
THE IMPACT OF CURRENT SERVICE BEHAVIOR TRENDS ON THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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Service being the cornerstone of hospitality, highly influences and lays foundation for guest experience, corollary the organization's success. The service behavior, highlighted during interactions with the guest, shape the brand perspective and loyalty. Recently, with technological integration and outreach, has significantly contributed in modification in the hospitality resulting in heightened customer expectations. Similarly, the work ethics and ideologies extensively differ in this generation. This paper aims to throw light on the current scenario service demeanor, identifying the pattern and ultimately trying to discover how the industry can adopt a few practices and formulate strategies and operating procedure in order to thrive.

Keywords: Service Behavior; Hospitality; Brand Perspective; Guest Expectations; Work Ethics.

INTRODUCTION

Hospitality is a term that refers to the generous and amicable behavior exhibited by the host towards the guests. Various fields encompass the hospitality industry. In this context we will be denuding hospitality with regards to hotels.

Hotels fall under the broad spectrum of the hospitality industry, the umbrella term itself denoting its insistence.

Furthermore, the phrase "atithi devo bhava" (translates to guest must be treated as god) reflects on how the culture imbibes the scruple of being hospitable towards guests. Hotels and restaurants may sell products but what makes the experience complete is the attitude showcased by the employees. There are numerous hotels, many that even offer similar products.

So, what sets you apart?

Any sector of the hospitality industry heavily relies on guest satisfaction. For the business to sustain and thrive, along with quality product, professionally amicable behavior is imperative. Good service behavior enhances the guest experience, similarly, does incessant customer service wears down the brand value tremendously? The gravity of out- turn depends largely on how established the brand is. For a well-known brand the downfall is gradual and for a new brand it's a nightmare. However, in both cases the result is undesirable. Reason being, with increase in spending power, there has been a simultaneous increase of products offered to the customers. Hence, for a guest to choose your brand, you must offer an experience that compliments the product wonderfully.

Let's see different scenarios each from one respective core department:

Scenario 1: The guest is unhappy with the dessert served as the dessert isn't plated as displayed in the menu.

When complaint is raised, the server says "in reality it's served like that only". This makes the guest upset and the two parties quarrel until the guest gives up. As a consequence, refuses to pay service charge and it overshadows the entire meal.

What could the server had done differently: politely apologized and offered to bring the dessert as represented or offered a similar dessert.

Scenario 2: Bath tub is unclean. When complaint is raised, the housekeeper says it can be sprayed with water.

What could the housekeeper had done differently: politely apologized, cleaned and offered bath salts and amenities/expendables.

Scenario 3: Non-resident guest that is sitting in the atrium is fascinated by welcome of a guest. On their way out, the guest enquires about the welcome.

The front office GRE (guest relations executive) looks and says that it's only for VIPs. This puts off the guest as it indicates the non-resident isn't as important.

Even worse, feels as they have been already perceived insignificant.

What could the GRE had done differently: greeted, explained and procedure, the memberships and benefits in order to secure the potential return guest.

These scenarios are exerted from real-life. Each scenario exhibits various departments that are essential for an organization to be claimed as a full-fledged hotel.

These are primarily those departments that have direct impact on the guests. Each interaction mentioned above, if looked at closely, makes one realize that intrinsically the root issue wasn't necessarily critical. However, the response to each situation, the misconduct resulted to guest animosity. Mindful and tactful approach would help curb the unpleasanties. Furthermore, the guest would be delighted and laud the organization for training competent professionals who can turn around and ameliorate the situation.

As this industry majorly relies upon guests for business, it is absolutely quintessential to keep up with guest expectations. Going over and beyond expectations can turn a satisfied customer into a loyal advocate. Offering personalized experiences, providing unexpected perks, or delivering products ahead of time can surprise and delight customers. The only way to retain a guest and ensure they lure more potential business, is by providing them a unique experience. In the acclaimed "Maslow's hierarchy of needs" **esteem** ranks second on the pyramid, thereby indicating how it's only human to seek an underlying sense of validation from the other side. Respect from others boosts self-esteem and elevates the sense of self. This validates the fact that a well-structured customer service enhances the experience and guest satisfaction to justify their choice of hotel brand.

To understand the root cause, we must take into consideration the workforce, i.e. the youth – current generation and their style of work. The majority is rather laid back and unbothered about the repercussions; invariably, this mindset is what keeps them from performing to their potential.

Consequentially, they can be rude, pay little or no heed to guests' needs.

Communication skills also play a major role in this, sometimes, the reason for the staff to unwary is – they may not understand what the other person is trying to convey. It is proven that poor communication reduces quality and weaken productivity.

Often, it's the managements fault as well; they may not train them well or may not have consequences or corrective measures, the absence of supervisor, lack of motivation, no reward system and no recognition. It's the managements responsibility to build and upskill the acquired staff.

METHODOLOGY

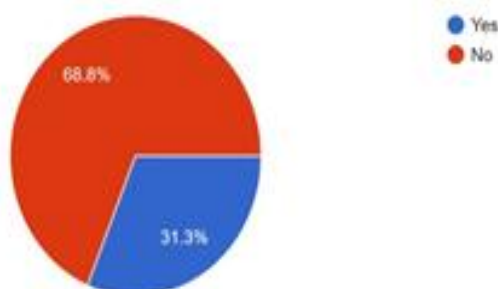
The research is significantly derived autoethnography.

Considering this in an abstract topic and focuses on intangible concepts such as emotions and human behavior exchanges, it is only fair to incorporate cultural, social and psychological thoughts, beliefs and experiences drawn from real life occurrences.

To further garner public notions and perceptions to corroborate, a research was conducted with close ended questions deriving structured and uncompromising perspectives. The study was administered using google forms, delivered digitally.

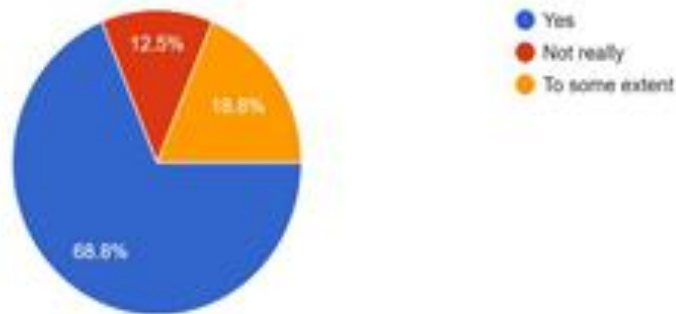
The data collection was not anonymous in order to ensure the authenticity of the responses. Study population included cross section of people from various walks of life to get a diverse range of opinions.

If the food is good but the service is bad, would you visit the restaurant again?
32 responses



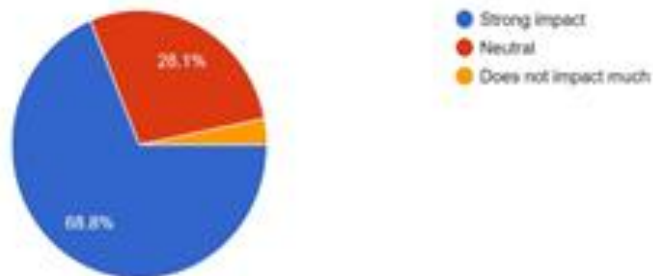
Does the employee behavior hamper the image of the reputed organization in the long run?

32 responses



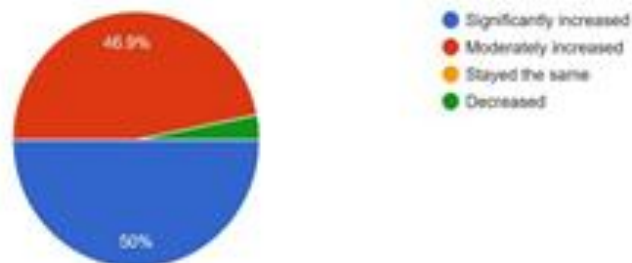
To what extent do you think service behavior impacts overall customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry?

32 responses



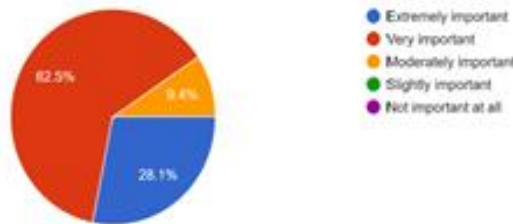
Have customer expectations evolved in recent years regarding service quality in the hospitality industry?

32 responses



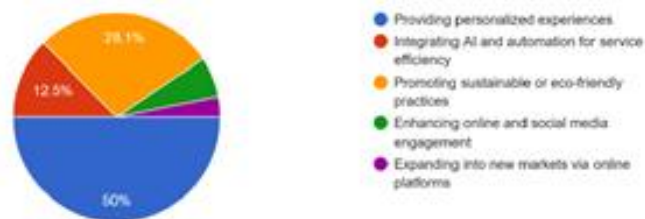
How important do you believe sustainability and eco-friendly practices are in shaping service behaviour trends in the hospitality industry?

32 responses



Which of the following trends do you see as the most significant opportunity for growth within segment of the hospitality industry?

32 responses



Do you believe that the hospitality industry is embracing innovation enough to meet evolving customer demands?

32 responses



Do you believe personalized guest experiences are a significant factor in customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry?

32 responses



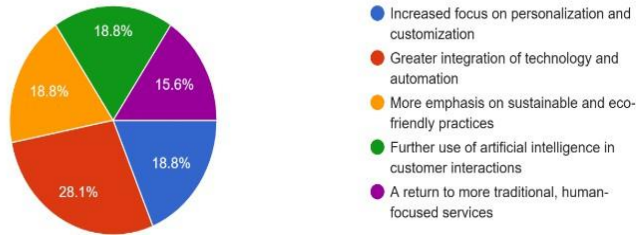
Which of the following service behaviour trends do you believe are currently most affecting the hospitality industry?

32 responses



Looking forward, how do you think service behaviours will continue to evolve in the hospitality industry in the next 5–10 years?

32 responses



RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Majority panelists’ response advocate that in order to provide a good customer experience, customer service is equally or sometimes more important than the product. Undoubtedly, the product or service rendered must be reliable, durable and meet promised standards so that the guest gets value for their money. But if the quality product or service lacks eloquent server behavior, it overall fails to invoke positive intrapersonal thoughts.

For the organization to last in the hospitality sector, it must be susceptible and commensurate with growing trends.

Integration of AI and automation are the need of the hour. It makes work easier and helps in effective time management. Human errors can be minimized. It can help ease human dependency for tasks that may not necessarily require human touch. It’s not just lucrative on the organization’s end but also helpful for and resourceful for the customers. High end technology reflects on the image of the brand and appeals to the masses.

Additionally, we also see concerns regarding adoption of green practices are emerging. Most hotels across the globe have effectively surrendered to eco- friendly measures but there’s still a long way to go.

LIMITATIONS

Although hospitality is the basic element of this industry, there are few factors that hinders the business from aligning with the said concept profoundly. Factors such as: the type of accommodation, basis of clientele, the location, the facilities, standard of living, the culture and traditions etc. This study limits to mid or luxury segment of the hotel industry.