ASSESSING THE QUALITY OF HOSPITALITY SERVICES IN ECO-LODGES

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Abstract

In order to understand customers' perceptions about the quality of hospitality services provided in eco-lodges or any type of hotels, the current level of quality should be assessed from the customers' point of view.

The current study aims to assess the level of quality of hospitality services provided in eco-lodges. To achieve this objective, a self-administrated questionnaire was developed and distributed on a random sample of customers stayed in the investigated eco-lodges which were ten eco-lodges (according to the Egyptian Hotel Guide,2013) in Siwa and Nuibaa during the period from December 2016 to June 2017, to investigate their perceptions towards quality of hospitality services provided. The questionnaire consisted of six sections that covered (customers' demographic data, popularity of eco-lodges, source of information, reasons of staying in an eco-lodge, list of ten dimensions which evaluates the level of quality according to the Lodging Quality Index (LQI) and Overall satisfaction). A sum of 400 forms was distributed among them. The number of the returned questionnaires was 372 forms (93%); only 355 forms (95.43%) of the returned forms were valid. The findings of the study indicated that there were positive perceptions and general satisfaction towards the quality of the hospitality services provided in the investigated eco-lodges. Based on the study findings, the main recommendations were: Offering a variety in menu items and applying standard recipes of menus' items, increasing the number of eco-lodges' rooms and guest supplies, adding more recreational facilities.

Keywords: Service Quality, Eco-lodges and Lodging Quality Index.

تقييم جودة خدمات الضيافة فى الفنادق البيئية

الملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تقييم جودة خدمات الضيافة فى الفنادق البيئية . ولتحقيق هذه الهدف قام الباحثون بتصميم استمارة إستقصاء آراء العملاء تم تطبيقها على عينة عشوائية من الفنادق البيئية والتى بلغ عددها عشرة) طبقاً لدليل الفنادق المصرية (2013, فى كل من مدينة سيوة ومدينة نويبع خلال الفترة من ديسمبر 2016 إلى يونيه 2017 وقد تضمنت الإستمارة ستة أجزاء; الجزء الأول لتوضيح البيانات الديموجرافية للعملاء ,والجزء الثانى لكشف شعبية الفنادق البيئية .أما الجزء الثالث فقد كان عن مصادر الحصول على المعلومات عن الفندق البيئى ,واختص الجزء الرابع بأسباب الإقامه بفندق بيئى ,اشتمل الجزء الخامس على عشرة أبعاد تضمنت أربعة وخمسون متغيرا طبقا لنموذج) مؤشر جودة الإقامة (وتم استخدام مقياس ليكرت الخماسى) موافق بشده-موافق-محايد-غيرموافق-غير موافق بشدة .(وقد تناول الجزء السادس والأخير تحديد مستوى القبول والرضا العام للعملاء .وقد توصلت الدراسة إلى وجود مستوى تصور إيجابى جيد لدى العملاء تجاه خدمات الضيافة فى الفنادق البيئية محل الدراسة .وبناءاً على نتائج هذه الدراسة تم إستخلاص مجموعة من التوصيات للتحسين المستمر لجودة خدمات الضيافة فى الفنادق البيئية لكى تتوافق مع توجهات وتوقعات العملاء وتحقق مزيداً من الرضا.وكانت بعض هذه التوصيات كا يلى : إضافة أصناف متنوعة لقوائم الطعام وتطبيق الوصفات القياسية, وضع الفئات الخاصة والمجموعات فى الإعتبار ,زيادة عدد الغرف لكى يتلاءم مع الزيادة فى نسب الإشغال, زيادة إمدادات العملاء داخل الغرف, رفع مستوى خدمة الإشراف الداخلى, إنشاء بازار لبيع المشغولات اليدوية والمحلية الصنع, إضافة بعض التسهيلات الترفيهية) مكتبة ,مراقبة النجوم ,ركوب الخيل..الخ (وإستغلال العيون الكبريتية والطبيعية فى الإستشفاء والترفيه للعملاء.

الكلمات الداله :جودة الخدمة -الفنادق البيئية-مؤشر جودة الإقامة.

Introduction

A rapidly changing business environment, changing customer demands, and increasing competition has been a challenge for many of today's hospitality companies (Cho et al., 2006). The gradual rising in the importance of hospitality for countries' economies have led to an increase in the number of hospitality establishment nowadays, and strengthened the competition environment. As for all the establishments, one of the main reasons for the hotels is obviously to stay competitive as well. The way for that is to make the hotel more attractive than the competitors (Didin and Köroğlu, 2008). Eco-lodges are accepted as one of the new trends in the hotel industry in recent years. An important part is that the travelers usually live in the industrialized metropolitan areas, Problems in big cities such as noise, environmental pollution; traffic and overpopulation are increasing the people's longing for the nature (Holjevac, 2003). Eco-lodges offer their environmentally aware customers a holiday alone with nature, and thus gain an important competitive advantage from providing hospitality services like accommodation services, food and beverage services and recreational facilities). (Bohdanowicz , 2005)

Service quality plays a vital role in the success of any hospitality services establishment. Customers' interaction level with various aspects of the establishment in the delivery and consumption of hospitality services is high. Customers always evaluate the level of hospitality services' quality by making a comparison between their perceptions of services delivery and services they actually received. Moreover, the quality of hospitality services also affect on the retention of the customers (Sandoff, 2005), and many organizations used it as a competitive advantage in their strategies between their competitors (Nadiri and Hussain, 2005).

Problem of the Study

The problem of this study lies on answering the following questions:

- hat are the perceptions of the investigated customers towards quality of hospitality services provided in eco-lodges?

- hat are the strength and weakness points which are mentioned by the investigated customers towards quality of hospitality services provided?

Aim and Objectives of the Study

This research aims to assess the level of quality of hospitality services provided in a sample of eco-lodges in Egypt. To achieve this aim, we used the following steps:

- Review the previous studies related to the research subject.
- Identify the perceptions of the investigated customers towards the quality of hospitality services (Accommodation services, Food and beverage services, Environmental and recreational facilities) provided in the investigated eco-lodges.
- Develop a set of recommendations based on the results of the field study aims to enhance the quality of hospitality services provided.

Literature of Review

Eco-lodge as a Type of Hospitality Establishment

The term "eco-lodge" was formally launched on the market at the First International Eco-lodge Forum and Field Seminar held in 1994 at Maho Bay Camps in the U.S. Virgin Islands and Maho Bay Camps was determined as the first eco-lodge (Mehta, 2007 and Dizdareviç, 2010). Later, "The First International Eco-lodge Guidelines" was published in 2002 after the Second International Conference held in 1995 in Costa Rica, which defined the eco-lodge as "an industry label used to identify a nature-dependent tourist lodge that meets the philosophy and principles of ecotourism" (Ceballos-Lascurain, 2008).

Wood (2002) stated that, "An eco-lodge is a five- to 75- room, low-impact, nature-based, financially sustainable accommodation facility that helps protect sensitive neighboring areas; involves and benefits local communities; offers tourists an interpretive and interactive participatory experience, constructed and operated in an environmentally and socially sensitive manner.

According to The International Eco-lodge Guidelines, an eco-lodge should meet the following criteria, which are the key principles of eco-lodges (Wood, 2002; International Finance Corporation, 2004; Mehta, 2007; Dizdareviç, 2010):

- Conserve the surrounding environment, both natural and cultural.
- Fit into its specific physical and cultural contexts through careful attention to form, landscaping and color, as well as the use of localized architecture.
- Use alternative, sustainable means of water acquisition and reduces water consumption.

- Meet its energy needs through passive design and combines these with their modern counterparts for greater sustainability.
- Endeavor to work together with the local community.
- Offer interpretative programs to educate both its employees and tourists about the surroundings natural and cultural environments.

Contribute to sustainable local development through research programs. Ecotourism is nature based tourism that includes education and interpretation of the natural environment and is managed in order to be ecologically sustainable. This definition illustrates that natural environment also included cultural aspects and that ecologically sustainable involves a suitable benefit to the local people and long term protection of the natural resources (Joshi, 2011).

Service Quality Concept

Regarding with the increased competition between establishments, The quality of services provided has become a popular area of academic research and has been considered as a competitive advantage and enhancing satisfying relationships with customers (Zeithaml, 2000).

Chiou and Shen (2006) defined the service quality as meeting or exceeding customer needs and expectations, and consequently to some extent it is the customers who eventually assess the quality of a product.

Eshghi (2008) agreed with Kosar and Rašeta (2005) that "The products' quality is the assessment of its usefulness, i.e. appropriateness to satisfy the customers' desires".

Importance of Service Quality in Hospitality Industry

Lovelocke (2001) mentioned that the perceptions and expectations of customers towards service are essentially to their satisfaction and loyalty. The perceptions of customers towards the service are what matters most as they form their first impression about the establishments' standards. So, hospitality managers should determine what customer satisfaction actually means to their customers (Gianesi and Correa 2004).

Jones et. al. (2002) agreed with Bowen and Chen (2001) that, Customer retention goes beyond satisfying the present expectations of the customers; instead it is helpful in anticipating their expectations so that they become loyal supporters and promoters for the company brand.

Relationship between Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction in Hospitality Industry

Service quality is an important factor of customer satisfaction. However, in hospitality industry assessing of the quality of services is a

complicated issue, because of the intangibility nature of service itself which can be evaluated differently by each customer (Vanacore and Erto, 2002).

Minazzi (2008) agreed with Hoffman and Bateson (2001) that customer satisfaction is considered as a result of comparison between expectations and perceptions of customers. It depends on such dimensions as tangibility, reliability, empathy, assurance responsiveness and on additional aspects like price and personal situations that may occur during the service process.

Research Methodology

As mentioned previously, this study originated from a need to assess the quality of hospitality services provided in eco-lodges. To achieve this objective, a self-administrated questionnaire was developed and distributed on a random sample of customers stayed in the investigated eco-lodges during the period from December 2016 to June 2017 to investigate their perceptions towards quality of hospitality services provided. The features of investigated eco-lodges are represented in Table 1.

Table 1: The Investigated Sample of Eco-lodges' Data

Eco-lodge Name	stars	Address	Owner Name	Operator Name	Rms No.
Adrere Amellal	3	Maraki Village,Siwa ,Egypt	Environment Quality for Tourism		35
Taziry	3	Inside El Maraki Village,Siwa, Egypt	Faysal El Shoaby	Mohamed El Sahrawy	29
Basata	2	23 Nuweiba-Taba-Road Nuweibá, Janub Sina', Egypt	Sherif El Ghamrawy		21 Tent 12 Huts
Albabenshal	3	Market square main gate fortress of shali , siwa, Egypt	Mounir Soliman Nematallah		14
Shali Lodge	3	El Seboukha St, Siwa, Egypt	Siwa for Tourism Development		99
Talist	3	Al Maraki Road,Siwa Oasis,Egypt	El sayed El Domiaty	Nabila Aziz	32
Table 1 Continued					

Eco-lodge Name	stars	Address	Owner Name	Operator Name	Rms No.
Ghaliet	3	Siwa Farms Area ,Siwa Oasis, Egypt	Magdy Ryad	Bakrin Mohamed	14
Taghaghien Island	2	Taghaghien Island,Siwa, Egypt	Boshra El-Gergawy		30
Dehiba	2	Al maraki Road,Siwa, Egypt	Nature for Managing ,Owing Hotel and Touristic Service LTD		50
Dream Oasis	2	Qesm Siwa,Siwa, Egypt	Mohammed Adel		37

Source: Egyptian Hotel Guide (2012/2013) and (Malem, 2015)*.

*In Arabic

The questionnaire form consisted of six sections that covered (customers' demographic data, popularity of eco-lodges, source of information, reasons of staying in an eco-lodge, fifty-four attributes covering ten dimensions (Tangibility, Reliability, Credibility, Responsiveness, Competence, Courtesy, Security, Access, Communication and Understanding) according to the Lodging Quality Index (LQI) Each attribute was investigated by using a five Likert type scale (strongly agree - agree - neutral - disagree - strongly disagree) and Overall satisfaction).

A sum of 400 forms was distributed among them. The number of the returned questionnaires was 372 forms (93%); only 355 forms (95.43%) of the returned forms were valid.

Results and Discussions

Q 1: Respondents' Demographic Data

This question aims to illustrate the respondents' demographic data with regard to (Gender, Age, Nationality and Education).

Table 2: The Respondents' Demographic Data

Attributes		Freq.	Perc. %
Gender	Male	198	55.5
	Female	157	44.5
Total		355	100%
Age	Less than 30 years	139	39.2
	From 30 to less than 40 years	87	24.5
	From 40 to less than 50 years	56	15.8
	More than 50 years	73	20.5

	Total	355	100%
Nationality	Egyptian	122	34.4
	Italian	34	9.5
	Malaysian	33	9.3
	Germany	26	7.3
	Polish	22	6.2
	American	19	5.3
	French	12	3.4
	Korean	11	3.1
	Moroccan	9	2.5
	Libyan	9	2.5
	British	8	2.3
	Canadian	8	2.3
		Table 2Continued	
	Attributes	**Freq.**	**Perc. %**
	Japanese	8	2.3
	Emirati	8	2.3
	Australian	7	2.0
	Spanish	5	1.4
	Finnish	5	1.4
	Lebanese	4	1.1
	Mexican	3	0.8
	Russian	2	0.6
Total		355	100%
Education	High school or equal	13	3.7
	University degree	258	72.6
	Post graduate	84	23.7
	Other	0	0
Total		355	100%

The findings of the customers' questionnaire form are illustrated in the following tabulated data. As seen in table (2) that represents the respondents' demographic data. It could be noticed that, (55.5%) of the investigated respondents were males while (44.5%) were females.

Concerning age, the age category less than 30 years represented (39.2%). While (24.5%)of the investigated respondents were of age category between 30 years to less than 40 years, however, number of respondents who were of age category from 40 years to less than 50 years represent

(15.8 %) Meanwhile, (20.5%) of customers were of the age category more than 40 years.

By focusing on the nationalities of the respondents, it can be concluded that Egyptian nationality was the largest (34.3%),

On the other hand, Russian, Mexican, Lebanese, Finnish and Spanish were the lowest category with percentages ranging from 0.6% to 1.49%

At the same time, other nationalities ranged from 2% to 9.5%.

This result means that the Tourism Development Authority should increase marketing activities in these low-level markets and expand into new markets to spread this type of hotel and encourage the domestic tourism in Egypt.

Also, it could be noticed that, the majority of the investigated respondents (72.6%) are of the level of university degree. The respondents who were of the post graduate level represent (23.7%). Meanwhile, (3.7 %) of the investigated respondents were of the level of high school or equal.

Q 2: Popularity of eco-lodge as a type of accommodation

This question aims to identify to what extent the investigated respondents were aware about eco-lodge as a type of accommodation.

Table3: Popularity of eco-lodge as a type of accommodation

Attribute	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	272	76.6
No	83	23.4
Total	**355**	**100**

From the tabulated data, it could be concluded that more than three quarters of the investigated respondents (76.6%) considered eco-lodges is a popular type of accommodation. Meanwhile, (23.4%) stated that eco-lodge is unpopular for them.

The popularity of eco-lodge as a type of accommodation to the investigated respondents were mentioned the reasons to be unpopular. Their reasons listed as follows:

• Shortages in marketing for eco-lodge.

• Some eco-lodges offer their services at some high prices .

• The nature of eco-lodges, especially as they move away from modern technology and traditional means of entertainment.

Q 3: Source of Information about this Eco-lodge

he purpose of this question is to reveal the source of information that the investigated respondents knew the eco-lodge

Table 4: Source of Information about Eco-lodge

Attribute	Frequency	Percentage%
Previous experience	55	15.5
Internet	153	43
Friends and alternatives	56	15.8
Travel agency	87	24.6
Other	4	1.1
Total	**355**	**100**

Data in table (4) showed that, the majority of respondents (43%) got their information about eco-lodge from internet advertising. Meanwhile, (24.6%) know about them from travel agencies, respondents who had previous experience and know them from their friends and relative represents (15.5% and 15.8%) respectively.

Q4: Reasons of Staying in an Eco-lodge.

This question figures out the reason that make the investigated respondents stayed in an eco-lodge

Table 5: Reasons of Staying in an Eco-lodge

Attribute	Frequency	Percentage
Relaxation	103	29
To have a new experience	131	37
Recreation	48	13.5
Enjoying the nature	62	17.4
Other	11	3.1
Total	**355**	**100**

Data presented in table (5) revealed that more than one third (37%) of the investigated respondents prefer to stay in eco-lodge to have a new experience. Meanwhile, (29%) of them prefer to stay for relaxation. The respondents who stay for enjoying the nature and practice recreational activities represent (17.4% and 13.5%) respectively.

Q5: Perceptions of the investigated respondents towards dimensions of hospitality service quality

This question aims to identify perceptions of the investigated respondents towards the quality of the hospitality services provided in the investigated eco-lodges. Data collected was presented in the following table:

Table 6: Perceptions of the investigated respondents towards dimensions of hospitality service quality

Variables	Mean	St.D
(1)Tangibility Dimension		
• Check-in and check-out procedures were easy to understand.	3.75	0.72
• The guestroom is quiet.	3.95	0.70
• The front desk is visually appealing.	4.06	0.68
• The employees had a good appearance (clean, neat uniforms).	3.65	0.87
• The guestrooms are comfortable and clean.	4.11	0.71
• Room service offered a good variety of menu items.	2.41	1.29
• Room service served food at a satisfactory temperature.	2.45	1.31
• The restaurant's atmosphere is suitable for you.	4.20	0.76
• The food is good.	4.12	0.73
• Environmental entertainment facilities and services are available in this eco-lodge (i.e. mountain climbing, safari, diving, bird watching, etc.).	3.31	0.73
• The outdoor surroundings were visually attractive and had an eco-design.	3.90	0.76
• The eco-lodge was eco-friendly lighted.	4.10	0.63
• Furnishings of the eco-lodge were appealing.	4.21	0.73
• The eco-lodge's interior and exterior were well maintained.	4.22	0.69
• The eco-lodge was clean.	4.20	0.79
Table 6 Continued		
Variables	Mean	St.D
(2)Reliability Dimension		
• Room service was consistent.	2.54	1.36
• Employees were able to accurately answer your questions.	4.36	0.76
• Your reservation was handled efficiently.	4.23	0.66
• Your guestroom was ready as promised.	4.22	0.71
• You received the type of room requested.	4.18	0.78
• Enough towels, soap, etc., were found in your room.	3.75	1.26
• Charges at check out were accurate	4.28	0.70
• Restaurant orders were filled correctly.	4.09	0.84
• The employees did what they said they would do.	4.24	0.70
(3)Credibility Dimension		
• You got what you paid for.	4.23	0.71
• Managers were frequently seen throughout the eco-lodge.	4.17	0.75
• The eco-lodge had a good reputation.	4.24	0.76
(4)Responsiveness Dimension		
• Restaurant service was prompt.	4.12	0.86
• Informative literature about the eco-lodge was provided.	4.21	0.69
• Employees were willing to answer your questions.	4.20	0.74
• Employees responded quickly to handle your problems.	4.08	0.90

Variables	Mean	St.D
• Room service was prompt.	2.68	1.40
• Check-in and check-out procedures were fast and efficient.	4.40	0.68
Table 6 Continued		
Variables	**Mean**	**St.D**
(5)Competence Dimension		
• Employees were knowledgeable about available services and facilities in surrounding area.	4.27	0.69
• Employees were knowledgeable about the ecological facilities in the property.	4.25	0.68
• Employees knew about local places of interest.	4.20	0.73
(6)Courtesy Dimension		
• Employees were consistently courteous.	4.20	0.90
• Employees treated you with respect.	4.22	0.76
(7)Security Dimension		
• The eco-lodge provided a safe environment.	4.18	0.75
• Employees at the front desk protected your privacy.	4.18	0.75
• Safe storage of belongings was available.	3.92	1.12
(8)Access Dimension		
• The restaurant was open at suitable hours.	4.10	0.85
• Room service was available at convenient hours.	2.63	1.40
• Your room location was good.	4.30	0.81
• Parking arrangements were provided.	4.10	0.99
• The facilities in the eco-lodge were conveniently located.	4.15	0.72
• A manager was available if you had a problem.	4.14	0.79
(9)Communication Dimension		
• Charges on your account were clearly explained.	4.18	0.74
Table 6 Continued		
Variables	**Mean**	**St.D**
• You received undivided attention at the front desk.	4.20	0.72
• Employees at this eco-lodge were able to handle your complaints.	4.27	0.70
(10)Understanding Dimension		
• Front office clerks tried to find out your particular needs.	4.19	0.74
• Employees anticipated your needs.	4.17	0.67
• Employees did the best to fulfill your requests.	4.30	0.66

With regard to tangibility dimension, it could be concluded that the majority of respondents were strongly agreed that the investigated eco-lodges' interior and exterior were well maintained and their Furnishings were appealing.

On the other hand, they disagreed that room service, served food at a satisfactory temperatures or offered a good variety of food items.

Their perceptions towards the other attributes ranged between neutral (2 items) and agree (10 items).

Regarding with the attributes of reliability dimension; it could be noticed that, the majority of the investigated respondents strongly agreed that the eco-lodges' employees had the ability to answer their questions. They did what they had promised; their rooms were ready with accurate charges.

On the other hand; they disagreed that there was a consistent room service at the investigated eco-lodges.

Meanwhile, they were agreed on receiving the requested rooms with enough guest supplies and their orders were correctly filled in the eco-lodges' restaurants.

Concerning the credibility dimension (Table 6), it could be concluded that the respondents strongly agreed with they paid for and that the eco-lodge had a good reputation. Also they agreed with the item which concerned with seeing the managers frequently in eco-lodge.

There was a strong agreement that informative literature about the eco-lodge provided and procedures of check-in and check-out were fast and efficient. The customers agreed also with three attributes (items no.29, 31 and 32), but they were neutral that room service was prompt.

Regarding to Responsiveness, Competence, Courtesy, Security, Access, Communication and Understanding dimensions, nearly the same trend was observed, there was a general agreement with the most of those dimensions' attributes. This could be summarized as follow:

• The restaurants service were prompt
• Employees were willing to answer customer's questions,
• Employees responded quickly to handle customer's problems, employees knew about local places of interest,
• Employees were consistently courteous,
• A safe environment was provided in the eco-lodge,
• Employees at the front desk protected customer's privacy,
• Safe storage of customer's belongings was available,
• The restaurant was open at suitable hours,
• Parking arrangements were provided,
• The facilities in the eco-lodge were conveniently located,
• Managers were available if customer had a problem,
• Charges on customer's account were clearly explained,
• Customers received undivided attention at the front desk,
• Front office clerks tried to find out customers' particular needs,
• Employees anticipated their needs.

Their perceptions were neutral towards the following attributes:
- Room service was prompt.
- Room service was available at convenient hours.

Chapter Four   Results and Discussion

Table7: Ranking of the ten dimensions' means of the customers' questionnaire forms from higher to lower

No.	Dimension	Mean
1	Competence	4.24
2	Understanding	4.22
3	Credibility	4.21
4	Courtesy	4.21
5	Communication	4.21
6	Security	4.09
7	Reliability	3.98
8	Responsiveness	3.94
9	Access	3.90
10	Tangibility	3.74

From the data in table (7), the following conclusion could be inferred:

- The majority of the investigated respondents strongly agreed with the attributes of dimensions: Communication, Courtesy, Credibility, Understanding and Competence with an average mean that ranged from 4.21 to 4.24 meanwhile they agreed with the attributes of dimensions: Tangibility, Access, Responsiveness, Reliability, and Security with an average mean that ranged from 3.74 to 4.09.
- These results agreed with that concluded by Sayed (2005) and Mohammed (2005).

Q 6: Respondents' Overall Satisfactions

This question aims to identify what extent the investigated respondents were satisfied.

Table8: Respondents' Overall Satisfactions

Attribute	Frequency No.	Percentage %
Completely satisfied	241	67.7
Somewhat satisfied	102	28.7
(Neutral)Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	12	3.6
Somewhat dissatisfied	0	0
Completely dissatisfied	0	0
Total	**355**	**100**

From the results indicated in the table (8) it could be noticed that more than two third (67.7%) of the investigated respondents were completely satisfied. The respondents who were somewhat satisfied represent (28.7%). Meanwhile (3.6%) of them were neutral. These results reflected the positive perceptions of the investigated respondents towards the quality of hospitality services provided in the investigated eco-lodges.

Conclusion

As a final conclusion, there is a positive perceptions and general satisfaction towards the quality of the hospitality services provided in the investigated eco-lodges. Also there were some weakness points such as: guest supplies were very little in some investigated eco-lodges, employees' uniform was not constant, Room rates were high, the outdoor surroundings were sometimes not clean and no safe storages were founded. So, management should focus on improvement and pay more attention to enhance it to fully meet the customers' perceptions and expectations.

Recommendations

Based on the results obtained from both theoretical and field studies. The following recommendations could be inferred and proposed to be applied:

- Improving the level of accommodation services through:
  - Increasing the number of eco-lodges' rooms to extent allowed by the standards for the eco-lodge in order to increase the capacity to accommodate larger numbers of new customers.
  - Increasing guest supplies in rooms such as (soap, towels ...etc).
  - Enhancing the level of housekeeping service.
  - Adopting periodical contracts for pests control with specialized establishments in order to keep the eco-lodges' rooms clean and free of insects and rodents.
- Enhancing the level of food and beverages services through:

- Offering a variety in menu items and applying standard recipes of menus' items.
- Putting the special categories and groups into consideration (such as diabetics, athletes, children...etc).
- Providing room service to eco-lodges that do not provide and improving it in the eco-lodges that already offer it.

- Improving the entertainment and recreational services within the eco-lodges by:
  - Establishing a bazaar to sell local products and handicrafts.
  - Adding some recreational facilities within the eco-lodges such as: (library, stargazing, horse riding ... etc.)
  - Using of the natural hot springs surround the eco-lodges in customers' recreation and recovering.

- Raising the level of employees' performance to be more effective and efficient through:
  - Establishing a set of training courses and programs that helps eco-lodges' employees to improve their personal, practical and behavioral skills and their languages to have a high level of customer communication.
  - Paying attention to the employees' appearance and provide them with uniforms.

- Marketing activities for eco-lodges and its' hospitality services should be increased to be known for more customers and categories.

- Continuous cooperation between the management of the eco-lodges and the governmental establishments in order to preserve the cleanliness of the outdoor surroundings of the eco-lodges and the preservation of its' natural characteristics.

- Continuous evaluation of the quality of accommodation services, recreation services, food and beverage services provided by the eco-lodge to determine the customer overall satisfaction about hospitality services.

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