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Raciti, Anndroniki

2016

http://hdl.handle.net/10539/21152

Raciti, Anndroniki (2016) Is there a relationship between TQM practices and service quality in the restaurant industry?, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg <http://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/handle/10539/21152>

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Abstract

This dissertation aims to identify whether or not there is clear and tangible evidence to suggest a relationship between the presence of total quality management (TQM) practices and service quality in the restaurant industry. It attempts to investigate if restaurants that show higher levels of service quality do so because they implement quality management practices in some form or another.

The study considers four restaurants in Johannesburg. A research method was devised purely for this dissertation to measure the presence of quality management practices within the restaurant and the level of service quality experienced by the customer. Three research instruments were designed for the study by using various frameworks, specifically TQM (a type of quality management practice), the SERVQUAL instrument (a tool used to measure service quality) and qualitative research interviewing. Quality management practices at the restaurants were assessed using the first research instrument: The TQM Questionnaire, which was conducted as an interview between researcher and restaurant employees. The level of service quality was assessed using the second research instrument: The Customer Survey, which was dispensed to the restaurant customers. The third instrument, an observations table was used to corroborate the results obtained by the first two instruments and was designed by the researcher.

The results of the TQM Questionnaire were analysed using content analysis, and each restaurant was assigned a total TQM score, which signified the degree to which they implement TQM practices. These scores were compared to the results obtained from the customer surveys, which assigned each restaurant with a SERVQUAL score that measured the degree of customer satisfaction. The TQM results were compared to the SERVQUAL results for each restaurant in order to identify a relationship between the two aspects.

The research identified that 3 of the 4 restaurants showed a clear relationship between the presence of TQM practices in their operations and the level of service quality experienced by the customer. It was identified that restaurants that achieved high TQM scores also achieved the highest SERVQUAL scores. This finding recognises that there is a relationship between TQM and service quality, however the study does not go forward to investigate the nature of this relationship.