

Investigating Service Quality Management in the Transport Sector in Fako Division – A Comparative Study of Guarantee Travel Agency Limited and Musango Bus Service Company Limited – Buea, South West Region - Cameroon

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ABSTRACT

Services are activities delivered by service providers when compared to products, service can only be experienced; its evaluation is incoherent before the consumption of the actual service. Employees must have the willingness to help customers and thus provide prompt service; this is communicated to customers by the length of time they have to wait for assistance, answers to questions or attention to problems. Excellent service quality has been recognized as a medium of competitiveness and supremacy in terms of service. For this reason tourism and hospitality establishment should therefore conduct regular assessment of how well a delivered service conforms to the client's expectations and they should do this in order to improve their services by trying to quickly recognize problems and to better assess client satisfaction if they want to stay in business or be competitive in the market place. The result obtains from the comparative study of the two tourism travel agencies; indicates that service quality is largely based on reliability and responsiveness and that these two tourism businesses must try to position themselves in the marketplace through branding.

Keywords: Service, Quality, Service Quality, Hospitality, Hospitality Industry, Tourism, Tourism Industry

INTRODUCTION

Since the tourism and hospitality industry is a service industry or a people oriented industry, in order for them to achieve its object of delivering quality service, they can plausibly try to meet and exceed the hope of the customer. It should be noted that the people oriented or service industry has a primordial role in the economy of many nations and therefore in today's global competitive environment delivering better quality service to customers is considered as an essential strategy for success and survival of tourism and hospitality businesses. Hence for tourism and hospitality businesses to deliver excellent services to its customers, their evaluation must look at these service quality dimensions variables: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, tangibles (www.serviceperformance.com).

It should be noted that delivering the type of customer experience that will lead to customer loyalty to a business or brand in a competitive

market now requires tourism and hospitality businesses to pay more attention to their performance (Abam, 2018). Also a business aptitude to deliver an experience that sets its eye on its customers will increase the amounts of customers spending with the tourism and hospitality business establishment and inspire a culture of repeat business. Therefore these tourism establishments need to lay more emphasis on the relationship between its employees and the customers so as to deliver better services, thus improving on the customer experience and thus positioning its self in the marketplace (Abam, 2019).

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Fako Division is a second-order Administrative Division; it is located in the South-West Region of Cameroon and covers an area of 2,093 km² and as of 2001 had a total population of 534, 854. Limbe is the administrative capital of the Fako Division and it is divided administratively into seven council areas namely: Buea rural,

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Limbe I, Limbe II, Limbe III, Muyuka, Tiko and the east coast councils with its subdivisiobal capital being Idenau. Fako Division is located at latitude: 4°10'0.01" and longitude: 9°10'0.01" (*annuairestatistique du Cameroun, 2004*).

Musango Bus Service Company Limited

The head office of Musango Bus Service Company limited is found in mile 17 Buea of the South West Region of Cameroon and this area also harbours many regional branches of other travel agencies. Like any travel agency, this travel agency provides bus service and as well as interurban transportation of both passengers and goods. The Musango travel agency is found in the following towns namely: Yaounde, Douala, Mutengene, Limbe, Bafoussam, Bamenda. Both mail and luggage service section whose price depends solely on the weight and value of the luggage are found at this agency and also it has a VIP (very important person) service section and this agency tries to retain its customers through a specially design brand loyalty program (**Abam and Ngwa, 2019** and www.wasamundi.com).

Gaurantee Travel Agency Limited

Created by Mr Puwo Jonas 33years ago, this tourism or travel agency cuts across four towns in Cameroon namely: Bamenda, Yaounde, Douala and Limbe and it has more than sixty (60) buses including VIP buses and its head office is found in Bamenda – north west region, Cameroon (**Abam and Ngwa, 2019**).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reid & Bojanic (2010) in their study of hospitality marketing management reveals that

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Table1. Showing the distribution of the respondents (percentage) vis-à-vis the five service quality management parameters in the transport sector in Fako division – a comparative study of Guarantee travel agency limited and Musango bus service company limited – BUEA, SOUTH WEST REGION – CAMERRON.

Variable or dimension of quality service	Explanation of variable	Guarantee travel agency (%)	Musango travel agency (%)
1) Tangibility	Agency has good looking facilities.	67	90
2) Reliability	Agency promises to do something at a certain time, it does so.	80	85
3) Responsiveness	The travel agency employees tell you exactly when services will be performed	75	75
4) Assurance	The behavior of travel agency employees instills confidence.	85	94
5) Empathy	Travel agency employees gives customers individual attention	77	80

Source: Filed survey 2019

successful firms are using customer`s perception of service quality so as to set performance standards rather than relying exclusively on operationally defined standards for service quality, in the meantime **Liu (2006)** is of the opinion that the evaluation of service quality should not embrace only the service delivered but that it should also focus on the manner in which this service is delivered. Furthermore in the tourism and hospitality industry the perceptions of service quality rely heavily on the development of positive perceptions or attitude of the guest or visitor. However (**Abam, 2017**) further explained that because of the increasing competitiveness for international marketplace, service quality is seen as providing the frame of competitive advantage.

Furthermore **Kotler and Keller (2009)** on the other hand reveal that customer satisfaction is the extent to which a product`s perceived performance matches a buyer`s expectations and **Parasuraman et al (1988)** think that any failure on the part of the tourism establishment businesses to meet these expectations leads to dissatisfaction and disgruntled or dissatisfied customers will not make a repeat visit to the business establishment.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Jary and Jary (1991) is of the opinion that qualitative techniques rely on the skills in gathering data while quantitative methods place reliance upon the research instruments in use to gather data and analyse, primary research method and questionnaires were used by the researcher to gather data for this research work.

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From table 1 above in order to investigate service quality dimensions of reliability, empathy and tangibility in influencing customer satisfaction toward the service delivered to them, the researcher distributed questionnaires to 100 customers of Musango bus Service Company limited and 100 questionnaires to customers of Guarantee travel agency limited.

From table 1 above, as concerns the service quality variable or dimension of tangibility, 67% of the respondents of Guarantee travel agency and 90% of customers of Musango travel agency indicated that the hotel has good looking facilities and add to their satisfaction.

Looking at the service quality variable of reliability, 80% of the customers of Guarantee travel agency and 85% of customers of Musango travel agency reveal that when the agency promises to do something at a certain time, they do it as promise.

As for responsibility, 75% of both the customers of Guarantee travel agency and those of Musango travel agency say that travel agency employees tell you exactly when services will be performed

Looking at assurance, 85% of the customers Guarantee travel agency and 94% of customers of Musango travel agency are of the opinion that the behavior of travel agency employees instills confidence.

Finally looking at the dimension of empathy, 77% of the customers of Guarantee travel agency and 80% of customers of Musango travel agency believe that the travel agency employees gives customers individual attention

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Since the tourism and hospitality businesses are service orient, when a customer perceives service quality or is satisfied with the quality of services rendered to them the results is that they become loyal to the business and he or she may talk about these services or his experiences to friends and relatives through word-of-mouth and the result will be that these service businesses will have a better turnover. From the comparative study of these travel agencies, service quality is largely based on reliability and responsiveness, these dimensions of reliability and responsiveness in the tourism and

hospitality industry have made significant and positive impacts on customer's satisfaction.

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Citation: Dr. Evaristus Nyong Abam, et al. "Investigating Service Quality Management in the Transport Sector in Fako Division – A Comperative Study of Guarantee Travel Agency Limited and Musango Bus Service Company Limited – Buea, South West Region - Cameroon" *Open Journal of Economics and Commerce*, 7(2), 2020, pp. 01-04.

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