

# Housekeeping, Human Resources: Competency Service Standard Management for Hotel Business in ASEAN

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**Abstract**—This research aimed to identify and study international benchmark service sequences for housekeeping room attendance and also investigated the housekeeping service quality via the gaps between guest expectation and actual perceived satisfaction. The objective of this research was to develop housekeeping room attendance human resources and increase the competitive advantage of Thai graduates so that they would be able to effectively work across the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC).

The conceptual framework is the study of housekeeping service quality based on five dimensions of SERVQUAL framework. Mixed methodology was used in this study. First, a qualitative study of standard housekeeping room attendance service sequences via the in-depth interview with professional housekeepers from Four Seasons Resort and Hotel Chiangmai, Banyan Tree Phuket and the Siam Kempinski Bangkok cooperated. Second, the quantitative study of gaps between satisfaction and the expectation on housekeeping service quality. Using 250 bi-lingual questionnaires to collect the data from non-probability samples, living in the hotels mentioned above. Mean and standard deviation were used to rank and compare each dimension of service quality. ANOVA inferential statistic was used to analyze guest expectation score according to different aims of stays.

From professional point of view, the housekeeping room attendance standard service sequences (HSSS) were discussed and concluded into ten logical steps. These steps of room attendant's service sequences were them proven successful with high satisfactory ratings by the clients. The statistic result demonstrated that group business have average score on overall expectation less than others, they paid more attention into the tangible dimension. The expectation scores on each dimension a little bit higher than real perceived satisfaction. The customers rate the most importance service as housekeeping assurances, then housekeeping reliabilities, tangibility, empathy and responsiveness. (in decreasing order) This is can be seen as a gap and an opportunity for growth in housekeeping human resources.

**Index Terms**—Hotel Business, Housekeeping, Service Quality, Standard.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Thailand is well recognized as one of the most attractive tourist destinations. The statistics of GDP of the country from Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) illustrate that tourism has pay a crucial role in the economic. The Tourisms Authority has spent many years creating the image and value of Amazing Thailand. Although, the political situation may weaken the image and reputation of the country, the

government still attempts to push many tourism and service recovery programs including encouraging quality people to grow service industry.

Developing and managing human resources, emphasize hospitality of Thai people was considered to strengthen service sector in Thailand.

Lancaster claimed that the hospitality industry, especially hotel business is generates the second large amount of income after retail business for Thai tourism economy [1]. Thailand offers a variety of destinations, resources and accommodation services from low price bungalows to the high-end hospitality such a service apartment, and five-star hotels. Hospitality and tourism businesses have grown and developed very rapidly in the last decade with many internal and external investors [2].

As Thailand will become a member of ASEAN economic community (AEC) in 2018, there will be many opportunities and also threats from competitors within the same market. The members are empowering their tourism strategies both individually and through partnership. ASEAN Tourism Ministers Meeting (M-ATM) [3], [4] refers to the adaptation of Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) on tourism professionals that will increase the equality of tourism human resource and will facilitate the mobility of tourism professionals within the region using the ASEAN Minimum Competency Standards for Tourism as the basis.

Delivering quality service is one of the major challenges facing hospitality employees. This challenge will be an essential condition for success in the emerging, keenly competitive, international hospitality market. Then, service quality in specific area of housekeeping was captured as housekeeping human resources managing and developing. Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report [5] claims included poor language ability, communication skills, lack of property maintenance, unreliable service, poor system and poor sanitation are consider as poor conditions comparing to direct counterparts in Asia such Singapore and Malaysia for examples. Offering consistent and excellent services will not help only Thailand's hotels to meet the international standard but also increasing its international competitiveness. China also challenging to complete the ASEAN segment as same market with competitors in Asia-Pacific regions, which highly esteemed on the sophisticated hotel industry with the similar product but better in services [6].

The hotels have also facing the situation of lacking qualified employee that could provide service on international service standard. The housekeeping staffs in Thailand are mostly unwell educated old generation woman. It affected to the image of housekeeping job which became lower leveled, hard and poor. Then the new generation avoids the area of housekeeping, affecting lack of skilled

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housekeeper resources.

The purpose of this paper is to offer an international benchmark that would promote professionalism of the housekeepers. The Housekeeping Standard Service Sequences (HSSS) is this benchmark. The HSSS is the service sequences for functional work as a housekeeping room attendant. It does not involve the other duties of the housekeeping throughout the hotel.

Then assessing the gaps between expectation and actual perceive satisfaction when work on duty based on the concluded international housekeeping room attendant standard service sequences.

## II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURES

### A. Service Quality and its Models

The service is defined by many authors as interaction activities between server and the client which the server tries to fulfill needs, be over expectation, raise satisfaction and impression [7]-[8].

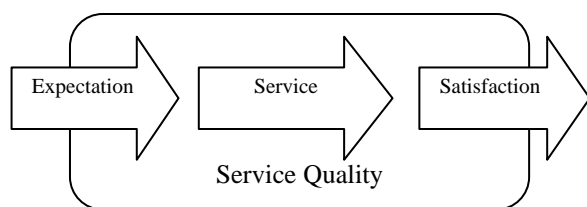


Fig. 1. Service timeline and service quality

Fig. 1 illustrates service timeline which expectation comes first as before the interaction between the server and the client. Then the satisfaction occurs after the service and rates the gaps between expectation and actual perceived service experiences [9].

Nowadays, Economic, business and entrepreneurs vision have been constantly influenced by information technologies, communication technologies and the trend of service oriented business [10].

The literatures including Parasuraman at al [11], and Lovelock and Gummesson [12] mention these characteristics of services that should be understood in order to study in service industry and service quality. There are services-intangibility, heterogeneity, and inseparability that should be understood in order to study further in service quality.

Purchasing goods and consumers employ tangible cues to judge quality: style, hardness, color, label, feel and package. On the other hand, consumers use intangible facts such satisfaction and expectation to judge quality [11].

Some of the most influential models in the service management literature [7], [10] focus on the concept of service quality gap (SQG). Parasuraman at al [11] and Brown and Swartz [13] define an exploring model with five SQGs, the concepts of which are amplified in Brogowicz at al.'s [14] model. The latter has five types of enveloping gaps: information and feedback-related gaps; design-related gaps; implementation-related gaps; communication-related gaps; and customers' perceptions and expectations-related gaps [15]. Parasuraman et al. [9], [11], [16] defined customers'

perceptions and expectations-related gaps of service quality through SERVQUAL into 5 main dimensions, tangible, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. Much literature in the last decades has investigated and used the SERVQUAL to study the perception of service quality within the hospitality industry including the restaurant firms and tourism business [17]-[22].

In this the Housekeeping Service Sequences (HSS) defined as the

## III. METHODOLOGY

The research was completed by using mixed methodology; both qualitative and quantitative techniques were employed to collect needed information. The relevant literature and surveys developed by past studies provided the basics for developing the questionnaire for this study. Through the review of the literature, only two of the seventeen service quality attributes were used to developed the questionnaire and analysis the customers' perceptions and expectations-related gaps. They were SERVQUAL and Kano's Model. The questionnaire was divided into three parts. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of international tourist's demographic and classification questions. The second part designed to measure real respondent satisfaction on housekeeper room attendant service quality. And the third part was designed to measure respondents' expectation on the housekeeper room attendant service quality. 250 bi-lingual questionnaires were used to collect the data from non-probability samples, living in the hotels. Respondents indicated the level of importance and the level of satisfaction using Likert's rating scales from (1) the least satisfaction and expectation to (5) the highest satisfaction and expectation.

The target populations for this study was random from all international tourists living overnight in the well recognized five-star hotels, which were Four Seasons Resort and Hotel Chiangmai, Banyan Tree Phuket and the Siam Kempinski Bangkok from three most popular destination in Thailand [23]; Bangkok, Chiangmai and Phuket. Although, there were 21 incomplete respond papers, 229 well completed questionnaires were collected and statistic analyzed.

Data analysis, the demographic data was first analyzed by the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17. After that, the pair t-test inferential statistic compared the statistic of expectation and satisfaction. ANOVA inferential statistic was used to analyze and compare expectation score by the group of customers with the different aims of stays.

## IV. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

### A. Demographic Profile of the International Guests

From the total 229 well completed questionnaires, the data was analyzed. The sample of international tourists contained 59.8 percentages female and 40.2 percentages male. The research results demonstrate that majority of samples is female of Thai Nationality, between ages 21-40; they are single with a higher education, working for the private organization, with the average income of less than US\$2000

USD per month.

Although, the majority of the samples were Thai citizens but Russians and Chinese tourist markets are noticeably and constantly increasing.

The data of sample's purpose of stay result are mainly 70.7 percentages of personal travelling, 17.5 percentages of private business trip, 7.4 percentages of group business trip and finally 4.4 percentages of group travelling. From this data, it illustrates the different expectation from different propose of stay.

**B. Housekeeping Room Attendance Service Sequences**

The ten steps of HSSS were logically concluded by housekeeping professionals. The first step is greeting and asking for permission to get into the room. Letting the quest know if someone enters the room is international good manner with both security and reliability concerns. The second step is start cleaning, clearing the rubbish which is a

basic cause of dirt and unpleasant smell. The third is turn off the Air conditioners and other electric tools to decrease power consumption and stop dust from spreading. The fourth is opening the doors, windows and curtains to ventilate and let the air flow. The fifth is clearing old cloths, towels, foot scraper, bed sheets etc. Step sixth is bed making. Step seventh is bath room cleaning including refills of all toiletries. Step eight is dusting and Wiping all shelves with clean cloths, hovering and re-organize all items in the room back into the hotel standards. Step ninth is floor cleaning, including sweeping, mopping and hovering. And the last step is checking, including any re-checks of all electric appliances and room conditions and reporting any unpleasant condition. Then, these steps begin again when the housekeeper starts a new room.

**C. Housekeeping Room Attendant Function Circle**

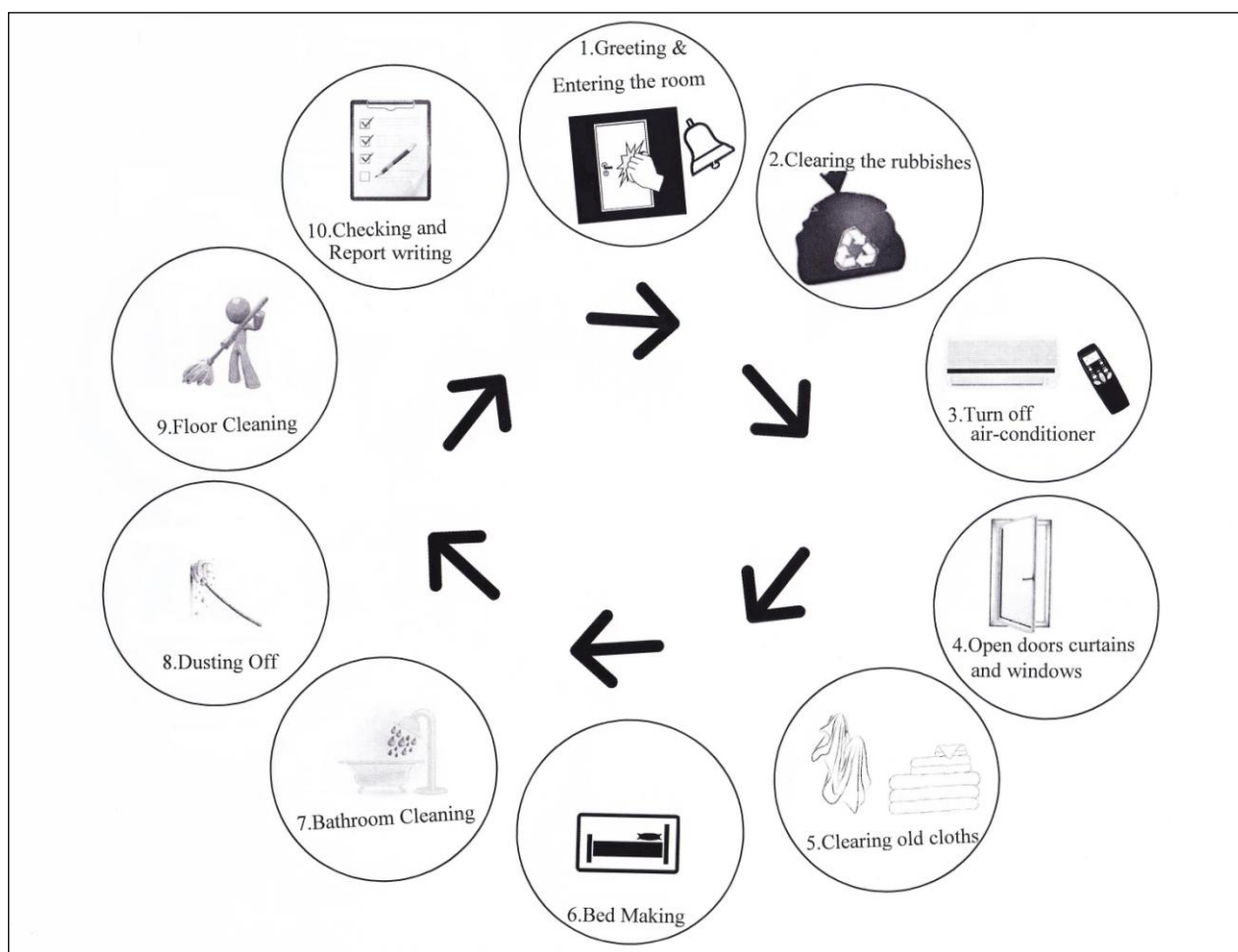


Fig. 2. Housekeeping room attendant function circle

Since the ten logical steps of housekeeping services sequences were concluded by the author. There has been a need to put this benchmark into real practice. Therefore, a teaching model was proposed.

A circles design of ten circles was used to represent the work steps which continually renew from the start to finish again.

The aim of creating a room attendant function circle is preparing for specific training for housekeeping practicing. Using the circles of HSS would help students or interns to

understand the logical reasons behind these steps. Then they could perform better services for the customers' high expectation.

**D. Importance and Expectation on the Housekeeping Services**

The study of expectation on housekeeping service quality gave the result of a very high expectation level. The customers rated their expectation based on the five dimensions of Parasuramans' SERVQUAL model. The

scores of these expectation studies also considered the relative level of importance of each dimension. The overall expectation on housekeeping service is at a very high level by each dimension. The customers carefully considered and rate each dimension; the most important being housekeeping assurances, then housekeeping reliabilities, housekeeping tangibility, housekeeping empathy and finally, housekeeping responsiveness.( in decreasing order.)

It clearly demonstrated that the expectation and importance of housekeeping service are related to the customer Satisfaction.

*E. Consumer Perception of Service Quality: Gaps between Expectation and Perceive Satisfaction*

TABLE I: GAPS BETWEEN TOURIST EXPECTATIONS AND REAL PERCEIVED SATISFACTION OF HOUSEKEEPING SERVICE QUALITY IN HOTEL FIRMS IN THAILAND.

Variable	Sample Amount	Average	S. D.	t-test
Overall				
Satisfaction	229	3.9524	0.35882	-15.665*
Expectation	229	4.4225	0.21101	
Tangible				
Satisfaction	229	4.3926	0.47229	-2.208*
Expectation	229	4.4780	0.32320	
Reliability				
Satisfaction	229	3.8908	0.36292	-17.885*
Expectation	229	4.4873	0.33726	
Responsiveness				
Satisfaction	229	3.3004	0.64797	-18.448*
Expectation	229	4.1328	0.31319	
Assurance				
Satisfaction	229	3.8632	0.62728	-19.506*
Expectation	229	4.7031	0.42364	
Empathy				
Satisfaction	229	3.6114	0.83412	-10.729*
Expectation	229	4.3130	0.46889	

Note: \* p-value (sig) < 0.05

The results of Table I show that, for the most part, the average statistic of housekeeping service satisfaction is above the level of good. The satisfaction on tangibility measurement is in the very good level, housekeeping reliability is in good level, housekeeping responsiveness is in the average level, housekeeping assurance is in the good level and the housekeeping empathy is in the good level.

Expectation on overall housekeeping service quality is in the very high level. The customers rate the most importance service as housekeeping assurances, then housekeeping reliabilities, housekeeping tangibility, housekeeping empathy and housekeeping responsiveness.( in decreasing order.)

By comparing the satisfaction mean score with the expectation rating score, the result illustrates that the statistic of the expectation score for every service dimension is higher than the satisfaction mean score.

The score of satisfaction could not meet the expectation. This illustrates that present housekeeping service sequences for housekeeping service quality remains at a good level

satisfaction. This gap also means that there is a potential development. The problem in housekeeping service quality may occur with the individual and not in the sequences.

TABLE II: ANOVA PARING DIFFERENT PURPOSES AND EXPECTATION SCORE

Purpose of Stay	Group of Business	Travelling as Group	Personal Travelling	Individual Business
Average Score	4.2571	4.4222	4.4269	4.4750

The ANOVA analysis comparing the expectation of tourists with different purpose of stay, discovered that the customers of group travelling, individual traveling and personal business scored the expectation on housekeeping service quality in the highest scale, while, the guest with group business purpose set the scoring differently. The customers with the purpose of group business had an average score on overall expectation less than other purposes but paid more attention into the tangible dimension. Therefore, the group business people present another challenge for the business hotels development.

V. IMPLICATIONS, CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Further applications from this paper, divided into two main areas, further studies and the integration of beneficial used for the local business development.

The contemporary study of housekeeping service rarely exists. This study of HSSS is just only small part of the various housekeeping works which simplified the standard function sequences. Future research of in-depth studies in each step of HSSS would be helpful for further development of housekeeping human resources. Also similar studies in different industries could also be done such as cruising, airline or industrial housekeeping.

Controlling the individual performances is a massive task. The suggestion of performance measurement system designing for specific housekeeping works would help in reliability and assurance concerns. Therefore research could also be done in applying the HSSS as a means to implement or evaluate quality control.

The second application is integrating Housekeeping Standard Service Sequences (HSSS) into the small businesses throughout Thailand. HSSS contains the basic steps which can be easily understood and adapted widely within hospitality business, from the small individual firms to the five star chain hotels. The small local accommodation could use these HSSS to educate their housekeeper, develop their service performance or even decrease expenses and generate more income. The service innovation within housekeeping area is waiting to be challenged by creative inventors.

Developing Hospitality service is critically important to an organization's performance, guest satisfaction, reputation, loyalty and ultimately profitability. The business performance depends on the summation of individual performances. Better service should result in a successful organization. The hospitality business is one of the strongest areas of Thai Tourism.

Developing leadership in tourism and hospitality service is an importance challenge in preparation for the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2018

The Housekeeping Standard Service Sequences (HSSS) is an example of developing and putting into practice logical processes which increase the effective and efficiency of the hospitality services. And may therefore, help to maintain a leadership role in a competitive environment.

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