

The Impact of Services Provided to PwDs on Customer Perceptions of Service Quality in the Hotel Business: The Influence of Gender and Educational Status with or without Disability

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Abstract: When PwDs engage with the persons who do not have disabilities; both parties experience a considerable level of stress. While relating to PwDs, subjects with no disability have higher emotional distress and physiological arousal, less verbal behavior variability, less motoric activity, and dismiss connections sooner than once relating with their counterparts who do not have a disability. The origins of negative attitudes toward PwDs, Hotels that provide services to people with disabilities help to develop a positive image for the organization while also lowering the customer rate. The hospitality industry understands the importance of projecting a positive image and influencing client behavior. As a result, we analyze the impact of services provided to PwDs on perceptions of customer of quality service in the hotel business, utilizing principles from service quality research. Survey design with quantitative approach was employed. The research covered all customers who visit hotels and restaurants in Kwadaso Municipality of Ashanti Region, Ghana. The study's sample size was obtained after the data collection. Hence, convenient sampling technique was used. The data collection instrument was a questionnaire. SPSS was used for the analysis of the results. The study found that the educated and uneducated customers showed a negative relation with service quality delivery when they see that PwDs are served at the hotel. The study revealed that males and females showed a positive relation with service quality delivery when they see that PwDs are served at the hotel. The study concluded that the relationship between service quality delivery when they see that PwDs are served at the hotel and the model was statistically insignificant.

Keywords: *hospitality industry; service quality; customer perception; persons with disabilities; gender; educational status.*

1. Introduction

Businesses like Hyatt, Marriott, Starwood, Sodexo, and McDonalds have made inclusion diversity an importance in their efforts of corporate social responsibility, with the purpose of hiring people from many backgrounds to assist guests from numerous backgrounds. As said by Kalargyrou & Volis (2014), according to research, people with disabilities (PwDs) face more stereotypes than individuals minus disabilities, and households with PwDs earn less than families without them (Harkin, 2014). Hotels that provide services to people with disabilities help to develop a positive image for the organization while also lowering the customer rate. The hospitality business understands the importance of projecting a positive image and influencing client behavior (Barber & Scarcelli, 2010; Ryu & Jang, 2008; Raajpoot, 2002). Employers in hospitality and retail businesses, according to Nickson et al. (2005), value soft skills such as attitude and appearance over hard skills. Employers are interested more in employing front-line staff who appear sound and good appropriate. Numerous research show that quality service is a key predictor of satisfaction of customer and is widely used to predict repeat business, resulting in new customers and brand loyalty (Oh, 2000; Yuksel & Yuksel, 2002). Customers use tangible aspects for example the decoration, building, equipment, furniture, and service appearance people to evaluate service effectiveness and make purchasing decisions in hotel services (Lovelock et al., 2014). Customers' decisions may be influenced by the look of people with disabilities by up to 90%. (Stanley & Stanley, 2015). For those with visible disabilities, appearance norms may be different, and this trait may influence perceptions of customer. Though there

has been studies on affective reactions and employees' attitudes while providing services to people with disabilities in the industry of hospitality (Houtenville & Kalargyrou, 2012, 2015; Groschl, 2005; 2013; 2007). There is very little studies on affective reactions and consumers' attitudes once they come into direct interaction with disabled people. It's crucial to remember that disabilities come in a variety of forms, comprising physical, mental, and sensory impairments. Consumer approval may differ contingent on the impairment type, especially if the handicap is obvious and may affect the appearance of service employee. As a result, we analyze the impact of services provided to PwDs on perceptions of customer of quality service in the hotel business, utilizing principles from service quality research.

1.1. Attitudes toward disabilities

Early studies revealed that when PwDs engage with persons who do not have disabilities, both parties experience a considerable level of stress (Kleck et al., 1966; Kleck, 1966, 1968). While relating with PwDs, subjects with no disability have higher emotional distress and physiological arousal, less verbal behavior variability, less motoric activity, and dismiss connections sooner than once relating with their counterparts who do not have a disability. The origins of negative attitudes toward PwDs, according to Livneh (1982, p. 344), include sociocultural conditioning, early-life of childhood experiences that foster adult stereotypical beliefs, mechanisms of psychodynamic that create unresolved conflicts and unrealistic expectations, and factors of disability-related (for example severity, functionality levels, visibility). According to Burge et al. (2007), a study of landmark in Canada conducted in 2007, 87% of respondents agreed that employing PwDs would not harm the company's image, and 65% said that employing individuals with intelligent impairments did not pose any productivity or safety difficulties. Consumers' buy intentions for a restaurant that provides services to people with disabilities were explored by Kuo & Kalargyrou (2014), who discovered that consumers had higher intentions purchase for a friends/family dining circumstance than for a business or romantic circumstance. Depending on the type of disability, attitudes and views often differ. Siller et al. (1967) investigated how individuals with blindness, amputations, and aesthetic disorders were perceived. People were uncomfortable in the existence of amputees, ugly, and blind, and they shied away from intimacy with them. They likewise disconnected them, prepared insulting comments about them, and performed in a hostile way to them. While participants came in close private contact with the impaired cosmetically people, they sensed sickened. In the context of service contacts, studies have also highlighted the obstacles that PwDs face as clients. Air travelers and hotel guests with impairments (namely physical disabilities) reported that the staff regarded them as if they had a cognitive handicap because of their appearance:

According to Paul, p. 26 (2004), cognitive impairment as determined by clinical quantified assessment or neuropsychological testing, in addition to objective indication of a general systemic medical illness or nervous central system malfunction. These results are consistent with research that show that people who are physically less beautiful are perceived to have desirable fewer social and personal attributes than individuals who are attractive (Ross, 2004; Poria et al., 2011; Poria et al., 2010). According to studies, educating the general public about PwDs can aid to move hostile stereotypes and attitudes about them. However, irrespective of intervention method, changing attitudes of society about PwDs is easier than changing attitudes of an individual (Daruwalla & Darcy, 2005).

1.2. Physical attractiveness and service quality

Since Parasuraman et al. (1985) study, which defined service quality model, there has been a significant number of papers on quality service. The importance of consumer perception is consistent with the study that follows. Tangible scales (physical service evidence, for example appearance of employee), assurance, reliability (proof of dependability and performance), responsiveness, and empathy are all embedded in the service quality model. The research by Nickson et al. (2005) focuses on the importance of front-line personnel' looks in hotel and retail industries. Employers are searching for "soft" talents rather than "hard" capabilities (specifically learned/teachable skills) in their front-line employees, according to the findings (i.e. what they are like). Lookism (Smorangkir, 2013; Harris & Small, 2013; DeCastro-Ambrosetti & Cho, 2011), which is the concept of desirable vs unpleasant and is described as bias toward individuals based on their looks, is growing more frequent across countries and industries (Harris & Small, 2013). According to Martin & Groves (2002), appearance pride was in the best ten replies offered by restaurant and hotel employing managers when it came to hiring hospitality staff. According to Warhurst et al. (2000) study, customer service representatives are more probable to be hired centered on their physical look. According to Dessler (2009), good-looking individuals (those who appeal to the intellect or the senses, for example by being gorgeous) are likely more to be hired, earn significantly more money, and be successful more than others since indication suggests they carry more business. Hamermesh (2011) discovered negative discrimination against persons who don't appear nice, as well as whether government initiatives should help the unattractive (eye displeasing, unappealing). Numerous research have looked into the link between handicap and physical beauty, or the extent to which an individual's physical characteristics are deemed appealing (YourDictionary, 2018). In their study, Bordieri et al. (1983) observed that attractiveness and disability seem to be exclusive mutually, while Kleck & DeJong (1983) discovered that physical attractiveness is destructively connected

to physical handicap existence, particularly in females. According to Dion et al. (1972), these results support the preconception that “what is attractive is good”.

As a result, we claim that different disabilities of service employees may influence delivery of service quality perceptions, centered on previous literature on attitudes toward physical attractiveness of service workers and PwDs. The psychological halo effect could explain this potential bias. As said by Nisbett & Wilson (1977), the halo effect is a cognitive process in which one attribute's impression influences the perception of another independent attribute. This dynamic is caused by a person's desire to sustain consistency of cognitive, which is associated beliefs' consistency (Russo & Corbin, 2016; Holbrook, 1983), or/and avoid dissonance of cognitive, which is a short-term condition characterized by a strong desire to overcome the unfriendly state (Demirgünes & Avcilar, 2017). As a result, when PwDs are served in the hospitality business, the possibility for unfavorable attitudes or affective reactions to PwDs may skew service quality judgments.

1.3. Stereotyping

According to Buhalis et al. (2012), there is a lot of research on stereotyping as a major impediment to work, travel, and everyday life for PwDs. Not every stereotype is the same. Stereotyped groups can be despised as incompetent and useless (for example mature individuals), admired for their extreme, dangerous competence (for example Asians), adored as harmless and sweet (for example housewives), or despised as inhuman and cold (for example housewives) (for example rich people). In their content stereotype model, Fiske et al. (2002) claimed that most group stereotypes are organized around 2 necessary dimensions: competence and warmth. Warmth denotes social and moral attributes (for example, friendly, warm, sociable, charming), while competence denotes intellectual and motivating qualities (charming capable, intelligent, competent, efficient). Most stereotypes, according to research, are of a mixed character, with negative scores on 1 dimension and favorable scores on the other (Eckes, 2006; Cuddy et al., 2005). These ambiguous contents stereotype might be the result of a struggle between societal pressures and bias against discrimination and prejudice.

Once a being tags an individual with physical handicap, the person likewise makes prospects about the individual centered on stereotypes about PwDs as a group (Stone and Colella 1996). For instance, if paraplegia people are helpless is the stereotype, the person is probable to accept that a paraplegic worker will be incapable to perform her or his job minus others' help. If the stereotype holds that individuals who have had limbs amputated are sad or bitter, the person will anticipate the applicant job with leg amputated to have struggle communicating with customers. People with disabilities are largely helped in everyday life, but often face discrimination, notably in the workplace and in education (Kalargyrou, 2014). Negative behaviors and attitudes toward them do exist, according to experimental research conducted in an organizational setting. As said by Louvet et al. (2009), numerous research have discovered negative workplace attitudes about disability individuals, such as their opinions as dependent, unproductive, and incompetent. According to Cuddy et al. (2007), explicit research utilizing self-reported data set the mixed content stereotype, revealing that people with disabilities are less capable and warmer than individuals with no disability. Nevertheless, implicit measurement of the content stereotype linked with disability revealed that people with disabilities are evaluated lower in both friendliness and competency than people without impairments (Rohmer & Louvet, 2012). Although there is some scholarship investigating stereotyping from employers' perspective once employing PwDs in the hospitality industry, there are only references of anecdotal to stereotyping concerning disability workers in encounters service. The present research is an attempt to close this gap. Hypotheses must be formulated and tested, just like in any other research. Once defining the hypotheses to test and our investigation direction, we took into account the results and work from the previous research.

1.4. Education

A higher educational level was associated with more favourable attitudes toward people with disabilities (Livneh 1982). Graduate nurses had higher favourable opinions toward PwDs than non-graduate nurses in a study (Slevin and Sines 1996). According to Nario-Redmond (2010), once college pupils were requested to describe the linkages among the classifications of “woman and disabled woman”, they identified substantial disparities among these ideas, citing Hanna & Rogovsky (1993) study. Mother, wife, work, and sexuality were mentioned by women, but disabled women were described as old, frail, ugly, and nasty, implying stereotyping. As a result, we provide the following hypotheses:

H1: When clients without disabilities observe that people with disabilities are served at the hotel, they will have a greater perception of delivery of service quality.

1.5. Gender

The Tringo study has been backed up by new studies. Females have more favourable attitudes about people with physical disabilities than males, according to a meta-study by Livneh (1982). Tervo et al. (2002) investigated medical pupils' views toward disability people and discovered that medical female pupils had additional attitudes which are positive toward disability people than medical male pupils and were less probable to have prejudices against people with disabilities. Women value warmth above competence attributes and place a higher importance

on recognizing warmth than males (Fiske et al. 2007). At a university in the Midwest, Miller (2010) managed attitudes toward disabled individuals scale to two hundred and forty faculty clinical members. The findings revealed that females recorded higher on average than males, implying that females have more attitudes which are positive regarding PwDs than males. The author theorizes that females' additional positive sentiments toward PwDs are due to empathy, as females record higher on empathy tests than males. We hypothesized, based on past research, that: **H2:** When clients without disabilities observe that PwDs are serviced at the hotel, they will have a greater perception of delivery of service quality.

2. Methodology

Survey design with quantitative approach was employed. The current study adopted a survey design since the questionnaire is directed to a sample to investigate the impact of services rendered to PwDs on customer perception of service quality in the industry of hospitality. The research covered all customers who visit hotels and restaurants in Kwadaso Municipality of Ashanti Region, Ghana. We surveyed 100 hotels and restaurants in the Kwadaso Municipality and selected 80 hotels and restaurants with the help of Survey Monkey Calculator with 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. The study's sample size was obtained after the data collection. Since the population of the customers who visit hotels and restaurants in Kwadaso Municipality was not certain. We used 2 months in collecting the data. However, close ended questionnaire was used in the data collection. Primary data sources were used to gather information for the investigation. The questionnaires were chosen for their low cost, low bias, increased anonymity, and ease of use. The study's quantitative data was gathered via a questionnaire. The data was analyzed utilizing the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS v 20) software application. The hotel and restaurant managers were consulted throughout the study to ensure that it adhered to the conduct and criteria of research practice of social science. Before administering the survey instrument, all participants were given the opportunity to give their informed permission.

3. Results

The R value in Table 1 is .143^a which means that the relationship between services rendered to PwDs and customer perception of service quality is weak but positive. The R Square of the model summary illustration is .020 which means the significant impact of services rendered to PwDs account for only 2% of the contribution of factors that influence customer perception of service quality. Hence, the model fit the study. The Std. Error of the Estimate between the variables is .55125 which is the average error for the model fit. How small the Std. Error of the Estimate is means that the model is good. The F Change for the model is 17.006 which is significant and it means that the R-squared does not equal to zero. Hence, the relationship between customer perception of service quality and the model is statistically significant. Moreover, the p-value in Table 2 is .000^b which is less than the F value of 17.006. This evidence that the regression model fits the data better than the model with no independent variables. The degree of freedom (814 – df1) is 813 which refers to the maximum number of logically independent values and have the freedom to vary in data sample without breaking any constraints. In Table 3, services rendered to PwDs showed a positive relation with on customer perception of service quality ($B = .143$, $t = 4.124$).

Table (1): Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.143 ^a	.020	.019	.55125

a. Predictors: (Constant), services rendered to PwDs

Table (2): ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5.168	1	5.168	17.006	.000 ^b
	Residual	247.052	813	.304		
	Total	252.220	814			

a. Dependent Variable: customer perception of service quality

b. Predictors: (Constant), services rendered to PwDs

Table (3): Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.859	.129		22.196	.000
	services rendered to PwDs	.141	.034	.143	4.124	.000

a. Dependent Variable: customer perception of service quality

Table 4 showed that five hundred and twenty-nine of the participants were males whereas two hundred and eighty-six of the participants were females. Males had the highest mean factor of 3.7974 and females with the second mean of 3.6282. The average distance score was from the mean ranged from .59490 to .49401, representing the measure of dispersion (standard deviation) which widely spread the distribution. The Std. Error Mean between males and service quality delivery when they see that PwDs are served at the hotel variables is .02587 which is the average error for the model fit. The Std. Error Mean between females and service quality delivery when they see that PwDs are served at the hotel variables is .02921 which is the average error for the model fit. How small the Std. Error of the Estimate is means that the model is good.

Table (4): Group Statistics

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Gender of customers without disability	Male	529	3.7974	.59490	.02587
	Female	286	3.6282	.49401	.02921

Hence, the relationship between service quality delivery when they see that PwDs are served at the hotel and the model is statistically significant. Moreover, the p-value in Table 5 is .001 which is less than the F value of 11.401. This evidence that the regression model fits the data better than the model with no independent variables. Males and females showed a positive relation with service quality delivery when they see that PwDs are served at the hotel ($t = 4.105$, $t = 4.337$).

Table (5): Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means
		F	Sig.	t
Gender of customers without disability	Equal variances assumed	11.401	.001	4.105
	Equal variances not assumed			4.337

Table 6 showed that four hundred and twenty-eight of the participants were educated whereas two hundred and eighty-seven of the participants were uneducated. Educated had the highest mean factor of 3.7145 and uneducated with the second mean of 3.8877. The average distance score was from the mean ranged from .48622 to .56457, representing the measure of dispersion (standard deviation) which widely spread the distribution. The Std. Error Mean between educated and service quality delivery when they see that PwDs are served at the hotel variables is .03256 which is the average error for the model fit. The Std. Error Mean between uneducated and service quality delivery when they see that PwDs are served at the hotel variables is .04185 which is the average error for the model fit. How small the Std. Error of the Estimate is means that the model is good.

Table (6): Group Statistics

	Type of employment	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Educational status of customers without disability	Educated	428	3.7145	.48622	.03256
	Uneducated	287	3.8877	.56457	.04185

Hence, the relationship between service quality delivery when they see that PwDs are served at the hotel and the model is statistically insignificant. Moreover, the p-value in Table 7 is .784 which is greater than the F value of .075. This is evidence that the regression model did not fit the data better than the model with no independent variables. Educated and uneducated showed a negative relation with service quality delivery when they see that PwDs are served at the hotel ($t = -3.315$, $t = -3.266$).

Table (7): Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means
		F	Sig.	t
Educational status of customers without disability	Equal variances assumed	.075	.784	-3.315
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.266

4. Discussion

The relationship between services rendered to PwDs and customer perception of service quality was weak but positive. The significant impact of services rendered to PwDs accounted for only 2% of the contribution of factors that influence customer perception of service quality. Hence, the model fit the study. The relationship between customer perception of service quality and the model was statistically significant. Moreover, the p-value was .000b which was less than the F value. This evidenced that the regression model fits the data better than the model with no independent variables. Services rendered to PwDs showed a positive relation with on customer perception of service quality. The relationship between service quality delivery when they see that PwDs are served at the hotel and the model was statistically significant. The p-value was .001 which was less than the F value of 11.401. This evidenced that the regression model fits the data better than the model with no independent variables. Males and females showed a positive relation with service quality delivery when they see that PwDs are served at the hotel. The relationship between service quality delivery when they see that PwDs are served at the hotel and the model was statistically insignificant. The p-value was .784 which was greater than the F value of .075. This evidenced that the regression model did not fit the data better than the model with no independent variables. Educated and uneducated showed a negative relation with service quality delivery when they see that PwDs are served at the hotel.

4.1. Theoretical implications

The current study looked at the impact of services offered to people with disabilities on customer perceptions of service quality because there is no comparable research in the hospitality area. The findings are intriguing because they reveal that, with PwDs, there are no important differences in perceptions of delivery of service quality and stereotyping among disabled service personnel. The study's findings corroborate those of several earlier research (Siller et al., 1967; Hamermesh, 2011), suggesting that aesthetics for front-line workers may not be a deciding element in the process of recruitment. These findings back with the findings of the Burge et al. (2007) study, which indicated that employing a disabled person has no negative influence on a company's image since disabled employees are not perceived as less trustworthy or professional. With the exception of those with visual impairment, respondents' demographics, such as generation, education, and religiosity, had minimal influence on their perception of delivery service quality, and there was no stereotyping evidence towards PwDs. These results are similar to those of Kuo & Kalargyrou (2014), who found no effect of demography on purchase intent. On the other hand, individuals who had a family member or close friend showed less stereotyping than people who did not. These results are comparable to Park et al.'s (2011). It's likewise worth noticing that when it came to employees with visual impairments, female respondents had a higher impression of trustworthiness than male participants, demonstrating that women can be more inclusive than males. As a result, businesses that hire people with disabilities may discover that their primary target market is women.

4.2. Practical implications

Persons with disabilities accessing the services of the hospitality industry are becoming more accepted because they are seen as normal in the same way that people without disabilities are. The results back the resource human management's choice to deploy strategically PwDs in front-line roles since they effectively portray the company's image, and visitors perceive their service to be dependable and professional. However, customers with vision problems were the only ones who were described as being attractive and less warm than their peers without disabilities. Despite this, they were thought to be reliable, competent, and knowledgeable. This is logical, considering that front-desk employees are required to keep frequent eye contact with their customers as portion of good service to customers, which can be challenging contingent on the severity and type of visual impairment. In research, the challenges of staff interacting with disabled guests in service encounters' context have been highlighted. Guests with disabilities frequently receive inaccurate information, and staff members lack the essential skills to assist them correctly. Disabled guests believe that info delivered by handicapped employees is more trustworthy than information delivered by non-disabled employees (Poria et al., 2011). Disabled guests with disabilities face accessibility challenges whereas traveling; as a result, managers and personnel must be informed and trained on how to serve and provide solutions accessible to PwDs (Buhalis et al., 2012). Furthermore, hospitality firms could explore hiring additional PwDs in front-line jobs to advance service to customer across diverse guest groups. As said by Daruwalla & Darcy (2005), change personal and social attitudes and reduce stereotyping toward PwDs by including suitable disability educational hospitality institutions curricula, inspiring managers to ponder applying obligatory disability awareness modules in role playing, performance appraisal and orientation programs, and safeguarding recurrent contact with PwDs. Additionally, customers must be educated. To manage client expectations, hospitality industry should inform consumers that they will most probable be dealing with disabled employees and teach them on how to do so efficiently through marketing and other kinds of communication. Companies that select personnel centered on appearance and selected workers who embody what they believe is the "correct image" should be aware of possible violations of the Article 23 of Human Rights Universal Declaration and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (United Nations, 2016). Additionally, focusing solely on

physical attractiveness may lead to bad customer service. Businesses must go afar ADA standards to diversify their service personnel by employing PwDs to improve customer experience. Recent technology breakthroughs (for example, sensors, microprocessors, and prosthetics) that facilitate human bodily functionality restoration and facilitate full integration into the workforce reaffirm the requisite to tap in PwDs' underutilized labor force. As stated by US Census (2016), the need to hire people with disabilities is bolstered by the current unemployment rate's fall following 2008 Great Recession, the slow retirement of the largest surviving cohort of baby boomers, and the point that one out of every five people in the US has a handicap. As stated by US Census (2016), employers who provide the same opportunities of employment to people with disabilities will advance their pool of candidate and, as a result, address social important matters such as the 57 million disabled people well-being in the United States by providing job satisfaction, meaningful employment, and poverty rates reduction and dependency welfare.

5. Conclusion, Limitation and Recommendation

It was found that services rendered to PwDs had a significant impact on customer perception of service quality. The relationship between service quality delivery when they see that PwDs are served at the hotel and the model was statistically significant. The relationship between service quality delivery when they see that PwDs are served at the hotel and the model was statistically insignificant. The study was limited to all customers who visit hotels and restaurants in Kwadaso Municipality of Ashanti Region, Ghana. Future studies should focus on the impact of services rendered to PwDs on customer perception of service quality in the hospitality industry. But different population and sample size should be used.

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