



Cooperative Education Report

Customer Relations and Service in Hospitality Industry

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Title - Customer Relations and Service in Hospitality Industry

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We have approved this cooperative report as a partial fulfillment of the cooperative education program semester 2/2018

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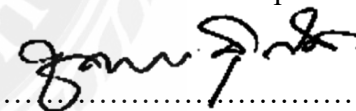
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Project Title: Customer Relations and Service in Hospitality Industry

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Abstract

This cooperative report entitled Customer Relations and Service in Hospitality Industry has the goals to investigate how important giving proper customer service and maintaining strong customer relationship is in the hospitality industry.

The objectives of this study includes the impact of customized service, product quality and value which the customer demands and how we are able to satisfy them.

At Novotel I was assigned to work as a guest service agent in the Front Office Department. My main responsibilities were to provide detailed information to our guests, promote our hotel services to them, help them upon check-in and check-out and make sure that their stay with us is pleasant and wonderful.

Upon the completion of my internship I found that while working in a hotel, we may have to tackle various issues and problems like the service standards, needs and wants of customers and customer behavior and attitude. With changing time and technology customers now expect more quality service and value for their money so we should be able to adapt efficiently to the circumstances and try to follow up to every little problem or issue that customers have and try our best to resolve them. At a professional level it is important to remain calm in such situations and offer quick and effective decision making which I learned through my training at Novotel and I also consider this invaluable for my professional development and career.

Keywords: Customer Service, Hospitality, Value

Acknowledgement

The internship opportunity I had with Novotel Bangkok on Siam Square was a great prospect for my learning and professional development. I consider myself as a lucky individual as I was provided with an opportunity to be a part of the company. I am also grateful for getting the chance to meet with so many wonderful people and professionals who led me through this internship period.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude and special thanks to my job supervisor Khun Phattrat Choovichian, Front Office Manager, who was always there to guide me along my internship journey and help me become a better professional individual.

Also, I express my deepest thanks to my academic supervisor Dr. Chanatip Suksai for helping me with decision making and giving necessary advices and guidance and arranged all facilities to make this report writing easier. I choose this moment to acknowledge his contribution gratefully.

This opportunity to work in Thailand for such a reputed organization is a big milestone in my career development. I will strive to use the skills and knowledge I gained in the best possible way, and I will continue to work on improving in order to accomplish my desired career goals. I hope to continue this wonderful cooperation with all of you in the coming future as well.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Company Profile

Novotel Bangkok on Siam Square is a 4-star hotel in Bangkok. It is a part of the Accor Hotels group company. The hotel is located in Bangkok's shopping, business and entertainment hub and is the perfect base to explore the city. The hotel has 425 comfortable rooms and suites. All rooms feature modern facilities such as large bathrooms, working desks, designer sofa, free Wi-Fi, connectivity hub, mini-bar and 24-hour room service.

Whether visiting for business or pleasure, all guests can appreciate the swimming pool, spa and gym. It is also the perfect venue for meetings and banquets. It has facilities perfect for families, couples and business travelers. Novotel seeks to keep customers at their heart and aims to deliver them an unforgettable experience.

Located in the midst of the city, visitors can experience typical Thai fashion and cuisine without venturing too far. Art institutions, stadiums, shopping malls, restaurants and other monuments are only minutes away via the Sky train located nearby as well.

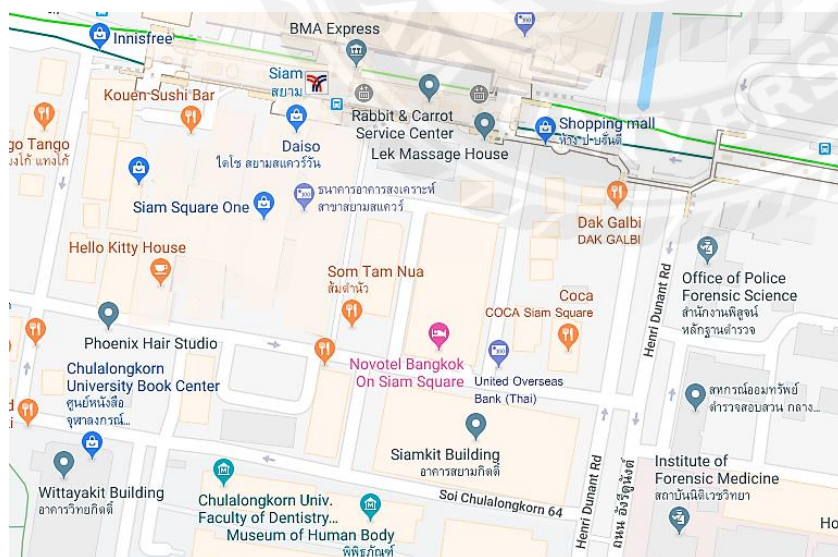


Figure 1.1 – Map of the hotel



Figure 1.2 – Novotel Bangkok on Siam Square

1.2 Organizational Structure

The key purpose of an organizational structure is to give clear and precise roles and responsibilities for all employees as per their department and hierarchy in the structure. This helps to maintain order and a system for carrying out performance. At Novotel I was part of the Front Office Department and the organizational structure comprised of the following:

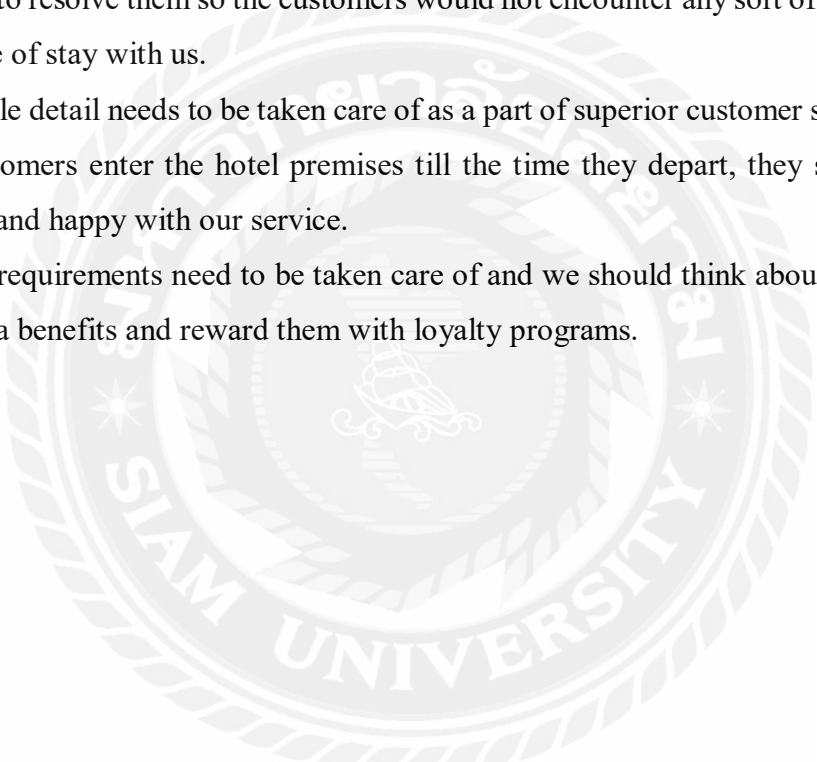


1.3 Statement of the report

This was my first experience working in a hotel. As a marketing student, the hospitality industry seems to be very appealing and full of new opportunities. Likewise there was a huge prospect for me to learn about how a hotel functions. I had the great opportunity to work as an intern in one of the most reputed hotel chains of Accor Hotel Company and this was a huge boost for my professional portfolio.

Novotel welcomed me with great love and support and made me feel like a part of its family. My supervisor and all the other staff were very friendly and were eager to help me continuously and gave me feedbacks all the time on how to become better. Although this was challenging for me as it was also a new working environment but I adapted to it slowly and now I enjoy my work quite well. I work with full vigor and passion and try to provide my help for the company as much as possible. If I need any sort of help there are supervisors and my work colleagues who guide me and help me understand. I had to learn about the culture and the social values of Thailand as it helped me with a new perception regarding how to carry forward with my work. I also tried to learn some important Thai phrases which would help me to deal with our esteemed guests. I learned my roles and responsibilities given to me by my supervisor pretty well and now I am not hesitant to do all types of work. This internship has made me more confident, motivated and diligent. I am thankful for this 4 month period upon which I discovered many new things about professional as well as my personal life.

1.4 Objectives of the study

1. The main objective of my study was to use the theoretical knowledge I have gained through my university and implement it practically at my work.
 2. At Novotel customer satisfaction is our main focus. So my objective was to provide great customer service and maintain good relations with our customers.
 3. I had to continually look for areas of problems which could lead to dissatisfaction and look for ways to resolve them so the customers would not encounter any sort of problems during their time of stay with us.
 4. Every little detail needs to be taken care of as a part of superior customer service. From the time customers enter the hotel premises till the time they depart, they should feel fully satisfied and happy with our service.
 5. All their requirements need to be taken care of and we should think about providing them with extra benefits and reward them with loyalty programs.
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- A large, faint, circular watermark seal of Siam University is centered in the background of the page. The seal features a central emblem with a crown and a shield, surrounded by the text 'SIAM UNIVERSITY' and a decorative border.

1.5 Roles and responsibility of the student

- Provide information regarding the hotel to the guests
- Give them information about our services and benefits
- Help with room assignment for expected arrival guests
- Prepare the guest's registration card and correspondence
- Assist with guest check-in and check-out
- Show the various types of rooms that we have to offer them
- Money Exchange Service
- Helping them with information about the city, tourist attractions, food and events
- Helping with keeping records of guest profile
- Providing guests with the key cards
- Help with the setting up of rooms
- Credit Card Cancellations
- Photocopy and Fax
- Marketing about our in-house activities like Tammachart Spa, Zero Latency Virtual Gaming, In Balance Fitness, Baggage & Luggage etc.

Chapter Two: Internship Activities

2.1 Assignments and responsibilities of the student

At Novotel I started my job on the 15th of January 2019 as a part of a 4 month internship program. I was assigned to the front office department looking at my personality, knowledge, communication skills and my extrovert nature. My main role was that of a customer service agent and customer relations management. Throughout my 4 years at my university I had learned about the importance of service in any type of business. Better service is what gives a company a competitive edge over another company.

Likewise in the hospitality industry, there are plenty of hotels which promise to provide good service but what makes the Accor Hotels above others is that we place customers above all and try to make them feel like home. We need to pay attention to every little aspect as per the requirements of customer satisfaction. So, using my knowledge and my skills that I had attained in my university regarding customer service I tried to implement and reflect it in my work.

I worked 5 days a week and had to work 10 hours per day. I started my shift 8 AM in the morning till 6 PM in the evening. Some of the assignments and responsibilities I was given by my supervisors are listed below:

- I had to provide guests with each and every detail and information regarding the hotel.
- I had to highlight the different categories of room types that the hotel had to offer like the Superior Room, Deluxe Room, Executive Premier Room, Junior Suite Room etc.
- I had to inform them about the services and values that we provide them with.
- I had to help with the check-in and check-out process for the guests.
- I had to listen to their complaints and feedbacks and work on finding solutions.
- I helped with the setup of rooms.
- I had to photocopy passports and other documents of the guests.
- I helped with writing the registration cards for the guests and maintaining their personal profiles and records of their stay with us.
- I issued the key cards for the guest's room.

- I helped with the cancellation of guests deposit payment through credit cards by faxing the card details to bank depending on whether they are master card, visa card or American Express card.
- I promoted the hotel activities and promotions on social media.
- I helped to enroll the guests into the Accor Loyalty program.

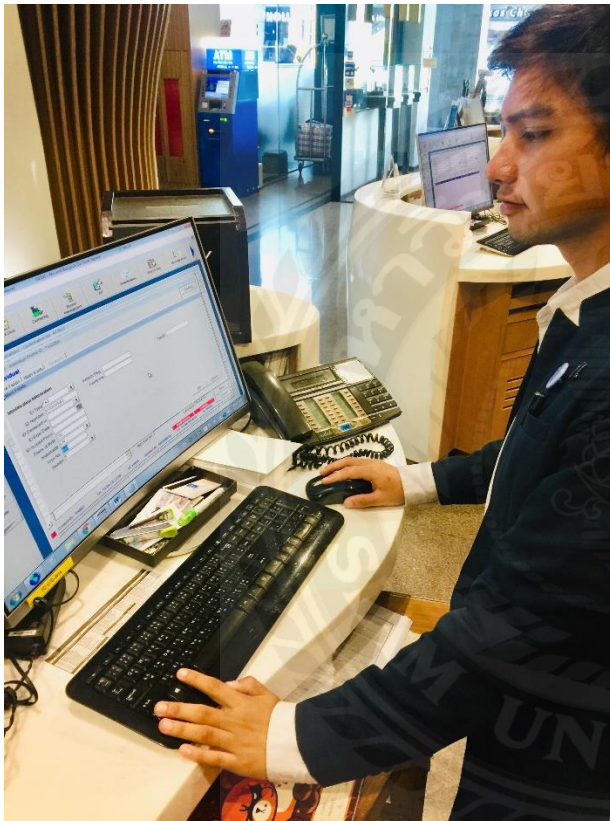


Figure 2.1 – Updating guests profile into the system

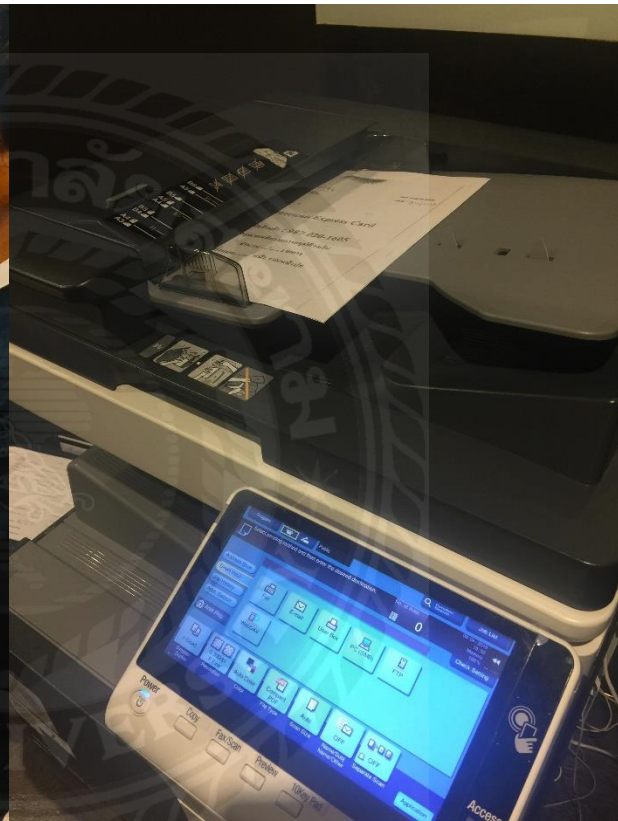


Figure 2.2 – Sending fax to the bank for credit card cancellation

Chapter Three: Identification of Problems Encountered during the Internship

During my time at my internship I was lucky to have experienced some real business ethics and morals. Business is not only about selling product or service in return of money. There is much more involved in the overall success of a business. At Novotel I had to assist with marketing of the business and encouraging more customers to make bookings at our hotel. For this we had to offer our potential customers with the value proposition better than our competitors and worth for their money. But running a successful business is not always an easy task as I learned during the time of my internship. There were many problems that I had to encounter during the period of my work:

- (i) Customer behavior and expectations – In Novotel everyday around 100 guests would check-in and check-out and our team job was to handle all of their queries, demands and expectations. Nowadays the customers want more value for their money and want a higher level of personalization and convenience everywhere they go. So we have to keep in mind on how to satisfy to their needs and provide value for them.
- (ii) Keeping Up With The Latest Technology - Increasingly, hotel guests are becoming tech-savvy and demand and expect conveniences like Wi-Fi, USB ports, more electric outlets, flat-screen TVs, and so on. So, our job was to understand the preferences of the customers and keep record of their data in our hotel's software which we call "OPERA". So, if the guest returns to our hotel next time, we can easily identify what he wants and assign him with the room and the accessories as preferred by him.
- (iii) Maintenance and renovations – Some problems regarding ongoing construction, sanitation, maintenance work and renovations were often criticized by the guests. From the time they enter the hotel premises we should keep in mind that the lobby, rooms and all the amenities are up to the standards of the guests. During my time at Novotel some regular problems encountered by the guests were regarding cleanliness of the rooms and hallways. There were also some problems regarding water leaking from ceilings and damaged air conditioners. But we looked at the problems immediately and shifted the customers to a better upgraded room.

- (iv) Customer complaints and feedbacks - The customer is the King in the hotel industry. The whole purpose of the hotel industry is to keep the customers happy. So at my work also it was a very challenging task to keep the customers happy as with changing times the demands and expectations of the customers are also changing drastically. I had to take care of every little customer complaint and feedback to ensure their happiness and loyalty with us. As if we do not take care of their feedbacks and complaints next time they might choose to stay at another hotel, so making the customers loyal was our main priority.

These are some of the basic problems encountered at our hotel, and whenever there were any problems like this I made sure to make a note of it and report to the specific department and made sure the problem had been resolved in due time. Different departments work continuously 24 hours at the hotel to make sure the hotel functions smoothly and the customers don't encounter many problems. So we tried our best to make sure of the customer satisfaction.

Mostly customers provided feedback online through our hotel's website and we had to review them carefully and keep their records in our software. Many customers gave feedback regarding how they were treated by the staff and what kind of service they had received during their stay at the hotel. Also some common complaints were about renovation of rooms, bad smell inside of rooms, noise from outside, no hot water in the shower etc. We should honor the guests with respect for their remarks and reviews whether they are positive or negative and try to make them feel welcome like at home, so for that every little aspects of concern for their satisfaction should be treated well.

Chapter Four: Contribution and Learning Process

As a student of marketing I actually learned a lot by working in the hospitality industry. I had learned a lot of theoretical knowledge at my university but after working in the practical world as a professional I learned more concepts, skills and decision making ability. After working at Novotel I learned that customer service and problem solving go hand in hand. The great thing about being part of Novotel was that I learned through on the job training from experienced supervisors and professionals. I now understand that providing excellent customer service can result in a great amount of difference for any company. Being faced with new, individual challenges every day constantly helped me learn key decision making skills which help better customer experience and improves work efficiency for the entire hotel team.

During my internship working in the front desk department I learned a huge amount about organization. Organizing is a skill that you learn extremely quickly and it helps to get the best out of your job and the entire team. One time I was involved in organizing and managing an event for Cornell Hotel Society as a part of a 3 day event where I was assigned with several different tasks. After helping with the organization of this event I believe I was equipped with better organizational skills and expertise as I was able to prioritize, manage and complete important tasks in limited time period and also make sure that the event runs smoothly. The event was about the annual meeting of the Cornell Hotel Society members where there were many activities like dancing, singing, award distribution, auctions and a general gathering along with food and beverages provided. My seniors guided me throughout and helped me make my work easier. I was complimented by my supervisors' quite well upon completion of this event and was very happy to be a part of it.

I believe my work with Novotel for these 4 months were quite special as I learned some life lessons which I would never have learned otherwise. I learned about empathy, humility, prioritizing, multitasking, problem solving and how to be patient. I became more familiar on dealing with people from different background, ethnicities and culture. Every customer came up with his/her own persona and I had to be able to understand their perception to attend to their needs. I learned a good amount of knowledge about different psychological processes of different human beings. The first and the last impression that we make on the customer is what decides on the eventual customer relations management. I believe my contributions were well noticed by my manager as

she seemed quite happy with my work. I tried my best as I could to communicate the message of our hotel to our guests and make them aware about our superior service and hotel facilities. Even during stressful situations I remained calm and co-operated with the guests to provide help for them. So, all in all I believe I gained lots of knowledge through my internship and now I am confident that I am able to transition into any other professional field in my life.



Figure 4.1 – Novotel Lobby

Chapter Five: Conclusion

5.1 Self-assessment as a professional

My journey as an intern for Novotel has brought out a huge change in my life. I consider this period of my life as an opportunity to self-reflect and understand my strengths and weaknesses. Not only as a professional but I think this has been important for my growth as a person. I have gained insight on how I can keep on improving in my life. In this period of 4 months I believe I have accomplished many milestones as a professional. Every task and responsibility given to me by my supervisor was well attended efficiently and effectively in the specified time frame. I was honest, critical and punctual about my work. At times when I felt some work were beyond my reach, I took advice from my seniors and worked hard upon improving upon my weaknesses. A valuable lesson that I've learned is when you work there is always an area for improvement. Recognizing my flaws was important as it helped me to learn and grow.

I was always keen to learn and adapt to new systems and I set goals for myself so I would keep on pushing myself to my maximum limit. I learned to become more dedicated towards my role and responsibilities, creative in helping out with solutions and overall a better communicator who cooperates well with the entire team.

As an employee I learned that rather than focusing on only my duties, I should be willing to help for the overall success of the company. I respect and value the opinions of my seniors and supervisors and took it as a positive motivation for my self-assessment. After the completion of my internship I would like to continue on developing myself as a professional and keep on progressing on my life skills. I would love to work with Novotel in the future as I have really enjoyed working closely with my colleagues and supervisors and I am really going to miss my work and everyone who was in this journey along with me.

Annex



Figure 6.1 - Special amenities including a fruit basket and chocolates for the welcome of the guests



Figure 6.2 – Busy day at Novotel as guests queue up to wait for their turn for check-in



Figure 6.3 – Hand designed towels in the shape of elephants for the delight of our guests



Figure 6.4 – Special set up inside the room dedicated for the blissful occasion of guest's anniversary



Figure 6.5 – Souvenirs for guests during Songkran festival



Figure 6.6 – Special complimentary cupcakes prepared and set up in the room of our valued guests upon their arrival



Figure 6.7 – Our Front Office Department team during the Songkran Festival in traditional Thai costumes

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