

# Article Title Page

## [Customer Satisfaction with Luxury Hotel in Bangkok: The Influence of Housekeeping Services Quality]

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### Structured Abstract:

**Purpose** – The purpose of this study is to examine the service quality, to represent what factors of housekeeping-service quality make the greatest contribution to customer satisfaction in housekeeping services of luxury hotels in Bangkok. The items of these four dimensions were adapted and reworded based on the LQI model for investigating the specific context.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Data are collected from 200 Thai and foreign respondents who stayed in the luxury hotel located at CBD of Bangkok within six months. The housekeeping-service quality was measured using four LQI dimensions of Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness and Communication as a predictor toward customer satisfaction. Hypothesizing these four dimensions has direct effect on the customer satisfaction in housekeeping services. Data are examined by using exploratory factor analysis and multiple regression analysis.

**Findings** – The resulted indicated that two out of four original constructs had direct effects on customer satisfaction. However, this study found two new constructs, which are Understanding and Competency that had direct effect on customer satisfaction. The final model consisted of four constructs, namely Reliability, Responsiveness, Understanding, and Competency which had an influence on customer satisfaction directly. The final model has relatively good explanatory power with  $R^2 = 40.6\%$ . The Competency was the most significant in the final model.

**Implications** – The hotel managers of luxury class hotels should recognize the important of “Competency” and “Understanding” in performing the housekeeping services in order to enhance customer satisfaction by training the housekeeping to work efficiently and have friendly manner and effort to anticipating customer’s need.

**Originality/value** – This study particularly identified the important factors of housekeeping-services quality, which helped the hotelier to improve the housekeeping services in the right point, thus this helps minimizing cost and time investment. This paper is one of rare study that attentively focused on the context of housekeeping services that has not been developed or operationalized.

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**Keywords:** Housekeeping, Hotel Service Quality, Lodging Quality Index, Customer satisfaction, Luxury Hotel, LQI, SERVQUAL

**Article Classification:** Research Paper

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# Customer Satisfaction with Luxury Hotel in Bangkok: The Influence of Housekeeping Services Quality

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## Abstract

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## **1. Introduction**

Bangkok, the capital of Thailand received the World Best's City Awards three times in a row since year 2010 to 2012 from Travel and Leisure. Even more the Top City Hotel Award in Asia from year 2008-2012 belonged to the luxury hotel in Bangkok (Marsh, 2012). However, nowadays the hotel industry is rapidly growing, especially in the central business district area (CBD) of Bangkok. The rapid growth also comes with higher competition, which causes many hoteliers choose to capture the market share by using price cutting strategy. However, the intense price discounting could run a serious risk of having a negative impact on the hotel's medium and long-term profitability. The hotel segment that critically affected by this issue is the luxury class hotels. Another key to help gaining a market share from competitors is a focus on services quality through a hotel's ability to differentiate itself by providing unique benefit to customers. The customer satisfaction is one of the most important factors affecting the hotel business performance, as it is the main driver of customer loyalty. The high level of customer satisfaction lead to repurchase and favorable word-of-mouth publicity and eventually increase in the revenue (Gundersen & Heide, 1996; Jay & Dwi, 2000; Markovic & Raspor, 2010; Swan & Oliver, 1989).

The hotel service department consists with three departments, which are the reception, food and beverage and housekeeping department. Many past research papers has studies on the quality of these service departments toward the customer satisfaction (Engeset & Heide, 1993; Gundersen & Heide, 1996; Jay & Dwi, 2000; Oh & Mount, 1998; Wang & Pearson, 2002). Jay and Dwi (2000) claimed that the hotel guests perceived customer satisfaction with housekeeping to be more important than satisfaction with reception and food and beverage when deciding whether to return and recommend. But the housekeeping is not traditionally considered by hotel manager as a front-line service department. Hence, service training offered to housekeeping staff is minimal in comparison with that provided for reception and restaurant staff. Nevertheless, few research studies have focused and identified which elements of housekeeping service quality that significantly influence a customer satisfaction in this department of the hotel. Therefore, this paper will particularly explore the factor of housekeeping service quality helping the hotel managers to enhance the housekeeping service performance and ultimately customer satisfaction.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Perceived service quality**

A generic measure of service quality, the SERVQUAL scale was developed by Parasuraman et al. (1985, 1988). Their aim was to provide a generic instrument for measuring service quality across a broad range of service categories. Relying on information from 12 focus groups of consumers, Parasuraman et al. (1985) reported that consumers evaluated service quality by comparing expectations (of service to be received) with perceptions (of service actually received) on ten dimension: tangible, reliability, responsiveness, communication, credibility, security, competence, understanding/knowing customers,

courtesy, and access. In a later Parasuraman et al. (1988) work, the authors reduced the original ten dimensions to five. Each dimension is measured by five items (a total of 22 items across the five dimensions). The definitive five dimensions were:

- 1) Tangible: the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, and personnel.
- 2) Reliability: the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.
- 3) Responsiveness: willingness to help customers and provide prompt service.
- 4) Assurance: the knowledge and courtesy of employees, and their ability to inspire trust and confidence.
- 5) Empathy: the level of caring and individualized attention that the firm provides to its customers.

SERVQUAL has been used to measure service quality in a wide range of service industries, which included; Health care sector (Carman, 1990; Headley & Miller, 1993); Fast food (Lee & Ulgado, 1997); Banking (Lam, 2002), telecommunications (Wal, Pampallis, & Bond, 2002); Information systems (Jiang, Klein, & Crampton, 2000) and retail chain (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1994). Despite, the widespread use of the SERVQUAL to measure service quality, several applications of the scale in different service settings have shown that the type and number of dimensions actually varies, depending on the service under investigation (Akbaba, 2006; Ladhari, 2009). It has been argued that a simple adaption of the SERVQUAL items is insufficient to measure service quality across a broad range of service industries (Babakus & Boller, 1992; Carman, 1990; Dyke, Leon, & Prybutok, 1997; Ekinici, Riley, & Fife-Schaw, 1998). Carman (1990) indicated that the certain dimensions required expansion by inclusion of 13 additional items to the SERVQUAL instrument in order to capture service quality sufficiently across different services.

For the case of hotel service industry, there was a variable support for the validity of the SERVQUAL model. For example, Wuest et al (1996) applied the SERVQUAL model in the hotel industry in United States to evaluate the importance of services provided. The authors reported that five dimensions found to be relevant and appropriate. On the other hand, the study of SERVQUAL model in the hotel industry in Cyprus indicated that only 'tangible' was relevant. The other dimensions (reliability, assurance, responsiveness and empathy) were collapsed into only on dimension which designated as intangible (Riadh, 2012; Wuest, Tas, & Emenheiser, 1996).

## **2.2 Hotel industry-specific measure of service quality**

From the argument above, it has been suggested that industry-specific measure of service quality would be more appropriate than using a single generic scale (Babakus & Boller, 1992; Dabholkar, Thorpe, & Rentz, 1996; Riadh, 2008). Therefore, several studies of the measurement of service quality in hotels have move from attempts to adapt SERVQUAL to the development of alternative industry-specific measure (Riadh, 2012). Many of research paper, has been developed by adapting

SERVQUAL or using SERVQUAL as a foundation for developing new instruments for measuring hotel service quality (Getty & Thompson, 1995; Khan, 2003; Oberoi & Hales, 1990).

For instance, Oberoi et al. (1990) proposed two types of perceived service quality attributes: physical (technical) attribute and non-physical (functional) attribute. Examples of technical attribute are the equipment availability, general facility cleanness, and quality and quantity of food. Examples of functional attributes are the reliability of hotel staff and management, staff assistance, and management attention to visitor's need (Oberoi & Hales, 1990). Another development that differs from those of SERVQUAL, Getty et al. (1995) identified three basic dimensions of lodging quality which were tangible, reliability and contact (LOGDQUAL). The tangible and reliability dimensions were as previously defined. However, the contact dimension is composite of SERVQUAL's responsiveness, empathy and assurance dimensions (Getty & Thompson, 1995). Getty et al. (1995) suggested that these dimensions were indistinguishable and generally represent the patron's contact experience with employees. Other specific instrument for measuring hotel service quality, Khan (2003) proposed ECOSERV model from investigating the service-quality expectations of eco-tourists and reported six dimensions, including so-called "eco-tangible"; this new dimension was judged by eco-tourists to be the most important aspect of hotel service quality, referred to physical facilities that considered environmentally appropriate and equipment that help minimizing environmental degradation.

### **2.3 The Lodging Quality Index and Its Relation to Customer Satisfaction**

The lodging quality index (LQI) is a multidimensional scale developed by Getty et al. (2003) on the basis of SERVQUAL model. The process of the LQI scale began with ten dimensions that was originally in the first version of SERVQUAL (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985). Ten dimensions were represented in the developmental versions of LQI by a pool of 63 items received from a literature review and in-depth interviews with a variety of interested person in United State. After the purification and validation, a pool of 26 items represented five dimensions, was kept in the final version of LQI (Juliet & Robert, 2003). The authors claimed that the LQI is a generic measure of hotel service quality. The five dimensions are:

1) Tangibility (eight items) refers to the functionality and appearance of the property. Eight items are related to the front desk, the hotel's interior and exterior, its surroundings, the cleanliness and brightness of hotel, and the atmosphere of hotel restaurants and shops. For instance, "the shops were pleasant and attractive"; and "the employees had clean, neat uniform" (Juliet & Robert, 2003; Riadh, 2012).

2) Reliability (four items), includes the original dimension of reliability and credibility. Examples of four items are; "My guestroom was ready as promised"; and "TV, radio, air condition and other mechanical equipment worked properly" (Juliet & Robert, 2003; Riadh, 2012).

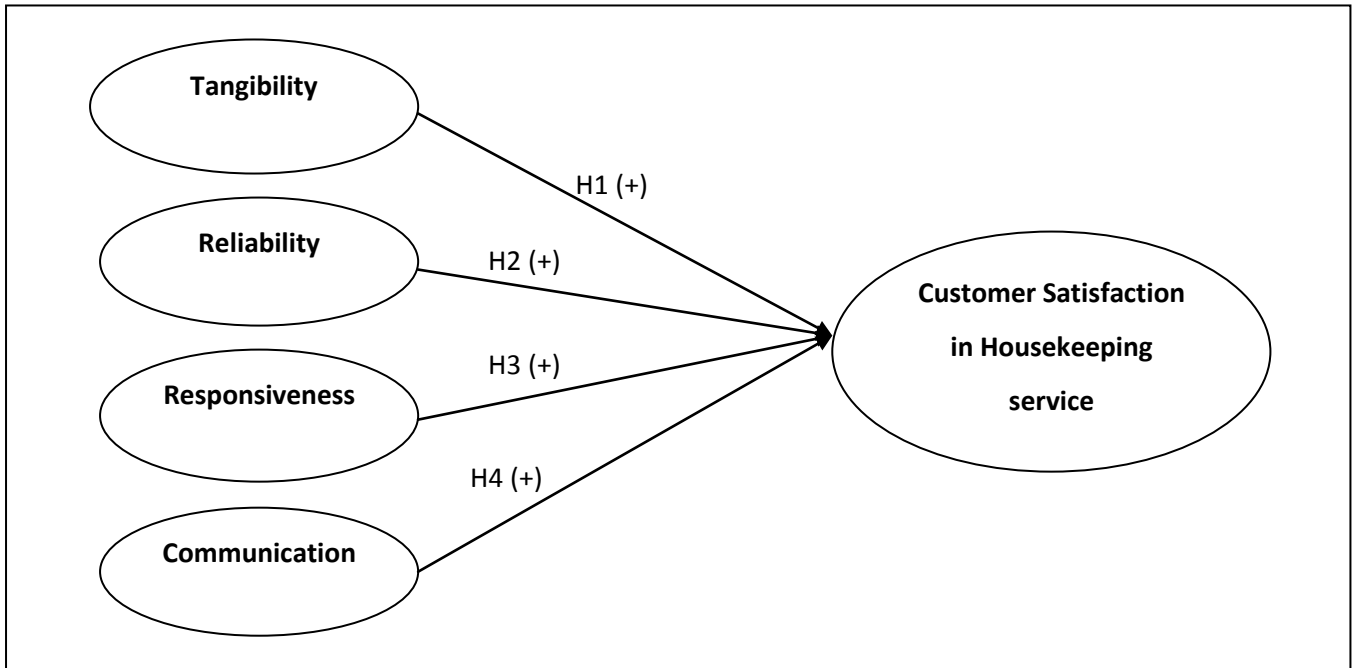
3) Responsiveness (Five items), refers to the willingness of staff to respond promptly to guests request and to solve their problems efficiently. Examples of its five items include: “Room service was prompt”; and “Employees responded promptly to my requests” (Juliet & Robert, 2003; Riadh, 2012).

4) Confidence (five items), includes the original dimensions of courtesy, competency, access and security. Examples of its five items are: “The facilities are conveniently located”; and “Employees knew about local places of interest” (Juliet & Robert, 2003; Riadh, 2012).

5) Communication (four items), includes the original dimension of communication and understanding. It refers good listening and communication skills, and making the effort to identify the customer’s particular needs. Examples of four items are: “Employees anticipated my needs”; and “Charges on my account were clearly explained” (Juliet & Robert, 2003; Riadh, 2012).

For the area of customer satisfaction, the perceived service quality is an important predictor of cognitive and emotional satisfaction as several empirical studies have reported. (Bei & Chiao, 2006; Choi & Chu, 2001; Riadh, 2012; Xiaoyun Han, Kwornik, & Chunxiao Wang, 2008). Satisfaction with a service experience is both cognitive (evaluative) and an affective-based response. Cognitive component is a form of attitude, an evaluative judgment of the hotel experience. The affective (emotional) component refers to the set of emotional response elicited specifically during service experience (Oliver, 1981). In the recent study, Riadh (2012) has tested and empirically confirmed the validity and reliability of the LQI instrument, reporting that the service quality of LQI dimensions had a positive impact on both cognitive and emotional satisfaction, but excepted “confidence” that was not relevant with the customer satisfaction in this empirical assessment (Riadh, 2012). As the further suggestion of Riadh (2012), the researcher could possibly adapt the LQI scale for use in the specific context by such rewording some items, adding some new statement and deleting current statement to be more suitable with the particular research purpose (Riadh, 2012). Therefore, in the proposed model of this study will use only four dimensions of LQI (Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, and Communication) that had a significant effect on the customer satisfaction as previously resulted in the empirical assessment of Riadh (2012). Moreover, this research will modify and propose the new statement of each four LQI dimensions for specifically measuring the housekeeping- service quality.

### 3. Proposed Model of Customer Satisfaction in Housekeeping-Service Quality



H1: Tangible aspect of housekeeping-service quality has positively a direct effect on the customer satisfaction in housekeeping service.

H2: Reliable aspect of housekeeping-service quality has positively a direct effect on the customer satisfaction in housekeeping service.

H3: Responsive aspect of housekeeping-service quality has positively a direct effect on the customer satisfaction in housekeeping service.

H4: Communicative aspect of housekeeping-service quality has positively a direct effect on the customer satisfaction in housekeeping service.

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1 Sample and Data Collection

In year 2012, we conducted the pretest twice with ten respondents each time, to ensure the respondents understand the questions that we have newly adjusted with the items. After the process of pretest, the pilot test was conducted with thirty respondents before field surveying. In the field work, we collected data from a convenience sample of Thai and foreign traveler who had stayed in the luxury class hotel located in the central business district of Bangkok within six months only. The respondents were approached at the entrance of luxury hotels and high-end shopping malls by three assistants over three weeks. In all 220 questionnaires were returned. Twenty incomplete questionnaires were eliminated from the analysis, leaving 200 usable questionnaires for further analysis. The sample size was considered sufficient for scale validation as comparable to those other researchers in developing their scale (Ekinci et al., 1998; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988; Riadh, 2012). A



majority of the respondents were female (54 percent). In term of income, 41 percent of the respondents had a monthly income between 1,666 to 2,666 US dollars. The citizenship of respondents was 65.5 percent of foreigner. In term of travel purpose, we found that 96 percent of respondents were a holiday purpose.

## 4.2 Measures

The questionnaire asked respondents to indicate their perception of housekeeping-service quality of the luxury class hotels that they had stayed lately. In regards, to each 26 of LQI and satisfaction statements, the participants were asked to respond in the format of five-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) “strongly disagree” to (5) “strongly agree”.

## 5. The Findings

Table 1: Measures Used in This Study

Constructs	Items	Factor Loadings
Tangibility	TAN1: Housekeeper dresses in a proper uniform.	0.902
	TAN2: Housekeeper arranges well-clean room.	0.741
	TAN3: Housekeeper arranges an adequate bath stuff.	0.836
	TAN4: Housekeeper arranges well-clean room amenities.	0.651
	TAN5: Housekeeper arranges a welcome card.	0.539
	TAN6: Housekeeper arranges a room comfortable.	0.605
6 Items	Reliability (Conbach's) = .804	
Reliability	REL2: Housekeeper regularly checks the neatness of my room.	0.772
	REL3: Room amenities is provided and ready for use.	0.820
	REL4: Room is provided upon my order.	0.856
3 Items	Reliability (Conbach's) = .816, drop REL1	
Responsiveness	RES1: Housekeeper is able to reach the room quickly after requested.	0.726
	RES2: Housekeeper can promptly provides and cleans my room.	0.799
	RES3: Housekeeper is willing to answer my question.	0.793
	RES5: Housekeeping is able to solve a problem in my room quickly.	0.798
4 Items	Reliability (Conbach's) = .829, drop RES4	
Understanding	COM1: Housekeeper has an effort to understand my want.	0.623
	COM2: Housekeeper is able to anticipate my want.	0.899
	COM3: Housekeeper communicates to me with smile and friendliness.	0.884
3 Items	Reliability (Conbach's) = .778	
Competency	COM4: Housekeeper is willing to listen to my request.	0.607
	COM5: Housekeeper is able to clearly explain the services of guest room.	0.760
	RES6: Housekeeping performs work efficiently.	0.764
3 Items	Reliability (Conbach's) = .702	
Customer Satisfaction	CS1: I feel like a special guest of hotel from receiving a housekeeping services.	0.729
	CS2: Housekeeping services make me feeling comfortable like staying home.	0.773
	CS3: I am satisfied with services provided by the housekeeper.	0.778
	CS4: I am satisfied with housekeeping services that respond my need.	0.763
	CS5: I feel good with the housekeeping service of this hotel.	0.597
5 Items	Reliability (Conbach's) = .772	

## 5.1 Validity and Reliability

To test the reliability of all scales used in this study, we calculated Cronbach's alpha scores for each dimension which was between 0.702 and 0.829. All reliability statistics were over 0.7 (see Table1), which expressed that all scales for each construct in the proposed model have good reliability.

We performed exploratory factor analysis (EFA), utilizing principal component method for factor extraction and varimax rotation technique to examine the validity of each construct. Measurement items with factor loadings less than 0.5 were cut off, resulting to cut RES4 and REL1. All factor loadings in Table1 were greater than 0.5 and most of them have factor loadings greater than 0.7, which implied that these measures had construct validity (Nunnally Jum & Bernstein Ira, 1978). However, one item (RES6) supposed to measure "responsiveness", were excluded from its construct and loaded together with COM4 and COM5 into a new construct, called "competency". The two items (COM4 and COM5) were actually supposed to measure "communication" but were excluded from its original construct either, leaving three items (COM1, COM2 and COM3) in the construct. Therefore, we renamed the communication construct as "understanding".

To test the construct validity of customer satisfaction scale, we also conducted the exploratory factor analysis and found that all five items were loaded into only one factor with factor loadings of every item greater than 0.5.

## 5.2 Hypotheses Testing

To test direct effect of five constructs (three original constructs plus Understanding and Competency) on customer satisfaction, we employed the multiple regression analysis with factor scores. The results represented all four constructs (except Tangibility) had a significant positive relationship with customer satisfaction with adjusted  $R^2 = 40.6\%$ , which expressed relatively good explanatory power (Table2)

Table2: the Results of Mutiple Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Tangibility	0.062	0.054	0.062	1.144	0.254
Responsiveness	0.145	0.054	0.145	2.658	0.009
Reliability	0.153	0.054	0.153	2.799	0.006
Understanding	0.345	0.054	0.345	6.326	0.000
Competency	0.504	0.054	0.504	9.254	0.000

$R^2 = .421$       Adjusted  $R^2 = .406$

## 6. Conclusion and Implication

The result of this study shows that tangibility did not significantly influence the customer satisfaction in housekeeping-service quality, which is not consistent with the prior empirical study of Riadh (2012), as previously reported the tangibility dimension of LQI had a significant effect on the customer satisfaction. The result might be due to the different characteristic of respondent and adapted items in the specific context of housekeeping services. Another point of view, the customers those who stayed in the luxury hotels, likely emphasized on the benefits of non-physical attribute of housekeeping-service quality rather than the physical attributes. However, the hypothesis 2 and 3 were confirmed with data employed in this study.

The new construct, “Understanding” had a significant positive relationship with the customer satisfaction in housekeeping services. It implied that customers who were highly treated with the friendly manner and being understood or anticipated their need by the hotel housekeeper, tend to have high level of satisfaction. For the influence of “Competency” measurement, which items of this new construct excluded from communication and responsiveness, has the highest positive influence on the customer satisfaction. This could imply that the hotel manger should give more important on training their housekeeping staffs in performing works efficiently, and ensuring that housekeepers have a proper behavior to listen willingly when customers speak with them.

In sum, this study particularly identified the important factors of housekeeping-services quality, which helped the hotelier to improve the housekeeping services in the right point, thus this helps minimizing cost and time investment of the organization. This study is one of rare study that attentively focused on this context. For other aspects of housekeeping service, although, there was no or low significant influence on customer satisfaction. We suggested the hotel managers should maintain the service attribute of tangibility, responsiveness and reliability at the acceptable level, because different type of customer usually has a variety of their preference. Hence, the manager should always supervise the housekeeping-service quality of these mentioned measurements that it does not perform under the service standard (Bauer, Jago, & Wise, 1993; Tat & Raymond, 2000). At a practical level, the hotel manager will have more insights about how to service direct to the point of their customer’s expectation.

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