

Service quality of hotel employees: A profile deviation analysis

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Abstract

Using a configuration theory approach, this paper will conduct a comparative study between hotel employees in phone and face-to-face service encounters for a front desk. The study will compare the top performers in service quality in relation to three components of organizational commitment and their demographics by applying a profile deviation analysis. This study plans to demonstrate the utility of profile deviation approaches in designing internal marketing strategies.

Introduction

Organizations operating in today's highly competitive hotel business environment need to differentiate on service quality as a means of achieving a competitive advantage, and frontline employees are central in determining this quality (Gustaffson, 2009). The frontline is the touch point of the company; therefore, the service that frontline employees provide is critical in developing customer relationships, gathering customer information, and in creating customer satisfaction, loyalty, and brand commitment (Burmam & Konig, 2011; Fang, Palmatier, & Grewal, 2011). Previous research indicates that the organizational commitment of frontline employees exerts a strong, positive influence on their service quality (Malhotra & Mukherjee, 2004; Vandenberghe et al., 2007). However, the actual commitment-profile differences between high and low quality service performers have not been substantively researched.

Using a configuration theory approach, this study compares employees in the two most difficult and important types of frontline service situations; face-to-face and telephone encounters. First, this study identifies the profile of the top performers in each of the encounters. Second, this study makes comparisons between the ideal and non-ideal profiles to investigate whether deviations from the ideal result in a decrease in service quality in each context. Any difference this study finds among the profiles of ideal performers in the two contexts is useful to explore, especially for companies employing multi-channel delivery, in order to recruit and manage frontline employees effectively through appropriately designed internal marketing strategies (Wieseke, Ahearne, Lam, & VanDick, 2009).

This study integrates the service-quality literature with the profile-deviation analysis literature to provide valuable new insights into the theory and practice of service excellence, and is the first to attempt to understand the role of configuration theory in designing internal marketing strategies.

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