

Role of Hotel Management in Attracting More Tourists: A Case Study of Hotels in Isfahan, Iran

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Abstract— This research is an attempt to investigate the role the hotel's management plays in attracting more tourists. This study, an applied research, employed a combination of library, field and survey methodologies for data collection. Questionnaires were the primary tools for data collection, prepared and administered following a number of library research, study of similar questionnaires and inclusion of the desired parameters. Their reliability and validity were tested in the next step. The statistical population included senior managers of Isfahan's province hotels that were studied by Isfahan's organization for cultural heritage, handicraft and tourism in 2013-2014. The sampling method was simple random sampling. The results indicated that the hotel's management could be effective in attracting more tourists in a variety of ways, the most important of which revealed to be efforts to establish effective communication with customers, utilization of the experience gained from successful hotels and focusing on actual needs of customers. Also, the results of the t-test showed that there was a significant gap between expectations and perceptions of hotel's managers regarding the roles hotels' management may play in attraction of tourist at a confidence level of 95. Of these roles, collective participation for offering services to customers, exact definition of expected performance standards to improve services and designing and formulation of an appropriate monitoring system to improve the services pose most serious challenges to attraction of tourists for which suitable solutions should be formulated.

Keywords— Hotel's Management, Attraction, Tourists, Isfahan.

1. Introduction

World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines tourism as the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes [1]. Tourism has been defined elsewhere as “the sum of the phenomena and relationships arising from the interaction of tourists, business suppliers, host governments and host communities in the process of attracting and hosting Tourism could be an interesting viable option for emerging markets as it poses far less challenges for practice compared with other industries. It may be a catalyst for other sectors due to its numerous connections with almost every economic sector of the country [2].

Tourism has a huge contribution to mutual interplay and development of stronger ties between countries and nations. Sightseeing, touring and visiting in its different shapes will produce higher and stronger understanding between different people and communities and fair distribution of wealth all over a country [3].

Tourism is a dynamic, diverse, big and “clean” industry and a component of sustainable development in national economy. Tourism is unique in the sense it is the sole industry with the potential to create jobs and chances for all walks of life, from

the lowest classes of a society to senior managers of hotels, investors and entrepreneurs. Employment multiplication coefficient is the highest one in this industry as it creates seven indirect jobs for each direct job. With 200 million practitioners (8% of the total employment in the world) and annual cash flow of about 5.4 trillion USD, tourism has turned into the biggest and most varied global industry, one of five major sources of revenues over 150 countries and the first in 60 countries. The number of tourists reached 760 million in 2004 from 25 million in 1950s and it is estimated to reach a landmark 1.56 by 2020, a fact that has prompted every country to grasp the opportunity and the associated benefits to provide relative well-being and social support for present and future [4].

Considering the significance attached to this industry, numerous researches have been conducted as to what attracts tourist. This study attempts to study and contemplate over the roles the management of the hotel can play to attract higher number of tourists. Then the results could be used to offer some insights and proposals to those involved in the industry.

For this, the researchers interviewed senior managers of Isfahan's hotels as a hot spot of tourism in Iran. It should be noted that Isfahan city as the provincial capital of Isfahan province is a renowned center for tourism thanks to its unique historic value and invaluable religious and cultural monuments which have entitled Isfahan the *cultural capital* of the middle east and the Islamic world. It also should be noted that in addition to its outstanding status as a tourism hub, it has major contributions at provincial and national levels to industry and agriculture of the country. These characteristics together with its touristic attractions have represented Isfahan as a multifunctional city [5].

2. Significance of the Study

Tourism is a major source of income for the government and direct and indirect creation of jobs across the world [1]. Hotels as a form of lodging reflect varying needs and tastes of visitors [6]. Study and analysis of those offering services in hotels (managers and staff) is important as customers' overall satisfaction could influence higher or lower future demands for a hotel's services. It is highly likely that those customers leaving with satisfaction recommend the hotel to others which is the cheapest and most influential way of marketing [7]. Customers' satisfaction will usually lead to higher customer retention, loyalty and attraction rate which in turn contribute to achievement of economic goals such as higher profits and more demands for services. As a result, long-term economic success and tourists' satisfaction are positively correlated [8]. The present study attempts to answer this question: how hotel's managers may influence the attraction of tourists?

3. Review of Literature and Presentation of Theoretical Framework of the Research

Gholipour in his research "prioritization of factors influencing marketing of hotels using Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP)" suggests that price was the most influential factor on satisfaction of customers [6].

Fathi holds that planning is an indispensable part of tourism management [9]. A total of 8 hotels were selected and questionnaires were handed out to the staff and managers.

In their article "*factors affecting the development of tourism in Iran*", Taghavi and Gholipour Soleymani, studying the period between 1996 and 2007, found out that variables related to the number of rooms, past foreign currency income, floating exchange rate of foreign currencies and touring agencies were significant and their marked effects were expected [10]. Researchers interviewed the managers of the best hotels in Iran.

Bhatnagar et al introduced strategic role of HR as an innovative tool for performance management after giving an account of the implementation of a Balanced Score card approach in Sheraton hotel of India [11]. Liang and Hou studied the strategy maps of some chain hotels in Singapore and proposed a number of dimensions as appropriate indicators for definition of strategies [12].

Namazi and Nazemi investigated the strategy maps of Homa group of hotels to see the way they influenced the attraction of tourists [13]. Their findings indicate that profit margin index as the financial dimension, occupancy rates of rooms and restaurants as customer care dimension, maintenance costs of the rooms as the internal process dimension and staff training as the development dimension must be considered while preparing strategy maps.

4. Research Questions and hypotheses

The Questions:

What are the different roles that managers of hotels could play to attract more tourists from the perspective of managers of Isfahan's hotels?

The Hypothesis:

There is a significant gap between the perceptions and expectations of the managers of Isfahan hotels regarding their different roles that could affect the attraction of tourists.

5. Materials and Methodology

5.1. Methodology

This study employed a combination of library, field and survey methodologies for data collection. Library research is primarily used for review of literature and field method is used to survey the impressions and ideas of the subjects. Library research ensures taking the right path, field method will inject accuracy into the research and surveying will allow for testing the hypothesis and thus were picked to form the quantitative research strategy. The research was conducted in the time period of late September 2014 to late May 2015.

5.2. Research Instrument

Likert 5-point scale questionnaires were used for data collection, prepared and administered following a number of library research, study of similar questionnaires and inclusion of the desired parameters (Table 1). Their reliability and

validity were tested in the next step. Questionnaires had 21 items (2-point perception-expectation questions to compare the current situation and the ideals).

5 experts and specialists were asked to answer the 2-point questionnaires (highly effective vs. low-effective) to test the validity of the items. Their answers were then modified and the questionnaires were approved. Cronbach’s alpha was employed to measure the reliability of the items. For this, 30 preliminary questionnaires were administered, the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of which revealed to be 0.875 that indicate high reliability of the measurement instrument.

5.3. Statistical Population, Statistical Sample and Sampling Method

The statistical population included senior managers of Isfahan’s province hotels that were studied by Isfahan’s organization for cultural heritage, handicraft and tourism in 2013-2014 (79 hotels). The sampling method was simple random sampling. Sampling was administered using Cochran’s formula due to time limitations for conducting the research: To determine the variance of this formula, an initial 30-subject sample was used. 0.721 was obtained after ignoring the standard deviation. Therefore, 62 subjects were selected. The sampling method was simple random sampling

6. Findings

After online or in person administration of 79 questionnaires (based on the statistical sample), a final 61 valid questionnaires (77%) were returned based on which later analyses would be performed.

6.1. Tests of Significance

In this part, a test of significance was administered for 21 items of the questionnaire at a confidence level of 95. Table 2 shows the results of this test: rejecting the hypothesis $\leq 3: H_0 \mu > 3: H_1$: confirming the hypothesis. As Table 2 shows, the item 11 was not significant and thus was removed from the analysis.

6.2. Rankings of Different Roles of the Managers that Affect the Attraction of More Tourists

Fuzzy TOPSIS was employed to rank the different roles of the managers that affect the attraction of more tourists. The results revealed the highest-ranked factors as below:

- i. Efforts to establish effective communication with customers
- ii. Utilization of the experience gained from successful hotels
- iii. Focusing on the actual needs of customers
- iv. Making plans to develop the potentials of the staff of hotels

6.3. Investigation and Analysis of the Hypothesis

To answer the research hypothesis, gap analysis was performed. A gap analysis is a method of assessing the differences between the current situations (perceptions) and the ideal scenario (expected) and making subsequent decisions. H_0 and H_1 hypotheses are answered as follows:

H_0 . There is no significant gap between expectations and perceptions of hotel managers of Isfahan for different roles the managers could play that affect the attraction of more tourists

H_1 . There is as significant gap between expectations and perceptions of hotel managers of Isfahan for different roles the managers could play that affect the attraction of more tourists

To answer statistical hypotheses, first, normality of the data was tested via Kolmogorov–Smirnov test (K–S test or KS test). The results indicated that the data follow normal distribution at a confidence level of 95%. Paired Samples parametric test was administered to calculate the critical values and the statistic given the normality of the data. Table 3 presents the results which indicate the significance of H_1 hypothesis and rejection of H_0 at a confidence level of 95. At this level of confidence, there is as significant gap between expectations and perceptions of hotel managers of Isfahan for different roles the managers could play that affect the attraction of more tourists

Table2. Results of the Tests of Significance of Different Roles of the Managers that Affect the Attraction of More Tourists

Item	t-test		Confidence Level of 95 %	
	t-test	df	Significance Level	Final Result
1	4.225	59	0.00	Confirmation of H1
2	2.015	59	0.05	Confirmation of H1
3	3.72	59	0.001	Confirmation of H1
4	3.59	59	0.001	Confirmation of H1
5	1.91	59	0.062	Confirmation of H1
6	2.746	59	0.008	Confirmation of H1
7	2.56	59	0.014	Confirmation of H1
8	4.432	59	0.00	Confirmation of H1
9	0.274	59	0.00	Confirmation of H1
10	0.856	59	0.00	Confirmation of H1
11	1.069	59	0.29	Rejection of H1
12	4.225	59	0.00	Confirmation of H1
13	2.46	59	0.018	Confirmation of H1
14	2.934	59	0.005	Confirmation of H1
15	2.99	59	0.004	Confirmation of H1
16	3.841	59	0.00	Confirmation of H1
17	3.934	59	0.00	Confirmation of H1
18	2.774	59	0.008	Confirmation of H1
19	4.287	59	0.00	Confirmation of H1

Table 3. Parametric Test Results

Paired Samples t-test			
Difference between pairs	Mean of the current situation- mean of the ideal situation		
	Confidence Level of 95%	Lower Limit	-0.70333
		Upper Limit	-0.21667
test t			-3.799
Significance level			0.000

7. Conclusion

The researchers addressed 2 questions and 1 hypothesis. After a number of analyses, the answers to the first research hypothesis, roles of hotel’s management in attracting more tourists from the perspective of Isfahan’s hotel managers, revealed that all the roles proposed were significant for attraction of more tourists at a confidence level of 95 except for exact definition of expected performance standards to improve the services.

For the second hypothesis, prioritizations and ranking of different roles of hotel’s management which affect the attraction of more tourists from the perspective of Isfahan’s hotel managers, results obtained via application of fuzzy TOPSIS technique showed that efforts to establish effective communication with customers, utilization of the experience gained from successful hotels and focusing on the actual needs of customers are ranked first, second and third respectively. It should be noted that the results of Table 4 indicate that the occurrence of a gap between the current situation and the ideal scenario and makes the identification of problematic issues a necessity.

Analysis of the results indicated that items 6, 13, 11 and 12 give rise to issues in management of the hotels. This means that these items have high expectation and low perception levels. These items include:

1. Employment of collective participation in offering services
2. Exact definition of expected performance standards to improve the services
3. Designing and formulation of an appropriate monitoring system to enhance the quality of services
4. Definition of objectives

The findings could be used to offer useful solutions to promote the roles the managers could play to attract more tourists.

8. Research Limitations

Time-consuming nature of the study of the statistical population, reluctance of some of the managers to answer the questionnaires, lack of access to up-to-date resources and materials due to scarcity of past researches and lack of control over the influential variables

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