Czech University of Life Sciences Prague

Faculty of Economics and Management

Department of Management

Bachelor Thesis

The Role of Service Employees in Customer Satisfaction during COVID-19: Conditions, Problems and Prospects

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CZECH UNIVERSITY OF LIFE SCIENCES PRAGUE

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BACHELOR THESIS ASSIGNMENT

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The Role of Service Employees in Customer Satisfaction during COVID-19: Conditions, Problems and Prospects

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Objectives of thesis

The objective of the thesis is to formulate, based on the research findings, a conceptual proposal of improvements in marketing programs of the given company both in internal and interactive marketing to achieve higher consumer satisfaction.

Methodology

The thesis will consist of two parts. The first part will provide the elementary theoretical overview, which should deal with the theory of services marketing and consumer satisfaction, including principles, models, and evaluation regarding the service marketing triangle in the hospitality industry.

The theoretical part of the thesis will be based on the critical review of the information gained from the study and the comparison of relevant resources—mainly books and articles from academic or professional journals.

The fundamental, empiric part will be focused on the specific services in a given company from the internal and interactive marketing perspective. Data for the empiric part will be gained using appropriate data collection techniques – observation, interviews and questionnaires. Based on the research, the relevant conclusions of the thesis must be drawn.

Recommended structure of the thesis:

1. Introduction – an explanation of the topic importance.

2. Thesis objectives and methodology – the main objective of the thesis will be divided into partial objectives based on the knowledge gained from the study of services marketing. The methodology chapter will explain appropriate data collection and processing methods in detail.

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3. Literature review – a critical review of current knowledge in services marketing, its specifics, principles, models and tools. The service marketing triangle will be studied.

4. Specification of the selected subject – description of the selected subject, its environment and market specification.

5. Practical part – analysis of data gained from own research according to the methodology.

6. Results and recommendation – formulation of own proposal of improvements.

7. Conclusion – review of main results and evaluation of the contribution of the theses.

8. References

9. Appendices
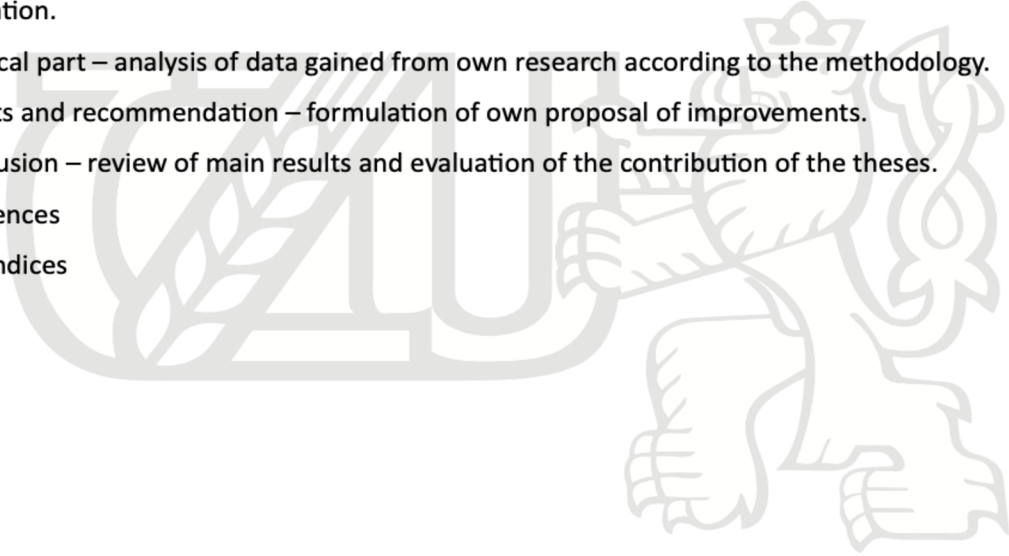
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consumer behaviour, services marketing, internal marketing, interactive marketing

Recommended information sources

DECROP, Alain, 2017. Consumer Behavior in Tourism and Hospitality Research. Bingley: Emerald Group Pub. 200 p. ISBN 9781787146914.

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Prague on 07. 03. 2022

Declaration

I declare that I have worked on my bachelor thesis titled "The Role of Service Employees in Customer Satisfaction during COVID-19: Conditions, Problems and Prospects" by myself and I have used only the sources mentioned at the end of the thesis. As the author of the bachelor thesis, I declare that the thesis does not break any copyrights.

In Prague on 13.03.2022 _____

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Ing. Lenka Platilová Vorlíčková and all other persons, for their advices and support during my work on this thesis.

The Role of Service Employees in Customer Satisfaction during COVID-19: Conditions, Problems and Prospects

Abstract

Companies use marketing in order to promote products and services. The main goal of marketing is to create and provide services that satisfy consumer needs and their expectations. The role of the employees is very important in the providing good quality services. However, many external factors affect employees' performance and quality of the service as well. The employees of the company of Swiss Hotel Apartments - "247 concierge" completed questionnaire and 2 focused group interviews. The results of the study helped to identify current working conditions and possibilities for the development of the company, by emphasizing some issues caused by ongoing changes in hospitality. Based on the survey results, findings and gained knowledge, recommendations of improvements and limitations in marketing programs of the given company was applied both in internal and interactive marketing to achieve higher consumer satisfaction. The analysis of the company "247Concierge" from the point of the employees' views conclude that internal customers play the crucial role within the company, their satisfaction directly affect a particular business' level of success in hospitality industry and customer satisfaction.

Keywords: consumer behaviour, service marketing, internal marketing, interactive marketing, working conditions, motivation, performance of employees, COVID-19, wages, tourism.

Úloha zaměstnanců ve službách ve spokojenosti zákazníků během COVID-19: Podmínky, Problémy a Perspektivy

Abstrakt

Společnosti používají marketing k propagaci výrobků a služeb. Hlavním cílem marketingu je vytvářet a poskytovat služby, které uspokojují potřeby spotřebitelů a jejich očekávání. Úloha zaměstnanců je při poskytování kvalitních služeb velmi důležitá. Výkonnost zaměstnanců a kvalitu služeb však ovlivňuje i mnoho vnějších faktorů. Zaměstnanci společnosti Swiss Hotel Apartments - "247 concierge" vyplnili dotazník a 2 cílené skupinové rozhovory. Výsledky studie pomohly identifikovat současné pracovní podmínky a možnosti rozvoje společnosti tím, že zdůraznily některé problémy způsobené probíhajícími změnami v pohostinství. Na základě výsledků průzkumu, zjištění a získaných poznatků byla aplikována doporučení zlepšení a omezení v marketingových programech dané společnosti, a to jak v interním, tak interaktivním marketingu s cílem dosáhnout vyšší spokojenosti spotřebitelů. Z analýzy společnosti "247Concierge" z pohledu zaměstnanců vyplývá, že interní zákazníci hrají ve společnosti klíčovou roli, jejich spokojenost přímo ovlivňuje úroveň úspěšnosti konkrétního podniku v pohostinství a spokojenost zákazníků.

Klíčová slova: spotřebitelské chování, marketing služeb, interní marketing, interaktivní marketing, pracovní podmínky, motivace, výkonnost zaměstnanců, COVID-19, mzdy, cestovní ruch.

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B2B – Business to Business
B2C – Business to Consumer

1 Introduction

This bachelor thesis analyses the role of service employees in customer satisfaction during COVID-19: conditions, problems, and prospects. This research is based on two surveys, conducted between employees of the "247 Concierge" company, and it identifies optimal work conditions and difficulties of the company through the pandemic period. This research is focus on solutions and prospects of the company.

One of the biggest tools to promote products and services for the company is marketing. Marketing services have changed and developed a lot over the past few years. But the main objective of marketing remains unchanged: to create and provide services that satisfy consumer needs and meet their expectations. Services marketing strategy focuses on delivering processes and experiences to customers rather than physical goods. It involves integrating a focus on the customer throughout the firm and across all functions.

Since the research was conducted during pandemic time, it is necessary to mention the fact that Covid-19 affected hospitality industry. Some of hotels and luxury accommodations had to change and adapt their business models to the current situation extremely quickly. It is stressful for employees as well as for owners of the business. This research organizes and summarizes data using numbers and graphs which lead to intelligible interpretation and analysis of current problems within the company.

Conducted surveys helped to determine how employees see the state of the company conditions affected by Covid-19 and how well developed internal and interactive marketing in the company. The survey's results are subjective because they are based on the opinions of employees and their emotional and psychological state during work. The indisputable fact is that the state of employees and the degree of their satisfaction with working conditions directly affects the efficiency of their work and, consequently, the success of the company and customer satisfaction. The results of the study help to identify possibilities for the development of the company, by emphasizing some issues caused by ongoing changes in hospitality.

2.1 Objectives and Methodology

2.1 Objectives

The objective of the thesis was to formulate, based on the research findings and the evaluation of the current situation in the company "247 Concierge" through the prism of employees' views, and issues caused by ongoing changes in hospitality, a conceptual proposal of improvements in marketing programs of the given company "247 Concierge" both in internal and interactive marketing to achieve higher consumer satisfaction. To achieve this, it was necessary to:

- To understand the working conditions for the employees within the company by conducting a questionnaire to the staff and to perform results of the group interviews.
- Partial objective was to identify current situation in the hospitality environment and changes caused by COVID-19.

2.2 Methodology

Partial objective of the study was to understand the current state of the field. In order to achieve this objective, the literature review was carried out. The first part provides the elementary theoretical overview, which should deal with the theory of services marketing and consumer satisfaction, including principles, models, and evaluation regarding the service marketing triangle in the hospitality industry. The author mentions also psychological impact of the pandemic, motivation and engagement factors and reflects current situation with wages in Switzerland.

The theoretical part of the thesis is based on the critical review of the information gained from the study and the comparison of relevant resources—mainly books and articles from academic or professional journals.

The author specifies selected subject – description of the selected subject, its environment and market specification. Description of the "247 Concierge" company services was made according to website pages of the company, Booking.com personal account of the front desk employee, contracts of workers and description of business of the external environment based by scientific research.

The fundamental, empiric part is focused on the specific services in the given company from the internal and interactive marketing perspective. Data for the empiric part was gained using appropriate data collection techniques – interviews, and questionnaires.

Practical part is built on two surveys. The first questionnaire was done between all employees in the company "247 Concierge" during August. The questionnaire was processed using absolute and relative frequencies with pie charts, diagrams, histograms, and cross tabulation, but using simple frequencies. The survey was conducted using Google Forms. All data was then loaded into Excel for analysis and charting. The survey was distributed using the company's corporate mail. In total, the company "247 Concierge" employs 55 people, a significant part - 42 people took part in the survey. This is 76.36% of the total number of employees in the company. The testing was not done, because of the sample size and would not achieve expected number of respondents proper testing using statistic. Therefore, an extra study was carried out.

The second survey was focused on 2 separate group interviews, intentionally targeted on 2 different groups of people with different job description: housekeeping team and front desk department. Interviews were conducted in February 2022, where in total of 11 employees took part, 6 housekeepers and 5 front desk staff. The scheduled interviews were conducted via Zoom meeting, due to different locations, where duration for each group interviews were approximately 1-1.5 hour and with the permission of the employees recorded for ease of analysis, as well as noted. Interviews present the qualitative method of research and results were performed in the form of responses from employees.

Both parts of the thesis played the certain role at the end. Based on surveys results, findings and knowledges gained from the literature review, a conceptual proposal, recommendations, and limitations of improvements in marketing programs of the given company was applied both in internal and interactive marketing to achieve higher consumer satisfaction. The relevant conclusion of the thesis was drawn.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Service Marketing Theory Triangle

The figure 1 shows service marketing triangle dynamic model, where there are three interlinked groups, aimed at developing, promoting, and delivering services. The key actors are labelled on pints of the triangle: company, employees, and customers. According to (Bitner, 1995; Kotler, 1994; Gronroos, 2007) the lines between the points represent different types of marketing that must be successfully carried out for a service to succeed:

- Internal marketing (enabling the promise) – communicating and sharing goals on a regular basis between company and employees; orienting, and motivating employees, training them to work as a team to achieve customer satisfaction. The purpose of company leaders is to increase employee engagement and productivity.
- External marketing (setting the promise) – interaction between company and clients. It is used to make promises and offers to clients. It is any communication with customers or potential customers, which includes direct marketing, advertising, personal selling etc. Marketers directly interact with the end users to understand and meet their needs.
- Interactive marketing (delivering the promise) – works when employees and customers interact. It is the most important part of the service triangle because it establishes a long term or shot relations with customers.

In order to maintain good customer relations, one should not underestimate the role of people within a company. "For most customer-oriented services, people are a crucial element of the marketing mix. It can be almost a cliche to say that, for some businesses, the employees are the business"(Baker, 2008). Employees are the face of the company; they represent business activity of the firm, interact with clients, and promote services by reflecting the philosophy of the company.

Therefore, the customer captures interaction between co-workers and clients as the image of the business as a whole. Customer satisfaction always results in increasing

percentage of returning guests and number of recommendations of this product or service to others.

This model provides a visual way to understand the importance of people in the service industry. The model demonstrates all service businesses are based on promises, which means to assure the customer about the services that are being offered which will be provided to them in time with same quality and quantity as mentioned.

Figure 1 Marketing Triangle Dynamic Model
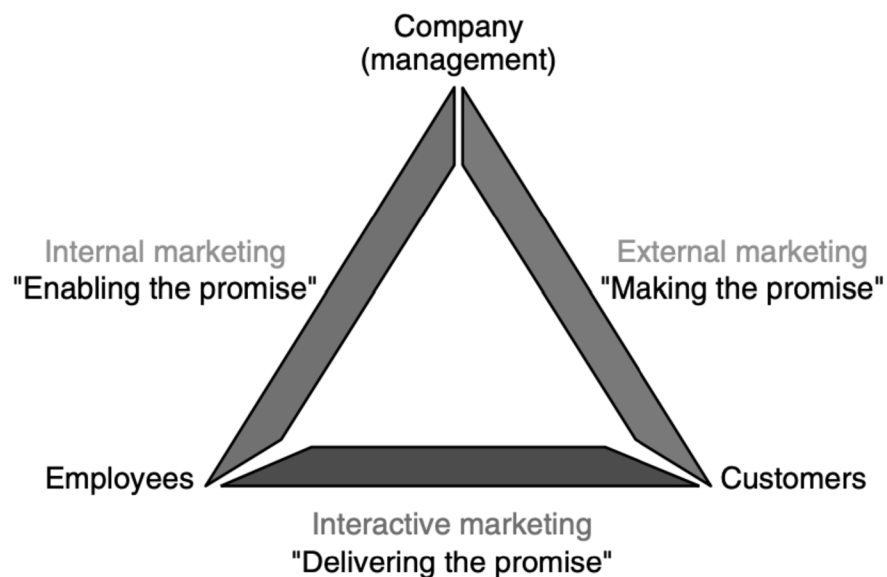
Source: The Services Marketing Triangle. (Bitner, 1995; Kotler, 1994; Gronroos, 2007)

3.1.2 Servicescape Framework

The framework suggests that both customers and employees recognize different types of objective environmental factors and both groups may give cognitive, emotional, and physiological attitude to the environment. Those internal reactions to the surrounding environment influence the behavioral patterns of individual customers and employees in the servicescape and affect social interactions between and among consumers and staff members. This model is unique in its breadth of synthesis (Mehrabian and Russell 1974 were focusing on emotional responses only), while the incorporation of both customers and employees and their interactions, and its application to commercial settings.

The most focus in this is on the behaviors that may be under the influence of the servicescape and then on the internal responses and the controllable dimensions that are a part of the servicescape. As Figure shows, perceptions of the servicescape result in certain emotions, beliefs, and physiological sensations which in turn influence behaviors. Behaviors are thus mediated by a person's internal responses to the place. Moreover, the servicescape affects the nature and quality of customer and employee interactions, most directly in interpersonal services. Bennett and Bennett (1970) state that "all social interaction is affected by the physical container in which it occurs". It was assumed that physical container affects the nature of social interaction in terms of duration of interaction and the actual progression of events.

Environment includes ambient conditions - it is background characteristics; spatial layout and functionality – arrangement of equipment; the last part are signs, symbols, and artefacts (ex: dress code of the employee). As it shown in the figure 2, the perceived servicescape may elicit cognitive responses (Golledge 1987; Kaplan and Kaplan 1982, Rapoport 1982), influencing people's beliefs about a place and their beliefs about the people and products found in that place. In that sense, the environment can be views as a form of nonverbal communication (Broadbent, Bunt, and Jencks 1980; Rapoport 1982). In addition to influencing cognitions, the perceived servicescape may elicit emotional responses that in turn influence behaviors.

Bitner in 2001 refers the research of Mehrabian and Russell 1974 and their colleagues, it was concluded that customer and two dimensions could capture employee emotional responses to the servicescape: pleasure/displeasure and arousal (amount of stimulation or excitement).

Figure 2 Servicescapes
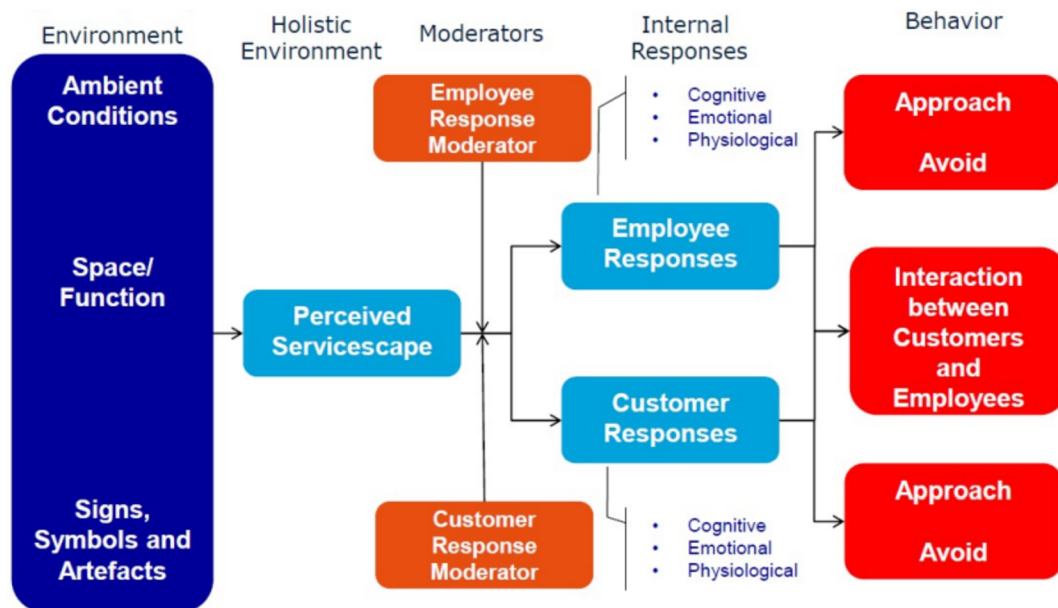
Source: Bitner, M. J. (1992). Servicescapes: The impact of physical surroundings on customers and employees. Journal of Marketing, 57-71

3.2 Business to Consumer (B2C) vs Bussines to Business (B2B)

According to V. Kumar and G. Raheja (2012), business-to-business (B2B) applies to companies promoting and marketing their goods or services to other businesses only, and not to consumers, while business-to-consumer (B2C) applies to businesses marketing their goods or services to consumers.

Population or geographical area, or both, put limits on potential B2C sales, but for B2B sales strategy, the only limitation is a number of specialized producers in the area.

Another important aspect which differentiates marketing communication in B2C from B2B sectors is who makes decisions. In B2C, a decision for a purchase is made by a particular person, with no exception. Whereas in B2B sales, there are more people involved in decision making; therefore, knowing decision makers and decision-making process in B2B is of high importance. (Rėklaitis and Pilelienė, 2019)

After providing a comparative study between B2B and B2C, S. K. Saha et al. (2014) provide their difference built on several characteristics, which are displayed in the table 1.

Table 1 B2B and B2C

Criterion	Business-to-Consumer	Business-to-Business
Target	End User	Enterprise
Market size	Large	Smaller
Sales volume	Low	High
Decision making	Individually	By committee
Risk	Low	High
Purchasing process	Short	Longer
Payment	Often instant	Instant payment may not be required
Transaction	Can be in cash, by card	Requires more complex system
Consumer decision	Emotional	Rational
Demand	Based on wish	Based on need
Usage of mass media	Essential	Avoidable

Source: adapted from S.K Saha et al.2014, p. 77

Customer orientation is an important component of marketing process. According to O. Duralia (2018), the goal of marketing communication strategy is to reach a concrete audience providing a clear and unitary message. M. A. Camilleri (2018) adds that sending clear, consistent, and complementary messages enable companies to finally turn prospects into customers.

The emotional factor is very important while making a decision to buy in a sales process in B2C sector (Saha et al., 2014), and companies spend significant resources on improving emotional intelligence, to be able to identify customer's emotions and close the deal. On the other hand, in B2B sector there are planned activities involved into a sales process: a purchaser has to follow the budget frames and time limitations. B2B sales are emotionally detached. (Rėklaitis and Pilelienė, 2019)

Both above mentioned marketing strategies can be a perfect solution for hospitality industry as it is customer oriented.

3.3 Gap Model

The model, illustrated in Figure 3, is firmly based on the customer service and integrates customer focus throughout all gaps within the model. A company's primary goal should be to meet or exceed customer expectations, and strategies used to meet the target

are all giving attention to the customer. Every gap and every strategy used to close the gaps in the model retains a fundamental focus on the customer.

The primary focus of the model is the customer gap – the difference between customer expectations and delivered service. The other four gaps in the model are known as the provider gaps and each represents a potential cause behind a firm's failure to match customer expectations. Closing the customer gap – delivering exceptional service – at the top of the model is a challenging task involving many different organizational and employee skills and tasks. These tasks can be divided into four other gaps – the provider gaps – each of which needs to be completed in order to close the customer gap. (Zeithaml, Bitner and Gremler, 2010)
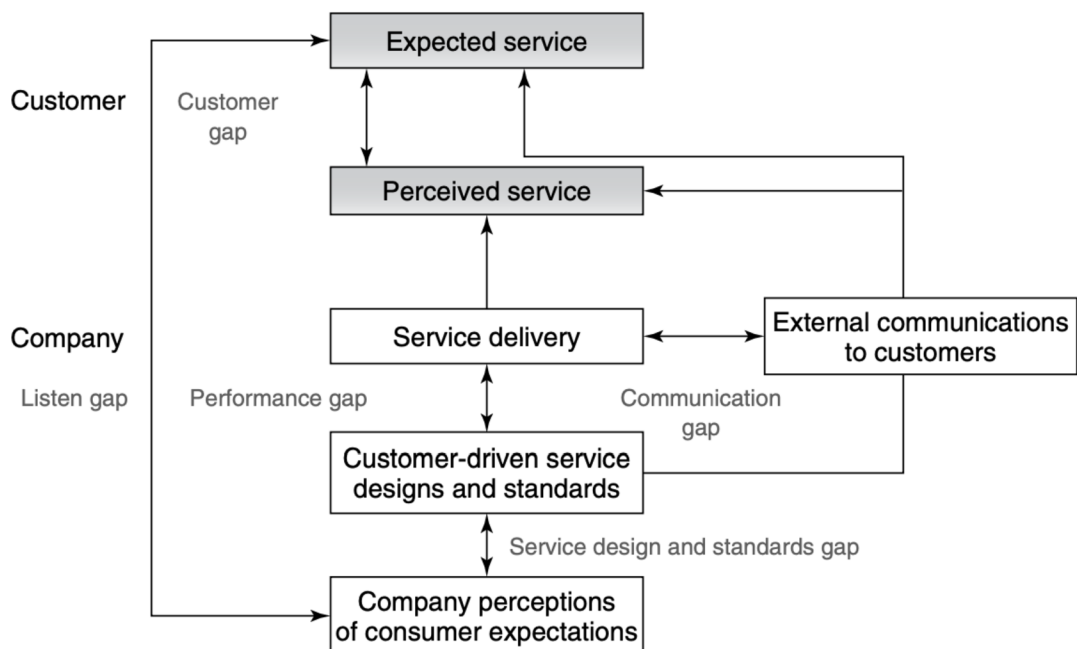
Gap 1: The listening gap

Gap 2: The service design and standards gap

Gap 3: The performance gap

Gap 4: The communication gap.

The model illustrates that the customer gap is a function of any one or all of the four provider gaps.

Figure 3 GAP model

Source: Article: Service Marketing Strategy; Valarie A. Zeithaml, Mary Jo Bitner, Dwayne D. Gremler, December 2010 p.4

3.4 General effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Hospitality

Hospitality industry is suffering a major blow with the effects of this ongoing pandemic. Because of sharp decline of tourists, restriction of limited places and stay-at-home orders, the hospitality business had to make substantial changes. Technology integration is an essential part of this industry, as people want to minimize human-to-human contact.

One of the main setbacks in this sector of hospitality is **job insecurity**. The fear of not being able to keep current employment conditions leads to psychological problems. Moreover, all new restrictions negatively influence on mental health. (Iqbal Khan, Niazi and Nasir, 2021)

3.4.1 Psychological Impact of the Pandemic

Uccella, Majno-Hurst, Uccella and Zoia, in 2020 carried an investigation the "Research square" about the psychological impact of the pandemic on healthcare workers, majorly between the Italian and Swiss workers after the COVID-19 outbreak. Respondents consisted of 3,038 hospital workers, who participated in this survey. The analysis investigated about symptoms of stress, how it affected their working ability and if these people needed any psychological support. People caused by pandemic, slept less than usual. This symptom further leads to different mental problems such as restlessness, irritation, etc.

As mental health influences the productivity at work, employers have to provide psychological support to their employees. Different activities, like sports, walking, healthy food and getting enough sleep can help people to recover after illness. (Uccella, Majno-Hurst, Uccella and Zoia, 2020) When employees are satisfied with the company's response to the crisis, they tend to exhibit the positive behaviour and attitudes in accordance with the principles of social exchange and theories of organizational assistance. They trust the organization more, feel more secure in their jobs, and are willing to work hard to help the organization overcome difficulties. (Vo-Thanh et al., 2020)

3.4.2 Motivation and engagement of employees.

The employee happiness is linked directly to efficiency and quality of customer service. The following steps will result in the better satisfaction level of employees within the company: focusing on performance management activities, engagement in business

projects, clarifying work responsibilities, offering comfortable work conditions, providing support, and promoting positive co-worker relationships.

"Motivation is the force that impels people to choose a particular job, to stay with that job, and to try hard"– the citation from the book "Beyond the carrot and the stick" by Tony Simons and Cathy A. Enz. It is known, that motivation is based on employee satisfaction, culture, performance of the company, wages etc. All these components are individualized for each person, but they have one thing in common – if the person has a willing to work, managers should help to develop employees' skill. Without personal motivation others factors will not work. (Simons and A. Enz, 1995)

As it was mentioned above, for employees' satisfaction and engagement is essential to work in comfortable conditions. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, there are basic, psychological and self-fulfilment needs. Physiological needs and the need for safety and security are the basic and have the highest priority. The need for belonging, love and the need for recognition are psychological, and they relate to the social nature of people. The last one is the need to succeed for self-confidence and public recognition.

To understand, which barriers to learning have employees, Deloitte conducted research called "Swiss workers are grossly understanding the need for lifelong learning", Switzerland, 2018, by Head of Research Michael Grampp, which is presented in the figure 4. The most common answer (especially between the group age of less than 35) is "not having dedicated time for learning" and "unsupportive working environment…". Companies have to figure out all barriers and help to find a solution, because motivated employee brings much more effort for the business.

Figure 4 Barriers to learning

Due to pandemic, many companies have to adapt to "online life". For development of employees in their career or training new ones, it was necessary to implement modern way of teaching, without physical presence. In the era of digitalization, the e-learning is an integral part of the successful company. During COVID-19 it is the best way to continue learning something new **safely**, so employees can develop in comfortable conditions now. (Wolor, Solikhah, Fidhyallah and Lestari, 2020)

3.4.3 The current situation in hospitality and tourism industries

As it previously mentioned, hospitality industry consists of different sectors but all of them were affected by imposed travel restrictions for tourists.

As tourism is directly connected with the hospitality industry, it is essential to focus on amelioration of motivational sources for worldwide travellers. According to Sosiologi Pariwisata, there are:

- Physical or physiological motivation
- Cultural motivation
- Social motivation or interpersonal motivation
- Fantasy motivation (Pitana and Gayatri, 2005)

All these motivations have to be counted in order to create the perfect area for visitors of the hotel. However, external factors such as – quarantine, vaccination or PCR tests and different other regulations significantly influence tourists' desire to travel. Hotels and serviced apartments need to find solutions on how to ensure safe and comfortable stay for everyone. Even though the demand on hotels has dropped recently, the situation remains under control.

The key statistics between 2019 and 2020 in Switzerland is given in the table 2 below. The growth of total chain hotels and total chain rooms are not significant – 0.6% and 0.9%. However, most of them are international chain hotels, as dynamic of domestic ones was decreasing to -7.5%.

Table 2 Key figures from 2019-2020

Key Statistics	2019	2020	% Diff.
Total chain hotels	318	320	0.6%
Total chain rooms	34,032	34,354	0.9%
Average size per chain hotel in rooms	107	107	0.3%
Country hotels stock (overall supply)	4,234	3,801	-10.2%
Country rooms Stock (overall supply)	130,625	117,589	-10.0%
Average size per hotel in rooms	30.9	30.9	0.1%
Chain penetration % by hotels	7.5%	8.4%	12.3%
Chain penetration % by rooms	26.1%	29.2%	11.9%
Total number of brands	80	83	3.8%
Domestic brands	11	11	0.0%
International brands	69	72	4.3%
Second-tier operated hotels	50	50	0.0%
International chain hotels	184	196	6.5%
Domestic chain hotels	134	124	-7.5%
International chain rooms	23,980	25,047	4.4%
Domestic chain rooms	10,052	9,307	-7.4%

Source: Switzerland Hotels & Chains, Andreas Züllig, p.14

3.5 Wages in Switzerland

As it was mentioned earlier, motivation for employees is an essential factor. Wages of workers influences on their productivity and output. "In Switzerland, wages refer to the gross monthly salary in private sector, including employee social security contributions, benefits in kind, regularly paid bonuses, share of turnover or commissions plus hardship allowances for shift, night and Sunday work, 1/12 of 13th month salary and 1/12 of special annual payments. Family and child benefits are not included in the calculation." (Switzerland Gross Monthly Wage in the Private Sector | 2022 Data | 2023 Forecast, 2022)

Figure 5 represents wages in Switzerland in private sector from 2012 until 2020. It is clearly seen, that wages increased to 6354 CHF/Month in 2020. Overall, it is upward tendency (except the year 2018, when average wage in private sector was slightly less than in previous year).

Figure 5 Wages in Switzerland in private sector
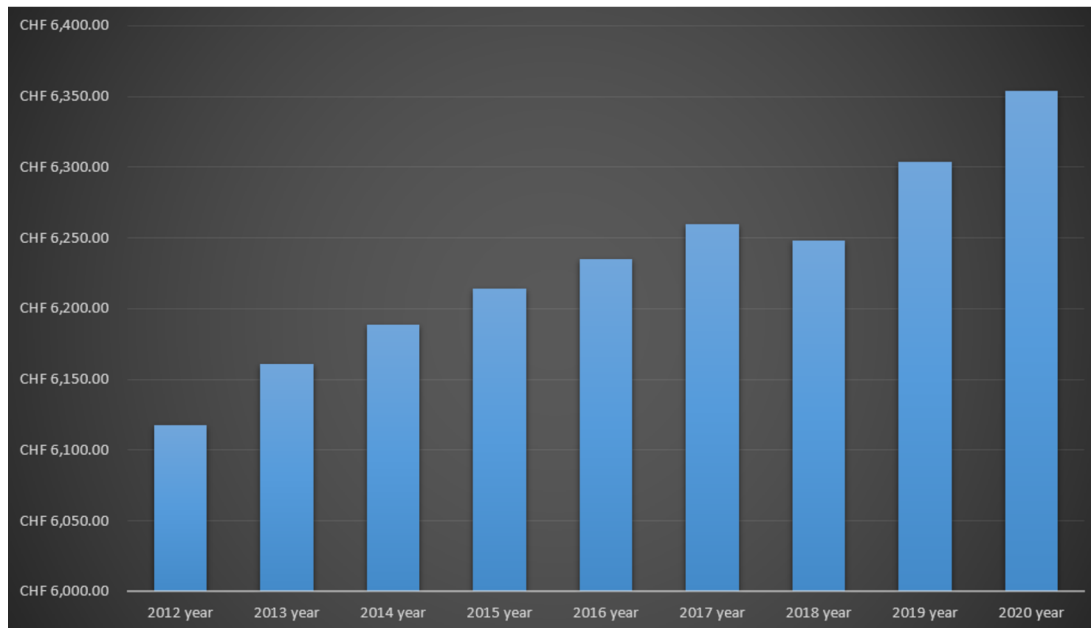
Source: tradingeconomics.com | Swiss international statistical office; 2020

To prevent unemployment, the government of Switzerland made a system- „Kurzarbeit"(Short-time working compensation). In this system, hotels are allowed temporarily reduce working hours when a business finds itself in a challenging situation beyond its control. In any case, the employer pays his employees a lower wage, which is then supplemented by the state through unemployment insurance. Employees receive eighty percent of the loss of income in the form of state compensation. The company then gets the disagreement to pay or not. This gives a grand advantage to companies that can avert losing work and the employees will not lose their job. (How Switzerland has Avoided Mass Layoffs in Hospitality through "Kurzarbeit" - Cayuga Hospitality Consultants, 2021) However, companies have to motivate their workers in order to receive maximum productivity and output, as motivation and satisfaction are keys factors for growth.

4. Description of 247 concierge services

Swiss Hotel Apartments AG offer luxury serviced apartments in Montreux (since 2013), Interlaken (since 2018), Grindelwald (2021) and Lugano (2022). All properties feature all the comforts of home with the luxury and services of a 5* hotel: luxury toiletries, the finest linens and towels, fluffy bathrobes and slippers, Nespresso coffee and household supplies. Parking space, daily cleaning service and city tax are included in the rate. The average price per night is about 450 euro. The size of rooms is varied from 160 m2 to 240 m2 and features from studio, 1 to 3 bedrooms apartments, villa, and chalet. (Swiss Hotel Apartments - Luxury, 5 star serviced apartments, 2022)

247 concierge SA – the inhouse company of Swiss Hotel Apartments, which is responsible for a tailor-made service. It includes limousine service with professional drivers, full range of the luxury and last model cars, housekeeping and concierge service. They assist clients searching for medical services or education, and gladly provide tailor-made accommodation and transportation services, here in Switzerland. (Homepage - 247 Concierge, 2022)

From the late 19th century, hospitality was developed in Switzerland and reaching the best results among all countries. Hospitality includes accommodation; restaurants, reception, allocation of guests and many others key factors, which should work together. The secret of the success of Swiss schools is that they offer practical courses with management theory and applied business exercises. Future managers understand how to apply their skills during their study. (Why hospitality management education has made its home in Switzerland, 2020)

The offer of services should be created according to the characteristics of the clients' desires that are most in the hotel represented or expected. It can try to focus on training, conferences, family stays with children, educational programmes, relaxation stays, group tours and more. (Smetana and Krátká, 2009) All these subtleties have studied in Switzerland and adjusted for each client. What helps businesses to create personalized marketing messages, is knowing their target audience. Some businesses struggle to reach the right audience because they do not narrow down the segments, and therefore do not determine the initial target market correctly. It is crucial to understand that not all customers

have the same needs or behave the same way toward products. The target market may be defined by age range, location, income, and lifestyle.

Swiss Hotel Apartments mostly focuses on family or business traveller groups from Middle East and South Asia target markets. Caused by Covid-19, the company has to change and adapt their business model to the current situation extremely quickly and one of the solutions was implementing a new contactless entry system and thereby attracting tourists from Europe. The figure 6 shows the seasonality of tourists' arrival of the 2012 until 2021. The trend was slightly increasing from the 2014 until 2019, but after pandemic, there was a huge recession. However, the trend is upwards - it will take time for full recovering.

Meanwhile, 247concierge SA also focuses on collaboration with five-star hotels like "Fairmont Montreux Palace" and other luxury hotels and companies to provide their high-quality service, implementing to the business B2B and B2C models. (Homepage - 247 Concierge, 2022)

Figure 6 Tourist Arrivals in Switzerland

Source: Switzerland Tourist Arrivals; 2021, Swiss Federal Statistical Office.

The weekly office hours are 45 per week (from 9:00 to 18:00) with a break of an hour. As per website and booking.com policy, check-in time is from 15:00 to 20:00, employees have to stay for late check-ins, depending on the arrival time of the guests. Based on the company policy, the overworking hours are not paid extra, as an alternative solution - employees can leave work early or take an additional day off if they have accumulated hours. According to the Swiss Law, the employees should have 2 days off per week;

however, there is an issue due to a shortage of employees, especially in a high season, therefore workers have a large number of overworking hours. Full time contract gives you 22 days of paid vocation that can be used during the year - agreed, approved, and signed by General Manager. As per internship contract, interns are entitled to 14 days of paid vacation.

Figure 7 247concierge logo

Source: https://247concierge.ch/

4.1 Rating of the company

According to Google rating, 247 Concierge services has in average 4.5 stars, where 85% of people rated it as 5, 4% as 4, 1% as 3, 1% as 2 and 9% - as 1. Overall, customers are satisfied with services. However, most of negative reviews relate to bad customer services.

The graph (figure 8) illustrates the performance of the employees of 247concierge company, according to Booking.com rating, out of 98 reviews left by guests from July 2021 till February 2022. The lowest score was in August – 8.6, then it started slowly grew and the highest rate 9.0 was noticed in the period from November-December. During last two months there is a slight decrease, but stability – approximately 8.9. In general, the results are adequate. We can assume that changes depend on the high/low season, filling, and volume of work and how staff can cooperate with it.

Figure 8 Reviews on Booking
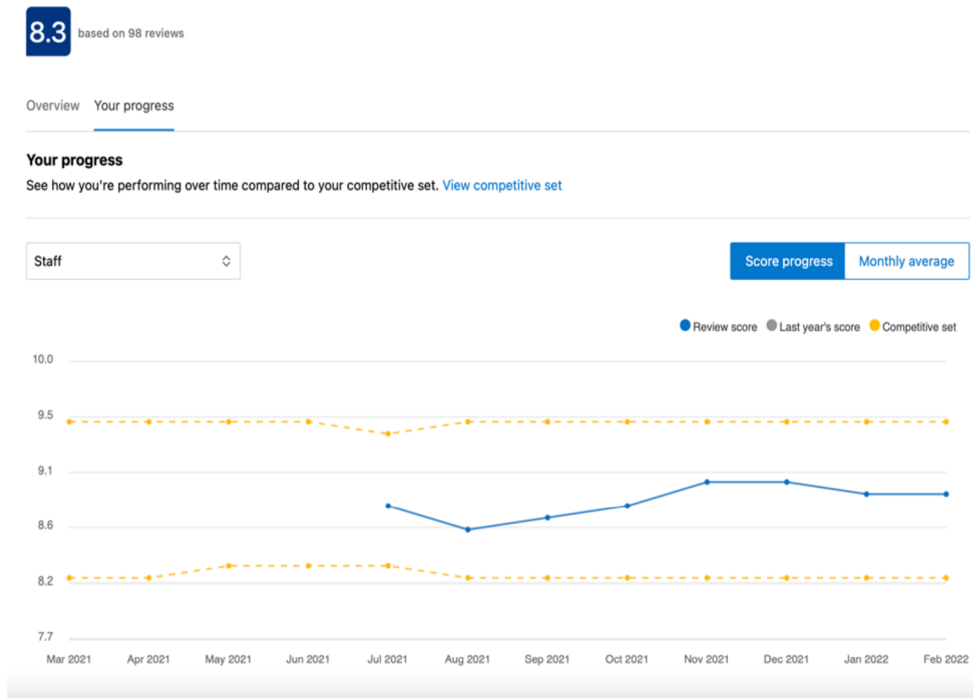
Source: (personal account of the company Booking.com 2022, guest review section)

Going into details and based on general mark 8.0 in the figure 9, the lowest point 2.5 applies to personnel of the company. It is the employees who represent the company and provide these services; therefore, relying on comments by guests, it is essential to analyse the current situation and conditions in the company and the performance of employees.

Figure 9 Basic Categories in reviews, Booking
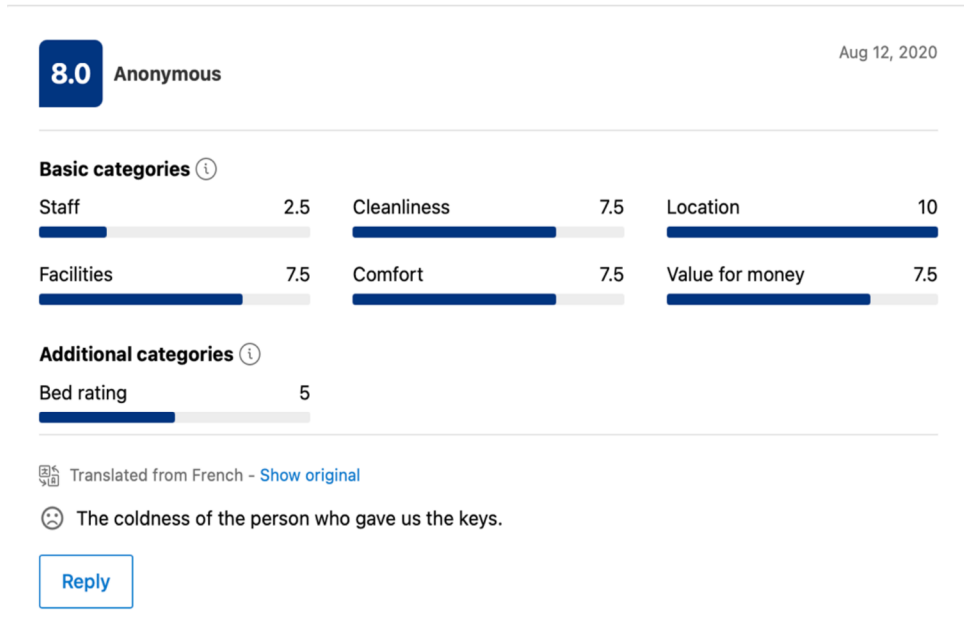
Source: (personal account of the company Booking.com 2022, guest review section)

5. Practical Part

5.1 Methods of Research

The fundamental, empiric part is focused on the specific services in the given company from the internal and interactive marketing perspective.

The research, which is part of this thesis, is based on a survey method. This method is the most effective for the chosen topic, as it will help to determine the current situation in the company "247 Concierge" through the prism of employees' views. The survey's results are subjective, because they are based on the opinions of employees and their emotional and psychological state during work.

The first survey has the format of a questionnaire consisting of 14 questions. The questions come in a variety of formats: general questions, questions of agreement and disagreement, questions using rating scales, and question with detailed answers. The survey is conditionally divided into 3 blocks: questions about changes in working conditions during the COVID-19 period, the personal attitude of employees to these changes and their feelings about this, the opinion of employees on the main trends and prospects for the development of the company in modern realities.

The second survey was focused on 2 separate group interviews, intentionally targeted on 2 different groups of people with different job description: housekeeping team and front desk department. The interviews contain 6 open questions; focused on the impact of stress at work on employee performance, and influence of employee satisfaction on customer service and client's satisfaction.

Both methods of research help to determine how employees see the state of the company conditions affected by Covid-19 and how well developed internal and interactive marketing in the company. The indisputable fact is that the state of employees and the degree of their satisfaction with working conditions directly affects the efficiency of their work and, consequently, the success of the company and customer satisfaction. Based on surveys results, findings and knowledges gained from the literature review, a conceptual proposal, and limitations of improvements in marketing programs of the given company was applied both in internal and interactive marketing to achieve higher consumer satisfaction.

5.1.1   Respondent sample

The respondents for the first survey were selected according to the only criterion: to be an employee of the company "247 Concierge ". It is inappropriate to add any age, gender and status criteria, since it is important to take into account the opinions of all employees of the company.

It should be noted, that for the second survey an additional criterion was added– position in the company, since the interviews were conducted with the housekeeping team and front desk agents.

5.1.2   Survey notes

As a comment, it is worth mentioning the number of respondents. In total, the company employs 55 people, but 42 employees took part in the survey. This is 76.36% of the total number of employees in the company. The remaining 13 people were unable to participate in the study, either due to illness or vacation.

Based on the first study and the results obtained, and due to lack of respondents, it was decided to conduct second research, which was focused on 2 separate group interviews, intentionally targeted on 2 different groups of people with different job description: housekeeping team and front desk department. In total, 11 employees took part in the interview: 6 people from the housekeepers and 5 from front desk team.

5.2 Interpreting survey results

Data for the empiric part was gained using appropriate data collection techniques - group interviews and questionnaires.

The first survey was conducted using Google Forms. All data was then loaded into Excel for statistical analysis and charting. The questionnaire was processed using absolute and relative frequencies with pie charts, diagrams, histograms, and cross tabulation, but using simple frequencies. The survey was distributed using the company's corporate mail. A significant part of the employees of the company "247 Concierge" took part in the survey. A total of 42 people took part in the survey. The survey was conducted in August 2021. The testing was not done, because of the sample size and would not achieve expected number of respondents proper testing using statistic. Therefore, an extra study was carried out.

The second survey was conducted in February 2022. It is scheduled discussion with 2 small groups of people conducted by the author the purpose of which to get the deeply information in specific aspects, such as stress of employees, internal and interactive marketing between customer and employees. A total of 11 people took part in the interview. The interviews were conducted through Zoom meeting, due to different locations, where duration for each group interview was approximately 1-1.5 hour and with the permission of the employees recorded for ease of analysis, as well as noted. Interviews present the qualitative method of research and results were performed in the form of responses from employees.

5.2.1 General representation of the sample

Previously, it was noted that the respondents in this study were employees of the company "247 Concierge" of all ages, positions, and any gender. The cross table 3 below, represents the gender and age characteristics. According to responses: 6 females and 2 males aged 18-24, 7 females and 9 males aged 25-34, 11 females and 6 males aged 35-44 and only 1 woman older than 54 took part in the survey. There is no critical bias towards young specialists or towards specialists of an older age group as well as for the gender gap.

Table 3 Total Number of Respondents (absolute frequency)

		What is your age group?				Total
		18-24	25-34	35-44	Above 54	
What is your current gender identity?	Female	6	7	11	1	25
	Male	2	9	6	0	17
Total		8	16	17	1	42

Source: (Authors own work; IBM SPSS Statistics, 2021)

5.3 Overall employee satisfaction with working conditions

It is quite interesting to see how employees are satisfied with certain factors of the working environment. These factors include salary, schedule, number of tasks and responsibilities, compliance with precautions related to COVID-19 and psychological

atmosphere. Respondents were asked to rate each of the listed factors from 1 to 5, where "1" would indicate complete dissatisfaction and "5" would indicate complete satisfaction.

After statistical analysis, the following results were obtained.

Salary: There is neither complete satisfaction nor complete dissatisfaction. The most frequent rating is "3". It was chosen by 59.52% of employees from the total number of respondents. Also, another 38.1% of respondents are satisfied with the salary a little more and are ready to rate it "4". Only one respondent is almost completely dissatisfied with his salary.

Schedule: Here the situation differs from the previous factor. 2 respondents are completely satisfied with the existing work schedule. However, the average mark "3" is still chosen by the majority of respondents - 61.9% (26 people). Almost satisfied with the schedule 57.28% of respondents.

Number of tasks and responsibilities: This factor has a clear advantage in the positive direction. 50% of employees are almost satisfied (rating "4") and another 9.52% are completely satisfied (rating "5"). In general, 17 respondents (40.48%) chose the average rating and lower.

Compliance with precautions related to COVID-19: This factor was rated Medium or higher. "3" - 21.43%, "4" - 59.52%, "5" - 19.05%. This factor received the most satisfaction.

Psychological atmosphere: in this question the situation is worse than in the previous one. 4 employees (9.52%) are almost completely dissatisfied with the psychological situation, as many as 66.67% are not very satisfied and only 23.81% are almost satisfied.

An important trend is that each factor in the company "247 Concierge" received an average rating, there is no sharp deviation in a negative or positive direction in some places. Each indicator enjoys average approval from employees.

Data confirmation is shown in the histogram below (figure 10).

Figure 10 Rate on a five-point scale your satisfaction with the following working conditions at the moment (absolute frequency)
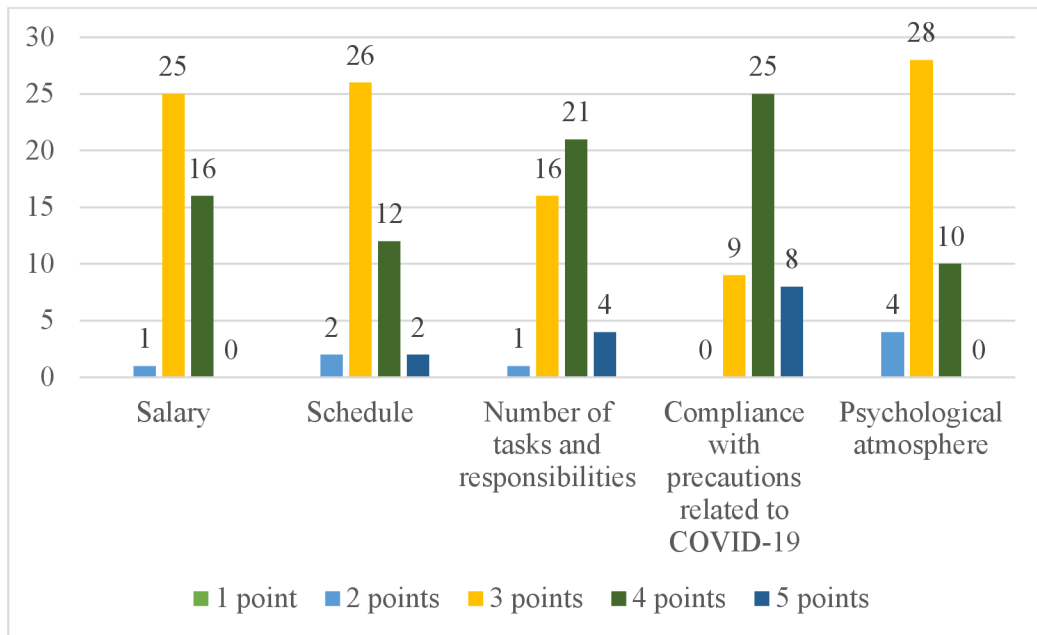
Source: (Authors own work; Google Forms; Excel, 2021)

5.3.1 The impact of stress at work on employee performance.

The main areas that normally leads to stress amongst the individuals are financial worries, work overload, unemployment, relationships, family issues, managing both work and household, health problems, caregiving, competitiveness, peer pressure, achievement of the targets, and inappropriate time management. The individuals do experience stress within the working environment, but they adjust themselves in order to deal with all kinds of stressful situations. When an individual experiences stress, he displays certain kinds of attitudes and behavioral traits, such as, anxiety, irritability, sadness, anger, frustration, loss of appetite, defensiveness, mood swings, impatience, inadequate performance in one's job, withdrawal and isolation from the other individuals and so forth. The influence of stress upon the health conditions of the individuals occurs in the form of headaches, fatigue, high blood pressure, insomnia, muscle ache, chest pain and frequent illness (Bickford, 2005).

How do you deal with the stress created by meeting the challenges at work? How the stress influences on the quality of your work?

One of the most stressful parts for housekeepers is to meet deadlines, when each apartment needs to be cleaned within limited time. Stress influence negatively, when employees are stressed in a hurry, they can miss some spots, that should be cleaned, which leads to the low customer service and low employee efficiency.

The decisions that help to deal with stress - is to follow the steps written in the housekeeping manual, as well as good preparation and organization. When employees have a lot of responsibilities and duties, they are trying to balance the time and focus on the most important task and make a planning for next day.

There were similar answers that *stress leads to errors, defocusing of attention, aggression, which directly affects the quality of work of both teams/groups. They become less efficient and take more time to accomplish the tasks.*

When people are under stressed, they might behave differently, their movements are different, *they can be rude to their team members,* which spoils the atmosphere within the team and the relationship between co-workers. *On the hand, some of the employees require support and help from their company leaders/managers or co-workers.*

The results showed that people find different ways to cooperate with stress, with the help of external factors not related to work. For example, *one of the options how to deal with the stress is to take short breaks during the working day for a coffee or a cigarette and do not think of current problems or situations, that make me stress.*

Based on the answers of a few workers, *some employees are constantly under stress physically and mentally and do not even know how to deal with it, what is the problem.*

Only one employee answered that *loves working under pressure, and it makes him feel powerful and take quick decisions.* Based on this opinion, we can assume, that not all stress influence negatively. Certain amounts of stress can be beneficial for health and wellbeing, keeps up levels of motivation and engagement, removes boredom, and at the end of the task can provide a sense of achievement and positive affect (Baehler & Bryson, 2009; McGowan et al., 2006).

According to the first questionnaire, which was conducted in August 2021 for all employees of different positions and departments, Covid-19 has significantly affected the psychological environment in the workplace.

In the company "247 Concierge" a significant part of the employees were stressed. 5 employees (11.9%) strongly agree with the statement: "I have been under pressure and stress

since the beginning of COVID-19". 22 respondents (52.4%) partly agree with the statement. In general, 28.6% of respondents either partially disagree or completely disagree with the fact that they experienced pressure and stress during the pandemic. 3 employees could not assess their psychological state. Thus, in the company "247 Concierge" a pressure and stressful environment for employees was noted. All data is marked on the histogram below (figure 11).

Figure 11 Do you agree with the statement: "I have been under pressure and stress since the beginning of COVID-19?" (relative frequency)
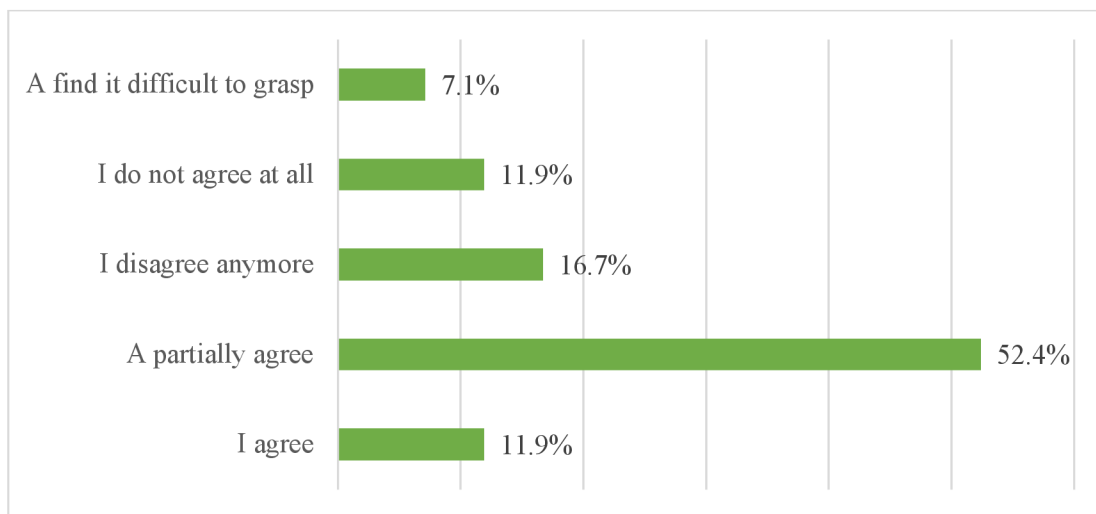
Source: (Authors own work; Google Forms; Excel, 2021)

There are some things that identify stress factors in invoices are environmental factors, organizational, and individuals who act as potential source of stress. Factors towards the actual stress depends on individual differences such as work experience and personality like the one the stress model described below in the figure 12. . (Aryanta, Sitiari and Suyatna Yasa, 2019)

Figure 12 Model Stress

Model Stress		
Potential Source	**consequences**	
Environmental factor	**Individual differences**	**Physiological symptoms**
Economic uncertainty	Perception	Headache
Political uncertainty	Work experience	Hypertension
Technological uncertainty	Social support	Heart disease
Confidence will control position		
Hostile attitude		
Organizational Factors	**Psychological Symptoms**	**symptoms of stress experienced**
Task demands		Anxiety
Demands for role		Gloomy
Interpersonal demands		Reduced
Organizational structure of job		
Organizational leadership		
Stage of establishment and dete-		
Individual Factors	**Behavior Symptoms**	
Family and relationships	Productivity	
Economic problems	Absence	
Personality	Level of discharge em-	

Source: Jurnal Ekonomi dan Bisnis Jagaditha, Volume 6, Nomor 1, 2019 p.24 (Bimantoro & Noor, 2012)

Overall, the results of this study support the research (Aryanta, Sitiari and Suyatna Yasa, 2019), mentioning that job stress negatively affect the performance, where the higher the stress level of a person will decrease the performance of work owned. Working stress gives negative and significant effect on the performance of employees.

5.3.2 Burnout at work

What do you do to avoid a burnout at work?

According to responses, *people pay a lot of attention to their mental health, therefore, prefer to do some activities, which they like, and which bring them energy: meditation, yoga, hiking, they spend their time with family etc. Employees try to normalize their work-life balance and try not to speak or think about work once their working day is finished.*

Some of them, to avoid a burnout, are trying to take control, and actively manage their time and tasks.

Should be noticed, that when *employees do not have a full understanding of their goals and they do not know exactly what employers expect from them, as a solution they request a meeting with the boss to clarify their responsibilities and discuss working issue, disturbing moments, and atmosphere.*

Three types of burnouts, according to Maslach C (1986):

• Exhaustion: Feeling overextended, both emotionally and physically

• Cynicism: Taking a cold, cynical attitude toward responsibilities.

• Ineffectiveness: When people feel ineffective, they feel a growing sense of inadequacy.

The consequences of burnout can be of two types: individual related and the effect on organization's overall productivity. Tennant has explained the personal consequences such as depressive disorder arising from stress. The effect on organizational of employee burnout includes decrease in employee's job performance and job satisfaction, diminished organizational commitment and increase in employee's absenteeism and turnover. (Chowdhury, 2018)

Deloitte research about Workplace Burnout Survey 2018 shows that 77% of employees on average experience burnout and stress at work. Sometimes such psychological states happen more than once. The following relationship was identified: 91% of employees noted that burnout and stress had a negative impact on the quality of their work. Thus, employers should be interested in creating a comfortable psychological atmosphere for their employees so that the quality of their work does not fall and customers are satisfied. The results are shown in the picture below (figure 13).

Figure 13 Burnout Survey

Source: Workplace Burnout Survey; Jen Fisher, 2018, USA, Www2.deloitte.com

5.3.3   Difficulties and complains at work

What is the most difficult part of your work, in your opinion?

Based on results, most of the employees have *the responsibilities that out of the job position. The examples were: front desk doing inspection of apartments, driving the housekeeping team, pay bills and invoices of the company.*

A detailed job description prevents misunderstandings between management and employees and becomes the foundation of performance reviews, creating a baseline of measurement. Job descriptions serve as a documented record of what an employee should accomplish in their position and what duties they must perform to meet those objectives. This should be an annex to an employment contract and serve as a tool to evaluate job performance.

The second most common answer was overworking hours and lack of employees, which are directly correlated. *The schedule is not flexible, and they receive it last minute which prevents them from making their personal life and plans. It happens due to lack of employees and high turnover. Most of them have to work a lot on weekends, or replace*

colleagues, when they are sick or on holidays. Front desk team have to come for late check-ins, after their working day or answer calls at 22:00, when the office is closed at 18:00.

A problem emerged from the interview that the most difficult part for the housekeepers as well as for the front desk team is *logistics; they need to move a lot between properties. It takes a lot of time, and sometimes housekeepers have to carry heavy bags.*

Conditions provided to employees may decrease/ increase their engagement, performance, and productivity, as well as their satisfaction and happiness; and consequently - turnover. All these factors directly affect to the lower customer service and customer dissatisfaction.

A significant indicator of how favourable conditions the company has created for its employees is the desire of employees to find another job. In this aspect, it cannot be argued that the 247 Concierge company coped with the onset of the pandemic completely. Thus, as it presented in the figure 14, 1/3 of the respondents (14 employees, 33.3%) noted that they had a desire to change jobs. As can be seen from the diagrams above, in this survey, 1/4 of the employees just got a job, so we can conclude that a greater number of employees had a desire to change jobs earlier. However, the majority of interviewed employees (28 people, 66.7%) had no desire to change jobs during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Figure 14 Have you had a desire to quit and find another job since the beginning of the pandemic? (relative frequency)
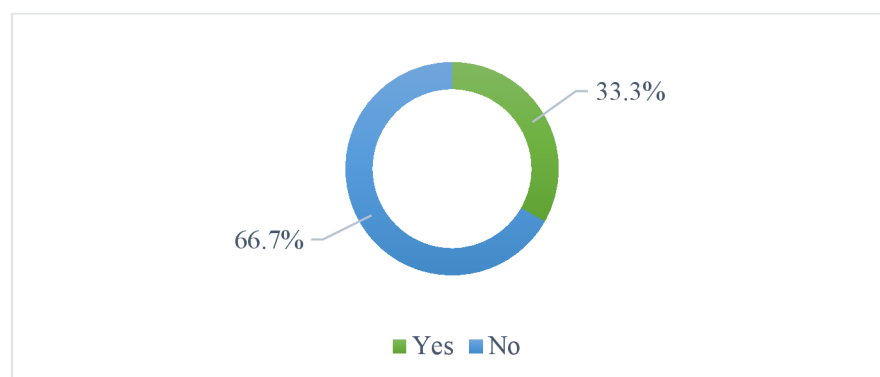
Source: (Authors own work; Google Forms; Excel, 2021)

5.3.4   Employee motivation and satisfaction

Satisfied employees are likely to help customers with a more pleasant demeanour and a higher level of customer service. This creates a more satisfying customer experience, increases customer loyalty, and ultimately, increases profitability.

How does the employers motivate, support and reward you?

Support can be expressed in various factors, such as: *When employer appreciates the work and thanks his employees for the efforts in the end of the working day*, it makes people to feel themselves valuable. *Support by implementing some technology and providing proper equipment and quality cleaning products, which help a lot in everyday work.*

The managers proceed with daily morning briefings and plan for the day. As it was mentioned in the literal review, it is necessary to provide trainings, clarify responsibilities and duties to engage employees in work. Motivation can be defined as a prime mover which leads people to act and to perform without pressure. It is known that if organizations motivated their employees effectively this would enable them to work in a way that met customer needs. The outcome of having satisfied customers might contribute significantly to employees own satisfaction as well.

When the employer sets me as an example to other collogues or gives me an appreciation letter.

One of the ways how the managers reward their employee is the salary bonuses, especially on special occasions (Christmas, birthdays, and so on). It is without doubt that every employee expects some level of reward after delivering a function or task.

However, most of answers were negative: *"I cannot say that my employer supports the team well enough, we receive a lot of criticism. My boss often ignores my achievements, but always notices minor mistakes."*

Job satisfaction of employees leads to customer-oriented behaviors. Employees take care of customers' needs and spend time listening to customers and sympathizing with them, thereby knowing what customers are looking for. A study by Homburg et al. (2004) demonstrated the mediating role of customer orientation in conveying the impact of employee job satisfaction on customer satisfaction.

According to Howard and Gengler (2001), customer attitudes towards products/ services are positively affected when they see positive emotions from employees. (Nghi NGUYEN, Ba HUYNH, Nam MAI and Loc HOANG, 2021)

Based on the open question which was presented in the first survey for all employees in the "247 Concierge" company: **"What do you think the company needs to change in order to make its employees more satisfied with working conditions?"**

The following responses were *support and rewards factors, balanced and organized schedule and responsibilities for everyone, friendly and reliable atmosphere between co-workers, training programs to be more qualified and customer oriented. It was also mentioned about communication within the company: between regular staff and mangers.*

These points are extremely important and affect to the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of employees and one of the ways to satisfy your employee is the salary: As shown in the ring diagram below (figure 15), during Covid-19 in the company "247 Concierge" 40.5% of respondents were subjected to a reduction in wages. This percentage is significant in this matter, since 21.4% of employees are new employees who cannot share relevant experience. Consequently, out of the former composition of workers (33 people), most of the employees note a decline in wages. If you open the full upload of responses, you can see which positions marked a decrease in wages. Thus, out of 17 people, 13 people turned out to be representatives of the administrative staff. For example, as many as 7 housekeepers suffered from wage cuts. At the same time, management personnel, largely, were not subjected to negative economic changes due to the Covid-19 epidemic.

Figure 15 Have there been any changes in your wages since the start of the pandemic? (relative frequency)
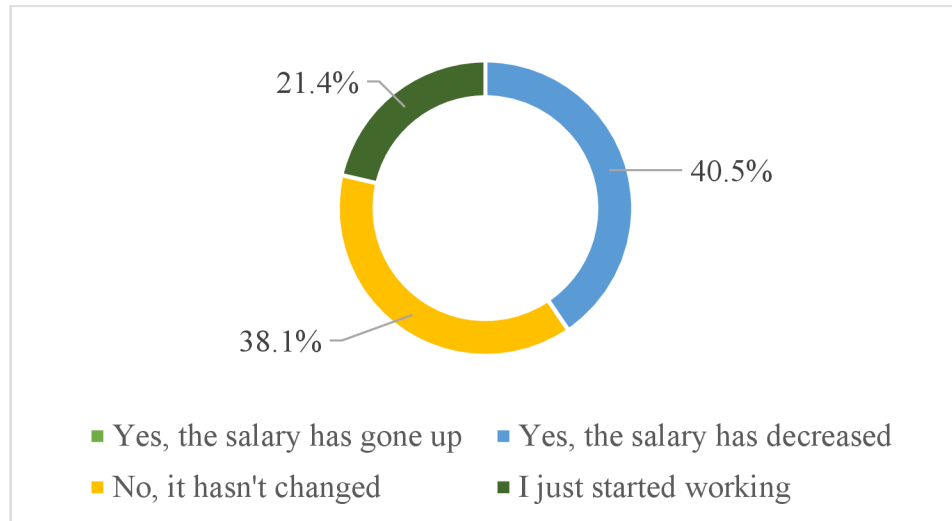
Source: (Authors own work; Google Forms; Excel, 2021)

The table 4 shows average wages for people working in Hotel Business. Typically, it varies from 2,560.00 CHF (minimum salary) to 5,036.00 CHF (highest average, actual maximum salary is higher). Compared to average wages in private sector, average wages in hospitality are lower for most job positions.

Table 4 Average Wages for People Working in Hotel Business

Accommodation Manager	2,907-8,050 CHF
Event Coordinator	2,641-4,677 CHF
Bartender	2,200-4,501 CHF
Booking agent	2,930-4,865 CHF
Food and Beverage Manager	3,221-8,963 CHF
Chambermaid (Housekeeper)	2,266-4,095 CHF
Concierge	2,200-5,825 CHF
Flight Attendant	3,786-6,566 CHF
Hotel Porter	2,200-4,528 CHF
Operation Supervisor	2,916-5,769 CHF
Receptionist	2,200-4,095 CHF
Retail Store Manager	3,382-6,738 CHF

Shift manager	3,107-6,179 CHF
Sommelier	3,665-6,228 CHF
Spa Therapist	2,356-4,818 CHF
Travel Guide	2,200-6,006 CHF
Waiter	2,200-4,665 CHF

Source: PayLab, https://www.paylab.com/ch/salaryinfo/tourism-gastronomy-hotel-business

5.3.5   Employees understanding of interactive marketing

How do you understand or think or feel about the situation of negative reviews and how do you handle it?

It turned out, that *none of the housekeepers are not aware well-enough of customer feedbacks. This group of employees does not have access to the guest reviews. They commented that front desk team could give them certain details or negative remarks what they should fix or improve and when it happens, some of the workers get upset, however they always take it into consideration and trying to manage with the problem.*

According to Knowledge Gap (where is the difference between the customer's expectations of the service and the company's provision of that service*)*, that was described earlier, the reason of this unawareness lies in the lack of communication between service employees and management.

Responses from the second group represent the following:
"I feel confused because I always fully invested in my work."
"I try not to take it personally and see it as an option for improvement"
"I try to understand the reason of the customer dissatisfaction in order to avoid several problems in the future"

Finally, few of people said that *it is understandable, and they agree with negative comments from the clients/guests, since the service and apartments do not correspond to five-star property and does not meet any guests' expectations. They think that most of the aspects should be improved to achieve better results.*

This begs the question of **"What may improve comments or customer reviews, what can front desk or housekeeping team can do to make customers happier?"**

Cleanness of the apartment influences a lot the satisfaction of guests, that's why, the company should provide well-organized trainings for the staff. Cleaning and service should be of high standard as well as quality control on a daily basis / inspection by gouvernante. Without understanding and learning, people (staff) do not know the standards and goals of the company.

Customer satisfaction leads to customer retention, which involves turning individual consumer transaction into long-term customer relationship by making it in the best interests of customers to stay with the company rather than switch to another firm.

N number of employees suggested global changes like *renovate some of the apartments, replace some of furniture items, invest more time and money in products. Employ more qualified staff and provide proper trainings and conditions for work.*

Based on internal marketing in the service marketing triangle, to meet and exceed customer expectations, internal customer (employees) service providers must identify what is needed from the customer to fulfill the request. Internal customers must also set expectations and communicate any urgent or high priority requests. Internal marketing helps businesses deliver better customer service. Employees feel more motivation and experience higher job satisfaction. They are entitled to make decisions within certain guidelines and begin to feel more appreciated and valued for their contributions.

Both groups noticed that *it is necessary to stay always positive, patient and welcoming with guests to make them feel as at home. Be helpful, try to find a solution for every customer demand, be responsive and polite. Front desk should be able to recommend some activities in the region. Attention to details, an employee should predict wishes and needs of guests, as an example: welcome card, flowers, or some fruits, etc. Treat every guest as a VIP by offering unique service to help them feel welcomed and valued. Offer loyalty programs and special offers for returning guests and their families.*

Ask for customer feedback, what company should improve or focus on, in this way the company can understand customer needs and wishes and always respond to the current reviews.

Employees who are positive towards their job are enthusiastic and confident. This is a crucial factor when customer service comes into play. When employees are proficient in what they do, they will provide a swift solution to customers. This declines the number of unhappy customers and increases positive customer feedback.

Going back to the service marketing triangle, the employees described the ways for improvement the quality of services with the help of communication and interaction with customers, emphasizing the importance of interactive marketing between staff and clients, which out of control by the company.

It is important to report the effect of employee satisfaction pre-determinants, which are rewards, communication, employee loyalty, retention and commitment as seen in Figure 16. Employee's satisfaction is believed to be shaped, developed, and created by having effective business systems and well-developed business processes (Al Kurdi, Alshurideh and Alnaser, 2020)

According to the study model, the study hypotheses can be stated as follow:

H1: Employee communication positively influences employee satisfaction.

H2: Employee rewards positively influence employee satisfaction.

H3: Employee satisfaction positively influences employee loyalty.

H4: Employee satisfaction positively influences employee retention.

H5: Employee satisfaction positively influences employee commitment.

H6: Employee satisfaction positively influences customer satisfaction.

Figure 16 The Effect of Employee Satisfaction
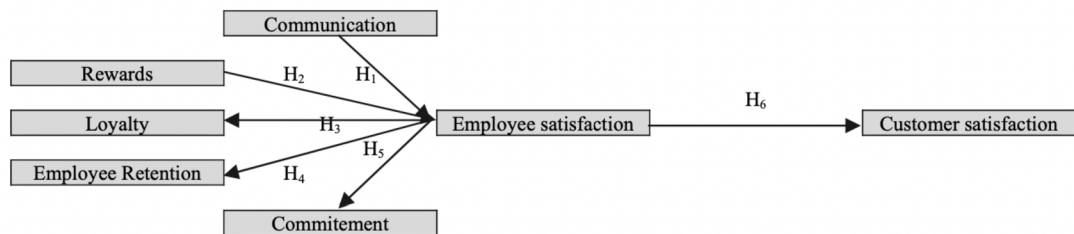
Source: The impact of employee satisfaction on customer satisfaction: Theoretical and empirical underpinning, Barween Al Kurdia, Muhammad Alshuridehb and Ahmad Alnasera, p.3564

When employees are satisfied with their work, it is reflected in the way they treat customers. They will be able to listen to their concerns, become more respectful and treat them politely, thus filling the listening gap. Therefore, the resulting communication with the customer is efficient. In turn, this will increase the service rating and grow the number of satisfied customers.

Excellent customer service is achievable when your employees are motivated to work if the job suits them. Thus, employee engagement is the key to achieving employee satisfaction. If they are more driven towards their job, they are more successful in bonding with the customers.

6. Results and Reccommendations.

6.1 Overall results

In general, the situation with internal marketing between company and employees is more or less at a good level, however positive results were not found in some points.

The situation is getting worse when it comes to interactive marketing between employees and customers, since some groups of employees are not aware of client's satisfaction/dissatisfaction and feedbacks at all. Therefore, recommendations for improvement both internal and interactive marketing practises are given below.

6.2 Difficulties and recommendations for reducing stress and burnout

Based on the results of two surveys, it is seen that a greater percentage of employees - 64.3% in the company are stressed, and it negatively and significantly affects employee's efficiency and performance as well as their physical and mental health. Stress affects everyone based on different factors, such as working conditions, challenges, not well clarified responsibilities, and other internal or external aspects. However, stress can be reduced by reducing physical stress, so that employees do not feel tired and exhausted in working and reduce psychological stress so that the employees do not feel restless and anxious for something. The company's policies on benefits, decision-making procedures, and rules regarding workload and other bureaucratic issues are designed to reduce sources of stress, so the employees can model a healthy work-life balance.

Promoting programs that encourage health and exercise and assisting employees who are in difficult work situations with other employees might be a solution to help staff overcome stressful situations. One can accept the idea proposed by Antares Foundation in 2012 in the research "Managing stress in humanitarian workers" that the company should have a policy of training managers and team leaders and evaluate their current capacity to ensure that they have the competencies to lead teams. Since poor management can be a major source of stress on staff, this includes ensuring that managers have appropriate managerial and administrative skills. Moreover, the staff member's needs with respect to training and/or support if they are to carry out their assignment effectively and with minimal adverse effects from the stresses of the assignment should be taken into consideration. (Foundation, 2012)

Employ more staff in order to normalize working hours. As per the contract. The working day last 9 hours, lunch break included. Which does not correspond to check-in time policy. If a guest arrives after office hours, employees are obliged to stay longer at work. This leads to dissatisfaction and eventual burnout, which can be avoided and prevented by hiring an employee for an evening shift, or by creating shifts for currents staff members.

Proper conditions: if the logistic is the main problem for two groups of employees, the company leaders should find a solution for everyone: to provide a car especially for housekeepers and parking space for each property. Consequently, the worker will be able to allocate resources since it will save time and energy and he/she could pay detailed attention to cleaning the apartment. The same can be applied to the front desk staff. In case if the worker does not have the driven licenses, company can provide or hire an extra driver to deliver the staff to the properties. In this way, employees do not think about solutions to problems and responsibilities that do not concern them, an employee will think about his task and over its implementation.

6.3 Recommendations for increasing motivation and engagement of employees

Employee satisfaction is significant when it comes to define organizational success, particularly in the service industry. The need to enhance employee satisfaction is critical because it is the key to better business operations as it increases long-term employee productivity and retains profitable customers.

Employee motivation and engagement can be improved by developing intrinsic motivation, which can be in the form of giving employees pride and purpose in their work, as well as extrinsic motivation in the form of salary, permanent employment, bonuses. When your employees are engaged and awarded, they are more likely to provide high-quality customer service, which leads to growing number of satisfied customers and gaining their loyalty.

Trainings and education should also be implemented on an ongoing basis with the application of technology that is easily understood by employees and strengthen the relationship between employees. This also includes effective communication skills, setting achievable goals, providing adequate training for employees with appropriate follow-up, recognizing an employee's value to the company, and tasking employees only with the work

that their position requires. The company must properly research its market and understand the expectations and needs of their current or potential customers. So that employees know and understand the main goals and objectives of the company. It is necessary to create/set realistic goals and clearly deliver them to team or individual employees

6.4 Recommendations for achieving better customer service

It cannot be said how big exactly the Gap model is, but it was found out that there are some provider gaps in communication and knowledge, based on customer feedbacks. Exact contribution of changes in closing this gap is impossible to express. Despite the fact, that the company might face some difficulties caused by COVID-19, the customer expectations do not get lower and maybe on the contrary, it is complicated to achieve their full satisfaction, because external factors are to be taken into consideration. (Positive experience of guest's experience, which leads to rising expectations, disinfection of more surfaces, contactless check-in, assistance in PCR testing etc.) Moreover, employee's needs, desires and aspirations change over time as well, thereby culminating in more complex satisfaction goals. For the research and further steps of management, it is recommended focus on concept of measurement of these gaps since it is changing with the time. It is about learning curve, people learn from their positive experience, therefore their expectations change and rise as well. An environment is changing rapidly. The service is intangible, and it is not possible to store, so every new service provision can be linked with better or worth experience than the previous.

As employee is one of the key actors in interactive marketing, the quality of work of each worker leads to eventual customer satisfaction with the company on the whole.

The employee customer interaction has a significant impact on customer satisfaction with not only that particular interaction but with the company or service as a whole. The company should have clear policy, terms, and conditions for current or potential guests, and fair working conditions for employees. Thus, each employee should be in charge of tasks corresponding to their position in the company and not be distracted by lack of organization from the management or other departments. In short, if a housekeeper is not involved into maintenance problems, they would have more time and energy to get their work done

according to high standards. In the result it will lead to better customer satisfaction with cleaning in this certain example.

Feedbacks from customers should be delivered to each company employee with no exception and serve as a source of motivation or as an example of things to be improved. Therefore, it is recommended for employees to have access to apps and websites with customer comments and ratings.

6.5 Limitations of the survey

These recommendations are not valid forever, they might be useful for current period and near future. Based on findings some concept tools changes in a management work would be helpful to prevent future disappointment of customers.

Programs of improvement, which were proposed above, do not allow to provide specific number of costs in economic aspects. However, logically, motivation and engagement of employees is shown in team stability: people who currently working in the company. Fluctuation rate is lower. People are satisfied and loyal to the company, so it is not necessary to spend extra money on training new staff and the company does not have cost loses caused by failures of beginners. Capitalized from the learning curve, people are experienced and skilled by proper trainings are more efficient in their work and it is not necessary to spend money hiring new employees or on compensating customers.

With regards to economic aspects, the cost of some of the recommendations and proposed changes cannot be calculated and provided here. For instance, in order to solve logistics problems, it is necessary to invest into a vehicle, pay for its service and gas. Despite its importance, it is impossible to estimate the cost of these expenses.

Predictions are useful because they allow to plan, but to form good plans it is necessary to know probabilities of possible outcomes and keep in mind uncertainties of economics.

The theoretical analysis combined with surveys results enabled indicating current difficulties and prospects in the internal and interactive marketing of the company. However, every single situation can be considered and threated individually. Thus, even with the knowledge of the identified problems, marketing process has to be adapted to a specific situation based on the type of organization, product characteristics, market situation, consumer profile, and other factors possibly having impact on business results.

7. Conclusion

To understand whether the goals of the thesis were accomplished, it is necessary to provide an overview of what work was done.

The goal of the research was to evaluate the role of employees in customer satisfaction, and to analyze current working conditions, difficulties, problems, and prospects for the company. To reach this objective qualitative method of research was conducted. Firstly, an overview of service marketing theory with the focus on service marketing triangle, servicescape framework and gap models were provided in the literature review. The purpose of it was to understand the connection between employees and customers in marketing service. Current situation in the hospitality industry in Switzerland was also mentioned, and how Covid-19 affected it. For better understanding, description of the "247Concierge" company was presented with the focus on target market and current ratings. The thesis' partial objectives were accomplished during the research and analyzation process for the main objective.

Data for the practical part was gained using appropriate data collection techniques: interviews, and questionnaires. Conducted surveys helped to obtain and analyze results through the prism of employees' views. Difficulties caused by ongoing changes in hospitality were studied through the qualitative method. The results of the study helped to identify possibilities for the development of the company and conceptual proposal of improvements and limitations in marketing programs of the "247 Concierge" company was applied both in internal and interactive marketing to achieve higher consumer satisfaction. This analysis of the company "247Concierge" from the point of view of the employees created conclusions on how employees and their satisfaction are important for customer service, and how it can affect a particular business' level of success in hospitality industry and customer satisfaction. Whether the employees will deliver the quality service and meet the expectations of the guests, or not, depends on the company and how the management is organized towards their internal customers. Although, generalizations cannot be made about all customer service companies, common themes and practices can help identify what those miss to deliver.

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9. Appendix

Questionnaire on the topic :

The Role of Service Employees in Customer Satisfaction during COVID-19 - Conditions, Problems and Prospects

1. What is your current gender identity?

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to answer

2. What is your age group?

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- Above 54

3. What position do you hold in the company?

4. Have there been any changes in your wages since the start of the pandemic?

- Yes, the salary has gone up
- Yes, the salary has decreased
- No, it hasn't changed

5. Has your schedule been changed due to the pandemic?

- Yes, I have had to work in excess of normal working hours
- Yes, my working hours have been reduced
- My schedule has not been changed

6. Did your company operate at the very beginning of the pandemic?

- Yes
- No

7. Were you suspended from work without pay in the midst of a pandemic?

- Yes
- No
- I was suspended from work, but the salary was paid

8. Can you argue that since the beginning of the pandemic, the workload of the company's employees has decreased?

- Yes, the load has become several times less
- Yes, but the load has become slightly less
- No, the load just got bigger
- No, the load has not changed at

9. Do you agree with the statement: "I have been under pressure and stress since the beginning of COVID-19?"

- I agree
- I partially agree
- I disagree anymore
- I do not agree at all
- I find it difficult to grasp

10. Have you had a desire to quit and find another job since the beginning of the pandemic? *

- Yes
- No

11. Rate on a five-point scale your satisfaction with the following working conditions now:

- Salary
- Schedule

- Number of tasks and responsibilities
- Compliance with sanitary standards
- Compliance with precautions related to COVID-19

12. Rate on a ten-point scale how well the company has adapted to modern realities in the conditions of COVID-19

13. If the pandemic ended today, would your company be able to return to its previous operating mode? How long would it take?

- Would return to the previous regime rather quickly (1-2 months)
- Would not return to the previous regime very quickly (3-4 months)
- Wouldn't recover for a long time (more than 6 months)
- Wouldn't return to the previous regime at all

14.   What do you think the company needs to change in order to make its employees more satisfied with working conditions?

Second research: 2 separate focused group interviews with the housekeeping team and front desk department:

1. How do you deal with the stress created by meeting the challenges at work? How the stress influences on the quality of your work?
2. What do you do to avoid a burnout at work?
3. What is the most difficult part of your work, in your opinion?
4. How does the employers motivate, support and reward you?
5. How do you understand, think, or feel about the situation of negative reviews and how do you handle it?
6. What may improve comments or customer reviews, what can front desk or housekeeping team can do to make customers happier?