

## **Guest Satisfaction towards the Services of Staff of Fernandina 88 Suites Hotel**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Service quality is one of the main ingredients for success in the hospitality industry. Rendering a high quality of service to satisfy the guest expectations is one of the priorities in a hotel. Fernandina 88 Suites has been catering to different kinds of guests may it be celebrities or common business people. That is why service quality is of the consideration. This study aimed to evaluate the level of guest satisfaction of Fernandina 88 Suites Hotel towards the service quality of the front office staff, as a basis for service development and reference within the hotel. The descriptive method (survey) was used. Accidental sampling was utilized and 258 guests were the respondents. The over-all satisfaction of the guests towards the service quality of the hotel along the five dimensions is at a good level. Most guests claimed that responsiveness is the most important dimension, followed by Empathy, Tangibility, Assurance, and Reliability. In this study, Responsiveness dimension was the most essential factor. Most guests acknowledged the importance of providing prompt services and the staff's enthusiasm to help them.*

**Keywords:** suite hotel, guest satisfaction, service quality, SERVQUAL approach, hotel concept

### **INTRODUCTION**

Service quality is one of the main ingredients in the hospitality industry. Giving a high quality of service to satisfy the guests' expectations is one of the main purposes in the operation of a hotel. Competition in the industry is quite tough, especially the quality of service that they give. Trends in the world market have changed noticeably, from agricultural to service market (Asian Development, 2007). Mostly of the service business are trying their best to improve and develop the quality of service they are giving to their customers. With more and more establishments achieving a global presence there has been a need for corresponding development global marketing strategy (Liew, 2008).

For hotels these days, guest satisfaction is the highest priority, so instead of just having a nice room, hotels offer high-quality staff as an amenity as well. In the hotel industry, hotel staff ranges from top management staff to front line staff (i.e. housekeepers, receptionists, front cashiers). The Front Office Department inside a

hotel is one of the main ingredients in meeting the expectations of a guest. Front office staff is considered a supporting factor in determining customer satisfaction when deciding to return, to recommend the hotel, or in demonstrating loyalty to a particular hotel.

In addition, front office is an important function because customers deal with front office staff as the center of the hotel. They provide assistance to guests, fulfill their needs, and meet their wants. Front office staff are also the nerve center of all hotels, and the front office is essential to monitor what is happening at all areas in a hotel.

Service quality was determined as the subjective comparison that customers make between their expectations about a service and the perception of the way the service has been run. The difference between expectation and performance is a big factor for a customer to choose where to stay.

Parasuraman et al. (1988) revised and defined the service quality in terms of five dimensions; tangibility (how well hotel staff are dressed); reliability (ability to resolve problems encountered by guests); responsiveness (convenience of making the reservation, promptness of check-in/check-out process, hotel/tour guide information); assurance (security and safety of guests); & empathy (caring and individualized attention).

In the hotel industry, most researchers are interested in maximizing customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction is a measure of how the customer receives service delivery.

Hotel management scholars consider service quality a precedent to guest satisfaction. Some experiential studies show that getting a good quality of service from the food and beverage (F&B) department of a hotel is important for many guests (Armstrong et al., 1997; Crick & Spencer, 2011; Cronin & Taylor, 1992).

Researchers have defined service quality in relation to the concept of consumer-perceived quality, which is based solely on the perspective of customers. Such a perception is built in a place where an organization supplies goods and services to customers in a manner that satisfies them and where they examine service quality. In the hotel industry, service quality that satisfies customers is important to encourage them to revisit and to earn their loyalty and satisfaction. Parasuraman et al. (1988), Tsang and Qu (1998), and Zeithaml et al. (1996) define “perceived service quality” as the global evaluation by customers of the overall excellence or superiority of a service. The definition is similar to the concept of attitude. Based on the exploratory definition of service quality as perceived by customers, it is the gap (discrepancy) between a customer’s expectation of a service and his perceptions of the actual service received

(p. 254 – 255). Recent researches on service quality have been carried out within the framework of the SQ (service quality) model, developed from the extensive researches of Parasuraman et al. (1990, 1988, and 1985 ), Qu & Tsang (1998), and Zeithaml et al. (1996). Service quality has been discussed in various literatures, and one of the most largely used models measuring service quality is the SERVQUAL.

Ismail (2002) wrote a book about front office for operations and management. This book introduces concepts of organization, communication, ethics and policy within a hotel. He focuses at the front office, housekeeping, reservations and night audit departments. Ismail stated that this book gives a “real world” understanding of hotel industry balancing its past, present and future. He also took time to write how property management system is managed covering this technology under his book. He also put some chapters discussing how services are delivered from the arrival to the departure of the guest.

Similarly, Bardi (2003) wrote a book about the updated guide to running a successful hotel front office. He stated that the Hotel Front Office Management uses a human resource approach to cover the unique management and operational challenges in the front offices of today's hotels and lodging facilities. His book features a new chapter on executive housekeeping and the relationship between the housekeeping department and the front office; commentaries from hotel front office managers, general managers, and other department managers; articles on the international hotel workforce; and additional case studies for applying theory and developing problem-solving strategies. No wonder that his work contributes to the proper handling of front office department.

He et al. (2009) also wrote a book on the comprehensive reference to successful service design for the telecommunications industry. Their book provides a consistent approach to designing scalable and operable processes that can be used when designing a variety of technologically based services; offering concepts, principles and numerous examples that the readers can easily adapt to their technological environment. They define what telecommunication services are from business, technical and operational perspectives. They explain how telecommunication services can be implemented, including implementation strategies for both new service introductions and enhancements to existing services. Their book will be of interest to managers, service designers, project managers, IT professionals, operation managers and senior executives who work in the telecommunication sector.

Many previous researchers have studied customer satisfaction towards service quality in service businesses such as spa, tourism, and hotel.

Parnkul (2006) studied a survey of guest satisfaction with spa services at Sivalai Spa. Both first-time and repeated customers were satisfied with the spa

services on a high level. They were satisfied with the following service dimensions: responsiveness, empathy, reliability, assurance, and tangibility of the service quality at Sivalai Spa. Most customers agreed that the location of the spa was the most important factor for the spa. They suggested that the food and beverage facilities should be improved. Moreover, the study showed that there were four demographic factors that influenced the service quality at Sivalai Spa which were gender, age, nationality, and income.

Markovic (2004) who studied service quality measurement in the Croatian Hotel Industry, showed that a SERVQUAL instrument is a useful and reliable method to measure service quality of Croatian hotels, for managers to identify differences in terms of expectations and perceptions. She claims this method will lead to a better allocation of resources and a more effective design of marketing strategies, such as communications mix and pricing components to ensure a proper level of service quality in hotels.

Phenphun (2003) studied international tourist satisfaction with the quality of service in accommodation in Thailand and the factors related to satisfaction, problems and the requirements of international tourists. The research revealed the satisfaction of international tourists towards quality of service was at a high level. However, the most common problems were lack of employee's knowledge and English skills, therefore, tourists suggested language and convenient facility improvement. Therefore, Government Policy suggests that the TAT and related organizations should create and develop a curriculum and training accordingly and focus on language skills.

In the 2001 study tour of Taiwan, Yu (2001) indicated that it might be possible to create service quality evaluations that are more accurate instruments for measuring the quality of service in the various service sectors, as Crompton et al., (1991) suggested. For the best indicators of service quality in the tourism sector, the tourist's experience might be the key indicator for evaluating tourism quality because the tourism industry is essential for people serving people.

Mohsin and Lockyer (2010) studied the customer perception in luxury hotels in New Delhi. The purpose of the study is to help the hotel management identify areas that need attention to meet and exceed customer expectations. The findings of their study indicate significant difference between expectations of the guests and actual experiences. The study contributes to the literature and provides an opportunity for a comparative study of service quality with other such studies undertaken in different parts of the globe.

Robazzi (2006) studied the degree of hospitality in diverse graphic elements, of the appearance of the installations, at hotels in São Paulo. The results enabled the proof of the tangibility of the hospitality, and the identification of forms and colours

present in the reading process. Oliveria (2009) evaluated the factors that affect the satisfaction and the fidelity of north-eastern tourists in Natal who take the bus or car as a means of transportation. The study concluded that cleanliness, environment, pool maintenance, bars and restaurant service, telephone service, service on local trips and price were the attributes that determined satisfaction and loyalty of the guests. Parnkul (2006) studied the influence of the mood of the staff in the quality of services in a hotel chain in São Paulo. The study concludes that internal customer satisfaction induces satisfaction for the external customer.

Kabir and Carlsson (2010) studied the expectations and perceptions about service quality in Destination Gotland. The objective of their study is to analyze the role of service quality for creating customer satisfaction. They tried to determine the gap between the expectations and perception of the guests' point of view. The survey was constructed as a case-study based on the quantitative method. The results from the different dimensions show that there is a gap between expectations and perceptions which means that the customers are not fully satisfied about the service quality at Destination Gotland. From the overall result in the statements, it can be seen that there are several gaps between expectations and perceptions which means that the service quality does not fully meet the expectations.

Similarly, Bashirian and Majdpuor (2011) studied the role of service quality in the creation of satisfactory guest experience in the five star hotels in Tehran. They sought out the opinions of the guests in the hotels to assess the perception of the guest in the five primary dimensions of service quality. The role of standard operation procedure in the front office was also assessed including its connections to service quality, business excellence and customer satisfaction. The research found out that majority of the hotel customers were satisfied with the indicators of service quality dimensions of tangibility, responsiveness, reliability, assurance, and empathy, however there were different ranks of guests' satisfaction among various nationalities as well as different rate of satisfaction among different hotels.

In fact, Strömngren (2007) identifies which dimension is the best predictor of overall service quality, in terms of generating an outcome that identifies dimensions regarding service quality. In order to achieve what she wants in her study, she performed a theoretical and empirical study. The theoretical study was conducted by identifying relevant theories, determining and defining service quality for hospitality industries. The empirical study comprised of 84 questionnaires with respondents' opinions and views from their resort hospitality experiences. The findings of the study show that the service quality is represented by six dimensions in the hospitality industry, relating to Reliability, Assurance, Tangibles, Employees, Exterior and Delivery of Service.

The researcher also looked into the quality of service offered by the UPB Libraries to its customers along the different services such as circulation, reference,

and automation. She found out that library services are satisfying the needs of the customers, however, much attention is needed in the areas where there are low satisfaction ratings; the factors of collection, library system, personnel, physical facilities, and security system are effective in giving satisfaction to both faculty and administrative staff but students yearn for more improvements as evidenced by their rating of moderately satisfied; and considerations should be given to the students' needs surmised in the services where they gave low satisfaction level for they composed the immensity of library customers.

Victoria and Paragua (2010) conducted a research about the food service cleanliness in fast food chains in the Philippines using the Service Quality Model. She travelled to different places in the country to conduct a survey to determine if the franchisee meets the FSC standards. The questionnaires were answered by the customers of a fast food outlet and the result showed that the outlet complies with the FSC standards. However, when the findings were presented to the outlet managers, they pointed out different problem regarding of the long queues of the customers. This is an indicator of customers' patronage of the product. Once the managers resolve the problem, the next thing they do is to have an outlet extension. The survey showed that customers have different point of views regards what they see in the fast food chain itself.

Cimacio et al. (2009) focused on establishing the profile of accredited hotels in Baguio city, the basic concerns of their front offices, and the strategies that they employ to ensure the delivery of quality service. The researchers administered a questionnaire to the front office supervisors of 11 accredited hotels in the city. Based on the gathered result, they found out that 64% of the hotels are corporations, with 8-60 employees, 34-71 rooms, and 3-8 front office staff and had been engaged in the business for 3 to 28 years. Majority of the front office supervisors are young female professionals. Although minimal, problems encountered by the front offices relate to reservation, check-in/registration, settling of bills and check-out. To ensure quality service, the hotels design orientation and training programs for their front office staff.

With the foregoing literature regarding service quality and the importance of this in the front office in lodging institutions, the researchers came up with a problem. The main focus of this study is to evaluate the guest satisfaction of Fernandina 88 Suites Hotel towards the service quality of the front office staff, as a basis of service development and reference within the hotel.

Specifically, it determined how the guests assess the service quality delivered by the front office in terms of assurance, reliability, tangibility, responsiveness, and empathy; it compared the guest's expectations and perceptions to the given aspects; and the problems experienced by the guests in the present situation.

## METHODOLOGY

The descriptive method, particularly the survey, was used to attain the objectives of this study. This method seeks to describe a present existing condition, which, in this study was the guest satisfaction on the service quality of the front office staff of Fernandina 88 Suites Hotel.

Accidental sampling method was used since the respondents are guests of the hotel. There were 258 guests who were used as respondents of this study. The guests were selected while they are roaming around the hotel lobby and were properly asked to answer questions and raise areas of concern. For this study, the survey-questionnaire instrument was used to achieve the objectives of the study. A researcher-made questionnaire was distributed to the said guests of Fernandina 88 Suites Hotel. The questionnaire given to the guests aimed to assess the service quality of the front office staff. Through their participation, the researcher was able to make possible recommendations that would improve the service quality of the front office staff of Fernandina 88 Suites Hotel.

The questionnaire includes five factors according to service quality dimensions of SERVQUAL system: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy based on the study of Parasuraman. SERVQUAL in this study was measured as the difference between the expectation and perception of the respondents.

## RESULTS & DISCUSSION

### Guest Satisfaction Towards Service Quality of Fernandina 88 Suites

Table 1 presents the summary of the assessment of the respondents on the level of guest satisfaction towards the service quality of Fernandina 88 Suites.

**Table 1**  
**Guest Satisfaction towards the Service Quality of Fernandina 88 Suites**

Empathy	Guests' Expectation		Guests' Perception	
	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. Tangibility	4.41	VGS	3.95	GS
2. Reliability	4.45	VGS	3.77	GS
3. Responsiveness	4.27	VGS	4.00	GS
4. Assurance	4.49	VGS	3.94	GS
5. Empathy	4.40	VGS	3.95	GS
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.40</b>	<b>VGS</b>	<b>3.92</b>	<b>GS</b>

Norm:

- 4.20 – 4.99 Very Good Satisfaction (VGS)
- 3.40 – 4.19 Good Satisfaction (GS)
- 2.60 – 3.39 Average Satisfaction (AS)
- 1.80 – 2.59 Low Satisfaction (LS)
- 1.00 – 1.79 Lowest Satisfaction (LS)

Table 1 shows that the over-all guests' expectation towards the five dimensions was at the Very Good level (M=4.40). The findings show that Assurance dimension ranks as the most important (M=4.49), followed by Reliability dimension (M=4.45), Tangibility dimension (M=4.41), Empathy dimension (M=4.40), and Responsiveness dimension (M=4.27). Most guests expected the front office staff to have product knowledge about the hotel services and for front office staff to be dependable.

The over-all guests satisfaction of the five dimensions of service quality was at the "Good" level (M =3.92). Most guests alleged that responsiveness is the most important dimension (M=4.00), followed by Empathy (M=3.95), Tangibility (M= 3.95), Assurance (3.94), and Reliability (M=3.77). In this study, 'responsiveness' was the most essential dimension of service quality. Most guests acknowledged the importance of providing prompt services and the staff's enthusiasm to help them.

**SERVQUAL gap between guests' expectation and perception level towards service quality of front office staff at the hotel**

The SERVQUAL gap is calculated between the mean score of the expectation level and the perception level. The findings of the study showed the difference between expectation level and perception level as shown in the table below.

**Table 2**  
**SERVQUAL Gap of Guests' Expectation and Perception Level**

<b>Attributes</b>	<b>Guests' Expectation</b>	<b>Guests' Perception</b>	<b>SERVQUAL Gap</b>
Pair 1: Tangibility	4.41	3.95	0.46
Pair 2: Reliability	4.45	3.77	0.68
Pair 3: Responsiveness	4.27	4.00	0.27
Pair 4: Assurance	4.49	3.94	0.55
Pair 5: Empathy	4.40	3.95	0.44
<b>Over-all Mean Score</b>	<b>4.40</b>	<b>3.92</b>	<b>0.48</b>

Table 2 shows the gap between guests' expectation and perception. The study shows that the over-all level of expectation of all dimensions is higher than the level of perception. The gap illustrates that the guests are contented with the services but the services provided to them are less than their expected level of service. This means that the guests expected the quality of service of the hotel to be very good but it was assessed to be good only.

In summary, responsiveness was determined to be the most vital dimension. The findings show a negative gap between perception and expectation. The front office staff did not meet the guests' expected service quality on all dimensions. For the guests, the most essential factor of service is assurance but for the staff of the hotel



as perceived by the guests, it is responsiveness. However when taken as a whole, reliability was considered the most important as evidenced by the 0.68 SERVQUAL GAP between Guests' Expectation and Perception.

### **Comparison between the guests' expectation and perception towards service quality of the front office staff**

Table 3 shows the t-test of the Guests' Expectation and Perception towards Service Quality of the Front Office Staff of Fernandina 88 Suites Hotel concerning the five dimensions which are Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy.

**Table 3**  
**Independent Sample t-test of the Guests' Expectation and Perception towards Service Quality of the Front Office Staff of Fernandina 88 Suites Hotel Concerning the Five Dimensions**

Parameter	Tabular t-value	Computed t-value	Remarks	Interpretation
Tangibility	2.45	6.96	Reject the null hypothesis	Significant
Reliability	2.45	6.57	Reject the null hypothesis	Significant
Responsiveness	2.78	1.98	Do not reject the null hypothesis	Not significant
Assurance	2.31	6.23	Reject the null hypothesis	Significant
Empathy	2.44	7.33	Reject the null hypothesis	Significant

For the first dimension which is tangibility, the computed t-value, 6.96 is higher than tabular t-value, 2.45 therefore the null hypothesis is rejected hence there is a significant difference between the expectation and perception of the guests towards Service Quality concerning tangibility. This means that for tangibility there is a big gap between the expectation and perception of the services rendered by the Front Office Staff. The actual service delivered is significantly lower that what was expected as far as tangibility is concerned.

Likewise, the computed t-value, 6.57 obtained for Reliability, is higher than the tabular t-value 2.45. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. There is a significant difference between the expectation and perception of guests towards service quality concerning Reliability. This also means that for reliability, the expectation of the guests is higher than what they received during the service process.

On the other hand, the computed t-value, 1.98 is lower than the tabular t-value 2.78 of Responsiveness. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected, thus there

is no significant difference between the expectation and perception of guests towards Responsiveness. This means that the responsiveness delivered by the staff was greatly appreciated and absorbed by the guests who actually received the service.

For Assurance, the higher computed t-value, 6.23 compared to its tabular t-value, 2.31 made the researcher reject the null hypothesis. Thus, there is a significant difference between the expectation and perception of the guests towards Service Quality concerning Assurance. It may be deemed that because of the level of service of this kind of establishment, the level of assurance was not as what the guests were expecting, rather, they received a service below their expectation.

Lastly, there is a significant difference between the expectation and perception of guests towards service quality concerning Empathy. This is based on the higher computed t-value, 7.33 compared to its corresponding tabular t-value, 2.44. It would seem that individual attention to the guests was not met because of their expectation but would have been greatly appreciated by the guests if the staff showed gestures evident to the guests.

### **Problems experienced by the guests in the present situation**

One of the problems encountered by the guests is that, the front office has only one on-duty staff every shift and he/she cannot handle all the duties and responsibilities well by himself/herself. It is cited by one of the guests that during his check out process, the front office staff excused himself to the guest and picked up the phone for a guest's request and it took a long time after he finished taking that said request phone call.

### **Proposed programs to improve delivery of service**

The hotel should have at least two front office staff every shifting hour. Another problem stumbled upon by the guests in the front office department is the misconception of thoughts between the guest and front office staff. Some guests had a hard time expressing themselves in communicating with the front office staff because of their language and accent. It is advised that the hotel will consider to either add language trainings to their front office staff during their vacant periods or hire front office staff that can understand and can speak at least 4 languages in order for them to communicate well with the guests.

## CONCLUSIONS

In the light of the foregoing findings, the following are the conclusions of the study:

The over-all guest satisfaction towards service quality along the five dimensions is at good level. Most guests alleged that responsiveness is the most important dimension given emphasis by the staff of the hotel. For the guests, they expected “Assurance” to be the most important dimension of service quality followed by Empathy dimension, Tangibility dimension, and Reliability dimension. In this study, ‘responsiveness’ dimension was the most essential factor. Most guests acknowledged the importance of providing prompt services and the staff’s enthusiasm to help them.

There is a strong indication that the service quality of the front office staff of Fernandina 88 Suites Hotel does not meet the guests’ expectation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Since the overall satisfaction of perception towards the five dimensions is at “Good” level only, it is recommended that the front office staff should enhance their efficiency along tangibility, responsiveness, assurance and empathy.

The management should focus on the service quality of their front office staff to meet the guests’ expectations.

Given that the problem falls under the five dimensions, the management should focus on closer supervision, and develop all dimensions. They may send their staff to attend trainings and seminar-workshops to improve their services.

Further studies should be undertaken to utilize the results of this study.

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