

The Critical Incident In Growth Groups: Theory And Technique

The Impact of Customer Behaviours on Other Customers' Service Experience

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ABSTRACT

Customer-to-customer interactions can severely affect a customer's evaluation of the overall service experience. Utilising the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) this paper reports findings from the hospitality sector that identified which aspects of an organisation's service both positively and negatively impacted on customers' perceptions of quality and, where a negative experience occurred, how management and employees dealt with them. No respondents described a satisfying experience that involved the behaviours of other customers, however many reported dissatisfying experiences due to customer misbehaviours. Respondents also expected service staff and managers to deal with the problems they encountered.

Keywords: Critical Incident Technique (CIT), Customer Behaviours, Service Recovery, Hospitality sector, service quality.

1.0 Introduction

Good service quality generally leads to increased customer satisfaction and positive word-of-mouth, attitudinal loyalty and purchase intentions (Greenier & Gwinner, 2000). Service encounter quality has a direct link to customer satisfaction and service quality perceptions (Jayawardhena et al., 2007). It has a vital impact on customer judgement in terms of overall quality of the service process, being the 'direct interaction between a service operation's employees and its customers' (Lewis, 1989). The quality of the encounter is essential in the overall impression and evaluation of the quality of the service experience (Lewis, 1989).

Customers generally become loyal due to satisfaction with a previous experience, which leads to the development of a relationship between the consumer and provider (Andreassen & Lindestad, 1998) and thus to profitability (Kelly, 2009). Failure experiences are the most powerful negative incidents customers experience within services (Hastie and Park, 1986 and Taylor, 1991). If not dealt with correctly, these negative experiences can lead to dissatisfaction and disloyalty (Anderson and Sullivan, 1993; Bolton and Drew, 1991; Fornell, 1992).

Consumers act as co-producers in a service environment (Huang, 2008), not only do they influence their own quality experience to some extent but also impact other customers' satisfaction (Tax et al., 2006). 'Acceptable' behaviour varies according to different service industries, consumer demographics may also have a relative effect on misbehaviours; variances in behaviour may alter in accordance to the individuals, cultures, context and also geographical locations (Fullerton et al., 1997). This means that behaviours some consumers deem acceptable, others could consider to be morally wrong (Fisk et al., 2010). Fisk et al (2010) suggested that consumers are challenging to predict.

Customers who violate the generally accepted norms of conduct in consumption situations have been defined as misbehaving customers (Fullerton & Punj, 1997). Examples of consumer misbehaviours include: disturbing others with loud noise/voices, using phone during services, cutting in the queue.

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