

# Assessment of Hotel Service Quality by Using Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) Model: The Case of Bule Hora and Yabello Town Hotels, Ethiopia

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## Abstract

The concern of this research is assessing hotel service quality by using Importance performance Analysis (IPA) Model in the special focus of hotels in Bule Hora and Yabello town, Ethiopia. The study used cross sectional descriptive research design that employee quantitative method. The data were collected by using questionnaire. The respondents are identified by using convenient sampling method. The study revealed that, fourteen (14) service quality attributes are performed poorly by the hotels. However, these fourteen (14) attributes are important by the customers/visitors. Twelve (12) service quality attributes are high importance to the customers and high performance by the hotels. Six (6) were low importance and low performance. And two service quality attributes was highly performed and low importance.

**Keywords:** Importance performance analysis model (IPA), service quality, customers/ visitors, Hotel industry Introduction

## Background of the Study

Studying customer's service is both important and difficult task. Its difficulty arises because of the unique characteristics of the service quality including intangibility, inseparability, perishability, heterogeneity. It's important is related with customers loyalty with necessary satisfaction, image building, increase business performance and etc (Chu and Choi, 2001). Among many scholars who define and describe service quality Gronroos (1978) suggests service quality has two components: technical quality and functional quality. Technical quality refers to what the service provider delivers during the service provision while functional quality is how the service employee provides the service. Parasuraman et al. (1988) define service quality as a difference between customer expectation of service and customers' perceptions of the actual service. From this definition customers are the sole judges of service quality. If they perceive it to be good service, then it is. They assess the quality of service their expectation to the service with perception/ actual service. Even several studies are conducted throughout the world still there is a room to work on service quality of country and culture specific because service quality of one culture may not be applicable to the other even with tourism industry itself (Salazar, 2010). Due to these reasons, the service qualities measured and assessed by using different methods. In recent time service quality in the hospitality industry measured and evaluated through the use of Importance Performance Analysis (IPA) method. The IPA method introduced in the late 1970s in the marketing research and used as a useful tool in other disciplines too (Wu & Shieh, 2009). It is a use full tool in the management insight to identify the organization strengths and weaknesses for improving the performance. So many researchers use IPA to studying customer's satisfaction to identify improvement opportunities and to guide strategic planning efforts (Wu & Shieh, 2009, 2010; Yavas & Shemwell, 2001). IPA has been used as a tool to evaluate service quality and applicable in educational organizations (O'Neill & Palmer, 2004), transportation [9] (Huang, Hsu, 1996), banks (Joseph et al., 2005), universities (Pike, 2004), hospitality (Janes, Wisnom, 2003) and tourism (Fuchs, Weiermair, 2003).

IPA model is a technique that use to criteria that consumers use in making a choice. One criterion is the relative importance of attributes the other is consumer's evaluations of the offering in terms of those attributes (Kitcharoen K., 2004). Because the underlying assumption of the IPA technique is that customers' level of satisfaction with the attributes is mainly derived from their expectations and judgment of the product's or service's performance. Studying the importance performance of the hotels service considered as improving the quality of the services that delivered by the establishment (Chu and Choi, 2000)

## Statement of the Problem

Service quality is an important topic in the service delivering industry including in the hotel and catering service (Davidson, 2003). As stated by Sit, Ooi, Lin, and Chong (2009), to get highly satisfied customers, organizations throughout the world are striving to produce products and services of superior quality. Thus, to achieve this any organizations in the world work towards service quality to meet customer's expectation. The higher satisfactions and meeting customer's expectation in the hospitality industry in turn generate numerous benefits to the

institutions including positive image towards the institution, employee satisfaction, customer's satisfaction (Hailu Fentaye Kasa and Nigatu Tesfaye Fentaw, 2015; Gunderson & et al, 1996).

As some researches find out, the service quality and the satisfaction of customers with the service delivery are low in Ethiopia (Rajasekhara & Awgichew, 2010 as cited in Mehariw Belay, 2012). Some studies worked in the assessment of service quality in the hotel industry. In Gondar city, Mehariw Belay (2012) study the quality of service by using Service quality model in the hotels and Sewunt Tesfaye (2013) study the service quality of the hotels by using IPA analysis. Using IPA model in the measurement of customer's expectation and perception is advantageous (Saglik et al, 2014).

Starting from last few years, the number of customers and tourists are increased in Bule Hora and Yabello towns and the surrounding areas. In Yabello the presence of Borena National park, geographical proximity with Kenya and Konso world heritage site, Ethio-Kenya power connection system are the stimulants for the increasing trend of visitors (Tesfaye, 2016). In Bule Hora town the number of guests and visitors increased from time to time due to the presence of Bule Hora University, center of trade, area of cash crop, development of tourism in the southern part of Ethiopia, some infrastructural improvements, increment of capacity building programs etc (Zenash et al, 2016) and the current development of the town as Zonal capital, West Gujji Zone. We always complain about the service quality of the hotels in Bule Hora town in our personal experience. Thus, different visitors and customers expect delivery of quality service in hotels that can enhance their satisfaction. As a result, it is timely issue to discuss and assess the quality of services in these hotels by using the significant model of IPA in order to address the quality concern of the hotels and to increase the satisfaction level of the customers. Therefore, this study assessed service quality in Bule Hora and Yabello town hotels by using Importance Performance Analysis model (IPA).

## **Theoretical Background and Conceptual Framework**

### **Service and Service Quality**

Service economy is the fastest growing sector in the world economy. Different scholars define service in different perspective. For example Vargo and Lusch (2004) defined service in the application of knowledge and skill perspective as "the application of specialized competences (knowledge and skills) through deeds, processes, and performances for the benefit of another entity or the entity itself". On the other hand Grönroos (2006) defined services as a process and interaction perspective "processes that consist of a set of activities which take place in interactions between a customer and people, goods and other physical resources, systems and/or infrastructures representing the service provider and possibly involving other customers, which aim at solving customers' problems". More advanced and summarized definition of service is given by Edvardsson and define it in dimensions as "in time and space linked activities and interactions provided as solutions to customer problems. The service is most often co-produced by the customer. Customers define service on the basis of value-in-use and the resulting customer experiences". In the 21<sup>st</sup> century business environment is changed, customers demand changed and competition increased in alarming rate. These changes led the business establishments in the area of service quality to stay in the business world (Cho et al., 2006). Service quality is a key requirement the success of hotel industry. When we say the service delivered by the company is "qualified" we say that it meets the customer's expectation at any effort. However, customer's expectation is depend upon the customer's perception because it differs from person to person.

### **Service Quality in the Hospitality Industry**

By its nature hospitality industry is very wide and people based industry and it has also unique characteristics because it has both tangible and intangible features (Benny Chan and Murray Mackenzie, 2013). Beyond this in the hospitality industry the guest and the employees are personally involved in the service transaction (Clayton et al, 2012). Therefore, its quality is depend on how the intangible and tangible features are fitted each other. And, it has also a feature of relationship process between customers and a host to make the service delivery "a home away from home". To be a success full business enterprise in the hospitality industry, it is not enough to deliver only product and service it needs a skill of how to deliver the product and service (the measure of quality). The qualities of staff and the way they deliver the service are often more important than the tangible products in making a hospitality experience satisfactory or unsatisfactory. As products and other tangible features can be easily imitated by competitors, hospitality operations which aimed for high-ended customers and 'superior' quality gradually spend more and more resources in enhancing the service standard as a strategy of differentiation (Benny Chan and Murray Mackenzie, 2013).

### **Importance-Performance Analysis Model (IPA)**

IPA first introduced and used by Matrilla and James (1977) in the marketing research. It is a use full tool in the management insight to identify the organization strengths and weaknesses for improving the performance. So many researchers use IPA to studying customer's satisfaction to identify improvement opportunities and to guide

strategic planning efforts (Wu & Shieh, 2009, 2010; Yavas & Shemwell, 2001). IPA has been used as a tool to evaluate service quality and applicable in educational organizations (O'Neill & Palmer, 2004), transportation (Huang, Hsu, 1996), banks (Joseph et al., 2005), universities (Pike, 2004), hospitality (Janes, Wisnom, 2003) and tourism (Fuchs, Weiermair, 2003).

The model is divided into four quadrants, with importance on the Y-axis and performance on the X-axis. These four quadrants are shown in the following figure. IPA model is a technique that uses criteria that consumers use in making a choice. One criterion is the relative importance of attributes the other is consumer's evaluations of the offering in terms of those attributes (Kitcharoen K., 2004). Because the underlying assumption of the IPA technique is that customers' level of satisfaction with the attributes is mainly derived from their expectations and judgment of the product's or service's performance (Chu & Choi, 2000).

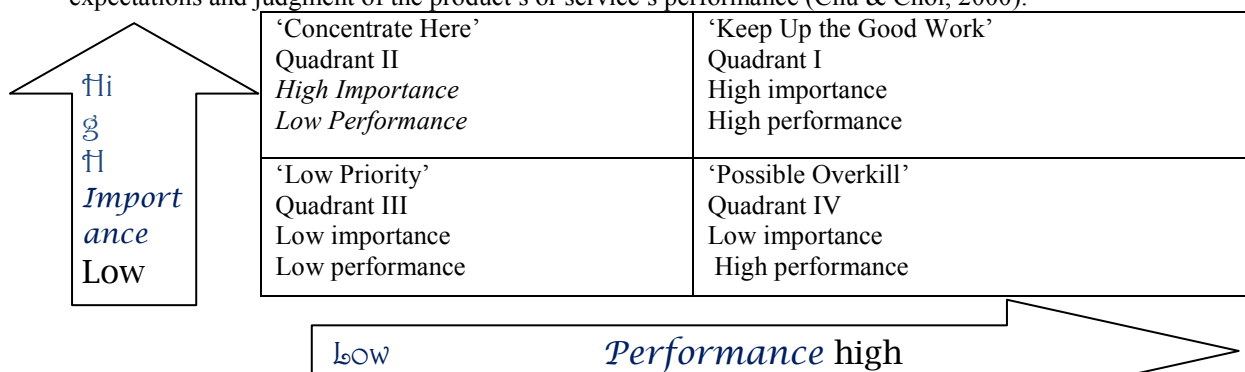


Figure one: Source Matrilla and James (1977), 'Importance- Performance Analysis', *Journal of Marketing*, 14: pp. 77-79.

## Research Methodology

### Description of the Study Area

The study was conducted in the two towns, Yabello and BuleHora. Yabello town is found 565 kilo meters south of Addis Ababa. It is the capital town of Borena Zone, Oromia Regional State. Bulehora town is currently served as the capital of the newly emerged Zone in Oromia regional State, West Gujji Zone and the home town of Bulehora University. The town is found 467 kilo meters from Addis Ababa in the way to Addis Ababa to Moyale road.

### Study Design

For this study the researchers were follow descriptive cross sectional study design because the information was collected from the sample only once (Kothri, 2004).

### Data Collection Methods

The data for this study was used both primary and secondary sources of data. The secondary sources of data were collected from published and unpublished sources for the discussion. To address the research objectives and to collect a primary data self administered questionnaires were developed to measure customer's perception about the quality attributes about the hotels. The questionnaire items were collected from previous research work and the researchers own development based on local circumstances in related with the hospitality industry concept. The data was collected from the selected hotels in BuleHora and Yabello towns. The target population of the study is the customers who get the service from these hotels. For this matter to measure the respondents perceived satisfaction/ performance levels, For the importance part the scale will be developed as 1=Very unimportant, 2= unimportant, 3=neutral, 4= important, 5=very important and to rate the performance a scale is developed as 1=very poor performance, 2=poor performance, 3=neutral, 4=good performance, 5= very good performance. Respondents below age of 18 will not considered for the research. Because, in most tourism researches & literature conducted on service quality, well-traveled, senior and experienced age group are recommended to include as respondents to obtain genuine responses on rating of the different attributes. To address the objective of this research, the researchers were tried to incorporate all quality concerns in the hotel industry. The attributes of the questionnaire will be categorized in technical quality and functional quality concerns

### Sampling Technique

Based on the preliminary survey and the researchers experience more than 20 "high standard" hotels found in Yabello and Bule Hora town. Locally high standard hotels described as no star or other classification by the national and international standard committee but have local classification as high standard or we can say it has star rate by their own or by the regional government. Based on the local context the levels are created for the

hotels. These are 1<sup>st</sup> level, 2<sup>nd</sup> level and 3<sup>rd</sup> level. The researchers were select eight hotels of the 1<sup>st</sup> levels in order to make our research is fairly reasonable and significance for analysis purpose (four from Bule Hora and four from Yabello town). Therefore, based on this Horsise Bula, Hata Gafarsa, Tula Saglan and Yabello Motel are selected from Yabello town; whereas Hagre Mariyam, Bule Hora, Tsehaye Hora and Abba Gada hotel are selected from Bule Hora town. To get the sample from the customers the researchers were used totally Convenience / accidentalsampling technique in different days of the data collection time because the numbers of the customers are not known in advance. The duration of the date collection takes place in two months. By using this method a total of 400 questionnaires were distributed. However, 312 questionnaires were returned and filled properly. Therefore, 312 questionnaires response was analyzed.

### Data Analysis Method

Descriptive statistics was used to describe the data. The respondent's importance and satisfaction/performance levels towards the attributes were calculate in mean and frequency descriptive statistics techniques. After that the mean results were plotted on the IPA grid. Then the importance performance grid was analyzed and interprets. The results were displayed and interpret in the following grid of IPA model.

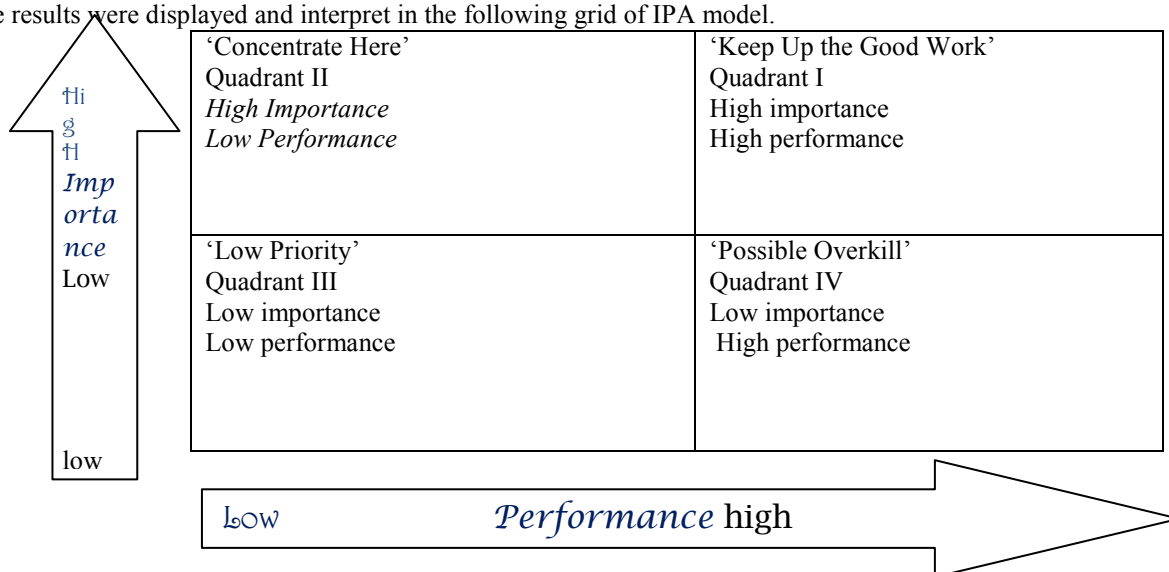


Figure two: Source Matrilla and James (1977), 'Importance- Performance Analysis', *Journal of Marketing*, 14: pp. 77-79

### Result

Before seeing the main point of the study we can see the demographic description of the respondents in the following table in summarized way.

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Table one: The Gender, Age, educational qualification, occupation, religion and number of time the customers visit the hotels

Questions/Items	Category	Number/ Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	male	252	80.8
	female	60	19.2
	Total	312	100.0
Age	18-25	141	45.2
	26-33	120	38.5
	34-41	46	14.7
	over 50	5	1.6
	Total	312	100.0
Educational qualification	primary education	20	6.4
	secondary education	78	25.0
	Bachelor degree	187	59.9
	Masters degree	9	2.9
	diploma	8	2.6
	PhD	10	3.2
	Total	312	100.0
Religion	Orthodox	60	19.2
	Muslim	62	19.9
	catholic	19	6.1
	protestant	154	49.4
	Waqeffetaa	17	5.4
	Total	312	100.0
How many times visit the hotel per week	one- three days a week	182	58.3
	four- six days a week	77	24.7
	all the days of the week	46	14.7
	my first time to visit this hotel	7	2.2
	Total	312	100.0
		private business	83
Current occupation	agriculture	40	12.8
	government employee	126	40.4
	NGO employee	49	15.7
	other	14	4.5
	Total	312	100.0

Source: survey data (2016/17)

In Table one above, the percentage and frequency of the gender of the respondents are shown. 80.8 % ( Frequency=252) of the respondents are males while the remaining 19.2% (Frequency=60) are females. This figure shows us the number of male customers was the highest as compeered to the female respondent customers.

As shown in the above Table one the majority (45.2 % Frequency= 141) of the respondents are found in the age limit of 18 up to 25 year. 38.5 % (Frequency= 120) of the respondents are found in the age limit of 26 up to 33 year, while the remaining 14.7 % and 1.6 % of the respondents are found in the age limit of 34- 41 and over 50 respectively. As understood from here, 83.7 % ( 261) respondent customers are found in the age limit of 18-33 years and the majority.

In addition to the demographic characteristics of the respondents in Table one educational qualification, religion and the number of times the customers visit the hotels are found. Among the respondents the majority (59.9 % Frequency= 187) of the respondents have bachelor degree. The remaining 25 % (Frequency =78) and 6.4 (frequency=20) have secondary education and primary education qualifications respectively. The majority of the respondents are a protestant (49.4 %) and only 5.4% of the respondents followed Waqeffeta religion. In terms of the number of times the customers visit the hotels, the majority (18.3 % or 182 respondents visit the hotels from one up to three days a week). When we see the current occupation of the respondents the majority engaged in government employment office (40.4 %), NGOs employee (15.7 %) and private business (26.6%).

### **Tangible service quality attributes importance-performance analysis**

This attributes are a service attributes and items related with appearance, physical facilities, equipments,

materials and other related tangible service quality measures.

Table Two: Mean importance and mean performance of the tangible service quality attributes

No.	Attributes	Mean importance	Mean performance
1	Taste of the food	4.22	2.96
2	Hygienic Food	4.22	2.64
3	Hygienic beverages	4.25	3.22
4	The Varsity of Food	3.32	2.30
5	The Varsity of drink	4.07	3.05
6	Cleanliness of the hotel	4.45	3.19
7	Attractiveness of the surrounding environment	4.42	2.85
8	Comfortable furnishing	4.38	2.85
9	Neat and clean staff members	4.14	2.81
10	Internet service	3.25	1.87
11	Safety and security at the hotel	4.16	3.44
12	Water access	4.04	2.89
13	Hotel staffs Easily availability	3.97	3.24
14	Modern looking hotel equipment	4.02	2.48
15	Visually appealing materials	3.80	2.93
16	Availability of Parking area	4.16	3.26
17	Local food availability	3.22	2.41
18	Local beverage availability	3.29	2.42
19	Comfortable atmosphere and equipment ( example chairs, rooms, etc.	4.32	2.62
	Grand mean	3.98	2.81

Source: survey data (2016/17)

As indicated in table two above, the grand mean of the overall tangible quality service importance was 3.98 and mean score of performance was 2.81. According to the rule of importance performance graphical explanation the mean score of all attribute is considered as the intersection point for both X- axis (performance) and Y- axis (importance) and divided the graph in to four quadrants. Therefore, on Y-axis (importance dividing line), the attributes above the grand mean (3.98) considered as importance and below the mean scored taken as low importance. As a result, out of nineteen (19) tangible service quality attributes; thirteen (13) tangible service quality attributes scored above the grand mean (3.98); which indicted as these (13) tangible service quality attributes were significantly important.

On the performance axis (X-axis), attributes scored above the grand mean (2.81) were considered as good performance were as below the grand mean (2.81) considered as poor performance. 12 tangible service quality service attribute seen as performance and 7 tangible service quality attribute seen as poor performance.

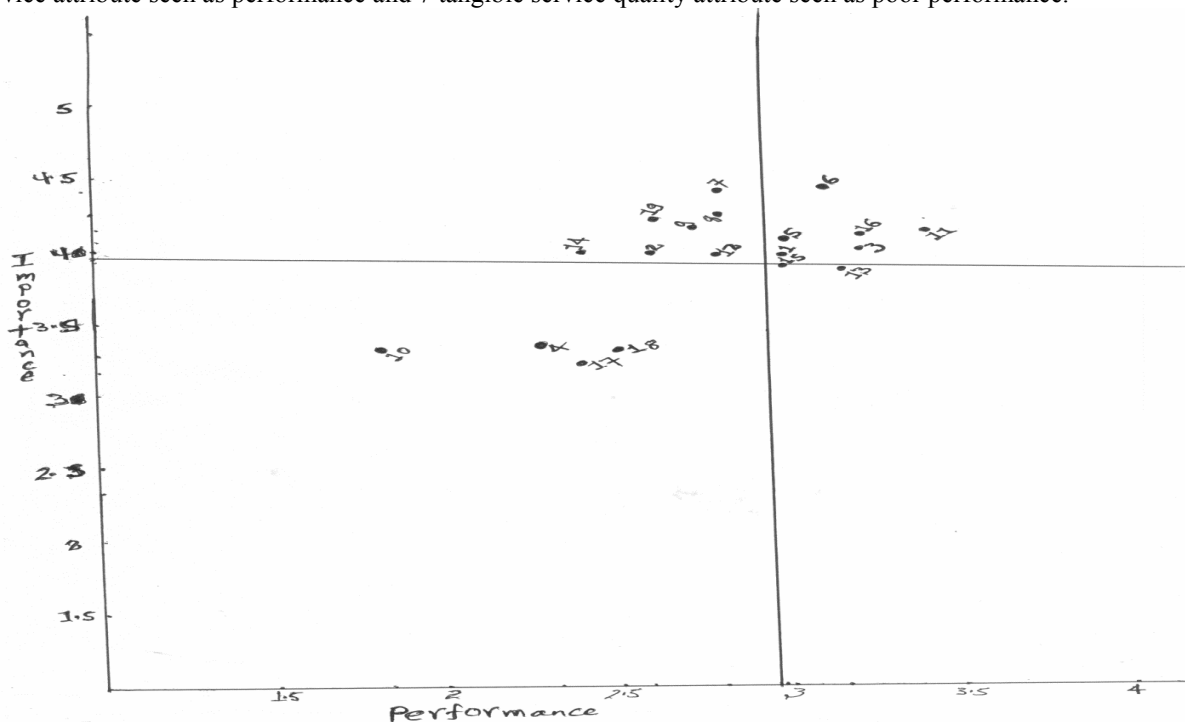


Figure three: grid showing of IPA of the attributes in tangible quality service attributes  
 Let us see the quadrant distribution of each tangible service quality attributes of the hotels. As shown in



figure 3 above, seven (7) tangible service attributes are found in quadrant one (I). These attributes are; hygienic food (2), attractiveness of the surrounding environment (7), Comfortable furnishing (8), Neat and clean staff members (9), Water access (12), Modern looking hotel equipment (14), Comfortable atmosphere and equipment ( example chairs, rooms, etc. This figure indicated that, the seven tangible service quality attributes are important to the hotel customers but the performances were fairly low. Therefore, this gives a direct message for the hotels to improve their performance because according to the IPA model, these attributes are found in concentrate here (quadrant I).

Based on the IPA model, the attributes reached in quadrant two (II) described as an attribute were importance and performance is high. Therefore, based on these explanations, this study found that; seven (7) tangible service quality attributes are found in this quadrant. These attributes were includes; Taste of the food (1), Hygienic beverages (3), The Variety of drink (5), Cleanliness of the hotel (6), Safety and security at the hotel (11), Availability of Parking area (16) and visually appealing materials(15). These attributes were considered as very important to the customers of the hotels, at the sometime the hotels recorded high level performance on these tangible service qualities attributes in the hotels. As a result this message gives a message to the hotels keep up the good work.

In quadrant three (III), were low importance and low performance, only four (4) tangible service quality attributes are found. These attributes are; The Variety of Food (4), Internet service (10), Local food availability (17), Local beverage availability (18). Therefore, this result shows the hotels should not possibly concentrate here because these tangible service quality attributes are not that much importance to the customers. In quadrant four (high performance low importance) one attribute were identified. This was; hotel staffs easily availability (13). Therefore, limited resources will be invested in this tangible service quality attribute because the performance is high and the importance level of this attribute is low for the customers.

Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance and Empathy Service Attributes Importance-Performance Analysis  
 Table three: Mean of Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance and Empathy Service Attributes Importance-Performance Analysis

No.	Attributes	Mean importance	Mean performance
1	Food presentation way	3.89	2.96
2	Fast service delivery/ timing	3.93	2.56
3	Communication skill of the staff	3.99	2.72
4	Friendliness of the staff	4.07	3.07
5	Interest in solving guests' problems	3.91	3.00
6	Service without delays	4.00	2.96
7	Hotel staff confidence	4.02	2.89
8	Courteous hotel staff	4.01	3.60
9	Hotel staff knowledge to answer questions	4.14	2.74
10	Personal attention by staff	3.98	2.47
11	Price and delivered service match	4.14	2.66
12	Clear information available in the hotel	3.85	2.40
13	Convenient opening and closing hour for service	4.00	3.28
14	Provision of the same services and associated materials every time	3.96	2.49
15	Keeping accurate records (e.g. Bills, orders, etc.)	3.37	2.48
	Grand mean	3.95	2.81

Source: survey data (2016/17)

As indicated in table three above, the grand mean of the overall reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy service attributes importance was 3.95 and mean score of performance was 2.81. According to the rule of importance performance graphical explanation the mean score of all attribute is considered as the intersection point for both X- axis (performance) and Y- axis (importance) and divided the graph in to four quadrants. Therefore, on Y-axis (importance dividing line), the attributes above the grand mean (3.95) considered as importance and below the mean scored taken as low importance. As a result, out of nineteen (15) reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy service attributes; thirteen (10) reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy service attributes scored above the grand mean (3.95); which indicted as these (10) reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy Service attributes were significantly important.

On the X-axis (performance line), attributes scored above the grand mean (2.81) were considered as good performance were as below the grand mean (2.81) considered as poor performance. 6 reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy service quality service attribute seen as good performance and 9 reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy service quality attribute seen as poor performance. When we see these reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy quality service attributes in the IPA grid we can got the

following IPA grid.

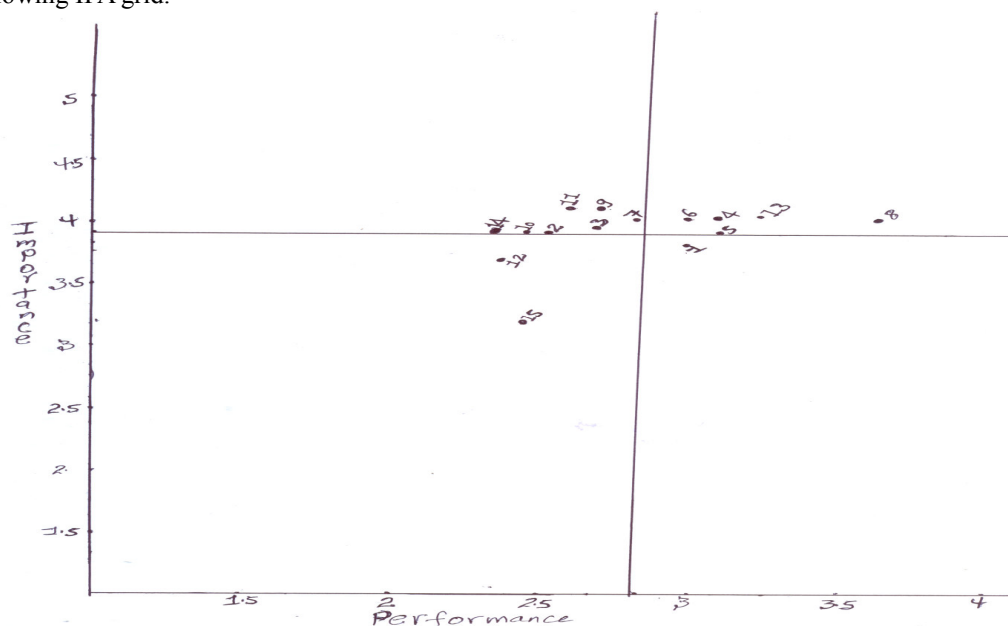


Figure four: grid show of IPA on Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance and Empathy Service Attributes Importance-Performance Analysis

As indicated in the above figure, seven quality service attributes were found in quadrant I (high importance and low performance). These reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy quality service attributes were; Fast service delivery/ timing (2), Communication skill of the staff (3), Hotel staff confidence (7), Hotel staff knowledge to answer questions (9), Personal attention by staff (10), Price and delivered service match (11), Provision of the same services and associated materials every time (14). Therefore, this research result indicated and showed that the hotels concentrate here for better service delivery because these quality service attributes are important for the customers.

On quadrant II (high importance high performance) grid five (5) service quality attributes are found. These were; Friendliness of the staff (4), Interest in solving guests' problems (5), Service without delays (6), Courteous hotel staff (8) and Convenient opening and closing hour for service (13). These attributes were important for the customers and at the same time the hotels performed high. This resulted and gives a direct message for the hotels keep up the good work. Two attributes were laid in quadrant III (low importance and low performance). These attributes were Clear information available in the hotel (12) and Keeping accurate records (e.g. Bills, orders, etc.). Only one attribute was identified and reached on quadrant four i.e. food presentation way (1)

## Conclusion and Recommendations

### Conclusion

The quality service attributes are identified in this research as an important and performance measure tool of Importance performance analysis (IPA) in the two towns, Yabello and BuleHora, Oromia Regional State, Ethiopia. As found from the study, seven (7) tangible service attributes are found in quadrant one (I). These attributes are; hygienic food, attractiveness of the surrounding environment, Comfortable furnishing, Neat and clean staff members, Water access, Modern looking hotel equipment, Comfortable atmosphere and equipment (example chairs, rooms, etc. therefore, this figure indicated that, the hotels are performed poorly in this attributes even these attributes are highly important by the visitors/ customers. At the same time seven quality service attributes were found in quadrant I (high importance and low performance) in the reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy quality service attributes; these attributes are; fast service delivery/ timing, communication skill of the staff, hotel staff confidence, Hotel staff knowledge to answer questions, personal attention by staff, price and delivered service match, provision of the same services and associated materials every time.

This study found that; seven (7) tangible service quality attributes are found in quadrant II (high importance and high performance), four (4) tangible service quality are found in quadrant three (III), were low importance and low performance and only one tangible service quality attributes was found in quadrant four (high performance low importance). Based on this study, five (5) reliability, assurance, responsiveness and empathy quality service attributes are found on quadrant II (high importance high performance) grid. Two attributes were laid in quadrant III (low importance and low performance) and only one attribute was identified and reached on quadrant four.



## Recommendations

Based on the finding of the study the following recommendations are forwarded to the hotels.

- The hotels should work on; in the issues of providing hygienic food and water access since these tangible service quality attributes are highly needed by the customers/ visitors while, the performance of the hotels relatively low.
- The hotels should consider the attractiveness of the surrounding environment, comfortable furnishing, neat and clean staff members, modern looking hotel equipment and comfortable atmosphere when they provide their service to the visitors/ customers because these tangible service qualities attributes are highly needed by the customers but performed lowly by the hotels.
- All the hotels should recommend keep up their good works especially in the quality service attributes of provisions of tasty food, safety and security and their food presentation way.
- Since the customers/ visitors strongly needed fast service delivery, communication skill of the staffs, confident staff members, knowledgeable staff members to answer questions and provisions of the same service and materials; the hotels work towards these attributes by developing a training program to the staff members.
- The customers strongly needed a personal attention while they are in the hotels and price-service match. Therefore, the hotels should work towards these two attributes by train their staff and adjusting their price and their service quality.

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