

# Measuring Hotel Customer Satisfaction: Who Cares?

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**Abstract**—Customer satisfaction is one of the indicators that show the quality of any business. In a hotel operation, it is the hotel guest who has the expectedly objective evaluation of its service. Practically, hotels invited their guests to rate their satisfaction toward overall hotel services through guest comment card. While they are essential, little is known about how hotels manage the data obtained from guest comment card. As such, this study aimed to enrich the understanding of hotel customer satisfaction measurement. Data were collected from 16 Hotel Managers in Bali and were analyzed qualitatively. The study revealed that all hotels used online and offline guest comment to understand how guests perceived their services. Mostly, for offline survey, the Housekeeping staffs were assigned to put and collect the data from the hotel guests. For the online survey, the Front Office staff suggested the guest to complete the online form upon their departure. Data were then shared to all hotel departments for further actions. Only a few hotels performed a thorough measurement and analysis on the data. Discussion and recommendation are provided in the paper as well as limitation and avenue for future study.

**Keywords**—customer satisfaction; hotel service; guest comment card; satisfaction measurement

## I. INTRODUCTION

For any learning organizations or businesses, customer is the center of attention. Thus, customer satisfaction is vital for the sustainability any business [1], [2] In fact, retaining the satisfaction of the existing customer is said to be harder and more costly than creating new ones or recalling the old customers [3]. This is particularly true in the era of increasing competition and the continuously more critical and demanding customers. With such phenomenon, customer may switch from one provider to another. That being said, the sustainability of the business relies highly on the satisfaction level of customer being served.

In the service management literature, service quality and customer satisfaction has long been identified as the key factor

to competitive differentiation and customer retention [4],[5],[6]. Moreover, customer satisfaction is also influential to sales level, customer loyalty, and profitability thereby it is not surprising if business allocate a great amount of resources to achieve customer satisfaction [7],[8].

Customers in the tourism and hotel sector demonstrate similar behavior in terms of increasingly requiring higher quality of products and services [1]. In fact, within this sector, attention toward service and customer satisfaction is a “given factor” or something that is a natural part and expected in the daily operations [9]. Furthermore, the tourism and hospitality sector may not sustain without satisfied customers [9]. Nevertheless, satisfied customers may not guarantee the success of the business. To be successful, business should provide a better satisfactory experience for its customers than the one of its competitors [9].

Based on an initial observation, in many hotel operations, gaining understanding toward guest satisfaction is done through guest satisfaction survey that is either online or offline. The online method used a small card that is distributed to all rooms or restaurants. Basically, hotels intend to know the level of guest satisfaction particularly toward room, front office service, restaurant, and reservation. The questions in the card are purposely designed to be simple, short, and easy to answer. However, although hotels have used their own culture in treating guest comments card, how they analyze seems to be questionable.

In the literature, limited research has been dedicated in this specific topic. Among a few, [1] reported that no hotels under study have implemented satisfaction survey using correct standard and best practice. Most of hotels use a survey to understand if service has met the requirement or standard of the management, whereas the emphasize should be put on the needs of the guests and the performance of the intangibility aspect of the service delivery. In fact, the intangibility element of any service companies depends on the skill of the employee [10]. That being said, the interaction between employee and

hotel guest becomes a critical issue in hotel and tourism business. As such, it is essential to understand the level of guest satisfaction.

However, only few studies have focused on how hotels manage and use the data from guest comment card. This is especially important in order to decide policies and procedures in hotel operations as one of the way to respond to the increased competition as well as the advancement of technology.

Thus, in order to address such gap, this study aimed to explore the implementation of customer satisfaction measurement in star-rated hotel in Bali. More specifically, how hotels used the data obtained from guest comment card (offline) or online was sought. The results of the study provide useful insight on the hotel guest satisfaction survey that would arguably enhance the existing understanding about this topic within the context of operations.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This research built on the dimension of service quality and customer satisfaction literature described below.

### A. Service Quality

*Service quality* is an evaluation of customers toward the overall service [1]. Customer perceptions toward *service quality* and *customer value* lead to *customer satisfaction* [11] (Lim, Widdows, & Park, 2006). In the service literature, service quality consists of five elements: *tangibility*, *reliability*, *responsiveness*, *empathy*, and *assurance* [4]. *Tangibility* is the physical aspect such as building, equipment, furniture, employee uniform, and the kinds. *Reliability* refers to the ability to perform the service. *Responsiveness* is the willingness to help and serve customer quickly. *Empathy* is the attention to customers individually. *Assurance* refers to the knowledge and courtesy of the employee that lead to the trust of customer. This dimension of service quality is named SERVQUAL [4].

Each of the SERVQUAL dimension is measured using 4 or 5 items, resulting in 22 items for all. The item is measured using the comparison of expectation and perception. In measuring service quality, respondents are given 7 point Likert Scale. While this model has been widely used, it may not be applicable to all types of service. Thereby, several authors suggested a specific model for different industry.

### B. Customer Satisfaction

This measurement and others are deliberate, using specifications that anticipate your paper as one part of the entire proceedings, and not as an independent document. Please do not revise any of the current designations. In this globalized era of information and technology, the behavior, environment, and competition of business change dramatically [7]. To stay in the business, company depends on the capability of the management to respond to such changes. In fact, this capability has become the key characteristic of competitive advantages and the success of many companies [9]. In line with that, customer expectation changes and thus the satisfaction level. Therefore, customer satisfaction is the most frequent area of

research particularly in the tourism and hospitality literature [7].

Previous research has found that employee plays a crucial role in the success of service delivery [12]. In line with its characteristic, service business especially tourism and hospitality that is heterogeneous and inseparable (production and consumption), employee largely involves in the service delivery [7]. The interaction of service provider and customer is the crucial moments called the "moment of truth" [13] during which customers evaluate the service level.

Customer evaluation is cognitively and psychologically conducted by comparing expectation and perception of the service [14]. Based on their evaluation the behavioral intention emerged for example, to buy the product or service, to return and become loyal or the other way around [15],[16],[8]. In the service literature, customer satisfaction is classified into transaction-specific satisfaction and overall satisfaction [14]. Transaction-specific satisfaction is the evaluation after the consumption, whereas overall satisfaction is the evaluation toward general aspects including brand [14]. From this definition, it can be concluded that overall satisfaction consists of several transaction-specific satisfaction [17].

As customer satisfaction is the reflection of positive feeling of the customers toward the level of service, it is essential to understand and analyze it consistently. This is also important for tourism and hospitality business including hotel. Building on that importance, this research attempted to answer how hotel perform its *customer satisfaction survey* and manage their data in order to produce policy and strategy.

## III. METHOD

This section discusses how the research was conducted. Using a qualitative approach, this study aimed at exploring the implementation of customer satisfaction survey within a hotel setting. Data were collected using semi-structured interview from Hotel Front Office, Learning and Analysis, and Human Resources Managers in Bali. The respondents were recruited using snowball and purposive sampling method. That is, those who understand and manage the hotel guest comments.

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## IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The study revealed that all hotels under study conduct customer satisfaction survey known as guest comment card. The card is placed upon preparing the guest room and collected upon check out by the room boy or room maid and then submitted to Front Office. Alternatively, hotels suggest their guest to fill out similar form using on line platform. This alternative was available in accordance with the advancement of technology and mostly applied in 4-5 star hotels or international chained hotels.

The respondents reported that the response rate of the satisfaction survey was moderate to low. That is, under 40%. The respondents explained that this low response was perhaps

due to only highly satisfied or highly dissatisfied guests concern on publishing their experience online or reporting it to the hotel manager. Furthermore, the content of the survey mostly include tangibility such as the cleanliness of the room and public area and intangibility aspects of service for example reservation, registration, restaurant service and staff services. All participants explained that the survey was designed in such away that guest would not feel annoyed or disturbed. That is, the questionnaire was small, simple, short, and easy to answer. These finding means that the five dimensions of service quality [4] were not completely adopted by hotels. In other words, hotels did not use correct standard and best practice [1].

Furthermore, consistent with the results of the preliminary research, the interview analyses concluded that all data from the guest card are discussed during Morning Briefing. All departments concerned are to act and respond to the topic being reported in the guest comment card. The briefing is conducted daily, chaired by the hotel general manager and attended by all department heads or their representatives. Next, the raw data were recorded and/or filed by Front Office, or Sales and Marketing, Public Relations, or Learning and Analyze Department.

Among the few hotels that analyze the data, it was revealed that data were classified based on department being mentioned whether it was satisfactory cases or dissatisfactory ones. Next, the departments that received the most comments were recorded and reported. The report included the type of service either positive or negative comments, based on which improvement can be made. One hotel in particular used the Quality Continuous Improvement Section to analyze the data and to link the results of the analyses with their training program. The department concerns may propose the topic of the training program and propose it. This is particularly important as it aims to address the complaint and to ensure that the same or similar complaint would not occur in the future.

As the customer satisfaction is essential for hotels to understand the level of their service [7, [8]] in the eyes of their hotel guest, the guest comments should be further analyzed. Using such analysis, from time to time, hotel can monitor the level of service in different section or department for continuous improvement. The analysis may serve as the source for maintaining a high quality of service and thus, the profitability of business especially in the environment of tight competition and more demanding and technology literate hotel guests.

## V. CONCLUSION

As in the literature, all respondents agreed that customer satisfaction is vital for hotels to understand the perception their hotel guests toward services they provide. In practical, hotels distribute guest comment card and/ or place online survey to know the evaluation of their guest toward overall or transactional services. The content of the survey included main services such as reception, reservation, restaurant, room, and overall staff service. The comments were discussed during morning briefing chaired by General Manager and attended by all Department Heads. However, only a few have conducted proper analysis of the data obtained from the guests. In order to

stay updated and to respond the continuous changes business environment including customer behavior, technology advancement, competition, it is important to have a deeper and better understanding of the customer perceptions toward service. By then, hotel can produce necessary rule, policy and procedure, and strategies to stay in the business. While limitation of this study is acknowledged in term of its inability to be generalized, this study provide insights for future research such as to examine the online interaction of hotel guest in sharing their hotel experiences.

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