

The Role of Internal Marketing towards Improving Service Quality: Empirical Setting from Eastern Based Hotels in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

In the service sector, quality and customer satisfaction are closely related to employee performance. An essential feature of any successful service organization is motivated and dedicated employees. Therefore, the attitude of an employee towards his/her place of work and the extent to which an employer is able to motivate employees may have a direct effect on the quality of those products offered to tourists. One of the most important challenges facing managers is to identify the context within which employees feel motivated and will act towards higher service quality. This can be defined as internal marketing and concept emerged from service marketing. The overall objective of this study was to understand the impact of internal marketing on service quality in the hotel industry. Further it focused on the implementation challenges in the Eastern based hotels in Sri Lanka. This study is based upon qualitative based field research carried out in Eastern province in Sri Lanka. Data collection was carried out in the form of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The sample for the in - depth interviews and focus group discussions consisted of key managers, non managerial employees and guests from the hotels. Purposive or judgmental sampling was used to twenty seven (27) managers, forty five (45) non managerial employees, and ninety (90) guests. The finding of this study show that attracting, developing, motivating, and retaining qualified employees were of primary concern for management and were included in a deliberate company strategy. When working with these parameters, management strongly emphasized customer-consciousness and sales-mindedness. Management of the different hotels was aware of the importance of front-line personnel's immediate effect on customer satisfaction and how important staff autonomy and know-how were for business success. There was also a great amount of understanding for the need of an information process, which was directed from and to every side of the organization. As a result of this understanding, the hotels worked with different kinds of platforms for feedback and information flows. In addition to the above findings this study has identified the best practices and challenges of the hotels towards service quality. Such as tourism seasonal fluctuations in sales create the greatest obstacle for working with internal marketing activities.

Keywords: Internal marketing, Service quality, Customer satisfaction, Best practices.