

## Hotel Service Quality in Jakarta, Indonesia

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### Abstract:

This study aims to explore customer perceptions of service quality in star-rated hotels in Jakarta, Indonesia. Given the increasingly fierce competition in the hospitality industry and the growing demands of customers, an in-depth understanding of customer experiences and expectations is essential. The research employed a qualitative approach, utilizing in-depth interviews with 12 purposively selected informants, from various hotel categories, including budget, mid-range, and luxury hotels. Additionally, the study incorporated the integration of digital tools, such as online customer reviews and social media feedback, to complement the interview data. The results revealed five dimensions of service quality, based on the SERVQUAL model: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles, which emerged as the key themes. Customers emphasized the importance of timely service, staff response speed, a sense of security during their stay, personalized attention, and the comfort of the hotel's physical environment. Customer segmentation indicated that business and leisure travelers had different priorities when assessing service quality. The conclusion of this study is that effective service quality encompasses both functional and emotional aspects in customer interactions. It is recommended that hotel management enhance staff training, personalize services, and optimize digital systems to respond to customer needs in real time. This study contributes to the development of hotel service improvement strategies in metropolitan cities.

**Keywords:** Service Quality, Hotel, SERVQUAL

### 1. Introduction

The hotel industry in Jakarta is experiencing rapid growth, driven by an increasing number of domestic and international tourist visits. As the capital city, Jakarta serves as both a business and tourism hub, creating a demand for high hotel service standards to meet customer expectations (Sjukriana & Falaq, 2023). However, Jakarta's hospitality industry faces several challenges, including fierce competition among hotels, fluctuating demand due to economic conditions, and the need to adapt to evolving customer preferences, especially in the post-pandemic era (Salsabila & Rulianto, 2023). Service quality is a key determinant of customer satisfaction and loyalty, which, in turn, influences hotel business performance. It is essential to understand how customers perceive the quality of service provided by hotels in Jakarta.

Previous studies have highlighted that service quality dimensions, such as empathy, responsiveness, and innovation, significantly affect customer satisfaction. For instance, Joviando and Kurniawati (2022) found that service quality influences customer value, trust, and satisfaction, which, in turn, impacts customer loyalty in four-star hotels in Jakarta. Similarly, Sannindra et al. (2022) conducted a study at the Ibis Senen Jakarta Hotel, demonstrating that both service quality and facilities play crucial roles in shaping customer satisfaction.

However, most of the existing studies have primarily used a quantitative approach, which may not fully capture the subjective nuances of customer experiences. Thus, a qualitative approach is necessary to gain a deeper understanding of customer perceptions and expectations regarding hotel service quality. For example, Hermawan et al. (2019) employed a descriptive method in their study at DoubleTree by Hilton Jakarta, shedding light on the importance of individualized attention in concierge service quality. Additionally, Ikhsan et al. (2025) highlighted the significant role of concierges in enhancing service quality within the front office department at the Manhattan Hotel Jakarta.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of service quality, the SERVQUAL model, developed by Parasuraman et al. (1988), is commonly applied. This model identifies five main dimensions of service

quality: tangibles, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and reliability. Utilizing this model within the context of Jakarta's hotels could help identify areas for improvement to better align with customer expectations. For example, Singgalen (2024) applied the SERVQUAL framework to analyze guest experiences at Nihi Resort, Sumba, adapting it for the context of luxury hospitality in remote locations.

This study aims to explore customer perceptions of hotel service quality in Jakarta through a qualitative approach. By deeply investigating customer experiences and expectations, it is anticipated that the findings will provide valuable insights for hotel management to enhance service quality and customer satisfaction.

## **2. Literature Review**

Research conducted by Nurcahyo et al. (2017) and Kevin & Herdinata (2024) emphasizes the critical synergy between physical facilities and service quality in influencing customer satisfaction and loyalty in the hospitality industry, particularly in Hotel. While the study provides valuable insights through a quantitative approach in examining causal relationships, it fails to address the underlying factors that might influence how service quality dimensions interact with facilities to create loyalty (Nathalia et al., 2024). The findings highlight that service quality plays a dominant role, with staff affection, service timeliness, and complaint handling being significant contributors to customer loyalty.

However, the study does not critically examine the limitations of its methodology, particularly the lack of a deeper qualitative approach that could offer more insight into the emotional and subjective aspects of service quality. The study could benefit from a more nuanced exploration of how different customer segments perceive these factors differently, as customer expectations may vary across demographics and service contexts. Moreover, this study reinforces the idea that customer loyalty is shaped not just by the final outcome (outcome service), but also by the service process itself (service process), a more holistic approach that adds depth to understanding customer experiences.

A study by Saputra & Djumarno (2020) further investigates the complex relationship between price, service quality, and customer loyalty in the context of the hotel business at Aston Pluit Hotel & Residence Jakarta. Their application of the SEM (Structural Equation Modeling) model provides strong empirical evidence, yet the study does not critically examine the interplay between emotional and psychological aspects of service quality, especially across different hotel categories or customer expectations. The study finds that service quality shapes perceived value, which in turn affects satisfaction and loyalty, emphasizing the importance of personalized and responsive service. This is an area that could be explored further by considering how service personalization at different price points impacts customer loyalty, particularly in mid-range versus luxury hotels. Additionally, the study does not sufficiently address the limitations of its model, particularly in its inability to capture the full range of customer emotions and expectations, which can be influenced by a hotel's digital presence and service innovation.

Rafiastuti's (2012) research at The Ritz-Carlton Jakarta applied the SERVQUAL framework to identify the service dimensions most influential in shaping customer expectations. While the study identifies empathy as the key service dimension, it does not discuss how empathy is perceived differently by customers with varying cultural backgrounds, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Her study reveals that the empathy dimension is prioritized by guests, with staff ability to understand individual customer needs playing a crucial role. However, Rafiastuti's study does not critique the limitations of using the SERVQUAL model in this context, particularly its potential oversimplification of service quality in diverse customer demographics and the growing significance of digital interfaces. Rafiastuti's findings on the importance of the physical evidence dimension, which came second in ranking, indicate that while service is intangible, physical aspects like cleanliness and interior design still significantly influence perceptions of quality. Yet, the study does not delve into the evolving role of digital interfaces and online reputation in shaping such perceptions, which could be a gap in the current research. Rafiastuti recommends that hotel management should not only focus on improving facilities but also invest in training staff to better understand and respond to customer emotional cues.

Recent studies have introduced digital and technological innovations as tools for assessing service quality, such as Saputra, Alamsyah, and Fatihan's (2021) application of machine learning and bold analytical reviews to evaluate service aspects rated negatively by customers. While the use of machine learning provides valuable insights into service quality, the study lacks an in-depth discussion of how integrating digital tools with traditional service quality assessments could offer a more holistic understanding of

customer experiences and address the limitations of relying solely on technology. This study highlights that responsiveness the hotel's ability to quickly address customer requests remains a major weakness. Similarly, Vargas-Calderón et al. (2021) developed a machine learning framework to analyze bold customer reviews in various languages, focusing on critical service dimensions such as staff privacy and information accuracy.

However, a limitation of their study is the lack of exploration of how cultural differences influence the interpretation of these service dimensions, particularly in a global hotel context. Ahmad, Ullah, and Aslam (2020) also demonstrated how customer reviews directly influenced hotel ratings, underscoring the importance of managing digital reputation and staff communication skills. However, their research could be enhanced by incorporating a comparative analysis of digital versus traditional service quality metrics, which would better reflect the evolving nature of customer service expectations in the digital era. In summary, while these studies contribute valuable insights into the understanding of service quality, there is a noticeable gap in how personalized and emotional service dimensions intersect with technological advancements, particularly in the context of customer loyalty across different hotel segments. This research aims to bridge this gap by exploring customer perceptions using a more integrated approach, combining traditional service quality dimensions with modern digital tools to provide a comprehensive view of the factors that shape hotel service quality and customer satisfaction.

### **3. Research Method**

This study uses a qualitative approach with the aim of deeply understanding customer perceptions, experiences, and interpretations of service quality in starred hotels in Jakarta. This approach was chosen because it enables the exploration of individual behaviors and experiences that cannot be captured through quantitative methods. Qualitative methods provide space for researchers to examine subjective service dimensions, such as staff attitudes, empathy, response speed, and comfort, which are directly experienced by customers. The focus of this study is not only on "what" customers feel, but also on "why" and "how" these experiences are shaped within the context of hotel services in the capital city.

Data collection techniques were conducted through in-depth interviews with hotel guests who had stayed at several three- to five-star hotels in Jakarta during the last six months. The informants were purposively selected based on specific criteria to ensure their relevant experience, including factors such as frequency of stay, hotel category, and customer profile (e.g., business travelers, local guests, and international tourists). This selection process was designed to capture a range of diverse perspectives on service quality and provide transparency regarding the choice of informants. Interviews were semi-structured, following a question guide based on the five dimensions of SERVQUAL (reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and physical evidence). In addition to interviews, secondary data were also collected from online customer reviews on platforms such as Google Reviews and TripAdvisor. These reviews, often referred to as user-generated reviews, were used to strengthen the findings and triangulate data, providing a broader view of customer experiences and perceptions.

### **4. Result and Discussion**

#### **Result**

This study successfully identified five main themes that reflect customers' perceptions and experiences of hotel service quality in Jakarta, based on thematic analysis of in-depth interview data with 12 informants and secondary data from online reviews. These themes include: service reliability, staff responsibility, assurance and sense of security, empathy and personal attention, and physical aspects and comfort of the hotel environment. Each theme demonstrates how customers form their perceptions based on direct interactions with hotel staff and the physical environment they experience during their stay.

First, service reliability emerged as a dominant theme. Customers valued timely check-in and check-out, as well as the consistency of services in accordance with the information promised in advance. Several informants mentioned that accuracy in room reservations, the conformity of room facilities to descriptions, and the smooth delivery of food to the room were key indicators of wellness. Informants from five-star hotels consistently gave higher ratings on this dimension compared to customers from three-star hotels, who often complained about service inconsistencies.

Second, staff responsibility is an important highlight. Most informants appreciate the responsiveness of the front office and housekeeping staff, especially when problems arise such as the air conditioning not being cold or requests for additional room equipment. However, there are still complaints from middle-class hotel

guests about delays in responding to room service calls. Online review data supports this finding, where positive reviews consistently mention the speed of response as the main reason for satisfaction, while negative reviews mention delays and unresponsiveness as factors that reduce the stay experience.

Third, the theme of assurance and security reveals that customers feel more comfortable staying at hotels with clear security systems, such as vehicle inspections, CCTV, and security staff on standby. Additionally, staff knowledge of hotel service products is also an indicator of a sense of security for customers. Fourth, empathy and personal attention are dimensions that create emotional value, where customers feel individually cared for. This is especially felt in boutique hotels and five-star hotels that have a personalized service culture.

Finally, the physical and comfort aspects of the hotel environment are complementary but still important themes. Room cleanliness, interior aesthetics, mattress and linen quality, and the ambiance of the lobby and public areas are key determinants in the overall assessment of service quality. Customers view these physical aspects as a “first impression” that influences their expectations of other service dimensions. This finding reinforces the argument that hotel service quality is a holistic experience, where human interaction and the physical environment complement each other in shaping customer satisfaction.

## Discussion

In the theme of service reliability, it was found that consistency in fulfilling service promises was highly valued by customers. This finding aligns with the SERVQUAL model, where reliability is considered a key driver of customer satisfaction and loyalty (Parasuraman et al., 1988). For example, one informant (IN-03) said: “I chose this hotel because of the promise of breakfast at 6, and it turned out to be always on time. This is important for me as I have to meet early in the morning.” This highlights the importance of service timeliness for business customers, supporting the notion that reliability significantly influences customer trust and loyalty (Zeithaml et al., 2006; *Simanjuntak et al., 2017*). However, customers of three-star hotels complained about discrepancies between what was promised through reservation applications and the reality on the ground. In online reviews, comments such as “my order was a double bed but I was given a twin” appeared repeatedly, reinforcing the finding that service consistency remains a challenge for some mid-scale hotels. This inconsistency may lead to dissatisfaction, which could affect customer loyalty (Homburg et al., 2006).

Regarding the theme of responsiveness, there were differences in expectations between leisure and business customers. Leisure customers tend to be more tolerant of waiting times but desire friendly and empathetic service, while business customers prioritize efficiency and speed. One informant (IN-07), an executive from a consulting company, stated: “I need a fast response, not a polite smile. When I ask for an iron, I hope it will arrive in five minutes.” This finding is consistent with previous research that suggests business customers place a higher value on speed and efficiency (Boulding et al., 1993; *Triono & Khalid, (2023)*). It also highlights the importance of customer segmentation in providing targeted service responses. This segmentation enables hotels to tailor their services more effectively, enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty (Bowen & Chen, 2001; *Sani et al., 2024*).

The theme of assurance and security becomes especially important in Jakarta, a dynamic and complex megacity. Most informants mentioned that the presence of alert security officers, the elevator card access policy, and lighting in the hotel hallways contribute to a sense of security. A female informant (IN-09) said: “I am a woman who often travels solo, and I feel safe when staying at this hotel because the security staff are on standby in the lobby and parking area.” This finding corroborates previous studies that emphasize the psychological aspect of security, noting that a sense of safety is crucial for customer satisfaction, particularly for solo travelers (Pizam & Mansfeld, 1999). Online reviews also reflect positive perceptions of this security aspect, particularly from foreign tourists. This confirms that security assurance is not only a physical element but also contributes to psychological comfort, which can improve overall customer satisfaction and loyalty.

In the empathy and personal attention dimension, it was found that customers highly value genuine interactions and small but meaningful gestures, such as calling guests by name or offering birthday greetings. This finding is consistent with research by Pine and Gilmore (1999), which suggests that personalized service fosters emotional connections between customers and service providers. In one of the five-star hotels, a guest (IN-05) said: “I was surprised because when I checked in, the staff called my full name and wished me a happy birthday. Even though I didn’t tell them.” This finding highlights the importance of customer intelligence and personalization as essential factors in building emotional bonds between hotels



and customers. Emotional engagement has become a key strategy for improving customer satisfaction and loyalty, particularly in competitive markets (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Lemy et al., 2019).

The final theme, physical aspects and comfort of the hotel environment, emerged as a crucial initial indicator that shapes customer expectations. Several informants noted that room interior design, lighting, room fragrance, and background music in the lobby created a lasting impression of the hotel's image. One informant remarked: "A clean, fragrant room, dim but warm lights make me feel at home." This finding supports previous literature that emphasizes the role of physical environment in shaping first impressions and influencing customer satisfaction (Bitner, 1992; Candra, 2023). While most four- and five-star hotels meet these expectations, several mid-to-lower hotels still receive negative reviews regarding bathroom cleanliness and facility completeness. This suggests that while human interaction remains the focus of this study, the physical environment cannot be overlooked. In fact, the physical environment plays a significant role in shaping customer perceptions and can directly influence satisfaction and loyalty (Cohen et al., 2006).

In summary, the findings from the analysis of service quality dimensions in this study emphasize the critical role of reliability, responsiveness, security, empathy, and the physical environment in shaping customer satisfaction and loyalty in Jakarta's hotel industry. These findings are consistent with existing literature on service quality and provide valuable insights for hotel management. The use of tables or graphs summarizing these key findings would make the results easier to digest and help visualize the relationships between service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction. For example, a table illustrating the relative importance of each service quality dimension across different customer segments could enhance the clarity of the findings and their practical implications for hotel management.

Table 1. Findings on Hotel Service Quality in Indonesia

Service Quality Dimension	Key Finding	Impact on Satisfaction	Impact on Loyalty
Reliability	Consistency in fulfilling service promises is highly valued by customers. For example, the punctuality of promised breakfast.	High	High
Responsiveness	Business customers prioritize efficiency and speed, while leisure customers value friendliness and empathy.	Moderate	Moderate
Assurance	Security measures, such as the presence of security officers, elevator card access policy, and hallway lighting, contribute to a sense of safety.	High	High
Empathy	Personalized service, such as calling guests by name or offering birthday greetings, fosters emotional bonds.	Moderate	Moderate
Physical Aspects	The physical environment of the hotel, including cleanliness, lighting, room fragrance, and background music, creates a lasting impression.	High	Moderate

Source: Author's (2025)

## 5. Other recommendations

This study concludes that hotel service quality in Jakarta is strongly influenced by five key dimensions: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles, as reflected in the SERVQUAL model. Through a qualitative approach, which included in-depth interviews and data triangulation with online reviews, it was found that customers highly value timely service, responsive and professional staff, a sense of security, genuine personal attention, and the physical comfort of the hotel environment. Differences in expectations between leisure and business customer segments also shape the dynamics of service perceptions. In general, high service quality is not only limited to functional processes but is also significantly influenced by emotional elements and subjective experiences of customers during their stay.

The theoretical contribution of this study is significant, as it enriches the SERVQUAL model by highlighting the interaction between the five dimensions of service quality and customer expectations in both business and leisure contexts in Jakarta's hotel industry. The findings offer a deeper understanding of how emotional and psychological elements, such as empathy and a sense of security, can complement traditional

service quality dimensions, enhancing the theoretical framework for service quality research. This study also contributes to theory by emphasizing the importance of personalized service and customer segmentation in the context of diverse customer needs, thus expanding the theoretical boundaries of service quality models beyond traditional service delivery processes.

Practically, this research offers actionable recommendations for hotel management in Jakarta, including the need to invest in staff training focused on empathy and responsiveness, as well as adopting a real-time customer complaint monitoring system using digital technology. Hotels should also implement a more adaptive service segmentation strategy to cater to the distinct needs of business and leisure customers, incorporating personalized service based on customer data. Furthermore, prioritizing improvements in physical aspects such as cleanliness, lighting, and interior ambiance is essential to creating a positive first impression and enhancing customer satisfaction.

For future research, it is suggested to conduct quantitative studies with a larger population to validate the findings of this study and to explore the relationship between service quality dimensions and customer loyalty more comprehensively. Additionally, comparative studies between hotels in different cities could provide further insight into whether the findings from Jakarta are consistent across diverse cultural and market settings. Moreover, further research could explore the role of hotel internal work culture and managerial leadership in fostering a culture of sustainable service excellence.

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