

**1999/2000 Quality Management Student Project Competition
2nd runner-up**

**AN EVALUATION OF THE SERVICE QUALITY OF FOOD AND
BEVERAGE DIVISION AT THE SALISBURY YMCA OF HONG KONG**

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ABSTRACT

The project investigated the factors that influenced service quality in the Food & Beverage (F&D) Division in the Salisbury YMCA (hotel) of Hong Kong. The background was that, since the significant drop in sales in its F&D Division, the Salisbury YMCA of Hong Kong would like to conduct a study to identify the critical factors that determine the service quality of the F&D Division.

The problem statements of the project were:

Are customers satisfied with the catering service provided by the YMCA?

Does the employee involvement program enhance service quality?

Based on literature review and theoretical models, customers' satisfaction was selected as the main focus to the project, while the employee attitude, communication and customer perception etc. were selected as would-be factors that may influence the former. A guest questionnaire survey and staff interviews were carried out in the period from October 1999 to January 2000. The key finding is that service quality was influenced by employee motivation, communication and customer perception. The results will be elaborated below and relevant recommendations were provided.

First, the initiative to provide quality service amongst front-line staff was low. It was because they had no motivation from the management and the pressure from the economy atmosphere in Hong Kong's hospitality industry. To overcome this problem, management commitment in providing quality service, as well as providing more motivation to staff members are needed.

Second, It was found that communication gap between management and front-line staff members influenced the quality service provided to customers. Without clear objectives provided, front-line workers would not perform their ultimate ability on their job. They would only intend to be a task-oriented employee. It is suggested that a communication channel in the organisational structure should be established so that the communication will operate effectively in order to eliminate the unnecessary misunderstanding.

In the third place, customer satisfaction measurement was also an important issue in this company. Customers' need in a service company is a subjective issue. How to interpret it into quantitative findings and how to propose improvement is the key to provide the high quality service. Managers have their own perception on the customer's needs. A suitable objective measurement on customer satisfaction and value perception would be helpful. Therefore, organising customer survey to gain more information and opinions from customers was suggested.

In summary, the employees' attitude is the most critical factor that influences service quality while communication and service quality measurement are also important factors. Based on the findings, recommendations on Customer Service Enhancement, Employee Involvement and Service Quality Improvement were provided. Post-study interview was conducted with the staff in the YMCA to examine the feasibility of each proposed suggestion.

Looking back at the project afterwards, it seemed that staff resisted telling the truth, which might be the main barrier to investigate the potential problems. This may be because they worry they may lose their job by telling the truth. The implication is that managers should encourage staff to cooperate in future investigation and the implementation of improvement measures later on. Additionally, future research may also look at the following issues.

a) To have a successful business, co-relation and cooperation between all departments in the organisation are the fundamental factors on providing

quality service. Room Division, Property Management Division, and Sales and Marketing Division are also the potential areas related to the quality service management in the YMCA. A more in-depth examination is needed.

b) Comparisons with other hotels are also important. It is because no organisation could run their business without competition in the market. Benchmarking within hotels in the same category is beneficial to investigate the critical factors on providing good quality service.

c) Last, well-known quality management tools and theories such as ISO9000 certification and/or Total Quality Management (TQM) can be considered in future endeavor. To further investigate the needs of customer, Quality Function Deployment (QFD) may be used.