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Abstract

Manystudies have been conducted about hotel attributesrelated tothehotel choice decision as a part ofacustomer's pre- purchase behavior(Dolnicar&Otter, 2003). Althoughit iscritical for hotel managerstounderstand post-trip behavior because such behaviorsmaydirectlyinfluence their futurebehavior, therearefew researchstudieswhich examine hotel attributesrelated to acustomer'spost-trip behavior.This studyteststhe relationship between leisure traveler'shotel attribute satisfaction and overall satisfaction in the post-trip behaviorperspectiveina hotel setting andexaminestherelative impactofhotel attributesatisfaction in influencing overall satisfaction. Multiple regressionwas used totestthe relationship and hotel attribute satisfaction isan important antecedent tooverall satisfaction. Theoretical and practical implications ofthe studyare discussed.

The Relationship between Leisure Traveler's Hotel Attribute Satisfaction and Overall Satisfaction

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Abstract

Many studies have been conducted about hotel attributes related to the hotel choice decision as a part of a customer's pre- purchase behavior (Dolnicar & Otter, 2003). Although it is critical for hotel managers to understand post-trip behavior because such behaviors may directly influence their future behavior, there are few research studies which examine hotel attributes related to a customer's post-trip behavior. This study tests the relationship between leisure traveler's hotel attribute satisfaction and overall satisfaction in the post-trip behavior perspective in a hotel setting and examines the relative impact of hotel attribute satisfaction in influencing overall satisfaction. Multiple regression was used to test the relationship and hotel attribute satisfaction is an important antecedent to overall satisfaction. Theoretical and practical implications of the study are discussed.

Keywords: leisure traveler behavior, post-trip behavior, hotel attribute satisfaction, overall satisfaction

Introduction

      According to the U.S. Travel Association, the U.S. domestic travel will increase by 2 percent annually through 2013 and the U.S. sales of hotel for leisure travelers will increase to $73,760 million in 2013. Hotels are trying to increase the sales by adopting new policies such as loyalty programs, technologies including social media and online booking systems, redesigning hotel lobby and welcoming areas, and offering extra services (Mintel, 2011). Hotel leisure travelers are more likely to make reservations through hotel websites and they expect hotels to recognize their connectivity needs. Success in the hotel business depends on understanding the key factors in determining customer satisfaction because satisfaction is a critical element related to a company's future profit by increasing customer loyalty (Anderson, Fornell, & Mazvancheryls, 2004; Homburg, Koschate, & Hoyer, 2005; Poon & Low, 2005). Therefore, managers are trying to develop ways to differentiate their products and services to increase customer satisfaction under the challenging environment of the expanding sophistication of customers' demands and market competition.

      Many studies have been conducted about hotel attributes related to the hotel choice decision as a part of pre-purchase behavior (Dolnicar & Otter, 2003). Although it is critical for hotel managers to understand post-trip behavior because such behavior may directly influence their future behavior, there are few research studies examining hotel attributes related to a customer's post-trip behavior. Not all hotel attributes that create customer value during the hotel experience are the same as the attributes that drive purchase. For instance, an employee's personalized service is not an attribute in the pre-purchase behavior, but it is a critical attribute in influencing a customer's future behavior. Hotel location and brand name, which can be critical attributes in the pre-purchase behavior, may be not as important in post-trip reflection.

      Therefore, it is worthy to address this topic to have a deeper understanding of the relationship between customer's satisfaction with attributes and overall satisfaction in the post-trip behavior perspective. The purpose of this study is 1) to examine the importance of and satisfaction with hotel attributes identified by leisure travelers, and 2) to examine the relative impact of hotel attribute satisfaction in influencing overall satisfaction. This study can help to expand understanding of leisure traveler's hotel attributes in the perspective of a post-trip behavior by examining the relationship between attribute satisfaction and overall satisfaction.

Literature Review

Hotel Attributes

Hotel attributes are critical in increasing customer satisfaction with hotel stays (Wuest, Tas, & Emenheiser, 1996). As shown in Table 1, according to the literature review, most travelers consider the following hotel attributes as important factors in making a hotel selection: friendliness of staff, hotel facilities and amenities, location, prompt and courteous service quality, quality of food, room cleanliness and comfort, safety and security, and value for money (e.g., Dube & Renaghan, 2000; Dolnicar & Otter, 2003; Knutson, 1988; Tsai, Yeung, & Yim, 2011). For example, Dolnicar & Otter (2003) reviewed 21 previous studies conducted between 1984 and 2000 and categorized important hotel attributes such as service, value, room, hotel facilities, image, food and beverage quality, and security.

Table 1: Summary of Important Hotel Attributes

Important Hotel Attributes	Literature Review
Friendliness of hotel staff	Dube & Renaghan, 2000; Dolnicar & Otter, 2003; Tsai et al, 2011
Hotel facilities and amenities	Babakus, Yavas, Karatepe, & Avci, 2003; Callan & Bowman 2000; Dubé & Renaghan , 2000; Ruys & Wei, 1998
Hotel location	Ananth et al., 1992; Babakus et al., 2003; Dolnicar & Otter, 2003; Dubé & Renaghan , 2000; LeBlanc & Nguyen, 1996; Rivers, Toh, & Alaoui, 1991; Tsai et al, 2011
Prompt and courteous service quality	Ananth et al., 1992; Atkinson, 1988; Babakus et al., 2003; Cadotte & Turgeon, 1988; Callan & Bowman, 2000; Dolnicar & Otter, 2003; Dubé & Renaghan , 2000; Knutson, 1988; LeBlanc & Nguyen, 1996; Rivers et al., 1991; Saleh & Ryan, 1992
Quality of food	Dubé & Renaghan , 2000; Tsai et al, 2011
Room cleanliness and comfort	Atkinson, 1988; Babakus et al., 2003; Cadotte & Turgeon, 1988; Callan & Bowman, 2000; Dolnicar & Otter, 2003; Dubé & Renaghan, 2000; Knutson, 1988; Saleh & Ryan, 1992; Tsai et al, 2011
Safety and security	Ananth et al., 1992; Atkinson, 1988; Babakus et al., 2003; Cadott & Turgeon, 1988; Callan & Bowman, 2000; Knutson, 1988; Tsai, et al, 2011
Value for money	Babakus et al., 2003; Callan & Bowman, 2000; Dolnicar & Otter, 2003; Dubé & Renaghan , 2000; Tsai, et al, 2011

Several studies also examined the different importance of hotel attributes in hotel choice decision between business and leisure travelers (Ananth, Demicco, Moreo, & Howey, 1992; Barsky & Labagh, 1992; Cadotte & Turgeon, 1988; Clow, Garretson, & Kurtz, 1994; Gilbert & Morris, 1995). For example, Barsky & Labagh (1992) found that there are significant differences of hotel attributes' importance (price, employee attitude, and room) in the hotel choice decision between business and leisure travelers. Lewis (1984) found

that business travelers are more concerned about hotel location than leisure travelers are. Dube & Renaghan (2000) also analyzed the hotel attributes in the hotel choice decision among business, leisure, and meeting and convention travelers and found that the most important attribute for the leisure traveler during a hotel stay was physical property including property cleanliness, staff's interpersonal service with friendliness, and food and beverage services.

Customer Satisfaction: Hotel Attribute Satisfaction and Overall Satisfaction

Satisfaction is defined as consumers' evaluative judgments based on both cognitive and affective responses as an emotional response (Bigné, Martínez, Miquel, & Andreu, 2003; Oliver, 1997; Westbrook & Oliver, 1991; Wirtz & Bateson, 1999; Wirtz, Mattila, & Tan, 2000). According to the expectation-disconfirmation theory (Oliver, 1981), customer satisfaction is believed to result from a process of a customer comparing his/her expectations and perceptions of performance; the confirmation or disconfirmation of those expectations then predicts satisfaction. In the hospitality industry, many empirical studies show that customer satisfaction is a strong indicator of intention to revisit, recommend the destination to other people, and company profitability (e.g., Back & Parks, 2005; Jeong, Oh & Gregoire, 2003; Mattila & Mount, 2003). Other studies have examined the relationship between attributes satisfaction and overall customer satisfaction (Czepiel, Rosenberg, & Akerele 1974; Oliver, 1993; Spreng, MacKenzie, & Olshavsky, 1996).

Specifically, according to Oliver (1993), customer satisfaction has been operationalized at both the general and attribute levels. Overall customer satisfaction and attribute satisfaction are distinct although they are related each other. Overall customer satisfaction is based on the combined experience or a summary evaluation of the entire products and services experience of the company, not just the individual attributes, while attribute satisfaction is the consumer's subjective satisfaction judgment resulting from observations of attribute performance (Czepiel et al., 1974; Spreng et al., 1996). According to Spreng et al. (1996), overall customer satisfaction is influenced by attribute satisfaction, which is produced by a customer's assessment of the degree to which a product and service's performance is perceived to have met his or her expectations and desires.

Conceptual Model and Hypothesis

Based on previous studies, the following hypotheses were developed and tested. As shown in Figure 1. The proposed conceptual model is that satisfaction of "friendliness of staff", "hotel amenities", "hotel location", "quality of food", "room cleanliness and comfort", and "value for money" are expected to influence, positively and directly, overall customer satisfaction.

H1: "Friendliness of staff" satisfaction positively influences overall customer satisfaction.
H2: "Hotel amenities" satisfaction positively influences overall customer satisfaction.
H3: "Hotel location" satisfaction positively influences overall customer satisfaction.
H4: "Quality of food" satisfaction positively influences overall customer satisfaction.
H5: "Room cleanliness and comfort" satisfaction positively influences overall customer satisfaction.
H6: "Value for money" satisfaction positively influences overall customer satisfaction.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model
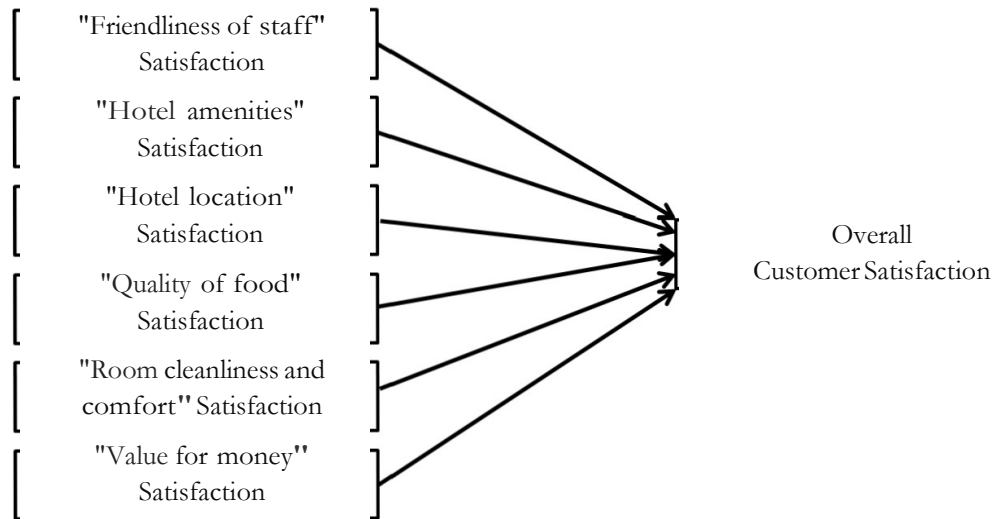
Methodology

Sampling & Data Collection

To study the relationship between hotel attribute satisfaction and overall satisfaction, a popular hotel resort in a Midwestern destination, which is independently owned and operated, was selected. The resort has 360 themed guestrooms, five indoor pools and three whirlpools, a miniature golf course, a large family fun center with over 100 video/arcade games, and several guest banquet and convention spaces. The population of this study was overnight resort guests excluding business travelers and groups for events (e.g., weddings, reunions, meetings). Travel parties who stayed at the resort were of interest to test the proposed model and hypotheses.

A pilot study (n=32) was conducted using an electronic survey in June 2009 with faculty, administrators, and graduate students at a Midwestern United States university to develop and test the questionnaire instrument. The main data collection was achieved via both a self-administered online survey and mail survey on a weekly basis from July 2009 to September 2009. One week after a stay at this resort, an email or postal mail survey was sent, based on the weekly guest records, along with an incentive for their requested participation in the research study. Respondents who completed the survey received discount coupons and were entered into a drawing for one grand prize (i.e., a stay at the resort). Two reminders were sent to those who had not yet responded and the total sample size was 3,709 (e-mailed surveys: 3,459; mailed surveys: 250) and comprised all guest stays for the months of July, August, and September 2009. A total of 1,660 completed and usable surveys resulted from the original 3,709 surveys (45% composite response rate; number of online surveys=1,573; number of paper surveys=87). Before combining the two sets of data, demographic characteristics of participants in these two data sets were compared. There were no significant differences between the two sets of data with demographic characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, income, and number of people in the household. The on-line survey had more respondents with full-time employment and the paper survey had more Michigan resident respondents. Data were analyzed in two steps using SPSS 17.0 software. First, descriptive statistics were obtained. Second, multiple regression was used to test the relationship between hotel attribute satisfaction and overall satisfaction.

Measurement

On the basis of previous studies, the survey items for each construct were developed. The key six hotel attributes were selected to measure hotel attribute importance in selecting a hotel and hotel attribute satisfaction (e.g., Dube & Renaghan, 2000; Dolnicar & Otter, 2003; Knutson, 1988; Tsai et al, 2011). For both hotel attribute importance in selecting a hotel and hotel attribute satisfaction, respondents were given the same attribute items with the following questions: "friendliness of staff", "hotel amenities", "hotel location", "quality of food", "room cleanliness and comfort", and "value for money." For the attribute importance questions, responses were given on seven-point Likert scales from 1 = *very unimportant* to 7 = *very important* and for the attribute satisfaction questions, responses were given on seven-point Likert scales from 1 = *very unsatisfied* to 7 = *very satisfied.* Overall customer satisfaction was measured with four items (Finn, 2005; Spreng et al., 1996). Responses were given on a seven-point Likert scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree* with the following questions: "Overall, this hotel was comfortable", "Overall, this hotel was satisfying", "Overall, this hotel was pleasing", and "Overall, this hotel was contenting." The four dependent variables of overall customer satisfaction were regressed as one dependent variable against the hotel attribute satisfaction factors.

Results

Profile and Travel Characteristics of Survey Respondents

A profile of the respondents from both the online and paper survey showed that the majority of participants were female (69%) and the average age was 48 years. The majority of participants (82%) were European American/Middle Eastern/White. About 60% of respondents had an annual household income between $50,000 and $199,999. The average number of people in a household was three, and most of the respondents (58%) were employed full-time. The majority of respondents (69%) reside in Michigan, followed by those living in Ohio (12%), Canada (7%), and other states (12%).

Respondents reported the information sources or marketing communications that influenced them to book their current stay at the resort with multiple responses allowed. The top source was a previous stay (57%). Other sources were hotel loyalty club membership holder (20%), friend or family member recommendation (17%), special package rate (17%), Internet web site or search engine (16%), and e-mail

promotion or newsletter offer (16%). Most of the respondents traveled with their family members (86%) or friends (12%). As shown in Table 2, the importance of the key six attributes were high with friendliness of staff (Mean 5.95 on 1: very unimportant to 7: very important), hotel amenities (pool, game room, free nightly entertainment) (6.11), hotel location (5.98), quality of food (5.68), room cleanliness and comfort (6.35), and value for money (6.20). Respondents were mostly satisfied with friendliness of staff (Mean 6.42 on 1: very unsatisfied to 7: very satisfied), hotel amenities (pool, game room, free nightly entertainment) (6.37), hotel location (6.63), quality of food (6.14), room cleanliness and comfort (6.27), and value for money (5.64).

Table 2: Hotel Attribute's Importance and Satisfaction

Hotel Attribute	Importance Mean[1]	Satisfaction Mean[2]
Friendliness of staff	5.95	6.42
Hotel amenities	6.11	6.37
Hotel location	5.98	6.63
Quality of food	5.68	6.14
Room cleanliness and comfort	6.35	6.27
Value for money	6.20	6.37

Note [1]: from 1 = *very unimportant* to 7 = *very important*
[2]: from 1 = *very unsatisfied* to 7 = *very satisfied*

As shown in Table 3, multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the relative importance of the six hotel attribute satisfaction in relation to overall satisfaction. The six variables, "friendliness of staff", "hotel amenities", "hotel location", "quality of food", "room cleanliness and comfort", and "value for money" were entered simultaneously into the analysis. The overall variance explained by the six independent variables was 53.8%. All six hypotheses were supported and the six variables were found to be statistically significant in the regression model: "friendliness of staff "($\beta = .07$, $p < .05$: H1 supported), "hotel amenities" ($\beta = .18$, $p < .001$: H2 supported), "hotel location" ($\beta = .26$, $p < .001$: H3 supported), "quality of food" ($\beta = .08$, $p < .001$: H4 supported), and "value for money" ($\beta = .32$, $p < .001$: H5 supported), and "room cleanliness and comfort" ($\beta = .40$, $p < .001$: H6 supported).

Table 3: The Relationship between Hotel Attribute Satisfaction and Overall Customer Satisfaction

Hotel Attribute Satisfaction	Regression Coefficients[1]
Friendliness of staff	.07* (H1 supported)
Hotel amenities	.18** (H2 supported)
Hotel location	.26** (H3 supported)
Quality of food	.08** (H4 supported)
Value for money	.32** (H5 supported)
Room cleanliness and comfort	.40** (H6 supported)

Note [1]: $R^2=.538$, *$p<.05$. **$p<.001$.

Discussion

The findings of this study have both theoretical and practical implications. As one of few empirical studies examining post-trip behavior, this study extends previous research on the relationship between hotel attribute satisfaction and overall satisfaction of leisure travelers in a hotel setting. The findings showed the relative impacts of the six hotel attributes satisfaction as an important antecedent to overall satisfaction.

In particular, the multiple regression analysis indicated that "room cleanliness and comfort", "value for money", and "hotel location" were the top three influential hotel attribute satisfaction factors related to overall satisfaction. "Room cleanliness and comfort" is found to be the most important attribute in selecting a hotel and has the greatest impact on overall satisfaction, which is similar to previous studies (Choi & Chu, 2001; Chu, 2002; Knutson, 1988; Tsai et al, 2011; Yavas & Babakus, 2003). "Room cleanliness and comfort" is considered to be the basic factor and is still critical related to overall customer satisfaction as the most studied hotel attribute in previous studies (Chu, 2002; Dolnicar & Otter, 2003; Lee, Han, & Willson, 2011). The "value for money" factor is the second most significant attribute in determining overall customer satisfaction. It was also the second most important attribute in selecting a hotel. The previous studies suggest that customers who perceive "value for money" are more satisfied than customers who do not perceive "value for money" and perceived value is also critical with respect to future intentions (Choi & Chu, 2001; Nasution & Mavondo, 2008; Woodruff, 1997; Zeithaml, 1988). As customers become more practical by comparing the difference between perceived benefits and costs to the competition (McDougall & Levesque, 2000; Zeithaml, 1988), the perceived benefits must be provided efficiently and continuously to be an important source of competitive advantage (Nasution & Mavondo, 2008).

Results of this study also suggest some managerial implications. This study can be helpful for managers

in understanding customer needs and expectations as well as their satisfaction and in identifying the differently contributing factors to overall customer satisfaction to develop customized products and services. The findings from the importance-satisfaction analysis have important implications for managers who need to understand customer needs and expectations. For instance, the satisfaction mean of (6.27) "room cleanliness and comfort" is lower than the importance mean (6.35) of "room cleanliness and comfort", which means managers need to pay more attention to improve this gap while the satisfaction means of the other hotel attributes are higher than the importance means of them. This study can also help managers better

understanding the relationship between hotel attribute satisfaction and overall satisfaction. An understanding of the hotel attributes, which impact differently on overall customer satisfaction should be important to hotels that targets leisure travelers. Managers can develop competitive marketing strategies, which can be differentiated from competitors based on the findings from this study.

Although there is significant relationship between hotel attribute satisfaction and overall customer satisfaction (R^2=.538) indicating hotel attribute satisfaction is an important antecedent of overall satisfaction, further studies may need to add other independent variables which influence overall customer satisfaction. Additionally, this study used the six most important hotel attributes to measure hotel attribute satisfaction. Other important attributes for leisure travelers can be added for the future study. This study provides useful insights into satisfaction research in the hospitality industry, however, the results from this study were from a single hotel. Future studies may investigate other hotel brands and different populations of customers, including different segments of customers.

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