There is a significant difference between expected and perceived service quality among customers visiting good old hotels.

H_2: The satisfaction level of the first time visitors to the good old hotels is very poor.

The expected and perceived service quality is measured on the basis of 35 hotel attributes, of which 29 (attributes representing five dimensions: Tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy) were adapted from the Stevens et al.(Stevens, 1995) study and nine other attributes representing two dimensions price, three dimensions about food quality and the remaining satisfaction were taken from Andaleeb and Conway's (Andaleeb, 2006) research. The questionnaires were administered among 208 respondents in 9 hotels of Ongole city, Andhra Pradesh. Respondents were first time visitors, regular and part time visitors to the hotel. Data was collected with the help of hotel staff at the convenience sampling method. Questionnaires were distributed to the customers who were shown willingness to participate in the research, after their dining experience (i.e., after the bill is paid). Data were analyzed using SPSS 19.0. In order to meet the research goals, descriptive, bivariate (paired t-test) statistical analyses were conducted. Through descriptive analysis the demographic profiles of the respondents were examined and the mean scores and standard deviation of the

scores relating to food & service quality, price expectations and perceptions of good old hotels customers were evaluated. The paired t-test was performed to know the significance differences between expected and perceived scores among the customers.

7. Scope of the Study

As it is very difficult to study all possible factors causing the debacle of good old hotels in Ongole, the present study will try to find out the customers' evaluation of their expectations relating to the food quality, price and service quality of the good old hotels of Ongole.

8. Findings of Research

From the demographic characteristics it can be seen that male respondents outnumbered female respondents visiting hotels in Ongole city. Most of the respondents are young and educated. Around 44% of customers previously visited the hotel at least once, indicating a degree of loyalty. Customers' expectations and perceptions are measured on a seven-point likert scale. The higher the score, higher the expectation and perception of hotel service. The results of statistical analysis (bivariate) are show in Table No.2. Comparing the research results of customers' expectations and perceptions of good old hotels service quality it can be concluded that the customers' expectations are higher than the customers' perceptions. The overall gap of 1.37 on customer satisfaction scale indicating a low level of service quality. It was observed from the above results that the customers' expectations are exceedingly more than the perceptions of the customers, all the 38 negative gaps indicate that the customers are no way happy with the quality of service, price and food quality of the good old hotels and there is a much room for improvement. The highest price gap was identified in price (2.7) and the lowest in empathy towards customers (1.87). There is a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between expectations and perceptions of the people visiting the good old hotels, thus accepting the H_1. And the first time visitors of the hotel are not all satisfied with the quality of food, price and service of the good old hotels ($p < 0.05$) H_2 is statistically significant.

9. Implications of Study

The key contribution of this study is that it provides a more comprehensive reflection of the reasons for the decrease in the business of the good old hotels in Ongole. From the research findings we can analyze the causes for the poor business of these hotels. Poor food & service quality, higher price are considered to be the causes for the poor performance of the once good hotels and now struggling to stay in the competition. Though these hotels are having a locational advantage and reputation which was built through years, it is lagging in many aspects with competitors of today. Few changes if it initiate will help these hotels to further its reputation and business in the days to come. Firstly, hotel managers spend resources by renovating the premises, ambiance in order to give a modern look, as it has to change with the time with the change in the people's taste and preferences. Since the resources and capital are limited, these hotels are not available to spend more extra resources on satisfaction improvement. However, our results could give hotel management some hints on improving customer satisfaction with limited resources. For example, we find physical facilities, cleanliness are a matter of concern in these hotels and this can be improved through measures like simple decorative wall paining, comfortable chairs, fans at least covering two tables, colored floor mats, neat wash basin with hand wash.

Second, the results of this study show that customers were dissatisfied with the performance of hotel staff, such as staff attitudes toward customers, food parcel speed and carelessness in housekeeping. Ensuring outstanding staff performance is thus the key element hotels should focus on to improve customer satisfaction. Hotels should adopt the correct attitude and continue training their staff

to meet the different needs of customers, through proper dress code with aprons, caps and gloves can improve the image of the hotel. The above discussed things will not cost much to the hotel but will improve the image its image among the customers.

Thirdly should create an identity by providing quality and unique taste which could attract customers and retain them for a long time like Alluraiah Neethi Mittaiah, Panthulu Mess in Ongole, which it known for its un matching taste for years. Good old hotels should try to reach the expectations of the customers by providing value for money.

10. Conclusion

Service quality is very important for any organization; through better service to the customers, organizations attain long term sustainability. Good old hotels in Ongole, which has a location advantage and brand image, should focus on product and service quality to with stand from the ever increasing competition. A wide gap between customers' expectations and perception should be addressed rightly, to attain customer satisfaction. Old hotels should focus on the measures which can build the image of the customers like slight renovation of the interiors and training of the staff. Through which it they can attain customer satisfaction through better service quality.

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Table 1- Demographic profile of the respondents (N=208)

Items	Percentage	Items	Percentage
Gender		Age	
Male	190	16-30	95
Female	18	31-45	66
		Above 45	47
Educational status		Number of previous visits to Hotels	
Educated	169		
Un educated	39	Never	116
		Once	31
		Twice or more	61

Source: Primary data

Table 2 - Customers' expectations and perceptions relating to service quality, price & food quality in good old hotels

Attributes	Expectations(a)		Perceptions(b)			
	Mean	S D	Mean	S D	Gap	t-value
V1 – Visually attractive parking areas and building exteriors	5.52	1.32	2.81	1.68	2.71	5.935*
V2 – Visually attractive dining area.	5.21	1.06	3.62	1.37	1.59	4.698*
V3 – Clean, neat and appropriately dressed staff	5.77	0.61	4.28	1.14	1.49	4.455*
V4 – Hotel's décor typical of its image and price range	6.24	0.9	4.23	1.18	2.01	5.045*
V5 – Easily readable menu.	6.45	0.82	4.28	1.15	2.17	4.945*
V6 – Visually attractive menu.	5.95	1.23	3.91	1.36	2.04	4.126*
V7 – Comfortable seats in the dining room	6.36	0.32	3.97	1.33	2.39	4.253*
V8 – Clean rest rooms.	6.73	0.74	3.88	1.19	2.85	5.651*
V 9 – Clean dining areas.	6.77	0.47	4.07	1.01	2.7	5.173*
V10 – Comfortable seats in the waiting hall	6.32	0.84	3.6	1.38	2.72	6.016*
MEAN TANGIBLES	**6.13**		**3.87**		**2.26**	
V11 – Service in the promised time.	6.22	0.95	4.04	1.01	2.18	3.779*
V12 – Quick correction of wrong service.	6.45	0.74	3.91	1.15	2.54	5.437*
V13 – Dependable and consistent restaurant	6.61	0.61	4.21	1.04	2.4	4.821*
V14 – Accurate bill.	6.91	0.24	4.68	0.94	2.23	4.140*
V15 – Error-free served order (food)	6.82	0.4	4.74	0.94	2.08	4.281*
MEAN RELIABILITY	**6.6**		**4.29**		**2.31**	
V16 – Maintaining speed and quality of service during busy times	6.08	0.92	3.22	1.38	2.86	5.411*
V17 – Provision of prompt service.	6.34	0.7	3.91	1.89	2.43	4.816*
V18 – Extra effort for handling special requests	5.89	1.03	3.47	1.52	2.42	3.695*
MEAN RESPONSIVENESS	**6.1**		**3.53**		**2.57**	
V19 – Employees can answer questions completely	6.33	0.85	3.9	1.25	2.43	4.826*
V20 – Comfortable and confident feeling.	6.53	0.69	3.98	1.26	2.55	5.651*
V21 – Staff provide information about menu items, their ingredients and methods of preparation	6.32	0.75	4.03	1.19	2.29	3.580*
V22 – Feeling safe.	5.98	1.15	4.14	1.06	1.84	2.324*

V23 – Anticipation of customers' individual attention	6.46	0.76	3.62	1.18	2.84	4.899*
V24 – Hotel supports the employees.	5.95	0.7	3.6	1.24	2.35	3.922*
MEAN ASSURANCE	**6.26**		**3.94**		**2.32**	
V25 – Employees provide individual attention	5.27	1.16	3.48	1.4	1.79	2.937*
V26 – Special feeling.	4.28	1.58	3.01	1.85	1.27	2.192*
V27 – Anticipation of customers' individual needs and wants	5.07	1.74	2.5	1.98	2.57	4.292*
V28 – Sympathetic and reassuring employees	6.47	1.63	5.13	1.78	1.34	2.051*
V29 – Customers' best interests at heart.	4.06	0.63	3.74	1.3	0.32	0.146*
MEAN EMPATHY	**5.03**		**3.17**		**1.86**	
V30 – Expensive food items.	4.09	1.72	3.57	1.75	0.52	1.028*
V31 – Paying more than planned.	5.55	1.78	4.66	1.96	0.89	1.037*
MEAN PRICE	**4.82**		**2.12**		**2.7**	
V32 -Taste of the food served	6.40	0.86	4.26	1.14	2.14	4.555*
V33 -Uniqueness in the taste of food served	5.91	1.26	3.94	1.33	1.97	2.196*
V34 - Consistency of the taste	6.35	0.39	3.99	1.39	2.36	3.273*
MEAN FOOD QUALITY	**6.22**		**4.06**		**2.15**	
V35 – Overall satisfaction with dining experience	5.65	1.1	4.02	1.4	1.63	1.851*
V36 – Returning to the hotel	5.65	1.12	4.06	1.52	1.59	1.548*
V37 – Recommending the hotels to others	5.46	1.9	4.01	1.55	1.45	1.265*
V38 – Excellent quality of service.	4.65	1.31	3.85	1.54	0.8	1.015*
MEAN SATISFACTION	**5.35**		**3.985**		**1.37**	
First time visitors satisfaction	6.02		3.985		2.03	3.123*
Part time visitors satisfaction	5.39		3.95		1.44	1.431*
Regular visitors satisfaction	4.64		4.03		0.61	0.431*

Note: a - Expectations mean ranges from 1 to 7; b - Perceptions mean ranges from 1 to 7; SD – standard deviation;

*t-test (2-tailed Sig.) $p < 0.05$

Source: Primary source

DEALING WITH SUICIDAL TENDENCIES AMONG STUDENTS IN ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The opportunity to pursue a higher education, enter adulthood with its added responsibilities and freedoms and participation in student life can be an exciting time. However, students may experience a significant degree of stress as the result of these same developmental opportunities. Research in the past has shown that college students report a higher rate of suicidal ideation than non-college students; therefore, becoming knowledgeable about the concept of suicide is essential when working with college students. Over the past few decades, suicide has become the second leading cause of death in academic institutions. The actual act of suicide is a complex behaviour that is generally not a response to a single event but a series of events, feelings and thoughts that place an individual at risk for suicidal behaviour. College students who are at risk for suicide appear to share a number of risk factors. Some of the more common risk factors associated with suicide includes depression, loneliness, stress and hopelessness. Suicide prevention is an umbrella term for the collective efforts of local NGO's, Professional Psychologists and related professionals to reduce the incidence of suicide through prevention and proactive measures. This proposal is an attempt to gather in-depth information about the suicide in respect of its nature and extent, related attitude and behaviour in order to assess what role can mental health counsellor play in preventing suicides in our country.

Key words: Suicide, Tendency, Depression, Students, Academic Institutions, Psychology

1. Suicide from Different Perspectives

"Why people wish to die by suicide?" Sigmund Freud, Father of Psychoanalysis, and his followers answered this question through the concept of 'death instinct' or 'Thanatos'. His student Karl Menninger elaborated the concept of a death instinct, which he viewed as being in constant conflict with the opposing force of the life instinct, or Eros. According to Menninger (1938), there is an inherent tendency toward self-destruction that may, when not sufficiently counterbalanced by the life instincts, result in both direct and indirect self-destructive behaviour.

Maurice Farber (1968), a psychologist, proposed that the tendency to commit suicide is a function of the extent of the threat to acceptable life conditions experienced by the individual, the individual's sense of competence, and therefore the individual's degree of hope.

Aaron Beck and his associates (1974) showed that hopelessness is one component of the syndrome of depression and is a much more powerful predictor of subsequent suicidal behaviour than other components of the syndrome.

Edwin Shneidman (1996), the founder of the American Association of Suicidology, proposed