



## Room Attendant Performance in Hotel Service Quality: A Qualitative Exploration

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines how room attendant performance impacts service quality and customer satisfaction through a qualitative case study at F&B Inn Sam Poo Kong Semarang. Through interviews with department heads and housekeeping staff, observation, and document analysis conducted December 2024-February 2025, the research identifies five performance dimensions (technical proficiency, consistency maintenance, attentiveness to detail, adaptive responsiveness, and guest interaction capability) that influence service quality and create three satisfaction patterns, including "satisfaction cascade effects" where housekeeping quality affects perceptions of all hotel services. Four organizational factors (performance management, training, interdepartmental communication, and leadership) significantly influence these relationships. The study contributes by revealing specific mechanisms linking housekeeping to guest experience while providing practical management guidance. Its originality lies in repositioning housekeeping from a support function to a strategic driver of competitive advantage

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The hospitality industry represents one of the most dynamic and competitive sectors in the global economy, with hotels constantly striving to differentiate themselves in an increasingly saturated market. Within this context, the housekeeping department plays a pivotal yet often underappreciated role in shaping guest experiences and determining overall satisfaction (González et al., 2024). Room attendants, as the primary workforce within housekeeping operations, bear the critical responsibility of maintaining cleanliness standards, ensuring room readiness, and indirectly representing the hotel's commitment to quality service (Tavitiyaman et al., 2022). Despite technological advancements and the digitalization of many hospitality functions, the human element embodied by room attendants remains irreplaceable in delivering the tangible aspects of service quality that guests directly experience during their stay. This fundamental connection between room attendant performance and guest satisfaction warrants in-depth investigation, particularly through qualitative methodologies that can capture the nuanced dimensions of this relationship.

Research has consistently demonstrated that cleanliness ranks among the top factors influencing hotel selection and guest satisfaction, with studies indicating that perceived cleanliness can account for up to 75% of a guest's overall impression of hotel quality (Park et al., 2019). However, the translation of room attendant performance into measurable service quality outcomes and subsequent customer satisfaction presents a complex phenomenon that extends beyond simple cleanliness metrics. Room attendants operate at a critical intersection of operational efficiency, quality standards, and guest interaction, navigating both visible and invisible aspects of service delivery. Their performance encompasses not only technical skills in cleaning and room preparation but also attitudinal dimensions, adaptive capabilities, attention to detail, and occasional direct guest interactions (Suriyani et al., 2023). These multifaceted performance elements collectively contribute to service quality perceptions and ultimately influence guest satisfaction in ways that have not been fully explored through existing predominantly quantitative research approaches.

The contemporary hospitality landscape presents additional challenges that further complicate the relationship between room attendant performance, service quality, and guest satisfaction. Post-pandemic changes in guest expectations regarding cleanliness and hygiene, increasingly personalized service demands, staffing shortages, high turnover rates, and intensified competition have created unprecedented pressure on housekeeping departments. Room attendants now face heightened scrutiny, expanded responsibilities, and accelerated work rhythms while simultaneously being expected to maintain impeccable standards and contribute positively to guest experience (Baek et al., 2020). These evolving conditions have created a gap between theoretical understandings of housekeeping performance and the lived reality of room attendants, suggesting that traditional performance metrics and management approaches may inadequately capture the full spectrum of factors influencing service quality outcomes and customer satisfaction in this domain.

Despite the evident importance of room attendant contributions to hotel success, there exists a notable research gap regarding the qualitative dimensions of their performance and its relationship to service quality and guest satisfaction. Previous studies have predominantly approached housekeeping performance through efficiency metrics, standard compliance measurements, and quantitative guest surveys, which fail to capture the subjective experiences, contextual factors, and underlying mechanisms that shape the relationship between room attendant work and guest satisfaction outcomes. Quantitative approaches, while valuable for certain comparative and generalizable insights, cannot adequately address questions of "how" and "why" that are essential to understanding the complex interplay between human performance, service delivery, and customer experience in the housekeeping context. A qualitative investigation provides the opportunity to examine these relationships through the lived experiences of multiple stakeholders—room attendants, supervisors, management, and guests—offering a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of this critical but understudied aspect of hospitality operations.

The present study addresses this knowledge gap by proposing a qualitative exploration of the impact of room attendant performance on service quality and customer satisfaction within hotel housekeeping departments. By employing in-depth interviews, observational techniques, and thematic analysis, this research seeks to uncover the multidimensional nature of room attendant performance and its direct and indirect influences on guest experience. The study aims to answer several critical questions: What factors most significantly influence room attendant performance in contemporary hotel settings? How do various dimensions of room attendant performance translate into perceived service quality from the guest perspective? What mechanisms connect room attendant work practices to ultimate customer satisfaction? How do organizational, environmental, and personal factors mediate these relationships? By examining these questions through a qualitative lens, this research will contribute valuable insights for both academic understanding and practical management approaches in hospitality, potentially informing more effective training, performance management, and service quality improvement initiatives in hotel housekeeping operations.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Room Attendant Performance**

The performance of room attendants has been extensively studied within the broader context of housekeeping management and hotel operations. Room attendant performance encompasses multiple dimensions including technical cleaning skills, time management, attention to detail, adherence to standard operating procedures, and interpersonal abilities (Kensbock et al., 2019). Previous studies further categorize room attendant performance elements into task performance (the core cleaning and room preparation duties) and contextual performance (discretionary behaviors that support the organizational environment) (Sari et al., 2023). These distinctions highlight the multidimensional nature of performance in housekeeping roles that extend

beyond simple task completion. Previous Research identified key performance indicators for room attendants, including rooms cleaned per shift, inspection scores, guest complaint rates, and cleaning supply utilization (Shih, 2019). However, previous studies argue that these quantitative metrics fail to capture critical qualitative aspects of room attendant performance that significantly impact guest experience, such as consistency, thoroughness, and anticipation of guest needs. Housekeeping staff's attention to personal touches and subtle details substantially influenced guest perceptions of hotel quality, suggesting that performance measurement requires both quantitative and qualitative approaches (Wijoyo et al., 2024). Previous research document how room attendant performance expectations have expanded to include enhanced sanitization protocols, more rigorous attention to high-touch surfaces, and adaptation to new cleaning technologies and products (Tavitiyaman et al., 2022). The increased psychological pressure on room attendants to perform perfectly under heightened guest scrutiny regarding cleanliness and hygiene, potentially affecting both performance capabilities and job satisfaction (Wijoyo et al., 2021). These studies collectively indicate that room attendant performance should be conceptualized as dynamic and contextually dependent rather than static or universal.

### **Service Quality in Housekeeping**

Service quality within housekeeping operations has traditionally been examined through the lens of the SERVQUAL model and its adaptations to hospitality contexts. Previous research developed the Lodging Quality Index (LQI), which identifies cleanliness as the most critical dimension of hotel service quality (Acar et al., 2019). Their research demonstrates that room cleanliness serves as a "qualifier" attribute—a baseline expectation that, when not met, cannot be compensated for by excellence in other service areas. Housekeeping-related factors accounted for approximately 75% of negative online hotel reviews, emphasizing the critical role of housekeeping service quality in overall guest evaluations (Alcalde-González, 2021). The tangible and intangible elements of housekeeping service quality have been distinguished in several studies. While tangible aspects like spotless bathrooms and properly made beds constitute the foundation of quality assessment, intangible elements such as room freshness, sensory impressions, and perceived thoroughness significantly influence overall quality perceptions (Aldabbagh et al., 2022). Expanding on this duality, previous research introduced the concept of "atmospherics" in hotel environments, where housekeeping service quality contributes substantially to creating ambient conditions that trigger positive emotional responses from guests (Bhatnagar, 2019). Recent research introduces the concept of "housekeeping transparency"—the extent to which housekeeping practices are visible and understandable to guests—as an emerging dimension of service quality. Their findings suggest that hotels implementing visible cleanliness cues and communication about housekeeping processes achieve higher perceived service quality ratings. Guests increasingly value both objective cleanliness (actual sanitization) and subjective cleanliness (perceived hygiene and orderliness) in their evaluation of

housekeeping service quality, with room attendants playing the central role in delivering both dimensions (Aswan et al., 2023).

### **Customer Satisfaction in Relation to Housekeeping**

The relationship between housekeeping operations and customer satisfaction has been extensively documented in hospitality literature. According to a comprehensive study which analyzing over 13,000 online hotel reviews across 80 cities, cleanliness emerged as the strongest predictor of overall satisfaction and likelihood to recommend, surpassing factors such as location, value, and staff service. This finding is consistent with research by (Bhatnagar & Nim, 2019), who determined that housekeeping-related satisfaction explained approximately 38% of variance in overall hotel satisfaction ratings, highlighting the disproportionate influence of room condition on guest experience. The psychological mechanisms connecting housekeeping quality to customer satisfaction have been explored in several studies (Chaudhari, 2021). Previous research identified that guest perceptions of cleanliness operate through both conscious assessment and unconscious processing, creating emotional responses that significantly impact overall satisfaction. Building on this understanding, previous studies proposed that housekeeping quality creates a "hygiene threshold" that, when met, allows guests to notice and appreciate other elements of hotel service, but when unmet, dominates the entire service experience with negative emotion (Adiningtyas, 2024). This perspective supports Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory in the hospitality context, positioning room attendant performance as a critical hygiene factor in guest satisfaction. Research examining the temporal dimensions of satisfaction suggests that the impact of housekeeping quality extends beyond the immediate stay (Ahmad, 2019). According to longitudinal studies, positive experiences with room cleanliness and condition contribute significantly to memory formation about hotel experiences, influencing both return intentions and word-of-mouth behavior. Housekeeping excellence creates "satisfaction resilience" – the ability of positive housekeeping impressions to mitigate the negative impact of service failures in other departments (Anabila, 2022). These studies collectively highlight the profound and lasting impact of room attendant performance on customer satisfaction within the broader service ecosystem of hotels.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This research employs a qualitative case study approach to explore the intricate relationship between room attendant performance, service quality, and customer satisfaction at F&B Inn Sam Poo Kong Semarang. The qualitative methodology was deliberately selected for its capacity to uncover rich, contextual understandings of human experiences and organizational processes that quantitative methods often fail to capture. Case study design provides an ideal framework for examining this complex phenomenon within its natural setting, allowing for holistic investigation of the multifaceted dimensions of housekeeping operations and their impact on guest experience. This methodological choice aligns with the study's interpretive paradigm, which recognizes that service quality and satisfaction are socially constructed concepts

best understood through the lived experiences and perspectives of various stakeholders rather than through predetermined metrics alone. The research was conducted over a three-month period from December 2024 to February 2025, strategically encompassing both peak holiday season and regular business operations to observe performance patterns under varying conditions of occupancy and guest expectations.

Data collection involved multiple complementary methods to ensure comprehensive capture of the phenomenon under study. In-depth interviews served as the primary data source, conducted with a purposively selected sample of participants representing key stakeholder perspectives: the Executive Housekeeper providing strategic oversight of housekeeping operations; Assistant Housekeepers offering tactical supervisory insights; Room Attendants of varying experience levels sharing frontline service perspectives; Department Heads including Front Office, Food & Beverage, Human Resources, and General Management contributing cross-departmental viewpoints; and a diverse selection of hotel guests representing different stay purposes, durations, and frequency. These interviews, each lasting 60-90 minutes, were supplemented by 40 hours of structured observation of housekeeping operations across different shifts and occupancy conditions, providing direct insight into the enactment of service processes and standards. Additional data sources included organizational documents such as standard operating procedures, performance evaluation frameworks, and training materials, as well as guest feedback data from satisfaction surveys, online reviews, and formal complaint records. This methodological triangulation strengthened the validity of findings by allowing for comparison across multiple data points and perspectives.

The analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2016) systematic approach to thematic analysis, utilizing NVivo 14 software to facilitate the organization and interpretation of substantial qualitative data. Through iterative processes of coding, theme development, and conceptual refinement, the analysis moved progressively from descriptive categorization to interpretive synthesis, uncovering patterns and relationships that illuminate how room attendant performance manifests in service delivery and ultimately influences guest satisfaction. The analysis paid particular attention to the contextual factors unique to F&B Inn Sam Poo Kong Semarang, including its physical environment, organizational culture, leadership practices, and guest profile, recognizing that these elements significantly shape the performance-quality-satisfaction relationship. Several strategies were employed to enhance methodological rigor, including prolonged engagement in the field, triangulation of data sources and methods, member checking of preliminary findings with key participants, maintenance of a comprehensive audit trail, and reflexive acknowledgment of researcher positionality. Ethical considerations were addressed through formal organizational approval, informed consent processes, confidentiality protections, and commitments to share research benefits with participating stakeholders, ensuring that the study maintained both scientific integrity and respect for all participants..

## **RESULTS**

### **Room Attendant Performance Dimensions**

This study identified five distinct dimensions of room attendant performance at F&B Inn Sam Poo Kong Semarang:

1. Technical proficiency: Cleaning skills, proper chemical usage, room preparation standards, and work sequencing.
2. Consistency maintenance: Reliable reproduction of quality standards across different rooms, shifts, and occupancy conditions.
3. Attentiveness to detail: Focus on subtle elements beyond basic cleanliness, including alignment of amenities, aesthetic presentation, odor elimination, and attention to often-overlooked areas.
4. Adaptive responsiveness: Capacity to modify procedures for unique guest preferences, special requests, and unexpected situations.
5. Guest interaction capability: Skill in direct guest interactions and anticipation of unexpressed needs through environmental cues.

Room attendants received minimal training in guest interaction skills compared to technical procedures, creating a notable gap in performance development.

### **Service Quality Perceptions**

Three primary mechanisms translated room attendant performance into perceived service quality:

1. Direct sensory evidence: Immediate tangible cues including visual cleanliness, fresh scents, functioning equipment, and aesthetic presentation.
2. Symbolic quality signaling: Specific elements of room condition interpreted as indicators of broader service standards and organizational values.
3. Expectation confirmation/disconfirmation: Continuous evaluative process comparing prior expectations with actual room conditions.

Housekeeping-related issues accounted for 43% of all service complaints and 76% of cases where guests explicitly stated they would not return.

### **Customer Satisfaction Patterns**

The relationship between housekeeping service quality and customer satisfaction displayed three distinct patterns:

1. Threshold satisfaction: Base level of cleanliness and functionality served as necessary but insufficient condition for satisfaction.
2. Enthusiasm factors: Performance exceeding expectations in meaningful ways created positive emotional responses that significantly elevated overall satisfaction.
3. Satisfaction cascade effects: Housekeeping quality triggered evaluative spillover to other service departments, positively or negatively.

Technical proficiency primarily addressed threshold satisfaction, while attention to detail and adaptive responsiveness were strongly associated with enthusiasm factors. Guest interaction capability demonstrated the strongest association with exceptional satisfaction outcomes.

### **Organizational Factors**

Four organizational factors significantly influenced the performance-quality-satisfaction relationship:

1. Performance management systems: Quantitative metrics dominated evaluation while qualitative aspects received limited formal recognition.
2. Training approaches: 87% of training hours focused on cleaning procedures, while only 9% addressed guest interaction skills or service personalization.
3. Interdepartmental communication: Information gaps between departments created service inconsistencies affecting personalization capabilities.

Leadership behaviors: Supervisors providing specific positive feedback and focusing on guest impact fostered higher performance across all dimensions.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Room Attendant Performance Dimensions**

The identification of five distinct performance dimensions (technical proficiency, consistency maintenance, attentiveness to detail, adaptive responsiveness, and guest interaction capability) extends previous conceptualizations of housekeeping performance that have predominantly focused on technical aspects and efficiency metrics. This research reveals a more complex and multifaceted performance landscape that encompasses both technical and interpersonal elements. Particularly significant is the emergence of adaptive responsiveness as a critical performance dimension, suggesting that room attendant work requires far greater cognitive flexibility and situational awareness than traditionally acknowledged in housekeeping literature. Performance measurement in housekeeping must extend beyond standard metrics to capture qualitative aspects of service delivery (Jubaedah et al., 2019). The notable gap in guest interaction training despite its strong association with guest satisfaction highlights a significant misalignment between performance development approaches and actual value creation mechanisms in housekeeping operations. This suggests that contemporary housekeeping training may be overly focused on standardization and technical consistency at the expense of developing the adaptive and interpersonal competencies that most powerfully influence guest experience. The findings also challenge the traditional positioning of room attendants as primarily task-focused operators, revealing instead their role as active service co-creators whose performance involves complex decision-making and guest-oriented adaptations. This reconceptualization has significant implications for how housekeeping talent is selected, developed, and managed, suggesting the need for hiring profiles that emphasize interpersonal aptitude and adaptive capabilities alongside technical skills, and training approaches that develop the full spectrum of performance dimensions rather than focusing narrowly on cleaning procedures and standards.

### **Service Quality Perception Mechanisms**

The identification of three transmission mechanisms (direct sensory evidence, symbolic quality signaling, and expectation confirmation/disconfirmation) through which room attendant performance translates into perceived service quality provides important insights into how guests evaluate housekeeping services. These mechanisms align with (Han, 2017) servicescape framework by specifically articulating how physical environment cues shape service evaluations in the housekeeping context. The finding that

direct sensory evidence forms the foundation of service quality judgments supports Barber and Scarcelli's (2010) positioning of cleanliness as a qualifier attribute, while the symbolic quality signaling mechanism reveals how specific elements of room condition serve as heuristic indicators of broader service standards. This supports the concept of "atmospherics" introduced, demonstrating how subtle environmental cues trigger holistic quality judgments. The disproportionate impact of housekeeping issues on return intentions (accounting for 76% of cases where guests stated they would not return) aligns with previous findings by regarding the critical importance of cleanliness in overall satisfaction determination (Alzoubi, 2021). However, this study extends previous research by revealing the specific mechanisms through which these evaluations occur, providing a more nuanced understanding of the psychological processes underlying service quality judgments. The cultural context of F&B Inn Sam Poo Kong Semarang created unique guest expectations regarding cultural elements in room presentation, highlighting the importance of considering cultural and contextual factors in service quality management. This resonates with emerging research on cultural authentication in hospitality settings and suggests that service quality perceptions are not universal but culturally embedded. The findings also reveal important variations in how these mechanisms operate across different guest segments, with business and leisure travelers applying different perceptual frameworks to service quality evaluation. This suggests the need for segmented approaches to housekeeping service design and delivery rather than standardized one-size-fits-all approaches.

#### **Customer Satisfaction Patterns**

The identification of three distinct satisfaction patterns (threshold satisfaction, enthusiasm factors, and satisfaction cascade effects) provides important insights into how housekeeping quality influences overall guest satisfaction. The threshold pattern confirms Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory in the housekeeping context, positioning basic cleanliness as a hygiene factor that prevents dissatisfaction but doesn't create positive satisfaction. This threshold has been elevated following the COVID-19 pandemic, aligning with findings by regarding heightened cleanliness expectations in the post-pandemic hospitality environment (Barthélemy, 2021). The enthusiasm factors, particularly personalization and anticipatory service, demonstrate the potential for housekeeping to transcend its traditional positioning as a background support service and become a strategic driver of exceptional satisfaction. This finding challenges conventional departmental hierarchies that often place housekeeping below guest-facing departments in terms of satisfaction impact. The satisfaction cascade effects – where housekeeping quality influences perceptions of unrelated services – represents a particularly significant finding with substantial managerial implications. This phenomenon, while noted anecdotally in previous literature, has received limited empirical attention and reveals housekeeping's role as a perceptual anchor that colors the entire service experience. This aligns with the concept of evaluative consistency in consumer psychology and suggests that housekeeping quality creates a perceptual frame that guests use to interpret subsequent service encounters. The finding that different performance

dimensions affect satisfaction in distinct ways—with technical proficiency addressing threshold satisfaction while attentiveness to detail and adaptive responsiveness drive enthusiasm factors—provides important guidance for strategically allocating resources and training emphases. Similarly, the observation that effective service recovery following housekeeping issues can transform dissatisfaction into enhanced loyalty challenges the traditional emphasis on error-free service and highlights the opportunity value of service failures when handled effectively (Bidner & Behmke, 2022).

### **Discussion of Organizational Factors**

The identification of four organizational factors (performance management systems, training approaches, interdepartmental communication, and leadership behaviors) that influence the performance-quality-satisfaction relationship highlights the systemic nature of service excellence in housekeeping operations. The disconnect between performance metrics (focused predominantly on efficiency and basic standards) and actual satisfaction drivers (often related to personalization and adaptive service) represents a significant finding with implications for housekeeping management (Yasa, 2019). This gap between measurement and value creation supports that housekeeping performance evaluation often fails to capture the elements that most significantly influence guest experience. The imbalance in training approaches—with 87% of hours devoted to technical skills while only 9% address guest interaction or personalization—reflects a traditional production-oriented mindset in housekeeping management that fails to acknowledge the department's critical role in value creation and satisfaction formation. This finding aligns with previous research argument that housekeeping requires reconceptualization within a service-dominant rather than goods-dominant logic framework. The importance of interdepartmental communication, particularly between front office and housekeeping, highlights the interconnected nature of the hotel service system and the critical role of information flows in enabling personalized service delivery. This finding extends previous research on departmental coordination by specifically identifying communication gaps that undermine service quality and guest satisfaction in the housekeeping context (Ann, 2023). The powerful influence of leadership behaviors, particularly supervisors' feedback approaches and recognition practices, on room attendant performance quality demonstrates that excellence in housekeeping emerges not merely from individual capabilities but from supportive management systems. This aligns with the service-profit chain model by highlighting how internal service quality influences external service value, and suggests that developing effective housekeeping supervisors may yield greater satisfaction improvements than focusing exclusively on room attendant training..

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This qualitative study examining the impact of room attendant performance on service quality and customer satisfaction at F&B Inn Sam Poo Kong Semarang reveals that housekeeping excellence significantly influences the overall guest experience through five distinct performance dimensions: technical proficiency, consistency maintenance, attentiveness to detail, adaptive

responsiveness, and guest interaction capability. The research demonstrates that room attendant performance translates into perceived service quality through direct sensory evidence, symbolic quality signaling, and expectation confirmation/disconfirmation, creating three satisfaction patterns (threshold satisfaction, enthusiasm factors, and satisfaction cascade effects) that position housekeeping not merely as a support function but as a strategic driver of overall guest experience. Organizational factors—including performance management systems, training approaches, interdepartmental communication, and leadership behaviors—significantly influence this relationship, suggesting that excellence requires systemic alignment rather than isolated initiatives. These findings contribute to hospitality theory while offering practical guidance: rebalance training to develop all performance dimensions, redesign evaluation metrics to capture qualitative excellence, enhance cross-departmental information flow, develop coaching-oriented supervision, and strategically prioritize housekeeping resources recognizing their hotel-wide impact. While limited by its single-site design, this research highlights how room attendant performance creates competitive advantage through its profound influence on guest satisfaction.

#### **FURTHER STUDY**

Future research should expand upon this study's findings through several avenues of investigation. Conducting similar qualitative explorations across multiple hotel categories (luxury, mid-scale, budget) and geographic locations would test the transferability of the five performance dimensions and satisfaction patterns identified at F&B Inn Sam Poo Kong Semarang. Longitudinal studies tracking the evolution of room attendant performance and its impact on guest satisfaction during different seasons, market conditions, and organizational changes would provide valuable insights into the dynamic nature of these relationships. Quantitative research measuring the economic impact of housekeeping excellence through satisfaction cascade effects could strengthen the business case for strategic investment in this department. Studies specifically examining the effectiveness of different training approaches in developing the full spectrum of performance dimensions, particularly guest interaction capability and adaptive responsiveness, would provide practical guidance for housekeeping managers. Additionally, research exploring cultural variations in guest expectations and perceptions of housekeeping quality would be valuable in the increasingly globalized hospitality industry. Investigating the intersection of technology adoption (such as robotics and IoT) with human performance in housekeeping could illuminate how traditional performance dimensions might evolve in increasingly digitalized hotel environments, while studies examining the impact of different leadership approaches on room attendant motivation and performance quality would contribute to more effective supervision practices.

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