



RESEARCH ARTICLE

IMPACT OF CHECK IN AND CHECK OUT POLICIES OF HOTELS ON SERVICE QUALITY OF HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY.

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Manuscript Info

Manuscript History

Received: 25 March 2017
Final Accepted: 27 April 2017
Published: May 2017

Key words:-

Check In and Check Out Time, Service Quality, SERVQUAL, Hospitality Industry, Hotel Industry.

Abstract

The tourism industry has played an important role in the economy of different countries in the last decades. Many countries have considered tourism as a means for generating more travelers and tourists, that resulted in added business and profits in their home countries. Hence the researcher was much interested in finding out the impact of Check In and Check Out policies followed by various hotels on service quality. Nowadays many of the hotels are following twelve noon Check In and Check Out policies and some hotels on business seasons follow 1:00 p.m. Check In and 10:00 a.m. Check Out. By this, the hotels can sell the room up to two times a day, which boosts the revenue of the hotel. These policies create a lot of inconvenience to the guest, leaving an awful impression on the system, which in turn causes an adverse effect on service quality. SERVQUAL is an administration quality appraisal apparatus. Since the advancement of SERVQUAL, it has been widely connected in an assortment of organizations for better plans of action. The objective of this study is to analyze the level of satisfaction of the guests towards the Check In and Check Out policies followed by the hotels and also to find out its impact on the service quality of the hospitality industry. As per guests, Check In & Check Out policies of a hotel influence the service quality. In some cases it is reported that the guests experienced difficulty in waiting for a long time to be allotted with a room when they arrived before time at a hotel.

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Introduction:-

The tourism industry has played an important role in the economy of different countries in the last decades. Many countries have considered tourism as a mean for generating more travelers and tourists, that resulted in added business and profits in their home countries. Regions and destinations are competing with each other on attracting as many tourists possible. The developed countries are engaged in doing marketing for their destinations and are continuously improving their services and striving to offer excellent experiences to their guests.

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Among others, the hotel sector is one of the most important ones. On the other hand, little has been done in establishing and offering high service quality and customer satisfaction. Furthermore, it is this office that encourages further fascination of visitors towards a spot, in light of the fact that it makes their visit more helpful.

In the 1980's there was extensive merger and acquisition activity between hotel and non-hotel companies. Many companies are now selling specific brands in an effort to get back to their core business. Luxury and first class hotels have created more amenities and products for their customers while economy and budget motels have cut back services in order to maintain lower prices. Also, specialized extended stay and suite hotels have become more popular. Hotels with indoor water parks are one of the newest trends. Timeshares is another segment that many hotel companies are involved with recently. The development, sale and management of timeshares have become particularly popular with the large chains. Franchising continues to flourish in the hotel industry.

Hence the researcher was much interested in finding out impact of Check In and Check Out time followed by various types of hotels and its effect on service quality. The current Check In and Check Out systems cause inconvenience to guests in various ways and thereby affects the guests' impression on the system, which in turn creates an adverse effect on service quality.

Type of Hotel Industry:-

The hotel industry is a mature industry marked by intense competition. Industry-wide, most growth occurs in the international, rather than the domestic arena. There are two ways to categorize hotels: by functions or by star ratings. By functions, hotel has been classified into several types: Commercial Hotels, Airport Hotels, Conference Centers, Economy Hotels, Suite or All-Suite Hotels, Residential Hotels, Casino Hotels and Resort Hotels

Impact of Check In and Check Policy of Hotels:-

Nowadays many of the hotels follow twelve noon Check In and twelve noon Check Out policy and some hotels in business seasons follow one p.m. Check In and ten a.m. Check Out policy. By this the hotels can sell the room up to two times a day and that will increase the revenue of the hotel. But in contradiction, this will create a lot of inconvenience to the guests. Most of the hotels offer early Check In according to availability without assurance, but due to this uncertainty, guests are compelled to book the hotel for one additional day or for extra charges for the want of assurance. This is very much unethical on the point of view of a guest. According to the service ethics, the guest has the right to enjoy for the amount he has paid and must be able to Check In at any time according to his convenience as per the arrival. Earlier, apart from 24hrs Check In, hotels used to provide more grace time to guests considering the situations and now everything has come into monitoring form without bothering guests' rights. Many guests expressed their dissatisfaction in specific Check In and Check Out time in hotels. This was the prime motto of the researcher.

Service Quality in Hospitality Industry:-

SERVQUAL is an administration quality appraisal apparatus. Since the advancement of SERVQUAL, it has been widely connected in an assortment of organizations for better plans of action. SERVQUAL is the most supported instrument for measuring administration quality (Robinson, 1999). Parasuraman et al (1988) reasoned that shoppers see quality by contrasting desires to execution and assess the nature of the administration in distinctive measurements. A 22-inquiry (thing) scale measuring five fundamental measurements are recorded.

- **Tangibles:** The presence of the physical facilities, equipments, correspondence material and work force.
- **Reliability:** The capacity to perform a guaranteed administration constantly and precisely.
- **Responsiveness:** The ability to help clients and to give brief administration.
- **Assurance:** The learning and obligingness of representatives and their capacity to move trust and trust in the clients.
- **Empathy:** The minding, individualized consideration a firm gives its clients.

SERVQUAL has been generally utilized by the scientists as a part of an assortment of modern and business settings like tire retailing (Carman, 1990), hotels (Saleh and Ryan, 1992), travel and tourism (Fick and Ritchie, 1991), car servicing (Bouman and Van der Wiele, 1992), business schools, data administrations (Pitt et al, 1995), advanced education (McElwee and Redman, 1993), health awareness applications (Babakus and Mangold, 1992) and numerous more. The present study utilizes Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry's 22-thing scale and five-measurement structure of administration quality for inspecting the exploration issue i.e. the nature of administrations offered by lodgings in Rourkela.

Aim of the Study:-

The hospitality industry is becoming the primary source of wealth, trade and growth throughout the developed world. Economic prosperity means that service transactions are becoming a tradeoff between the benefits obtained and the costs incurred in terms of time and control, with price becoming irrelevant. Deregulation of services and the application of new technologies are presenting considerable challenges to hospitality industry. The service product is difficult to be designed and introducing market orientation into a hospitality industry dominated by operations is yet another forceful task. The application of marketing principles in hospitality industry is the main thing in service marketing. The industry has to focus on the satisfaction of the guest and has to design necessary service policies according to requirement and expectations of guests and moreover, any existing practices that are inconvenient to guests and unethical may also to be demolished. Along with revenue earning, equal importance for guest expectations and satisfaction are also to be considered. Hence there is a need to study the service quality and prevailing practices in hotel industry.

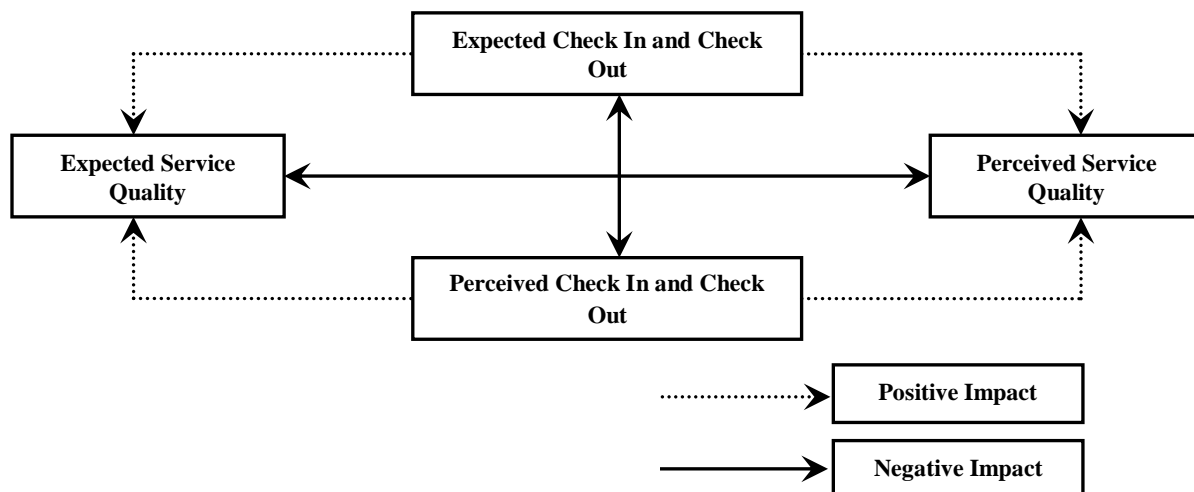
Problem Statement:-

It is important for hotel firms to consider what the customer values while setting pricing (Shoemaker & Mattila, 2009). There are a few hotels that challenge the present trends of the Check In and Check Out policies. For example, The Residency Tower Hotel in Chennai provides 24hrs check in, allowing guests to check-in any time during the day and stay for 24 hours after check-in, and this strategy distinguished this hotel from its competitors. Many hotels are following this strategy but many of the top class hotels including chain hotels are adamant on the 12 noon Check In/Check Out timings. The advantage they foresee is to earn more profit by selling the room twice in a day. So the impact of this policy is to be considered and decided as to whether it is an ethical practice. It is very much on an affirmative side as far as the hotel is considered due to the increase in revenue generation, but from the customer's view point it causes a lot of inconvenience and dissatisfaction. Customers may not feel the value worth the payment made.

Conceptual Model:-

The theoretical framework is a model of logical relationship among the independent variable expected and perceived Check In and Check Out and the dependent variable expected and perceived service quality ; the self-developed theoretical model from the outlook of the hotel guests who are visiting Kerala hospitality industry has been developed by the researcher, which is depicted in **Figure 1.1**. Based on this model, the research objectives are framed and hypotheses are also formulated.

Figure 1.1. Impact of Check In / Checkout on Service Quality

**Objective of the Study:-**

The objective of this study is to analyze the level of satisfaction of the guests towards the Check In and Check Out policies followed by the hotels and also to find its impact on the service quality of the hospitality industry.

Review of Literature:-

Kim and Mattila (2011), state that " hotel customers do not arrive at a hotel collectively, however, hotels choose to rely on the orthodox of fixed check-in and check-out times". Room rates are typically charged on a nightly basis. Hotel guests do not enjoy any discounts on arriving late. We argue that service duration and price mismatch can negatively affect price fairness for two reasons. First, prior literature argues that charging different prices for essentially the same product or service, raises concerns about fairness when dynamic pricing strategies are evaluated by consumers (Garbario & Lee, 2003; Grewal et al., 2004). If one guest pays \$200.00 for 20 hours and another customer pays \$200.00 for a 10 hour stay, then one is paying \$10.00 an hour and the other is paying \$20.00 an hour. This indicates that the two customers are paying different prices for the same service. Price fairness literature indicates that the degree of transaction similarity has a significant influence on price fairness perceptions (Xia, et al., 2004). The comparative reference can be other customers as well as the guests themselves if consumers compare the current transaction with a past transaction. Service duration mismatch results in a high degree of transaction dissimilarity which leads to price unfairness. Second, one of the characteristics of services that differ from the characteristics of manufactured goods is perishability. Services such as hotel rooms are perishable and if the services are not sold, the revenue for those services is lost forever (Shoemaker & Mattila, 2009). Likewise, perishability of hotel rooms is relevant to customers. If a customer pays for 24 hours, the hotel room has to be used during that period of time. If the customer checks in late, the duration of time the room has not been used is perishable to the customer. The customer cannot keep the service or use it later.

Many studies revealed that guest is always bothered about the responsiveness and assurance of the facilities. Guest may arrive at the hotel at any time according to their convenience. Most of the travelers may not be able to reach their destinations at exact timings as planned. There may be a delay in the arrival or the arrival may be before the expected time depending on the transport conditions and other related concerns. All the guests expect an immediate Check In once they arrive at a hotel. The main problem faced by the hotel when there is no specific Check Out time is the difficulty in room allotment to the new guests. This may be one of the reasons hotels follow a particular Check In and Check Out time. The second advantage hotels add on is that they can sell the room at least two times in a day according to the availability and that can increase the revenue.

Campos and Marodin (2012) present the results of a study completed in the Hotel Industry, in the city of Natal, Brazil. Natal receives more than 2 million visitors per year and is also one of the cities with the largest numbers of tourist vacancies in the country, approximately 23,000. The objective of this work is to analyze the level of guest satisfaction from the gaps existing between the expectations and the perception of service received at hotels. Through questionnaires, 1440 guests from 6 hotels of the hotel network, falling into tourist categories, superior and luxury were involved. The sample plan established two collection phases; the first in which guests were interviewed before Check In into the hotel and secondly at Check Out.

The study revealed that the majority of respondents traveled by flight and came with tourism as their objective. The results suggest that there was a slight difference in the ranking of attributes, whether by category, or by hotel. The Spearman test confirmed that the expectations of the guests did not change significantly when the category of the hotel was changed. In the general evaluation by guests, from the gaps calculated, in thirteen of the attributes the performance of the hotels surpassed customer expectations.

Research Methodology:-

The methodology for the present study includes exploration and description. The exploratory research enables the researcher to gain insight into the research topic, to clarify central concepts and construct and develop methods, which have to be employed in the study. The descriptive research allows the researcher to measure and report the occurrence with which specific variable occurs in the sample to present an image of the facts of a condition or relationship.

The data collected for the study includes primary and secondary data. Primary data are those which are collected, as fresh and for the first time and happen to be original in character. The secondary data was collected from company publications in the form of annual report, Journal publication, Government reports. Academic research findings are also taken into consideration for this present study.

Research Instrument:-

This research has an applied questionnaire as the research instrument for collecting the data. The questionnaire comprises of three sections; the first section measures the demographical profile like the number of times the guest stayed at that particular hotel with the labels as once/twice, thrice/five, five/ten times and more than 10 times. The second section measures the Check In / Check Out policy followed by the hotel, it comprises of two segmentations, what the guest expects and perceives. It has four measuring questions and it is measured using five-point scale of Likert ranging from “5” = strongly agree, “4” = agree, “3” = moderate, “2” = disagree and “1” = strongly disagree. The third section measures the service quality. The five variables used to measure the service quality are reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles, it also comprises of two segmentations, what the guest expects and perceives. It is measured using five-point scale of Likert ranging from “5” = strongly agree, “4” = agree, “3” = moderate, “2” = disagree and “1” = strongly disagree.

Pilot Study:-

The pilot study was conducted with the help of the structured questionnaire which was administered among the sample of 50 respondents. The Cronbach's alpha value for the expected service quality is 0.788, perceived service quality is 0.844, expected Check In / Check Out policy is 0.836 and perceived Check In / Check Out policy is 0.724. The most commonly used reliability coefficient is the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. It is based on the average correlation of items within a test, if the items are standardized to a standard deviation of 1, or on the average, covariance among items on a scale, if the items are not standardized. The calculated overall reliability coefficient has exceeded 0.8 and appears to be consistently high across the entire variables.

Sampling Method:-

The study is descriptive in nature, with the sampling method of simple random sampling. The population of the study is the tourists, who are visiting three, four and five stars hotels in Kerala. Since the population is infinite, the researcher has taken a sample of 1354, with a confidence level of 99% and a margin of errors of 3.5%. The researcher has considered the De Morgan's sample formula and table to find out the desired sample for the study. The researcher has distributed around 1400 questionnaires to the respondents and arrived at a sample size of 1354 for the study and the rest of the questionnaires of about 46 numbers were biased.

Data Analysis:-

The collected data were fed into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 20 version and Analyzing Momentum of Structures (AMOS) 18 version, popularly used statistical software for social research analysis. The following statistical tools were used for analysis namely; the frequency distribution, measures of central tendency and dispersion (mean and standard deviation), correlation and SEM modeling.

Analysis and Interpretation:-

The data may be reliable and valid but it does not serve the purpose unless the data is carefully classified, processed, analyzed, interpreted and concluded. This analysis consists of four parts such as Frequency Distribution (Percentage Analysis), Measures of Central Tendency (Mean Scores) and Measures of Dispersion (Standard Deviation), Chi-Square Test, Correlation and Regression (SEM Modeling).

Part I - Frequency Distribution –Frequency of stay:-

The table clearly depicts the frequency of stay at a hotel in the past years including current stay wise category of the respondents. The values or the labels given in the following category are once or twice, thrice or five times, five or ten times and more than 10 times. The table is as follows;

Table 1:- Number of Times Stayed at the Hotel.

Profile Labels	Frequency	Percentage
Once or Twice	486	35.9
Thrice or Five Times	435	32.1
Five or Ten Times	257	19.0
More than 10 times	176	13.0
Total	1354	100.0

The majority of the respondents have stayed once or twice with 35.9 per cent, 32.1 per cent of the respondents have stayed thrice or five times, 19.0 per cent of the respondents have stayed five or ten times and finally 13.0 per cent of the respondents have stayed more than 10 times.

Part II – Mean and Standard Deviation – Check In / Check Out Policy and Service Quality

This part of analysis measures the Check In / Check Out policy and expected/perceived service quality as opined by the respondents.

Table 2:- Check in / Check Out Policy.

Measuring Variables	Expected		Perception		Gap
	Mean	Sd	Mean	Sd	
Check In / Check Out policy of the hotel is flexible and convenient.	4.40	.490	1.39	.488	3.01
Satisfied with the grace time given for Check in / Check Out.	4.39	.488	1.43	.495	2.96
Satisfied with the Check in / Check Out policy of the hotel	4.36	.481	1.41	.492	2.95
Recommend this hotel to my friends and family because of the good Check in / Check Out policy followed.	4.33	.471	1.51	.500	2.82
Mean Score	4.37	0.48	1.44	0.49	2.94
Sd - Standard Deviation					

The table clearly shows that the respondents strongly agree with the Check In / Check Out policy with an expected mean value of 4.37 and an expected standard deviation of 0.48, whereas the respondents disagree with the Check In / Check Out policy with a perceived mean value of 1.44 and standard deviation 0.49. The gap is also found to be large with a value of 2.94.

Table 3:- Section VI – Mean and Standard Deviation of Service Quality

Measuring Variables	Expected		Perception		Gap
	Mean	Sd	Mean	Sd	
Reliability	4.44	0.51	2.17	0.69	2.27
Responsiveness	4.35	0.49	2.29	0.66	2.05
Assurance	4.31	0.46	2.12	0.66	2.19
Empathy	4.32	0.49	2.17	0.68	2.15
Tangibles	4.35	0.47	2.07	0.74	2.28
Mean Score	4.35	0.49	2.17	0.69	2.19
Sd - Standard Deviation					

The table clearly shows that the respondents strongly agree with the overall service quality with an expected mean value of 4.35 and an expected standard deviation of 0.49, whereas the respondents have a moderate feel towards the overall service quality with a perceived mean value of 2.17 and a perceived standard deviation of 0.69. The gap is also found to be large with a value of 2.19.

Part III – Correlation – Check In / Check Out Policy and Service Quality:-

H_0 : There is no significant correlation between the Check In / Check Out policy (expected and perceived) and service quality (expected and perceived).

Variables		Expected Service Quality	Perceived Service Quality	Expected Check in / Check out	Perceived Check in / Check out
Expected Service Quality	PC	1			
	Sig.				
	N	1354			
Perceived Service Quality	PC	-.238**	1		
	Sig.	.000			
	N	1354	1354		
Expected Check In / Checkout	PC	.704**	-.365**	1	
	Sig.	.000	.000		
	N	1354	1354	1354	
Perceived Check	PC	-.037	.186**	-.047	1

In / Checkout	Sig.	.179	.000	.081	
	N	1354	1354	1354	1354
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					
PC - Pearson Correlation					

The variable expected service quality has positive correlation with expected Check In / Check Out with Pearson correlation value of 0.704, whereas negative correlation with perceived service quality with Pearson correlation value of - 0.238 and no correlation with perceived Check In / Check Out.

Similarly the variable perceived service quality has positive correlation with perceived Check In / Check Out with Pearson correlation value of 0.186, whereas negative correlation with expected Check In / Check Out with Pearson correlation value of - 0.365.

And finally the variable expected Check In / Check Out has no correlation with perceived Check In / Check Out.

Part IV – Structural Equation Modelling - Impact of Check In / Check Out Policy on Service Quality:-

The impact of the independent variables like the expected and perceived Check In / Check Out policy on the dependent variables like expected and perceived service quality:- The regression weights have been used to find the impact of the independent variables on the dependent variables. The GFI (Goodness of Fit) and AGFI (Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index) nearing to one or value one indicates that the model is a good fit. In this model it's nearing one so it indicates that the model is a good fit. In this model the GFI value is 0.998 and AGFI value is 0.992. This clearly implies that the model is a good fit.

Figure 1.2. Impact of Check In / Check Out Policy on Service Quality

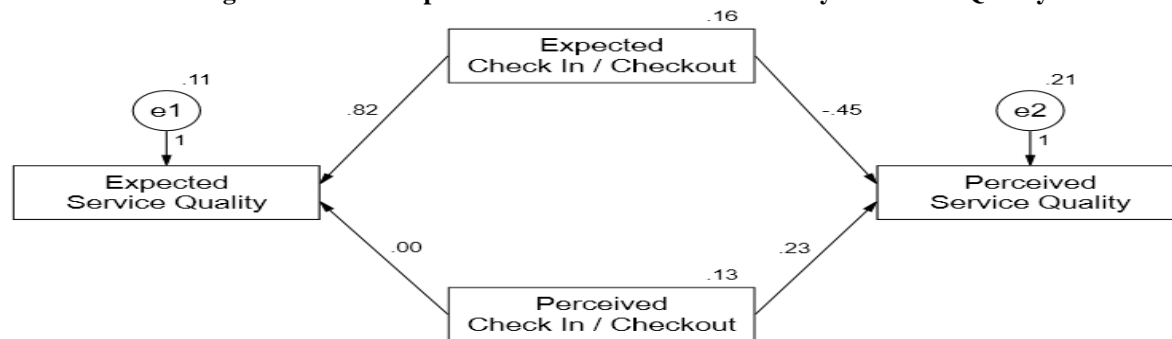


Table 4:- Regression Weight - Impact of Check In / Check Out Policy on Service Quality

Variable	Inf.	Variable	UE	SE	S.E.	C.R.	P
Expected Service Quality	←	Expected Check in / Checkout Policy	0.817	0.703	0.022	36.407	***
Expected Service Quality	←	Perceived Check in / Checkout Policy	-0.004	-0.003	0.024	-0.163	0.871
Perceived Service Quality	←	Perceived Check in / Checkout Policy	0.231	0.169	0.034	6.783	***
Perceived Service Quality	←	Expected Check in / Checkout Policy	-0.451	-0.358	0.031	-14.341	***
*** Significant at 0.001percentage Level			S.E – Standard Error				
** Significant at 0.05percentage Level			C.R – Critical Ration				
UE – Unstandardised Estimate			P – Probability Value				
SE – Standardised Estimate			Inf. – Influence				

The independent variable expected Check In / Check Out policy has a positive influence over the dependent variable expected service quality. Similarly the independent variable perceived Check In / Check Out policy has a positive influence over the dependent variable perceived service quality. Whereas the independent variable perceived Check In / Check Out policy has negative correlation on the dependent variable perceived service quality and the

independent variable perceived Check In / Check Out policy does not influence the dependent variable expected service quality.

Findings of the Study:-

The majority of the respondents have stayed in their respective hostels once or twice. The respondents strongly agree with the expected Check In / Check Out policy and expected service quality, whereas the respondents disagree with the perceived Check In / Check Out policy and perceived service quality.

Similarly from the correlation analysis the variable expected service quality has negative correlation with perceived service quality and no correlation with perceived Check In / Check Out. Similarly the variable perceived service quality has negative correlation with expected Check In / Check Out and finally the variable expected Check In / Check Out has no correlation with perceived Check In / Check Out.

Thus it is clear that the independent variable perceived Check In / Check Out policy has negative correlation with the dependent variable perceived service quality and the independent variable perceived Check In / Check Out policy does not influence the dependent variable expected service quality.

Recommendations:-

Thus the researcher placed the following recommendations from his findings on the impact of the Check In and Check Out policies of the hotels. For all pre booked guests, hotels have to provide any time Check In Check Out facility, but hotels can request for the approximate time of Check In and Check Out. Hotels have to ensure that the guests do not wait for long time to be allotted with a room. 24 hrs Check Out policy is the expected selling standard but hotels can sell the room for 12 hrs also at a special rate according to the availability and situations. This can avoid perishability. Hotels should operate for the convenience of the guests along with the profitability. Some chain hotels in India still continue 24 hrs Check In and Check Out policy for their guest satisfaction and they found it a success concerning the total volume of the business. They found that guests who once stayed in these hotels continued to prefer them for further stay. Regular guests are always a success of a hotel.

In peak seasons, hotels may charge peak season tariffs still providing 24 hrs Check In/ Check out and hotels can sell rooms on hourly basis to guests who want to avail a room only for refreshment purposes, especially for walk in guests (who are found to be genuine) at the discretion of the hotel. In the 24 hrs system, hotels may also impose extra charges for stay of extra hours after providing a reasonable grace time. After 24 hrs, if the stay extends further to 12 or more hours, the hotels may charge a day's rent. Hotels may avoid inconvenience caused to guests arising due to long waiting time in settling the final bills. Bills to be kept ready as that would be the last meeting point of the guest and therefore an important factor for the guest satisfaction. Guests may be briefed properly about the Check In / Check Out policies including charges applicable for additional hours of stay.

Conclusions:-

With the feedback received from the guests and the data interpretation, comfort of the guest is of highest priority. The place of stay should be a home away from home and thereby, the aspects of comfort, security and reliability are to be ensured.

Purpose of tourists visiting a place may be business reasons, pilgrimage, leisure, sports/events, family functions etc. Thereby time of arrival of guests may differ and availability of rooms for guests at arrival time is to be ensured, especially if the rooms are booked in advance.

In some cases it is reported that guests experienced difficulties due to long waiting hours to be allotted with a room when they arrived before time in a hotel. One guest expressed that he booked a hotel for a particular day and his travel was by train. He reached the hotel at around 9am and he was compelled to avail the common wash room for his basic needs and waited up to 12 noon to be allotted a room. He had to attend a meeting by 12 noon but because of this delay, he deferred the meeting. In perspective of a guest, if they can book a hotel with the 24hrs Check In/Check Out, getting a room according to their requirement is mandatory if a tentative arrival time is informed. Most of the guests mentioned that the 12 noon Check In/ Check Out policies of hotels are unethical and are based on their monetary advantages alone. Some guests also pointed out that at least hotels have to allot the rooms to guests according to their desired time by charging a reasonable amount.

From all the above observations, it is specific that 24hrs Check In/Check Out system is mandatory for hospitality industry and is one of the important aspects of customer satisfaction and service quality enhancement.

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