



Management Response to Online Complaints

An Analysis

Bachelor Thesis for Obtaining the Degree

Bachelor of Business Administration

Tourism and Hospitality Management

Submitted to PD Dr. Astrid Dickinger

Natascha Sorensen

1011563

Vienna

November 2012

Abstract

Customer-centered philosophies are a prioritization in many contemporary business practices and strategies. Managers have realized its importance to achieve customer satisfaction and higher perceived service quality. The concept of understanding the customer through complaints, essentially a feedback management tool, has to be taken seriously. Thus, the aim of this bachelor thesis is to understand what makes customers write a complaint in online forums such as TripAdvisor, and how managers respond to this accordingly. To commence the theoretical part, the background of the problem is stated and defined, followed by the research aims and objectives. Thereafter the theoretical background is described in detail covering the topics: customer satisfaction, quality standards, emotions, service failure and recovery, complaint handling, and an introduction to TripAdvisor. The main source being TripAdvisor, this thesis takes a qualitative approach to the research question, applying content analysis to the negative hotel reviews, along with a manager's response retrieved from TripAdvisor.com. This chapter is followed by the hypotheses development, methodology, results, and finally, the conclusion, in which limitations and future recommendations to the thesis and research question are stated. The outcome of this research shows that tangible factors are the element which customers complain about the most, accounting for 68%. The second element most frequently complained about is empathy of staff, totaling 60% of the complaints analyzed in this thesis. Regarding the managerial responses, they all include terms as "I", "we", "us" to make the response personal. Secondly, apologizing to the guest and thanking for the review is used in 68% of the responses. Justification is the most popular approach overall, applied by 52% of the managers. The outcome provides a guidance tool to management, as to what service element to improve and how to respond to a customer complaint sufficiently.

Keywords: Customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction, service failure, complaint handling, service recovery

Declaration of Authorship

I hereby affirm that this Bachelor's Thesis represents my own written work and that I have used no sources and aids other than those indicated. All passages quoted from publications or paraphrased from these sources are properly cited and attributed.

The thesis was not submitted in the same or in a substantially similar version, not even partially, to another examination board and was not published elsewhere.

Date

Signature

Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	4
List of Tables	6
List of Figures.....	6
List of Abbreviations	7
1. Introduction.....	8
2. Problem Definitions	9
2.1 Background and Statement of the Problem	9
2.2 Research Aims and Objectives	9
2.3 Research Question	10
3. Literature Review	11
3.1 Defining Tourism Products and Services	11
3.2 Customer Satisfaction	12
3.2.1 Zone of Tolerance.....	14
3.2.2 Kano's Model of Satisfaction	16
3.3 Quality Standards.....	18
3.4 Model of Service Quality Gaps	24
3.5 Perceived Justice; Psychological Approach of Service Failure.....	26
3.6 Emotions	28
3.7 Service Failure and Service Recovery	30
3.8 Complaint Handling.....	34
3.8.1 How to Proceed With a Service Complaint	36
3.8.2 The Fairness Theory	38
3.8.3 Complaint Handling Procedure in Ritz-Carlton	40
3.9 TripAdvisor.....	43

3.10 Hypotheses Development	43
4. Methodology.....	46
4.1 Qualitative Approach.....	46
4.2 Content Analysis.....	47
4.3 Netnography.....	47
4.4 Data Collection	48
5. Results.....	49
5.1 Sample Description.....	49
5.2 Content Analysis of Hotel Reviews and Managerial Responses	49
5.2.1 Hotel Rathaus Wine and Design.....	49
5.2.2 Hotel Altstadt Vienna	55
5.2.3 Das Tyrol Small Luxury Hotel	61
5.2.4 Hollmann Beletage	65
5.2.5 Hotel Imperial Vienna	69
5.3 Discussion of Results.....	73
6. Conclusion	84
6.1 Limitations	85
6.2 Suggestion for Future Research.....	86
7. Bibliography	87
8. Appendix.....	104
Table 8.1 Total % of Complaint Type	104
Table 8.2 Total % of Response Usage.....	105
8.3 Hotel Reviews and Managerial Responses Retrieved from TripAdvisor..	106
8.3.1 Hotel Rathaus Wein and Design.....	106
8.3.2 Hotel Altstadt Vienna	113
8.3.3 Das Tyrol Small Luxury Hotel	121

8.3.4 Hollmann Beletage	127
8.3.5 Hotel Imperial Vienna	136

List of Tables

Table 1: Total % of Type of Complaint.....	73
Table 2: Total % of Response Usage.....	78

List of Figures

Figure 1: Zone of Tolerance	14
Figure 2: Zone of Tolerance “Adequate Service to Desired Service”	15
Figure 3: Kano’s Model of Customer Satisfaction	17
Figure 4: The Two Service Quality Dimensions	20
Figure 5: Total Perceived Quality	21
Figure 6: The Five Dimensions of Service Quality	22
Figure 7: The Service Quality Gap Model.....	24
Figure 8: Hierachy of Consumer Emotions	29
Figure 9: The APqI model - Towards a More Inclusive Model for Understanding Service Failure and Service Recovery	34
Figure 10: The Effects of Explanations: The Three Counterfactuals in Fairness Theory.....	39
Figure 11: Hotel Rathaus Wein and Design – TripAdvisor Feedback	50
Figure 12: Hotel Altstadt – TripAdvisor Feedback	56
Figure 13: Das Tyrol Small Luxury Hotel – TripAdvisor Feedback.....	61
Figure 14: Hollman Beletage– TripAdvisor Feedback.....	66
Figure 15: Hotel Imperial – TripAdvisor Feedback	70

List of Abbreviations

SERVQUAL.....	Service Quality
DMO.....	Destination Management Organization
CRM.....	Customer Relationship Management
T&T.....	Tourism and Travel

1. Introduction

In 2011, T&T became “one of the world’s largest industries” (WTTC 2011 cited Chen, Jang, and Peng 2011 p.603). Thus, contributing to 9% of the global GDP, equaling more than six trillion dollars and 255 million jobs worldwide (WTTC, ‘Foreword’ 2012). “The industry is expected to grow by an average of 4% annually over the next ten years”, hence by 2022, “1 in every 10 jobs” will be in the T&T sector worldwide (WTTC, ‘Foreword’, 2012). Therefore, the quality of the experiences made in this industry are essential for future growth. However, due to the tourism product being perishable, inseparable, heterogenic (Chang and Hsiao, 2008), intangible, and man-made (Vanhove, 2005), it is only to be expected that not all customers will be satisfied with the provided service (Schoefer and Ennew, 2004). This inevitably leads customers to complain (Dickinger and Bauernfeind, 2009).

The Web 2.0 has a big impact on consumers buying behavior. TripAdvisor is one of the websites that has taken advantage of this trend, particularly pertaining to the T&T industry. Users of TripAdvisor read and write reviews of places they want to go to, sleep in and dine at (TripAdvisor, 2012). This makes the industry highly competitive and provides a constant pressure to perform flawlessly at every customer encounter.

This thesis will investigate what aspects of service are typically complained about when expectations are not met by the service provider. Moreover, it will examine how to prevent complaints from happening, and when they do happen, how to effectively deal with them. This will be done through the use of netnography, a form of ethnography and content analysis. Specifically, it will be an analysis of reviews by consumers and managerial responses on TripAdvisor. This way both the review and the answer can be analyzed in detail. This leads to the main research question of this thesis, which is as follows:

“Which element of a service leads to dissatisfaction and how does the ideal managerial response look?”

2. Problem Definitions

2.1 Background and Statement of the Problem

The tourism industry is unique in the sense that consumption is inseparable from the product, and it cannot be tested prior to its purchase (Zekan, 2010). Consequently consumers increasingly read online reviews of a service prior to the purchase thereof. Consumers increasingly weight what has been said online by previous customers to gain a better understanding of what to expect from the service (WTO, 2008). Tourism is an experience industry run by people, and therefore the outcome will always vary, regardless of the extent to which the service has been standardized. Some experiences will not live up to the customers' expectations, which will lead to dissatisfaction (Verma, 2008). This said, it is crucial for managers to know what part of the service is of highest importance to the customer, allowing for improvement of this aspect of the service, thereby avoiding dissatisfied customers and negative word-of-mouth in the future. This is critical because studies found that "it is 6-7 times more expensive to acquire a new customer", compared to keeping an old one (Helpscout.net, 2012). Moreover, "loyal customers are worth up to 10 times more after their first purchase" (Helpscout.net, 2012). Being pro-active is a key aspect, for dissatisfaction is inevitable, and therefore it is vital to have a service recovery system in place, as well as knowledge of how to handle complaints when they arise.

2.2 Research Aims and Objectives

The aim of this thesis is to investigate what part of the service has the greatest influence on dissatisfaction and, when dissatisfaction occurs, how to handle it from a managerial perspective. To accomplish this, negative reviews of hotels will be compared and analyzed to find out if there is a pattern related to why people write negative reviews, and secondly, if and how a manager responds to the complaints. This thesis will provide an evaluation of what emotions and aspects of the service trigger customer complaints. Furthermore, this thesis will probe how to approach dissatisfied customers in a professional and comprehensive way.

2.3 Research Question

Online review sites have proven to be a great tool for both consumers and managers. From customer complaints to positive feedback, managers can gain an enhanced understanding of what part of the service matters most to the customer. Ruby Newell-Legnet (2012 cited HelpScout.net, 2012) states that, on average, a “business hears from 4% of its dissatisfied customers”. However, Web 2.0 has facilitated the customer’s ability to complain, as well as the company’s ability to get in touch with unhappy customers. This platform even gives the manager the opportunity to get in direct contact with the dissatisfied customer, and to try and improve the bad impression the customer initially retained. This thesis will give a main idea of what leads to dissatisfied customers, and how to handle such a situation from a managerial perspective.

Therefore the main research question is as follows: **“Which element of a service leads to dissatisfaction and how does the ideal managerial response look?”**

3. Literature Review

3.1 Defining Tourism Products and Services

Aparna (2004) defined the tourism product as the physical and psychological satisfaction provided to a tourist during their travels or stay at a destination. The tourism industry is made up of services and products aiming to meet the needs of the individual tourist (Aparna, 2004). The tourism product itself is a composite of various things, including tourist attractions, transport, accommodation and entertainment, ultimately leading to customer satisfaction (Aparna, 2004). Various, individual providers are responsible for delivering the individual components of the tourist product. This entails hotels, travel agencies, airlines and other big international companies (Aparna, 2004). Furthermore, in order to assess the quality of the tourism product a measurement in means of attraction, accessibility and accommodation has to be carried out (Aparna, 2004).

Lovelock and Wirtz (2007) defined service in more detail, stating that a service is an experience in exchange for money, offered by one party to another. These are most commonly known as “time-based performances”: the “exchange of money, time, and effort, service customers expect to obtain value from access to goods, labor, professional skills, facilities, networks, and systems” (cited Maglio, Kieliszewski and Spohrer 2010, p.699). However, it is important to keep in mind that the customer does not take ownership of the physical elements involved in the service process (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2007).

The last sentence of Lovelock and Wirtz’s (2007) definition touches upon an important matter of services. The tourism product is unique in terms of inseparability, intangibility, perishability and variability (Rust, Zahorik & Kliningham 1996). Furthermore, there is a significant difference between goods and services as distinguished by Lovelock (1991, p.7);

- “Nature of the product”
- “Greater involvement of customers in the production process”
- “People as part of the product”

- “Greater difficulties in maintaining quality control standards”
- “Absence of inventories”
- “Relative importance of the time factor”
- “Structure of distribution channels”

This makes it difficult to standardize services, and make service offerings 100% satisfactory at all times. The next chapter will touch upon what elements influence customer satisfaction.

3.2 Customer Satisfaction

Satisfaction and quality are highly dependent on one another when it comes to satisfaction (Swarbrooke *et al.* 1999). Thus, this often causes challenges for the service provider since the factors that influence satisfaction are uncontrollable (Swarbrooke *et al.* 1999). Oliver (2010, p.6) stated that “the term *satisfaction* implies filling or fulfillment”. Furthermore, Oliver (1997) explained that customer satisfaction is the level of the customer’s fulfillment response when consuming a service experience. Throughout the consumption of the service, the consumer undergoes a judgment process. Naturally, the higher the fulfillment response is, the higher the level of customer satisfaction (Oliver, 1997). Buttle (2004) said that satisfaction is a pleasurable fulfillment response, and dissatisfaction is an unpleasurable reaction. Furthermore, Buttle (2004) explained that satisfaction and dissatisfaction are each other opposites and can be applied to a scale as such. The outcome shows a comparison between the customer’s expectation and the actual outcome of the service experience. Oliver (1997) stated that satisfaction is a post-usage phenomenon, purely experiential, resulting from comparative processes.

Moreover, Swarbrooke *et al.* (2007, p.219) stated “satisfaction is connected to the concept of arousal; too little arousal can cause boredom and dissatisfaction”. Similarly Rust *et al.* (1994) divided the levels of arousal into sub-categories; *Satisfaction-as-contentment* means low arousal. This entails that the product or service is perceived to be acceptable (satisfactory) in a continuous and phlegmatic sense. *Satisfaction-as-surprise* stems from high arousal satisfaction. This can be either negative or positive. *Satisfaction-as-pleasure* occurs when the

product/service adds value or pleasure to an inactive state of consumption (Rust *et al.* 1994). Satisfaction is a subjective and individual matter, hence the importance to emphasize on all the factors leading to satisfaction.

Customer satisfaction is the ultimate goal for any company (satisfaction = higher profits). How to reach customer satisfaction is explained by Lockyer (2007) and Buttle (2004) in a fairly simple manner: when the service and product meets the expectations and standards of the customer, it will lead to satisfaction. Here it is important to mention the *disconfirmation paradigm*, as described by Oliver (1997). The *disconfirmation paradigm* occurs when a customer compares their original expectation to what they actually received (Oliver, 1997). The first component of disconfirmation, *expectation*, is a subjective prediction of the service product performance. Product performance is the perceived outcome the customer receives. The performance is reported on an objective scale, the opposite poles being the positive and negative levels of the service outcome (e.g., polite/impolite service). If the expectations are higher than the actual experience, the service quality is perceived unsatisfactorily, resulting in a disappointed customer (Berry *et al.* 1985).

In most cases satisfaction leads to repeat clients and brand loyalty. Concerning long-term profits, previously established satisfied customers are advantageous compared to requiring new ones (Harrison-Walker 2001, Hart, Heskett and Sasser, 1990, Shea, Enghagen and Khullar 2004). The obvious gains of having satisfied customers are business expansion, increased market share and the acquisition of repeat customers, which will lower costs and lead to higher profitability (Barsky, 1992).

Ultimately, it is the level of understanding and knowledge a company has, of how specific service offerings are being valued by the individual customer (Noe, 1999). The service providers have to understand their customers and provide a service according to their expectations. In Buttle's (2004, p. 41) opinion, satisfaction is to understand "customer requirements, meet customer expectations, and deliver customer value".

3.2.1 Zone of Tolerance

Another important theory to discuss when talking about expectations and satisfaction is the zone of tolerance. There is a vast amount of thought on this topic, none of which has reached consensus. Zone of tolerance simply put, is the range (hence, *zone*) of service performance which the customer believes to be satisfactory (Berry and Parasuraman, 1991). As explained by Puga-Leal and Pereira (2007 p.6) “usually it is assumed that levels of service performance within the zone of tolerance are not perceived as different by customers”. Opinions gathered from Miller (1977), Kennedy and Thirkell (1988), Swan (1988), Oliver (1980), Woodruff *et al.* (1985), Berry and Parasuraman (1991), Zeithaml *et al.* (1993) cited Johnston (1995, p.48-49), there are three main zones, namely an “outcome range”, a “pre-performance expectation range”, and an “in-process service performance range”. Within each range there is an outcome state. The three outcomes are *dissatisfaction* (negative disconfirmation), which is a result from poor perceived quality, *delight* (positive disconfirmation), a result from high quality and lastly, *satisfaction* (confirmation), the result from sufficient quality (Johnston, 1995). The *satisfaction* state is within the zone of tolerance, whereas *dissatisfaction* and *delight* is at the outer poles of the range (Kennedy and Thirkell 1988).

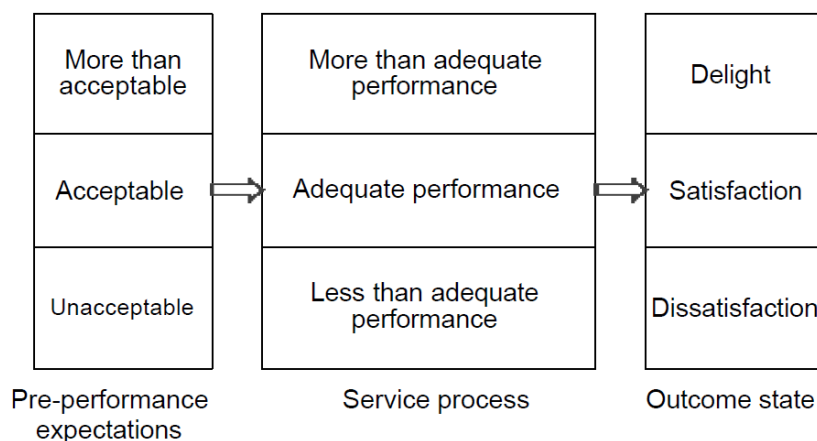


Figure 1: Zone of Tolerance

Source: Johnston (1995), p. 49

The zone of tolerance is also used to determine *pre-performance expectations* (Johnston, 1995). Here the ranges are “minimum tolerable”, “ideal”, “deserved”, “desirable” and “adequate” (Miller 1977, LaTour and Peat 1979, Woodruff *et al.* 1985, Parasuraman 1991, Miller 1977, Mattsson 1992, Olshavsky and Spreng 1989, Spreng and Olshavsky 1992 and Zeithaml *et al.* 1993 cited Johnston 1995, p. 48). Poiesz and Bloemer (1991) found it more appropriate to have expectations set as zones, whereas Berry *et al.* (1991) suggested that it is more a matter of the customers’ desired level of service versus a satisfactory level of service.

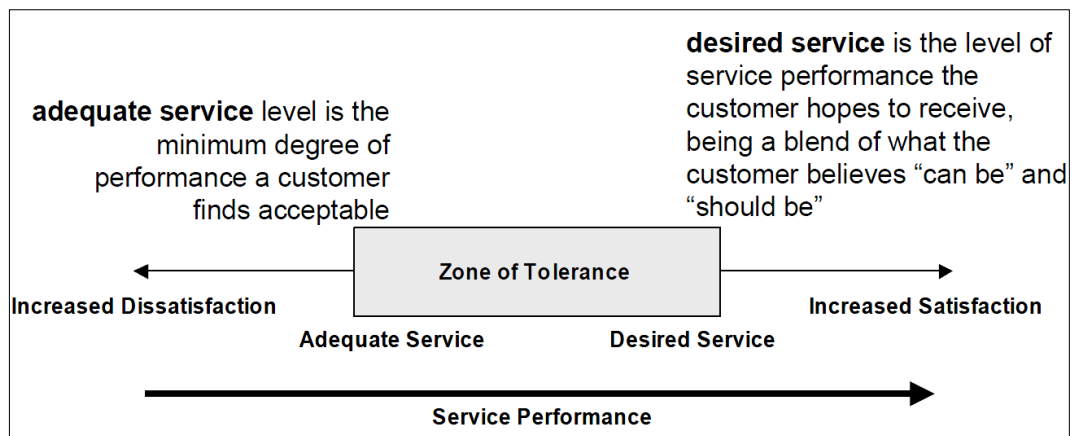


Figure 2: Zone of Tolerance “Adequate Service to Desired Service”

Source: Puga-Leal and Pereria (2007), p. 6

Berry *et al.* (1991) also touched upon the subject of customer loyalty and zone of tolerance and stated that customers will evaluate the service performance as it occurs. There are two main outcomes of this evaluation, namely *low customer loyalty* if the service performance is below the zone of tolerance and an *increase in loyalty* if the service performance is above the tolerance zone (Berry *et al.* 1991). Strandvik (1994) said that a variation of performance within the zone of tolerance is acceptable and any increase in the service performance, will only have a small effect on satisfaction. The effect only plays a role on perceived service quality when a performance is outside of the zone of tolerance (Johnston, 1995).

Throughout the service process, the pre-performance expectations are modified as a result of dis/satisfaction of the service experience. Every service encounter is evaluated and judged, consciously or sub-consciously by the customer. The service encounter can be evaluated as adequate/acceptable (satisfactory) or inadequate (dissatisfactory). Only when the service encounter is perceived to be satisfactory, is it within the zone of tolerance (Johnston, 1995). The evaluation of the service performance will lead to a qualitative, satisfied perception of the complete service encounter. The final evaluation ranges from being *satisfactory*, *dissatisfactory* or *delighting* to the customer (Johnston, 1995). The final evaluation of the service will decide the customer's attitude, perception, and level of future loyalty (Bitner and Hubbert, 1994). Johnston (1995) argued that whilst the marketer plays a key part in influencing the pre-expectations of the service offerings, managers play a vital role in managing the customer's perception throughout the service process. Managers have the opportunity to influence and adjust the overall satisfaction of their customers, thereby altering the zone of tolerance for the future service process (Johnston, 1995).

3.2.2 Kano's Model of Satisfaction

Another approach that also tries to define the key to customer satisfaction is the satisfaction model made by Kano, Seraku, Takahasi and Tsuji (1984). It clarifies that service attributes stem from three different dimensions, which influence the level of customer satisfaction. The dimensions are *basic factors*, *performance* and *excitement* factors. The model is shown on the following page.

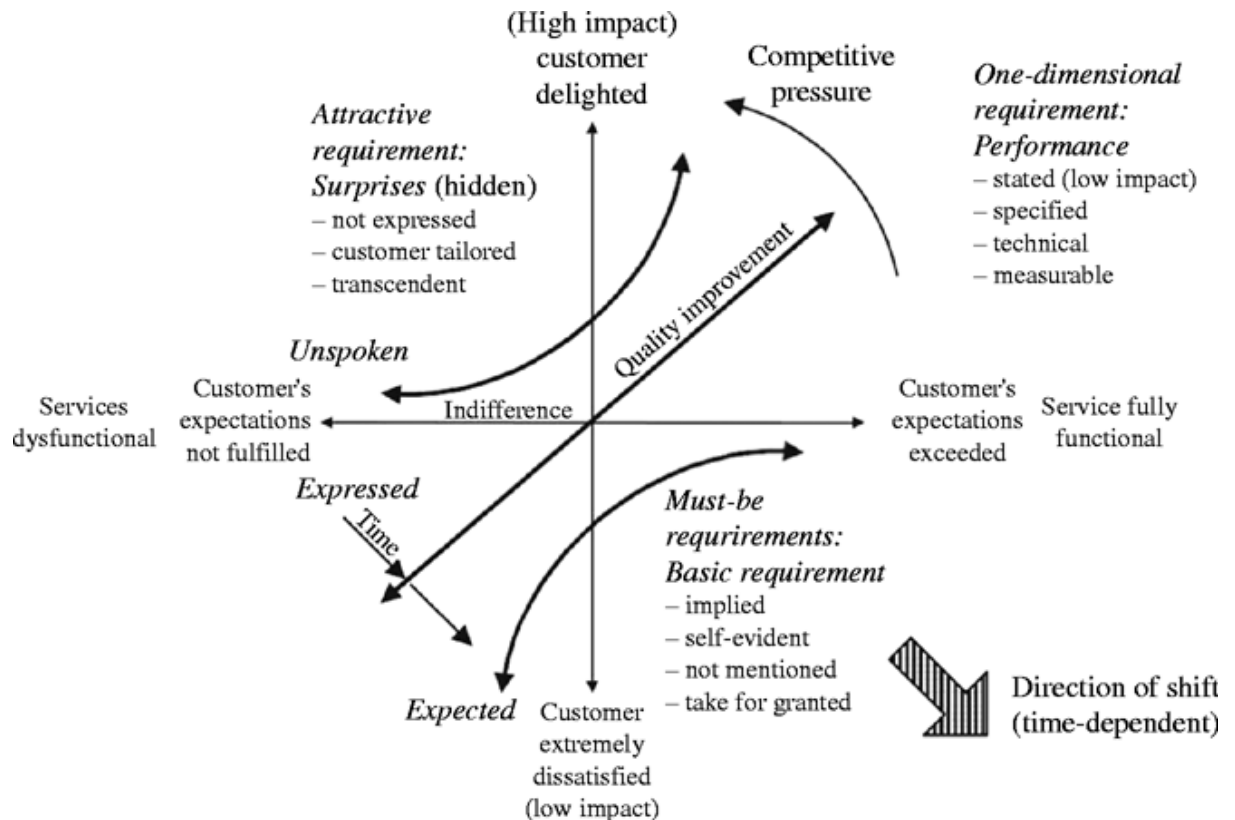


Figure 3: Kano's Model of Customer Satisfaction

Source: Shahin and Nekuie (2011), p. 180

The following paragraphs are the interpretation of the Kano model by Sauerwein, Bailom, Matzler and Hinterhuber (1996):

Must-be-requirements: Must-be requirements are the basic/core attributes and criteria a product must entail. If the requirements are not met, the customer will be dissatisfied. Furthermore, these requirements are expected, so when fulfilled, they will not increase the satisfaction level of the customer. However, these requirements are extremely important, because if not met by the provider, the customer will not purchase the product or service and go to another provider.

One-dimensional requirements: The level of satisfaction will increase with the level of fulfillment of this particular requirement and vice versa. Often the one-dimensional requirements are demanded and expressed by the customer.

Attractive requirements: This requirement is often unexpected and not expressed by the customer. So when it is met, it leads to high levels of customer satisfaction. Hence, absence of this requirement does not lead to dissatisfaction.

Other researchers touch upon simpler tools such a ‘customer service’. As mentioned earlier by Barsky (1992), Zeithaml and Bitner (2000), Szymanski and Henard (2001) also emphasizes upon the point that customer service is linked to customer satisfaction, which will bring customer loyalty and long-term profitability. This is a two way street, because if a company chooses to apply customer services, they learn more about their customers and how to satisfy them (Bruening, 2001).

3.3 Quality Standards

Quality is a very subjective concept making it ambiguous and hard to control, thus it is whatever the customer perceives it to be (Garvin, 1984). Consequently, interactions between the customer and service provider have a high impact on the perceived experience and service. Nowadays quality management has become an invaluable strategy for businesses aiming to main competitiveness and growth (Zehrer *et al.* 2006).

One approach to quality management is the Nordic Model, defined by Grönroos (1984). This model explains the gap between customers’ expectations and actual experiences at the service encounter, also called “disconfirmation of expectations approach”. If the expectations equal the service outcome confirmation occurs. If they are exceeded, and there is an over-performance, positive disconfirmation occurs. If there is an underperformance, negative disconfirmation occurs. Grönroos (1984) stated that the quality of service from a customer’s perspective has two dimensions: a *Technical or Outcome Dimension* and a *Functional or Process-related Dimension*. The two questions: “What” and “How” attempt to answer what dimension the event belongs to.

The *Technical Quality of the Outcome* from the service production process is *what* the customer receives from the service. However, the *Technical Quality* will not make up the total quality, because there are other factors that come into play, such

as moments of truth. Moments of truth are the first interaction between the service supplier and the customer (Grönroos, 1984). The customer will also be influenced by how the service is received, including the hotel website, appearance of the staff, professionalism of employees and so forth.

The second half of the quality dimension is called the *Functional Quality of the Process*. Here the consumer is affected by *how* the service is received, and *how* the delivery and consumption process is perceived. Here moments of truth comes into play concerning the service encounters; i.e. the initial encounter between service provider and consumer (Grönroos, 1984).

Zeithaml and Bitner (1996) mentioned the importance of functional quality. Functional quality is for example, when an organization's marketing activities influences the image of the company in either a positive or negative manner. Image is key when it comes to influencing the perception of the services offered by the service provider to the customer. Before even consuming the product or service, if the customer has a positive image in mind, the likelihood of satisfaction is higher (Zeithaml *et al.* 1996). Likewise Grönroos (1983), found that service quality influences the company's image, and the image has an impact on the customers' buying behavior. Normann (1991) stated that the image will influence the customers' minds through word-of-mouth, public relations, physical image, advertising, actual experiences and service encounters. Thus, a customer's actual experience with the service is the highest influencer in regard to the company's image. However, if a company brings up a positive image in the customers mind, little mistakes are more likely to be overlooked, whereas if the customer had a negative image prior to consumption, mistakes by the service provider will confirm their disapproval and worsen the already poor image. The two service quality dimensions are depicted on the following page.

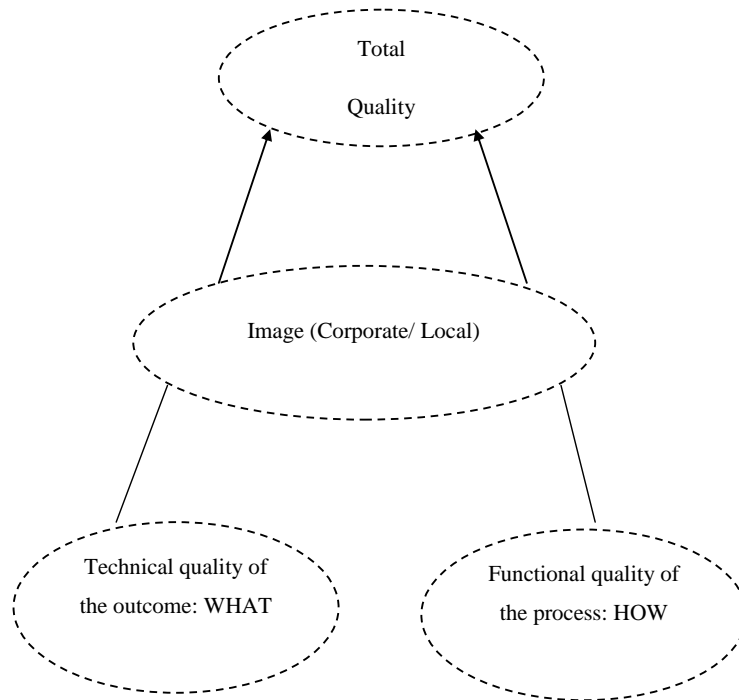


Figure 4: The Two Service Quality Dimensions

Source: Grönroos (2000), p.65

However, these two quality dimensions do not describe the quality perception process in detail. Hence, Grönroos (1982) introduced a more detailed model called the *Total Perceived Service Quality*. This model concludes that quality experiences are directly linked to conventional marketing activities, which results in *Perceived Service Quality*. Positively perceived quality occurs when the customers' *expected quality* meet the *experienced quality* as mentioned by Oliver's (1997) *Disconfirmation Paradigm*. As mentioned earlier, quality is subjective, so even if customers' expectations are unrealistic and too high, the perceived quality of the service will be low, even if the experienced quality, when evaluated objectively, would be adequate.

Included in the model are factors that may influence the expected quality. These are marketing communications (sales promotion and campaigns, conventional advertising, internet communication, direct mail and websites), word-of-mouth, image of the company, price, and customer needs. Marketing communications

have direct control, whereas word-of-mouth is an uncontrollable element. Image is a critical element in the customer's perception of service quality. The image however, can be managed to some extent, since it is the actual performance of the service provider communicated by the various marketing strategies. Knowing this, it is clear that the level of total perceived quality does not only consist of the level of technical and functional quality dimensions, but arises when there is a gap between the *expected* and *experienced* quality. By minimizing the gap, the quality will consequently be higher. The model is shown below:

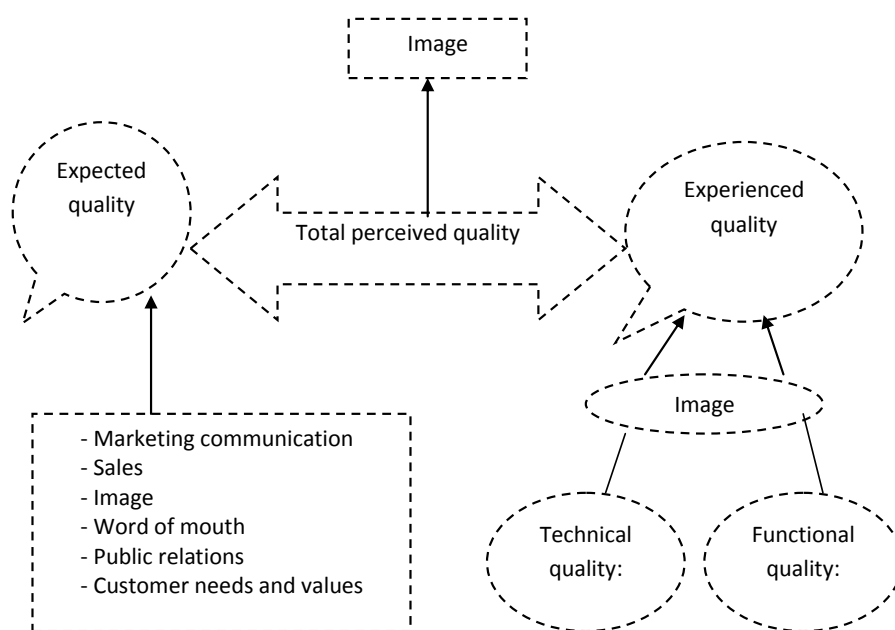


Figure 5: Total Perceived Quality

Source: Grönroos (2001), p.71

According to Swarbrooke and Horner (1999), there are a number of tangible factors that can lead tourists to modify their expectations and decision-making processes when planning a visit to a particular destination. Alternatively, Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1985), Lovelock, Wirtz and Chew (2009) came up with five dimensions of service quality explaining both tangible and intangible factors:

- “Tangibles (appearance of physical elements)”

- “Reliability (dependable and accurate performance)”
- “Responsiveness (promptness and helpfulness)”
- “Assurance (credibility, competence, courtesy and security)”
- “Empathy (good communications, customer understanding and easy access)”

(Lovelock 2009 *et al.* p. 8)

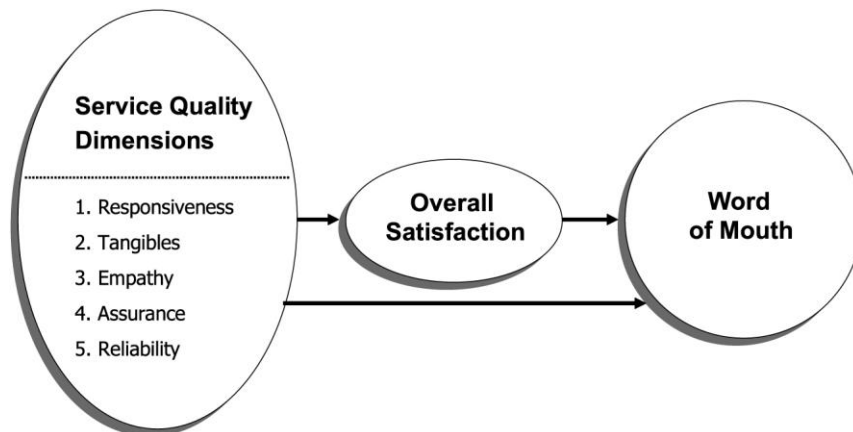


Figure 6: The Five Dimensions of Service Quality

Source: Lovelock, Wirtz and Chew (2009), p.8

Garvin (1984), found five quality notions whilst attempting to describe the dimensions of Quality;

- *Transcendent quality*: Quality is an “innate excellence” that is hard to define, but is rather instinctively understood. Quality is a simple, un-analyzable property, which one learns to recognize with and through experiences.
- *Product-based quality*: Quality is an objective and measurable variable found in the components of the product. Furthermore, it reflects the involvement or absence of these attributes in the product.
- *Customer-based quality*: According to the consumer, high quality involves more attributes in the product, which normally entails a higher costs and therefore more expensive goods.
- *Manufacturing-based quality*: Conformance to requirements. A product that alternates from the initial specifications and standards is often of poor quality.

Subsequently the product becomes unreliable, resulting in dissatisfaction compared to the one that is properly constructed (high quality products).

- *Value-based quality*: Defines quality in terms of its cost and price: “A quality product is one that provides performance at an acceptable price or conformance at an acceptable cost.”

Regarding hotels specifically, Wind, Green, Shifflet and Scarbrough (1989, p.25) outline seven facets of hotel attributes to offer a satisfactory service, which convey important insights:

- “**External factors**: building shape, landscape design, pool type, location, and hotel size.”
- “**Rooms**: room size and decor, type of heating and cooling, location, amenities, and type of bathroom.”
- “**Food-related services**: type and location of restaurant, room service, vending services and stores, in-room kitchen facilities.”
- “**Lounge facilities**: location, atmosphere, and type of clientele.”
- “**Services**: including reservations, registration and check-out, limousine to airport, bellman, message center, secretarial services, as well as car rental and maintenance.”
- “**Facilities for leisure-time activities**: sauna, exercise room, racquetball courts, tennis courts, game room, children’s playroom, and yard.”
- “**Security factors**: security guards, smoke detectors, 24-hour video camera, etc.”

Quality standards have a big impact on satisfaction equilibrium, but the expectations of the customer must also be met by the provider. Many misunderstandings can occur throughout the service delivery, which will be

explained in more detail with the use of Parasuraman, Valarie, Zeithaml and Berry's (1985) model of Service Quality Gaps.

3.4 Model of Service Quality Gaps

The first SERVQUAL Gap Model was designed by Parasuraman *et al.* (1985), entailing five gaps. Below, one can see an extension of the original model with seven gaps, by Curry (1999), and Luk and Layton (2002). This model was created as a management tool to help understand where the problems and misunderstandings occur. This provides the management with the opportunity to find a solution and eliminate the problem in the future. Explanations of the gaps can be seen below the figure.

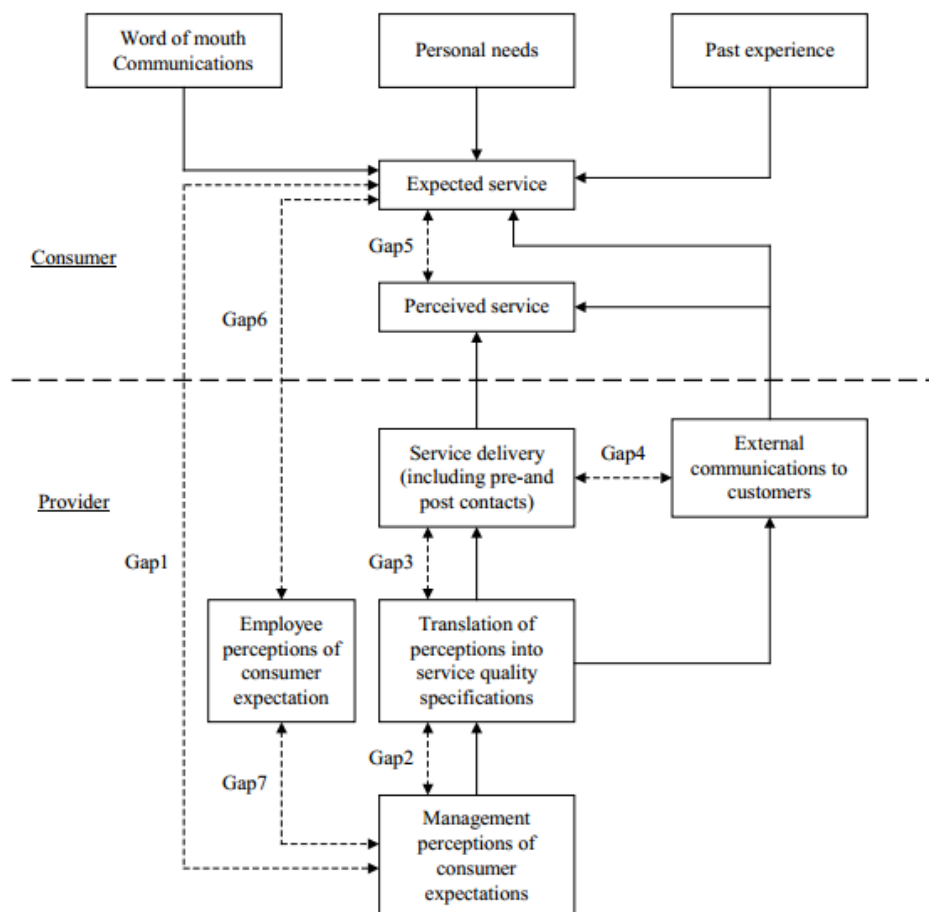


Figure 7: The Service Quality Gap Model

Source: Curry (1999), Luk and Layton (2002) cited in Shahin (2006) p. 120

Gap 1: The Knowledge Gap. This entails customers' expectations versus managements' perception of what the customer actually wants. This is a result from poor market research, insufficient upward communication and a vertical management structure opposed to a horizontal management structure.

Gap 2: The Policy Gap. This pertains to management perceptions versus service specifications. This arises from a lack of commitment to service quality and the company's standards, the management perceives the standards impossible to reach, lack of task standardization and inadequate goal setting within the company.

Gap 3: The Delivery Gap. This refers to the service specifications versus service delivery. It emerges as a result of role uncertainty, unsatisfactory employee-job fit, poor teamwork and inappropriate supervisory and managerial skills.

Gap 4: The Communication Gap. This is a result of insufficient horizontal communication and the tendency to over-promise.

Gap 5: The Perceptions Gap. This occurs when there is an inconsistency between customers' initial expectation and the post-perception of service after consumption. Customers' expectations are influenced by word of mouth, recommendations and other service experiences.

Gap 6: The Service Quality Gap. This shows the differences between customers' expectations and employees' perceptions. It results from different understandings of consumer expectations by front-line service providers (Adapted by Luk and Layton 2002).

Gap 7: Second Level Perception Gap. This occurs when there is an inconsistency between employees' perceptions and managements' perception (Adapted by Luk *et al.* 2002).

The gap model gives demonstrates at what stages the service delivery can fail before, during, and after consumption. If one prevents the gaps from happening, the customer will most likely be satisfied with the service.

Strategies to close these quality gaps were made by Grönroos (2001), Looy, Gemmel and Dierdonck (2003) and Buttle (2004):

- Change the management or learn from front-line staff that has first-hand contact with the customers. Impose a flat hierarchical structure in the company, track customer expectations in consumer records and conduct market research for improvement, etc.
- Change the firm's priorities. Commit to developing service standards in the company, conduct feasibility assessments of customer expectations, standardize processes wherever possible, outsource when competencies within management and the staff lacks, develop service quality goals.
- Invest in the staff: (recruit the best staff, train and preserve your current staff), invest in technology, promote empowerment (flat hierarchical structure), cultivate communication internally, avoid ambiguity when it comes to job specifications and provide incentives for service excellence.
- Clarify what image the marketing departments shall communicate, provide a clear message as to what the customer can expect, have comprehensive training of all employees in order for them not to over-promise, reprimand employees who does over-promise, encourage customers to give feedback of their service experience, have a comprehensive service recovery scheme that manage customer complaints.

3.5 Perceived Justice; Psychological Approach of Service Failure

“Justice Theory originates from social exchange (Hofmans, 1961) and Adams (1965) equity theory” (cited Kuo and Wu 2011, p.4). The cost of a product or a service must be equal to the gains; if this fails, it will be perceived as unfair. However, if the cost is higher than the gains, the service provider may take certain actions that can reduce the level of unfairness (Hofmans, 1961 cited Kuo and Wu 2011). A service failure is a typical result of a customer feeling unfairly treated.

Hence, the actions taken to achieve service recovery can be evaluated based on perceived justice (Kuo and Wu, 2011). Service failure was defined by Bitner, Boom and Tetreault (1990) and Bitner, Bernard and Mohr (1994) as: during a service encounter, the customer is dissatisfied, has negative feelings and overall a bad experience.

In a company there are three components of justice that are implemented in the process of service recovery. These are: Distributive Justice, Procedural Justice and Interactional Justice (Collier and Bienstock (2006), Chebat and Slusarczyk (2005), Maxham III and Netemeyer (2003), Del Río-Lanza *et al.* (2009), Wirtz and Mattila (2004), Schoefer (2008), Schoefer and Ennew (2005)).

Distributive Justice is a recovery action that involves a monetary compensation in regards to the failed customer. This compensation can be coupons, a refund or a discount, gifts or vouchers from the service provider (Blodgett *et al.* (1997), Goodwin and Ross (1992) and Tax *et al.* (1998)).

Procedural Justice focuses on the efficiency of the recovery process itself as well as the flexibility of the rules and policies in the company. Procedural justice comes in play when the service provider admits the failure and tries to resolve the failure. It is important that the service provider notes the failure and tries to change this in the future. “Procedural justice can generally be evaluated as to whether customers can freely express their opinions, recovery efficiency of the company, dominance of the outcome, easiness of making complaints, flexibility, instantaneity, transparency of the recovery process, and appropriateness of the recovery action and policy” (Blodgett *et al.* (1997), Chebat *et al.* (2005), Maxham III *et al.* (2003) Smith *et al.* (1998), Tax *et al.* (1998), Wirtz *et al.* (2004) cited Kuo and Wu (2011, p. 5)).

Interactional justice concerns itself with the level of fairness the recovery phase has regarding the dissatisfied customer. Interactional justice occurs when the service provider communicates politely with the failed customer, is honest in the ways of communicating and has empathy for the situation while finding a solution

the complaint (Goodwin *et al.* (1992), Maxham III *et al.* (2003), Tax *et al.* (1998), Wirtz *et al.* (2004)).

“Interactional justice is evaluated by reliability, clear explanation of the problem, sincerity, apologetic attitude, communication, politeness, respect, detailed attention to problems, willingness to hear complaints, and solving the problem” (Blodgett *et al.* (1997), Smith *et al.* (1998), Wirtz *et al.* (2004) cited Kuo and Wu (2011, p.5)).

3.6 Emotions

Emotions play a vital role when trying to understand how service failure and its recovery is evaluated from the perspective of a dissatisfied customer (Bagozzi *et al.* (1999), Schoefer (2008), Weiss *et al.* (1999), Schoefer and Diamantopoulos (2008)). Furthermore, Schoefer *et al.* (2008) emphasized that a reliable scale for measuring emotions doesn’t exist and may therefore be the reason it lacks in most service recovery research papers.

According to Bagozzi *et al.* (1999), emotions are sentimental states of an individual that are directly connected to one’s thoughts or in relation to an event. Cacioppo and Gardner (1993), Watson, Clark and Tellegen (1988), Cacioppo, Gardner and Berntson (1997), discovered two distinct dimensions in emotions namely, a positive and a negative. Laros and Steenkamp (2005) stated that “positive emotion is related to contentment, happiness, love, and pride, whereas negative emotions are related to anger, fear, sadness, and shame” (p.1441). The model is shown on the following page.

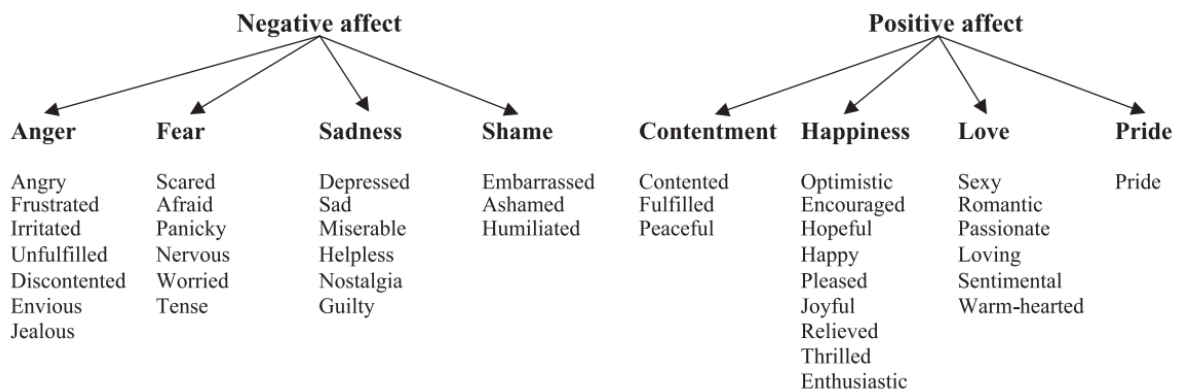


Figure 8: Hierachy of Consumer Emotions

Source: Laros and Steenkamp (2005) p. 1441

These two dimensions have irregular and distinctive effects on an individual's behavior (Cacioppo *et al.* 1993, Cacioppo *et al.* 1997). Furthermore, Smith and Bolton (2002) stated that during service recovery customers have a tendency to become very emotional. This emotional response, whether negative or positive, will decide for the customer's future perception of and relation to the service provider (Smith and Bolton, 2002).

In correspondence to the service provider's service recovery strategy, the customer is confronted with various emotions according to the customers' perceived justice of that particular approach (Schoefer, 2008). Weiss *et al.* (1999), Chebat and Slusarczyk (2005), del Río-Lanza, *et al.* (2009), Schoefer (2008) Schoefer *et al.* (2005), and William (1999) "studied post-recovery customer emotions under the framework of perceived justice" (cited Kuo *et al.* 2011, p.133). It was found that negative emotions (*anger, fury and unhappiness*) and low positive emotions (*happiness, pleasure and joy*) arises when the customer observes low perceived justice (Schoefer *et al.* 2005). According to Weiss *et al.* (1999), furious emotions can be observed if the customers are unhappy with the outcome or perceive injustice have been made during the recovery process. Chebat *et al.* (2005) found that higher levels of distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice may diminish negative emotions felt towards the service provider by the customers. Additionally, if the customer perceives a

higher procedural justice, it will lead to an increase in positive emotions and a decrease in negative ones (Schoefer *et al.* 2008).

3.7 Service Failure and Service Recovery

As stated by Vanhove (2005), hospitality and tourism is an intangible, man-made product. Hence, due to “heterogeneity and indivisibility, service failure is unavoidable” (Tax *et al.* 1999 cited Chang *et al.* 2008, p.3). However, knowing this, many companies still lack an efficient service recovery system and the main reasons for lost costumers is due to this fact (Bowen and Lawler, 1992). A service failure happens when the service provider is not able to live up to the customer’s expectations (Dickinger *et al.* 2009). “Additionally, customers do not easily forget or forgive unfair handling of service failures” (Seiders and Berry, 1998 cited Kuo and Wu 2011, p.5). Nevertheless, Blodgett *et al.* (1997) found that when a service provider’s offer a monetary compensation (distributive justice) in regards to the service failure, in a polite manner, the outcome is solely positive also in regards to customer loyalty and word-of-mouth.

Maxham III *et al.* (2003) however, found a positive correlation between perceived procedural justice (efficiency of service recovery) and incentive for positive word-of mouth. Whereas a higher perceived interactional justice (fairness in treatment of failed customers) was clearly correlated to higher repurchase intentions by the failed customer. However, according to the equity theory as well as Levesque and McDougall (2000), when the loss is bigger, the customer is probably not going to be satisfied with the service recovery, regardless of what approach the service provider takes.

Maxham and Netemeyer (2002) touched upon the subject of external and internal attribution. They defined external attribution as an outside factor, something the service provider cannot control, thereby naming it “unstable attribution”. The internal attribution was named as “stable attribution”, because the outcome of the service was in the control of the service provider. If the service failure occurs from a stable attribution, the service provider has to claim all responsibility and minimize the errors in the future (McCole and Herwadkar, 2003).

According to Bitner, Booms and Stanfield (1990) there are three types of service failures; 1) service system failure, 2) failures indirectly from customer requests and 3) spontaneous and unprofessional employee actions. If service failure number 1. occurs, the customer will most likely change service provider (Chung and Hoffman (1998) cited Dickinger *et al.* 2009). In this case it is fundamental to have a service recovery system set in place. Lovelock and Wright (1998) made the point, that true commitment to ones customers, is the actions that the service provider takes after the service failure happens.

“Service recovery is essential due to the inevitability of service failures” (Goodwin and Ross (1992), Levesque and McDougall (2000) cited Kuo *et al.* 2011, p.5). If a company does not handle service complaints accordingly it may lead to negative and harming word-of-mouth and the customer will be lost to competition (Tax *et al.* (1998), Mattila and Mount (2003)). According to Sparks and McColl-Kennedy (2001), Smith and Bolton (1998), service recovery is a necessary tool in order to keep ones good reputation, avoid bad PR and have satisfied as well as loyal customers.

Service recovery has many layers and aspects, therefore different definitions have been given on the matter. According to Grönroos (1988), a successful service recovery is when the customer has a positive reaction to the solution. As stressed before by other authors, it is essential for the service provider to invest in proper service recovery strategies in order to minimize lost customers (Grönroos (1988), Hart *et al.* (1990) and Kenney (1995)).

Smith *et al.* (1998) defined service recovery as the process of apology, reaction speed, compensation and voluntary corrective measures. Hart *et al.* (1990) defined service recovery as “apology, compensation, and reaction speed”. Similar to Smith *et al.* (1998), Greenberg (1990) said that the service recovery process should be more detailed and therefore divided service recovery into three sub-recovery responses: *Excuse* (does not admit mistakes), *Justification* (admits mistakes, but does not compensate for it) and *Apology* (admits mistakes and compensates customer). Studies by Crant and Bateman (1993) and Tata (2000)

found that *excuses*, where the service provider blames the outcome on an external cause, has a positive outcome. Conlon and Murray (1996), Bobocel and Farrell (1996) suggested that *justifications*, shows that the service provider takes responsibility and are more effective when dealing with a customer failure.

However, according to Schoefer and Ennew (2004) regardless of the procedure, “customers expect a speedy, confident, fair and personalized complaint handling” (cited Astrid *et al.* 2009, p.157). Goodwin *et al.* (1992) found that an apology is a crucial part of the service recovery process and since it will diminish the negative feeling the customer has towards the company. According to Tax *et al.* (1998) the costumer expects to be compensated from the loss of a service failure. Boshoff (1999) argues that the company should be attentive towards what feedback the customer gives them when they have been given compensation for the failure.

Studies by Kelly, Hoffman and Davis (1993) indicate that the customers believe that the company has to take responsibility for the mistake right away, and have a service recovery plan in place in order to deal with the failure immediately. Service recovery is not solely the actionable procedure following the service failure, but also the behavior towards the customer in form of honesty, empathy and ability to smooth any emotional dissatisfaction and possible angry emotions shown by the customer (Chang and Hsiao, 2008).

Maxham *et al.* (2002), McCollough and Bharadwaj (1992) and Michel (2001), stated that a customer is more likely to rate a firm higher, if their complaint was satisfactorily dealt with by the company, naming this the recovery paradox. However, Maxham *et al.* (2002) found that this only counts for service failures that come from an unstable attribution (a situation that isn’t in the control of the service provider). Additionally, important to keep in mind, Maxham *et al.* (2002) states that the power of the recovery paradox will degrade with each service failure. In the end, the post-behavior and satisfaction of the customer will depend on how the service failure was dealt with from a managerial level.

As mentioned by Hart *et al.* (1990) “service recovery is the action taken to retain customer loyalty by a timely and appropriate response to a customer complaint”

(cited Chang *et al.* 2008, p.61). Brand loyalty was defined by Evans, Moutinho and Raaij (1996) as “a cognitive behavior, where loyalty is an internal commitment to purchase a particular brand” (p. 261). Bowen and Lawler (1992) stated that the customer service policies and regulations of a company reveal how important customer loyalty is to them. Moreover, stated by Chang and Hsiao (2008) service recovery requires constant updates, action, improvement and feedback, but may eventually create and reinforce strong customer loyalty.

McCole and Herwadkar (2003), found a need for a stronger model explaining service recovery in a more inclusive matter. The model APQI has three dimensions; “*Awareness, Process and Quality and Intent*” (hence the name) (McCole *et al.* 2003, p.2273). In the awareness dimension there are four important variables; “perception of value, importance of service failure, annoyance at service failure and attitude towards the company” (McCole *et al.* 2003, p.2272). Perception of value is the dimension where the customer is faced with a service failure and may therefore complain. The core dimension ‘Process and Quality’ displays the ‘expectations to service recovery’ and the three variables mentioned earlier, namely ‘Distributive’, ‘Procedural’ and ‘Interactional’ justice. In the core dimension one also find the inclusion of the “nature and magnitude of the service failure, individual consumer psychographics, context specificity” (McCole *et al.* 2003, p.2272) and contingency. McCole *et al.* (2003) emphasize the importance of these elements to the service recovery research. The last part of the model is the ‘Intent’ dimension. The intent dimension involves the service recovery paradox and rudiments of the prospect and attribution theory.

Also, as mentioned earlier by Tax *et al.* (1998), the customer will not purchase again from a service provider who, had an unsatisfactory service recovery or a service recovery below expectations. This usually occurs, if the service provider does not take responsibility for the service failure (in case of stable attribution) or the service provider doesn’t make an effort to compensate and for the failure. The situation may accelerate if the service provider claims unstable attribution, blaming the customer for the service failure.

The attribution theory emphasizes on the importance of giving attention to the dissatisfied customer and his/her complaint and the effort being made to rectify the situation and live up to the expectations of the customer. The APqI model is shown below:

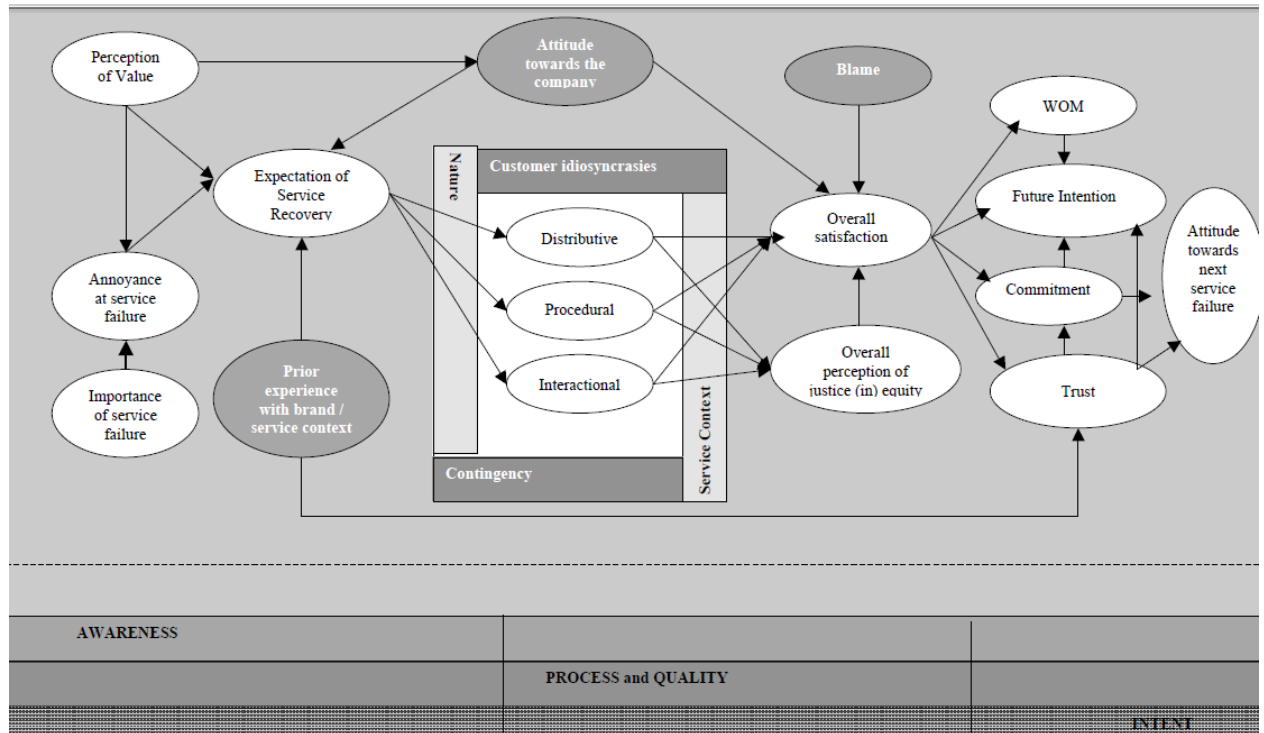


Figure 9: The APqI model - Towards a More Inclusive Model for Understanding Service Failure and Service Recovery

Source: McCole and Herwadkar (2003), p.2277

3.8 Complaint Handling

Complaint handling is an important part of any company. When customer service handles complaints satisfactorily, it reflects directly on how important the customers are to the company (Strauss, 2002). The service provider needs to see complaints as an opportunity to identify the core problems and improve them (Buttle, 1998). Moreover, customers' complaint satisfaction is not only about the complaint outcome but also the process and attributes of the complaint handling itself (Strauss, 2002). Complaints should also be handled with care and respect, because employees with an unprofessional attitude can spoil a company's

reputation and spread negative word-of-mouth (Buttle, 1998). Around two-thirds of complaints does not reach the service provider (Richins, 1983), but are however a victim of negative word of mouth. On average a dissatisfied customer tells twice as many people about a negative experience compared to a positive one (TARP (1995) cited Buttle, 2004). If a company has a sufficient complaint handling system it will bring a stable customer base, excellence in service quality and a customer- focused organization (Looy *et al.* 2003).

Ritz-Carlton (2012, a, p.1) gave their reasons to why a complaint occurs:

- “Customer expectations are not met.”
- “Uncaring employees.”
- “Negative attitude of employees.”
- “Customers did not receive what was promised to them.”
- “Poor employee training.”
- “Poor treatment of employees as customers.”
- “Employees are not empowered to provide good service and take responsibility.”

Ford and Heaton (2000) stated that the customer expects cleanliness, courtesy, responsiveness, reliability, and friendliness. Furthermore, they will complain if they do not receive the expected outcome or when there are unexpected negative impacts within the service outcome (Ford *et al.* 2000). Ford, Heaton and Sturman (2012, p.19), made a list of the most common attributes that are being complained about in a hotel:

1. “Guest Complaint: Lying, dishonesty, unfairness.”
 “Guest Expectation: To be told the truth and treated fairly.”
2. “Guest Complaint: Harsh, disrespectful treatment by employees.”
 “Guest Expectation: To be treated with respect.”
3. “Guest Complaint: Carelessness, mistakes, broken promises.”
 “Guest Expectation: To receive careful, reliable service.”

4. “Guest Complaint: Employees without the desire or authority to solve problems.”
“Guest Expectation: To receive prompt solutions to problems.”
5. “Guest Complaint: Waiting in line because some service lanes or counters are closed.”
Guest Expectation: To wait as short a time as possible.”
6. “Guest Complaint: Impersonal Service.”
“Guest Expectation: To receive personal attention and genuine interest from service employees.”
7. “Guest Complaint: Inadequate communication after problems arises.”
“Guest Expectation: To be kept informed about recovery efforts after reporting problems or service failures.”
8. “Guest Complaint: Employees unwilling to make extra effort or who seem annoyed by requests for assistance.”
“Guest Expectation: To receive assistance, offered willingly by service employees.”
9. “Guest Complaint: Employees who do not know what is happening.”
“Guest Expectation: To receive accurate answers from service employees to common questions.”
10. “Guest Complaint: Employees who put their own interests first, conduct personal business, or chat with each other while the customers wait.”
“Guest Expectation: To have their interests come first.”

3.8.1 How to Proceed With a Service Complaint

According to Burke and Resnick (2000), salespeople or customer service specialists should resolve complaints immediately. If the settlement is prolonged, the customer will become more emotional in form of anger along with being more vocal, frustrated and angry (Burke *et al.* 2000 and Schoefer and Ennew, 2004). Burke *et al.* (2000) stated that employees need to give full attention to and express genuine interest in a customer’s problem. The sales/customer service representatives should attempt to gather all information evolving around the complaint at hand. Whenever possible, they should agree with the customer and

offer a fair adjustment (usually an apology) (Burke *et al.* 2000). With a justified service failure, customer service has a chance to increase goodwill and achieve a loyal customer Burke *et al.* (2000). That is if the adjustment is more liberal than the customer expected. However even if a customer's complaint is unjustified, salespeople should attempt to come to a compromise that will satisfy the customer without hurting the company (Burke *et al.* 2000).

Blodgett *et al.* (1997) and Schoefer and Ennew (2004), mentioned the importance of politeness when handling a complaint. Terms like “we”, “I”, “our company”, “us” is also important, since it makes the customer feel at ease. Thus, it has to be done along with higher level of attention and care to the customer from the service provider (Dickinger *et al.* 2009).

Complaint handling is not an easy subject but researchers have given different thoughts on how to make it easier for the service provider to deal with. A suggestion from Burke *et al.* (2000) is to outsource and hire customer service trouble shooters to handle the problems on the spot. Outsourced customer service personnel have the expertise, routine and knowledge to handle customer complaints in the best possible way. A simpler way to approach this issue is to encourage and help ones customers to contact appropriate customer service representatives (Burke *et al.* 2000).

Nguyen and Murphy (2002) encourage companies to integrate email communication as a service recovery tool. According to Bauer *et al.* (2002), internet communication will increase the trust and satisfaction of the customer. Through the use of e-mail communication it will embrace “reliability, responsiveness, access, personalization, convenience, collaboration and costs savings” (Anton 2000, Strauss and Hill, 2001 cited Swangboonsatic 2006, p.15). According to them, e-mails build and strengthen customer relationships, serve customers better and functions as a main customer service tool (Newell 2000, Sinha 1999, Bertagnoli, 2001). In an e-mail it is of equal importance to use personalized salutations, proper closings with the name of the sender, his/her current position in the company and contact details (phone number, alternative e-

mail address and company address) (Walden 1997, Guffey 1997, Strauss and Hill 2001). According to May (2000), Bertagnoli (2001) and Yang *et al.* (2001), this strategy should be applied to have a responsive, regular and reactive e-mail service. However, the downside to technology is that people prefer people over machines (Stone *et al.* 1996 and Seligman 2000) and businesses encounter practical issues using technology as a customer service tool (Nguyen and Murphy, 2002).

3.8.2 The Fairness Theory

The fairness theory conducted by Folger and Cropanzano (1998, 2001), touches upon important aspects of the complaint handling process. Shaw, Wild and Colquitt (2003) carried out a study based on fairness theory to explore the effects of justifications and excuse –based explanations given to employers and customers.

In short, fairness theory describes, when a service provider supplies their dissatisfied customer with an explanation it has beneficial effects and an overall positive outcome (Shaw *et al.* 2003). There are two components, namely; “the could” and “the should” counterfactuals. “*Could counterfactuals* compare what the decision maker did, to what the decision maker could have done” (Folger *et al.*, 1998, 2001 cited Shaw *et al.* 2003, p. 446). Hence, the customer is deciding whether there would have been a more desirable outcome compared to the choice made by the service provider. If the customer determines that there was another alternative outcome to the decision process, then it is most likely that the customer blames the service provider (Folger *et al.*, 1998, 2001). On the other hand, “*should counterfactuals* compare what the decision maker did to what he or she should have done from an ethical perspective” (Folger *et al.*, 1998, 2001 cited Shaw *et al.* 2003, p. 446). According to Shaw *et al.* (2003): “*Should counterfactual* are more concerned with the evaluation of good versus bad and right versus wrong” (p.446). However, for the outcome to be perceived unfair, it must defy the common ethical standards of which, people are expected to follow (Folger *et al.*, 1998, 2001 cited Shaw *et al.* 2003).

Whether the explanation is an *excuse* or a *justification*, both have the potential to deactivate the counterfactuals (Shaw *et al.* 2003). An excuse places the responsibility of the perceived outcome to an external cause or justifies that the situation made the decision made inevitable (Shaw *et al.* 2003). “The more adequate the excuse is, the more the recipient will see the event in question as the only feasible option” (Shaw *et al.* 2003, p.446). Likewise, justifying an outcome may show the customer that the decision made was correct, comparing it to the big picture. Hence, when the justification given is sufficient, the customer will see the outcome as ethically justifiable (Shaw *et al.* 2003). The goal of both excuse and justification is to avoid the customer feeling that the outcome is unfair. The fairness theory model illustrates why both *justification* and *excuse* can be beneficial, keeping in mind that they affect different mechanisms in the recipient. The model is depicted below:

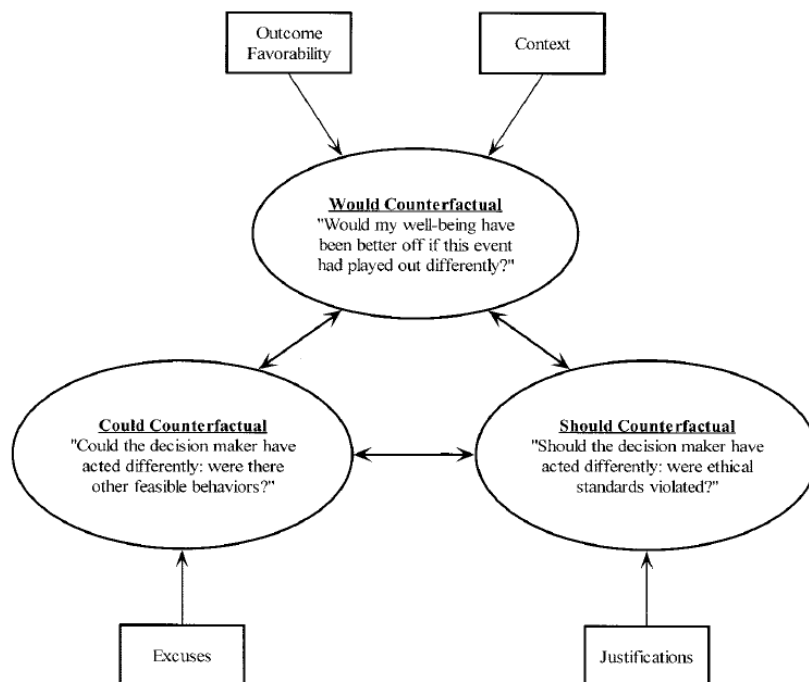


Figure 10: The Effects of Explanations: The Three Counterfactuals in Fairness Theory

Source: Shaw *et al.* (2003) p. 447

In a study carried out by Shaw *et al.* (2003), it was found that an explanation was perceived more satisfactory if it was sufficient and comprehensive, in comparison

to solely the provision of one. However, an inadequate explanation is perceived more unjust than not providing one at all (Shaw *et al.* 2003).

Shaw *et al.* (2003) used the fairness theory to recognize what moderator variables could have the power to change the effects of the explanation. Shaw *et al.* (2003) stated that “excuses are capable to deactivate the *could* and the *should* components of the fairness theory” (p.447). A sufficient excuse leaves no other outcome possible, which neutralizes the *could counterfactual*. Furthermore, since ethical standards is only put in question when it comes to an unjustly perceived outcome, the *should counterfactual* is eliminated as well. Along with this reasoning, Shaw *et al.* (2003) found, that excuses were better received than justifications. The reason for this is that justifications provoke cognitive resistance compared to excuses. It is harder to reach and understand the merits of a superordinate goal between service provider and customer compared to the reality of an explanatory situation (p.452). Also, “individuals may be biased against accepting that a negative outcome was justifiable due to self-serving or egocentric biases” (Shaw *et al.* 2003, p.452).

3.8.3 Complaint Handling Procedure in Ritz-Carlton

Ritz-Carlton is a prestigious five-starred hotel chain with 79 hotels worldwide (Ritz-Carlton, 2012, b). Not only did Ritz-Carlton set high quality standards for themselves, but customers will automatically expect more from a hotel chain as Ritz-Carlton. This thesis intends to look at the highest rated hotels by TripAdvisor users in Vienna, Austria. Therefore Ritz-Carlton’s complaint handling policies is a good benchmark and guidance tool.

Ritz-Carlton requires their employees to learn the L.E.A.P. model when dealing with a dissatisfied customer (Ritz-Carlton, a, p.1):

Listen

- “Give them your full attention: If the guest expresses his/her concern, drop everything and listen to what the guest is trying to tell YOU.”
- “Empathetic listening with eye contact.”

- “Proper body language.”
- “Take notes if necessary.”
- “Could raise certain questions in order to get a better understanding of the situation.”
- “Remain Calm. Do not take it personally - the guest is upset and expressing his disappointment and frustration.”

Empathy

- “Apologize.”

“I am very sorry for not being able to anticipate your request. Please accept my sincere apologies...”

“I am terribly sorry for what has happened, please accept apologies and I will personally look into it.”
- “Summarize - After the guest identifies the problem repeat the problem by saying it in your own words.”
- “Put yourself in guest’s shoes.”

Ask

- “How Can I make it right?”
- “Solution – tell the guest your plan. Be assertive.”
- “Verity - *If I can accomplish this, would that make you happy?*”
- “I have some options for you, please let me know which one is the best for you.”
- “Never make excuses.”
- “Never blame other departments in the hotel.”
- “Never pass it on.”
- “Never promise what you cannot deliver, it will make it worse.”

Produce a Response

- “Agree on time needed.”
- “If time needed would take longer than you promised to guest, keep guest informed any action has been taken.”

- “If you are not able to perform the corrective actions, ask for **HELP** to the specific department involved. Always remember that when you own a complaint you are responsible for fixing it till the guest is satisfied.”
- “Follow up within 20 minutes to **ensure satisfaction.**”

Concerning Ritz-Carlton’s service recovery procedure they have a few rules their employees need to go by as well (most relevant ones have been included);

(Ritz-Carlton, a, p.3)

“Problem Resolution Basic # 2: Whatever commitments or promises you make to the guest, it is important/critical that you keep them. If you fail to do so, we will lose the trust of our guest.”

“Problem Resolution Basic # 3: Ask questions, even repeat what the guest told you so that there can be no misunderstanding as to what the guest opportunity was.”

“Problem Resolution Basic # 4: The 20 – minute follow up call or visit is the responsibility of the employee who received the initial complaint. This part is crucial for successful problem resolution.”

“Problem Resolution Basic # 8: Customers judge the quality of a company by judging the responsiveness of the first person they come in contact with to discuss their problem.”

*“Problem Resolution Basic #13: Never lose a guest. Instant guest pacification is the responsibility of each employee. Whoever receives a complaint will **OWN IT, RESOLVE IT** to the guest’s satisfaction and **RECORD IT.**”*

The complaint and service recovery manual for Ritz-Carlton employees are thorough, with details that was not found in other literature review. The LEAP approach is clear and easy to understand. The question is, if it is followed by its managers and employees.

3.9 TripAdvisor

TripAdvisor is the main source of data collection for this thesis and therefore the following chapter is a short introduction to TripAdvisor and its functions.

TripAdvisor is an online platform and the world's largest travel site. It provides reviews and advice on flights, vacation packages, hotels, resorts and travel guides. "TripAdvisor offers trusted advice from real travelers and a wide variety of travel choices and planning features with links to booking tools" (TripAdvisor, 2012, About Us). It was founded in year 2000, operates in 30 different countries in 21 different languages. It includes sites in the U.S with more than 60 million traveler reviews, 56 million unique monthly visitors and 20 million members (ComScore Media Metrix Worldwide, 2012).

TripAdvisor is a feedback and review platform but does not function as a booking site. However, "TripAdvisor provides easy access worldwide to leading online travel agencies including Expedia, Orbitz, Travelocity, hotels.com, Priceline and Booking.com" (TripAdvisor, 2012, About Us). Every individual can read reviews written by other travelers and establish their own account and write reviews themselves (Green, 2007).

3.10 Hypotheses Development

The following chapter will develop the hypotheses that later on will be tested and analyzed. This thesis will have two branches of hypotheses due to the nature of the research question. First set of hypothesis will try to answer "which element of a service leads to dissatisfaction", whereas the second part will investigate "how the ideal manager response looks".

Along with findings in the literature review and Wind *et al.* (1989) facets of expected hotel attributes, the hypotheses are ready to be developed:

- **Hypothesis 1:** Tangible factors (room appearance, hotel appearance, cleanliness, F&B, location) influences customer satisfaction the most (for details please refer to 3.3).

- **Hypothesis 2:** Reliability (accurate perceived performance compared to hotels image) influences customer satisfaction the most (for details please refer to 3.3).
- **Hypothesis 3:** Empathy of staff (promptness and helpfulness, good communication, customer understanding, friendliness) influences customer satisfaction the most (for details please refer to 3.8 and 3.8.3).
- **Hypothesis 4:** Amenities as TV, internet, sauna, spa, pool, and fitness center influences customer satisfaction the most (for details please refer to 3.3).
- **Hypothesis 5:** Availability of registration and check-out, bellman, concierge secretarial services, car rental and chauffeur services and general maintenance (for details please refer to 3.3).

Regarding the second part of the research question: the ideal manager response, Greenberg's (1990) three approaches to service recovery is essential:

- Excuse (does not admit mistakes)
- Justification (admits mistakes, but does not compensate for the service failure)
- Apology (admit mistakes and compensates customer)

Another theory to keep in mind when developing the hypotheses is the internal and external attribution by Maxham *et al.* (2002).

- Internal attribution (stable attribution) is when the service provider is in control of the outcome.
- External attribution (unstable attribution) is when there is an outside factor influencing the outcome and therefore, the outcome is out of the service provider's control.

Consequently, it will be interesting to see which form of explanation and attribution is most frequently used by the managers at the respected hotels. To find an answer to this, the hypotheses are the following:

- **Hypothesis 6:** Excuse is being used more when dealing with a customer complaint (for details please refer to 3.7).
- **Hypothesis 7:** Justification is being used more when dealing with a customer complaint (for details please refer to 3.7).
- **Hypothesis 8:** Apology is being used more when dealing with a customer complaint (for details please refer to 3.7).
- **Hypothesis 9:** Service failures are connected with internal attribution (for details please refer to 3.7).
- **Hypothesis 10:** Service failures are connected with external attribution (for details please refer to 3.7).
- **Hypothesis 11:** The service provider thanks the guests for feedback and comments given in the review (for details please refer to 3.8.3).
- **Hypothesis 12:** Terms like “we”, “I” and “our company” are used when responding to a customer complaint (for details please refer to 3.8.1).
- **Hypothesis 13:** When a refund or discount is offered to the dissatisfied customer, the customer will be satisfied with the complaint handling process (for details please refer to 3.5).
- **Hypothesis 14:** The service provider agrees with the guests and explains the situation (for details please refer to 3.8.1).

Now that the hypotheses have been developed the next chapter will cover the methodology and approach necessary, to answer the research question.

4. Methodology

This chapter describes the methods that will be used to acquire data for this thesis. This thesis attempts to understand and evaluate perceptions, giving it a qualitative nature by definition. This will be described in 4.1. In point 4.2, content analysis will be explained, since this will be the method of analyzing the data. Netnography is the main approach of the data collection and will be described in 4.3.

4.1 Qualitative Approach

The qualitative research approach does not use the support of mathematical and statistical measures. On the contrary, qualitative research is “developing a detailed understanding of individual’s views, attitudes and behavior” (Moore 2000, p.21). Qualitative research assesses already existing and observable facts, enabling the researcher to develop new theories and/or formulate new hypotheses (Flick, 2011). A qualitative approach can yield “volumes of exceedingly rich data” (Walker, 1985, p.121). The main aspects of qualitative research are listed below:

- “Theory is as an end point to be developed.”
- “Data selection is open.”
- “Analysis of the data is interpretative.”
- “Generalization applicable in a theoretical sense.”

(Flick 2011, p.13)

Qualitative research can involve the collection of interviews and observations, or the studying of documents. This thesis will use the qualitative-studying-documents approach. Studying documents is a part of the content analysis method, which will be evaluated in the next section.

4.2 Content Analysis

“Content analysis is a research method which is a systematic and objective means of describing and quantifying phenomena” (Krippendorff 1980, Downe-Wamboldt 1992, Sandelowski 1995 cited Elo and Kyngäs 2008, p.108). It is a technique used to analyze visual, verbal, written communication messages and documents (Cole 1988). Moreover, it is a technique to create “knowledge, new insights, a representation of facts, and a practical guide to action” (Krippendorff, 1980 cited Elo and Kyngäs 2008, p.108). Content analysis allows the researcher to test theoretical issues to enhance the understanding of the data (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008). The purpose of content analysis is to divide sentences and words into related sub-categories (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008). Hence, when classified into sub-categories the words and sentences share a common meaning and can be analyzed as such (Cavanagh 1997). The goal is to find the intention, deeper context and meaning as well as consequences with the text (Downe-Wamboldt 1992, Cavanagh 1997).

4.3 Netnography

Since this thesis will retrieve all its data from the website TripAdvisor, it is important to understand the concept of netnography. According to Kozinets (1998), netnography is a qualitative method dedicated to investigating consumer behavior of online cultures and communities. It refers to an online research method, which is adapted to the study of communities and cultures, created through computer-mediated social interaction (Kozinets, 1998).

This thesis will be conducted using results from “pure netnography”, which is “netnography conducted using only computer mediated data and social interaction with no in-person or face-to-face data collection or interactional components” (Kozinets, 2010, p. 192).

Kozinets (2010) proposed a strategy when having a netnographic approach in ones research. Kozinets suggests that one “should look for online communities that are: (a) relevant, they relate to one’s research focus and question(s), (b) active, they involve recent and regular communication, (c) interactive, they have a

flow of communication between participants, (d) substantial, they have a critical mass of communicators and an energetic feel, (e) heterogeneous, they have a number of different participants, and (f) data-rich, offering more detailed or descriptive, rich data” (p. 89).

Analysis and “interpretation involves classification, coding analysis, and contextualization of communicative acts” (Bowler 2010, p.1272). Kozinets (2010, p.118) suggests the following principles of analyzing qualitative data:

- “Proceed systematically and rigorously (minimize human error)”
- “Record process, memos, journals, etc.”
- “Focus on responding to research questions”
- “Appropriate level of interpretation appropriate for situation”
- “Time (process of inquiry and analysis are often simultaneous)”
- “Seek to explain or enlighten”
- “Evolutionary/emerging”

4.4 Data Collection

The five hotels ranked highest in Vienna have been selected on TripAdvisor.com. Thereafter, five negative reviews, containing a response from the respective manager in charge, were highlighted per hotel. In total this led to the analysis of 25 reviews and 25 manager responses. A table was constructed in which each hypothesis served as the “title” of one column. Each hotel had five rows, one for each review. If a tangible attribute was complained about in the review for example, this was ‘checked’ off in the table. The same approach was taken for the managerial responses. Please refer to appendix 8.1 and 8.2 for further details on the table and results.

5. Results

5.1 Sample Description

The following five hotels were chosen for the purpose of this thesis:

- Hotel Rathaus Wein and Design
- Hotel Altstadt
- Das Tyrol Small Luxury Hotel
- Hollmann Beletage
- Hotel Imperial Vienna

These five hotels were chosen because they have been ranked within the top 6 hotels on TripAdvisor. Initially the top 5 hotels were looked at, but since the hotel ranked third did not have any managerial responses online, it was not included, so as to ensure a more valid analysis of the managerial responses. Five negative reviews from each hotel, from the review category: ‘terrible’, ‘poor’ or ‘average’ with a managerial response were taken from TripAdvisor.com (summer, 2012).

The first four hotels are in the 4-star category, whereas Hotel Imperial Vienna has 5 stars.

5.2 Content Analysis of Hotel Reviews and Managerial Responses

5.2.1 Hotel Rathaus Wine and Design

Hotel Rathaus Vienna Wein and Design is a four starred concept hotel in the 8th district of Vienna. It has a total of 39 rooms with the theme ‘wine and modern design’. Therefore, the guest can find a hint of wines everywhere: amongst the amenities, in the cheese at the breakfast buffet etc. If the guests of the hotel are interested, the hotel offers wine tasting throughout the year in the hotels wine lounge. Price ranges from 160€-400€ for a room. The hotel won the Vineus award in 2012 (Hotel Rathaus Wien, 2012).

Hotel Rathaus Wein and Design is ranked # 1 out of 354 hotels in Vienna (registered on TripAdvisor). It has a total of 306 reviews. Distribution of feedback from the hotels customers is depicted on the following page:

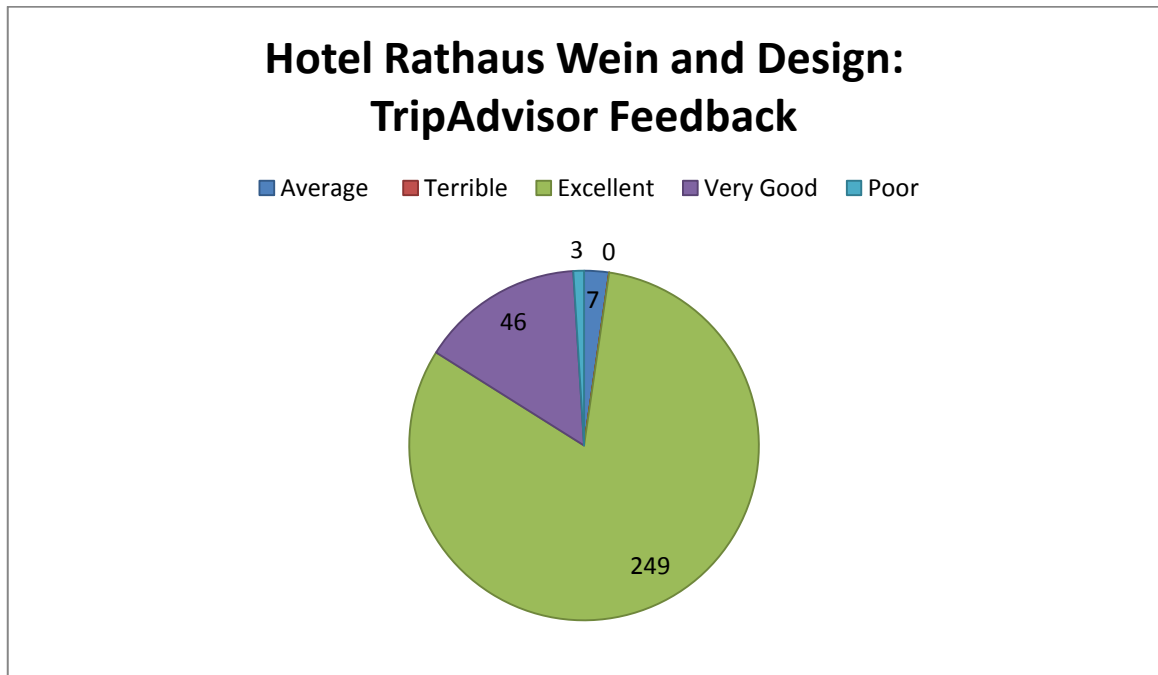


Figure 11: Hotel Rathaus Wein and Design – TripAdvisor Feedback

Source: TripAdvisor.com; Hotel Rathaus Wein and Design, 2012

Review # 1:

The review was written by a business man, thus the internet was a very important attribution for customer satisfaction. The “internet never worked” (amenities), and the customer had to “remind the reception, again and again, to reboot the system” (empathy of staff), to have the internet working. The internet seems like the main reason for the dissatisfaction however, complaints were also made towards tangible factors of the hotel: “didn’t like the hotel”, “just an old apartment building on a boring street”, “tiny reception”, “no lobby”, “bare dining room” and “zero feel either of class hotel experiences”. There was also a lack of other amenities in the customers opinion: “rooftop, spa...”.

(Review # 1, Hotel Rathaus Wein and Design, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Review # 2:

This review is rather emotional and accusing the hotel to have falsely written reviews on TripAdvisor: “only rationale behind all these great reviews is that owners or staff has many friends writing reviews on TripAdvisor”. Tangible

factors are mentioned as: “location... not good”, “hotel itself is desperate for a full facelift”, “dodgy, worn out”, impractical rooms, “closet small and open”, “sleep with shoes right where your head is”, average breakfast buffet, food poisoning after returning home, “poor value for money” and empathy of staff: “better level of attention” from the staff at other hotels.

(Review # 2, Hotel Rathaus Wein and Design, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Review # 3:

This customer stated: “probably the worst hotel we’ve stayed in”, “seedy neighborhood with amazing amounts of graffiti”, “dirty room, particularly the toilet”, “sloppy housekeeping standards” (tangible factors). Furthermore, the customer was “appalled at the attitude of the manager when we complained at checkout”, “imply that we were liars... worst example of handling a complaint we’ve ever seen and most unprofessional” (empathy of staff). The manager offered them an extra 2-night stay free of charge which, the customer perceived as “ill-judged in the light of the seriousness of our complaints”, “no attempt of professionalism” (empathy of staff), the husbands birthday were “completely ruined” (emotional).

(Review # 3, Hotel Rathaus Wein and Design, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Review # 4:

Review # 4 is about the location and staff: “location is very important and this hotel does not have it” (tangible factors) and “concierge very rude with everything” (empathy of staff).

(Review # 4, Hotel Rathaus Wein and Design, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Review # 5:

This review entails mostly complaints about the staff (empathy of staff) and (availability): “understaffed and lack knowledgeable front desk staff”, “no suggestions” to cafes and restaurants, “front desk could only offer us a map”, “housekeeper failed to replenish the bath soap and body lotion”, “staff needs to be more friendly, knowledgeable and service oriented”, “had to call the front desk to

request toiletries” (inconvenience), “no brochures or guidebooks... English language magazines” (amenities), “hotel does not have a lobby” (tangible), “thus a long line of guests waited to check-out”(availability).

(Review # 5, Hotel Rathaus Wein and Design, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Response # 1-5:

Only review # 1 and # 2 had a response on TripAdvisor from a manager. Both responses were written by the Hotel Manager, Conrad Schröpel. Both responses are very thorough and cover all the points of the customer complaints. Both responses start with thanking the customer for submitting the feedback and the Hotel Manager offers his apology for the service failure as well as an apology at the end.

“Thank you very much for submitting your review”, “I am more than sorry you had troubles with the internet” (review # 1). “First of all I would like to thank you for your stay with us and for taking your time to write a review about our hotel”, “I am sorry your stay in Vienna didn’t meet your requirements and you left the hotel unhappy”.

For review # 1, the response is very sincere regarding the lack of functional internet, and the Hotel Manager takes the customers “side”: “absolutely agree that internet is, besides other things, a MUST HAVE nowadays”. Furthermore, the situation is set as an external attribute: “breakdown of the W-Lan internet couldn’t be solved by any of us and during the weekend it was not possible for the company who was in charge for the internet to fix it”. The Hotel Manager points out that the internet provider has been changed for a more reliable one for future reference (customers). The Hotel Manager offered the customer a free night and the comment itself has a personal touch of high involvement: “to offer you a free night during your recent stay with us came really from deep inside of my heart”.

The following paragraphs regarding elements of the customers complaint sounds more like a sales speech to future customers than directed to the customer him/herself: “so many small and good restaurants in our lane, small boutiques and

designer shops, various bakeries, bars, hairdressers, playgrounds, two theaters, venues... not more than five minutes walking distance”, “serve you with more than 400 wines outside”, “my charming staff and myself are 24 hours available for all the wishes our appreciated guests may have!”. At the end of the response the Hotel Manager writes “Best regards” with his name and title.

The response to review # 2 is very emotional and defensive around the complaints that were raised. After thanking the guests, the Hotel Manager confronts the complaint with the following opening sentence: “Although we didn’t get the chance to react during your stay with us, I will try to explain some issues now, on the one hand as a response for you and on the other hand in order to inform other prospective guests”. The complaint about location is handled with justification: “we always point out in all written documents... in the 8th district... adjacent to the 1st district, which is true and visible in all city maps etc.” The Hotel Manager then continues summing up some of the popular attractions and ends the sentence with “....!”. Assumedly, to make a clear point of the hotel’s good location. In the end he compares the hotel to 1st district hotels: “I cannot see any advantages of some hotels, located in the 1st district, which are sometimes further away from above mentioned sights than our hotel is...?” The last sentence could be discussed to be defensive with a hint of mocking the customer who doesn’t know the Viennese districts like the Hotel Manager does.

Regarding the rooms the Hotel Manager becomes defensive and emotional, justifying the perceived outcome: “you stayed in one room only, so it is not fair to write about “rooms” in plural”, “as you have taken some photographs also portraying the closet, everyone can see the place for the shoes is not next to the head of the bed...!!!”

Concerning the lack of staff availability for the customer, the Hotel Manager responded: “I am sorry again to learn you obviously didn’t get the attention you desired. However, I think it is also part of well behaving of the staff if they don’t interfere”, “ways of communication are short and efficient. Most of our guests prefer this.” (comparison and justification).

Regarding the breakfast buffet and the food poisoning accusation, the Hotel Manager justifies, and underline his points and further rejects the complaint; “The hotel was fully booked during your stay with us and no one else was suffering from our products!”, “Sorry to learn, you came home with a food poisoning! A really serious affliction! I wish you all the best for a quick recovery: however doubt any relations to our cheese...!”

The last two paragraphs involves mainly justification of the perceived outcome regarding the tangible factors: “please understand our hotel dates back from the 1890ies”, “aware of the situation and of the challenges an old building holds”, “I may assure you my utmost attention for this issue as well”. Nevertheless, there is a slight disrespectfulness again in coming paragraph: “worn out rooms (plural again)” and “I hope, you have realized that...”.

In the end the Hotel Manager denies all accusations regarding writing fake-positive reviews of his hotel on TripAdvisor. He comments: “the accusation, we are writing out “own” reports is a real harsh accusation and needs a very clear statement: I promise, and you and all the other readers can rely on my truth and honesty... I felt free enough to communicate this accusation also to TripAdvisor!”, “I do not know if there are hotels, who act like this, but...! Again for our hotel I ask you to believe in our seriousness and our ongoing efforts to provide a warm atmosphere, with premium products and best service for our guests!”.

(Response # 1-5, Hotel Rathaus Wein and Design, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Conclusion

For Hotel Rathaus Wein and Design there was a clear pattern of the complaints. 5/5 complained about tangible factors and empathy of the staff. In review #1 the guest complained about the amenities (internet) and review # 5 a complaint about availability of staff was made. Perceived outcomes are very subjective, and each complaint should be taken seriously and dealt with accordingly even if they are not fair in the eyes of the manager (hence review # 2). However, when a manager sees that each negative review includes the interior of the hotel, professionalism

and helpfulness of his staff then it is a clear message that this needs to be revised. The manager response used to “service recovery tools” in form of making it personal (“I”, “we”, “us”), thanking the guest for the review and apologizing for the dissatisfaction. The responses were very long and precise to the point and done by the Hotel Manager himself. The average word count of the responses were 774 (one page), however only 2/5 reviews were answered.

5.2.2 Hotel Altstadt Vienna

Hotel Altstadt is a four starred hotel, built in 1902 and located in the 7th district of Vienna. The hotel is an old palace from the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy, which in 1991 was rebuilt into the hotel with 24 rooms and suites. The last ten years the hotel kept expanding and today it has a total of 42 rooms and suites, spread over five stories. The hotel has a big collection of art, which makes it a meeting point for artists, musicians as well as individual travelers. The hotel describes them as having a “diverse, stylish, colorful, classic, elegant, warm and friendly ambiance and atmosphere.” Price ranges from 125€ to 370€ and the hotel won the certificate of excellence in 2012 by TripAdvisor (Hotel Altstadt Vienna, 2012).

Hotel Altstadt Vienna is ranked # 2 out of 354 hotels in Vienna (registered on TripAdvisor). It has a total of 550 reviews. Distribution of feedback from customers is shown on the following page:

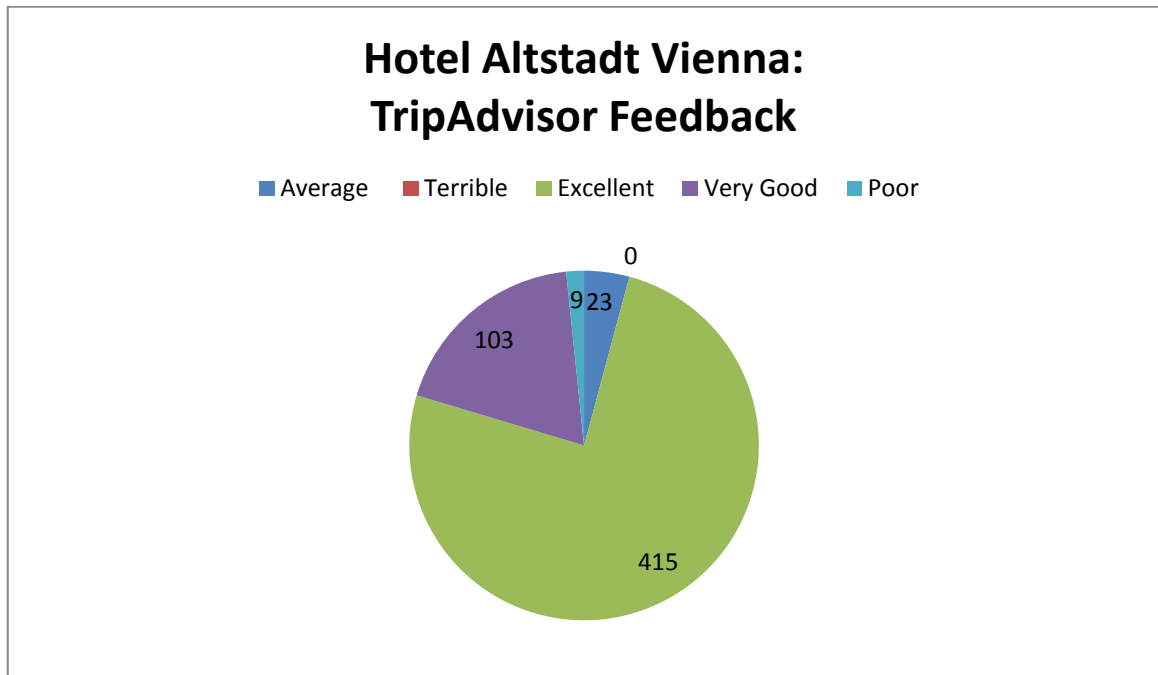


Figure 12: Hotel Altstadt – TripAdvisor Feedback

Source: TripAdvisor.com; Hotel Altstadt, 2012

Review # 1:

The customer booked the hotel because it was ranked # 1 on TripAdvisor (2011). Therefore, the customer had high expectations to the perceived outcome before purchase. The customer complaint entailed the interior of the hotel itself (tangible factors). Hotel was described with the words “old and musty”, “room very small”, “breakfast below average.” Moreover, “TV was too small – “BIG disappointment” (amenities). The customer ends the review with saying “way below our expectation of a # 1 hotel” (reliability).

(Review # 1, Hotel Altstadt, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Review # 2:

The customer was a “walked” guest due to problems at previously booked hotel. The customer complaint is mainly about tangible factors as the room size and the elevator lift: “tiny tiny room”, “extremely basic”, no personal touch, too little food variation offered at breakfast, “terrified” about the lift because there was no door. The customer was cold during night and wanted a blanket but the hotel had no

extras due to 100% occupancy rate, the staff called at 12.30am to tell the customer thus, waking him up (empathy of staff).

(Review # 2, Hotel Altstadt, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Review # 3:

The customer complaint entails both tangible factors, empathy of staff and amenities as dissatisfactory. Tangible factors are: “building across covered in graffiti” (view from customers room), “lifts are small”, “entrance not welcoming”, long walk to hotel room and looked like “pre-war apartment block”, “empty walls”, “too residential”, “no drawers” for small items, lack of clock/radio/Ipod docking station (amenities). The customer also complained about the church bells ringing on Sunday morning at 9.15 am. Furthermore, the customer ended up paying 160€ more for the room than what he thought he initially booked “I should not have had to pay for a room I did not request” (empathy of staff). Upon check-out the receptionist offered him an 80€ refund. The customer “appreciated this gesture of goodwill”. In the future the customer intends to reconfirm with the hotel, to ensure the room he gets is what he reserved and stay at a “more typical hotel – such a Sacher.”

(Review # 3, Hotel Altstadt, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Review # 4:

The customer complaint involved the size of the rooms: “rooms are microscopic, even by European standards”, the customer stated at the end of the review: “need to change hotels since this accommodation is too claustrophobic” (tangible factors).

(Review # 4, Hotel Altstadt, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Review # 5:

The customer complained about tangible elements and amenities: “floors are creaky”, “internet connection is patchy; allow one device to connect at a time”, “always have to wait as there is only one person in the reception area (availability).” “overall not a great experience and I don’t plan to stay again.”

(Review # 5, Hotel Altstadt, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Response # 1-5:

There were three different people responding to the five reviews. These include Alexandra Wallner the GM at Hotel Altstadt Vienna (review # 1), Leonie Lang: Marketing Department (review # 2) and Andrea Amann: Guest Relations Manager at Hotel Altstadt (review # 3,4,5). In the responses from the GM and the GR Manager, protocol is followed by thanking and apologizing to the guest. Example from responses to review # 1 and review # 5 are given below:

“Thank you very much for taking the time to provide us with your feedback regarding your experience in our house. We are truly very sorry to hear, that we have not met your expectations and we are very sorry that we let you leave disappointed” (Review # 1, GM Alexandra Wallner).

“Dear guest,

First of all thank you very much for your visit and for taking the time to provide us with your feedback concerning your experience in the Altstadt Vienna” (Review # 5, GRM Andrea Amann).

The opening paragraph from Leonie Lang (Marketing Depart.) is straight to the point and defensive in form of justifying the perceived service outcome. “We, the Altstadt Vienna team feel sorry that this guest did not enjoy the stay at our pension. However we would like to clear a few things: ... ”

She uses the term “we” and include all personnel in the message, possibly with the intention to ease the customer, however the message is not directly written to the customer, more to the general readers of TripAdvisor: “sorry that this guest did not enjoy...”.

Depending on what the complaint entailed, managers applied both internal and external attribution during the service recovery process;

Internal Attribution: “concerning the TV in the room we totally agree”, “sincerest apologies if we have neglected to inform you about additional breakfast offers”

(review # 1); “sorry about this, it is by far not within our policy to charge more than what has originally been confirmed”, “the mistake has been clearly on our side, therefore we would like to also re-emburse you the total amount of overpayment”, “entrance area you are absolutely right that it needs improvement” (review # 3); “please accept our apologies if we have not clearly indicated that you need one code per device” (review # 5).

External Attribution: “Due to new regulations, these elevators with no extra door (which can be found in a lot of houses in Vienna) have to be modified until December 2006” (review # 2); “some of the other things you mentioned unfortunately we have no influence on; ... church bells rings for the Sunday morning mass”, “graffiti’s” (on surrounding buildings) (review # 3); “size of design rooms ranges from 22sqm to 28sqm, which is absolutely within European standards” (review # 4).

All the responses use justification in form of explanation, to rectify the perceived service outcome, when the outcome is perceived “incorrect” or misguided by the hotel staff: “the keys however are of regular size... not at all frustrating to our guests nor hard to use” (review # 1), “only have 2 of the small rooms... sell them only if all other rooms are fully booked.. additionally we reduce the room rate for these 2 rooms”, “our elevator is not illegal” (review # 2), “as far as technology goes in the room there is a CD/DVD player in all Junior Suites and Suites” (review # 3), “size of design rooms ranges from 22m² to 28m², which is absolutely within European Standards (review # 4). “the rooms have been refurbished with a wooden fishbone parquet floor in order to keep the charm of such a historic building” (review # 5).

Review # 1,3,5 thanks the guest at the end for the complaint. At the end of review # 3, the GRM writes a rather long closing paragraph directed to all readers;

“We are very thankful to all the wonderful reviews by all of our guests, it is you who have brought us amongst the Top 5 Hotels within Vienna. Of course these reviews always depend on personal expectations and for everyone looking for a small special hotel we are definitely the right choice! We might not always find

the time to reply to all of the comments, but we can assure you we do them very seriously. So thank you again very much for taking the time to point out several things. It is a really big help in order to improve upon our service facilities.

Thank you.”

(Response # 1-5, Hotel Altstadt, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Conclusion

All five reviews involves a complaint about a tangible factor, 3/5 are dissatisfied with the amenities offered, two complains about the staff, # 1 because of 12.30 am call back and review # 3 because the receptionist booked a more expensive room than the customer wanted (and had to pay for it). There was one complaint about reliability, which concerns a discrepancy between the perceived performance and the hotels image. Thus, since it is the voting of TripAdvisor users that the hotel is ranked as # 2, the hotel has no direct influence on it, except for delivering great service to their customers every time. The perceived outcome is subjective and when people read on TripAdvisor that it is the second best hotel in Vienna, people may perceive the service and tangible factors to be higher and better quality (more of what a five star hotel would offer) than the accurate perceived level of performance for a four-starred hotel actually is. This may happen unless the customer read the hotel description before booking. This outcome is hard to avoid and something managers have to deal with accordingly. Concerning the manager responses the average word count was 331 words (1/3 of a page). All the responses included an apology, although in review # 2 the phrase was “feel sorry that his guest”, which is not a direct apology to the guest more a message to the TripAdvisor readers that the team regret that the customer was not happy with the perceived outcome. 5/5 uses justification in their response for the perceived outcome and they all involve terms as “we”, “I” and “us”. 4/5 thanks the guest for the review and the comments. 3/5 uses both internal and external attribution. It is fairly accurate the attributions assigned concerning the nature of the complaint. The managers were fair in taking the fault if that was the truth and agreeing with the guest where appropriate (2/5). 1/5 guests were offered a discount because of

the fault of the receptionist booking a more expensive room than the customer initially wanted.

5.2.3 Das Tyrol Small Luxury Hotel

Das Tyrol Small Luxury Hotel is a four starred hotel located in the 6th district of Vienna. It has a total of 30 deluxe rooms and studios, newly renovated in 2009. The rooms are stylish, trendy and comfortable - “a harmony between history and design”. Amenities such as private sauna, steam bath and light-therapy shower is offered as well as the basic attributes (Air conditioning, high-speed Internet via WLAN, satellite TV, radio, telephone, safe, mini bar, tea and coffee maker by Nespresso). The price for a room ranges from 109€-299€ (Das Tyrol Small Luxury Hotel, 2012).

Das Tyrol Small Luxury Hotel is ranked # 4 out of 354 hotels in Vienna (registered on TripAdvisor). It has a total of 454 reviews. Distribution of feedback from customers is shown below:

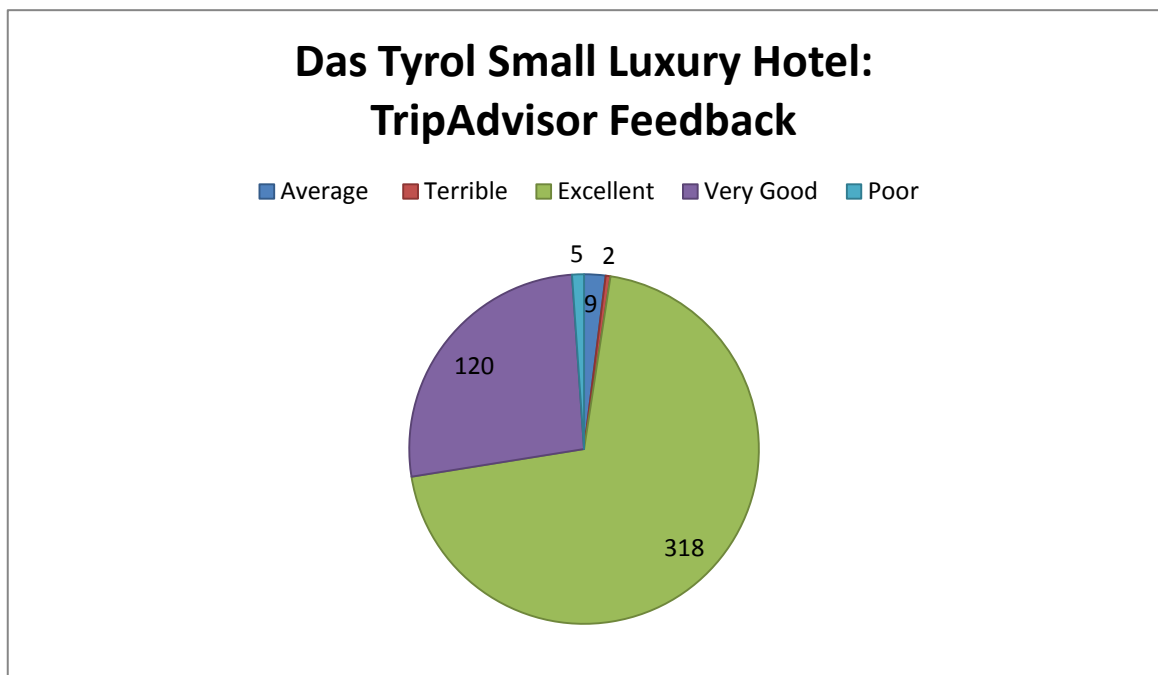


Figure 13: Das Tyrol Small Luxury Hotel – TripAdvisor Feedback

Source: Tripadvisor.com; Das Tyrol Small Luxury Hotel, 2012

Review # 1:

This reviewer never stayed at the hotel because the hotel was overbooked: “had a “problem” with their reservation system and they had transferred me to another hotel, which turned out to be of a lower category”, “concierge told me that they were overbooking their place to be sure that it would be full, and that they were often getting their overflow”, “be cautious when booking”.

(Review # 1, Das Tyrol Small Luxury Hotel, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Review # 2:

This customer faced the same problem as the review above; overbooking: “no one called to let us know in advance even though they had our contact information and they had sent us a second confirmation”, “no apologies, no offer for help or call a taxi” (empathy of staff), the hotel which the customer was walked to had less stars than the original hotel, customer is overall “very disappointed in this service” (reliability).

(Review # 2, Das Tyrol Small Luxury Hotel, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Review # 3:

This review concerns the booking site of the hotel. The customer wanted to book 4 nights over New Years however, due to a mix-up on the site he booked for the present day and only found out when “I received a bill for my no-show at the hotel”. The customer calls the hotel and asks if he can get a discount for the originally planned 4 days over New Years, since he already payed 4 days. However, the hotel does not refund the money and the guest has to pay full price twice for the 4 days. The customer is upset because “It would have been nice for the hotel management to be understanding of this mistake and to offer me some kind of discount on my stay, rather than basically telling me “too bad about the 160€ you spend because of your mistake, but we would welcome you to stay here in the future.” The guest cancelled his 4 days he had booked over New Years.

(Review # 3, Das Tyrol Small Luxury Hotel, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Review # 4:

The customer wrote the review one year after staying at the hotel: “I have waited a year to write my review, trying to put my disappointment behind me, but here I am.” Complaint entails a few topics: “the front desk staff was pretty cold and not helpful the few times we asked” (empathy of staff) and the second part of the complaint entails uncleanness of bed sheets (or lack of fresh ones): 2nd night the “linens not changed, just smoothed. The next night was the same only more so, decidedly unfresh, but it was very late... did not call housekeeping and have them changed”, 3rd night: “bed had been made up with original linens and the housekeeper said that there were no clean bed sheets” (tangible). Customer then “speaks to front desk and they had words with the housekeeper who proceeded to grudgingly change the bed linens with withering looks” (empathy of staff). The customer him/herself states that it was their mistake “not to alert management to our dissatisfaction” and in their opinion “minimum requirements are a fresh bed, clean towels and hot water”. Reliability is also mentioned here as: “for a supposedly ‘small luxury hotel’ they failed miserably in this very basic criteria.”

(Review # 4, Das Tyrol Small Luxury Hotel, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Review # 5:

This complaint is concerning the taxi that the hotel ordered for the customer to get to the airport. The customer felt they had been ripped off: “we do not need to be taken advantage of even if we are tourists! A good hotel watches out for their customers” (reliability). The customer thought that the taxi fare was 30€, where the front desk informed them it was 36€, but they ended up paying 41€ because “he came in advance and waited for us in the lobby... while we checked out”. The customer was upset because the perceived situation was that the taxi driver was trying to fool the customer: “he seemed to be very good friends with the front desk guy while he was supposedly waiting!”. Furthermore, the customer also said: “I paid my internet connection and it never worked from the room!” (amenities).

(Review # 5, Das Tyrol Small Luxury Hotel, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Response # 1-5:

Except for review # 4, Ines Weissensteiner, the Guest Relation Manager and the Marketing and Sales Manager at Das Tyrol Small Luxury Hotel, responds to the complaints. For review # 4 the signed person is “Resonanz Team, Sales and Marketing Manager”.

Response # 1,2 apologizes in the opening paragraph.

Response # 3,4 and 5 does not apologize but opens the response thanking the customer for the review.

Response # 1 takes full responsibility and keeps it as an internal attribution: “Unfortunately we were overbooked and we really tried to find a beautiful hotel”. Agrees and understand customer: “we understand very well that you are very upset”.

Response # 2: The response entails an explanatory excuse: “we had this overbooking because of urgent technical problems in two of our guest rooms (internal) and so we were not able to communicate this to Ambriole before the arrival... ”; justification and rejection of the complaint: “we did offer to call a taxi and we did apologize for the inconvenience and it is not true, that we arranged a room in a 3 star hotel. We selected a 4 star hotel in adequate location. And it is not true that we did not try to contact Ambriole”. However, the manager states in the end a follow up will be done: “we still try to get in contact with Ambriole to find a way of compensation for the anger and inconveniences caused by this matter and hope to clear this disagreeable situation.”

Response # 3 is an explanation and justification of why they could not provide a discount for the mis-booked 4 days. They state it as an internal attribution: “As our hotel was fully booked and hotels have to keep booked rooms until next day 7am, we really had a loss out of this no show booking.” In the end the manager clarifies the accusation of tricky booking system for future reference: “is very clear and easy to handle in all stages of the booking process. We need to refuse against the allegation of providing a tricky online booking!”, “We hope that we could explain our situation and thank you again for your sincere feedback.”

Response # 4 and 5 both ‘blame’ the customer for the perceived outcome: “as you already mentioned in your review, it would have helped telling the management (or the reception desk) about your dissatisfaction”, “The driver arrived punctually and in time at the hotel to take you to the Vienna Airport at 7.15am. As he had to wait for you 20 minutes until 7.35am he added a surcharge of 5€ for the delay which is usual in case of such delays caused by passengers... he explained this surcharge to you and you did accept this without any complaint.” The end of response # 5 has a bit of a hostile attitude: “of course every guest can call his own taxi company... do not take any responsibility for the quality... we would not recommend taking other taxis than the hotel suggests. We are unlucky that our hotel is evaluated on TripAdvisor in such a bad way for a service we arranged for you.”

(Response # 1-5, Das Tyrol Small Luxury Hotel, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Conclusion

The pattern of the complaints for this hotel is unordinary compared to the first two hotels. Only one complained about the tangible factors and 2 complained regarding the empathy of staff. 3/5 complained over availability of hotel (all due to overbooking) and reliability of the hotel image. All customers expected more from the hotel than originally received. One complaint was regarding the amenities offered (internet).

All the responses included the terms “we”, “I” and “our” and 3/5 thanked the guest for the review. 3/5 responses included justification, an apology and internal attribution. Only one used external attribution and one response included an agreement towards perceived outcome and an explanation towards why it has happen. One response uses an internal excuse; however the manager does apologize as well. Average word count was 225 words (1/4 of a page) and in general the responses were professional but very quick to justify the outcome.

5.2.4 Hollmann Beletage

Holmann Beletage is a four starred hotel located in the 1st district of Vienna. They offer 25 large sized rooms in a house from the 19th century. Their style is

“timeless architecture with state of the art - comfort and charming tributes to the cultural identity of Vienna”. Furthermore it is an “innovative living experience – with all the amenities of a large hotel”. Price ranges from 140€-390€ (Hollmann Beletage, 2012).

Hollmann Beletage is ranked # 5 out of 354 hotels in Vienna (registered on TripAdvisor). It has a total of 394 reviews. Distribution of feedback from customers is shown below:

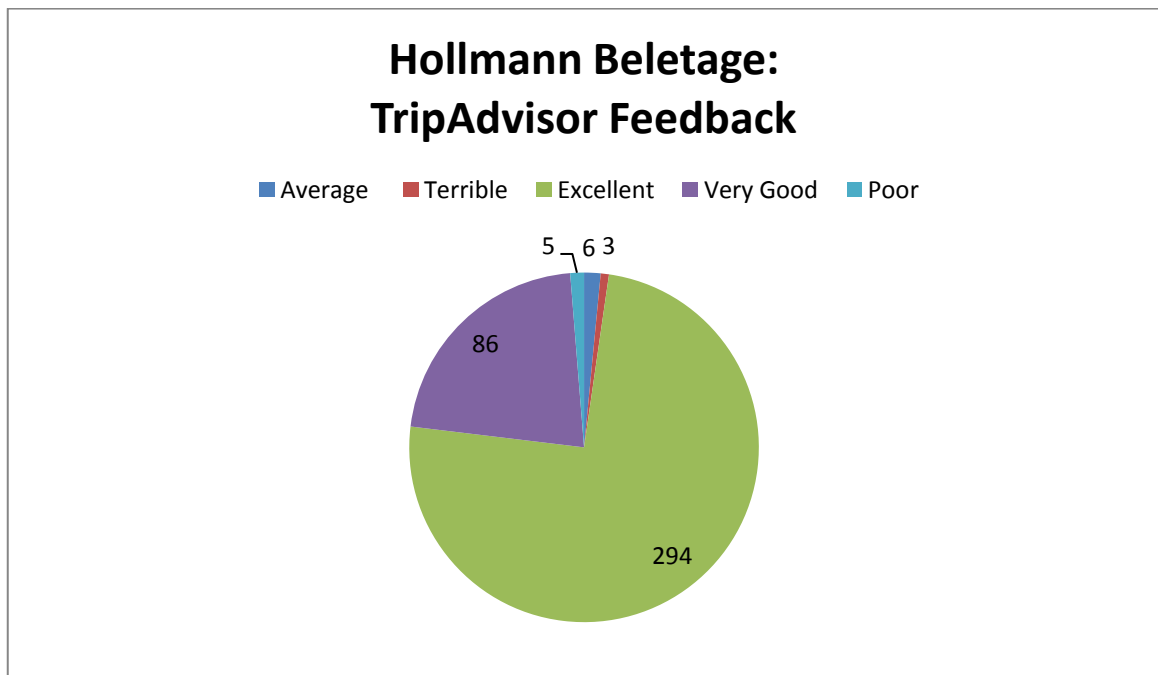


Figure 14: Hollman Beletage– TripAdvisor Feedback

Source: Tripadvisor.com; Hollman Beletage, 2012

Review # 1:

The complaint involves a mix up with the customers booking. The customer booked for 3 days but upon arrival only 2 days had been reserved. From the customer perspective the receptionist did not take responsibility for the mistake at first: “the lady at the reception made it appear as if it had been our mistake”, however, later on when customer shows the confirmation email “she admitted that she had made a mistake.” The complaint goes into further detail about how the hotel handled the overbooking: “she was not willing to cancel on whoever was

arriving later, thus, rather preferred inconveniencing us who had already arrived.”, “there was a lukewarm apology and some help transferring us to the Le Meridien”, “Hollmann did not give us a discount to make up for their mistake”. In the end empathy of staff is mentioned: “I have never encountered such arrogance and inflexibility dealing with reception staff”.

(Review # 1, Hollmann Beletage, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Review # 2:

A few attributes are mentioned in the review. Empathy of staff: “reception girl is useless in every sense of the word”, “WHAT SERVICE? She is incompetent, cold, non-chalance and just useless”, “she either makes a face when she is asked or she gives you an answer that doesn’t help” (still about the receptionist). Furthermore the receptionist told the customer false information about the return policies in stores (no money back, only store credit) and she did not know how much a ticket for the train costs. Availability is mentioned as well: “reception is only available from 9am-5pm”. Tangible factors: “no view” and “phone card didn’t work from the room phone”. Lastly the customer mentioned reliability: “service is part of the rate that we paid for and we expect at least a minimum form of service from this front desk person.”

(Review # 2, Hollmann Beletage, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Review # 3:

Customer complaint entails mostly tangible factors: “floors creaked”, “no wall decoration”, “cannot watch television from the bed”, “extremely undersized screen” (of TV), “lights stay on when closet doors are closed”, “bathroom is small”, “bathroom floor wet after showering”, “not one drawer in the room”, “inadequate A/C”, “the key lock on the door did NOT function properly”, -“twice we needed front desk assistance”. Last point made the guest nervous to come home after the reception would close at 9pm in case they wouldn’t be able to enter their room (availability and inconvenience for customer). At breakfast there were “no introductions or explanations” (empathy of staff). The customer ends the complaint writing “we expect far more than the H-B offered” (reliability).

(Review # 3, Hollmann Beletage, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Review # 4:

This is a very short review only concerning the tangible factors of the hotel: “room was extremely small, the bathroom was as tiny as my... And the fruit plate was grey of bad fruit.”

(Review # 4, Hollmann Beletage, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Review # 5:

The last review concerns tangible attributes as well: “no air conditioning”, “hated the pillows, as others have said”.

(Review # 5, Hollmann Beletage, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Response # 1-5:

For review # 1,2,5, “Manager at Hollmann Beletage” responded, whereas Philip Patzel, the GM of the hotel responded to review # 3,4.

Response # 1 apologizes in the opening paragraph but does not thank the customer for the review. All responses summarize the things the customer DID like and mentions in the review.

Response # 3,4,5 all use justification and list the reasons for the outcome. Example from review # 5: “Indeed- at the time of your stay – we did not yet have our air-condition activated. 2 reasons: ... (lists the reasons)”. In review # 4 the customer complains about the room size, which the GM justifies and says that it is the customers own fault cause that is the room he ordered and it is described on the website that it is “only” 20m2 big and then moves on the list the square meters and attributes of the different rooms the hotel offers.

Response # 2 is not directed to the customer who complained but a general message to all the TripAdvisor readers: “Dear TripAdvisor Users, We are always very thankful for your honest reviews and feedbacks.” Furthermore the manager justifies the rude receptionist with external causes: “We are very sorry that guests had to undergo this “bad” service experience, which was in fact due to personal

family-problems of our receptionist” -not very professional of a manager to mention this in an online forum when the guest who complained about the receptionist gave the name (Dorothea) as well.

(Response # 1-5, Hollmann Beletage, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Conclusion

Concerning the complaints, 4/5 was regarding tangible attributes and 3 about the empathy of staff. When it is more than half the complaints that entail the same problem, management has to react. However, the manager responses mainly involve a justification in a bulletin format, than actually taking responsibility for the complaint. The management responses had the attitude of “this is how we do it – take it or leave it”. An interesting approach by the managers here was to list all the positive attributes the customer mentioned in the beginning of the response and then justify the negative attributes afterwards. The manager responses had an average of 186 words so overall they were very short.

5.2.5 Hotel Imperial Vienna

Hotel Imperial is five starred hotel located on Kärntner Ring in the 15th district of Vienna. The hotel is the old Palace of Württemberg and was transformed to a hotel in 1873. 138 rooms are offered with the following amenities: “large bathrooms, bath robes, sound systems with CD players and extra large TV-sets, two external telephone lines with high-speed internet access and air-conditioning. Guests of our suites are privileged to receive various additional amenities free of charge, as well as to be served by their personal butler”. Hotel Imperial is part of the Starwood hotels and room price ranges from approx. 400€ (25-30 m²) to approx. 3000€ (160 m²) (Hotel Imperial, 2012).

Hotel Imperial is ranked # 6 out of 354 hotels in Vienna (registered on TripAdvisor). It has a total of 307 reviews. Distribution of feedback from customers is shown below:

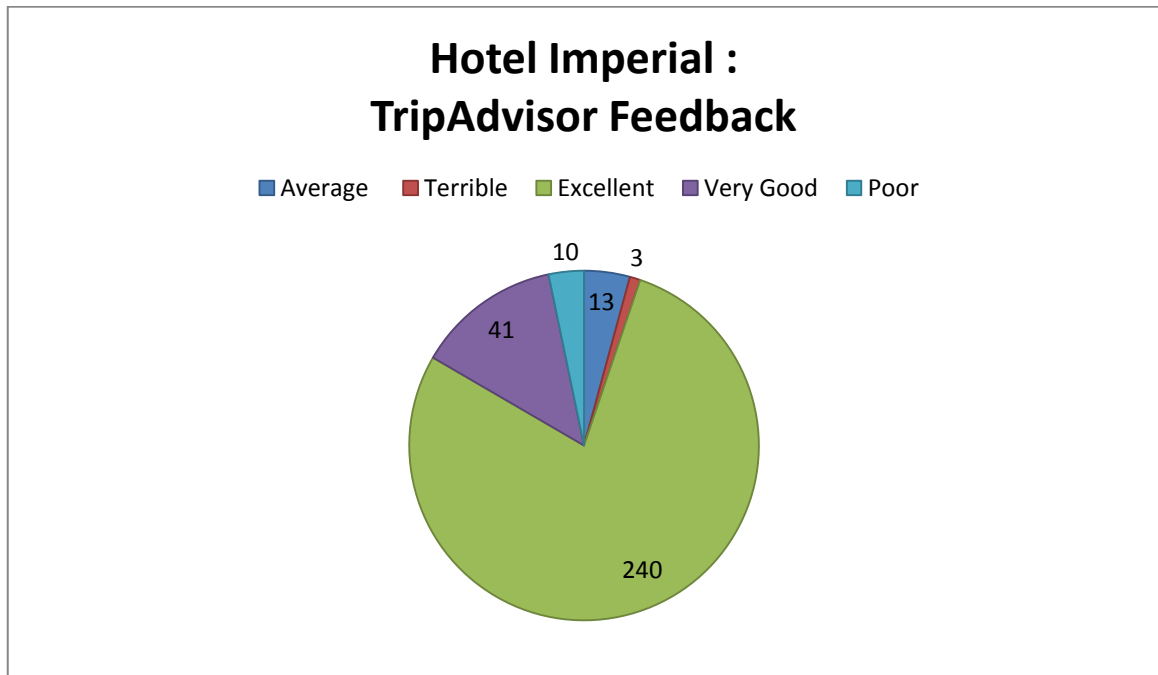


Figure 15: Hotel Imperial – TripAdvisor Feedback

Source: Tripadvisor.com; Hotel Imperial, 2012

Review # 1:

This customer complains about the F&B they had at the hotel for Christmas Eve. The courses are described as: “another tasteless... vaguely resemble the divine taste of a ripe creamy avocado, necessary to scrape it off the plate, neither plentiful or stuffed with anything worthwhile, overcooked, veal was substituted by something in the seafood category, no sign of taste whatsoever, no sign of Christmas music” (tangible).

(Review # 1, Hotel Imperial, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Review # 2:

This review concerns the empathy of staff: “very poor stay in terms of service levels”, “do their jobs but do not go beyond what is expected, as in they do not ‘anticipate’ needs as it is usually expected from hotels of this category” and “set your expectations right with regards to service levels ... if service is important to you stay somewhere else”(reliability). Tangible factors: “no swimming pool”.

(Review # 2, Hotel Imperial, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Review # 3:

This customer complains about the tangible factor of the room being outdated and “very old fashioned” (which is the concept of the hotel being the old palace). Amenities, such as the gym was “incredibly small”. Empathy of staff described as: “the front desk and concierge like to ignore your presence”. “this is no way near the quality of a 5-star hotel” (reliability).

(Review # 3, Hotel Imperial, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Review # 4:

Complaint entails amenities: “internet access, in-room entertainment, and room service are behind expected standards for a luxury hotel” (reliability). Empathy of staff: “The real character of the hotel, however, rears its ugly head in the behavior of the front desk staff... the front desk management is populated with arrogant, inconsiderate and inflexible people.” Furthermore the customer accuses the hotel to have raised the hotel room price because the guest of the hotel was stuck due to the Icelandic volcano eruption 2010.

(Review # 4, Hotel Imperial, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Review # 5:

Tangible factors concerning cleanliness of room: “room has not been tidied up after the previous visitor. The toilet bowl has not been washed off... rubbish from a previous visitor, thick dust layer”. The customer was served cold coffee at the breakfast and asked twice before hot coffee was served to him/her. Furthermore, the customer complained about the availability of English breakfast on the menu.

(Review # 5, Hotel Imperial, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Response # 1-5:

All of the responses were written by the GM, Oscar del Campo and are all very similar in the response format. All five customers receive an apology, he always uses terms as “I” or “we” and 4/5 responses thanks the guest for providing the feedback. A nice approach here to smooth the customers’ unsatisfied state is that he encourages them to contact him directly if they shall ever return and he will

make sure they will have a great stay. It is perceived as the top of the hierarchy, taking responsibility and special interest in the individual customer. Review #3, 4 was received as an internal attribution and dealt with accordingly: “Rest assured that we have taken your feedback very serious and will be reviewing your comments with our Front Office staff.” All responses were polite, professional and consist on average of 239 words (1/4 of a page).

(Response # 1-5, Hotel Imperial, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Conclusion

Hotel Imperial is the only five star hotel in this research and naturally the expected service outcome is raised accordingly by the customer. Reliability (perceived image compared to actual perceived outcome) was mentioned twice and was regarding the hotels cleanliness and staff. Empathy of staff was mentioned in three of the complaints which, is a clear message to management to train their staff or hire staff that are more hospitality orientated and service minded. All reviews were answered by the GM himself which shows high level of involvement and that the GM takes the complaints seriously.

5.3 Discussion of Results

Throughout the content analysis the following table was used to keep track of what type of complaint was being raised by the customer. The results were the following:

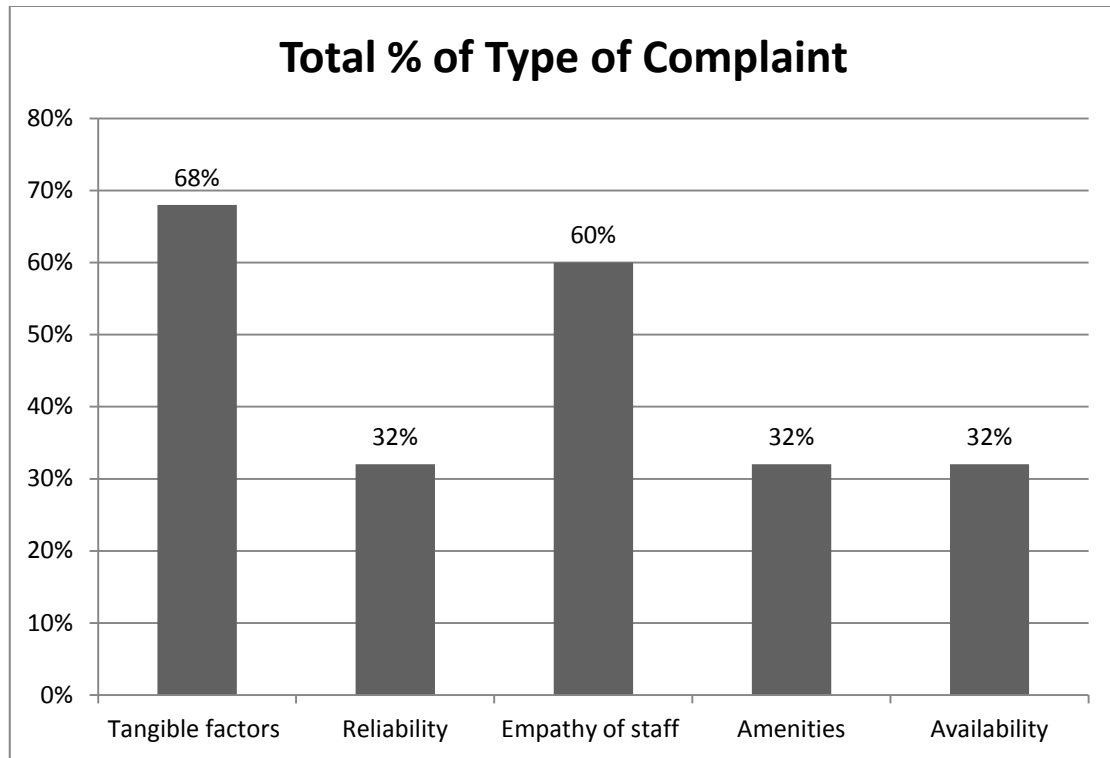


Table 1: Total % of Type of Complaint

(For full table and individual results of hotels please refer to Appendix 8.1)

Hypothesis 1: Tangible factors (room appearance, hotel appearance, cleanliness, F&B, location) influences customer satisfaction the most.

Tangible factors were the top 1 attribute, which was complained about with a total of 68%. The complaints were mainly about the maintenance of the hotel interior, room size, location and cleanliness. Most of the customer complaints seemed justified however, some of the complaints occurred, because the customer misunderstood the hotel concept and therefore had too high expectations to the service delivery. Consequently, a customer at Hollmann Beletage complained about the room being very small, however on Hollmann Beletage's website the

rooms are clearly described along with the size of the rooms in square meters. Concerning interior, a customer from Hotel Imperial said “rooms are extremely dated with very old fashioned decor”, whereas the GM from the hotel clarifies that the hotel is the old residence of Prince from Württemberg from 1865-1873 and the style of this era was kept ever since. Which is also clear from Hotel Imperials own website. Regarding housekeeping and cleanliness there were only a few complaints, but all are justified since this is a basic attribute and minimum requirement, regardless of the hotels stars or ranking.

As theories in the literature review stated, *quality* is highly subjective (Garvin, 1984). Oliver (1997) even explains if the customer expectations are unfair and too high, their perceived quality of the service outcome will be low, even if the outcome is satisfactory when measured objectively. The disconfirmation paradigm seems to be the main predicament for the hotels regarding the tangible factors. The theories by Zeithalm and Bitner (1996), suggests the only way to avoid this is through alternating the image the customer receives through PR, physical image, advertising and actual experiences at the hotel.

(TripAdvisor.com; Hotel Imperial, 2012)

Hypothesis 2: Reliability (accurate perceived performance compared to hotel’s image) influences customer satisfaction the most.

64% stated that their *expectations* had not been met throughout the service delivery. Discrepancy between expectations to the service outcome and realized perceived performance was mentioned in 1/3 of the complaints. There can be two reasons for this outcome:

1) Customers that choose their hotel through TripAdvisor might only make their decision based on other users’ reviews: “We selected Hollmann Beletage because of TripAdvisor reviews” and “Definitely way below our expectation of a # 1 hotel”. The problem here is that the customer does not look at what style the hotel is, what they offer and how many stars it has before booking it. For example Das Tyrol Small Luxury Hotel is ranked # 4 on TripAdvisor but is classified as a

Bed&Breakfast hotel (by the hotel themselves) and not 5 star luxury hotel. Some people might misunderstand the ranking system on TripAdvisor, relating the rank to stars and type of hotel. Furthermore, perceived service outcome is a very subjective matter and if TripAdvisor users rate it likewise, the ratings become rather unreliable. A more objective approach would be to compare ones experience with the hotel's image – so compare it to what the hotel promised to deliver.

2) Another reason for discrepancy of the hotels image could be inflicted by the hotel itself. This could be done by over-selling or over-promising themselves through marketing campaigns, the hotels own website or other channels. For example 'Das Tyrol Small Luxury Hotel' which is ranked # 4, had the most complaints concerning this attribute (3/5). *Luxury* comes with high expectations and portrays a certain image to everyone, so unless the hotel does offer luxurious attributes to their customers they 'trap' themselves in a misconception they cannot live up to. In a review they state to the complaining customer that they are a Bed&Breakfast Hotel, so having *luxury* in their name is sending an image bound to be misunderstood by customers and reviewers alike. Additionally, a customer from Hotel Altstadt wrote: "It is not a 'hotel' and should not be listed as such. It is more like a B&B." This type of discrepancy is easy to avoid because it is in the hands of the hotels themselves. Naturally it should be avoided because it causes dissatisfaction and will make the customer complain.

The result of this hypothesis comes in close correlation to hypothesis # 1 and the findings by Zeithalm *et al.* (1996). It is a question of functional quality: the marketing strategies carried out by a hotel have an enormous impact on an organizations image with both positive and negative outcomes. As mentioned it may be that TripAdvisor's ranking system misleads potential customers by giving them a higher expectation and wrong image of the hotel. If so, potentially TripAdvisor, in cooperation with the hotels, has to change the presentational set-up of the hotels on the TripAdvisor web-page. The goal would be to portray the hotels in a more 'correct' manner. A suggestion could be to divide the original

assigned stars in separate ranking categories. By doing so, a B&B hotel would not be compared to a five starred hotel.

(TripAdvisor.com; Hotel Altstadt, 2012), (TripAdvisor.com; Das Tyrol Small Luxury Hotel, 2012)

Hypothesis 3: Empathy of staff (promptness and helpfulness, good communication, customer understanding, friendliness) influences customer satisfaction the most.

60% of the customer reviews involved a complaint about empathy of staff. This is a fairly high percentage along with the fact that this can be avoided to a large extent by improving the hiring procedure and through employee training. As discussed in the literature review, the tourism industry is a man-made product - an experience through people. People have bad days but there is a certain level of professionalism to be kept while at work. All five reviews from Hotel Rathaus Wein and Design had a staff complaint and in this case it is a clear message to the management they have to take action and improve the attitude of their employees. Likewise, Hotel Imperial and Hollmann Beletage had 3/5 customer complaints concerning staff members. Both hotels understand the vital importance of this attribute and sent the right message by replying to the complaint: “we have taken your feedback very seriously and will be reviewing your comments with our Front Office staff” (TripAdvisor.com; Hotel Imperial, 2012), “we will intensify our personnel training and let them undergo further trainings and courses” (TripAdvisor.com; Hollmann Beletage, 2012).

The complaints all complied with the *10 attributes of hotel most commonly complained about* by Ford and Heaton (2012). The complaints were raised if the receptionist didn’t know basic things as the cost for a one-day train ticket (“# 9: Employees who does not know what is happening”), or if the concierge, bell-man or receptionist avoided eye-contact and was unwilling to help the customer (“# 6: Impersonal Service”). These elements are part of the employees’ job description

and surely people have bad days but hardly every day. Empathy of staff has an influence on customer satisfaction as it is a big part of the perceived service experience. Thus, this complaint should be minimized as much as possible since, it is an internal attribute and the responsibility of the manager.

(TripAdvisor.com; Hotel Imperial, 2012)

Hypothesis 4: Amenities as TV, internet, sauna, spa, pool, and fitness center influences customer satisfaction the most.

Amenities were mentioned in 32% of the complaints, of which 50% was about the internet connection (or lack thereof). Today internet is more a necessity than an amenity. Hence, it will cause dissatisfaction for most customers if it isn't offered or not working. The hotels which were included in this research were not the typical business hotels but more tourist hotels. If a business hotel had a 'weak' internet connection, the amount of complaints for this attribute would possibly be remarkably higher. However, *amenities* are stated as one of the seven facets for satisfactory service delivery by Wind *et al.* (1989) with no specification of the hotel category. In conclusion there are two possibilities for this finding: Wind *et al.* (1989) theory of amenities being important can be rejected, or the hotels amenities were overall satisfactory. The hypothesis remains inconclusive.

Hypothesis 5: Availability of registration and check-out, bellman, concierge secretarial services, car rental and chauffeur services and general maintenance.

Availability was mentioned in 32% of the complaints and was also based on Wind *et al.* (1989) seven facets of hotel attributes. It mainly involved issues with overbooking and waiting time at the reception due to lack of staff members. Both factors are internal attributes and something the hotel can control. However, overbooking is a vital exercise in revenue management. A hotel will never stop exercising overbooking, because there will always be a certain percentage of no-shows. Hospitality is a business, hence revenue and maximizing profits are naturally a main aim for the hotel. However, if the hotel constantly has to walk their guests – a revision of the guest statistics should be made. If 3/5 complaints

involves a ‘warning’ that the hotel is constantly overbooked and ones booking is not secured, it could cause great damage for prospective new customers. Same conclusion applies here as for hypothesis # 4: Wind *et al.* (1989) theory of availability as important can be rejected or the hotels availability were overall satisfactory.

Regarding the second part of the research questions, manager responses, the same system and table were used. The results are the following:

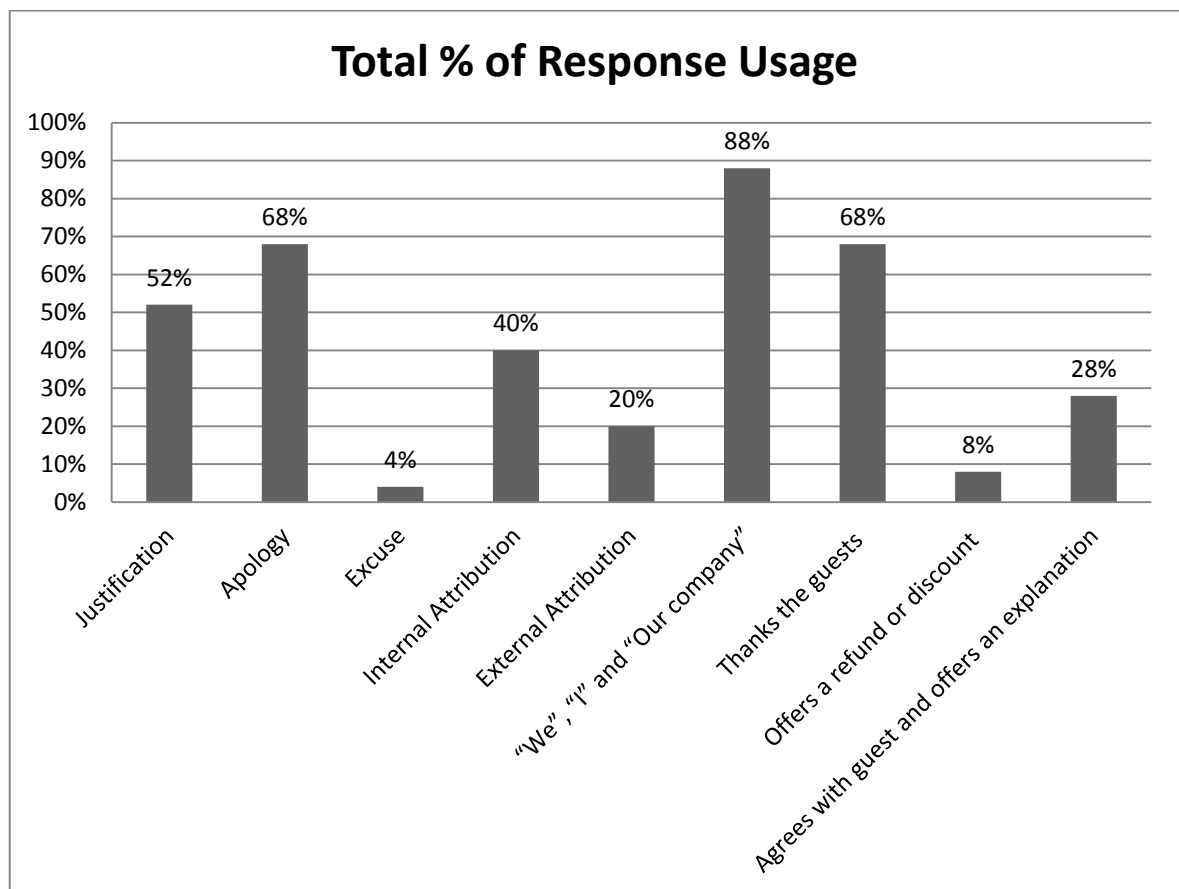


Table 2: Total % of Response Usage

(For full table and individual results of hotels please refer to Appendix 8.2)

Hypothesis 6: Excuse is being used more when dealing with a customer complaint.

One manager response included an excuse and was regarding an overbooking due to technical problems in two of the guest rooms. Technical problems can include

many things and may be a valid reason for putting the rooms Out of Order. However, there was no communication to the guest about this incident prior to the arrival, which is why this incident comes across as an excuse. It may an excuse for the hotel having overbooked and not wanted to tell the customer the truth. Furthermore, it was New Year eve so an overbooking is very feasible. However, this only appeared in one case and there were no direct complaints about staff managers using excuses when dealing with a complaint. Therefore, the theory by Crant and Bateman (1993) and Tata (2000) can be disregarded based on these results. In order to test the theory of excuse being perceived positively another test environment needs to be applied and carried out.

Hypothesis 7: Justification is being used more when dealing with a customer complaint.

Justification was used in 52% of the responses, so indeed a popular approach when dealing with service recovery. In most cases the justification of the perceived service outcome came with an apology because management realized that complaints often arise from misinterpretations, miscommunications and a subjective perspective from the customer him/herself. Justification is a good approach when done in a professional and considerate manner. The manager at Hotel Rathaus Wein and Design responded this way: “I am sorry your stay in Vienna didn’t meet your requirements and you left the hotel unhappy”, (the customer complained about the location of the hotel), “we always point out in all written documents (homepage etc.) as well personally we are located in Vienna’s traditional Josefstadt, the 8th district...” When the response is written in a polite and sincere manner, the explanation of the outcome justifies the service failure so other readers understand the situation. Hence, other managers had a ‘harsher’ tone in the response, which is less sympathetic than the first example: “we would like to clear a few things...” followed by a contradiction/justification to the complaints that were raised. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that the two response forms were mainly Procedural- and Interactional Justice.

Justification found in the sample of manager responses, is very similar to an explanation and clarification of the perceived outcome. This may be accepted by the customer if it comes with an apology and for the purpose of potential customers – for them to have two sides of the story.

It was somewhat expected that the use of *justification* would be higher than 52%. Solely in this thesis, *justification* as an element of service recovery is mentioned by nine different researchers. Namely Chebat and Slusarczyk (2005), Collier and Bienstock (2006), Del Río-Lanza *et al.* (2009), Maxham III and Netemeyer (2003), Schoefer (2008), Schoefer and Ennew (2005), Wirtz and Mattila (2004), Greenberg (1990), Bobocel and Farrell (1996) and Conlon and Murray (1996). Justification seems to be a widely accepted approach and therefore it should be applied in more of the manager responses.

(TripAdvisor.com; Hotel Rathaus Wein and Design, 2012)

Hypothesis 8: Apology is being used more when dealing with a customer complaint.

An apology was included in 68% of the responses from the managers at the various hotels. Some apologies were directed towards the customer perceived failed experience whereas other apologized directly for the service failure itself. An example from Hotel Imperial is given: “Please accept my personal and sincere apologies for any lack of attention you *may* have suffered during your honeymoon trip to our hotel” compared to: “I am more than sorry you had troubles with the internet during your stay with us”.

In addition, there was a slight difference in *how* the apology was delivered. In some cases this could raise the question of sincerity behind the apology: “please accept our apologies if we have not clearly indicated that you need one code per device.” The word *if*, indicate the alternative that the hotel have explained the guest that he/she needs one code per device, and in this case, the apology does not apply anymore. Hence, the phrasing of the apology: ‘please accept our apologies for not clearly indicating that one need one code per device’. When phrasing it

this way the manager takes responsibility for the service outcome and apologizes. Even if they did tell the customer about the internet code, they do not lose anything when apologizing and taking responsibility for the failure. The customer has already blamed the hotel staff and will not change his/her opinion. An apology goes a long way, which is also clearly indicated by the results and research findings by Greenberg (1990) and the Ritz-Carlton Complaint Handling Manual (2012).

(TripAdvisor.com; Hotel Altstadt Vienna, 2012)

(TripAdvisor.com; Hotel Imperial, 2012)

Hypothesis 9: Service failures are connected with internal attribution.

Most complaints occurred due to internal attribution with a total percentage of 40. First of all, it is positive that the managers take responsibility for the service failures and do not blame the outcome to be an external attribution. However, management has to realize that internal attribution occurs from a stable attribution, meaning that they have control over the outcome. As stated by McCole *et al.* (2003), only claiming the responsibility is not enough in these incidents, but minimizing the errors in the future is of equal importance. Moreover, as discussed by Bitner *et al.* (1990) if the service failure is due to service system failure (internal), the customer is likely to change the service provider. If so, this means that the service provider will not even be given a chance to recover the service experience. Thus, emphasizing the importance of minimizing the internal attribution.

Hypothesis 10: Service failures are connected with external attribution.

External attribution occurred in 20% of the cases. There are many factors in a hotel that are out of the service provider's control. Sometimes a failure will happen due to an unstable attribution and the important part is for management to deal with it accordingly. The manager from Hotel Altstadt had a customer complain about the internet connection. The manager claimed all responsibility and apologized to the guest and thereafter informed the customer and future

guests that the internet provider had been changed. If an external attribution constantly causes problems then the management has to take action, otherwise the service quality will decrease.

Hypothesis 11: The service provider thanks the guests for feedback and comments given in the review.

68% of all the manager responses included a “thank you” for the review the customer submitted. Naturally some were more elaborate than others however, the manager responses showed a general understanding of the importance of customer feedback. Following is an example from one of the managers: “First of all I would like to thank you for your stay with us and for taking your time to write a review about our hotel. Of course, we are more than happy about positive reviews, but also consider the negative ones either as inspiration for further efforts to make our hotel even better respectively those reviews allow us to respond in order to clarify various issues”. One could argue that this result should be 100%, because whether the complaint is legit or not, other reviewers do not know what happened and it would only show good courtesy of the manager if this was included in the response form.

(TripAdvisor.com; Hotel Rathaus Wein Design, 2012)

Hypothesis 12: Terms like “we”, “I” and “our company” are used when responding to a customer complaint.

All the responses had a personal touch and included the terms “we”, “I” and “our/us”. However, due to the three missing responses from Hotel Rathaus Wein and Design the total percentage fell to 88%. If this is disregarded this is a very positive observation and the management seems to be aware of its effects. The result is compatible with the findings of Dickinger *et al.* (2009) in the literature review. Namely that it makes the customer feel at ease and it resembles personal care towards the customer.

Hypothesis 13: When a refund or discount is offered to the dissatisfied customer, the customer will be satisfied with the complaint handling process.

Solely two customers (8%) were offered a discount or refund for the service failure. There may have been other customers who wrote a negative review, who also were offered a discount, but simply didn't mention it when writing the review. However, if this was the case, the hypothesis is proved wrong because regardless, people still wrote the negative review on TripAdvisor after receiving the discount or refund from the hotel. In the literature review this was described as *Distributive Justice*. The two other justifications forms were *Procedural- and Interactional Justice* and was found in 52% of the responses. Thus, making Distributive Justice less efficient concerning service recovery.

Hypothesis 14: The service provider agrees with the guests and explains the situation.

This occurred in 28% of the cases and can have two reasons:

1) It may be that the complaint was not fairly perceived by management and therefore the management did not agree to take the responsibility and blame of the perceived service failure. However, according to Burke *et al.* (2000), the service provider should *always when possible*, agree with the customer and offer a fair adjustment (an apology) and promise to do better in the future.

2) Even if the management realizes it is their fault (internal attribution, 40% of the cases) they do not want to admit their mistake. However, the few manager responses that used this approach came forward as very sincere: "we understand very well that you are very upset having selected and booked the Das Tyrol and then being transferred to another hotel. Please accept our sincere apology for this really annoying situation." Burke *et al.* (2000) also mentioned that even if the customer's complaint is unjustified, salespeople should attempt to find a compromise that will satisfy the customer without hurting the company. If the service failure is due to an internal attribution, there is no reason for management not to agree, apologize and explain the service outcome. It comes forward as professional and the apology seems sincere when applied, exactly as Burke *et al.* (2000) stated.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to understand what part of the service outcome, when perceived unsatisfactorily, would lead to a customer complaint, and ultimately what the managerial response should be. This was answered by using different theories and applying them to hypotheses that then lead to patterns and results. The research question was: *Which element of a service leads to dissatisfaction, and how does the ideal managerial response look?*

Concerning service elements, hypothesis 1 (tangible factors) was the one which customer complained about the most, accounting for 68%. The second element most frequently complained about was empathy of staff, accounting for 60% (hypothesis 3). The rest of the attributes (hypothesis 2, 4, and 5) covered 32% of the complaints each, thus they were less important to the customers. Interestingly, empathy of staff and the tangible factors of the hotel are internal attributes. This is rather positive, because hotels can control these factors, and can change/alter them accordingly. Therefore, they can improve the quality and their customers' overall satisfaction.

Regarding the managerial responses, the findings were in general surprisingly positive. Only 3 out of 25 reviews didn't have a managerial response. All the responses used terms like "I", "we", "us" to make the response personal, which gave a good impression. Secondly, apologizing to the guest and thanking for the review was used in 68%. In retrospect, also pertaining to the theoretical background, this is not good enough. The managers have to realize that they will not lose anything by apologizing to the respective guest, as well as thanking them for the time they took to provide the feedback (review). Managers and employees should be trained to have these three elements in their opening sentences when dealing with an angry customer: thanking the guest, apologizing, and making it a personal responsibility to deal with the complaint.

A justification was commonly used, namely in 52% of the responses. If appropriate and done correctly, this worked very well and was perceived positively. It represents an opportunity for improvement, by teaching employees

through training courses for instance. It is human nature to try and explain the reasons behind a failed outcome and should be used as a tool for soothing an unhappy customer, and clarifying the situation for new, prospective customers. The *tone* in which one tries to justify the outcome is of crucial importance. For instance, sarcasm, blame, and a demeaning manner should be avoided at all times.

The concluding note is that the research question was successfully answered. By analyzing 25 complaints and managerial responses on TripAdvisor.com, the researcher found interesting outcomes and results to the research question. In conclusion, the analysis of complaints is a crucial tool for understanding ones customers and to improve the service accordingly. The analysis and outcomes shouldn't be ignored and ought to be implemented, improved and built upon in every hotel.

6.1 Limitations

The results and interpretations of the content analysis would have been more thorough if there had been an opportunity to follow up and double-check the perceived outcomes. For instance, how many times did the managers apply 'internal attribution' in his/her response, compared to how many times he/she *should have* applied internal attribution. The same can be argued for excuses. Were excuses applied more than interpreted in the content analysis? It is difficult to know without having observed the objective facts around the service outcome and complaint.

Another aspect of *excuses* which was not covered is, if they were perceived more positively than an explanation and justification. This however, could not be answered as there was only one written response from each party (customer and manager). To answer this, an additional contact has to be made with the customer after having received a response from the manager.

Even though the researcher tried to analyze the reviews and responses in the most objective and efficient way, there will always be discrepancies of viewpoints and interpretations. The method used, leaves the question of subjectivity. This is because what the author analyzed in a certain way may be perceived differently

by other persons. Furthermore, this thesis includes a relatively small sample of 5 hotels, with 5 reviews each, in Vienna, Austria. The sample size is not large enough to be generalized. However, by maintaining awareness of these points, the author has provided a thorough, comprehensive and objective analysis.

6.2 Suggestion for Future Research

It could be interesting to take the same approach with a larger sample size, in order to make the findings more generalizable. This research could be done within the same city and star ratings. However, one could also compare different star categories, or different geographical areas in the form of cities, countries, or continents. This would be interesting to compare customer behavior.

An improvement to this particular thesis approach would be to have a follow-up stage. This entails the use of three parts of content analysis, namely customer complaint, managerial response, and a follow-up interview or questionnaire with the customer. This way, one could evaluate which response-form is more positively received by the customer.

7. Bibliography

- Adams, J. S. (1965). Inequity in social exchange. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 2, 267–269.
- Anton J. (2000), Customer Connections. *Electric Perspectives*, 25(4), pp. 14-21.
- Aparna R. (2004), *Tourist Behaviour: A psychological perspective*. Kanishka Publishers, Distributors: New Delhi.
- Bagozzi R. P. Gopinath M. and Nyer P. U. (1999), The role of emotions in marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 27(2), 184–206.
- Bauer H.H. Gether M. and Leach M. (2002), Customer Relations Through the Internet. <http://e-commerce.mit.edu/papers/ERF/ERF38.pdf>
- Barsky J. (1992) “Customer satisfaction in the hotel industry: measurement and meaning”, *Cornell H.R.A. Quarterly*, 7, pp.20-41
- Berry L.L., Zeithaml V.A. and Parasuraman, A. (1985), “Quality counts in services, too”, *Business Horizons*, May-June, pp. 44-52.
- Berry L.L. and Parasuraman A. (1991), *Marketing Services: Competing Through Quality*, Free Press, New York
- Bertagnoli L. (2001), Getting Satisfaction. *Marketing News*, 35(10), p.11.
- Bitner M. J., Booms B. H., and Stanfield T. M. (1990), The service encounter: Diagnosing favourable and unfavourable incidents. *Journal of Marketing*, 54(1), 71-84.
- Bitner M. J., Boom B. M. and Tetreault, M. S. (1990), The service encounter: Diagnosing favorable and unfavorable incidents. *Journal of Marketing*, 54(1), 71-85.
- Bitner M. J., Booms B. H., and Mohr L. A. (1994), Critical service encounters: The employee’s viewpoint. *Journal of Marketing*, 58(4), 95-106.
- Bitner M.J. and Hubbert A.R. (1994), “Encounter Satisfaction Versus Overall Satisfaction Versus Service Quality: The Consumer’s Voice”, in Rust R.T. and Oliver R.L., (eds), *Service Quality: New Directions in Theory and Practice*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, USA

- Blodgett J. G., Hill D. J., and Tax S. S. (1997), The effects of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice on post-complaint behavior. *Journal of Retailing*, 73(2), 185–210.
- Bobocel D. R. and Farrell A. C. (1996), Sex-based promotion decisions and interactional fairness: Investigating the influence of managerial accounts. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 81, 22–35.
- Boshoff C. (1999), Recover: An instrument to measure satisfaction with transaction-specific service recovery. *Journal of Service Research*, 1(3), 236–249.
- Bowen D.E. and Lawler E.E. III (1992), The empowerment of service workers: What, why, how, and when. *Sloan Management Review*, 33(3), 31–39.
- Bowler G. M. Jr. (2010), Netnography: A method specifically designed to study cultures and communities online. *The Qualitative Report*, 15(5), 1270-1275. Retrieved from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR15-5/kozinefs.pdf>
- Bruening M. (2001), Make The Most Out Of CS's Front Lines. *Marketing News*. 35(10), p.12.
- Buttle F.A. (1998), "Word-of- mouth: understanding and managing referral marketing", *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 6, pp 241-54
- Buttle F. (2004), *Customer Relationship Management: concepts and tools*, Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann
- Burke J., Resnick B., (2000), *Marketing and Selling the Travel Product*. 2nd ed. Albany: Delmar.
- Cacioppo J. T., and Gardner W. L. (1993), What underlies medical donor attitudes and behavior? *Health Psychology*, 12(4), 269–271.
- Cacioppo J. T., Gardner W. L. and Berntson G. G. (1997), Beyond bipolar conceptualizations and measures: The case of attitudes and evaluative space. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 1(1), 3–25.
- Cavanagh S. (1997), Content analysis: concepts, methods and applications. *Nurse Researcher* 4, 5–16.

- Chang H.S., Hsiao H.L. (2008), Examining the casual relationship among service recovery, perceived justice, perceived risk, and customer value in the hotel industry. *The Service Industries Journal* Vol. 28, No. 4, May 2008, 513–528.
- Chebat J.C., and Slusarczyk W. (2005), How emotions mediate the effects of perceived justice on loyalty in service recovery situations: An empirical study. *Journal of Business Research*, 58(5), 664–673.
- Chen M.H., Jang, S.C. and Peng, Y.J. (2011). *Discovering optimal tourist market mixes*. *Journal of Travel Research*, 50(6), 602-614.
- Chen, M.H., Lee J.C. Tseng C.H. (2008), ‘The influence of service recovery on perceived justice under different involvement level — an evidence of retail industry’. *Contemporary Management Research* Pages 57-82, Vol. 4, No. 1, March 2008
- Chung B. and Hoffman D.K. (1998), Critical incidents. *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 39(3), 66-71.
- Collier J.E. and Bienstock C.C. (2006), Measuring service quality in e-retailing. *Journal of Service Research*, 8(3), 260–275.
- Cole F.L. (1988) Content analysis: process and application. *Clinical Nurse Specialist* 2(1), 53–57.
- ComScore (2012), viewed 10.07.2012
<http://www.comscore.com/Products_Services/Product_Index/Media_Matrix_Suite/Media_Metrix_Core_Reports>
- Conlon D.E. and Murray N.M. (1996), Customer perception of corporate responses to product complaints: The role of explanations. *Academy of Management Journal*, 39(3), 140–156 and 1040–1056.
- Crant J. M. and Bateman T. S. (1993), Assignment of credit and blame for performance outcomes. *Academy of Management Journal*, 36, 7–27.
- Curry A. (1999), Innovation in public service management. *Managing Service Quality*. Vol. 9, No. 3, 1999. pp. 180-190
- Das Tyrol Small Luxury Hotel, viewed 09.09.2012
<<http://www.das-tyrol.at>>

- Dickinger A. and Bauernfeind U. (2009), An Analysis of Corporate E-mail Communication As Part Of Airlines' Service Recovery Strategy. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 26:2,156 – 168.
- Del Río-Lanza A. B., Vázquez-Casielles R. and Díaz-Martín A. M. (2009), Satisfaction with service recovery: Perceived justice and emotional responses. *Journal of Business Research*, 62(8), 775–781.
- Downe-Wamboldt B. (1992), Content analysis: method, applications and issues. *Health Care for Women International* 13, 313–321.
- Elo S. and Kyngäs H. (2008), The qualitative content analysis process. *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 62(1), 107–115.
- Evans M.J., Moutinho L. and van Raaij W.F. (1996), *Applied Consumer Behaviour*. Addison-Wesley, Harlow.
- Flick U. (2011), 'Introducing Research Methodology: A Beginner's Guide to Doing a Research Project', Thousand Oaks; CA, SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Folger R. and Cropanzano R. (1998), *Organizational justice and human resource management*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Folger R. and Cropanzano R. (2001), Fairness theory: Justice as accountability; In J. Greenberg & R. Cropanzano (Eds.), *Advances in organizational justice* (pp. 1–55). Palo Alto, CA: Stanford Press.
- Ford R.C. and Heaton C.P. (2000), *Managing the Guest Experience in Hospitality*. Delmar/Thomson Learning, Albany.
- Ford R.C., Heaton C.P. and Sturman M.C. (2012), *Managing Quality Service in Hospitality*. Delmar/Cengage Learning: New York.
- Garvin D.A. (1984), What does 'Product Quality' really mean? *Sloan Management Review*, 26 (1), 25-43.
- Goodwin C. and Ross I. (1992), Customer responses to service failures: Influence of procedural and interactional fairness perceptions. *Journal of Business Research*, 25(2), 149–163.
- Green C.E. (2007), *The Travel Marketer's Guide to Social Media and Social Networks: Sales and Marketing in a Web 2.0 World*. HSMAI Foundation Special Report: Oslo.

- Greenberg J. (1990), Organizational justice: Yesterday, today, and tomorrow. *Journal of Management*, 16(2), 399–432.
- Grönroos C. (1982), “*Strategic Management and Marketing in the Service Sector*”, Helsinki: Swedish School of Economics and Business Administration.
- Grönroos C. (1983), “*Strategic Management and Marketing in the Service Sector*”, Report No. 83-104, Marketing Science Institute, Cambridge, MA.
- Grönroos C. (1984), “A service quality model and its marketing implications”, *European Journal of Marketing*, 18, 36-44
- Grönroos C. (1988), Service quality: The six criteria of good perceived service quality. *Review of Business*, 9(4), 10–13.
- Grönroos C. (2000), 1st edition. *Service Management and Marketing: A Customer Relationship Management Approach*. John Wiley & Sons Ltd, Chichester, England
- Grönroos C. (2001), 2nd edition. *Service Management and Marketing: A Customer Relationship Management Approach*. John Wiley & Sons Ltd, Chichester, England
- Guffey M.E. (1997), 2nd edition. *Business Communication: Process & Product*. South-Western College Publishing, Cincinnati, Ohio.
- Hart C.W.L., Heskett, J.L., & Sasser, W. (1990), The profitable art of service recovery. *Harvard Business Review*, 68(4), 148–156.
- Harrison-Walker, L. (2001), E-Complaining: A Content Analysis of an Internet Complaint Forum. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 15(5): 397-412.
- Help Scout.net (2012), E-Book: *75 Customer Service Facts, Quotes & Statistics- How Your Business Can Deliver With the Best of the Best*. Available on: <http://docs.helpscout.net/75CustServiceStats.pdf>
- Hofmanns, G. C. (1961), The humanities and the social sciences: Joint concern with individual” and values the arts distinct from social science distinctions of social status. *The American Behavioral Scientist*, 4(8), 3–6.
- Hollmann Beletage, viewed 09.09.2012
< <http://www.hollmann-beletage.at> >
- Hotel Altstadt Vienna, viewed 08.09.2012

< <http://www.hotel-altstadt-vienna.com>>

Hotel Imperial Vienna, viewed 09.09.2012

<<http://www.imperialvienna.com>>

Hotel Rathaus Wein and Design, viewed 08.09.2012

< <http://www.hotel-rathaus-wien.at>>

Johnston R. (1995), The Zone of Tolerance Exploring the Relationship Between Service Transactions and Satisfaction with the Overall Service. *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, vol. 6, no 2, 1995, pp 46-61.

Kano N., Seraku N., Takahashi F., Tsuji S. (1984), Attractive Quality and Must-be Quality. Hinsshitsu. The Journal of Japanese Society for Quality Control pp. 39-48.

Kelly S.W., Hoffman, K.D., & Davis, M.A. (1993), A typology of retail failures and recoveries. *Journal of Retailing*, 69(4), 429–452.

Kennedy J.R. and Thirkell P.C. (1988), “An Extended Perspective on the Antecedents of Satisfaction”, *Journal of Consumer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction and Complaining Behavior*, vol. 1, pp 2-9

Kenney M.J. (1995), Antecedents to customer expectations for service recovery. *Journal of Academy of Marketing Science*, 22(1), 52–62.

Kozinets R.V. (1998), "On Netnography: Initial Reflections on Consumer Research Investigations of Cyberculture", in *Advances in Consumer Research Volume 25*, eds. Joseph W. Alba & J. Wesley Hutchinson, *Advances in Consumer Research Volume 25 : Association for Consumer Research*, Pages: 366-371.

Kozinets R. V. (2010), *Netnography. Doing ethnographic research online*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Krippendorff K. (1980), *Content Analysis: An Introduction to its Methodology*. Sage Publications, Newbury Park.

Kuo Y.F., Wu C.H. (2011), Satisfaction and post-purchase intentions with service recovery of online shopping websites: Perspectives on perceived justice and emotions. *International Journal of Information Management* 32 (2012) 127–138.

- Kuo Y.F., Yen S.T. and Chen L.H. (2011), Online auction service failures in Taiwan: Typologies and recovery strategies. *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications* 10 (2011) 183–193.
- Laros F. J. M. and Steenkamp, J. B. E. M. (2005), Emotions in consumer behavior: A hierarchical approach. *Journal of Business Research*, 58(100), 1437–1445.
- Levesque T.J., and McDougall G. (2000), “Service Problems and Recovery Strategies: An Experiment,” *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences*, 17 (1), 20-37.
- Lockyer T.L.G. (2007), *The International Hotel Industry – Sustainable Management*. The Harvest Press, Inc. Binghampton; New York.
- Lovelock C.H., (1991), *Services Marketing*. 2nd Ed. Prentice Hall: Englewood Cliffs.
- Lovelock C.H. & Wirtz, J. (2007), *Services Marketing: People, Technology, Strategy*. 6th Ed. Pearson Prentice Hall: Upper Saddle River.
- Lovelock C. and Wright L. (1998), *Service Marketing and Management*, US: Prentice-Hall.
- Lovelock C. H., Wirtz J. and Chew, P., (2009), *Essentials of services marketing*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Looy B.V., Gemmel, P. and Dierdonck, R.V. (2003), “*Services Management: An integrated approach*”, 2nd edition, Essex: Pearson Education Limited
- Luk Sh.T.K. and Layton, R. (2002), "Perception Gaps in customer expectations: Managers versus service providers and customers", *The Service Industries Journal*, Vol.22, No.2, April, pp. 109-128.
- Maglio P.P., Kieliszewski C.A. and Spohrer J.C. (2010), “*Handbook of Service Science*”, Springer Science + Business Media, LLC; New York, USA.
- Mattila A. S., and Mount D. J. (2003), ‘The impact of selected customer characteristics and response time’. *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*. Downloaded By: [Temple University] At: 14:46 24 June 2009 on e-complaint satisfaction and return intent. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 22(2), 135-145.

- Maxham J.G., and Netemeyer, R.G. (2002), "A Longitudinal Study of Complaining Customers' Evaluations of Multiple Service Failures and Recovery Efforts," *Journal of Marketing*, 66 (October), 57-71.
- Maxham J. G., III, & Netemeyer, R. G. (2003), Firms reap what they sow: The effects of employee shared values and perceived organizational justice on customer evaluations of complaint handling. *Journal of Marketing*, 67(1), 46-62.
- May P. (2000), *The Business of Ecommerce: From Corporate Strategy to Technology*. Cambridge University Press.
- McCole P. and Herwadkar A. (2003), *Towards a More Inclusive Model for Understanding Service Failure and Service Recovery*. University of Otago, New Zealand.
- McCollough M.A. and Bharadwaj, S.G. (1992), "The Recovery Paradox: An Examination of Consumer Satisfaction in Relation to Disconfirmation, Service Quality, and Attribution Based Theories," in *Marketing Theory and Applications*, Alan, et al., (Editors), Chicago: American Marketing Association.
- Michel S. (2001), "Analysing Service Failures and Recoveries: A Process Approach," *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 12 (1), 20-33.
- Moore N. (2000), 'How to do research.' London: Library Association Publishing, 3rd Edition.
- Newell F. (2000), *Loyalty.com: Customer Relationship Management in the New Era of Internet Marketing*. New York, McGraw Hill Professional Book.
- Nguyen D.T.H.C. and Murphy J. (2002), *Australian Organisations' Email Customer Service*. University of Western Australia; Department of Information Management and Marketing.
- Normann R. (1991), "*Service Management Strategy and Leadership in Service Businesses*", Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd
- Noe F. (1999), *Tourist Service Satisfaction: Hotel, Transportation, and Recreation*. 5th ed, Sagamore Publishing, USA.

- Oliver R.L. (1997), “*Satisfaction: A behavioral perspective on the consumer*”, McGraw Hill, Singapore.
- Oliver R.L. (2010), “*Satisfaction: A behavioral perspective on the consumer*”, 2nd ed, M.E. Sharpe Inc, New York.
- Parasuraman A., Valarie A., Zeithaml, Berry L.L. (1985), A Conceptual Model of Service Quality and Its Implications for Future Research. *Journal of Marketing* Vol. 49, No. 4, pp. 41-50. Published by: American Marketing Association
- Poiesz T.B.C. and Bloemer J.M.M. (1991), “Customer (Dis)Satisfaction with the Performance of Products and Services - The Applicability of the (Dis)Confirmation Paradigm”, *Marketing Thought Around the World*, vol 2, Proceedings from the European Marketing Academy Conference, Dublin, pp 446-462
- Puga-Leal R., Pereira Z.L. (2007), Zone of Tolerance and Process Capability in Services. UNIDEMI – Faculty of Science and Technology, New University of Lisbon.
- Richins M. (1983), “Negative Word-of-mouth by dissatisfied customers: a pilot study”, *Journal of Marketing*, 68, pp 105-11
- Ritz-Carlton (a) Complaint Handling Manual – Ritz Carlton (2012), The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company L.L.C, Maryland, United States of America
- Ritz-Carlton (b) Fact sheet, viewed 31.08.2012
http://www.ritzcarlton.com/corporate/about_us/fact_sheet.asp
- Rust R.T. and Oliver R. C. (1994), Service quality: Insights and managerial implications from the frontier. In *Service Quality: New Directions in Theory and Practice*, ed. Rust, R. T., and R. C. Oliver. London: Sage Publications.
- Rust R.T., Zahorik A.J. & Kliningham, T.L. (1996), *Service Marketing*. Harper Collins College Publishers: New York.
- Sandelowski M. (1995), Qualitative analysis: what it is and how to begin? *Research in Nursing & Health* 18, 371–375.
- Sauerwein E., Bailom F., Matzler K., Hinterhuber H.H. (1996), The Kano Model: How To Delight Your Customers in: Preprints Volume I of the IX.

- International Working Seminar on Production Economics.
Innsbruck/igls/Austria, February 19-23 1996, pp. 313-327.
- Schoefer K. (2008), The role of cognition and affect in the formation of customer satisfaction judgments concerning service recovery encounters. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 7(3), 210–221.
- Schoefer K. and Diamantopoulos A. (2008), Measuring experienced emotions during service recovery encounters: Construction and assessment of the ESRE scale. *Service Business*, 2(1), 65–81.
- Schoefer K. and Ennew C. (2004), Customer evaluation of tour operators' responses to their complaints. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 17(1), 83-91.
- Schoefer K. and Ennew C. (2005), The impact of perceived justice on consumer emotional responses to service complaints experiences. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 19(5), 261–270.
- Shahin A. (2006), "SERVQUAL and model of service quality gaps: A framework for determining and prioritizing critical factors in delivering quality services", In: *Service quality – An introduction*, Partha Sarathy V. (ed), Andhra Pradesh: ICFAI University Press, pp. 117-131.
- Shahin A., Nekuie N. (2011), "Development of the Kano model: A novel approach based on linear logarithmic transformation with a case study in an air travel agency", *Asian Journal on Quality*, Vol. 12 Issue: 2, pp.176 – 188
- Shaw J.C., Wild E. and Colquitt J.A. (2003), To Justify or Excuse? : A Meta-Analytic Review of the Effects of Explanations. *Journal of Applied Psychology*. American Psychological Association, Inc. 2003, Vol. 88, No. 3, Gainesville, Florida.
- Shea L., Enghagen L. and Khullar A. (2004), Internet diffusion of an e-complaint: A content analysis of unsolicited responses. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 17(2–3), 145-156.
- Seiders K. and Berry L. L. (1998), Service fairness: What it is and why it matter. *Academy of Management Executive*, 12(2), 8–20.
- Seligman M. (2000), Wired for Service. *New Zealand Management*, 47(4), pp. 44-46.

- Sinha G. (1999). Email: Crucial to the Customer Support Mix. *Call Center Solutions*, 17(8), pp. 96-101.
- Smith A. K. and Bolton, R. N. (2002), The effects of customers, emotional responses to service failures on their recovery effort evaluations and satisfaction judgments. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 30(1), 5–23.
- Smith A. K. and Bolton R. N. (1998), An experimental investigation of customer reactions to service failure and recovery encounters. *Journal of Service Research*, 1(1), 65-81.
- Sparks B. A. and McColl-Kennedy J. R. (2001), Justice strategy options for increased customer satisfaction in a services recovery setting. *Journal of Business Research*, 54(3), 209-218.
- Strandvik T. (1994), *Tolerance Zones in Perceived Service Quality*, Swedish School of Economics and Business Administration, Helsingfors.
- Strauss B. (2002), “The Dimensions of Complaint Satisfaction: Process and Outcome Complaint Satisfaction Versus Cold Fact and Warm Act Complaint Satisfaction,” *Managing Service Quality*, 12 (3), 173-83.
- Strauss J. and Hill D.J. (2001), Consumer Complaints by Email: An Exploratory Investigation of Corporate Responses and Customer Reactions. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 15(1), pp. 63-73.
- Stone M. Woodcock N. and Wilson M. (1996), Managing the Change from Marketing Planning to Customer Relationship Management. *Long Range Planning*, 29(5), pp. 675-683.
- Swarbrooke J. and Horner S. (2007), *Consumer Behavior in Tourism*. 2nd Ed. Oxford: Elsevier Ltd.
- Swarbrooke J. and Horner S. (1999), *Consumer Behavior in Tourism*. 1st Ed. Oxford: Elsevier Ltd.
- Swangboonsatic C. (2006), ‘*Text and Context in International Trade Communication: A Case Study of Email; Business Communication Among Professionals in the Asia-Pacific Region*’. PhD thesis, Victoria University.

- Szymanski D.M. and Henard D.H. (2001), Customer Satisfaction: A Meta-Analysis of the Empirical Evidence. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 29(1), pp. 16-35.
- Tata J. (2000), She said, he said. The influence of remedial accounts on third-party judgments of coworker sexual harassment. *Journal of Management*, 26, 1133–1156.
- Tax S. S. and Brown S. W. (1998), Recovering and learning from service failure. *Sloan Management Review*, 55(4), 75-88.
- Tax S. S., Brown W. B. and Chandrashekar M. (1999), Customer Evaluations of Service Complaint Experiences: Implications for Relationship Marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 62(4), 60-77.

TripAdvisor

TripAdvisor LLC 2011, 'About TripAdvisor Media Group', viewed 10.07.2012
http://www.tripadvisor.com/pages/about_us.html

Hotel Rathaus Wein and Design, viewed 09.09.2012
<http://www.tripadvisor.com/Hotel_Review-g190454-d294822-Reviews-Hotel_Rathaus_Wein_Design-Vienna.html>

Review # 1, viewed 06.09.2012
<http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g190454-d294822-r126761661-Hotel_Rathaus_Wein_Design-Vienna.html#CHECK_RATES_CONT>

Review # 2, viewed 06.09.2012
<http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g190454-d294822-r125904166-Hotel_Rathaus_Wein_Design-Vienna.html#CHECK_RATES_CONT>

Review # 3, viewed 06.09.2012
<http://www.tripadvisor.com/Hotel_Review-g190454-d294822-Reviews-Hotel_Rathaus_Wein_Design-Vienna.html#REVIEWS>

Review # 4, viewed 06.09.2012
<http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g190454-d294822-r10781603-Hotel_Rathaus_Wein_Design-Vienna.html#CHECK_RATES_CONT>

Review # 5, viewed 06.09.2012

<http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g190454-d294822-r16245973-Hotel_Rathaus_Wein_Design-Vienna.html#REVIEWS>

Response # 1-5, viewed 06.09.2012

<http://www.tripadvisor.com/Hotel_Review-g190454-d294822-Reviews-Hotel_Rathaus_Wein_Design-Vienna.html#REVIEWS>

Hotel Altstadt, viewed 08.09.2012

<http://www.tripadvisor.com/Hotel_Review-g190454-d263905-Reviews-Hotel_Altstadt_Vienna-Vienna.html>

Review # 1, viewed 06.06.2012

<http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g190454-d263905-r104900692-Hotel_Altstadt_Vienna-Vienna.html#CHECK_RATES_CONT>

Review # 2, viewed 06.09.2012

<http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g190454-d263905-r4955297-Hotel_Altstadt_Vienna-Vienna.html#CHECK_RATES_CONT>

Review # 3, viewed 08.09.2012

<http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g190454-d263905-r136691269-Hotel_Altstadt_Vienna-Vienna.html#REVIEWS>

Review # 4, viewed 08.09.2012

<http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g190454-d263905-r136691269-Hotel_Altstadt_Vienna-Vienna.html#REVIEWS>

Review # 5, viewed 08.09.2012

<http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g190454-d263905-r117174947-Hotel_Altstadt_Vienna-Vienna.html#REVIEWS>

Response # 1-5, viewed 08.09.2012

<http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g190454-d263905-r117174947-Hotel_Altstadt_Vienna-Vienna.html#REVIEWS>

Das Tyrol Small Luxury Hotel, viewed 08.09.2012

<http://www.tripadvisor.com/Hotel_Review-g190454-d577354-Reviews-Das_Tyrol_Small_Luxury_Hotel-Vienna.html>

Review # 1, viewed 09.09.2012

<http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g190454-d577354-r111393372-Das_Tyrol_Small_Luxury_Hotel-Vienna.html#CHECK_RATES_CONT>

Review # 2, viewed 09.09.2012

<http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g190454-d577354-r111393372-Das_Tyrol_Small_Luxury_Hotel-Vienna.html#REVIEWS>

Review # 3, viewed 09.09.2012

<http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g190454-d577354-r120108269-Das_Tyrol_Small_Luxury_Hotel-Vienna.html#REVIEWS>

Review # 4, viewed 09.09.2012

<http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g190454-d577354-r120108269-Das_Tyrol_Small_Luxury_Hotel-Vienna.html#REVIEWS>

Review # 5, viewed 09.09.2012

<http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g190454-d577354-r120108269-Das_Tyrol_Small_Luxury_Hotel-Vienna.html#REVIEWS>

Response # 1-5, viewed 09.09.2012

<http://www.tripadvisor.com/Hotel_Review-g190454-d577354-Reviews-Das_Tyrol_Small_Luxury_Hotel-Vienna.html#REVIEWS>

Hollmann Beletage, viewed 08.09.2012

<http://www.tripadvisor.com/Hotel_Review-g190454-d482579-Reviews-Hollmann_Beletage-Vienna.html>

Review # 1, viewed 09.09.2012

<http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g190454-d482579-r129156902-Hollmann_Beletage-Vienna.html#REVIEWS>

Review # 2, viewed 09.09.2012

<http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g190454-d482579-r7790774-Hollmann_Beletage-Vienna.html#CHECK_RATES_CONT>

Review # 3, viewed 09.09.2012

<http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g190454-d482579-r130624349-Hollmann_Beletage-Vienna.html#REVIEWS>

Review # 4, viewed 09.09.2012

<http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g190454-d482579-r130624349-Hollmann_Beletage-Vienna.html#REVIEWS>

Review # 5, viewed 09.09.2012

<http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g190454-d482579-r130624349-Hollmann_Beletage-Vienna.html#REVIEWS>

Response # 1-5, viewed 09.09.2012

<http://www.tripadvisor.com/Hotel_Review-g190454-d482579-Reviews-Hollmann_Beletage-Vienna.html#REVIEWS>

Hotel Imperial Vienna, viewed 08.09.2012

<http://www.tripadvisor.com/Hotel_Review-g190454-d195098-Reviews-Hotel_Imperial_Vienna-Vienna.html>

Review # 1, viewed 09.09.2012

<http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g190454-d195098-r51835560-Hotel_Imperial_Vienna-Vienna.html#CHECK_RATES_CONT>

Review # 2, viewed 09.09.2012

<http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g190454-d195098-r111981828-Hotel_Imperial_Vienna-Vienna.html#REVIEWS>

Review # 3, viewed 09.09.2012

<http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g190454-d195098-r111981828-Hotel_Imperial_Vienna-Vienna.html#REVIEWS>

Review # 4, viewed 09.09.2012

<http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g190454-d195098-r111981828-Hotel_Imperial_Vienna-Vienna.html#REVIEWS>

Review # 5, viewed 09.09.2012

<http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g190454-d195098-r111981828-Hotel_Imperial_Vienna-Vienna.html#REVIEWS>

Response # 1-5, viewed 11.09.2012

http://www.tripadvisor.com/Hotel_Review-g190454-d195098-Reviews-Hotel_Imperial_Vienna-Vienna.html#REVIEWS

Vanhove N. (2005), Economic Characteristics of tourism. In: Vanhove, Norbert: *The Economics of Tourism Destinations*. Amsterdam: Elsevier, 8-20.

- Verma H.V. (2008), *Services Marketing – Text and Cases*. 2nd Ed. Pearsons Education. Dorling Kindersley, India.
- Watson D., Clark L. A. and Tellegen A. (1988), Development and validation of brief measures of positive and negative affect: The PANAS scales. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 54(6), 1063–1070.
- Walden I. (1997), Email: The Legal Issues. *Accountancy*, 120(1250), p. 119.
- Walker R. (1985), ‘Applied Qualitative Research.’ Aldershot: Gower.
- Weiss H. M., Suckow K. and Cropanzano R. (1999), Effects of justice conditions on discrete emotions. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 84(5), 786–794.
- William S. (1999), The effects of distributive and procedural justice on performance. *Journal of Psychology: Interdisciplinary and Applied*, 133(2), 183–194.
- Wind J. Green PE. Shifflet D. and Scarbrough M. (1989), ‘Courtyard by Marriott: Designing a Hotel Facility with Consumer-Based Marketing Models’, *Interfaces*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 25-47.
- Wirtz J. And Mattila A. S. (2004), Consumer responses to compensation, speed of recovery and apology after a service failure. *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 15(2), 150–166.
- World Tourism Organization and European Travel Commission (2008), *Handbook on E-Marketing for Tourism Destinations*. World Tourism Organization: Madrid.
- World Travel and Tourism Council (2012), *Travel and Tourism – Economic Impact 2012 World*. viewed 30.07.2012
<http://www.wttc.org/site_media/uploads/downloads/world2012.pdf>
- Zehrer A., Pechlaner H. (2006), Response Quality of E-mail Inquiries – A Driver for Knowledge Management in the Tourism Organization In: *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism* 2006 Vol. 7 No. 1/2 pp. 53-73.
- Zeithaml V.A., Parasuraman A. and Berry L.L. (1985), *Delivering Quality Service: Balancing Customer Perfections and Expectations*. Free Press, New York.
- Zeithaml V. A. and Bitner M.J. (1996), “*Service Marketing*”, New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies, INC.

- Zeithaml V.A. and Bitner M.J. (2000), 2nd edition. Services Marketing: Integrating Customer Focus across The Firm. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Zekan B. (2010), Tourism Analysis. *Characteristics of the tourism and leisure industry*. [lecture] 11.10.2010. Vienna: Modul University of Vienna.
- Yang Z., Peterson R.T. and Huang L. (2001), Taking the Pulse of Internet Pharmacies. *Marketing Health Services*, 21(2), p. 4-1

8. Appendix

Table 8.1 Total % of Complaint Type

Review #	Tangible factors	Reliability	Empathy of staff	Amenities	Availability
Hotel Rathaus Wine and Design #1					
Review #1	✓		✓	✓	
Review #2	✓		✓		
Review #3	✓		✓		
Review #4	✓		✓		
Review #5	✓		✓		✓
Total	5	0	5	1	1
Hotel Altstadt #2					
Review #1	✓	✓		✓	
Review #2	✓		✓		
Review #3	✓		✓	✓	
Review #4	✓				
Review #5	✓			✓	✓
Total	5	1	2	3	1
Das Tyrol Small Luxury Hotel #4					
Review #1					✓
Review #2		✓	✓		✓
Review #3					✓
Review #4	✓	✓	✓		
Review #5		✓		✓	
Total	1	3	2	1	3
Hollman Beletage #5					
Review #1			✓		
Review #2	✓	✓	✓		✓
Review #3	✓	✓	✓		✓
Review #4	✓				
Review #5	✓				
Total	4	2	3	0	2
Hotel Imperial Vienna #6					
Review #1	✓				
Review #2		✓	✓	✓	
Review #3	✓		✓	✓	
Review #4		✓	✓	✓	
Review #5	✓				✓
Total	2	2	3	3	1
Total Sum	17	8	15	8	8
Total %	68%	32%	60%	32%	32%

Table 8.2 Total % of Response Usage

Hotel Name & Review #	Justification	Apology	Excuse	Internal Attribution	External Attribution	"We", "I" and "Our company"	Thanks the guests	Offers a refund or discount	Agrees with guest and offers an explanation
Hotel Rathaus Wine and Design									
Review #1		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Review #2	✓	✓				✓	✓		
Review #3	MISSING								
Review #4	MISSING								
Review #5	MISSING								
Total	1	2	0	0	1	2	2	1	1
Hotel Altstadt #2									
Review #1	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓
Review #2	✓	✓			✓	✓			
Review #3	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Review #4	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		
Review #5	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓		
Total	5	5	0	3	3	5	4	1	2
Das Tyrol Small Luxury Hotel #4									
Review #1		✓		✓		✓			✓
Review #2	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			
Review #3	✓					✓	✓		
Review #4		✓		✓		✓	✓		
Review #5	✓				✓	✓	✓		
Total	3	3	1	3	1	5	3	0	1
Hollman Beletage #5									
Review #1		✓		✓		✓			
Review #2						✓	✓		
Review #3	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓
Review #4	✓					✓	✓		
Review #5	✓					✓	✓		✓
Total	3	2	0	2	0	5	4	0	2
Hotel Imperial Vienna #6									
Review #1		✓				✓	✓		
Review #2		✓				✓	✓		
Review #3		✓		✓		✓	✓		
Review #4		✓		✓		✓	✓		✓
Review #5	✓	✓				✓			
Total	1	5	0	2	0	5	4	0	1
Total Sum	13	17	1	10	5	22	17	2	7
Total %	52%	68%	4%	40%	20%	88%	68%	8%	28%

8.3 Hotel Reviews and Managerial Responses Retrieved from TripAdvisor

The author of this thesis would like to state that the following chapter is a composite of the 25 hotel reviews and responses, used chapter 5 to answer the research question: “Which element of a service leads to dissatisfaction and how does the ideal managerial response look?”. All the reviews and responses were retrieved from TripAdvisor.com, 2012.

8.3.1 Hotel Rathaus Wein and Design

Review # 1: “No internet service, no charm, no class”, March 27th, 2012

“To be fair, the hotel offered me a discount of one free night, because the internet never worked. In truth, however, my entire trip went down the drain, simply because business messages that were sent to me were not received until too late, when I reminded the reception, again and again, to reboot the system. But I didn't like the hotel, irrespective. It's just an old apartment building on a boring side street, with a tiny reception that you hit after a long corridor and up a flight, with no lobby (or rooftop, or spa, or...) at all, with a very "bare" dining room, and zero feel either of a class hotel experience, or of Vienna. A nice, clean, spacious bedroom to sleep, on the "cold" side of decor, and that's it. You can easily do better for 2/3 the price.”

(Review # 1, Hotel Rathaus Wein and Design, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Conrad Schröpel, Manager at Hotel Rathaus Wein & Design, March 28th, 2012

“Dear guest from room nr. 403,
thank you very much for submitting your review.

I am more than sorry you had troubles with the internet during your stay with us. I absolutely commit there was a breakdown of the W-Lan internet that couldn't be solved by us and during the weekend it was not possible for the company who was (and I point out WAS, because we have now changed the provider company

due to the weak system we have had before) in charge for the internet to fix it. Last week we have had an independent company here in the hotel who checked all internet systems and as of yesterday we have a completely new internet provider (freewave) in the hotel that works properly. To offer you a free night during your recent stay with us came really from deep inside of my heart, as I was to your room and realized how bad your situation was, because of the internet breakdown. Sorry again your Apple Pad was not compatible to our European Lan system (which works in case the WIFI should break down). I, however, absolutely agree that internet is, besides other things, a MUST HAVE nowadays and I reassure you again that we take all efforts to make the W-Lan run efficiently. Now it does!!!

Regarding the location of our hotel (you can also see this on other reviews)...., yes we are located in a quiet lane in Vienna's Josefstadt. A lot of guests especially prefer the tranquility of our neighborhood a little bit away from all the huzzle and buzz along the ring. A hotel where you can sleep with open windows in the city is hard to find...! As we are a small boutique style hotel with only 39 rooms, with a very decorative facade and interior design dating back to the 1890ies we certainly cannot accommodate busses or cheering groups, but I guess this is what makes a boutique hotel special, but not boring! I neither would say our lane is boring. There are so many small and good restaurants in our lane, small boutiques and designer shops, various bakeries, bars, hairdressers, playgrounds, two theatres and really interesting places to discover. And again, Museums Quarter and all the other vibrant inner city venues are not more than five minutes walking distance. And our wine bar as well as the courtyard and the terrace (of course we do have a terrace, however in winter / spring the terrace is not used so often, because of the weather..., the recent few days we have had more than 20°C and all seats on the terrace were occupied and people had a good time whilst enjoying wine), I wouldn't consider them to be charmless places. Maybe we get a second chance from you to convince you with efficient internet, sunny and warm weather (the only thing I cannot promise, as I have no influence on this), so we can serve you with more than 400 wines outside and if you were looking for recommendations nearby to entertain yourself: my charming staff and myself are

24 hours available for all the wishes our appreciated guests may have!

Best regards

Conrad Schröpel

Hotel Manager”

(Response # 1, Hotel Rathaus Wein and Design, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Review # 2: “Old, dodgy and worn out”, March 10th, 2012

“Simply put - reviews on TripAdvisor about this hotel are not correct. We are often in Vienna, and decided to try it because of all the nice reviews here. What a mistake! First, location - it is ok, but not good. You are in the city, but a bit far from anything. There are many better locations even nearby. Second, hotel itself is desperate for full facelift. It is dodgy, worn out and has seen much better days. Rooms - super impractical. Toilet right next to the bed, closet small and open, again next to bed, so you sleep with shoes right where your head is. In short, not good at all. Staff - ok but nothing special. If you go to any other decent hotel, you will get same or in fact better level of attention. The staff itself does everything and you see same people at the front desk or serving at the bar per example. "Famous" breakfast so praised here is just an average buffet breakfast, not even as good as we had in several other four star hotels in Vienna. As a special treat, after coming back home, we've had food poisoning, probably from the cheese we had at the breakfast. Cleanliness is ok, but since rooms are so worn out, it is hard to clean something that collects over years. All in all, very, very poor value for money. The only rationale behind all these great reviews is that owners or staff have many friends writing reviews on TripAdvisor.”

(Review # 2, Hotel Rathaus Wein and Design, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Conrad Schröpel, Manager at Hotel Rathaus Wein & Design, March 16th, 2012

“Dear guests, who recently stayed in room 109 dedicated to the Achs-Winery! (of course we respect the privacy of our guests, however it was easy to find out, who

stayed recently for a few days in this room, due to the photograph displaying the wines!). First of all I would like to thank you for your stay with us and for taking your time to write a review about our hotel. Of course, we are more happy about positive reviews, but also consider the negatives ones either as inspiration for further efforts to make our hotel even better respectively those reviews allow us to respond in order to clarify various issues. I am sorry your stay in Vienna didn't meet your requirements and you left the hotel unhappy. Although we didn't get the chance to react during your stay with us and I will try to explain some issues now, on the one hand as a response for you and on the other hand in order to inform other prospective guests. Location: we always point out in all written documents (homepage etc) as well personally we are located in Vienna's traditional Josefstadt, the 8th district, however adjacent to the inner city, the 1st district, which is true and visible in all city maps etc. All the inner city's tourist attractions are within walking distance. Hofburg 6 - 7 minutes, Museums Quarter 5 minutes, Burgtheater 10 minutes, English Theatre 2 minutes, Volksstheater 5 minutes, Theater in der Josefstadt 3 minutes, St. Stephan's Cathedral and Shopping Lanes 15 - 20 minutes....! I cannot see any advantages of some hotels, located in the 1st district, which are sometimes (depending on their location within the 1st district) further away from above mentioned sights than our hotels is...? Rooms: you stayed in one room only, so it is not fair to write about "rooms" in plural. The closet for your wardrobe is open, this is true. But for the shoes there is a separate board next to the door, so maybe you have not seen it. So shoes would be hidden at least two metres away from the bed. And as you have taken some photographs also portraying the closet, everyone can see the place for shoes is not next to the head of the bed...!!! Staff: I am sorry again to learn you obviously didn't get the attention you were desiring for. However, I think it is also part of wellbehaving of the staff if they don't interfere, or even worse, disturb if our guests have business talks. We are a small team of only six persons, who both care for the reception and the winebar. It has been part of our special understanding of individual care for our guest, that our guests get everything from one hand. So, the same persons who have the first contact with our guests either by phone or internet (unless they book anonymously via an online booking

platform!), they also check them in, give all the necessary guidance during their stay, serve the welcome wine and maybe say also "good night" to them with a nightcap around midnight. So, this is a real intensive get together between our guests and our staff and ways of communications are short and efficient. Most of our guests prefer this over separate "departments", working next to each other or maybe against each other. Breakfast: I simply leave it with everybody to "praise" our breakfast or not. The only thing I can say is, we will keep our individual track in preparing and presenting breakfast. Most of our products are homemade, the others from small producers, most of them are "bio" and sustainable products, this includes cheese dairies, butchers and farmers etc...! The hotel was fully booked during your stay with us, no one else was suffering from our products! I am sorry to learn, you came home with a food poisoning! A really serious affliction! I wish you all the best for a quick recovery, however doubt any relations to our cheese...! Worn out rooms (plural again): Please understand our hotel dates back from the 1890ies. An old building, with lots of history and with a soul, too, but with a modern and state of the art interior design. We are aware of the situation and of the challenges an old building holds. Fittings of cuts in the walls and the links with old wooden panels (a building is permanently in move), and wall repainting belong to our weekly routine and I may assure you my utmost attention for this issues as well. On the other hand, I hope, you have realized that also your room was featuring a brand new bathroom, new designed desk, bench, armchairs and curtains (all from fall 2011). Last paragraph:... well the accusation, we are writing our "own" reports is a real harsh accusation and needs a very clear statement: I promise, and you and all the other readers can rely on my truth and honesty: We'd rather be ranked number 10, 20 or 30, but would never write our own reviews. I felt free enough to communicate this accusation also to Tripadvisor! It is, however, a really serious issue. Unfortunately nobody has to prove, whether he or she really stayed with the hotel. Thus, it is theoretically possible to write things, you have never experienced, this both includes overwhelming, very positive reviews but it would also allow someone to write very negative reports about competitors. Please believe me that I am everything but happy with this and I guess a lot of my colleagues aren't either. I do not know

if there are hotels, who act like this, but...! Again for our hotel I ask you to believe in our seriousness and our ongoing efforts to provide a warm atmosphere, with premium products and best service for our guests! This is what we would like to achieve, a high ranking comes secondly. I hope this response provides the necessary information and sorry again you didn't not enjoy your stay in Vienna.

Cordially,
Conrad Schröpel
Hotel Manager"

(Response # 2, Hotel Rathaus Wein and Design, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Review # 3: "don't go there", June 16th, 2011

"This is probably the worst hotel we've ever stayed in. We booked it for my husband's 60th birthday and, after reading the reviews on this site, thought it would be a good choice. Unfortunately we found it to be in a seedy neighbourhood with amazing amounts of graffiti on most buildings. Dirty room, particularly the toilet. Dark and depressing, with the appearance of having been furnished very cheaply. generally sloppy housekeeping standards. If it hadn't been late in the evening after a long journey we would have, and on reflection, should have checked out immediately. We are hoteliers ourselves of over 35 years and were absolutely appalled at the attitude of the manager when we complained on checkout, going so far as to imply that we were liars, probably the worst example of handling a complaint we've ever seen and most unprofessional. His offer of a future 2 night stay was particularly ill-judged in the light of the seriousness of our complaints - why on earth would we want to put ourselves through this experience again? In short , my husbands birthday was completely ruined. This hotel has all the characteristics of absentee proprietors, operating the business on a shoestring with no attempt at professionalism. Most definitely not 4 star standard."

(Review # 3, Hotel Rathaus Wein and Design, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

No manager response

Review # 4: “Very Bad Location & Very Rude Multi Concierge”, November 12th, 2007

“We Stay at this hotel in October, I think location is very important and this hotel does not have it, the Multiuses Concierge is very rude with everything, the only best thing about this hotel is Breakfast. Very far from being number 1 in Vienna.”

(Review # 4, Hotel Rathaus Wein and Design, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

No manager response

Review # 5: “Needs improvement”, May 20th, 2008

“We selected this hotel based on TripAdvisor ratings. The location is convenient and our room was clean. Their problem is that they are understaffed and lack knowledgeable front desk staff. Upon our arrival we asked the front desk attendant to recommend a vegetarian restaurant for lunch. It was Sunday. We walked 10 minutes to the restaurant only to find that it was closed on Sundays. We had also her to recommend a cafe or restaurant near the museums & shops - yet she had no suggestions. Since it was Sunday all of the bookshops were closed. There were no brochures or guidebooks about Vienna in our room. Nor did our room have any English language magazines. We had planned to read up about what to see & do in Vienna upon arrival at the hotel - yet the front desk could only offer us a map. We then walked to one of the five star hotels and asked their concierge for suggestions. Fortunately the concierge at the other hotel knew of one bookshop which was open on Sundays. We took the metro to the bookshop and bought several guidebooks about Vienna. We stayed at the Hotel Rathaus for two nights. When cleaning our room the housekeeper failed to replenish the bath soap and body lotion. We had to call the front desk to request toiletries. It is also odd that the hotel does not have a lobby. It only has a front desk on the 2nd floor. They only had one person on duty at the front desk in the morning when folks need to check out. Thus a long line of guests waited to checkout - in the narrow hallway adjacent to the front desk. After check out we waited on the sidewalk for

our cab, since there was no lobby area seating - and one can not see the entrance door from the front desk area. In our opinion the hotel staff needs to be more friendly, knowledgeable and service oriented.”

(Review # 5, Hotel Rathaus Wein and Design, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

No manager response

8.3.2 Hotel Altstadt Vienna

Review # 1 “Big disappointment”, April 21st, 2011

“We wanted the best experience so we booked the #1 rated hotel in Vienna, the Altstadt. The staff were friendly and helpful, but the hotel itself was a big disappointment. Old and musty. You can hear doors banging. The doors must be open with a big key that was very hard and frustrating to use. The room very small. The red carpet in the hallway looked wet and very old (not nice like the pictures in here). The TV was the size of a computer screen (BIG disappointment). Breakfast was below average -- nothing hot although you can ask for a boiled egg. Location was a few blocks to the Museum Quarter (maybe 5-10 min. walk) so it's not too bad. The afternoon tea was nice...there's a simple cake but it's really tea time so don't hope too much for the cake. Definitely way below our expectation of a #1 hotel.”

(Review # 1, Hotel Altstadt, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Alexandra Wallner, General Manager at Hotel Altstadt Vienna, April 29th, 2011

“Dear Guest!

Thank you very much for taking the time to provide us with your feedback regarding your experience in our house. We are truly very sorry to hear, that we have not met your expectations and we are very sorry that we let you leave disappointed. Concerning the TV in the room we totally agree. In some rooms we still had small flat screens, which in the meantime have all been exchanged by larger ones. Certain things however we like to keep in a traditional way, such as

roomkeys instead of keycards. The keys however are of regular size and just as easy to use as in a private home. They should not at all be frustrating to our guests nor hard to use. The breakfast buffet, which is included in the rate, we always like to keep fresh. That is why we do not have any shaving dishes on the buffet. Whether it is an omlette, eggs any style, bacon, ham or veggies, it will always be cooked fresh and of course it is also included in the rate.

It is our policy to always offer hot dishes such as mentioned before to our guests at the breakfast table. Please accept our sincerest apologies if we have neglected to inform you about the additional breakfast offer and have left you with the opinion of only boiled eggs being available. The breakfast buffet offers a variety of high quality, organic, local and imported products. Aside from local cold cuts, such as ham, turkey, pastrami, etc. we make sure to additionally provide only the best quality of prosciutto, salami and salmon. Not to mention all the different cheeses, spreads, fruits, vegetables, yogurt, jam, nuts, seeds, dried fruits, different rolls & bread, toast, croissants, cakes and all kinds of cereals. We also make the Bircher Muesli ourselves and the fruit salad fresh every day. All kinds of juices, still & sparkling water, coffee, espresso, cafe latte, melange, cappuccino or hot chocolate you can drink as much as you like. Prosecco (Sparkling Wine) is also included in the rate. We are very sorry to hear that you found the breakfast buffet below average. The teabuffet and homemade cake every afternoon is a complimentary service to our guests. The cake is freshly made every day and different every day. All the different teas provided are also only of the best (Demmer's Tea). A typical english tea time (with scones, sandwiches, etc.) unfortunately we would not be able to offer on a complimentary basis. Again we are very sorry for not having met your expectations, but we are all most appreciative of your comments, which are very helpful in assisting us to maintain and improve upon our services and facilities.

Thank you.”

(Response # 1, Hotel Altstadt, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Review # 2: “Ok, but not that great”, April 10th, 2006

“My experience of this hotel may be different to others - the hotel i booked had problms so i was relocated here. Friendly staff showed me around and took me up to my room. I was shown a tiny tiny room with a single bed, that although clean was extremely basic with none of the personal touches that other travellers comment on. I was freezing in the night but the fact that the hotel was fully booked meant no extra blankets availaible - though i was called back at 1230am to say that they did have one. at this time i was asleep so wasnt happy with that. The breakfast was ok but very bread heavy. There was little for those who cannot eat bread products, not much meat or cheese. The worst thing is the lift, there is no door on the inside so the wall moves in front of you and i would be terrified that something could get caught in it. the hotel staff admitted it was not legal. I think my experience would have been different had i been given another room and although i didnt have a good stay the reviews suggest this was an exception.”

(Review # 2, Hotel Altstadt, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Leonie Lang, Marketing Dept. at Hotel Altstadt Vienna, April 23rd, 2006

“We, the Altstadt Vienna Team feel sorry that this guest did not enjoy the stay at our pension. However we would like to clear a few things:

- We only have 2 of the small rooms with only 1 bed and we sell them only if all other rooms are fully booked. But we inform EVERY guest if he gets one of these rooms - this was also the case for the guest mentioned above. Additionally we reduce the room rate for these 2 rooms.
- Our elevator situation is not illegal. Due to new regulations, these elevators with no extra door (which can be find in a lot of houses in Vienna) have to be modified until December 2006. At the moment we are constructing a new elevator, which will be finished in June 2006.
- Finally we would like to inform our guests that we are building another 17 rooms - designed by the famous Italian architect Matteo Thun - in a side tract of the house. Opening will be in June 2006.

Please don't hesitate to contact our staff whenever you have further queries.
The Altstadt Team.”

(Response # 2, Hotel Altstadt, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Review # 3: “Not exactly what I expected...”, August 8th, 2012

“We stayed at this hotel for two nights. We chose it based on previous comments and the TA status of number 1 in Vienna. I agree it is a unique property and a bit eclectic - but would not rate it so favorably. It is not a "hotel" and should not be listed as such. It is more like a B&B. We stayed in a one bedroom suite called "Sari" (see comments at bottom of this review). It was at the front of the building overlooking another building (which was covered in graffiti) and behind that , an old church. The windows were great and we could open them fully which was nice. The church bells ring at regular intervals throughout the day. Some may find this charming at first but tedious after several days. Sunday morning starts at 915AM and goes on for several minutes repeating again after 15 minutes. I find it all part of the experience and different than at home. Staff were pleasant but not overly friendly. The reception desk is in a small room with a counter. Felt like I was in the principals office at high school. Not very charming as a first impression. The lifts are small. There are two to choose from. One person and luggage can fit into one lift and two in the other lift. The entrance is not very welcoming and felt like we were in a university dorm and not a hotel. The trek to our room was like walking through a prewar apartment block. Halls were wide and echoey . Interesting artwork near the elevators , but empty walls as you move further in. There are some units which are not part of the hotel and are occupied by private businesses or residents. We had a psychiatrist office near our room. A little too residential for my liking. The suite itself was fine very large and creaky wooden floors. Separate toilet room from the shower room. Some may not like that prospect. One needs to walk through the kitchen area from the "toilet" to the "shower room". For an avant garde , modern hip hotel I did not like the fact there was no clock or radio / iPod docking station. I had to use my laptop to play music. Also no drawers to put small items in. I had to put my socks, underwear , belts etc

into a small suitcase and place on a shelf to use as a makeshift drawer. Breakfast was very good but can get crowded. Staff do their best to keep up. They are mostly pouring coffee and cleaning up tables. No one offered us any hot items except for eggs. We were unaware other items could be made available. No menu. The staff tried their best and I could not fault them as it was very busy. It was overall a good experience but I would not agree with the number 1 rating on TA. This hotel is not for everyone. One thing to note in terms of making a reservation. Be very specific about what you ask for. I initially requested a "Junior Suite". I subsequently contacted the hotel to see if the "Terrace" suite was available as I potentially wanted to upgrade. It was not available, but the reservation staff "upgraded" my Junior Suite to a Suite (not the terrace suite I requested). When checking out I was shocked to discover we had been in a "Suite" and not a "Junior Suite". My bill was Euro 160 more than I expected. I spoke to the front desk who were very willing to listen but needed time to speak to the GM. I paid the extra Euro 160 and checked out. The next day I received an email from the hotel offering a refund of Euro 80. There was obviously some misscommunication on the request to upgrade and I ended up with a room I did not really want. The hotel decided to "split" the difference with me. I appreciated this gesture of goodwill. However felt I should not have had to pay for a room I did not request. I chalked it up to experience and will be extra careful to reconfirm back with the front desk whenever I check into a hotel to ensure the room I get is what I reserved. If I return to Vienna I will probably stay in a more typical hotel - such as Sacher. But this property may suit others and I would suggest one read all the comments and make your own educated decision.”

(Review # 3, Hotel Altstadt, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Andrea Amann, Guest Relations Manager at Hotel Altstadt Vienna, August 17th, 2012

“Dear guest,

first of all thank you very much for your visit and for taking the time to provide us with your feedback concerning your experience in the Altstadt Vienna. We tried to

find out what happened with your reservation and why you ended up paying more. It looks like you originally booked a suite and then changed to a junior suite with the request for an upgrade. Unfortunately this caused a little bit of confusion and we are very sorry about this misunderstanding. As it was your birthday and we did have a Suite available we have granted you a complimentary upgrade, but unfortunately forgot to adjust the rate. We are truly very sorry about this, it is by far not within our policy to charge more than what has originally been confirmed. Please contact us at anytime regarding this incident as the mistake has been clearly on our side and therefore we would like to also re-emburse you for the total amount of overpayment. We are also very sorry, that this could not have been settled upon your departure and that it took a public review to clear this matter. Regarding the entrance area you are absolutely right that it needs improvement. We are already working on it, the new rooftop has already arrived and once the function room next to the entrance will be finished (works are already in progress) the new entrance area concept will be implemented latest by the end of this year. The reception area will be renewed until the end of March 2013. Nevertheless we would like to add, that a lot of frequent guests, including artists and actors, have become loyal customers as the personal and cozy atmosphere is what is very much appreciated rather than having a bustling atmosphere in big chain hotels. Due to the fact that the house used to be a residential home the Altstadt simply is different. Every corridor is different, every room is different and there is a maximum of 8 rooms in each former appartement so guests never feel like staying in a big hotel, it is more your "home away from home"! And that is simply our charme... As far as technologie goes in the room there is a CD/DVD player in all JuniorSuites and Suites. CD's are already provided in the room, a selection of more CD's as well as DVD's can be chosen at the reception desk at any time free of charge. However, we will consider adding I-Pod docking stations for the future! Some of the other things you mentioned unfortunately we have no influence on. Vienna is still a traditional city with approx. 70% Catholics, so the church bells still ring for the Sunday morning mass. Just as in any other city unfortunately you will also always find graffities, which however are being removed from time to time. We are not happy about this either,

but on the other hand it does not mean that it is a less secure area. In fact Vienna has been quoted the best city to live in (by Mercer) for the 3rd time in a row. We are very thankful to all the wonderful reviews by all of our guests, it is you who have brought us amongst the Top 5 Hotels within Vienna. Of course these reviews always depend on personal expectations and for everyone looking for a small special hotel we are definitely the right choice! We might not always find the time to reply to all of the comments, but we can assure you we do take them very seriously. So thank you again very much for taking the time to point out several things. It is really a big help in order to improve upon our service and facilities. Thank you.”

(Response # 3, Hotel Altstadt, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Review # 4: “Wonderful place, but avoid Matteo Thun rooms”, September 8th, 2011

“Terrific service at this "more like a B&b than a hotel" property. The staff is terrific and the public salon very comfortable. Unfortunately we booked one of the Matteo Thun rooms instead of a suite or junior suite. The MT rooms are microscopic, even by European standards. Unfortunately, there were no upgrades to be had, so we could not move. Our room is #3 and perhaps others on the floor could be larger, but do yourself a favor and get a suite. We will likely need to change hotels since this accommodation is too claustrophobic.”

(Review # 4, Hotel Altstadt, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Andrea Amann, Guest Relations Manager at Hotel Altstadt Vienna, September 20th, 2011

“Dear guest,

thank you very much for staying at the Altstadt Vienna on your recent visit and for taking the time to provide us with your feedback concerning your experience in our house. We are very sorry to hear that you felt claustrophobic in the Matteo Thun design rooms and that we were not able to offer an alternative due to a very

busy season and therefore a full house! In 2006 the Italian star architect "Matteo Thun" has created a total of 8 design rooms, which are quite the contrary compared to the rest of the house. Whereas all the classic and superior rooms are all individually decorated, the design rooms are dominated by dark colours with a touch of erotic (red velvet, open glass showers, nude black&white prints). The size of the design rooms ranges from 22sqm to 28sqm, which is absolutely within European Standards. But we understand that this might not be to everybodys taste and that the dark walls might make the room appear "smaller". Nevertheless, Matteo Thun has created something very unique, which is also very much appreciated by our guests that are "design lovers" looking for a unique experience..."

(Response # 4, Hotel Altstadt, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Review # 5: "Decent hotel, nothing special", July 28th, 2011

"Good points: They have great breakfast buffet, and one good receptionist who explained everything to us at check-in. Other than that, everything was mediocre. The floors are creaky, Internet connection is patchy at best and only allow one device to connect at a time, if you need reception service anytime during your stay, you always have to wait as there is only one person in the reception area. Overall not a great experience and I don't plan to stay again if ever I return to Vienna."

(Review # 5, Hotel Altstadt, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Andrea Amann, Guest Relations Manager at Hotel Altstadt Vienna, August 16th, 2011

"Thank you very much for staying at the Altstadt Vienna and for taking the time and effort to write a review. Your comments are very helpful in assisting us to maintain and improve upon our services and facilities. The house was built in 1901 and many things have been renovated carefully since. All the rooms have been refurbished with a wooden fishbone parquet floor In order to keep the charme of such a historic building (and also being more suitable for allergic

people). As the wifi-connection is complimentary to all our guests one can have as many access codes as needed. Please accept our apologies if we have not clearly indicated that you need one code per device. During the week there are usually 3 staff members at reception for a good and personal service. On the weekend, just for a few hours there is only one person. We are thinking about changing this and your review is a good reason to discuss this matter further. So sorry if you had to wait and thank you for your opinion.”

(Response # 5, Hotel Altstadt, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

8.3.3 Das Tyrol Small Luxury Hotel

Review # 1: “Beware - possible trap - over booking”, June 4th, 2011

“I booked a room a month ahead. Just before getting there, I sent them an email to inform them that I'd be arriving late. They replied to me that they had had a "problem" with their reservation system and that they had transferred me to another hotel, which turned out to be of a lower category. The concierge of the hotel told me that they were overbooking their place to be sure that it would be full, and that they were often getting their overflow. This hotel may be great if you can get in. I'd be cautious when booking during a week end, and worse during vacation time.”

(Review # 1, Das Tyrol Small Luxury Hotel, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Ines_Weissensteiner, Leiter Gästebetreuung at Das Tyrol Small Luxury Hotel, June 7th, 2011

“Dear Mr. Bernard,

We are awfully sorry that your business trip in Vienna started with the unpleasant situation of an transfer to another Hotel. Unfortunately we where overbooked and we really tried to find a beautiful hotel of the same category (4 stars), a better location (1st district of Vienna) and a fantastic view over Vienna. Please be sure that overbookings are realy horrible - not solely for you, also for us - and that we try everything to avoid this situation! For this reason we would like to comment your review as follows: As we worked with the the Hotel where you stayed for the

first time, it is possible that the concierge maybe mixed something up, telling you that it is our policy to overbook. We understand very well that you are very upset having selected and booked the Das Tyrol and then being transferred to another Hotel. Please accept our sincere apology for this really annoying situation. We hope that we will have the chance to welcome you as your guest at your next trip to Vienna.

The Management”

(Response # 1, Das Tyrol Small Luxury Hotel, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Review # 2: “Horrible experience”, January 12th, 2008

“If you book this hotel - don't assume that you will be staying here. Booked a 3-night stay starting from Dec. 31 four months in advance. When we arrived we were told (by the front desk clerk while he was having lunch) they were overbooked (we booked on their own website) . No one called to let us know in advance even though they had our contact information and they had sent us a second confirmation mid December. They simply said they had arrange for us to stay at a nearby hotel for the night and to walk there (no apologies, no offer for help or call a taxi). They asked us to come back in the morning for the breakfast (breakfast was not included in the other hotel...on January first) and promised there would be a room the next night. The hotel that we were transfered to was very nice but less stars than this one. I was very disappointed in this service and I am still waiting on Tyrol to contact me regarding this.”

(Review # 2, Das Tyrol Small Luxury Hotel, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Ines_Weissensteiner, Sales & Marketing Manager at Das Tyrol Small Luxury Hotel, September 16th, 2008

“We are awfully sorry about the problems during this stay in Vienna last New Year Eve and the overbooking we had in our hotel. We had this overbooking because of urgent technical problems in two of our guest rooms and so we were not able to communicate this to Ambriole before the arrival at the reception. Therefore we arranged an adequate hotel room nearby which is by the way international custom in this situation. We did offer to call a taxi and we did

apologize for the inconveniences of this translocation, and: It is not true, that we arranged a room in a 3 star hotel. We selected a 4 star hotel in adequate location. And it is not true that we did not try to contact Ambriole: Infact we sent 3 mailmessages within the tripadvisor-mail-system and did not get any answer. We still try to get in contact with Ambriole to find a way of compensation for the anger and inconveniences caused by this matter and hope to clear this disagreeable situation. The Hotel Management.”

(Response # 2, Das Tyrol Small Luxury Hotel, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Review # 3: “Buyer beware! Tricky reservation website can be costly....”, November 3rd, 2011

“I tried to reserve a suite at Das Tyrol using their website for a stay at the end of the year. When I was finalizing the reservation process and entering my credit card information, there was a website error which took me back to the original booking screen. I went back through the process of entering my credit card information, and thought I had a booking! Oops. When the hotel webpage goes back to its homepage, it resets the reservation date to THE PRESENT DAY, and if you're not eagle-eyed (which I was not) you end up with a reservation for that very day, rather than in the future! I only noticed this when I received a bill for my no-show at the hotel. I tried to call the hotel to tell them about my mistake, and to make a reservation for four nights in their suite over the telephone. The person on the phone was very nice, understood my mistake, and told me that they would speak to the hotel management about whether my upcoming reservation could be discounted by the amount I had already paid. However, a few days later they emailed me to tell me that this was impossible. The hotel is of course legally within its rights to do this. The mistake was mine, although I feel that the website was a little bit tricky to negotiate in that the default date setting makes it very easy to make a reservation for the night of the day you happen to be looking at the site. However, this was an honest mistake, and I had made a reservation to stay in a suite for four nights a few months later. It would have been nice for the hotel management to be understanding of this mistake and to offer me some kind of discount on my stay, rather than basically telling me "too bad about the 160 euro

you spent because of your mistake, but we would welcome you to stay here in the future. Needless to say, I cancelled my reservation and won't be staying at this hotel.”

(Review # 3, Das Tyrol Small Luxury Hotel, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Ines_Weissensteiner, Leiter Gästebetreuung at Das Tyrol Small Luxury Hotel, November 7th, 2011

“Dear Otus,

first of all thank you for your feedback. As by you explained you booked online on our homepage. As every hotelbooking is a "contract" it is the legal demand, that at the end of every booking process, a guests receives a written confirmation with all details on it, thus also the arrival and departure date. Of course all guests agree to the clearly stated general conditions before a confirmation. Discovering your error, the cancellation would have been possible the same day without any charges because we would have sold the room again to another guest easily. As our hotel were fully booked and hotels have to keep booked rooms until next day 7am, we really had a loss out of this no show booking.

We also would like to clearly state, that our web-booking-engine (bookassist) is very clear and easy to handle in all stages of the booking process. We need to refuse against the allegation of providing a tricky online booking! We hope that we could explain our situation and thank you again for your sincere feedback.

The Hotel Management”

(Response # 3, Das Tyrol Small Luxury Hotel, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Review # 4: “Bahhh”, Reviewed June 20th, 2008

“The location is perfect. Potentially (and we expected to have) a brilliant experience here at this hotel... everything looked just lovely-- small but jewel-like. I have waited a year to write my review, trying to put my disappointment behind me, but here I am. It was all beautifully appointed, breakfast was the best I have

had in any beautiful hotel EVER and is included in the room price, thank you very much. The front desk staff were actually pretty cool and not helpful the few times we asked, but this was not a major thing to us. We stayed five nights and, for some reason, perhaps just a substandard linen supplier, the bedsheets were very limp, not fresh and slightly starchy like good hotel sheets usually are-- we didn't really think much about it the first night, they were visually clean. We left the next day for sightseeing, came back late. Bed was made but linens not changed, just smoothed. Okay, no big deal. But the next night was the same only more so, decidedly unfresh, but it was very late and we were not of a mind to call housekeeping and have them changed (as if that would be an option). The next morning we pulled the sheets half off the bed, hinting maybe that a change was in order. Our mistake: we did not alert management to our dissatisfaction. We came back that night, bed had been made up with original linens and the housekeeper said there were no clean bedsheets. We spoke with front desk and they had words with the housekeeper who proceeded to grudgingly change the bedlinens with withering looks. In judging a hotel, my minimum requirements are a fresh bed, clean towels and hot water. It almost seemed as if this maid had not been briefed in the hotel's expectations about beds...for a supposedly 'small luxury hotel' they failed miserably in this very basic criteria.”

(Review # 4, Das Tyrol Small Luxury Hotel, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Resonanz_Team, Sales & Marketing Manager at Das Tyrol Small Luxury Hotel, July 29th, 2008

“Dear oohl,

Thank you very much for writing a review regarding you problems during your stay at our hotel.

We are very concerned about the described troubles with our housekeeping department and the linnen, that have not been changed. Usually we have really excellent valuations for the categories "cleanliness" or "service" on tripadvisor and also other internet sales and marketing websites. As you already mentioned in your review, it would have helped telling the management (or the reception desk) about your dissatisfaction. We would have had a second opportunity to resolve

this problem. We definitely thank you for your open expression of opinion and apologize to you for this unsatisfactory service of our housekeeping department and that your holiday-feeling was affected in this way. We trained our gils in the housekeeping department on this problem and hope that a mistake like this will not happen again. We also hope that we get the opportunity to persuade you during a possible second stay at our hotel, thatservice is our success.

Thank you for your understanding!

The Hotel Management”

(Response # 4, Das Tyrol Small Luxury Hotel, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Review # 5: “CALL your own TAXI!!!”, September 22nd, 2010

“The rip off ! After a nice stay at a nice place We were VERY disappointed with the front desk for calling our taxi...We had read everywhere that there was a flat rate of 30 euros for airport taxis...(20 minutes away). The front desk advised us that the rate would be 36 euros. OK we said we had no choice...But then half way to the airport the taxi driver tells us that it would be 41 euros because he came in advance and waited for us in the lobby...while we checked out. He seemed to be very good friends with the front desk guy while he was supposedly waiting! I would be careful! We do not need to be taken advantage of even if we are tourists! A good hotel watches out for their customers!

PS my i pad internet connection never worked from the room!”

(Review # 5, Das Tyrol Small Luxury Hotel, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Ines_Weissensteiner, Verkaufsleiter at Das Tyrol Small Luxury Hotel, September 28th, 2010

“Dear Montrealgirls,

Thank you very much for your comment on tripadvisor.

After some investigations with our employees and the taxi company about your complaint we would like to annotate the following: The driver arrived punctually and in time at the hotel to take your to the Vienna Airport at 7.15 am. As he had to wait for you 20 minutes until 7.35 he added a surcharge of 5 Euros for the delay

which is usual in case of such delays caused by passengers. As the driver told us, he explained this surcharge to you and you did accept this without any complaint. Generally we would like to declare regarding our airport service: We use the same company since 8 years and are very satisfied with their performance. They are very reliable, punctual and courteous and always guarantees a correct behavior for our guests. For this reason we have chosen this partner for our transfers. Of course our employees know the airport drivers after so many years of cooperation. Regarding the reproach of the “rip off” we disclaim vehemently, because the charge of 36 Euros for an Airport Service is a standard rate in Vienna. Of course every guest can call his own taxi company or can ask us to call a certain company for him. In this case of course we will not take any responsibility for the quality of this airport service of a company we probably would not recommend. We are unlucky that our hotel is valued in Tripadvisor in such a bad way for a service we arranged for you.

Best regards,

The Hotel Management”

(Response # 5, Das Tyrol Small Luxury Hotel, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

8.3.4 Hollmann Beletage

Review # 1: “Unreliable staff leading to missed reservation”, October 30th, 2008

“The Beletage Hollmann comes with rave reviews. The hotel deserves them, if you can get a room. We made reservations and were confirmed for THREE days. When we checked in, we were told that we only had reserved for TWO days and the lady at the reception made it appear as if it had been our mistake. I then produced a printout detailing our reservation and she admitted that she had made a mistake. She was not willing to cancel on whoever was arriving later, thus rather preferred inconveniencing us who had already arrived. There was a lukewarm apology and some help transferring us to the Le Meridien, which has impeccable service. Suffice to say, Hollmann did not give us a discount to make up for their mistake. All we got was a bottle of spumante. This hotel is clearly a victim of its

own success. I have never encountered such arrogance and inflexibility dealing with reception staff. That said, if you're looking for a hotel that offers a personalized experience apart from above issues that could still be seen as a single occurrence, the Beletage Hollmann is for you.”

(Review # 1, Hollmann Beletage, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Manager at Hollmann Beletage, December 1st, 2008

“On behalf of Hollmann Beletage I would like to apologize for what has happened. Due to technical problems our online-booking system did not show the actual and correct amount of bookable rooms. Thus the overbooking occurred. We can assure you that - in the unlikely event such error might occur again - we will surely find an adequate hotel-alternative, taking care of transportation and overpricing. Be assured, despite our success and boasting occupancy, with only 25 rooms you will be our personal guest.”

(Response # 1, Hollmann Beletage, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Review # 2: “Really nice hotel but really bad reception desk service”, June 6th, 2007

“If you are familiar with Vienna and know everything you need to know and don't need any help from the front desk then I would highly recommend this hotel. Once you step in this hotel, you're on your own because the reception girl is useless in every sense of the word. She will lead you to your room and that's about it. We stayed at the Beletage for 3 nights for 120 Euro per night without breakfast. From the airport it was just a few stops before you get to Stephansplatz underground station. You get off the train and you see the magnificent St Stephen's Cathedral. The area is busy and bustling with tourists but the hotel is hidden in one of the small streets 5 mins walk away from the train stop. It's a FANTASTIC location. The actual room was beautiful we were in room 9 and it was quiet. Although I can see how it can be noisy in other rooms. There is no view from the room so just keep your curtains closed. I don't have to go into details about the room, it's modern, clean, tasteful and I loved the room, lots of storage too for

clothes and stuff. Although my phonecard didnt work from the room phone. Out of all the hotels we stayed in eastern europe only in this hotel that dialing an austrian toll free number didnt work. There is a small laptop in the lobby that is available during the day but gone after a certain time in the evening. ALL PRAISES for the ROOM, LOCATION and the actual hotel.

Reception is only available from 9 am to 5 pm. There was only one girl in the reception during our entire stay (Dorothea) and I can only agree on what the other people say about the service she provides....WHAT SERVICE? She is incompetent, cold, non-chalance and just useless. How can you not know the cost of a one day train pass? or why would you tell me that you can return an item you bought in a store when stores in Vienna only do store credit? At some point we stopped asking her questions because she either makes a face when she is asked or she gives you an answer that doesnt help. I hate the fact that part of our room rate was used to pay her salary, she doesnt deserve any penny from me. Unless the beletage gets rid of her, she takes some crash course on customer service or they get a new person who is helpful and competent, I will not recommend this hotel unless the rate is less than 100 Euro per night. Service is part of the rate that we paid for and we expect at least a minimum form of service from this front desk person.”

(Review # 2, Hollmann Beletage, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

PALP, Management at Hollmann Beletage, June 25th, 2007

“Dear Tripadvisor Users:

We are always very thankful for your honest reviews and feedback. We consider this as a major tool of complaint management and service improvement. Concerning the recent review we would like to make the following statement:

- Our reception personnel was well chosen among dozens of qualified applications and finally succeeded in managing our tough application process.
- We are very sorry that guests had to undergo this "bad" service experience, which was in fact due to personal family-problems of our receptionist.

Of course professional reception service has to be friendly and competent at all

time - no matter what personal matters might occur. Therefore we will intensify our personnel training and let them undergo further trainings and courses.

Please be assured your concerns are valuable and crucial for our own improvement and necessary to keep our high level of quality.”

(Response # 2, Hollmann Beletage, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Review # 3: “You can do far better in Vienna”, May 26th, 2012

“My wife and I stayed at the Hollmann-Beletage (H-B) for 2 nights in May. We booked an X-large room and paid a rate of 230 Euros per night (about \$300) that included all taxes and breakfast. The new hotel, built on several floors of a residential apartment building, is likely more than 150 years old and is centrally located in the heart of the old city. It’s very convenient to busses and subways, and within walking distance of a good number of major historical and cultural sights. Our room had 2 large windows that faced beautiful old buildings across the street. The view is far from pretty, but it is what one would expect in the heart of an old city. To reduce noise levels, the hotel installed double windows – an outside set and an inside set, and to get fresh air (see below) one must open both sets of windows. Not a problem – so far. Our room was approximately 20 ft. x 15 ft with 11-12 foot ceilings. One of the 20’ walls is comprised of a set of floor-to-ceiling modern, wooden, nicely finished doors. One door hides a safe and minibar, another door hides a set of storage cubicles and clothes hanging space, another hides a 20-22 inch tv and more storage space, and there’s a double set of doors that hides the bathroom. (You can open one door to gain bathroom access, or you can open both doors to expose almost the entire 8 ft. width of the bathroom.) Some of the doors have lights that illuminate when they are opened. The new wooden floors are lovely looking, but they are completely bare. Bare floors are common in Europe, but there’s usually an area rug or, at the very least, a floor mat put down at night on each side of the bed. Not at H-B. Moreover, wherever we walked in the room, the floors creaked. The bed was a platform consisting of two separate single mattresses, each with their own comforter. There was a nightstand on each side of the bed, a desk, a double bed sleeper-sofa, and a coffee table. The

walls were white and there was no wall decoration whatsoever - no wall design, no art. Nothing. Overall, the interior furnishings are a step up from Ikea. It's functional, it can sleep four people, but there were drawbacks in our room worth mentioning. Some of the closet doors open 180 degrees, but some only open to about 95 degrees. This means, for example, that you cannot watch the television set from the bed. (And if the door opened wider so you could view the tv from the bed, it's doubtful you'd be able to see much on the extremely undersized screen.) The closet doors are so tall that some warping has occurred. This means the lights often stay on when the closet doors are closed. The bathroom is small. There's a tub with shower, but the partial glass shower wall does not cover enough of the length of the tub. As a result, it's difficult to shower without getting the bathroom floor wet – not a few drops, more like a half liter. There is not enough flat storage space in the bathroom. We don't carry many toiletries, but we found ourselves using the night tables for many of them and keeping some in our suitcases. (Note that there is not one drawer in the room.) Although there was a thermostat in the room, we found the a/c woefully inadequate. The weather was relatively mild (low 60s at night, mid 70s during the day) but it was humid. Because of the inadequate a/c, we left our windows open when we were in the room during the day. But because of the early city noise that begins about 5 a.m. we closed both sets of windows at night. Unfortunately the a/c couldn't cool the room or reduce the humidity. As a result, we had two restless nights. (We should also note that the a/c did not cool down the public spaces – the lobby, breakfast room, or the mini-theater. It was always stuffy and the outside temperature always felt cooler than the hotel spaces. We mentioned the a/c problem to the front desk and were politely told that it was in the process of being repaired. The keyed lock on the door to our room did NOT function properly. It often required us to turn over and reinsert the key, jiggle the cylinder, etc. etc. etc. Sometimes it took us 30 seconds to enter and once or twice we needed front desk assistance. When we complained, we were told that the lock was problematic and would have to be repaired again. Given the lock situation, the fact that hotel personnel leave at 9 p.m. (you gain access to the hotel using a key) made us nervous about being able to open the door to our room when no one was around to help. The breakfast was

very good and it was served in a lovely room that had 2 large French doors for ventilation. Again, there was not enough air in the room for us to be comfortable. When we went to breakfast on our first day, there were no introductions or explanations. Orange juice, and a tray with 2 jars of cut-up fruit, 2 small glasses of carrot juice, a cut apple, were brought to our table. We were asked what kind of hot beverage we wanted, but no one explained how breakfast was served, and it wasn't until we saw other people ordering from a menu that we realized there was a "card" for ordering hot dishes. For some reason everyone else in the room was given a card, but we had to ask for one (and for coffee refills as well.)

The H-B is modern and trendy and it's extremely expensive for what you get. There ARE nice touches. For example, we were given an iPad for the length of our stay, there's a mini-theater that plays 3 or 4 movies a day and seats 8-10 people on wooden attached "bleacher" chairs, there are two or three bottles of liquor left in the lobby all day, snacks provided in the afternoon, and there's a small yard with a few tables and chairs and a large hammock. The staff was uniformly friendly, but the service provided was not always professional. In our view these touches do not begin to make up for the stark room, the lack of ventilation in our room and in the public spaces, the room lock problem, and the inadequate shower. We selected H-B because of Trip Advisor reviews. When we read Trip Advisor we always read the worst reviews first and eliminate the "poor" and "terrible" ratings that involve reservation and other idiosyncratic problems. We're careful about our selections and when we spend \$300/night for a room we expect far more than the H-B offered. There are better choices in Vienna at far better prices. We know this because we visited several alternative hotels during our stay."

(Review # 3, Hollmann Beletage, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

PALP, General Manager at Hollmann Beletage, May 29th, 2012

“Thank you for posting your feedback. At first let me express my appreciation for mentioning our good location in the heart of Vienna's city center, our outstanding breakfast, our complimentary services and facilities (free iPads, cinema, terrace, free homemade snacks all day long) and our friendly staff. Regarding the ventilation and A/C system: I have to admit that we occurred a partial breakdown of our cooling system for 2-3 days - unfortunately during your stay. I honestly apologize. The A/C has been repaired in the meanwhile and works perfectly well. Every room has its own thermostat and can control its own temperature. Hollmann Beletage is situated in an building dating back to 1893. We tried to keep as many original touches as possible, therefore high ceilings, wooden double windows and wooden parquet floorings (mainly refurbished original floor). The "creaking" of the wooden floor is due to its age (it is NOT new, we really tried to keep the old own, as it creates its own atmosphere) and some say "part of the experience in good old europe". As for the interior of our rooms and the hotel: even though we have the highest respect for the smart and clever scandinavian IKEA design, we do prefer our custom-made interior. Our beddings, closets, basically all interior has been designed by architects and custom made by austrian carpenters. As for the mentioned closet doors: either doors open 180 degrees OR are insertable into the closet itself, which allows to watch TV from the sofa AND from the bed. We will take your feedback as a hint to let our front office staff get more into details when personally escorting every guest to his room upon check/in. Again the problem with your door lock must be admitted, I apologize. We have had the lock replaced in the meanwhile. I would very much like to welcome you some time in the future, in order to make up for the things mentioned. Warm regards (even though A/C is working) from the centre of Vienna, Philipp Patzel, GM.”

(Response # 3, Hollmann Beletage, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Review # 4: “Overestimated, but nice”, January 14th, 2012

“This hotel has a beautiful breakfast and great location. However, the room was extremely small, the bathroom was as tiny as my bottom... And the fruit plate was grey of bad fruit. The overall hotel was a bit claustrophobic... The personnel was kind and some nice extra touch like the iPad was beautiful.”

(Review # 4, Hollmann Beletage, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

PALP, General Manager at Hollmann Beletage, January 20th, 2012

“Dear Avi, thank you for your feedback. First of all I am glad for you appreciating our great breakfast, location, staff service and our complimentary iPad for every guest. As for the size of the room you mentioned I can easily explain our room categories to you and fellow travelers: Hollmann Beletage consists of 26 rooms.

- 1 Suite: 95sqm
- 19 Rooms XL: 35sqm
- 3 Rooms L: 25sqm
- 3 Rooms M: 20sqm

According to the different sizes, room prices vary. You have chosen the "smallest" and cheapest category ("M" = 20sqm), but could have taken one of our many larger rooms. "M" rooms are a bit smaller than the rest but are very cozy and funky. They feature an open shower and the bathroom is integrated into the rest of the room. Perfect for lovebirds ;) Dear Avi, we would very much like to welcome you some time in the future, perhaps in one of our 23 out of 26 rooms that are larger than the one you had. Warmest regards from the heart of Vienna, Philipp Patzel, GM.”

(Response # 4, Hollmann Beletage, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Review # 5: “Impossible to sleep”, April 20th, 2010

“We visited this hotel on the strength of the Trip Advisor reviews, and everything was as advertised except one --- there was no air conditioning. Now, admittedly, this was April in Vienna, but the inside of the hotel was so hot that we had to open

our windows to be comfortable. The only trouble with that was that the hotel is located near bars that empty between 1 and 2 (with yelling drunks) and around 3:30, the delivery trucks start arriving at the supermarket across the street. When we complained to the front desk, they agreed that it was very hot inside, but that management had decided not to turn on the air conditioning until May. Very bad idea if you want return customers. We also hated the pillows, as others have said. On the positive side, it is a great location. The design features are cool and the sister restaurant down the street serves a creative array of small dishes. The breakfasts were excellent. Vienna was wonderful and we want to go back, but we will stay somewhere else.”

(Review # 5, Hollmann Beletage, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

PALP, Manager at Hollmann Beletage, April 22nd, 2010

“Dear newdavevally,

thank you for your honest feedback. We are very pleased to hear that you very much appreciated our breakfast, our location, our design and our restaurant. Indeed - at the time of your stay - we did not yet have our airconditioning activated.

2 reasons:

- The average temperature in Vienna during April is around 12°C / 53°F, during night time even less.
- We have ecological principles (for example: we use electricity from 100% sustainable energy only) and do not want to waste energy with heating on the one side and cooling down on the other...

The airconditioning will be activated automatically once the outside temperature reaches 20°C/ 68°F. We are located in the very center of town, at the heart of Vienna's old town, in a quiet side street. Thus you will definitely find a whole array of restaurants and bars in walking distance. Our rooms are equipped with double-glassed windows. We provide a choice of pillows for every guest: 4 standard 100% down feather pillows in every room. Upon request: non allergic pillows and/or orthopaedic pillows.”

(Response # 5, Hollmann Beletage, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

8.3.5 Hotel Imperial Vienna

Review # 1: “tasteless yet overpriced food!” December 25th, 2009

“We attended the gala christmas eve dinner and they insisted on a credit card number in advance to guarantee the reservation. The appetizer was barely a mouthful of something that had a very bland undiscernible flavour labelled in the menu as "Amuse Bouche". Next the Tuna Carpaccio was so fine that it seemed that it was finely painted onto the plates. In an attempt to sample this delicacy, each slice was so thin that it was necessary to scrape it of the plate. The so called avocado mousse was yet another tasteless and at best bland mouthful that did not vaguely resemble the divine taste of a ripe creamy avocado. Next the crayfish filled pasta packets were neither plentiful or stuffed with anything worthwhile. Actually they were overcooked and almost empty and could be counted on two fingers, yes only 2 tiny tortellini style bites surrounded by a frothy white thin layer of something labelled as "Cream soup of black salisfy" !! Next the medallion of veal was substituted by something in the seafood category. and when we asked what type of fish that would be we were simply told that the chef said that it was seafood... Enough said really. The dessert was "iced mascarpone tarlet with honey-sour" well there was a lot of ice and very little mascarpone and no sign of any taste whatsoever, let alone a lovely combination of honey and sour. That tasteless, preset, conveyor belt meal was served to everyone. There was no sign of any christmas music just an elderly pianist that was doing his best under the circumstances. The cost for this gourmet debacle was a few euros short of 400. Hmmmmm...”

(Review # 1, Hotel Imperial, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

GM Vienna, General Manager at Hotel Imperial Vienna, February 1st, 2010

“Dear Reviewer,

thank you for your open and very detailed feedback. I was of course very concerned to read of your disappointment, especially as our Christmas Dinner was

fully booked and we had received overwhelming and positive feedback from our guests on the evening. I am very sorry to hear that the food did not meet with your approval. I nevertheless hope that you will give us a second chance to prove that we can certainly show you why the Imperial is well known for its first rate cuisine. Please contact me directly on your next visit to Vienna, and I will ensure that your experience in our restaurant will be a magical one

Kind regards from Vienna,

Oscar del Campo

General Manager”

(Response # 1, Hotel Imperial, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Review # 2: “A beautiful hotel with poor service”, June 7th, 2011

“I stayed at the Hotel Imperial, Vienna during the 1st weekend of June and had a great stay in terms of location, the interiors of the hotel, and the Imperial torte at the café but a very poor stay in terms of service levels. I would probably return to this hotel maybe once more to “test it out” but for now I am sceptical of the value of \$\$ paid at this hotel. Just for the record, I am a frequent traveller and mostly stay in 5* hotels. Firstly, the architecture and the interior of the hotel are impressive. It is very old world with fine details and oil paintings all around. Reviews from others in this thread have done a great job describing the interiors. Heads of states and presidents stay here often and once you walk into the hotel lobby you will understand why. The rooms are equally immaculate with chandeliers and marble bathrooms. There are a few rooms that are evidently poorer – these are the rooms made from the old servants quarters – try to avoid these by booking a rate that is a step higher than the lowest rate. The restaurant is great – the chef that used to head restaurant Korso at the Bristol is the new head chef there – with great large portions! The foods are evidently expensive but nothing out of the ordinary given it is part of a luxurious hotel. I would highly recommend them. Speaking of food, you cannot skip the Imperial Torte. Words cannot do them justice – make sure you get yourself one during your stay!

The location is also great, though not as perfect as, say, the Sofitel. It is 1 minute away from the Musikverein and very close to the U-bahn and the tram stops. There are plenty cafes nearby for great Viennese breakfasts. There is no swimming pool, but the gym is well equipped with an attached sauna, available 24 hours a day. The service levels, on the other hand, are mediocre at best. The staffs seem to be efficient in what they do but in large part are quite stiff. They do their jobs but do not go beyond what is expected, as in they do not ‘anticipate’ needs as it is usually expected from hotels of this category. You will receive no greetings from the staff walking about, and most will appear busy all the time. I have not had a single person smile at me during my whole stay. The worst of the pack would be the bellman who stands around not making eye contact with anybody throughout my whole stay. The concierge, however well-connected they may be, are also indifferent in their service. At hotels of this level I would expect them to at least look up and smile if they sense someone approaching them. Instead, I had to approach the desk, do an ‘ahem’ to get their attention, and once I made my request known, had the concierge give me the information in a very ‘efficient’ but ‘cold’ way. Maybe I was disturbing him from other things that are much more important? This really dampens your stay in this beautiful hotel, as your attention is taken away from the luxurious surroundings to thinking about the impolite/indifferent gestures made by the staff you interact with. This sub-par level of service was especially disappointing given that I had just come from The Ring where we were made to feel like valued guests. So if you are planning a stay here, set your expectations right with regards to service levels and focus on the great building you get to stay in. If service is important to you, stay somewhere else.”

(Review # 2, Hotel Imperial, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

klauchr, Manager at Hotel Imperial Vienna, June 10th, 2011

“Dear “jaejaez“,

Thank you for taking the time to share your experience at our hotel during your recent stay with us on TripAdvisor and allow me to introduce myself as the new

General Manager at Hotel Imperial in Vienna. It was most disappointing for me to learn about your experience at our hotel, especially as upon further investigation with my team members on duty during these days, no indication had been noted about the lack of service and the perceived indifference of several colleagues that you highlight in your comments. I have also personally reviewed all available correspondence and could not retrieve any reference to your observations posted online. Rest assured that the lack of service focus and customer attention you described is in no way a reflection of the high standards this property stands for. From my own extensive observations over the past few weeks, I can also assure you that the service interactions described by you are not indicative of the general standards visible around the hotel. Although I quite clearly cannot bear witness of what has transpired in the period before my arrival in Vienna, rest assured that no efforts will be spared to bring any inconsistency in service delivery back in line and provide all our valued customers with a uniquely memorable experience here at Hotel Imperial that is commensurate to our history and status. Please accept my personal and sincere apologies for any lack of attention you may have suffered during your honeymoon trip at our hotel. In summary, we clearly have a lot of areas and space to improve our services and product and I can assure you once again of our sincerity to address these points. I would greatly appreciate if you were to channel your next reservation through my office to enable me to handle the arrangements personally. It is unfortunate that we had to get to know each other in this way and I am confident that we will be able to regain your trust once again in the future. If there is anything else I can do for you, your family or colleague, please do not hesitate in contacting me directly.

With sunny greetings from the music and culture capital of Europe,

KLAUS

GENERAL MANAGER”

(Response # 2, Hotel Imperial, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Review # 3: “Awfully Overated Hotel with Rude Staff”, May 16th, 2010

“This hotel has a good location and is in a historic building. However, the rooms are extremely dated with very old fashioned decor. Gym is a incredibly small, although not uncommon in many older European hotels. Bathroom is small and shows wear and tear. And the worst is, the hotel staff is simply rude and very arrogant. The front desk and concierge like to ignore your presence and recommend nothing else to eat other than the restaurant in the hotel. This is no way near the quality of a 5-star hotel. Would never stay here again.”

(Review # 3, Hotel Imperial, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

GM Vienna, General Manager at Hotel Imperial Vienna, responded to this review, May 18th, 2010

“Dear Reviewer

Thank you for your honest feedback. I was very sorry and concerned to read of your experience.

Our rooms are decorated in a style that corresponds with the hotels heritage and history - the Hotel Imperial was originally the private residence of the Prince of Wurttemberg from 1865 to 1873, and as such it still maintains that classical feel of a Viennese Palais. I am very sorry that this did not meet your expectations. Please accept my apologies for any inconvenience caused through our staff. Rest assured that we have taken your feedback very seriously and will be reviewing your comments with our Front Office staff. I sincerely hope that you will give us a chance to redeem ourselves on your next visit to Vienna. Please feel free to make your reservation directly through my office, so that I may assure you of my personal attention.

Kind regards,

Oscar del Campo
General Manager”

(Response # 3, Hotel Imperial, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Review # 4 “Impossibly Rude Staff, Average Rooms”, April 18th, 2010

“This hotel is located in a stately and beautiful physical structure. The rooms are adequate, if not somewhat dated. Internet access, in-room entertainment, and room service are behind expected standards for a luxury hotel. The real character of the hotel, however, rears its ugly head in the behavior of the front desk staff. Although many servers and cleaning staff members are lovely, the front desk and management is populated with arrogant, inconsiderate, and inflexible people. My wife and I were stuck in Vienna during the European air space closure of the Icelandic volcano eruption of 2010. During a time when not a single airline has been flying into or out of Northern Europe, and we have had to unexpectedly extend our stay, the Imperial has used this breakdown in infrastructure as an opportunity to inexplicably raise our room rate (despite the hotel being essentially empty). This is a sad example of price gouging, at a time when the trapped traveller is vulnerable. We found ourselves irate with the hotel management, and simply took our business to a lovely luxury hotel right next door, where the management has been much more responsive to this unusual situation of airport closures. Do not book a stay at the Imperial. You could stay home and have someone insult you for free instead, if that's what you're looking for.”

(Review # 4, Hotel Imperial, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

GM Vienna, General Manager at Hotel Imperial Vienna, April 23rd, 2010

“Dear Reviewer

Thank you for your honest feedback, some of which we discussed already on Monday. I once again extend my apologies for any behaviour that you might have considered to be inappropriate.

In the meantime I have been able to look further into the matter - your room was booked as part of a large congress, and as such our Reception did not know what the exact rate was that you had been charged. Subsequently you were offered the lowest available rate at the time. Please accept my apologies that the rate offered was € 14,00 higher than your original rate and did not include breakfast. As soon as you informed me of this I offered to correct that immediately but unfortunately

by that time you had made up your mind to leave the hotel. I can assure we did not at any time try to take advantage of the situation in any way and I am very sorry that you went away with that impression. I sincerely hope that you will give us another opportunity on your next visit to Vienna. Please feel free to make your next reservation directly through my office so that I may assure you of my personal attention.

Kind regards,
Oscar del Campo
General Manager”

(Response # 4, Hotel Imperial, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

Review # 5: “Unjustified expectations”, January 14th, 2009

“I stayed in your hotel one night, but for this short time have received many inconveniences. I do not have claims as I understand that in any business there are overlays and omissions. But that you could avoid them in the future, I wish to state the remarks.

The room has not been tidied up after the previous visitor. The toilet bowl has not been washed off, in a case there was a rubbish from the previous visitor, on walls of a per capita cabin the soapsuds hung. Probably, this room is seldom occupied, as the thick dust layer lay on the top regiments of a case. And there can be it a centenary dust which is trademark of the Hotel Imperial?

After the message to cleaning service I had to leave hotel that my room could clear. Perhaps it not my cares, but I would suggest to be cleaned in a room in an interval between check-out and check-in time. Certainly it is pleasant that the personnel on an input remembers your name, but against a dirt in a room it looks mockery. To cafe for a breakfast have submitted cold coffee. I have asked to bring still, have brought again the cold. And only after I have asked to bring hot coffee, to me have brought hot coffee in a coffee pot. Hot coffee can be cooled, a few having waited. But the guest cannot warm up cold coffee, as on tables there is no equipment for heating. Therefore I suggest to submit hot coffee then guests can

regulate temperature, cooling its expectation.

Besides, in a room there were many papers, letters, envelopes, forms, instructions which I should unpack, read, fill, take into consideration. I have arrived to hotel to have a rest, instead of to work. Even the person with good knowledge of English language should spend half an hour for reading all your congratulations, instructions, instructions, assurances. Can it is necessary to reduce all these banalities, and instead to put the list of that is paid in hotel, and that free. At booking of a room I have specified "buffet breakfast". But in the evening to my room have brought the form in which I should choose breakfast type: continental, Viennese, Japanese (by the way, for some reason there there was no English variant). This form has misled me and I have again spent half an hour for trials. Vienna always was famous exclusively for cleanliness in hotels. Even a 3-stars Viennese hotels are remarkable faultless cleanliness. Probably your hotel does not wish to be Viennese. Certainly I cannot recommend this hotel to the acquaintances, but I hope that in the Luxury Collection not all hotels such. People for this purpose also choose five-stars hotels to have no problems and no scandals. Next time I will necessarily try to take advantage of services of other hotel from the Luxury Collection.

P.S. I sent this letter by e-mail, but the answer and have not received.”

(Review # 5, Hotel Imperial, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)

GM Vienna, General Manager at Hotel Imperial Vienna, January 26th, 2009

“Dear Reviewer,

First and foremost allow me to apologize for any inconvenience you experienced during your stay with us. We normally pride ourselves on our very high standard of cleanliness, and I am very sorry should this not have been satisfactory in your case. We received your letter both here at the hotel and in our corporate head office. Our initial response to you went out to the e:mail address you had left when checking in - I am sorry if you did not receive this. Writing to our corporate office you supplied another e:mail address to which we subsequently addressed the follow-up letter. Allow me also to comment on the amount of papers, letters

and envelopes you mention in your review. On arrival I send every guest a personal welcome letter, which also includes a cultural suggestion (for example an exhibition or a particular concert we would recommend). On the desk of our rooms we provide our guests with a questionnaire which they can use to give us feedback regarding their experience with us. Please accept my apologies if you found these two documents to be an inconvenience. In addition to that we provide a roomservice order form during turn down in the evening. This is placed on the bed and can be used should our guests wish to order roomservice breakfast in the morning. It allows our guests to complete their choice of breakfast, indicate the time they would like it delivered and then hang it outside the door. This is of course optional, I am very sorry if you found this to be confusing.

I sincerely hope that even though your experience with us was not as pleasant as you hoped, you will consider giving us another opportunity to show you the quality of service for which we are usually known. Please make your next reservation directly through my office so that I may assure you of my personal attention.

Best regards from Vienna!

Oscar del Campo

General Manager”

(Response # 5, Hotel Imperial, viewed on TripAdvisor, 2012)