Service Blueprint for Service Improvement in the Restaurant

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Abstract

As the competition in the restaurant industry becomes more, service quality becomes important to achieve the success restaurant. Service Blueprint is one of the methods that use to apply to improve the service system. The process of blueprint is a necessary tool that the restaurant can view all of process of the restaurant’s operation between the customer and providers. The paper aims to examine and apply to improve in the service processes of the restaurant by using the Service Blueprint to be the technique that used to understand customer service experiences. For the service blueprint design, an in-depth interview and a quantitative research method was used based on a customer expectation on the target customer who always to dining-out in the restaurant. The providing emphasize on value co-creation and design characteristics of service systems, and identifying the most important service system characteristics perceived by the customer, is the important way to improve the service.

Keywords: blueprint, service, improvement, restaurant

Introduction

The trend of food and beverage industries in Thailand is growing in the positive direction because the customer behavior on eating out (Thansettakij Newspaper, 2012). Many reasons, hungry, social business and personal reason, affect guests to visit the restaurant. Whatever the reason, customers expect their dining experience to be positive (Ninemeier and Hayes, 2006). Developing high-quality dining experience (Rong and Jun, 2012) is the better way to create value of service to attraction (Sandström et al, 2008). Increasing market competition and growing customer service demands influence the organization to improve efficiency the service processes (Mascio, 2007). The good service process is the first for the restaurant to gain competitive advantage, to marketing success and to growing (Hee
and Young, 2001). Restaurants that use the delivery of high service quality have the stronger competitive position (Kit and Ka, 2001).

**Customer Satisfaction and Customer Expectation**

The outcome of customers’ evaluation of a service is the satisfaction that based on a comparison of the recognition of service delivery with their previous expectations. (Johnston and Clark, 2005). Thus restaurant need to understand the customers’ service expectations (Johnston and Clark, 2001:2005; Ford and Heaton, 2000), that is an essential for delivering greater service because they represent implicit performance standards that customers use in assessing service quality (Andronikidis et al, 2009).

Understanding customer expectations performed an importance part for delivering the customer satisfaction. Customer expectations include two levels are desired expectation and adequate expectation. Desired expectations represented the customer wanted the service to perform that the service “should be”. While adequate expectations are the satisfactory performance that the service “will be” (Yen and Soe, 2010).

**Customer Experience and Service Process**

Services are the experience that depends on human and delivery system. Because of the growing of Service Business, the organization should move into the customer experience management that is importance to creating customer loyalty by creating meaningful and memorable. (Bitner et al., 2007).

Experience can be determined as the aggregate and increasing customer awareness created during the process of learning about, obtaining and using a product or service (Jiang, 2008). Customer experience has been treated as embedded in service quality. It is also measured by comparing expectations before, and perceptions after the experience, or perceptions only, through different predetermined service attributes (Walter et al, 2010).
Service process is the part of the customer’s experience creation. (Johnston and Clark, 2001:2005) That includes the human element (the people who interacting with customers) and the material production process (Ford and Heaton, 2000). The service process is a collection of activities that represents all of the steps over a period of time (Bitner et al., 2007).

**Service Blueprint**

There are a lot of techniques that used to develop the service delivery system for the guest experience. One of them is the service blueprint that is the method of process modeling that use to visualize, analyze, organize, control and develop service processes for improving the internal and external of organization (Gersch et al., 2011). Service Blueprint helps the organization to see the key operational, human resources, and marketing issues that offering the service experience for the customer, easily (Bitner et al., 2007). Dong and Shiang (2010) suggested the service system bird’s eyview that shows all of the steps in the service process can guarantee the customer satisfaction. The workflow description helps the organization to watch out all of service parts that can provide to improve the failure points.

Service Blueprinting is the process of creating the delivering service standard that shows the personnel and equipment required (Mascio, 2007). This method adapts for service innovation, quality improvement, customer experience design, and strategic change focused around customers as a highly effective (Bitner et al., 2007) and effectiveness (Hummel and Murphy, 2011). Drucker (1977) mentions the effectiveness as “doing the right things” and the efficiency as “doing things right”. Moreover this technique involves a description of the different process steps visually and in continuity, helping to define the steps at which the customer uses the core service and to identify the additional benefits that make up the increased product (Pires et al., 2004).

**Components of Service Blueprint**

Coenen et al. (2011) defines a service blueprint as “…visually displays activities by simultaneously depicting the process of service delivery, the points of
customer contact, the roles of customers and employees, and the physical surrounding of the perceived process”.

A typical service blueprint consists of five components (Bitner et al., 2007):

1. Customer actions: All of steps that show the customers’ activity.
2. Onstage/visible contact employee actions: Face-to-face actions between the customers and employees
3. Backstage/invisible contact employee actions: All of the employee actions, but the customer can’t see.
4. Support processes: All the tangibles that customers are exposed to that can influence their quality perceptions.
5. Physical evidence: All the activities carried out by individuals and units within the company who are not contact employees.

Moreover, there are the actions that separated by diverse “lines” (Coenen et al., 2011; Gersch et al., 2011).

The “line of interaction” separates the customer activity from the provider action, showing the direct interactions between customer and provider. Above the “line of interaction”, there are the activities, choices, and interactions performed by the customer.

The “line of visibility” differentiates between the visible (onstage) and invisible (backstage) to the customer. Above the “line of visibility”, there are the actions and decisions carried out by front office employees.

The “line of internal interaction” distinguishes between front office and back office activities. Support processes which are necessary to aid front office employees in delivering the service are carried out below the “line of internal interaction”.
### Service Blueprint Components

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Evidence</th>
<th>Line of Interaction</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customer Actions</td>
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<td>Invisible Contact Employee Actions</td>
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<td>Support Processes</td>
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**Figure 1** Model of blueprint as suggested by Bitner, Ostrom & Morgan (2007)

**Research Method**

Regarding to the aim of this paper the research must examine and apply to improve the service process for service experience. For the collection of comprehensive and detail information about customer’s expectation in the service delivery process. First of all, In-depth interview was used to be the method to help on creating the questionnaire. The questionnaire was devised to measure customer expectations in term of quality of service of the restaurant.
References


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