

The Factors That Affect Customer Satisfaction in Hotels at Kota Bharu, Kelantan

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ABSTRACT

With the increasing competitiveness in the hospitality sector, hoteliers face the challenge of differentiating their products and services. The primary objective of this study is to investigate the factors that influence guest satisfaction in the hotel industry, focusing on hotels in Kota Bharu, Kelantan. A quantitative research approach was employed, utilizing a questionnaire as the data collection instrument. The study collected data from 384 respondents via an online platform and analyzed using statistical techniques to determine the relationship between service quality dimensions (tangibles, reliability, and responsiveness) and customer satisfaction. The analysis revealed significant associations between tangibles, reliability, and responsiveness with customer satisfaction in hotels in Kota Bharu, Kelantan. These findings contribute to theoretical and practical perspectives by comprehensively understanding the factors that impact guest satisfaction in the local hotel industry and hence enabling the hoteliers to develop effective strategies to enhance service quality and improve overall customer satisfaction.

Keywords: Hospitality, Service Quality, Guest Satisfaction, Tangible, Reliability, Responsiveness

INTRODUCTION

As a diverse sector encompassing lodging, food and drink service, event planning, theme parks, and travel and tourism, hospitality management places great importance on customer satisfaction to deliver exceptional experiences. In an increasingly competitive environment, businesses and organizations in the industry strive to maintain customer loyalty and improve the quality of their goods and services. Various indicators have been developed and applied internationally to evaluate customer satisfaction over the past three decades. Clarity, tangibility, and empathy are crucial components for achieving successful customer satisfaction (Markovi, 2010), especially when assessing service quality in hotel settings.

Additionally, service responsiveness, transaction accuracy, and security features have gained recognition as factors influencing customers' service quality evaluations. Prior research has emphasized the significance of the five service quality attributes concerning customer satisfaction, emphasizing the provision of consistently high-quality services as the key to ensuring customer delight (Khan & Fash, 2014; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Oluwafemi & Dastance, 2016). Nevertheless, more research must be conducted to establish a causal relationship between customer satisfaction and service excellence, necessitating further investigation into how service quality dimensions impact customer happiness.

While previous studies have identified a positive correlation between customer satisfaction and service quality, they have yet to thoroughly examine the specific connections between each aspect of service quality and customer satisfaction. Therefore, it is essential to investigate and define these relationships comprehensively. Furthermore, previous research has provided only a general overview of the relationships between service quality and dimensional parameters, needing more in-depth explanations of each factor's relationship with service quality.

In the context of hotels in Kota Bharu, customers have expressed concerns regarding cleanliness and tidiness despite positive overall ratings and reviews. This study aims to investigate the impact of service quality on customer satisfaction in Malaysia by examining the relationship between service quality dimensions (tangibles, reliability, and responsiveness) and customer satisfaction. By identifying and analyzing these relationships, this research aims to contribute to the body of knowledge in the field and provide insights for hotels in Kota Bharu to enhance service quality and improve customer satisfaction. The specific objectives for this study are as follow:

1. To examine the relationship between tangible with customer satisfaction in hotel.
2. To determine the relationship between reliability with customer satisfaction in hotel.
3. To identify the relationship between the responsiveness with customer satisfaction in hotel.

This empirical study makes a valuable contribution to the existing body of knowledge on customer satisfaction in the hotel industry. By investigating the factors influencing consumer satisfaction within the hotel sector, this research offers insightful findings that can inform and guide hoteliers in meeting customer expectations. Additionally, the study provides consumers with valuable information that can assist them in making informed decisions when choosing hotels.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, the researchers briefly describe the literature review, hypothesis, conceptual framework and summary. This chapter will discuss the influenced satisfaction in hotel service quality in Kota Bharu, Kelantan. Tangible, reliability and responsiveness are independent variables while customer satisfaction is dependent variable. Based on the literature review that was discussed and the research problem, the analysis's hypothesis was presented in the manner that follows.

Tangible

Tangibles encompass various elements, such as the physical environment, personnel, and communication materials within a service context. These tangible components can create an impression or perception on customers without requiring monetary transactions (Asubonteng et al., 1996). Assessing perceived quality involves comparing customers' expectations with their actual experiences, as service quality is determined by the disparity between these two factors (Naik et al., 2010; Yesilada & Direktor, 2010).

Measuring perceived quality is essential as it comprehensively evaluates how well a service aligns with customer expectations. Businesses that meet or surpass customer expectations are considered to possess a high level of service quality. Furthermore, service quality directly impacts customer loyalty, as satisfied customers are more likely to remain loyal, attract new customers through positive word-of-mouth referrals, enhance the establishment's image, and ultimately increase profitability within the hotel industry.

Reliability

Reliability, as defined by Drost (2011), refers to the extent to which measurements exhibit reproducibility when performed by different individuals on separate occasions, under varying conditions, and using different tools to measure the intended construct or skill. It represents the consistency and dependability of measurement. For instance, when different individuals estimate a person's weight, the values obtained may not precisely match the actual weight, indicating an unreliable measurement. However, if multiple individuals use the same weighing scale to measure the weight, there is a higher likelihood of obtaining consistent results, thus enhancing the measurement's credibility. Bajpai and Bajpai (2019) also emphasize the importance of reliability and validity as two psychometric properties in measurement.

In the context of hotel service quality, service providers must have efficient means of tailoring their services to meet customers' specific requirements to some extent. This strategy often involves the development of computerized customer information systems that enable service providers to capture guest preferences and provide personalized and enhanced services. For example, in a hotel in Kota Bharu, Kelantan, an information system could be implemented to record and utilize guest preferences, allowing for the pre-assignment of preferred room types and stocking the room with requested whiskey brands from previous visits. As mentioned earlier, reliability refers to the stability of measurements across different scenarios where consistent results should be produced (Nunnally, 1978). It represents the ability to replicate or reproduce study findings. When a researcher conducts a study under specific conditions and obtains consistent results upon repeating the study, the data is considered reliable. Drost (2011) highlights that random and systematic errors can affect the trustworthiness of data derived from research instruments. Random error can be attributed to unknown and uncontrollable external factors that randomly influence specific observations but not others. For example, respondents in better moods may react more favorably to concepts such as self-esteem, contentment, and satisfaction than those in worse moods.

Responsiveness

Responsiveness, as related to the core tenets of general systems theory, pertains to a system event caused by another event occurring within the same system or its environment. Ackoff (1971) describes such an event, produced by another system or environmental stimulus, as a "response." Hence, a response is an event that the system contributes to causing. In hotel management, the perceived value is significant in achieving customer satisfaction. Moliner highlights that perceived value encompasses functional value (quality and price of a product or service), emotional value (associated with feelings), and social value (resulting from personal experiences and alternative options). Anderson et al. define value in business markets as "the perceived worth in monetary terms of the economic, technical, service, and social benefits received by a customer firm in exchange for the price paid, considering the offerings and prices of available suppliers." They consider economic, technical, service, and social benefits as integral components of value, in addition to price and the offerings and prices of suppliers.

Moreover, Gale et al. assert that customer value is "market-perceived quality adjusted for the relative price of the seller's goods." Monroe defines consumer perceptions of value as a trade-off between the perceived quality or benefits of goods and the sacrifice perceived in paying the price. These definitions align with the notion that value is a proportion between the price (monetary

and non-monetary) paid and the perceived quality attained by the customer, as stated by Gale et al. and Rust et al.

Perceived quality, customer expectations, and perceived value form the three primary pillars of customer value. Achieving a significant advancement in all three dimensions provides creative or breakthrough customer value. King highlights the unique connection between service providers and clients in the context of hospitality as a commercial activity. In this connection, the host attends to the needs and desires of guests, ensuring their satisfaction and a feeling of being at home. Satisfactory service quality is indispensable for the success of the hospitality business. Similar effects of service quality have been reported in the tourism, hospitality, and leisure industries, including enhancing guest convenience, improving the service provider's image, ensuring customer security, generating profitable traffic, cost savings, increasing market share, and establishing a competitive advantage and customer demand properties. The measurement scales used to assess these effects are crucial for determining the adequacy and accuracy of scientific research techniques when investigating the impact of hotel service quality on customer satisfaction at Hotel Kota Bharu, Kelantan.

Customer Satisfaction

The topic of total satisfaction has become a subject of extensive debate among researchers. Advocates of this concept often highlight the significance of meeting specifications, complying with regulations, and delivering high-quality services to customers (Anwar & Abd Zebari, 2015). In the present context, consumer happiness is of paramount importance. Customers are likely to utilize the service again or recommend it to others if they are satisfied. If a guest leaves a hotel unsatisfied, all the efforts invested in improving service quality would be in vain. Meeting consumer expectations remains a pressing challenge in the industry today (Anwar & Surarchith, 2015).

The focus of the hospitality business extends beyond the customer to encompass a small fraction of the actual consumption process, often accompanied by preconceived expectations of service and quality. Contemporary consumers in the hospitality industry are increasingly time-constrained, sophisticated, and demanding (Anwar, 2017). Understanding the customer base and the level of satisfaction they anticipate is crucial before implementing management strategies to enhance service quality. Anwar (2016) defines satisfaction as "an individual's experience of joy or disappointment resulting from comparing the perceived performance or outcome of a product to their expectations."

Research Hypothesis

F The literature review highlighted that independent variables such as tangible, reliability, and responsiveness are the factors that affect customer satisfaction in hotels at Kota Bharu, Kelantan. The hypothesis in the study is to find out whether there are any correlations or relationship between dependent variables and independent variables as follow:

H1: There is a relationship between tangible and customer satisfaction in hotel at Kota Bahru, Kelantan

H2: There is a relationship between realibility and customer satisfaction in hotel at Kota Bahru, Kelantan

H3 : There is a relationship between responsiveness and customer satisfaction in hotel at Kota Bharu, Kelantan

Research Framework

Figure 1 below shows the research framework used for this study.

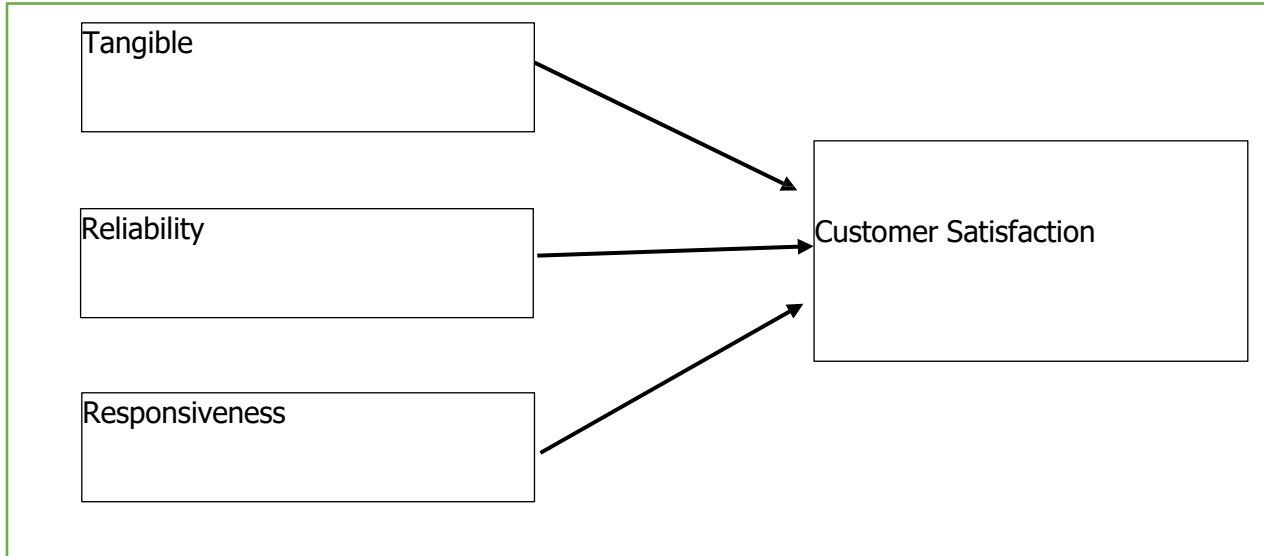


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A research design plays a crucial role in organizing the methodology and processes of a study. To ensure the success of the research, it is essential for researchers to diligently execute their study and employ an established testing strategy. In the present study, the researchers collected data through the utilization of a questionnaire and employed a quantitative approach.

Data Collection

This research employed a survey method with questionnaires as the primary data collection tool. The questionnaires were administered using Google Form and distributed to respondents through popular social media platforms like WhatsApp and Telegram. The survey was conducted online to ensure convenience for the participants. The questionnaire was designed to gather data on independent variables such as tangible aspects, reliability, and responsiveness in relation to customer satisfaction in hotels located in Kota Bharu, Kelantan.

Sampling

In this study, the sampling method employed is non-probability sampling, specifically convenience sampling. Convenience sampling was utilized to gather information from respondents for the purposes of the research. The researcher aimed to investigate perspectives from a broad range of individuals, objects, or entities within the target population. According to Etikan, Musa,

and Alkassim (2016), convenience sampling involves selecting respondents who are readily available and willing to participate. Kumar et al. (2013) defines convenience sampling as the practice of gathering data from respondents who can easily be accessed and are suitable for the researcher's needs.

Data Analysis

Data analysis involves the systematic examination, cleansing, manipulation, and modeling of data to extract crucial information, facilitate decision-making, and offer recommendations (Pal, 2017). In the present study, the researchers utilized the SPSS software version 26.0 for conducting statistical data analysis. The survey data collected from the respondents were compiled and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). SPSS is a software program that provides a user-friendly interface for data entry and analysis, allowing the construction of tables and pie charts. The analysis techniques employed in this study included frequency analysis, descriptive analysis, reliability analysis, and correlation analysis.

FINDINGS

Demographic Analysis

Table 1 below shows the results of frequency analysis

Table 1: Frequency Analysis

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	213	55.5
Female	171	44.5
Age		
20-25	130	35.5
26-30	120	25.5
31-35	60	18.0
35-40	60	18.0
40 and above	14	3.0
Occupation		
Government Sector	30	15.2
Private Sector	20	12.0
Unemployed	85	22.1
Self-Employed	25	13.9
Student	224	36.8
Income		
Below RM 1000	92	24
RM 1001- RM 2000	161	41.9
RM 2001-RM 3000	73	19.0
RM 4001 above	58	15.1

Marital Status		
Married	94	31.5
Single	290	68.5

Table 1 presents the results of the frequency analysis conducted on the gender, age, occupation, income, and marital status of the 384 respondents. The table indicates that male respondents accounted for 55.5% (n=213) of the sample, while female respondents comprised 44.5% (n=171). Among the different age groups, the highest number of respondents fell within the 20-25 years age bracket, constituting 35.5% (n=130) of the sample. The second highest number of respondents, 25.5% (n=120), belonged to the 26-30 years age group. The age groups 31-35 years and 35-40 years each had 18.0% (n=60) of the respondents, while the age group 40 and above accounted for 3.0% (n=14) of the sample.

Regarding occupation, respondents from the government sector represented 15.2% (n=30) of the sample, while those from the private sector comprised 12.0% (n=20). Unemployed respondents constituted 22.1% (n=85), and self-employed respondents accounted for 13.9% (n=25). Students made up the largest group with a total of 224 respondents, representing 36.8% of the sample.

In terms of income, respondents with an income below RM 1000 numbered 92 (24.0%), while those with an income ranging from RM 1001 to RM 2000 constituted 41.9% (n=161) of the sample. Respondents with an income between RM 2001 and RM 3000 represented 19.0% (n=73), and those with an income of RM 4001 and above totaled 58 (15.1%). Marital status included two categories: married and single. The total number of married respondents was 94 (31.5%), whereas the majority of respondents, 290 (68.5%), were single.

Descriptive Analysis

Table 2 below shows the results of descriptive analysis.

Variable	Item	Mean Score	Standard deviation
Tangible	The hotel provides clean and comfortable rooms	3.5885	1.37773
	The hotel has swimming pool, sauna and health club	3.5781	1.38215
	The hotel has appealing decorations	3.5521	1.34704
	The hotel has neat appearance staff	3.6380	1.35065
	The hotel has courteous and polite to the customers	3.5651	1.37715
Reliability	Staff at the hotel are able to provide service as promised	3.8620	1.36889
	Staff of the hotel are dependable in handling customers service problem	3.7943	1.37940

	The hotel keeps customers informed of the performance of services	3.7917	1.39126
	Staff of the hotel keeps confidential records of customers	3.8021	1.39091
	Staff of hotel is friendly and helpful for customer	3.7214	1.36076
Responsiveness	Staff at the hotel are ready to responds to customer request	3.94	0.859
	Staff at the hotel are always willing to help customers	3.86	0.929
	Staff at the hotel has some knowledge to provide to the guest	2.66	1.201
	Staff at the hotel has flexibility according to guests demand	2.74	1.133
Customer Satisfaction	I feel satisfied with the service of this hotel	3.8646	1.31962
	I feel I get more attention from the employees of this hotel	3.6250	1.38058
	Hotels ensure the safety of their customers by appointing guards in 24 hours inspection	3.8646	1.26920
	The guest feels safe and secure in their stay in the hotel	3.8698	1.32410
	Staff of the hotel have customers best interest at heart	3.9062	1.27910

Table 2 presents the mean and standard deviation for the items used to assess the factors of tangible, reliability, and responsiveness that influence customer satisfaction. Each variable was measured using five (5) questions. Regarding the tangible variable, the highest mean of 3.6380 was observed for the statement, "The hotel has appealing decorations." Conversely, the lowest mean of 3.5651 was recorded for the statement, "The hotel has appealing decorations."

For the reliability variable, the highest mean of 3.8620 was found for the statement, "Staff at the hotel are able to provide service as promised." On the other hand, the lowest mean of 3.7214 was obtained for the statement, "Staff of the hotel is friendly and helpful for customers." Regarding responsiveness, the highest mean of 3.7396 was observed for the statement "Staff readiness to respond to customers' inquiries." Conversely, the lowest mean of 3.6276 was recorded for the statement "Staff at the hotel are always willing to help customers." Lastly, the highest mean of 3.9062 was reported for the customer satisfaction variable for the statement, "The staff are courteous and polite to the customers." Conversely, the lowest mean of 3.6250 was obtained for the statement, "I feel I get more attention from the employees of this hotel."

Reliability Analysis

Table 3 below shows the result of reliability analysis

Table 3: Result of reliability analysis

Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Tangible	5	0.774
Reliability	5	0.880
Responsiveness	5	0.706
Customer Satisfaction	5	0.709

Based on the findings presented in Table 3, the results of the pilot test for each section of the questionnaire are considered acceptable, as all the values exceed the threshold of 0.700 for Cronbach's Alpha. The questionnaire comprised five questions used to measure the variables in this study. The first independent variable, tangible, demonstrated a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.774, indicating a good strength of association among the items in this variable. Similarly, the second independent variable, reliability, exhibited a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.880, indicating a very good strength of association. The variable responsiveness yielded a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.706, signifying a good strength of association. Lastly, for the dependent variable, e-learning on academic performance, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was 0.709, indicating a good strength of association. It is noteworthy that all the variables consisted of valid questions. Overall, the pilot test results confirm the reliability and validity of the questionnaire items used to measure the variables in this study.

Pearson Correlation Analysis

Table 4 presents the findings of the Pearson Correlation Analysis conducted in this study.

Table 4: Pearson Correlation Analysis

Hypothesis	P-Value	Result (Supported/Not Supported)
H1 : There is a relationship between tangible and customer satisfaction in hotel at Kota Bharu, Kelantan	0.516	H1 is supported
H2 : There is a relationship between realibility and customer satisfaction in hotel at Kota Bharu, Kelantan	0.54	H2 is supported
H3 : There is a relationship between responsiveness and customer satisfaction in hotel at Kota Bharu, Kelantan	0.517	H3 is supported

Based on the results shown in Table 4, the hypothesis testing revealed significant relationships between the variables of tangible, reliability, and responsiveness and their impact on customer satisfaction in hotels at Kota Bharu, Kelantan. Consequently, all the hypotheses were accepted at a 0.01 significance level. These findings provide evidence that there is a statistically significant association between tangible aspects of hotel services, the reliability of hotel services, responsiveness of hotel staff, and customer satisfaction. This suggests that the tangible elements, reliability, and responsiveness play crucial roles in shaping customer satisfaction in hotels at Kota Bharu, Kelantan.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION

From the findings, it is evident that there is a strong positive relationship between the tangible factors and customer satisfaction in hotels in Kota Bharu, Kelantan, as indicated by a correlation coefficient of 1. The p-value of 0.516 further confirms the positive relationship, providing support for H1. This finding suggests that customers in Kota Bharu, Kelantan place high importance on the tangible aspects of hotels and derive significant satisfaction from them. This aligns with previous studies conducted by Ali and Gardi (2021), which also identified tangible factors as influential determinants of customer satisfaction in the hotel industry.

Besides that, the analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between responsiveness and the factors influencing customer satisfaction in hotels in Kota Bharu, Kelantan, as indicated by a correlation coefficient of 0.706. The p-value of 0.517 further supports this positive association, providing confirmation for H3. This finding is consistent with the results of a previous study, which also found a positive relationship between responsiveness and customer satisfaction in the hotel industry. Future research should consider incorporating additional independent variables, such as students' attitudes, as these may have an impact on their satisfaction with hotels in Kota Bharu, Kelantan. The current findings suggest that students' attitudes towards customer satisfaction are relevant in this context.

Moreover, it is recommended that future studies employ a quantitative research methodology, as it enables faster data collection compared to qualitative approaches. Quantitative research allows for numerical data, facilitating the use of statistical tests to make meaningful statements about the data. Researchers can benefit from a diverse range of data collection techniques, from unstructured to semi-structured methods. Furthermore, it would be valuable for future studies to explore customer satisfaction in hotels across Malaysia. Such investigations may shed light on potential issues within the hospitality industry and offer insights that surpass the scope of the present study. By expanding the research to a broader context, researchers can generate a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing customer satisfaction in hotels, specifically in Kota Bharu, Kelantan.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to investigate the factors influencing customer satisfaction in hotels located in Kota Bharu, Kelantan. Specifically, the study focused on the variables of tangibility, reliability, and responsiveness. Through the application of Pearson Correlation analysis, the research aimed to establish the relationships between these independent variables and customer satisfaction as the dependent variable.

The findings of the study revealed significant associations between the independent variables (tangibility, reliability, and responsiveness) and the factors influencing customer satisfaction in hotels in Kota Bharu, Kelantan. This suggests that these factors play a crucial role in shaping customer satisfaction within the hotel industry. The results support the notion that tangible aspects, such as appealing decorations, reliable services as promised, and responsive staff, contribute significantly to customer satisfaction in hotel settings.

In conclusion, this study emphasizes the importance of tangibility, reliability, and responsiveness in influencing customer satisfaction in hotels located in Kota Bharu, Kelantan. The findings provide valuable insights for hotel management and practitioners to prioritize and enhance these factors to meet customer expectations and ultimately improve overall satisfaction levels. Further research in this area could explore additional variables and extend the investigation to a wider range of hotels within the Malaysian hospitality industry, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of customer satisfaction dynamics.

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