Abstract

The main purpose of this research is to investigate service expectation and performance in the Japanese restaurants of Bangkok, Thailand, from the perspectives of Thai customers of the restaurants. The study utilized a mixed research method to investigate: 1) the service quality expectations and perceptions of the participants, 2) the importance-performance gaps, and 3) determinants of service quality performance achievement in order to evaluate what key factors are needed for improving and engaging the particular framework for the Bangkok Japanese restaurants' service quality performance. A quantitative analysis of responses from 425 restaurants' customers from ten Japanese restaurants in Bangkok and a qualitative analysis based on the semi-structured interviews of five key informants from the five Bangkok Japanese restaurants were undertaken.

The research uses the DINESERV approach (Stevens et al., 1995) integrated with the perceived service quality theory (Parasuraman et al., 1988a, b), the continuous quality improvement and control philosophies (1980s) (Deming, 1986, 1993; Juran, 1988), and Baldrige criteria by the Baldrige Quality Award Program (NIST, 2009-2010), as the theoretical framework to explore and elicit critical success factors in the investigation of service quality expectation and performance.

Paired sample t-test, Independent sample t-test, Scheffe, ANOVA, and Multinomial Regression techniques were used to test the importance of the gap between expectations and perceptions, and statistical significances across other socio-demographic variables and post hoc multiple comparisons of the three sample groups were also conducted respectively. Multiple Regression Analysis (MRA) and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) software called AMOS and Mplus editor 6.12 were employed to analyze the causal relationships among the determining and determined variables and the research hypotheses. A pattern matching technique (Yin, 1994; Saunders et al., 2007), a deductively based analytical strategy and procedure, was also used for the analysis of qualitative data in this research.

Mixed research findings indicate that there is a positive correlation between expectations and perceptions of service quality performance. The finding represents that most participants are satisfied with the restaurants' product and service quality and that the restaurants' performance meets their expectations but the restaurants do not represent service quality performance that exceeds their customers' expectations. The study also discusses reasons for this and suggests the impact of perception gaps and the role it plays in building service expectations. The SEM analyses and pattern matching technique jointly illustrate that expectation and satisfaction factors play an important role in determining these results and positively affect the success of the restaurants' overall corporate service quality performance excellence. Finally, the study also suggests key market segments and implications for both theory and practice with additional evidence to that found in the literature.