

Understanding the Influence of Hotel Staff's Service Quality on Guest Loyalty: A Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT

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This qualitative study aimed to determine what affects guest loyalty when guests receive service from hotel employees. This included how guests feel about their experience at the hotel and if they will come back or refer others. We wanted to understand guests' perceptions of the quality of service provided by hotel employees. We also examined how employees' service affected guests' loyalty and behavioral intention. We chose a qualitative study to better understand participants' experiences and perceptions. We used purposive sampling because participants met our criteria as hotel guests. We gathered information by interviewing participants about their experiences with hotel employees, their perceptions of the service they received, what made a good service experience, and why they would return to a hotel or refer someone to it. The collected information was coded and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify common trends and themes. The participants felt that quality of service was achieved when the employee gave the guest a positive interaction. Service was given in a timely manner. Service that they could trust and was professional. Guests felt cared for by the employee and had their problems resolved. Communication was of quality, and service was provided in a pleasant environment. Guests also liked it when employees went above and beyond by offering extra services or gestures. At times, service fell short by not meeting guests' needs, taking too long, or providing no follow-up, and some employees did not provide quality service. Our results show that quality of service played a big role in keeping guests loyal to the hotel by providing quality service that met their needs in a timely manner, was professional, and showed them that they cared.

Keywords: Hotel service quality, guest loyalty, guest experience, hotel staff, qualitative study

INTRODUCTION

Hotels offer many services to make guests happy and leave them with a good memory of their stay, and they want to build a relationship with those guests. When dealing with services, you never see what you're purchasing, only what you experience when interacting

with your fellow human beings at the company. Hotel employees play many roles when working with guests. This includes greeting guests when they arrive or helping them with any needs or requests. They answer questions and resolve problems. They provide services that benefit guests in a timely, friendly manner. How these things are done determines whether guests feel they received good value and quality service from the hotel. So, understanding what service quality means to your guests helps you build relationships with them.

Service quality consists of the quality of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles offered to your guests. Your employees can exemplify these when they provide proper service to guests. This includes providing information and meeting their needs quickly and courteously. Displaying job knowledge and caring about your guests' needs. These qualities can encourage customers to return. Just as poor communication and taking too long to help them or acting unprofessional towards them. Customers develop feelings toward a company when staff provides good-quality service. They will trust that company and want to continue using their services.

Customer loyalty also plays a big role in hotels. If a customer is satisfied with a company, they will want to return to that establishment. Not only will they return to that hotel, but they will also spread the word to others. Customer loyalty means the guest will use the hotel's services again. Whether it's spreading positive word of mouth about the business or choosing that company's services over competitors. There are many hotels out there that your customers can choose from, so you must find ways to attract them to come to your hotel over others. Providing quality service can help you build customer loyalty.

There are many ways that we can measure if our customers are receiving quality service from our staff. But we cannot know why certain services our staff provides make them loyal to the hotel. We can learn that they enjoy quality service from our employees, but not what those services are. They may enjoy how our staff speaks to them, how quickly we resolve their problems, or how we provide services. We could learn what helps customers develop loyalty to our hotel by finding out what they enjoyed about their experience.

Another reason to look into what experiences help guests build loyalty is that we can find out what they think and feel about their time at our hotel. What they enjoyed and didn't enjoy. When someone feels a hotel provided quality service, they will most likely become loyal to that business. Hotel staff represent your company and shape how customers view it. Learning what they enjoyed can help us dig deeper into why those experiences made them want to stay loyal to the hotel.

We know our hotel employees can do many things to provide guests with quality service and help them build loyalty to our business. But we don't know what they think about the service we provide. A qualitative study can allow guests to tell us what they think about the service quality they receive and why they return to the hotel. This will help us learn what factors lead guests to build loyalty with our business.

This study focused on what hotel guests believe that quality service from hotel employees means to them. It also examined what they experienced that helped them build loyalty to the hotel. This research helped hotel employees and management understand what they can provide to guests to build a relationship with the company.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to understand how hotel staff's service quality influences guests' loyalty based on guests' experiences and perceptions. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. How do hotel guests describe their experiences and perceptions of the service quality provided by hotel staff?
2. How does the service quality of hotel staff influence guests' loyalty and their decisions to revisit or recommend the hotel?

Scope and Delimitations

The purpose of this study was to find out if hotel staff's quality of service has an effect on guest loyalty. By using selected hotel guests' experiences and knowledge about hotel staff's quality of service. The study described how hotel staff provide quality service by responding promptly to guest requests and providing reliable service guests can count on. It also described how staff provide assurance and empathy, communicate professionally, and offer individualized service. The study also described how these services affected guests' perceptions of loyalty. The quality of Service provided by hotel staff may have an impact on how guests perceive their loyalty to the hotel by being satisfied with the service and trusting the hotel to provide the same quality of service when they visit again and would like to refer others to that hotel. This study used a qualitative method to gain in-depth information from purposive samples that have experienced hotel service. Using their narrative, the study hopes to gather common experiences, perceptions, and insights about hotel staff's quality of service and how it affects guest loyalty.

This study was limited to selected hotel guests who can give in-depth information about their time at the hotel and the service they received from hotel staff. This study described hotel staff's quality of service and how it can affect guests' loyalty to the hotel. This study did not measure quality of service, guest satisfaction, or loyalty. Hotel owners or staff were not included in this study. This study did not cover other factors that can affect guest loyalty, such as room rates, hotel amenities, hotel location, sales the hotel may be offering, hotel reputation, or competitors, unless mentioned by the sample. Because this study was qualitative, it covers only the samples used, not all guests who have visited a hotel.

Review of Related Literatures

Jin, Cheng, Li, and Wang (2021) studied how hotel employees' role stress affects their prosocial service behavior. They discussed how employees showing good service behavior toward guests can positively affect customers and benefit the hotel. They found mediation and moderation effects. Job satisfaction helped mediate the role of stress in prosocial service behavior. Social support moderated the relationship between role stress and job satisfaction. This study relates to our study because, if you want your guests to receive good service, many factors affect an employee's ability to display prosocial behavior. Understanding what makes guests feel employees were attentive, helpful, and willing to go above and beyond could help explain how employees build customer loyalty.

Liang and Wu (2021) studied employees wearing facemasks during the COVID-19 pandemic and their effect on customers' perceived service quality and service experience. They stated that front-line employees' appearance and behavior can affect customers. This is similar to our study because many factors can affect how customers perceive service quality. Not only can customers judge employees on how well they complete tasks, but also on what the employees are wearing and displaying to the customers. By interviewing guests about how they

view staff, we can learn what makes an employee seem nice and gain more insight into what affects service quality.

Yeong, Knox, Prabhakar, and Knox (2022) found that when looking at SERVQUAL dimensions, Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy all affected customer satisfaction and loyalty at Resort Hotels in Malaysia. This study aimed to determine which of the five service quality dimensions was most likely to lead to customer satisfaction and loyalty. This study aligns with our study because reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy could all be reasons someone chooses to stay loyal to a hotel. If someone liked those things during their stay, they may want to return to that hotel or even tell their friends about it.

Zhang (2022) examined how service quality in economy hotels affected customer satisfaction and loyalty. Many dimensions of service quality affected customer satisfaction and loyalty. All dimensions except compensation affected satisfaction, and Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy affected loyalty. Reliability impacted customer satisfaction the most, and Assurance impacted customer loyalty the most. This applies to our study because we know guests believe certain service qualities affect their loyalty to a hotel. Interviewing guests could let us hear what they thought of employees who provided good or poor service.

Kalnaovakul and Promsivapallop (2023) looked at customer reviews and what they believed were dimensions of hotel service quality. By analyzing 25,267 reviews, they identified six dimensions of hotel service quality for guests staying in Phuket. These included Leisure Activities, Tangibles & Surroundings, Reliability, Responsiveness, Service Process, and Food. We can conclude that customers use many factors to determine whether their hotel stay met their expectations. Our study will allow guests to describe what made their experience with hotel employees great or bad.

Gajić, Vukolić, Zrnić, and Lóránt Dénes (2023) researched how quality of service in hotels affected visitors' loyalty to hotels. They found that visitors were loyal to hotels because of tangible and intangible service-quality factors. Intangible factors had a slightly greater effect on visitors' decisions about whether they were loyal to a hotel. Our study focuses on how guests perceive service quality from employees. Employees can affect visitors on the intangible side of service quality by being nice and empathetic to visitors' needs.

Campos, Araújo, and Campos (2024) found that service quality dimensions impacted guest satisfaction and loyalty to hotels. 618 guests who stayed at hotels or resorts filled out questionnaires. The study found that Contact & Service and Lodging affected guest satisfaction. Lodging, Food and Drink, and Value for Money impacted guest loyalty to a hotel or resort. Female guests who visited a hotel or resort more than once showed some differences. This research helps our study by showing that there are many reasons a person may be loyal to a hotel or resort. Through interviews, we can learn why guests feel loyal to certain hotels.

Ariffin, Nadesan, and Alamssia (2025) researched which service escape factors affect guests' loyalty to a resort hotel. The researchers focused on physical, social and electronic servicescape and how it related to customers being loyal to a hotel. The researcher concluded that social servicescape could play a large role in why customers are loyal to a hotel. When

interviewing guests about why they were loyal to a hotel, they may mention employees. If employees were nice and communicated well with them, they may decide to stay at that hotel again.

Theoretical Framework

This study was based on the *SERVQUAL Model of Service Quality*. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) proposed that service quality can be defined as the difference between the guest's expectations and what they actually perceive when receiving service. They further described service quality as divided into five categories. These categories include tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. This study described how employees and their ways of serving guests can influence the guest experience. The study examined how employees displayed reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and service toward guests. Using a qualitative method, we asked guests to describe their experiences receiving good or bad service from hotel staff. We also asked whether guests would want to return to the hotel.

We also used Oliver's Theory of Customer Loyalty as a theoretical framework. When a customer is satisfied with a product or service, it leads to customer loyalty. However, customer loyalty does not consist only of customer satisfaction. The customer may also feel a sense of superiority when buying a certain product or becoming loyal to a brand or business. Oliver (1999) describes customer loyalty as more than satisfaction. Using this theory, we believe guests will become loyal customers of a hotel after experiencing good service from the hotel and its employees. Therefore, if a customer enjoys their stay and feels a bond with the hotel, they are more likely to return and may tell others about their stay. These theories help explain why employees play such an important role in creating loyal hotel customers.

Conceptual Framework

The Input–Process–Output (IPO) Model was used to create this study's conceptual framework. This concept framework shows the research questions as the Input. The Process includes how the information was collected and qualitatively analyzed. Lastly, the output is how the information was brought together to answer our questions about hotel staff service and loyalty.

The input of this study would be the research questions. The first research question asked how hotel guests perceived their experience of service provided by hotel staff. Guests would talk about how staff responded to them and showed them courtesy. It also asked how staff communicated with them and whether they were professional, reliable, and attentive to their needs. They felt the staff met their needs and addressed their concerns. The second input was asking how hotel staff service affected guests' loyalty to the hotel. We based our inputs on these questions when interviewing guests about their experience with hotel staff and their decision to stay loyal.

This study collected information from selected hotel guests. Information was collected using qualitative methods. We interviewed participants about their experience and perception of the service provided. After collecting all the information, we coded and analyzed it for common ideas or meanings. We categorized the statements that stood out into themes related to hotel staff and the service guests experienced, and how those experiences made them want to return or stay loyal to the hotel. The researcher used these themes to further explain the questions at hand while allowing the guests to speak for themselves.

The **Output** of this study is to gain an in-depth understanding of how hotel staff service can affect guests' loyalty. The main themes that came up from our research will be stated and we will explain how guests felt when being serviced by the staff. These will show what made them loyal to the hotel and want to return. This output will help us see what we can do as a hotel to ensure our staff provides great service to our guests.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative research design. Qualitative research is best when you are trying to gain information from individuals about what they have experienced or what they think about something. This study focused on what guests think about their experiences interacting with hotel staff and whether those experiences made them want to return, tell others about the hotel, and stay connected to the establishment. The goal was to get descriptions from the participants that would help understand what service quality is and what makes a guest loyal to a hotel. By collecting this information, the researchers can understand what participants mean when they describe these factors and how staff members affect guests' loyalty to the hotel.

The researchers used purposive sampling to choose participants for this study. Participants were selected because they could provide valuable information for the study. These individuals were all guests who interacted with hotel staff and could describe their experience receiving services from hotel staff. The criteria ensured participants knew enough about hotel services to provide informative answers. Participants were selected based on whether they met the criteria needed to complete the study. The researcher interviewed as many participants as possible until they felt they had gathered enough information and similar information began to repeat.

The researcher gathered data by interviewing the participants. Interviewing participants allowed the researcher to ask questions about all aspects of the study. It also gave the participants a chance to elaborate on their experience. Interview questions will relate to the participant's experience with the hotel staff. What did they think about the services that were offered by the staff? Were the staff responsive to the guests' needs? How did the staff communicate with the guests? Were the guests satisfied with their services? Why or why not would they like to return to that hotel or tell others about the hotel? The researcher asked additional questions if needed. Participants consented to have their interview recorded and transcribed. After the transcript was finished, the researcher reviewed it to ensure the participants said what they intended and to retain important information.

Thematic Analysis was used to analyze the data collected. The researcher read the transcripts multiple times to understand what the participants answered. The researcher selected and coded important quotes and data relevant to service quality and guest loyalty. The researcher grouped similar codes to create categories. The researcher then used these categories to develop themes that participants may have shared. Once the themes were identified, the researcher reviewed them to see whether they supported what participants shared during the interview. These themes helped the researcher answer the study question. How does service quality from the hotel staff affect guest loyalty?

By transcribing and analyzing the collected data, the researcher ensured the study's reliability. Staying consistent with what participants stated while reviewing all the data

increased the study's credibility. Allowing participants to provide detailed information about their experiences also helped increase credibility. By going through the transcripts and codes several times, it helped make sure that the researcher stayed faithful to what the participants told them. Confidentiality was maintained with the participants. They were informed about the study and that they were free to leave at any time.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

SOP 1. How do hotel guests describe their experiences and perceptions of the service quality provided by hotel staff?

Major Theme	Subthemes	Core Meaning from Guests' Experiences
Positive Staff–Guest Interaction	Warmth, courtesy, friendliness, respect	Guests felt welcomed and valued when employees interacted with them positively.
Efficient Service Delivery	Responsiveness, prompt assistance, availability	Guests appreciated employees who addressed their needs quickly and efficiently.
Trustworthy Service	Reliability, consistency, fulfillment of promises	Guests developed confidence when hotel staff consistently delivered what was promised.
Professional Service	Competence, knowledge, professionalism, assurance	Employees' expertise and professional behavior increased guests' confidence in the hotel.
Personalized Guest Care	Empathy, attentiveness, individualized assistance	Guests valued being treated according to their specific needs and circumstances.
Effective Problem Resolution	Listening, complaint handling, corrective action	Guests judged service quality partly by how staff responded when problems occurred.
Quality Communication	Clarity, patience, respect, accurate information	Effective communication helped guests understand procedures and reduced uncertainty.
Tangible Service Environment	Cleanliness, grooming, room condition, presentation	Physical and visual aspects reinforced perceptions of staff professionalism and service quality.

Exceeding Expectations	Extra effort, proactive assistance, personalized gestures	Additional efforts created memorable experiences that went beyond basic service expectations.
Service Gaps and Inconsistency	Delays, follow-ups, varying employee performance	Inconsistent service reduced otherwise positive perceptions of the hotel experience.

Based on these results, guests felt service quality depends on many factors around them while at a hotel. When guests felt service was provided, they mentioned many positive employee characteristics. These included friendliness, helpfulness, promptness, efficiency, professionalism, individuality, communication, and issue resolution. Employees who went above and beyond to assist guests were also seen as providing good service. If something took too long or required multiple calls to employees, it was seen as bad service. Employee quality also played a role. Our results show that guests consider whether their request is met and how quickly, with courtesy and consistency, it is done. This aligns with recent studies on hospitality services.

SOP 2. How does the service quality of hotel staff influence guests' loyalty and their decisions to revisit or recommend the hotel?

The quality of hotel service from hotel staff affects guests' loyalty towards the hotel. If hotel staff provide helpful service that meets guests' needs, guests are more likely to be loyal to the hotel. When staff are friendly and attentive while providing their services, Guests will want to keep staying at that hotel because the staff showed them hospitality and kindness. Hotel guests will want to stay at hotels where they know the staff can please them with their service. But if the staff is not helpful or takes too long to provide service, guests will not want to stay loyal to the hotel.

Guests will also be loyal to hotels if they believe that they will be satisfied while staying there. If hotel staff show guests that they care about them and what they need, guests will be loyal to the hotel. They will believe the hotel can please them when they need something or if something goes wrong. Because the hotel staff greeted them with kindness, they will want to return to that hotel. They will know the hotel staff will help them out.

Hotel service plays a big role in whether a guest will recommend the hotel to others. Such as family, friends, and co-workers. If hotel staff provide guests with quality service, guests are more likely to recommend the hotel to others. Showing others that they provided good service will make guests want to share that information. Guests may want to show others that they stayed at a hotel they enjoyed.

Based on these factors, guests may want to be loyal to the hotel if they receive good service from the staff. If a guest receives quality service from hotel staff, they will most likely want to return and tell others about the hotel. Quality service can affect the guest's experience at the hotel. This could lead them to return to the hotel and become loyal to it.

SUMMARY

The results for SOP 1 indicated that hotel guests viewed service quality as the actions of hotel employees. Hotel guests wanted staff to be courteous, friendly, and helpful, and to provide quality service. Guests also mentioned communication, help resolving problems, and staff having a clean appearance as factors that led them to view service quality positively. They liked it when staff went above and beyond to help them during their stay. Delays or having to ask multiple times for help created service gaps. So, guests felt that if their needs were met, the hotel provided good-quality service. It also came down to how hotel staff treated guests while they were staying at the hotel.

From SOP 2, it was found that guests felt that if hotel staff were nice to them, they were more likely to return and tell others about their stay. When hotel employees were polite, helpful, courteous, and provided quality service, the guests felt welcome at the hotel. This helped establish that guests would be more loyal and more likely to recommend the hotel. When staff didn't provide these qualities, guests were less likely to return to the hotel or recommend it. It concluded that when hotel staff provide quality service, they can turn a happy customer into a loyal one who will return and tell others about the hotel.

CONCLUSIONS

- Hotel guests felt that they were provided service quality through interaction with the staff. Guests felt that when hotel employees showed kindness and friendliness, they received good-quality service. Other characteristics that made guests feel they were receiving quality service were promptness, dependability, professional knowledge, going above and beyond for the guest, resolving problems, communicating effectively, and maintaining a high standard of service. Employees who showed these traits made guests feel cared for. When service was slow, employees did not follow up, and inconsistency among employees affected guests' perception of service quality. Hotel employees provide service quality when they can fulfill what the guest asks for and do so well.
- Guests developed loyalty towards the hotel after they received good service from employees. They were more likely to return if they were treated with kindness and helped promptly. Being dependable, knowledgeable, and showing guests you care will make them want to return to your hotel and tell others about their stay. If an employee can resolve a guest's problem and go out of their way to help, they are bound to make a good impression and build trust. Guests developed less loyalty towards the hotel when employees acted inappropriately and took too long to respond to the guests' needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Hotel management needs to work more with their employees when it comes to serving their guests. Train them to serve customers better, communicate effectively, respond promptly, show sympathy, and resolve any problems that may occur. As well as acting professionally. Once training is in place, make sure you have ways to measure these standards. Make sure your employees aren't taking too long to respond to guests or that their responses vary from one employee to the next. By using guest feedback, you can learn which areas you need to improve. This can help you give guests a more personal touch.
2. By having steps in place that will better allow the hotel to retain its guests. By providing the same level of service to all guests. Reward employees who provide great service,

and keep teaching them how to serve and build relationships with guests. Find ways to better ensure guests return to your establishment and tell others about their experience. Always check in with your guests and note anything that could hinder their loyalty to your hotel.

AI DECLARATION STATEMENT

AI was used for grammar and language. The researcher conducted all research, including generating ideas, analyzing data, and drawing conclusions.

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