

A Study of Hospitality Management in the Bowling Business –Relationship between Employee Satisfaction and Customer Satisfaction in the Bowling Alleys-

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Introduction

A significant increase in the number of Japanese from all social strata participating in a wide variety of sports and physical activities has been observed (2003 White Paper on Leisure). Bowling has been one of the most popular sports for the last four decades in Japan, because bowling is a typical sport not requiring any entry qualifications regardless of gender or age. However, since the bursting of Japan's economic bubble in 1991, a considerable number of bowling alleys have been forced to close or restructure their businesses.

Under the continuing economic recession, survived bowling alleys have to come up with a better and more effective strategy to maintain their business, namely to keep their existing customers and win new ones. Previous research studies (Hattori, 1996; Ichino, 2002; Mizuno, 2002; Nosaka, 2003; Sasaki, 1997) indicate that a change in employee satisfaction results in a very similar change in customer satisfaction that eventually leads to the business performance. In other words, it is essential for any bowling alley to sustain a group of high-satisfied staff with hospitality mind unless the alley is to shrink in size or go bankrupt. Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to explore how the bowling business has adopted the hospitality management in Japan.

Purpose of this Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction in the bowling alleys in Japan.

Definition of Terms

Hospitality management

The term hospitality management is a management strategy to create reciprocal satisfaction between customer and employee, and bring about many profit for hospitality industries (P.Kotler *et al.*, 1996). In this study, hospitality management was defined the management strategy to create customer satisfaction and improves attending motivation to the bowling alley. On the basis of definition that Hattori (1996) indicated, hospitality management appears to be consisted of four different elements such as "human element", "physical element", "creative element" and "functional element", in this study.

Customer satisfaction

The term customer satisfaction is the level of a person's state of fulfillment resulting from comparing a product's perceived performance (or outcome) in relation to the person's expectations (P.Kotler, 1994). The various methods have been developed to assess of customer satisfaction in the past (N.Hill *et al.*, 1999). In this study, customer satisfaction was gauged by using four elements of the hospitality management provided at bowling alley.

Employee satisfaction

The term employee satisfaction has been defined with various forms in the past. Specifically, Herzberg's "Two-factor Theory" (1959) defined that employee satisfaction, a favorable emotion toward work that stems from two continua, one for satisfaction (which results from the presence of motivating factors) and one for dissatisfaction (which results from the absence of hygiene factors). On the basis of "Two-factor Theory", employee satisfaction seems to be composed of two elements, such as "job contents" and "work environment" in this study.

Methods & Procedures

Sample subjects

Two sets of sample subjects, bowling alley staffs (N=148) and regular customers (N=800), were selected in this study. A total of 148 bowling alley staffs at eight bowling alleys in the Tokyo metropolitan areas were chosen to take part in the employee satisfaction study. Of the 148, 118 subjects voluntarily participated in this project by returning a self-administered questionnaire (return rate: 79.7%). On the other hand, eight hundred regular customers from those eight bowling alleys were chosen to be sample subjects for the customer satisfaction study. Of the 800, 549 customers were willingly to take part in this survey (return rate: 68.6%).

Test instruments

On the basis of previous research studies (Adachi, 1999; Hattori, 1996; Herzberg, 1959), two sets of the written questionnaires were developed by the researchers. These questionnaires somewhat differed from each other in terms of contents and question items. For employee survey, the questionnaire, consisting of 26 questions, was designed to obtain data on the degree of employee satisfaction, job adherence, hospitality management and other aspects of bowling business. Bowling alley staffs were specifically asked to evaluate own job satisfaction using the 6-point likert scale with 1 'totally dissatisfied', 2 'dissatisfied', 3 'somewhat dissatisfied', 4 'somewhat satisfied', 5 'satisfied' and 6 'totally satisfied.' On the other hand, for customer survey, the questionnaire, consisting of 26 questions, was designed to obtain data on the degree of customer satisfaction, alley's member years, reasons why they come to bowling alleys, and other aspects of playing bowling conditions. Specifically, regular customers were asked to gauge customer satisfaction using the 6-point likert scale with 1 'totally dissatisfied', 2 'dissatisfied', 3 'somewhat dissatisfied', 4 'somewhat satisfied', 5 'satisfied' and 6 'totally satisfied.'

Data collection

Two different procedures were employed to collect data in this study due to two different types of sample subjects. For employees, a mail survey was employed at each bowling alley. For regular customers, on the other hand, the researchers with help from alley staffs handed out the questionnaire with a stamped envelope to regular customers. Both questionnaires were sent to the researchers by mail. The period of data collection was carried out from October 1 to November 1, 2003.

Data analyses

The usable data obtained from the written questionnaires were analyzed using by t-tests. There were four steps to analyze data. First, the mean values of employee satisfaction were calculated at each bowling alley. Next, the overall mean value ($\bar{\chi}=3.96$) of employee satisfaction from all eight alleys was calculated. Third, eight alleys were divided into two groups; four alleys to be "High-satisfied alley ($\bar{\chi}>3.96$)" and the other four "Low-satisfied alley ($\bar{\chi}<3.96$).". At last, a series of t-test was conducted to compare two groups on four elements customer satisfaction.

Main findings & Discussions

Characteristic of regular customers

- Regular customers tend to evaluate severely and appear to value very high at staff hospitality.

The correlation analysis of the length of customer years and customer satisfaction was carried out. On this analysis, independent variable was the length of customer years and dependent variable was customer satisfaction at bowling alleys. On the basis of the correlation analysis, a negative correlation (N=435, $\gamma=-0.1949$, $p<0.01$) was found between two variables. From this result, it is suggested that regular customers tend to show low customer satisfaction. As Fujimoto (1992) implied that it is considered the longer the length of customer, the higher their expectation on hospitality management became.

Characteristic of bowling alley staffs

- Factors determining employee satisfaction were human relation and job contents oriented.

Employee satisfaction in the bowling alleys was examined with a multiple answer form. As a result, employee satisfaction dealt with “role execution”, “learning of the knowledge regarding a job”, “good relation with regular customers” and “good relation with other staff members.”

From these results, it is important to provide challenging job that improves the ability of the employee, as Herzberg (1959) pointed out. Also, as previous research studies (Haraguchi, 1995; Ikeda, 1991; Murasugi, 1975; Taketo, 1991) indicated, that the communication in the workplace and the personal relations with customers would be likely to influence on employee satisfaction.

Relationship between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction

- The bowling alleys that were applied into “High-satisfied alley” created high customer satisfaction than the alleys that were applied “Low-satisfied alley.”

The results of t-tests between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction were depicted in Table 1. Eight alleys were divided into two groups, “High-satisfied alley” and “Low-satisfied alley”, on the basis of mean value of eight alleys employee satisfaction. On the basis of t-tests, the significant difference in all four elements of customer satisfaction was found between two groups.

Our findings reinforced the assumptions of Nosaka (2003) and Hattori (1996) that employee satisfaction is the key factor to create customer satisfaction in the bowling alleys. Our results also supported their assumption of the existence of correlation between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction at the bowling alleys. Therefore, it is safe to assume that people in bowling business should improve employee satisfaction to begin with, and then to concentrate on bringing up their performance of hospitality management to create customer satisfaction.

Table 1. Result of the t-tests Relations between Employee Satisfaction and Customer Satisfaction

Elements of Customer Satisfaction	Alley groups	n	Average of Customer Satisfaction	S.D.	df	t	p
Human element	High	247	4.84	0.85	450	3.83	**
	Low	241	4.50	1.11			
Physicalelement	High	253	4.52	0.83	499	3.72	**
	Low	248	4.23	0.96			
Creative element	High	245	4.90	0.77	458	4.54	**
	Low	239	4.54	0.94			
Functionalelement	High	240	4.52	0.62	437	5.10	**
	Low	233	4.18	0.80			

Note; High = High-satisfied alley
Low = Low-satisfied alley

**□ p□ @.01

Conclusion

Our results indicated that employee satisfaction somewhat directly led customer satisfaction at the bowling alleys. Thus, it is necessary for bowling business to improve employee satisfaction at first. Hospitality management is a significant forecasting index in the bowling business to succeed.

Main References

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