

The importance of service quality in disneyland marketing essay



The broad area of interest in this report is “ The importance of Service Quality in Disneyland”. Disney’s theme park, Disneyland is chosen as a case study, to understand and examine the importance of service quality.

The location chosen for qualitative research is Anaheim, California. The reason being, it is the first Disneyland and the only theme park which Disney Company fully owns and operates. The researcher will use the methodology of interviews and focus groups, over a 6 months research.

Service quality is defined as “ the outcome of a process in which consumers’ expectations for the service are compared with their perceptions of the services actually delivered” (Mangold and Babakus 1991, Cited by Schneider and White 2004).

It is stated that “ virtually all organisations compete to some degree on the basis of service” and “ excellent service pays off because it creates true customers who will use the firm again and sing the firm’s praises to others “(Zeithaml et al. 1990).

Zeithaml et al. (1990) cites Exhibit 1. 1 from Profit Impact of Market Strategy (1987), which shows the positive and important relationship between relative perceived quality and return on sales/return on investment.

Exhibit 1. 1 - The Quality/Profit Relationship

Source: Robert D. Buzzell and Bradley T. Gale, The PIMS Principles (New York: Free Press, 1987), p. 107

Why Disney and Disneyland?

It is currently the biggest theme park owner in the world with 11 parks in 4 countries, with a combined 121.4 million visitors. [Orlando Sentinel, 3 June 2012]

Financial reports shows that from the years 2009 to 2011, the revenue of 'Parks & Resorts' have increased. In the 2011 Financial Report revenues for year ended 2011 "increased 10%", despite "temporary closure of the Tokyo Disney Resort following the March 2011 earthquake in Japan".

[Fiscal Year 2011 Annual Financial Report and Shareholder Letter]

Disney is known for its own institute where they train their employees and other business. Two dozen hospitals have signed up with Disney Institute for training in customer care in 2011. [MediaPost Communications, Nov 2011]

Disney is ranked #1 in the entertainment industry in the Fortune 500 (2012). [Fortune 500, CNN Money 2012]

The aims of this research are:

To identify what is Service Quality from the point of an employee

How important does the employee think is "service quality"

What does the employee think is "service quality"?

To identify Service Quality from the point of an employer

How important is service quality to the employer?

How is “ service quality attitude” imparted onto the employees?

To establish consumers’ perception of service quality

How important is service quality to consumers?

What influences the expectations of service quality?

An interpretive approach is used because the researcher needs to understand social behaviour of consumers, and it is argued that an interpretive approach “ seeks to understand and interpret how individuals make sense of their lifeworlds”. A positivist approach will not allow this to happen as it tends to ignore or reduces the subjective dimension of the human behaviour, as the human behaviour is “ conceptualized and explained deterministically”(Symon and Cassell 2012).

Inductive approach is used as it generates the theory from the collection of qualitative data, gaining an understanding of various meanings people attach to experiences. Being flexible, it allows modifications to the research emphasis as research progresses.(Saunders et al. 2008)

This research uses methodology triangulation of both focus groups and in-depth interviews as “ no single method ever adequately solves the problem of rival casual factors because each method reveals different aspects and thus multiple methods of observations must be employed” (Denzin 1978, Cited by Patton 2002). Triangulation reduces any biases, increasing the reliability and validity of the research (Jonsen and Jehn 2009).

Focus groups allows direct interaction with the respondents, and access to non-verbal communication of the respondents. It allows the researcher to gain large and rich data quickly, and respondents will feel less pressurised to respond to each question. Patton (2002) states that “ focus groups have come to play an important role in quality management efforts where feedback about services is desired”. Although it will not uncover the senior management ‘ s perspective as no senior management staff are involved, this loophole will be covered by in-depth interviews conducted later.

A total of 10 participants will be planned out for each focus group, as Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) argues that having fewer than 6 participants will not create a fruitful discussion, and more than 12 participants might prove too difficult for to manage. It is highlighted that focus groups should have an allowance of up to 2 absentees, and that it is better to draft extra participants than to have too little.

The advantages and disadvantages of focus groups are summarised in Table 1. 1.

Advantages

Disadvantages

Data are provided more quickly, more cost-effective

Reserved group members may be hesitant to talk

Able to interact directly with respondents, allowing better clarity and follow-ups

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May be biased by a very dominant or opinionated member

Respondents react and build upon group members', creating a synergistic effect and snowballing, producing data/ideas that might not have been unveiled in individual interviews

Summarization and interpretation of results may be difficult due to the open-ended nature of responses obtained

Large and rich amounts of data in respondents' own words can be obtained, allowing deeper levels of understanding, verbal and nonverbal responses

Number of questions that can be asked is greatly restricted due to the amount of available response time

No single individual is required to respond to a question , thus responses are spontaneous, providing an accurate picture

Focus groups work best when respondents of similar backgrounds are strangers to each other, but dynamics are different and more complex when participants have prior established relationships in this case

Respondents are likely to be more truthful as there is less individual pressure than in a depth interview

Table 1. 1

(Stewart and Shamdasani 1990, Patton 2002, Stokes and Bergin 2006)

Individual in-depth interviews allows the researcher to research deeply into social and personal matters, and was applied previously in health-care research to “reconstruct perceptions and experiences” (Bloom and Crabtree 2006).

Semi-structured interviews are used because it is more flexible and capable of uncovering important and hidden aspects of human and organizational behaviour, and especially valuable to this research as it seeks to understand the way interviewees perceive the social world (Qu and Dumay 2011).

Unstructured interviews are not used because “skilled use of the technique requires a great deal of training and expertise” and structured interviews are unable to explore and generate insights and understanding of behaviours (Carruthers 1990).

The advantages and disadvantages of interviews are summarised in Table 1.2.

Advantages

Disadvantages

Allows researcher to gain insights into or understanding of opinions, attitudes, experiences, processes, behaviours, or predictions, which are the objectives of this research

Time consuming compared to methods such as questionnaires; conducting the interview, data analyzing

More likely to provide more data and successful than other methods when target interviewees are in management positions

May be difficult to find willing interviewees

More convenient, accessible and economical than other methods

Two way communication

Table 1. 2

(Rowley 2012, Symon and Cassell 2012)

The time line for conducting the research can be viewed in the Gantt Chart below.

Task

Scout Focus Group Participants

Focus Group (1, 2, 3)

Interviews

Compile Data

Completion

Sept'12

Nov'12

Dec'12

Jan'13

Feb'13

Mar'13

Apr'13

Focus Group 1

Focus Group 2

Focus Group 3

All participants are junior staff

2 performing staff

2 rides & attractions staff

2 food & beverages staff

2 ticketing staff

2 mascot staff

Students aged 18 to 24 who visited Disneyland in the past 6 months (5 males & 5 females)

5 Couples aged 22-40 who visited Disneyland in the past 6 months

The focus groups will be conducted in a meeting room at Disneyland Resort Hotel.

Focus group 1 participants are chosen because they are the frontline crew who meets guests on a daily basis, and are usually the first point of contact that guests will meet.

The researcher will approach possible participants for group 2 and 3 at Disneyland with a survey form (Appendix 1A), and select participants. These participants will be able to provide relevant and recent data for the focus group. The age groups are set from 18 to 40 to allow a larger data pool collection.

4 questions to start off the focus groups are:

What do you think is good service quality?

How important is service quality to you?

What influences the expectations of service quality of an individual?

What can be done to improve the service quality?

Interview 1

Interview 2

Training executive at Disney Institute

Human Resources Manager

Two interviews will be conducted. The researcher needs to understand how training executives view service quality and how do they incorporate a 'quality service attitude' into staff via training.

The researcher needs to understand what and how the human resources manager look for in new staff, review staff performances as well as the type of feedback they are looking for to constantly improve. It also allows the researcher to find out what does management think about service quality. A list of questions to begin the interviews can be viewed at Appendix 1B.

This research will use a grounded theory approach to analysing and coding the data. It is a suitable method because Goulding (1998) argues that it befits studies of behaviours and that it has "potential for a number of research directions and contexts that go beyond consumer behaviour".

Goulding (2005) states that grounded theory supports the research's inductive approach as it allows the researcher to enter the field once the area of research has been identified, and data is not depleted before the research, but "consulted as part of an iterative, inductive and interactional process of data collection." It also allows for a wide range of data, one of which is the in-depth interviews that has been utilised as a methodology for this research.

Exhibit 1. 2

Defining the importance of service quality in Disneyland for Disney and Customers

Inter-relationship (Disneyland needs customers to profit)

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Role of Organisation (How Disney important views service quality)

Role of the service employee (How do employees play a part in service quality)

Organisational Structure (How does it view/promotes good service quality)

Role of customers

(Matching expectations)

Role of Human Resources /Management (Types of training / policies)

Exhibit 1. 2 below shows the research's route of data coding, and creating relationships between the codes.

Data is first subjected to open coding, allowing identification and categorisation of any phenomena that is found. Open coding allows experiences and events to be manifested and put in plain words through the respondents' own perspective. These experiences will be sorted into labels signifying its individual meaning. After which, the researcher will be able to be more selective and focus on a specific direction of the study (Symon and Cassell 2012). Axial coding is utilised to form relationships between the codes created.

Selective coding follows, appointing a primary category, connecting all other categories, hence integrating codes collectively into an idea. Theoretical coding concludes the process by relating the substantive codes as a hypothesis which is integrated into the theory produced.

Ultimately, the research question of “ How important is Service Quality in Disneyland” will be fulfilled by using a multiple-method strategy supported by the analytical axial technique of grounded theory. Hence, it is contented that this will provide as an acceptable research.