

The Role of Customer Service in Improving the Quality of Service to Customers at Hotel Aero

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the role of customer service in improving service quality, especially in handling complaints from visitors and hotel guests. This is very important to note considering the increasing proliferation of hotel businesses, resulting in increasingly high levels of competition in the hotel industry. Therefore, hotels are required to be able to provide the best service in order to provide a pleasant experience for hotel guests. In order to analyze this, the research applied in this study is a type of qualitative research with a descriptive approach. The study was conducted at the Aero Hotel Tanjung Morawa, with data collection techniques in the form of observation, interviews and documentation. Based on the results of the study, it shows that the Aero Hotel.

INTRODUCTION

The hotel industry continues to grow along with the development of the business world, marked by the increasing number of hotels in Indonesia with various classifications both regional and international. With the increasing and mushrooming availability of existing hotels, of course, it also presents increased competition among fellow hotel industry players. It cannot be denied, the hotel industry is currently faced with very intense competition, therefore every hotel is required to be able to have a service of excellent that will be able to win the competition. Basically the hotel is a property that prioritizes professional service in addition to the facilities available at the hotel. Hotel guests need quality facilities and service in accordance with what guests expect (Rendrawan et al., 2020).

Customer satisfaction is the main thing that needs to be considered by hotel managers to assess the performance of their hotels. Therefore, the factors that contribute to customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction need to be considered by the hotel industry. On the one hand, satisfied customers tend to return and recommend the hotel. On the other hand, dissatisfied customers tend to spread negative word of mouth which not only tarnishes the hotel's image and reputation, but also lowers the hotel's revenue by deterring potential customers (Li et al., 2020).

Trust and a positive image in the eyes of hotel guests are very important for the sustainability of a company. In today's competitive era, it is not only the public who needs the company, but the company also relies heavily on the guests public. Service complaints reflect customer dissatisfaction with service standards, either in the form of inadequate action or inaction from the responsible party, which has a direct impact on the customer experience. In addition, according to Venmard, complaints can be seen as a form of unmet expectations (Kurnia & Wulandari, 2024). Service improvement is very important in an effort to increase customer satisfaction. This is where the hotel is required to be able to provide quality service. Service quality is a very important factor to determine whether they are satisfied or not with the service system provided by the hotel. One part that handles these problems is customer service. Here, customer service is required to have the ability to carry out this role.

The role of customer service is very important and cannot be underestimated. Professional and responsive service plays an important role in building a positive first impression for guests, which is often the deciding factor for them to return or recommend the hotel to others. Customer service is the face of every hotel. Friendly, prompt, and responsive service to guests' needs creates a pleasant stay. For guests, interactions with hotel staff, especially customer service, greatly affect their perception of the overall quality of the hotel. Customer service has a role as a communication bridge between guests and the hotel. They are in charge of informing the facilities, additional services, as well as handling special requests from guests. In certain situations, customer service must be able to act as an intermediary who ensures guests' needs are met so as to make guests feel special and appreciated.

Customer Service not only maintains existing customers but must also increase loyalty and integrity to all customers. Therefore, customer service is required to can serve customers and provide information, as well as create harmonious relationships with customers. Good relationships and communication can attract people's interest and attention to become customers (Qadrina et al., 2023). Hotel Aero, always tries to provide the best service to consumers and also ensures that the service runs well without any interruption in service and coverage. However, it is not uncommon for there to be complaints from guests. Starting from room discomfort to other unexpected problems. This is where customer service's ability to handle complaints quickly and effectively is tested. Good service not only solves the problem but also turns the complaint into a positive experience that can make guests feel cared for and satisfied. Quick responses and appropriate solutions are key to maintaining a hotel's reputation.

IMPLEMENTATION AND METHODS

This management work study (KKM) activity was carried out for 3 weeks, starting from January 6 - February 7, 2025 at the hotel at Hotel Aero Tanjung Morawa, Limau Manis, Tanjung Morawa District, Deli Serdang Regency, North Sumatra Province.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of observations and interviews with several customer service staff during internship activities at Hotel Aero, there are several problems that the author found, including the existence of several complaints submitted by hotel visitors to the Hotel Aero customer service. Complaints that occur are generally related to system aspects, such as air conditioners that are less cold, water heaters, room access keys, bed types or mattresses and other systems where in these complaints, the hotel checks or moves guests to another room. Or other complaints such as misunderstanding room reservations via online, or available room facilities.

There are several handling of customer complaints by Hotel Aero's customer service, namely:

1. Identify. To prevent consumers from making complaints, the Aero Hotel customer service first looks for any problems with complaints that can make customers or hotel guests uncomfortable. There are two methods for filing a complaint at Aero Hotel, namely directly and indirectly. If a complaint is made directly, it can be determined by observing the visitor's posture, body language, and facial expressions.
2. Listen. In handling customer complaints, the Aero Hotel customer service makes an effort to listen carefully to the problems conveyed by customers, such as writing down the problem, understanding it, and confirming it back to the customer.

3. Empathize. Aero Hotel's customer service is also trained to cultivate feelings of empathy so that they can calm the emotions of angry guests by feeling their disappointment and trying to understand what they feel. The ability to understand the guest's emotional state is done by showing concern for the problems faced by the guest.
4. Apologize. The hotel customer service conveys regrets and apologies to customers without cornering either party (the hotel and the customer). The hotel expressed regret for the inconvenience that occurred, such as by saying "We are very sorry for this incident, and we apologize."
5. Deliver solution. In addition, the Aero Hotel customer service also customer approval and in accordance with policies that have been determined by the hotel so that there is harmony between customers and companies. The solution carried out by Aero Hotel is to help guests, check on related problems, and move guests to other rooms.

Customer approval and in accordance with policies that have been determined by the hotel so that there is harmony between customers and companies. The solution carried out by Aero Hotel is to help guests, check on related problems, and move guests to other rooms. Providing good service to customers is not an easy thing, considering the many obstacles faced, including:

- a. Different guest characters
Every customer or guest has a different character, so the hotel customer service must be able to read and distinguish each customer character well so that the handling of customer complaints can be adjusted, for example the difference between guests who just submit their complaints calmly with guests who complain in a high tone and want to be handled immediately, want to get compensation directly, exaggerating complaints, for example, such as complaints about the type of bed or mattress, when guests book a room with twin type or two separate beds and write a request with one large bed, the voucher has explained that the request is based on availability or based on availability, if the guest has requested but the type of bed is not available, it will be reserved according to the initial voucher. In the check in process, guests complain that they are not given good service because it does not match what they want, usually guests will continue to provide ongoing complaints to the hotel.
- b. Different levels of guest satisfaction
Every customer or guest also has a different level of satisfaction, guests who feel disappointed even though the mistake is small, guests who are not satisfied with the service even though it is in accordance with the rate or price ordered, and so on. Aero Hotel customer service must be able to handle this, therefore this is an obstacle in handling customer complaints. For example, when the room access card does not work and must be recharged, there are guests who feel normal and there are guests who feel disappointed and angry and then make complaints, actually during the check in process it has been explained that the room access card must be kept away from cellphones or magnets because the system is sensitive.

- c. Guests complain without looking at the situation
Some guests complain directly and under unfavorable circumstances, for example when the staff is busy or in the process of working, guests will immediately complain and hotel staff must be prepared for this, sometimes when it is busy or the work process makes other customers or guests feel disturbed or even feel provoked. For example, on weekends, usually the check-in process runs with a long and crowded queue process, when the guest has been given a room and the guest has entered the room, the guest returns to the receptionist and complains that the room condition is not good and is conveyed in a high tone to ask for a room swap or move room, this causes discomfort for guests or can even provoke other guests who are queuing.
- d. Lack of human resources in handling customer complaints,
When the hotel is crowded with guests, guests often submit their complaints directly and in a state where the staff is in the process of working or busy in providing services. Usually this complaint occurs on weekends or long weekends where during check in hours, guests will queue to register and get a room.

The efforts to overcome obstacles in handling customer complaints are carried out by the Aero Hotel, which are as follows:

1. In order to know the character of each customer or guest, the Aero Hotel customer service continues to provide services by applying empathy or feeling what the customer feels, being friendly and polite, patient and careful in the words delivered and responsive in handling the complaint, so that customers or guests who feel angry will feel calm because their complaints are responded well.
2. To overcome obstacles to different levels of guest satisfaction, the Hotel's customer service works professionally and sticks to the standard operating procedures determined by the company. In handling customer or guest complaints, the Aero Hotel customer service does not blame the guest or blame the hotel for what happened, and in providing solutions to guest complaints it is done fairly and does not violate the provisions set by hotel management. If the guest is not satisfied with the solution provided by the hotel and wants more solutions, the customer service will explain the rules determined by hotel management and usually these rules have been included in the voucher or official hotel website.
3. In handling obstacles to guests who complain without seeing the situation, the Aero Hotel customer service has increased focus and works professionally by handling customer complaints quickly and resolving the problem or complaint completely so that customers or guests do not spread their bad experiences or make other guests feel provoked and think negatively of the hotel.

4. In dealing with obstacles to the lack of human resources, the Aero Hotel has a "Manager On Duty", where on holidays there will be a manager on duty in handling customer complaints, the manager is a representative of the department to carry out tasks every day off and has been determined by a schedule made by human resources management. With this, handling customer complaints at Aero Hotel is carried out effectively.

A hotel cannot last long if there are no guests staying there. After all, guests will definitely look for a place to stay where they can get the best service. With the money that they have spent, hotel guests expect that they can get a worthy experience, including the service from the hotel's customer service. In the hospitality industry, the main focus is not only about serving guests' needs but also creating a comfortable and memorable experience. This experience is often the main reason guests return and recommend the hotel to others. Therefore, it is important for hotels to provide competent customer service. While best efforts are always made to provide excellent service, complaints from guests are inevitable. How a hotel responds and resolves these complaints will be a reflection of their professionalism and commitment to customer satisfaction.

Hence, the importance of handling complaints appropriately. When a guest makes a complaint, it could be because their expectations were not met, the service was not appropriate, or there was some discomfort that they experienced. However, every complaint is an opportunity for the hotel to improve and build a better relationship with the guest. Not only that, a proper handling a good response to complaints can also prevent the spread of negative information about the hotel, which can adversely affect reputation in today's digital age. In the hospitality industry, complaint handling is an integral part of maintaining guest satisfaction and hotel reputation. Here are the essential steps to manage complaints effectively:

1. Respond to complaints quickly
A quick response to guest complaints is essential. Every complaint should be responded to as soon as it is received, either through reception, customer service, or other available communication platforms.
2. Listen with empathy
Listen to guest complaints patiently and empathetically. Give guests the opportunity to express their dissatisfaction fully without interruption. This not only shows attention to their concerns but also builds trust.
3. Accept and apologize sincerely
Express a sincere apology for any inconvenience or dissatisfaction experienced by the guest. This shows a willingness to acknowledge any mistakes or imperfections that may have occurred.
4. Investigate and evaluate
Investigate the complaint to understand the root cause. Ask for additional information if needed and find out what can be done to improve the situation. Evaluate each complaint to identify patterns or larger issues.

5. Offer a satisfactory solution
Provide solutions that are adequate and appropriate to the level of complaint the guest is experiencing. For example, offer compensation
6. Take preventive measures
Use data from complaints to improve your procedures or services. Review operational procedures, employee training, or infrastructure that can minimize the likelihood of similar complaints in the future.
7. Employee training
Make sure your employees are trained to deal with and handle complaints properly. Give them effective communication skills, problem-solving abilities, and resilience in dealing with difficult situations.
8. Maintain professional ethics
Always maintain professionalism in handling complaints. Avoid getting defensive or blaming the guest. Stay calm, respectful, and respond to complaints in a way that respects your guests.
9. Monitor and evaluate
Conduct continuous monitoring of complaints and responses to them. Evaluate the effectiveness of your strategy periodically to ensure that the complaint handling process continues to improve.

by implementing the steps above, the hotel can improve its service quality and build a reputation for being responsive, caring, and competent in responding to guests' needs and expectations. This can not only improve service quality but can also increase customer satisfaction which will ultimately have an impact on maintaining customer loyalty in the long run.





Figure1. KKM (Management Work Lecture) Activities at the Aero Tanjung Morawa Hotel

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Handling complaints well is not just about correcting mistakes or inconveniences that guests experience, but also an opportunity to strengthen relationships with them. An effective handling can increase guest loyalty, enhance the hotel's reputation, and ultimately, improve overall business success. In the competitive world of hospitality, the ability to manage and resolve complaints well is a highly valued skill. This is where the role of hotel customer service is required to handle these issues well. Hotel Aero, through its customer service has done a pretty good role in maintaining the quality of service at the hotel, as evidenced by the ability of the customer service in handling hotel customer complaints properly and professionally, by taking steps and taking the right policies. Of course, this is an important note for the creation of a pleasant experience for every hotel guest staying at the place.

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