

# Roles of Empathy and Responsiveness towards Customer Satisfaction in Luxury Hotels in Jakarta

Beny Setiawan<sup>1</sup>, Meriza Hendri<sup>2</sup>, Muhammad Asyraf Hasim<sup>3\*</sup>

Widyatama University<sup>1,2</sup>

Universiti Kuala Lumpur<sup>3</sup>

\*corresponding author: asyrafhasim@unikl.edu

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## Abstract:

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the roles of reliability and assurance of service quality on customer satisfaction in the luxury hotels in Jakarta and to indicate which factors have a role in driving customer satisfaction. Primary data in the form of 250 questionnaire responses was been collected from top ten luxury hotels in Jakarta. Likert seven-point rating scales were used to structure the questionnaire. The results of the analysis indicate that empathy and responsiveness play the important role in driving customer satisfaction in the luxury hotel services. In a nutshell, both empathy and responsiveness variables are important factor driving customer satisfaction in the context of the luxury hotels services. This research incorporates unique and original insights in relation to the luxury hotel services. The findings of this research have contributed to a better understanding of the roles of reliability and assurance in service quality towards customer satisfaction.

**Keywords:** Empathy, Responsiveness, Service quality, Luxury hotel, Customer satisfaction

## I. Introduction

Today, service industry is facing a new generation of customer. The 21<sup>st</sup> century customer according to (M. F. Shamsudin, Esa, & Ali, 2019) has too high expectations. The generation is more knowledgeable and further more they have more access to information with the support of technology. A research conducted by (Hassan & Shamsudin, 2019) claimed that the current generation dictate the buying process. They are more demanding. They know what they exactly want and use. Customer today is also smart. Most of the customer used the internet to review the product or services prior the decision making. Today, customer can view and read comments or feedback of past customer or user about their feeling or experiences. Such facilities provide advantage and strengthen customer buying power during the decision making (Razak & Shamsudin, 2019)

Research conducted by (Han & Hyun, 2017; Kang, Stein, Heo, & Lee, 2012; Liu, Wong, Tseng, Chang, & Phau, 2017; Lu, Berchoux, Marek, & Chen, 2015; Oh, 1999; Smith, 2017; Walls, Okumus, Wang, & Kwun, 2011; Wu & Liang, 2009) with regards to customer expectations on the service of luxury hotel revealed that the service quality is important towards customer satisfaction. The results however indicate that the priority or expectation of customer from the five

dimension of service quality varies based on geographical and customer background.

There are too many hotels in Jakarta that offering top star services to customer. The competition among them in the industry getting tough. Hotel player needs to be very focus in servicing their customer in order to win the competition. Handling 21<sup>st</sup> customer is not easy as service provider need to understand them rather than giving them option to choose. It is important to understand which part of the service quality dimension that really important that drives the overall feeling towards customer satisfaction (Han & Hyun, 2017; Walls et al., 2011; Wu & Liang, 2009).

## II. Literature review

### Customer satisfaction

According to (Oh & Kim, 2017; Pizam, Shapoval, & Ellis, 2016; Worsfold, Fisher, McPhail, Francis, & Thomas, 2016) hospitality industry, facing tough challenge to achieved the customer satisfaction. Service provider must understand how the customer satisfaction level is functioning (M. F. Shamsudin et al., 2019). According to expectancy disconfirmation theory, customer can only become satisfied once the service offered, enjoyed or experienced is more than what the customer itself expected (Oliver & Swan, 1989). The challenge is how to make sure that the expectations from

customer is at par to the service and quality level that being offered by the service provider(Oliver & Swan, 1989).

Hotel industry especially facing tough competition(M. F. Shamsudin et al., 2019). Customer today have ample choices of accommodation when they travel or due to any other reason. Beside hotel there are also mere competitor in the same category that provide homestay, service apartments or Airbnb(M. F. Shamsudin et al., 2019). The competition among the hotel ranking also becoming fierce. There are budget hotels, 3-star hotel, 4-star hotel and 5-star hotel. In this context of this research luxury hotel is considered as the hotel that provide a luxurious service to their customer(Umasuthan, Park, & Ryu, 2017). Although sometimes four start rated hotel also claimed that they are luxury hotel. At this moment, there is no identical standards that has been used as a benchmark of luxury hotel(Zobnina & Rozhkov, 2018). Today, most five-star hotel is considered as luxury hotel as they compete each other among the market player in order to earn market share(M. F. Shamsudin et al., 2019).

One thing in comment is that all luxury hotel is expensive and due to that customer expectation is also high(Razak & Shamsudin, 2019). Customer start to put high hopes on the level of quality that they going to receive during their stay in the hotel. According to(Ahmad, Ahmad, & Papastathopoulos, 2019; Shafiq, Mostafiz, & Taniguchi, 2019), employee play important role in contributing to customer satisfaction. A great working conditions will motivate employee to work harder and serve customer better that may exceed the customer expectations. A good employee may work hard to provide the best services so that customer is happy and eventually satisfied. (Bihamta, Jayashree, Rezaei, Okumus, & Rahimi, 2017)also highlighted that personalization may contribute to customer satisfaction. Hotel employee need to understand and think what customer needs and offered them the service that may exceed the customer expectations(Oh & Kim, 2017). In order to achieve that, hotel employee need to encourage creativity in their working environments. The service must be beyond customer expectations and some elements of surprise can increase the level of customer satisfaction(Hassan & Shamsudin, 2019).

(M. F. Shamsudin et al., 2019) suggested that hotel need to aim for consistency in order to achieve the highest service level to customer. Customer is not only looking

for a fast service but quality(Hussein, Hapsari, & Yulianti, 2018). Luxury hotels need to ensure that they meet both the expectations, which is fast, and high quality(Lemy, Goh, & Ferry, 2019). The competition among the hotel created another challenge since most of the hotel is fighting for market share and at the same time put some effort to keep customer for their next visit.

(Pizam et al., 2016; Worsfold et al., 2016)stated that service quality is among the key point that customer is looking forward but at the same time the service delivery should be flexible(Thadani, Vadehra, Sindarta, & Poh, 2015). Customer especially from the millennia is being more demanded because it seems that this young generation is knowledgeable. Young generation used internet to browse through the hotel website, social media and others. Customer today like to read the comments and feedback from other customer. That scenario created another challenge that market player in the industry need to take as challenge(Line & Hanks, 2019; Oh & Kim, 2017).

One of the research recently by (Hussein et al., 2018; Lemy et al., 2019)recommended that service provider to practiced flexibility in order to be friendlier. The same author also recommended that service provider to listen to customer and keep their ear to the ground. To the customer, they deserved to enjoy the best services as they pay premium. The challenge is to meet the customer expectations. Service provider needs to ask around on how the customer responses to the services provided. Is it within their level or the hotel failed to translate their advertisements into reality.(Nurcahyo, Fitriyani, & Hudda, 2017) suggested that service provider to learn from customer feedback and experiences. Hotel need to continuous conduct their survey and asked customer feedback in order to preset their status from the eye of customer. (Nuris & Yulia, 2018)on the hand recommended that the customer focused and high service quality to be offered in order to gain customer satisfaction. The objective of meeting customer satisfaction should start from top to down in the organization(M. F. Shamsudin & Razali, 2015).

(Oliver, 1993)stated that meeting customer expectations is the core business in the service industry. Customer today have more bargaining power compare to the past. Market player need to compete in order to sustain. Failure to understand customer is very costly. Luxury hotels need to deliver their promised so that customer

not only become satisfied but loyal. (Keshavarz & Jamshidi, 2018; Umasuthan et al., 2017) claimed that in order to achieve that, service provider need to practice to offer reality to customer. The promised given in the advertisements should be reasonable and practical. (Hall, Ahearne, & Sujan, 2015) also stressed that listening to customer is the best approach especially towards understanding their requirements and needs.

Many past studies looked into the customer satisfaction at the hospitality industry (Gregory, 2019; Hussain, Jing, Junaid, Bukhari, & Shi, 2019; Ramanathan, Di, & Ramanathan, 2016; Shafiq et al., 2019; Zhang, Zhang, & Law, 2013). The results on customer satisfaction is important to the management in order to enhance and improvised their services to the public (Chen & Hu, 2010; El- Bassiouni, Madi, Zoubeydi, & Hassan, 2012; Islam, Ahmed, Ali, & Ahmer, 2019; Ryu, Han, & Jang, 2010; Tsoukatos & Rand, 2006). Based on the past research, service quality in luxury hotel is important in order to provide the best service that can meet customer expectations and needs (Xu & Selover, 2019).

### Service quality

Service quality measurement starts when (A. Parasuraman, Berry, & Zeithaml, 1991), introduced SERVQUAL. It is a set of quality requirement used to measure customer expectations against the actual service provided (Berry, Parasuraman, & Zeithaml, 1985). SERVQUAL consist of five dimension, which is reliability, assurance, tangibility, empathy and responsiveness (A. A. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1991). The model has been widely used and beneficial to measure how the service quality perception can lead to the customer satisfaction (Berry & Parasuraman, 1993a, 1993b).

Hotel industry is a service based industry that service quality is one of the important factors that will lead to whether customer is satisfied or not based on the investment amount that customer used to exchange with the service (Khan, Garg, & Rahman, 2015). Reliability in hotel services referred to the action that hotel employee provided as per the promised. It means that customer enjoyed the services as per what hotel advertised or what others have told through media or word of mouth from family and friends (Minh, Thu Ha, Chi Anh, & Matsui, 2015). The promised could also delivered through social media statements, experience sharing as well as comments and feedback (Amin, Yahya, Ismayatim,

Nasharuddin, & Kassim, 2013). Hotel customer may have their expectations based on the information received before the visitation (M. F. Shamsudin et al., 2019). That expectation is the benchmark used to compare against the actual services delivered. Customer can easily achieve satisfaction once the service delivered is more than what they expected (Raza, Jawaid, & Hassan, 2015). The challenge to the hotel providers is to ensure that they are ready to deliver what have them promised and that is a key to success in gaining market share and able to sustain in the industry (Radojevic, Stanic, & Stanic, 2015). Besides that, employee should also sincerity in managing customer. The services will begin from the moment customer step in the hotel with the greeting from the hotel employee. Customer than will be at the reception counter where there will be another touch point between employee and customer. A good warm welcome and response towards customer will make customer feel good and happy. Hotel employee play important role to instill the positive feeling to customer regardless how busy they are (Khan et al., 2015). Hotel employee should treat customer politely and sincerely especially when the customer has problem or looking for something that may needs hotel employee to help or solve (Radojevic et al., 2015). Another important point is reliability is the act of employee should be always right at every time they performed with the target of error free (Keith & Simmers, 2013). Experienced employee and well-trained staff may know how to handle problem or request. Some of the problem may need a quick decision-making and some may just a little consideration to accommodate the customer request (Cheng & Rashid, 2013). Reliability is important to reflect the customer confident that they have chosen the right hotel. There is a greater chance that customer will become satisfied should employee managed to handle customer based on their professional treatments (Barabino, Deiana, & Tilocca, 2012; Cakici, Akgunduz, & Yildirim, 2019; Jayasanka & Wickramasuriya, 2019).

Assurance is another important dimension in service quality. It is a continuation from the aspects measured in reliability. Assurance means the level of employee behave in communicating and serving the customer that may instill confidence level (Berry, Zeithaml, & Parasuraman, 1985). Customer will start to feel that they have come to the right hotel and the way each employee serves them will add the positive experiences. (A.

Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1994) claimed that assurance would also instill the safe feeling among customer. It is the fact that every new customer will feel doubtful whether they have made the right choice or not. The assurance from employee will turn the doubtful towards high confident (Razak & Shamsudin, 2019). Customer started to enjoyed as they have less worried on the matter whether they will be taken care or not. Feeling safe is another element that may contribute to customer satisfaction. They know that they stay in the hotel will be taken care by a good courteous employee. Another element highlighted by (M. Shamsudin et al., 2015) is the level of courteous by the hotel employee. Each employee should manage their customer politely and knowledgeable. The element mentioned in the assurance can be developed by the hotel through training and culture. Luxury hotel especially should focus on developing positive culture that may bring benefits to the customer and to the hotel (Torres & Kline, 2006).

Another dimension that proposed by (A. Parasuraman, Berry, & Zeithaml, 1993) is tangibility. In the hotel industry, tangible refers to the facilities and equipment used by the hotel or visual appealing that attract the customer interest (Ayo, 2018). Facilities in the hotel may refer to the facilities provided by the hotel for the convenient of customer. It starts from the outdoor visually and facilities. The hotel provides ample parking indoor or outdoor. The parking space is within the hotel compound and guarded (Worsfold et al., 2016). Customer feel happy when they face less hassle in parking since that would be their first experience about the hotel. The building should visually be appealing with the design or decoration. Hotel building may not be able to change but a good decoration may change customer perception towards positive feelings. (Akbar, Mat Som, Wadood, & Jamil Alzaidiyeen, 2010) stated that most of the time new hotel may able to attract new customer based on their new designing but the existing hotel may promote their services based on outstanding services and up to date decoration that may appeal good to customer (Al-Msallam, 2015). Customer expect hotel to be equipped with latest and modern equipment. The latest equipment normally is more customer friendly and easy to use. Beside that hotel should also the physical facilities for the usage of hotel customer. Among the important physical facilities such as swimming pool, SPA centers, Tennis court and others, that being promise as selling point to customer. Managing physical

facilities could be expensive but it would be worth if that can be used as competitive advantage against other competitor (Ahmad et al., 2019; Shafiq et al., 2019; Zobnina & Rozhkov, 2018) stressed that hotel need to neat appearances all the time. Employee to take care and managed the environment so that it maintains the feeling good situation. Another important element is the visually impressed of all materials. Hotel need to engage someone who are good in decorating and turn the environment into something that create positive emotional feeling. Some elements of background color, water based decoration, slow music and good lighting may create a good ambience to the customer (Ayo, 2018; Line & Hanks, 2019; Thaker et al., 2020).

Empathy is one of the important dimension of service quality. Empathy is referring to how well is the employee provide the service to customer (A. A. Parasuraman et al., 1991; A. Parasuraman et al., 1991). Employee is one of the important asset in service industry. Some skills can be thought but some could be just derived from the employee patience and interest. In the hotel industry, personal and attention towards individual customer is very important (Gregory, 2019; Raza et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2013). Customer may come from various background. Some could be local but others could be tourist from outside country. Ability to provide and treat with individual attention is very much appreciated by the customer. Customer will feel safe and honored that the hotel employee is taking a good care of them (M. F. Shamsudin et al., 2019). It is also important for luxury hotel specially to provide customer services 24 hours. At any time, there should be someone who willing to help customer (Muhammad, Farid Shamsudin, & Hadi, 2016). There could be various situation that customer is seeking help in the middle of night. A good hotel may treat the customer as their royal guest regardless of the time they are needed (Forsythe, 2016; Kant & Jaiswal, 2017; Moghavvemi, Lee, & Lee, 2018). Hotel employee must also be willing to help customer by giving personal services such as opinion and suggestion (Pramularso, 2017). Some scenario may need local experts to guide the customer in making decision. A good knowledgeable employee may be able to guide the customer based on what they are looking after. Customer might look for a good traditional dining place, tourist spot or searching for transportation. A good employee to practiced empathy in their daily task and



such action may create a positive experience to customer that may lead to customer satisfaction(Ružić, 2015). The final dimension in service quality is responsiveness. This is another dimension that may focused more on employee. Service industry very much rely on the support of staff in order to win the heart of customer(A. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985). Physical aspects may have contributed to temporary good feelings but good personal services may last long. Employee need to be more responsiveness in servicing the customer(Cheung, Kong, & Song, 2014). All services related to customer should be informed and explain. Customer to be made understand on the policy, estimate delivery time and the process that may take to deliver the services. (Kim, Cho, & Brymer, 2013) stated that customer values prompt services. Premium customer is reported to be very fussy and demanding. Prompt services is required by the hotel employee to satisfy the customer needs(Salanova, Agut, & Peiró, 2005). Beside the entire above, hotel employee should also be ready to help customer at any time. They should never be too busy to participate in attending to customer. The services given by the employee may remain as a memory to customer. Good services may instill positive customer experience that may lead to customer satisfaction.

### III. Methodology

This research is using a survey method. A questionnaire with 29 questions in total distributed to respondent based on volunteer basis. The questionnaire divided into 2 sections. Section A is about respondent details and background details. Section B is about the respondent feedback on their perceived service quality towards satisfaction. Top 20-luxury hotel chosen in Jakarta. The top 20-luxury hotel was based on recommendation by the travel BlogSpot that managed the promotion and advertisements of the tourism in Jakarta and Indonesia. 20-luxury hotel nominated based on the five-star rating and above(Casaló, Flavián, Guinalfú, & Ekinici, 2015). The data collections took 14 days to be completed in order to gather 250 respondents. Data collection process was smooth and both local and international tourist willing to take part in the survey. Data collected is processed and analyzed using SPSS version 24.

### IV. Data analysis

In total 250 data was collected from top 20-luxury hotel nominated by the famous blogpost. Based on the data collection there are 64% of male voluntary participated in the survey followed by the 36% female. Male respondent is more willing to participate voluntary as compared to female especially those who are coming as a tourist. There is problem to convince the respondent to participate in the beginning as they are more reluctant to listen and tends to run away from being approach. Local people seems to be more cooperative. No token or souvenir given for their participation. Majority of respondent come from the age of 36 to 45 years old. The age group contributed 68% from the total respondent. Only 2 percent of respondent are below 25 years old and one respondent above 65 years old. The respondent profile indicated that 63% come to the hotel for travelling purposes. Most of the customer who choose luxury hotel normally those who come from developed country. The next highest respondent is that customer who come on official basis. 27% come to the hotel based on office matters such as attending seminars, conferences and meeting. Such group of respondent normally come on short-term basis and some may only come for a day visitation. The survey indicates that 53% would stay in the hotel for less than 2 days while 16% will stay more than 3 days. one-night stay consists of 26% and this is mostly due to official purposes. 46 % of customer come alone followed by 31% come between 2 -3 members. There are only 22 % that come together more than three members. The large pax is normally derived from a family trips consists of both domestic and international customers. The survey also revealed that only 10 % come for more than 3 times while majority of them are the first time customer.

Table 1: Respondent profile

Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Gender or respondents		
Female	89	36%
Male	161	64%
Total	250	100%
Age of respondent		
below 25	5	2%
26 - 35	38	15%
36 - 45	171	68%

45 - 60	35	14%
more than 60	1	0%
Total	250	100%

Visiting Purpose		
Official	67	27%
Travel	157	63%
Family matters	26	10%
Total	250	100%

Length of stay		
1 night only	66	26%
2 -3 nights	145	58%
more than 3 nights	39	16%
	250	100%

Number of Pax		
Alone	116	46%
2-3 members	78	31%
more than 3 members	56	22%
	250	100%

Number of experience		
First time visit	135	54%
second time visit	91	36%
More than 3 times	24	10%
	250	100%

Table 2 indicates the model summary of regression analysis. The R-value with 0.938 is known as the correlation coefficient between the dependent and independent variables. According to Hair (2010), the  $R^2$ -value which accounts for 0.921 illustrates that 92.1 per cent of the variance in customer satisfaction is explained by the five independent variables, tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy.

Table 2: Model; summary

Model	R	$R^2$	Adjusted $R^2$	SE of the estimate
1	0.938 <sup>a</sup>	0.921	0.920	0.37081
Note: <sup>a</sup> Predictors (constant), assurance, reliability, empathy responsiveness, tangibles				

Table 3 shows that the independent variables influencing the dependent variable are significant with a p-value of 0.00. It implies that if p is less than 0.001, there is 99 per cent certainty of a linear relationship between the variables.

Table 3: Significance of independent variables on dependent variable

	Anova <sup>a</sup>				
	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Model 1					
Regression	726.486	5	163.297	979.181	0.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	22.514	131	0.163		
Total	748.000	156			

Notes: <sup>a</sup>Dependent variable: customer satisfaction; <sup>b</sup>predictors: (constant), assurance, reliability, empathy, responsiveness, tangibles

Table 4 shows that the VIF of the five independent variables is equal to 1.000. It implies that the value illustrates a complete lack of multicollinearity. It is evident that all tolerance values, which must be higher than 0.5 to prevent multicollinearity, are 1.000. As a result, it can be said that the five independent variables are unaffected by each other and verifying the

appropriateness of conducting the regression analysis. Moreover, the results shown in Table 4 also indicate that the significance of the independent variables is 0.000 which is less than 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that the five independent variables have an influence on the dependent variable (customer satisfaction). Based on the  $\beta$ -values, if reliability, assurance, tangibility,

empathy and responsiveness factor change one unit, 0.801 and 0.875 units, respectively. customer satisfaction will change 0.396, 0.3289, 0.188,

Table 4: Coefficients

	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	SE				Tolerance	VIF
<i>Model 1</i>							
Constant	5.276	00.32		164.06	0.00		
				5			
Reliability	0.419	00.32	0.396	66.132	0.00	1.000	1.000
Assurance	0.370	00.32	0.289	16.882	0.00	1.000	1.000
Tangibility	0.113	00.32	0.188	19.438	0.00	1.000	1.000
Empathy	2.132	00.32	0.801	17.018	0.00	1.000	1.000
Responsiveness	2.508	00.32	0.875	17.939	0.00	1.000	1.000

s

Note: Dependent variable: customer satisfaction

## V. Conclusion

The research indicates that responsiveness play high influence role towards customer satisfaction in hotel services among the luxury hotel category. It can be say that the customer is expecting that they being served promptly and putting high expectations on the employee readiness and knowledge to solve their problem or question. Customer is expecting that the employee to understand their need and wants. It is very clear that customer is expecting employee to inform customer the process and expectation time that the service will be deliver. Customer is also expecting that the employee is ever ready to attend to the customer and willing to help at any time. The role of employee is very important as they need to be continuously motivated to attend and respond to customer. Based on that it can be concluded that seeking a right staff and putting them at the right position is important in order to improve customer services in the hotel industry.

Next dimension that play important role towards customer satisfaction is empathy. Customer is expecting the employee to understand them. Such situation can be considered important especially when the customer is new. The respondent profile indicates that 54 % is first time visitors and that could be the reason why empathy is important. First time customers may need special attention because they may not familiar with the culture and other things in the place. They might looking help

for suggestion of tourist spot, transportation or advice on other matters. A good employee with empathy would be able to comfort the customer and make them feel good.

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