



*“Did you enjoy your stay with us?”*

An Investigation into (Dublin) Hotels Own Assessment of  
Service Performance and Implications for Customer Retention

Stephen Foster

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Stephen Foster

Master of Science in Marketing  
National College of Ireland

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## **Acknowledgements**

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I am also grateful for my girlfriend who helped me through many difficult situations, gave me a helping hand and never let me fall behind with my work.

I would also like to give praise to my research supervisor, Julia Reynolds for if it were not for her friendly and helpful.

## Abstract

**Aim:** To examine the hospitality industry in order to understand how hotels in the Dublin region assess their overall service offerings in order to stay successful. The point of this study is to; Gain an understanding of how hotels assess their levels of service quality, identify what they do if a service failure occurs and the methods used to recover the situation.

Identify how they retain repeat (loyal) customers while attracting in new customers

This study endeavours to achieve a deeper insight into getting a better understanding of how hotels in the Dublin region assess their overall service offering to include all aspects of the service process.

A qualitative approach was adopted in order to obtain a clearer understanding of the research question. In order to achieve the set objectives, the researcher engaged in in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the participants who had high ranking positions within Dublin hotels as a method of data collection. The data analysis conducted by the research was that of thematic analysis and was used to generate clear and concise results.

The researcher found that a number of processes and applications exist with services of hotels and stretch further than the expected procedures and practices. While it was found that aspects of managerial input, training, communication and service management all play a role in assessing service offerings, the more important discovery was the focus put on the human side to the service and the interaction that play out with them. Service failure and recovery as well as customer retention and attraction were also found to be areas of importance within service quality assessment. It is imperative that managers and staff find a suitable balance between these aspects for a service offering to be successful.

# Declaration

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## **List of Abbreviations**

WOM	–	Word Of Mouth
IMC	–	Integrated Marketing Communications
ICT	–	Information Communication Technology

# **Chapter One**

## **Introduction**

## **1.1. Research Problem:**

Service quality management plays a dominant role within the hotel sector with many suggesting that the way in which it is adequately assessed is the forefront of any management process (Boon-itt & Rompho 2013). It is important therefore, to focus on the aspects of service offerings and the areas that are entailed with it to provide a successful service (Dominici & Guzzo 2010). What is important is that the reasons why guests revisit a hotel and how a high-quality service is developed is in many cases still unanswered (Ala'a Nimer AbuKhalifeh' & Ahmad Puad Mat Som 2012). Leading to believe that further research is required into the area.

Managers that are working within the hotel sector are continuously presented with challenges to analyse the services that are on offer and are constantly looking to make improvement in the process. They work to establish a failure free system aimed at offering a top quality service.

Once a service has been established within a hotel, managers and staff are then presented with the on-going process of analysing what they offer and how to improve them in order to remain issue-free (Boon-itt & Rompho 2013). With this in mind, the researcher is interested in finding out what is involved in assessing the overall service offerings of a hotel. The researcher will endeavour to ascertain how services are assessed by hotels, the issues involved in recovering those that have failed and the way in which customer retention and attraction methods are implemented, giving an overview of the whole aspect of hotel service offerings in the process.

## **1.2. Background and Need:**

As a student of marketing who is interested in the field of services, the area of service quality management is of great interest to me. As a researcher, I would like to get an understanding of how hotels in Dublin approach their services and what they do to assess, examine and develop each aspect associated with them. The Dublin region was selected as the levels of hotels are of greater quantity which leads the researcher to believe that competition will be greater and the value of service assessment will mean more to the hotels. The review of the literature found that there

is plenty of findings relating to customers perspectives on service quality, with only a few suggesting the need for further focus to be placed on the hotel. The researcher feels that the methods of assessing a service are of great importance to the hotel sector.

Service quality management and all the aspects entailed with it are of great importance to a successful running of a service offering. The researcher intends on gaining an understanding of how hotels assess their service offerings and what they do to recover failed situations and how they retain/attract new customers in the process.

Parasuraman et al. (1985) suggests that service quality management is reliant on a number of factors being present which include; tangibles, such as food, responsiveness, reliability, assurance and empathy. Knowing this, the researcher wishes to find out if these factors are applicable to all service situations that are offered and what they mean to managers involved. Studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of customer perspectives in the field of service quality management but lacked hotel involvement (Siu et al 2013). However, more research is needed in order to gain a better perspective from the hotel and what is involved in the overall service implementation (Gale 1994).

The need for this study is based on the appearance of limited evidence documenting the methods involved in assessing a service from a hotel's perspective as well as the other applications that are associated with the area. The purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of how hotels assess the services they offer to guests, the methods of recovery they use in situations of failure and what is involved in the retention and attraction of guests. When looking at a piece from Dominici & Guzzo (2010) they believed that success is not primarily based around attracting new customers but rather a mix of attraction and retention of existing customers through policies of customer satisfaction and loyalty (Dominici & Guzzo 2010). Their study looked at managerial approaches that focused on customer satisfaction and loyalty.

### **1.3. Aims and Hypothesis:**

According to Choi & Chu (2001) the most important aspect to delivering a satisfied customer is to ensure that all aspects of the hotel are kept up to date and monitored effectively, with the risk of failure or disappointment being reduced in the process

The study aims to:

- Gain an understanding of how hotels assess their levels of service quality
- Identify what they do if a service failure occurs and the methods used to recover the situation
- Identify how they retain repeat (loyal) customers while attracting in new customer.

The researcher hypothesises that the participants involved will be continually engaging in a service quality management environment.

### **1.4. Assumptions and Limitations:**

Prior to taking part in the study, the researcher made a number of assumptions:

- That the participants will give descriptions that are rich in information and applicable to the study.
- That service quality management will be an important aspect of manager's daily routines.
- The participants will have established methods for assessing their services as well as methods for recovering from failure.
- Customer retention and attraction will be high on participant's priorities.

The research that is carried out will be perceived as limited due to the researchers' inexperience.

### **1.5. Overview of Thesis:**

Chapter Two gives a detailed and accurate review of literature that is relevant to this study. The researcher will look to identify gaps in the research and compare and contrast the different concepts associated with the areas of service quality management and service failure recovery. Chapter Three describes the methods used

to answer the research question proposed. It will look at the techniques and analytical approaches chosen by the researcher and justify the reasons for their implementation. Chapter Four discusses the results of the study followed by a more detailed description of specific elements of the findings of the study. Chapter Five looks at the connection between the findings and those of other studies as mentioned in previous chapters. It will debate the implications to service quality management and critique the study as a whole. Finally the researcher will provide a summary of the entire study, giving conclusions to the research question.

## **1.6 findings**

The research finds that reoccurring themes such as service management, the role of the manager, customers, the service itself and levels of communication all go towards a hotel's self-assessment which leads to an overall better service performance as well as levels of customer retention.

# **Chapter Two**

## **Literature Review**

## **2.1. Introduction:**

In this chapter the researcher will conduct an in-depth examination and describe the many perspectives within the literature revolved around services marketing in the hotel industry, focusing on the methods used in numerous but similar studies and conclusions that different academics produced and developed throughout. By reviewing the literature, the following aims are expected to be achieved;

- Justification for the need of the research to be carried out.
- To show a background need for research in the area of service quality, failure and recovery in hotels.

The review will take on a deductive approach and open with a focus on the generalised area of service marketing and quality in the hotel industry as well as customer loyalty, narrowing down to more specific subject areas such as, service failure and recovery within hotels and hospitality sectors as well as quality management. The following headings were used in the discussion of the literature;

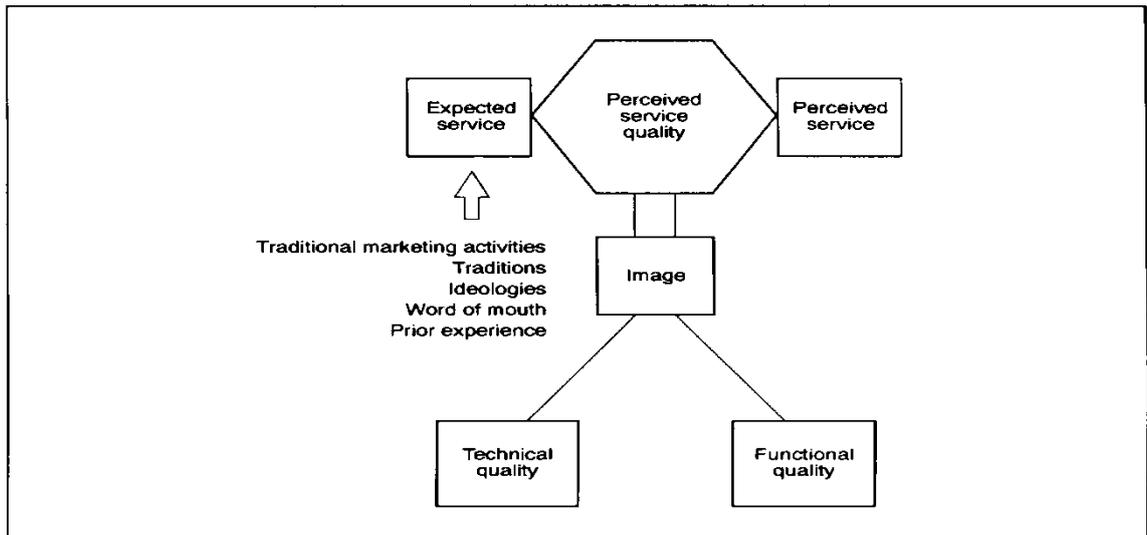
1. Services and quality management in the hotel industry.
2. Customer loyalty management within hotels.
3. Different aspects of service failure and recovery.
4. Importance of service failure and recovery strategies.
5. Service failure and recovery within hotels.

## **2.2. Services and Quality Management in the Hotel Industry:**

### **2.2.1. Definitions and Perspectives:**

Service quality can be a difficult area to define, with many in existence. However Juran (1982) defines service quality as a “fitness for use”, primarily basing it on satisfying customer’s needs. Gronroos (1984a) puts forward the idea that there are both technical and functional aspects to service quality with technical being the quantifiable aspects that a customer gets from interacting with the firm and functional aspects being how the service is delivered to the customer, an area that is harder to measure and has higher rate of obstacles. Figure 2.1 illustrates these

perspectives:

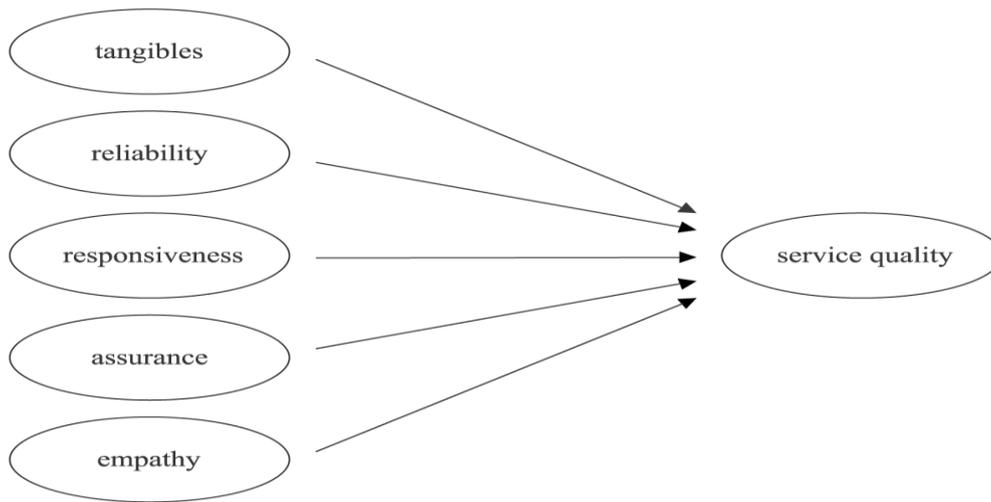


**Figure 2.1** Consumer's perception of technical and functional quality (Gronroos 1984b).

When looking at a piece from Dominici & Guzzo (2010) they believed that success is not primarily based around attracting new customers but rather a mix of attraction and retention of existing customers through policies of customer satisfaction and loyalty (Dominici & Guzzo 2010). Their study looked at managerial approaches that focused on customer satisfaction and loyalty. They carried out in-depth interviews with hotel management to verify the existence of a customer orientated philosophy and found that they target families through a number of different channels such as TV programs, transfer services, public relations and so on in order to develop loyalty with their customers, they also found that the hotel lacked in customer relationship management suggesting that improvements in this area should be made to improve retention rates (Dominici & Guzzo 2010). Similarly, Le Blanc & Nguyen (1996) suggest that hotels should attempt to direct their marketing efforts towards highlighting the environmental characteristics of the hotel's location in order to attract new customers as the rising demand for services by tourists accompanied by higher standards and expectations from guests has led to higher competition between hospitality suppliers (Le Blanc & Nguyen 1996).

### **2.2.2 Dimensions of Service Quality:**

Ala'a Nimer AbuKhalifeh' & Ahmad Puad Mat Som (2012) looked at service quality management within the hotel industry. Their work looks at existing literature and uses five dimensions of service quality developed by Parasuraman et al. (1985) and Zeithaml et al. (1996) for an enriched assessment that include; 1) Tangibles 2)Reliability 3)Responsiveness 4)Assurance and 5)Empathy. These make up service quality and in turn lead to guest satisfaction (as identified in the figure 2.2 below). They found that if properly assessed, there can be a development of customer loyalty in further transactions. Grobelna & Marciszewska (2013) looked at the gaps between the expected and perceived quality of hotel services, determining the most urgent tasks facing managers, like trying to improve their services. Interviews were carried out among managers and staff to find out how they were identifying the priorities of service quality improvements. They found that further research was needed in innovation and service implementation in order to maintain customer satisfaction. In a competitive hospitality industry with a large number of homogeneous services, individual hoteliers must be able to satisfy the needs of their customer in a more efficient way to that of their counterparts (Choi & Chou 2001).



**Figure 2.2** Parasuraman’s SERVQUAL management framework: adopted by Parasuraman et al (1985).

Crawford (2013) suggests methods of delivering a service from a number of perspectives (staff members). The study’s research was made up of data collection through semi-structured interviews which involved different hospitality management operators as the participants. The primary focus of the interviews was based around the participants understanding of a service and how they develop a need to serve others. They found that practical implications for service practitioners included training and selection methods as the proper selection and training of an appropriate employee in key areas can help in the delivery of effective services, a valuable asset to the service provider (Crawford 2013). Gaining high levels of customer loyalty are high priority in the hospitality industry, with many of the actions of loyal customers including word-of-mouth; repurchase intent, complaining behaviour and price sensitivity (Leisen & Prosser 2004). Work by Malik, Yaqoob & Aslam (2012) looked at customer loyalty constructs in the hospitality industry, focusing on price perception, service quality and brand image as an independent variable and customer loyalty as the dependent variable. They conducted 300 surveys and found that service quality, price perception and brand image are all positively correlated with that of customer loyalty, the dependent variable. It helps highlight the factors that are important for building loyalty but lack the hotels perspective of how they take action (Malik et al 2012). They also suggest the idea that a service is intangible in its nature and as a result can create a number of challenges that can include managing, measuring and standardising within the hospitality sector. Finding answers to these

problems is the main priority for managers as it can lead to a pleasant and positive experience for the customers who in turn will lead to repeated patronage and hopefully further recommendations to friends and family, a profitable result for the business (Malik et al 2012).

## **2.3 Customer Loyalty Management within Hotels:**

### **2.3.1 Customer Loyalty & Retention:**

Customer loyalty is also a key area for service marketing. There are a number of different factors that can affect customer loyalty such as price sensitivity which leads to profitability which has a direct relationship with customer loyalty and so the more loyal the customers are the more likely profits will be higher (Helgesen 2006). Osman, Hemmingon and Bowie (2009) look at the concept of both transactional and relationship marketing and how they can develop customer loyalty for a hotel brand. Their methodology was that of a qualitative approach which was made up of both non-participant observations and in-depth interviews with managers of the hotels. The findings of their work suggest that a transactional approach to marketing can be an effective strategy for hotels, which target niche segments with highly differentiated offers at competitive prices such as couples, bachelor parties and so on to increase their spectrum of customers (Osman et al 2009). Tixier (2011) looks at the importance as well as the difficulties of building and retaining customer loyalty in luxury hotels and focuses on areas such as staff loyalty and changing expectations of customers and their tastes. The methodology included interviews carried out with staff and management and focused on the importance of them from the start to the end of their stay. The study pointed out that the cost of achieving and retaining customer loyalty is very high, as is the canvassing other rich customers into the hotel. There are suggestions made that the role of a better adapted communication system in the way they advertise could be better utilised in order to attract and retain customers on a low cost basis (Tixier 2011). Šerić, Gil-Saura & Mollá-Descals (2013) believe that In order to increase the levels of loyalty and build permanent relationships with their customers, hotel companies must begin to embrace new marketing and communication initiatives, such as integrated marketing communications (IMC) and loyalty programs, both of which are supported by a number of advancements in information and communication technology (ICT). Their

methods involved interviewing staff and management to gather a better perspective of what they thought of the concepts of loyalty, IMC, and ICT. The findings of their work demonstrate a high degree of IMC and ICT adoption and a moderate degree of development of loyalty programs in hotels. As well as this we can see that they confirm a positive influence of ICT on IMC implementation as well as a positive impact of IMC on loyalty of customers (Šerić, Gil-Saura & Mollá-Descals 2013).

Research carried out by Malik, Naeem & Nasir (2011) also focuses on the importance of hotel service quality and gaining brand loyalty but gathers their information in a quantitative format from the point of view of the customer (surveys), which is a different approach to the methods used previously. They used multiple regression methods on the results of customers from different hotels and found that areas such as tangibles, reliability and empathy (Fig 1.1) all contributed to their loyalty of the hotel brand (Malik 2011). Throughout many studies there is repeated reference to the use of Parasuraman's model which is seen as somewhat of a backbone to service quality and customer loyalty in the hotel and services marketing industry. Its importance helps to highlight the idea that a customer's perception of quality can be linked to their loyalty of a brand as a highly perceived brand is more likely to produce highly loyal customers (Malik 2011). Backing up this idea is Bolton and Drew (1991) who put forward their suggestion that "*service quality has significant effects on customer loyalty*" (Bolton & Drew 1991).

### **2.3.2 Customer Perspectives of Quality Failure:**

Akbar, Som, Wadoo & Alzaidiyeen (2010) focused their research on the relationship between hotel service quality failure, customer perceived value, revitalization of service quality, customer satisfaction and loyalty in the hotel industry. A mixed methods approach was adopted, using surveys and in-depth interviews to collect data from both customers and hotel management. Results found that the hotel lacked feedback methods and empathy training methods to boost staff moral to make customers feel at ease, however renewal of previously lacking services had a long lasting effect on image which was the main area customers rated highly upon (Akbar et al 2010). Suggestions put forward by their study focus on the fact that even though hotel recovery service quality may not have a powerful impact or influence over the level of customer satisfaction, it may have a somewhat indirect effect on customer

satisfaction in terms of the level failure service quality (Akbar et al 2010). Along with this they also believe that one of the most important strategies that can be used to retain valuable, loyal customers is to improve the level of quality in terms of service recovery such as a quick response time during failure issues (Akbar et al 2010). The constant need to increasingly improve levels of service quality is an indispensable asset needed to increase competitive advantage of a service business. A large number of service companies are doing their best to expand on service delivery performance while avoiding any aspect of failure, as Hart et al. (1990) claimed;

*“Mistakes are critical parts of every service. Hard as they try, even the best service companies cannot prevent the occasional late flights, burnt steak or missed delivery. The fact is, in services, often performed in the customer’s presence, errors are inevitable”*

As pointed out above, service failures are an inevitable part in service industries. A failure of a service can lead to accelerated dissatisfaction among customers with the provider of the service, which can in turn lead to an increase in customer complaints. Irrate customers may spread forms of negative word of mouth (WOM) or even voice their complaints directly to the hotel which is why it is vital for hotels and their staff to be adequately prepared to recover the service quickly and efficiently (Akbar et al 2010).

As the focus on customer loyalty comes to a close, the review looks at a study from Ranjbarian, Dabestani, Khajeh & Noktehdan (2011) who look at the influencing factors of customer loyalty in a four star hotel in Iran. Their research takes on a mixed method approach with surveys aimed at the guests of the studied hotels and interviews aimed at frontline staff dealing with customers on a regular basis. The likert scale surveys found a high level of results in terms of customer satisfaction correlating to staff’s attentiveness but lacking on other tangibles such as facilities. Staff also showed lacked levels of empowerment when it came to dealing with issues as they repeatedly answered that they were given little or no permission to deal with issues freely in the interviews. Results suggest that the hotel should prepare staff with better frontline training and power in decision making situations The study was also limited to one hotel which narrowed the overall scope (Ranjbarian et al. 2011).

In another situation, Ball et al. (2006) also analyse the influences of service personalisation on loyalty and measure some of the psychological dynamics of the process. Their findings prove that service personalisation has an indirect influence on the loyalty of a customer, with the variables of the relation being service satisfaction and trust (Ball et al. 2006).

There is focus placed on a study from Al-Rousan, Ramzi & Badaruddin (2010) whose research focuses on customer loyalty and the impacts of customer loyalty in terms of five star hotels in Jordan. Their research targeted customers with a self-administered survey that was in keeping with the SERQUAL scale in order to identify and measure the perceived tourism service quality of hotel guests. The paper concluded with a proposed scale for measuring the service quality of five star hotels through exploratory factor analysis and that having knowledge on these areas would surely help managers to meet the increasing challenge of improving service quality within the hotel industry (Al-Rousan et al 2010). In most cases it is important to note that failure to identify the power of customer satisfaction, in particular their emotions, can in fact destroy the power of customer retention as well as loyalty (Yi 2001). Along with this, Gale (1994) believes that both feelings and attitudes that are experienced by the customers via the service that has been provided by hotels can form the perception of service quality and that the customer's personal perception of a service, based on personal feelings, can form their overall experience which can be either positive or negative for the hotel's image (Gale 1994). This is also another reason to factor in the importance of service quality and management in terms of success within the hospitality industry. Limitations include a lack of the hotel's perspective.

## **2.4 Different Aspects of Service Failure and Recovery:**

### **2.4.1 Service Recovery as a Factor of Loyalty:**

As mentioned previously, there is a large focus on the importance of service quality and its management in the hotel industry as is the main factor determining the loyalty of existing customers as well as attracting new ones. But with all services, there is always the risk of something going wrong which is why hotels need to have a strategy in place for when a service fails in order to recover the issues quickly and

efficiently while keeping the customer happy. When looking at the concept of service recovery, it can be seen as the actions taken by a company to deal with the failure of a service (Gronroos, 1988). In a piece by Michel, Bowen and Johnston (2009), the focus is put on the area of service recovery, its importance to a company and why it may sometimes fail. The purpose of the study was to identify the reason why customer satisfaction after recovery is not as high as expected by gathering literature on the topic in general. The findings of the study found that there is an on-going debate that service recovery can sometime fails due to a number of unresolved tensions found between the conflicting views of customer recovery, process recovery, and employee recovery. Therefore, successful service recovery requires the integration of these different perspectives (Michel et al 2009). The primary implications from the study are that managers should concentrate on the underlying cause of tension within customer recovery, process recovery, and employee recovery. That is, managers should strive to integrate service recovery efforts based upon a service logic mind-set throughout the day to day business life (Michel et al 2009). In other words, the development of procedures and employees to have a service mind-set rather than a functional one is what a business should be aiming for.

#### **2.4.2 Perspectives of Service Recovery:**

There exist three perspectives on effective service recovery that include; customer recovery, operations recovery and employee recovery (Michel, Bowen and Johnston 2009) . The aspect of customer recovery focuses on the customer's experience at all times, with the goal being to satisfy the customer appropriately with fair levels of treatment after a failure has occurred (Michel et al 2009). Operations recovery places its focus on different production and delivery processes within a company and how to learn from failures in order to improve processes as an attempt to prevent failures that may occur in the future (Michel et al 2009). Finally there is employee recovery which directs its focus towards helping employees of the company become successful in attempting to recover customers or to recover themselves from negative feelings or aggravated customers from service failure situations (Michel et al 2009). The idea of fairness is the key to successful business as customer perceptions and values of being fairly treated can represent a significant factor in service recovery evaluations (Seiders and Berry 1998). In order for the issues of service failure to be

adequately resolved, Michel, Bowen & Johnson (2009) suggest that management-led integration of these perspectives be taken on and developed through a service logic. A service logic looks at how and why a unified service system works and should guide management's design of the service system for both service delivery and recovery (Kingman-Brundage et al., 1995). Michel et al (2009) conclude on the issues that effective recovery management requires starting with what is already known in terms of objectives that need to be achieved and then actually implementing them by an integrated approach based upon aspects of service logic as well as value and strategy-driven approaches in order to recover successfully (Michel et al 2009).

In a separate study carried out by Johnston & Thunderbird (2013) they also focus on service recovery and back up the previous studies that recovery can be split into three distinct dimensions that are customer, process, and employee recoveries (Johnson & Thunderbird 2013). Their research consisted of a model, which linked different recovery procedures to the outcomes of recovery and financial performance, and is tested using data that is gathered from a detailed set of interviews with top management of 15 organisations within the UK. They found that many companies as well as academic researchers have placed a great deal of their efforts all on customer recovery and have, in many cases, avoided the area of both process and employee recovery (Johnson & Thunderbird 2013). The primary finding of the study was that the service recovery procedures of a company have a much more profound effect on both the staff and process improvement than that of the customers. Along with this it is important to note that, although many companies seem to be apprehensive around the area of service recovery, very few companies that implement strategies don't seem to be good at gaining the actual benefits from successfully recovered customers, improved processes or recovered employees (Johnson & Thunderbird 2013). Their implications suggest that further focus should be placed on areas such as process improvements as well as staff training in all areas where service failure may occur.

## **2.5 Importance of Service Failure and Recovery Strategies:**

Siu, Zhang & Yau (2013) look at the area of customer satisfaction and look at how it has been viewed upon as being a crucial element in maintaining sustaining long-term customer relationships in the literature of relationship and services marketing. With this in mind, it is important to focus on situations where customers may encounter a service failure, with the main challenge being made up of rebuilding customer satisfaction and retaining any unsatisfied customers (Siu et al 2013). They used quantitative surveys targeted at customers and concluded that in order to sustain a high level of customer satisfaction in a service failure, the recovery methods must somehow get consumers of the service to see that their treatment of the failure is both fair and considerate (Siu et al 2013). The importance of service recovery is also put forward by Kau & Loh (2006) who suggest that in order to satisfy the grievances of the dissatisfied customers, the customers must gain the perception that the way their issues have been handled are both fair and considerate (Kau & Loh 2006). Another study in favour of the importance of service recovery are Hoffman & Kelley (2000) who suggest that the recovery of the failed service, the multiple reactions of customers and the differing behaviours enacted by both staff and customer during the recovery process and the delivery of results are all important areas within services (Hoffman & Kelley 2000).

A separate study carried out by Nguyen, McColl-Kennedy & Dagger (2012) also looks at the importance of service recovery in terms of customer preferences. The purpose of the study is to argue the idea that service recovery attempts can sometimes pay little or no attention to what the customer is actually looking for in terms of a recovered service. Despite attempts to recover the service for the customer, firms generally do not know if the recovery choice selected is what the customer actually expects as an adequate solution (Nguyen et al 2012). The methodology used was made up of a two-part qualitative approach aimed at staff and managers of a chain store and then a multivariate analysis was carried out on 431 customers. The findings of the study were that customers only show signs of satisfaction with the service recovery method only when it matches up with the most demanding recovery preference available and that customer's recovery preferences can have a powerful impact on the levels of satisfaction they experience with

recovery as well as their repurchase intentions (Nguyen et al 2012). Separately, Maxham & James (2001) look at the numerous effects that altered levels of service recovery have on areas of customer satisfaction, their purchase intentions, and the customer's tendency to spread positive word-of-mouth (WOM) after the service recover has occurred. The results indicate that higher levels of service recovery efforts generally increase post-failure levels of satisfaction, purchase intent, and positive WOM. They also suggest that further action be taken to monitor front line staff as to how they should better assess failure situations appropriately (Maxham & James 2001). Keeping the customer happy is the pivotal point in all recovery situations as Power, Konrad, Cuneo, & Treece, (1991) state that;

*“Modern customers are very demanding and have easy access to diverse information channels. Customer demands for value create a strong focus on a combination of quality, fair price and good service in their purchases”*  
(Power et al 1991).

Tsai & Su (2013) back this statement up in their study in which they focus on the area of service failures within the hospitality sector as well as conducting an examination on the levels of customer satisfaction with certain recovery strategies and successive retention rates of customers. The research was made up of interviewers collect and record critical incidents and associated data from a number respondent contacted via purposive sampling methods using a questionnaire style interview that was developed by the authors (Tsai & Su 2013). Results found that staff on the frontline were lacking in proper training when it came to dealing with customers complaint, simply passing them on to a higher authority. Implications suggest that managerial involvement be reduced and staff training increased along with a development of more practical recovery strategies (Tsai & Su 2013).

Along with this there is a similar study by Cranage & Mattila (2013) who suggest that giving an informed choice to customers can be an effective strategy to counterbalance the damaging effects of service failure in a company. The idea around this method is that customers who are given an informed choice generally have increased feelings of self-attributions, share the responsibility for the service failure, feel more regret and stay more loyal (Cranage & Mattila 2013). Also, they wish to find out if this strategy works when a service failure occurs and the normal

service recovery strategies of an apology and/or compensation are given. After repeated interview style questions were targeted at customers the primary finding was that levels of customer satisfaction and loyalty were generally higher after a service failure when the tactical strategy of giving an informed choice to the customer or the service recovery strategy of an apology and/or compensation were used, than when no choice, apology or compensation were offered (Cranage & Mattilia 2013).

## **2.6 Service Failure and Recovery within Hotels:**

### **2.6.1 Importance of Failure and Recovery Strategies in Hotels:**

The final section of the review narrows down its focus towards service failure and recovery specific to the hotel/hospitality industry, which will give a stronger understanding of the area as well as influence the final choice of methodology to be used. Bin Veop Yunus, Ishak, & Rhouse (2012) focus on service failure and recovery within hotels in a study whereby they look to try and gather an understanding of the service failures and recovery processes in organizations such as hotels. They gather data through critical incident techniques whereby customers who have experienced service failures in Malaysian hotels are interviewed. Staff and management are also interviewed to see if their recovery attempts are successful. The results show that most of the customers interviewed expressed dissatisfaction with the way they had been treated by employees after the failure occurred, decreasing their overall experience (Bin Veop Yunus et al 2012). The study suggests that management need to encourage their staff to be more accommodating with more apologies, general assistance as well as offering adequate compensation to avoid any negativity (Bitner et al 1990). Smith et al. (1999) also suggest that the efficiency of a recovery strategy is highly dependent on the employee that is in contact with the customer and how they handle the issues at hand, and this can include high levels of responsiveness, empathy and understanding (Smith et al 1999).

### **2.6.2 Approaches to Hospitality Recovery:**

A Service Failure can occur in terms of any area of a hotel's service and its delivery, that can include difficult to deal with customers (Bailey, 1994), problems developing

with communication (Bolfing, 1989) and the aspect of waiting (Laws, 1992), all of which can be manipulated and influenced by front-line employees as well as support staff working in the background, equipment and information systems faults (Bin Veop Yunus et al 2012). Mohr and Bitner (1995) identified two different aspects of service failures that include both outcome and process failures in a service. The outcome aspect of a service encounter involves what the customer actually received from the service exchange, whereas the process aspect looks at how they received the service, in other words it looks at the way in which the service is delivered to the customer (Gronroos, 1988).

So with this in mind in, when an outcome failure happens, the hotel does not deliver the basic service or perform the primary service required (e.g. a reserved hotel room is unavailable because of overbooking). On the other hand, with a process failure, the delivery of the main service is interrupted or lacking in some way or another (e.g. a hotel desk clerk treats the customer rudely during check in). The level of Customer satisfaction and their overall judgment will be different in relation to the severity of the failure. Hoffman, Kelley and Rotalsky (1995) suggest that the higher the magnitude or the severity of service failure, the lower the level of customer satisfaction will be.

Kuenzel & Katsaris (2011) look at the differences that may arise with tourist's and management's perceptions of service failures and service recoveries in hotels. They used in-depth, semi-structured interviews aimed at both customers and managers of a hotel. Results found that managers referred to technical aspects when talking about failures and lacked empathy for the customer's perspective and concluded that more passion should be given towards the impact a failure can have on the customer's experience (Kuenzel & Katsaris 2011). As well as this, it is also noted that the way that customers perceive the performance of a service, and whether or not it is a failure, seems partly to depend on customers' prior expectations (Bitner 1990). In another study, Gil, Hudson & Quintana (2006) look at service recovery and customer loyalty, and their influence on perceived service quality within the hotel industry. Their research was made up of an application of a factor analysis which then highlights a clear distinction between tangible and non-tangible dimensions of service quality for both hotel receptions and hotel restaurants. The results show that the non-tangible dimensions of service quality perceived by customers will increase

if the customer is loyal, or if the customer experiences a successful service recovery during their visit. However, for tangible dimensions, these two factors have no influence on perceived service quality (Gill et al 2006). This Further highlights the importance of service recovery strategies in the hotel industry.

## **2.7 Conclusion:**

Within the field of services marketing, particularly quality management, service failure and service recovery in hotels, there exists a number of perspectives, ideas, applications and so on of how they should be managed and applied in practice but what is clear is that once a customer has experienced a service problem, it is becoming increasingly difficult to try and bring the customer back to the level of satisfaction they began with (Yao-Yi & Mount 2007).

In conclusion to this review it is observed that many studies have been undertaken to asses both service quality failure and recovery attempts in hotels but many of which are undertaken from the customer's perspective. These studies also noted that the lack of a hotels perspective was their primary limitation. It is necessary to provide more research in terms of a hotels perspective of service quality and failure & recovery strategies for a more informed perspective within the area.

# **Chapter Three**

## **Methodology**

### **3.1. Introduction**

This chapter will describe the development of this study and the methodology that has been chosen to answer the research question. The researcher aims to carry out an examination of the hospitality industry in order to get a better understanding of how hotels in the Dublin region assess failures in their service offerings as well as the recovery strategies they implement to counter these service short

A qualitative approach will be used for the research of this study and will take shape through an interpretive, inductive approach combined with the use of in-depth, semi-structured interviews to gather data. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) suggest that interpretivism supports the idea that it is necessary for the researcher to understand differences between humans in our role as social actors. What is important to the interpretivist philosophy is that the researcher has to adopt an empathetic stance (Saunders et al 2009). Many would agree that this form of perspective is highly appropriate in the fields of business and management, in particular, areas of marketing and human resource management (Saunders et al 2009 & Collis & Hussey 2009). Interpretivism (an almost opposite approach to positivism) methods will take on an exploratory perspective within the study as it is a valuable means of finding out what is happening right now (Saunders et al 2009) and is strongly linked with qualitative approaches (Collis & Hussey 2009) which leads onto the choice of qualitative methods being adopted.

In terms of qualitative approaches and the data collected, it is generally understood only within context and is associated with an interpretive methodology that has findings high in validity (Collis & Hussey 2009). Qualitative research is quite common in both social and behavioural sciences in which there is a need to understand human behaviour and functions (Ghauri & Gronhaug 2005). It is seen as being most applicable for studying organizations, groups and individuals (Strauss & Corbin 1990). Throughout the literature there exist three major components of qualitative research (Becker, 1970; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Miles & Huberman, 1994):

1. Data: generally collected through interviews and/or observations

2. Interpretive or analytical procedure: the techniques used to conceptualise and analyse the data to arrive at findings
3. Report: written or verbal. In the case of this research it takes the form of a thesis.

(Becker, 1970; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Miles & Huberman, 1994)

The researcher has chosen to go with qualitative interview techniques as it gives the ability to provide textual descriptions of how people may experience a certain research issue. Saunders et al (2009) puts forward a number of qualitative approaches that include; In-depth interviews, protocol analysis, diary methods, observation techniques and focus groups. For the purpose of this study, the researcher is adopting unstructured interviews as Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe (1991) suggest that semi-structured interviews are appropriate when it is necessary to understand the construct that the interviewee uses as a basis his or her opinions and beliefs about a particular situation (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Lowe 1991). As the researcher sought to examine and gain a better understanding of service quality management, service failure and recovery in hotels, this method was seen to be the most suitable methodological option. Although there are claims that relatively few studies use qualitative methods, it is not difficult to find support for the use of qualitative data as Miles (1979) states;

*“Qualitative data are attractive for many reasons: They are rich, full, earthly, holistic, real; their face validity seems unimpeachable, they preserve chronological flow where that is important, and suffer minimally from retrospective distortion; and they, in principal, offer a far more precise way to asses causality in organizational affairs than arcane efforts like crossed-lagged correlations.”*

(Miles, 1979: p117)

From this, the direction of the study is aimed towards a qualitative application in the form of in-depth, semi-structured interviews as their application within an exploratory study can reap countless outcomes for the researcher (Ghauri & Gronhaug 2005).

### **3.2. Research Question:**

According to Maniu & Marin-Pantelescu (2012);

*“An outstanding service can make a lot of money for a business within the hospitality industry, in particular, hotels because the business of a hotel is people and without happy people the service will fail”*( Maniu & Marin-Pantelescu 2012 p237).

The researcher ventured to try and gain an understanding of the different methods hotels in the Dublin region use to develop and manage their level of service quality as well as identifying the procedures they go through when service failure occurs, including the recovery strategies they implement. As well as this, the researcher looks to examine the process of customer retention and attraction methods carried out by hotels. The researcher endeavoured to answer the following question through this qualitative research project:

*To examine the hospitality industry in order to try and understand how hotels in the Dublin region assess the services they offer to stay successful.*

### **3.3. Aims and objectives of study:**

According to Choi & Chu (2001) the most important aspect to delivering a satisfied customer is to ensure that all aspects of the hotel are kept up to date and monitored effectively, with the risk of failure or disappointment being reduced in the process

The aims of the researcher are to try and;

- Gain an understanding of how hotels assess the levels of service quality.
- Identify what they do if a service failure occurs and the methods used to recover the situation
- Identify how loyal customers are retained and new customers are attracted.

### **3.4. Research Measures:**

A variety of different measures have been used to examine services within the hotel industry, including self-administered questionnaires (Malik et al 2011), Mixed method approaches of surveys and interviews (Akbar et al 2010), Qualitative

methods such as Critical incident techniques (Michel et al 2009) and SERVQUAL methods (Al-Rousan et al 2010). For the purpose of this research, qualitative in-depth interviewing proved to be the most suitable choice. Reasons behind choosing qualitative in-depth interviewing is that there is much more focus placed on the interviewee's point of view where the aspect of rambling off on an a tangent is encouraged (Bryman & Bell 2007). Qualitative interviewing looks at uncovering rich, detailed answers that are full of information whereas quantitative research looks at generating answers that are quickly processed and easily coded (Bryman & Bell 2007). In terms of this research, the researcher is looking for detailed information on hotels procedures, something that cannot be found in short and sweet answers. Much of the literature focused its research on the customer's point of view (Siu et al 2013, Bin Veop Yunus et al 2012 & Smith et al 1999) but pointed out in the limitations that there was little information gathered from the hotel's point of view. It was felt that in-depth interviews were the most appropriate research method to receive highly informative information.

Other areas that were consulted for this research project include: qualitative Ethnography & participant observation and focus groups and quantitative structured interviews and questionnaires. Participant observation or ethnography refers to an individual immersing themselves in a group for an extended period of time, observing the different behaviours, listening to what is being said in conversations between others and the field worker, and asking question numerous questions (Bryman & Bell 2007). However a number of limitations exist with this method such as getting access to willing participants. In terms of this research project it wouldn't have worked as the sample selected were very restrictive in terms of time they had to spare and willingness to give information due to their high profile position which is why this method was rejected.

The focus group technique is a method of interviewing a number of individuals at the same time. There is generally focus placed on underlining a certain topic that is examined in detail. The focus group practitioner is most interested in the way people talk about an issue as a group as opposed to as an individual (Bryman & Bell 2007). They combine aspects of interviewing as well as observation but can also lead to new data being developed through the interaction of the group. They can be used in an interpretive methodology but are also adopted by positivists before or after

conducting surveys (Collis & Hussey 2009).some of the limitations of focus groups are that they can be difficult to organise, analyse and issues can arise within the group environment. In terms of this research it is an unfit method as the research requires perspectives of higher management of different hotels and would be difficult, almost impossible to arrange a group meeting of different hotel managerial staff to give their opinions.

When looking at quantitative structured interviews and questionnaires it is noted that structured interviews are made up of standardised questions following an Identical format with each participant, leaving no room for opinions and all questions look for answers that are straight to the point. Many of the questions are close ended and responses are similar. The issue here is that there is little or no room for freedom of speech and gathering different opinions (Bryman & Bell 2007). As the purpose of this study is to get an understanding of methods, approaches and opinions and procedures within hotels, structured interviews were not chosen. When looking at self-administered questionnaires, there are both advantages and disadvantages in comparison to interview. They are quick and easy to administer and generally convenient for the respondent to fill out. However there is no way of helping the respondent if he/she has difficulty answering a certain question. There is also the problem of reduced ability to ask questions that require large amounts of information (Saunders et al 2009) as there is little or no room for discussion with this method it was also not selected.

In terms of using in-depth semi structured interviews, it is suggested that it is the most appropriate approach to use with regards to finding out opinions of procedures in hotels, whether it be from the hotel's perspective or the customer's perspective (Bin Veop Yunus et al 2012, Kuenzel & Katsaris 2011, Nguyen et al 2012 & Bitner 1990). Along with this, further investigation of the literature suggests that many studies are lacking an opinion of services from a hotels perspective as they primarily focus on the customer's perspective (Cranage & Mattila 2013, Tsai & Su 2013 & Maxham & James 2001). The methodological approach the researcher has adopted is similar in application to a number of previous studies carried out in the area of services and hospitality (Bin Veop Yunus et al 2012, Kuenzel & Katsaris 2011, Nguyen et al 2012 & Bitner 1990) and the use of in-depth, semi-structured interviews for this piece can also be linked to work by Lo, Stalcup & Lee (2010)

who carried out a similar method of semi-structured, in-depth interviews with hotel managers to gain information on customer relationship management, giving further justification for the chosen method being adopted.

### **3.5. Procedure adopted and field research:**

As mentioned previously, the method or procedure that has been chosen for the research being carried out is semi-structured, in-depth interviews which are a qualitative approach that is most suitable to extract as much information from the participants as possible (Lo, Stalcup & Lee 2010).

The researcher originally contacted twelve hotels in the Dublin area, with general managers and directors of the hotels being the primary target. The Dublin area was targeted as it has a high population of hotels that are in strong competition and rely on their service offerings to be a step ahead of the competition and is why it was the most suitable choice. At first, two pilot interviews were carried out with two hotels, with the questions being altered soon after to make them more suitable for the future participants. Over the space of a short time (July 10<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup>, Mon-Fri), five more interviews were conducted with question and answer style interviews consisting of a mix of open ended questions for maximum information as well as straight to the open questions that looked for a certain answer such as “In your opinion, what is good service management” and “what steps do you take to manage service quality for guests?”. The interviews took place in the lounge areas of the hotels in the morning time as it was the quietest time of the day to meet with the participants. The interviews ranged in length from forty five minutes to ten minutes as some participants had less time to spare than others. Most of the participants came from an educated background in their field of work with two of them having more “hands on” experience, working their way up to their position over the years.

Due to the nature of their high profile positions and the summer season in place, many hotels were unwilling to give up time to be interviewed which restricted the sample to a number of five willing participants. The participants included three general managers, two human resource managers and a marketing director, all of which were interviewed following the same question/theme sheet (See Appendix A). The interviews were recorded and transcribed with the participants remaining

anonymous at their request as they felt that they did not want to give away any “Tips of the trade away” one participant stated. They did however consent to the title of their position being used to help give different perspectives of different job applications (HR perspective against a marketing perspective).

### **3.6. Sample:**

In this section, the focus is placed on the group of participants selected to be used as part of the research, why they were selected and how they were interviewed, correctly referred to as the sample. When looking at sampling in qualitative research, the purpose is rarely to come to a statistically valid conclusion (even though it is possible), but rather to understand, gain insights and create explanations (Ghauri & Gronhaug 2005). Sampling refers to the selection of participants that are suitable to represent the population that is being under investigation in the research (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010). The researcher looked at choosing types of hotels that had similar attributes and roles in their field of work and so employed the use of ‘purposeful sampling’ methods as described by Burns and Grove (2011), and so consciously selected a homogenous sample of participants who are potentially able to provide rich, in-depth and comprehensive descriptions on a specific topic that is under investigation. Participants were contacted via telephone, email and walk in appointments asking for a period of time during their working day to conduct research. All of the research carried out with the participants was conducted with their consenting approval.

The target sample for this study consisted of six hotel staff members in high managerial positions that had a role to play in the services within the hotel. This choice was based on the fact that within these positions, aspects of all services must meet their approval. Along with this, Service changes or improvements are also considered, consulted and applied by people in the selected positions. The recruitment process was designed in a way that the approached participants did not feel obliged to participate but rather to give them a feeling of helpfulness and support of the study being carried out by the researcher. The participants that agreed were emailed a copy of the questions they would be asked as to ensure that they could answer all the questions with ease and that they did not feel as if they were giving away confidential information.

Nine participants agreed to engage in the study and included five general managers, 3 human resource managers and one director of marketing. Two interviews were conducted as a pilot interview and another human resource manager declined to participate prior to the interview due to on-going business meetings and time constraints. The researcher was in constant contact with the agreeing participants and ensured to be readily available for times that suited their schedules as they're time was of a precious commodity for the study. The final sample size for the study consisted of six participants in total. Verbal consent was then given again by the participants prior to the interview taking place.

The research instrument used with on sample in order to gather information consisted of semi-structured, in-depth interviews with a number of questions being asked of them, thirteen in total and were made up of primarily open-ended questions so that the participant had the ability to ramble on about the topic asked.

### **3.7. Pilot testing & development of measures:**

According to Turner (2010), an important area of qualitative research is conducting a pilot test as it helps in identifying flaws, limitations and other problems within the interview design. In order to try and improve interview skills, perfect the research design and to become more familiar with recording equipment, two pilot interviews were carried out with two willing participants with a set of questions that had been put together shortly before. After the pilot interviews were carried out it was decided by the researcher to change the phrasing, layout and themes of the questions as they lacked a level of flow as well as proving difficult for participants to answer. As many of the questions involved opinions on specific areas, it was decided to inform participants of the areas that will be discussed as not to leave them confused or speechless when questioned.

### **3.8. Data collection:**

In using a qualitative approach to this research, the participants of the study were asked to take part in a semi-structured interview which would take place in their working environment (primarily the hotel lobby), with the questions being guided around important areas that are seen as being vital for a successful service such as

service quality, Service recovery and customer retention. The interview sessions ranged in duration from 15-50 minutes depending on the participants time constraints and willingness to provide information when questioned. The interviews were also recorded on a Dictaphone with the participant's request being given beforehand and later transcribed by the researcher for data analysis. The style of the interviews was of question and answer with the researcher using a variety of techniques, including open ended questions, to get the most information regarding participant's opinion and approach to the areas mentioned above. In order to get a deep understanding, the interview was broken down into three areas that were made up of service quality, service failure and recover and customer retention and attraction. These areas seemed the most relevant to the research and for the information being sought after. Examples of these questions can include: *What do you consider to be good service management within the hotel industry? And what do you consider to be a service failure...* The method of how the data was analysed will now be discussed in the following section.

### **3.9. Data analysis:**

Qualitative data cannot be simply collected and analysed in a linear fashion (Newton-Suter, 2012). Constant interpretation of the data and a previous knowledge base was important in analysing the data collected. This on-going process is demonstrated in figure 3.1.



**Figure 3.1** Process of qualitative data collection (Buckman 2006)

The method adopted to examine the data was that of thematic analysis which is a process for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns that can be seen as being important to the area being studied (Daly, Kellehear & Gliksman,1997). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), it should be seen as a foundational approach to qualitative analysis. The primary process in this study was directed by Braun and Clarke’s (2006) guide to thematic analysis, summarized in the table below.

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic ‘map’ of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

**Table 3.1** Phases of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006)

As the point of the study was to gain an understanding of a hotel's view of services and areas entailed, a data driven approach was undertaken by the researcher which is also referred to as 'inductive thematic analysis' (Patton 1990). As Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest, the researcher aimed to try and develop themes from the data as opposed to just sticking the information into pre-existing theories developed by the researcher. Thematic analysis can be an essentialist or realist method, which reports experiences, meanings and the reality of participants, or it can be a constructionist method, which examines the ways in which events, realities, meanings, experiences and so on are the effects of a range of discourses operating within society (Braun & Clarke 2006). Thematic analysis is a flexible approach that can be used across a wide range of research questions.

The six interviews were all transcribed, which allowed for the researcher to become highly immersed in the data collected (see Appendix B for a sample transcribed interview). The method that was used in the study involved reading and re-reading of the data in order to identify different patterns and possible meanings. All of the data collected was worked through manually by the researcher, identifying a number of different views and taking note of possible repetitions occurring, also known as 'codes' which can be described as; "*The most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon*" (Boyatz 1998 p63)

The researcher began generating codes from each transcript, re-reading everything to ensure the reliability of the chosen codes. As a pilot interview was carried out, the researcher had an understanding of the coding process which helped data analysis. As the pilot questions had to be altered they were not included into the study as they acted primarily as a guide to the establishing the right question set. Potential themes were identified by the researcher through a process of combining and collating the identified themes into broader sections. Clear definitions for each theme were generated in order to fit codes accurately, as there should be clear and identifiable distinctions between them (Braun & Clarke, 2006). All of the data was then reread, which then allowed the researcher to determine whether the themes chosen give an accurate representation of the data, and to code any additional information within the data used (see Appendix C for code/theme table). A 'thematic map' was generated which provides a visual image of the codes and themes that were developed. The

analysis and discussion of the resulting information retrieved from this process will be presented in the following chapters.

### **3.10. Ethical considerations:**

Ethical issues were taken into account by the researcher during the process of data collection. One of the most important ethical principal to take into account is that coercion should not in any circumstance be used to force participants into taking part in the research being carried out. In terms of academic research it is also suggested that providing forms of financial or material rewards should be avoided as this can sometimes lead to biased results (Collis & Hussey 2009). The researcher informed the participants of general areas that will be discussed in order to ensure that the participants had clearance to discuss the topics in detail.

In theory, both anonymity and confidentiality should be offered to all participating individuals. This not only gives them a feeling of ease but also allows them to talk more freely when questioned on different topics (Collis & Hussey 2009). The researcher gave the participant the freedom to select the location of interviews and verbal consent to be recorded was given prior to each interview taking place. As the positions of the participants were of a high level, they all requested their names and the names of their hotel remain anonymous as they felt insecure about giving hotel 'secrets' away. The participant gave consent for their job titles being used in the study. All the participating individuals were given ID names which were then coded. All of the information gathered was confidential and only seen by the researcher.

### **3.11. Methodological limitations:**

As all methods of data collection have their problems, it is suggested that the use of qualitative interviewing can be a method with fewest inhibitors to the study (Saunders et al 2009). However, even qualitative interviewing has its limitations which can include the ability to provide primarily valid results as opposed to reliable ones, time consumption with the transcription stage can be a long and drawn out process as well as sometimes being too subjective (Bryman & Bell 2007).

There are a number of limitations to this study which can include the trustworthiness of the information that the participants provide, are they telling the researcher

everything or holding back on certain information? This is unknown. Another limitation was that of access and time with the participants! Due to their high position and the summer season (Peak business for hotels), many did not wish to partake in the study with some of the participants only meeting for a short period of time compared to other participating individuals. Some participants even seemed rushed during the interview, leading the researcher to believe that they could not adequately answer the questions asked of them, possibly leaving out important information. As the researcher used purposeful sampling, the findings are difficult to generalize into a variety of different settings (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010). Another limitation is that the sample size for this study is not very large (6 in total) and not representative of all hotels and their service offerings. Many attempts had been taken by the researcher to get a larger sample size but it remained at six participants. Crouch and McKenzie (2006) argue however, that a small sample size is adequate and allows facilitation of the; *“Researcher’s close association with the participants, and enhances the validity of fine-grained, in-depth inquiry in naturalistic settings”*. (Crouch & McKenzie 2006)

### **3.12. Conclusions:**

In using a qualitative approach to this study, the researcher employed the use of semi-structured, in-depth interviews with willing participants who were purposefully selected for this study. Both the benefits and disadvantages of the method have been highlighted with reasoning behind the final choice being noted. The information gathered from the interview process was then thematically analysed and coded into important themes in the area. The data that has been analysed will now be presented and discussed in the following chapters.

# **Chapter Four**

## **Results**

## **4.1 Introduction:**

This chapter will discuss the objectives and thematic analysis that was carried out on the data that was gathered from interviews conducted with the sample. The process of coding and theme development can be seen in Appendix C and Appendix D.

Participants will be referred to as H1, H2, H3, H4, H5 and H6 accordingly throughout this chapter to maintain anonymity.

## **4.2 Objective Findings:**

The research objectives that will be answered include:

1. To gain an understanding of how hotels assess their levels of service quality.
2. To identify what they do if a service failure occurs and the methods used to recover the situation
3. To identify how loyal customers are retained and new customers are attracted

### **4.2.1. Objective One:**

From the analysis of the interviews, the most significant methods that hotels use to assess their levels of service quality rely on the different levels of feedback that they receive from the customer as well as the levels of customers that repeatedly use their services. H2 believes that employees should try get as much as they can from customers as she said:

*“Every single day there should be constant observation of staff, making your presence clear, providing feedback on performances, coaching people, in particular our front line staff such as the concierge as he represents the quality, standard and image of this hotel when the guest enter the hotel”*

Interestingly, when questioned on the topic of service management H3 believes that creating an atmosphere that promotes feedback from guests was a valuable method of maintaining service quality *“Well I expect an environment that is comfortable for*

*customers as well as staff that are well trained and are empowered to work hard and meet goals”*

The level of loyalty was also another aspect that came up in most of the interviews regarding service quality as many participants find that if they notice a large amount of repeat faces, it is a reflection of the quality of the service the hotel provides as H4 mentioned *“A friendly approach to recognising repeat customers is definitely a winner for holding onto them as well as a reflection of the business”*

## **4.2.2. Objective Two:**

### **4.2.2.1 Failure occurrence**

The most significant responses that arose when asked about the process involved when a failure occurs included: acknowledging a problem, apologising and providing some form of compensation. Participants repeatedly mentioned acknowledgement as the first step to making the guest happy. H1 said *“..if it’s been heard, acknowledged and sorted then the customer will know they’ve been listened to.”*

Similarly, H2 believes identifying an issue and informing the guest is the best approach to take if something does go wrong as she mentioned: *“If you acknowledge that something’s wrong and you apologise, then they are more likely to be more forgiving”*

Making sure that you take in everything the guest is telling you was another important aspect pointed out as H1 suggested *“I think the most important thing is to listen to the guest without interruption and try to understand what it is that caused the issue.* Demonstrating empathy when a problem occurs was another approach mentioned when a failure occurs as in one instance, H4 replied *“well firstly we try to apologize as soon as possible and then we try to take extra care in handling the situation.”*

A final aspect that was prevalent was trying to offer the guest some form of compensation for failing to meet their standards. Offering compensation is

important, it makes the customer feel like they've been listened to and offered something to rectify the issue. H4 talked about mending the problem quickly and through gifts, stating *"In most cases it can be rectified quickly but sometimes we go the extra mile and offer dinner on the house or maybe a voucher to stay with us again"*.

#### **4.2.2.2 Service recovery:**

When questioned on the methods used to rectify service failure, the areas that stood out for the researcher included: Customer satisfaction, Recognition of the problem, Demonstration of empathy, and methods of compensation. In terms of customer satisfaction, all participants referred to it as an aspect of recovery, that it is something that should be learned from as H3 states *"If you ask me, all feedback is good feedback, the bad ones help us to improve the services we offer"*

A sense of recognition is also something that a number of participants referred to when questioned on recovery methods. H2, H3 and H5 strongly agree on the methods of recognition with H2 stating *"Listening and recognising what customers want is the most important aspect to avoid negative feedback!"*

In terms of showing the customer an empathetic approach, H1, H3 and H6 strongly agree that letting the customer know that your genuinely sorry for the inconvenience can ease the situation quickly. H6 suggests that: *"...we try to apologize as soon as possible, if we make the effort the customer can be very forgiving!"*

#### **4.2.3. Objective Three:**

##### **4.2.3.1. Methods of retention:**

The primary area that was identified by the researcher as being a method of retention for all participants was of customer recognition, When asked what maintains customer loyalty, H1 replied *"The feeling of recognition, being welcomed and being known goes down extremely well with guests"*

Similarly, H6 noted that their customers inform staff how they like the fact that they've been remembered, stating: *"...a lot of the time I hear back that customers appreciate the fact that we remember them"*

H3 was asked the same question regarding loyalty and put forward the suggestion that if employees are able to acknowledge a regular customer in a nice way then they'll be successful in holding onto their business stating that: *“A friendly approach to recognising repeat customers is definitely a winner for holding onto them as well as a reflection of the business”*

#### 4.2.3.2. Methods of attraction:

There were a number of methods identified that hotels adopt to attract new customers. The methods of attraction are illustrated in the table below:

	Sales Team	Online Advertising	Online Forums	3 <sup>rd</sup> Party Websites	Paper advertising	Social Media
<b>Hotel 1</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
<b>Hotel 2</b>		✓	✓	✓		✓
<b>Hotel 3</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
<b>Hotel 4</b>		✓				✓
<b>Hotel 5</b>				✓		✓
<b>Hotel 6</b>	✓	✓			✓	

**Table 4.1** Methods of attraction used by participants.

### **4.3 Thematic analysis**

The five themes that emerged from the in-depth analysis of the interviews are as follows:

1. Service Management
2. Role of Management
3. Communication:
4. Customers
  - Attraction
  - Retention
5. Services
  - Failure
  - Recovery

The following figure illustrates the codes generated during the analysis of the data.

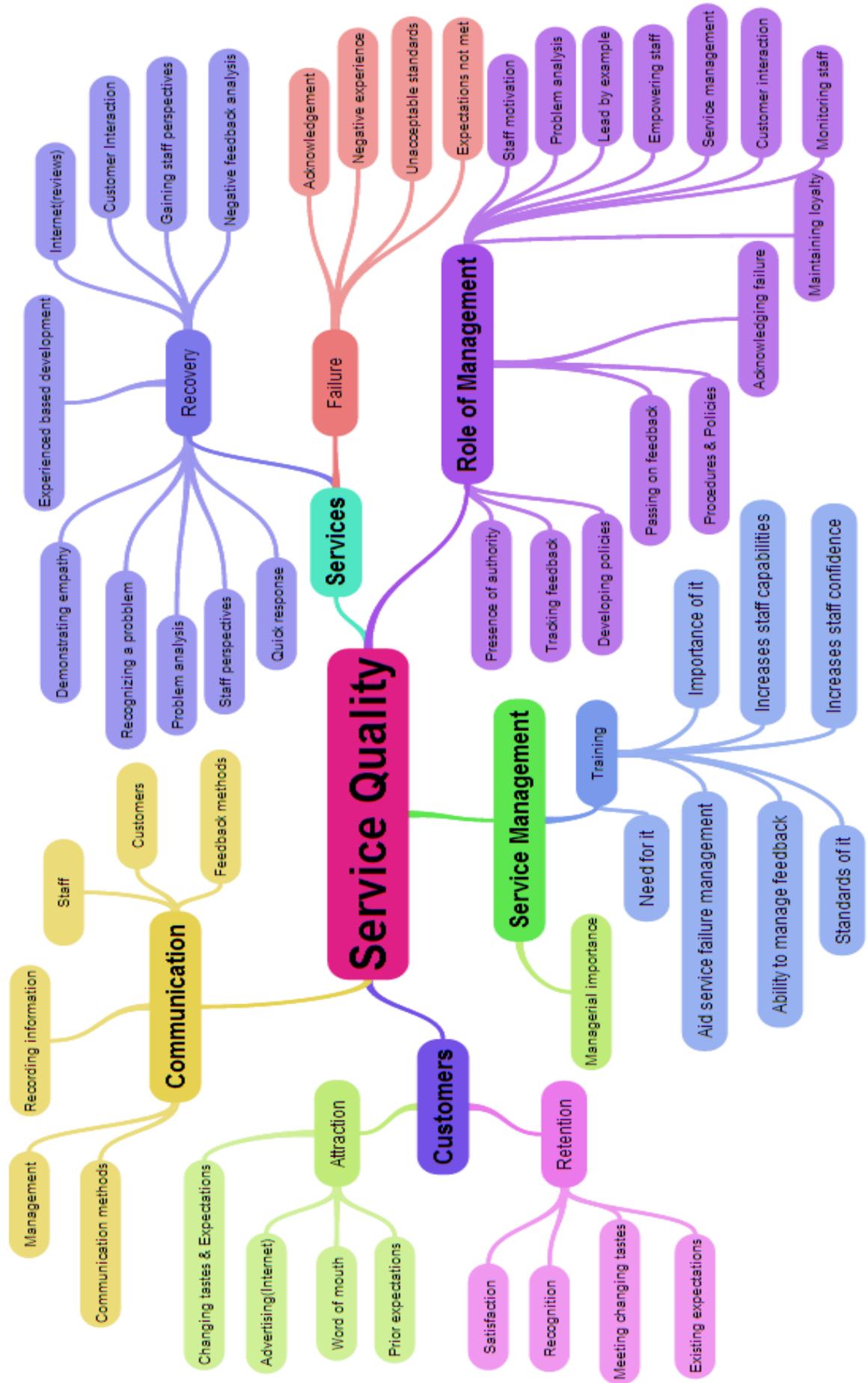


Figure 4.1 illustrates the creation of themes from the coded data

### **4.3.1. Service Management:**

Service management played an important role for the participants regarding the analysis of the service they offer. Service management was identified as the elements used to ensure high levels of service quality within the hotels. It was found that participants discussed training, managerial importance and staff presentation repeatedly.

#### **4.3.1.1. Training:**

Training was a reoccurring factor mentioned by all participants and discussions ranged from the need for it, the importance of it and the standards of it. When questioned about training H1 mentioned: *“we start emphasising on training early as it is crucial for hotels”*

In a similar instance, H1 of training to emphasize the focus of standards and what it means to their hotel stating *“there is a lot of training involved to ensure the customer has a good time and if they come to us again they experience the same level of service”*

Training was described by participants as an important tool for increasing staff capabilities, building confidence as well as providing them with the skills to manage situations independently, for example H1 states: *“[Training] gives them a sense of authority and empowerment as opposed to just passing it on to a manager, leaving the customer waiting.”*

#### **4.3.1.2. Managerial importance:**

Interestingly participants suggest that management plays an important role in service management with H1 stating: *“As a manager, you need to lead by example so you need to show them how to deal with the customer, not to be afraid of the customer”*

And similarly, H2 mentions *“Constant coaching and friendly tips from managers are also beneficial to our staff.”*

#### **4.3.1.3. Staff presentation:**

The presence of a manager not only seems to have an impact with all training aspects but also has implications towards staff presentation and attitudes. Participants referred to the appearance of their staff on a number of occasions as H4 states: *“So a well-managed service, I believe, relies on the staff representing the service and how they conduct themselves,”*

#### **4.3.2 Role of manager:**

While having a role in service management, number of different approaches were identified in terms of the managerial aspects within a hotel. The role of the manager refers to the aspects taken on by managerial positions which impact on staff, services and so on. The primary, reoccurring aspects that emerged with all participants include empowering staff, customer integration, monitoring staff and acknowledging service failure.

##### **4.3.2.1 Staff empowerment:**

Both H1 and H2 talk about the issues of staff not having the confidence to deal with certain situations when confronted with them and how giving the staff the ability to tackle problems on their own is the key and they are provided with skills to manage issues that may arise . H1 suggests an alternative method of empowering staff *“Management is all about leading by example and empowering your staff as they’re the frontline people”*

And in the same instance, H2 mentions *“having staff who are empowered to act on the spot can be beneficial.”*

H3 talks about how having staff that can do the right things at the right time can help to create an atmosphere in the hotel that has the customer at ease as well as a service that runs without any hitch, Highlighting the aspect of interaction and empowerment, *“Well I expect an environment that is comfortable for customers as well as staff that are well trained and are empowered to work hard and meet goals”*

#### **4.3.2.2. Customer interaction:**

Participants discuss customer interaction repeatedly throughout their interviews, they find helps manager's assess service quality, customer satisfaction and aspects or areas of failure. H1 believes interaction can help get rid of any bad experiences the customer may have had *"If the customer is communicated with, it makes them feel heard, hopefully reducing the negative experience"*

H4 supports this by talking about interaction as a method of solving issues and recovering from bad situations quickly *"Talking to the customer and plenty of interaction is also a good way of improving many situations."*

#### **4.3.2.3. Monitoring staff:**

The importance of monitoring staff was another feature mentioned by participants when discussing the role of the manager referring back to the fact that staff work harder when they know they're being watched as well as having someone to turn to in difficult situation with H1 saying: *"if staff see a manager around, they automatically step up their game because they know they're being watched"*

Along with H3 mentioning that *"I like the approach of monitoring staff, not all the time but just enough to let them know that there's someone there to look after situation"*

Interestingly, H2 talks about the use of external methods of monitoring staff, such as mystery-shopper-type scenarios to get a full experience of the staffs capabilities *"We also use secret guest methods to monitor our staffs performance"*

#### **4.3.2.4. Acknowledging service failure:**

The ability to acknowledge that a service has failed is another important role of the manager and plays a huge part of all participants and their hotels as it is the first and most basic step for service recovery to take place. H6 believes that if acceptance is taken for the issue, the customer is less likely to get irate:

*"If customers are not acknowledged and their problem is not rectified then we have failed!"*

H1 talks about the irritation of little mistakes revolved around acknowledgement such as not saying hello and how it is down to the manager to enforce this:

*“Sometimes customers write that they were not even acknowledged by any staff during their stay! I want staff to have acknowledgement drilled into their head!”*

Similarly, H3 goes on to talk about acknowledgement of issues as being the main way that staff and managers kick-start the recovery process as it gives them a platform to gather information from the customer:

*“well we need to listen to them, understand where they’re coming from and start by recognising and acknowledging the customer as well as apologising for the inconvenience”*

### **4.3.3 Communication**

Another reoccurring topic during the interviews was various methods and aspects and the importance of communication... Communication was identified in the analysis and can be referred to as the channels used by staff and managers to interact with each other as well as the methods used to gain feedback from the customer. Areas that seemed relevant to participants included communication with customers and methods of feedback used.

#### **4.3.3.1. Methods of customer communication:**

H1 H2 and H4 talk about communication and describe it as a method of making sure the service stays highly efficient at all times. H2 discussed talking directly to the customer as being an important factor in service management *“we have so many different way of communicating; one is obviously personal transaction with the guests in order to get direct feedback”*

Interestingly, different perspectives are taken by some participants when asked about customer communication. H3 believed that being around too much might be too much for the customer:

*“in my own opinion I don’t like to around the customers too much in case it makes them feel uneasy!”*

Participants also talked about how staff play a big role in communicating information back to managers, as the frontline positions receive the most information. H6 suggested that if the staff communicate information back the manager then processes become more efficient *“I like to hear back from my frontline staff as it lets me know the goings on around the place”*

#### 4.3.3.2. Methods of feedback:

When asked on the methods of feedback customers can use in their hotel, a range of methods were given. These methods can be illustrated in the table below:

	Comment card	Online Forum	Follow-up email	Personal transaction with guest
Hotel 1	✓	✓		✓
Hotel 2	✓		✓	✓
Hotel 3	✓	✓		
Hotel 4	✓			✓
Hotel 5	✓	✓		
Hotel 6	✓		✓	✓

**Table 4.2** Methods of feedback

#### 4.3.4 Customers:

This theme was split into two sub-themes for the purpose of the research:

- Retention of customer
- Attraction of customers

##### 4.3.4.1 Retention of customers:

The researcher found that there seemed to be a similar retention process with all participants which is identified in the figure below:



**Figure 4.2** Methods of customer retention

Participants identified a number of aspects that enable them to help them hold onto repeated business and keep retention high which means there is a need for better communication with customers H4 talks about the importance of maintaining satisfaction with guests as being a primary tool:

*“We can’t let an unhappy customer walk out the door because that can lead to negative word of mouth”*

Interestingly, most participants found that a level of recognition towards repeated guests was a winner for them as it lets customers know they’ve been remembered. H1 believes that:

*“Giving a feeling of recognition and being welcomed and being known is nice for customers”*

Participants found that the expectations of customers are of importance and that rewarding repeated patronage as well as get to know these guests. H1 found developing a relationship to be important *“We try to do special nights for these people, complimentary desserts, and Christmas presents”*

#### 4.3.4.2. Methods of customer attraction:

the most significant methods of customer attraction included the advertising approaches and word of mouth communication from customers. All participants mentioned the internet as the main form of advertising, H5 states:

*“the main methods we use besides general advertising include our social network pages on Facebook and so on as well as allocating a number of cheaper rooms on 3rd party websites”*

Word of mouth communication is another aspect as a satisfied customer is more likely to inform friends of their positive experiences which may attract new customers in .H3 mentions *“...we like to encourage is word of mouth communication as it has a great snowball effect among customers”*

Methods of attraction are illustrated in the figure below:



**Figure 4.3** Methods of attraction

### **4.3.5 Services:**

Two sub-themes emerged within this theme:

- Service failure
- Service recovery

#### **4.3.5.1 Service failure**

When questioned about services, various aspects of what constitutes a failure became evident. Participants regularly referred to the failure to acknowledge a problem as being the primary form of failure with H6, H3 and H1 mentioning that they find the most frequent complaint is that nothing was done about an issue. H1 states *“I think the biggest service failure issue happens when a customer highlights an issue to you and you do nothing about it”*

Similarly, H2 finds that it’s just a case of common decency *“If a customer is not acknowledged, in any situation I believe that to be a service failure as well as being plain rude!”*

#### **4.3.5.2 Service recovery:**

When questioned about how issues can be resolved in the hotel, participants put forward a number of suggestions such as recognising the problem, analysing it and responding quickly. The primary approaches were made up of customer interaction, demonstration of empathy and using the internet.

H1 states that *“if it’s been heard, acknowledged and sorted then the customer will know they’ve been listened to”*

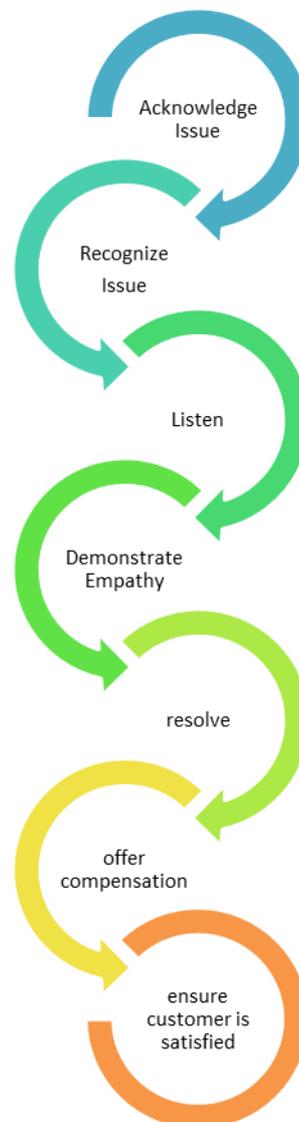
In terms of internet use, H1 and H2 mention the monitoring of reviews as being a method of recovery. They find that dealing with identified problems and informing the customer by email is an appropriate method. H2 believes that: *“forums such as trip advisor to give reviews of our hotel are great as we welcome all online feedback and we acknowledge and respond to it actively”*

A strong area that appeared with all participants as a method of recovery was showing the customer a sense of empathy when an issue happens. H2 found empathy

to be their most appropriate method as *“If you acknowledge that something’s wrong and you apologise then they are more likely to be more forgiving”*

And similarly, H5 said *“show the person a bit of empathy! Put yourself in their shoes”*

The primary steps identified as recovering a service are illustrated in the figure below:



**Figure 4.4** Stages of service recovery

## **4.4 Conclusion:**

The findings of the analysis carried out on the data collected in this study. The objectives of the research were also examined Exploration into the service offerings of a hotel, the factors influencing service quality were discovered. Service management and the role of the manager were a few of the identified aspects of service quality.

A number of factors were defined under both the attraction and retention of customers. The two of these were placed under the area of customers. Retention involves acknowledgement of customers and interaction whereas customer attraction involves advertising methods and word of mouth communication

Extracts from the data were included to deepen the reader's understanding of the thematic analysis.

# **Chapter Five**

## **Discussion**

## **5.1. Introduction:**

It has been recorded that services and what they offer are reliant on a number of aspects which need to be kept up to date and efficiently monitored, including the staff, the way they're trained and so on (Crawford 2013). Constant efforts must be made in order to hold onto a repeated guest and retention rates must be kept at an all-time high, which is reliant on the service offerings (Dominici & Guzzo 2010). Therefore a focus on hotel service offering and how they are managed, maintained and implemented is vital within the business of hospitality (Gobelna & Marciszewska 2013). This chapter includes discussion and integration of the main results of this study.

The five main themes that emerged from the data analysis included:

1. Service management
2. Role of manager
3. Communication
4. Customers
  - Retention
  - Attraction
5. Services
  - Failure
  - Recovery

## **5.2. Service management:**

There are many different aspects that are seen as important when discussing the management of services. The maintenance of service management helps to encourage systems-level thinking and provides at least some initial guidance on developing appropriate 'mind-sets' and skills (Lusch & Spohrer 2012). The levels of training that are apparent with hotel staff and training programs that address specific problems or potentially rewarding opportunities the potential benefits should be obvious (Laing & Andrews 2011). The theme of service management which was identified by the researcher contained two important aspects that included training and managerial importance.

### **5.2.1. Training:**

Training was discussed by all participants as being one of the primary factors that go towards the management of services. It can improve the levels of responsiveness and reaction, both of which are highlighted by participants and seen in similar studies by Parasuraman et al (1985) who advocated the improvement of these aspects for an overall better service quality.

### **5.2.2. Importance of manager:**

The need and importance of training are apparent, with the levels of training varying depending on the employee's position. Training helped staff and management tackle issues that they would be unable to if it were not for the training they had received. Therefore it is from these activities that staff increased both their capabilities and overall confidence.

The importance of the manager was another area identified as being key to the management of services. Overseeing the systems, having someone to consult and a person to implement policies were all evident and helped the service run as well as improve the training process. Deery & Jago (2001) believed that the manager acts like an instructor, guiding the staff to meet the goals of the hotel. This also helped to improve staff confidence as they felt they had someone to turn to. The importance of managers and their skillsets was observed and can be related to previous studies documented (Gentry, Patterson, Stawiski, Gilmore & Sparks 2013 & Tonidandel, Braddy & Fleenor 2012)

## **5.3 Role of the manager:**

The participants focused on the managerial aspect of services and how they are the most influential factor within the service offering. One participant stated how the manager is a part of all operations within the hotel so they have a clear and important role to play in all situations. Managerial involvement and consultation have been shown to positively enhance services in all fields (Ouakouak, Ouedraogo & Mbengue 2013).

The participants mentioned the ability to empower the staff as being one of the primary methods of improving capabilities, confidence and training abilities which

in turn all go toward the final service being offered. Empowerment can give the ability to let staff act on their feet and get things done quickly and effectively. One participant described empowerment as being a tool to be used in preventing time wastage looking for a manager. Framer (2011) found that the delegation of authority and relationship with supervision were significant effects of empowerment which lead to greater staff development. Similarly, Amenumey & Lockwood (2008) found that managerial support, monitoring of staff and aspects of training all play an advantage in empowering the employee.

It became evident that another aspect of the manager's role was to acknowledge failure when and if it occurs. Three participants mentioned acknowledgement of a service as being an important aspect of recovery and that a managerial presence is needed. Not knowing what is wanted is down to poor acknowledgement by management. The findings of this study are similar in a number of previous other studies where it is found that even though attempts are made to recover the service for the customer, firms generally do not know if the recovery choice selected is what the customer actually expects as an adequate solution (Nguyen et al 2012 & Ottenbacher, Shaw & Lockwood 2008). These findings correlate with that of the researcher as participants repeatedly mention the failure to acknowledge as being an aspect of the role of the manager. P3 found that there needed to be constant interaction with customers and staff to solve problems.

Aspects of customer integration were allocated into the role of manager but studies carried out remained limited with much of the same studies being those used to describe acknowledgement of failure.

#### **5.4. Communication:**

This study identified a few aspects of communication within a hotel, the primary ones being methods of communication with the customer and the methods of attaining feedback from customers. All of which lead to a more reliable process being implemented (Parasuraman et al 1985 & Crawford 2013).

#### **5.4.1. Communication with customers:**

What is important to note is that all participants recognised that a level of communication should be adopted with customers, not only as a method of solving issues but also as a method of customer retention. This is not only highlighted in the literature on recovery (Bin Veop Yunus et al 2012, Bitner et al 1990 & Smith et al 1999) but similar studies also found that communication, in particular, face-to-face communication with customers is a winner over other artificial methods (Salomonson, Allwood, Lind & Alm 2013). Halimi, Chavosh & Choshali (2011) also found that a high level of communication as well as personalization can increase the overall level of customer satisfaction.

These levels of personalization come from the staff communicating with the customers, feeding it back to managers and developing the communication further

From discussions with the participants it is clear to see that all aspects of services require levels of communication and can include staff communication, management communication and customer communication. One participant refers to the fact that customers like to be engaged with, and that it gives them a sense of belonging.

#### **5.4.2. Methods of feedback:**

Participants frequently referred to multiple methods of feedback as their primary channels of communication with the customer. Some of the methods mentioned by participants included comment cards, reviews, direct interaction and so on.

The literature is directed around the customer and how they have changing expectations which need to be met, expectations that need to be communicated for the hotels to understand what is wanted in what they offer (Power et al 1991, Tsai & Su 2013 & Maxhan & James 2001). Interestingly, Hokey & Hyesung (2005) found that high levels of feedback, both from superior positions and from external factors (customers), the levels of service quality offered by hotels steadily increases. This finding correlates with the findings of this sample as two participants noted significant improvements when a comment card system was introduced.

## **5.6. Customers:**

The results identified two sub-themes that were associated with customers:

- Retention of customers
- Attraction of customers

### **5.6.1. Retention:**

The ability to hold onto a guest and have them return to the hotel was Identified as an aspect of the service offerings of a hotel. Participants frequently talked about holding onto the guests they already have with one participant saying that repeated patronage matters most to them. The researcher identified trends of satisfaction maintenance, recognition of existing customers and meeting established expectations as methods of retention. The literature provides much importance regarding retention in numerous studies (Dominici & Guzzo 2010, Yi 2001 & Tsai & Su 2013). In a study carried out by Hasan, Asif, Arif & Khan (2013) the importance of retaining customers is highlighted as being a substantial factor in the dynamic market environment and this can be related to the results gathered from the sample as all participants mentioned the importance of retention

Recognising a familiar face was identified as another approach to retention with one participant stating that their customers tell the staff that they appreciate all the recognition. This leaves the researcher to believe that the most important methods are always the simplest. Bitner (1990) identified that focusing on prior experiences of customers and maintaining their perception of the service is a step towards retention. Similarly, the participants in this study all mentioned that they go the extra mile by saying hello and remembering the guests name to retain them.

### **5.6.2. Attraction:**

The ability to attract new customers was also identified as a part of a hotel's service offering. Along with retention, the ability to attract new customers to your service is clear throughout the literature with methods of advertising, improving word of mouth communication and exceeding expectations being at the forefront (Tixier 2011, Le Blanc & Nguyen 1996 & Dominici & Guzzo 2010).

Interestingly, in a study by Mosakhani, Behboudi, Khah & Ardalani (2013), they found that new methods for attracting customers have moved towards the digital approach to advertising, this directly links to the sample of this study as all participants mentioned the adoption of online methods to get new customers such as social networks and third party websites. This in turn is seen as an appropriate way of spreading information to possible guests as well as increasing word of mouth communication.

## **5.7. Services:**

The research identified two sub-sections in the analysis of customers:

- Issues of failure
- Methods of recovery

### **5.7.1. Issues of failure:**

All participants discussed the aspect of failure when they talked about the topic of services. They believed that it is an inevitable aspect of the job that cannot be avoided H3 said that *you can never keep everyone happy, failure is bound to happen.*

The literature on service failure repeatedly presents the causes for a service to fail with dropping standards and failing to meet the guest's expectations being the primary ones (Johnson & Thunderbird 2013, Maxhan & James 2001, Tsai & Su 2013 & Rhouse 2012). This can be linked to the results of the study as H1 mentioned that one of their guests made a comment that no even said hello to them which showed the simple issues that arise with failure.

Interestingly, Weber & Sparks(2010) found that if a failure occurs due to uncontrollable events (broken shower etc.) as opposed to human error (messing up a food order) customers are more forgiving as there is no one person to blame. This can be correlated back to the results as H1 mentioned that if a simple mistake by staff is continuously ignored, the customer becomes irate. Participants all mention that they continuously try to monitor failure issues as they occur.

### **5.7.2. Methods of recovery:**

After analysis of the data, it was found that the primary aspects of service recovery were made up of monitoring review online, interaction with the customer and demonstrating empathy. Analysing recorded data helps to recover situations quickly as demonstrated by Bin Veop Yunus, Ishak & Rhouse (2012) who describe the difficulties of consistently delivering to customers but methods of apologising and compensating the guests can lead to quick recovery.

From conversations with the participants, the researcher found that all involved in the study implemented some form of empathising strategy as a method of resolution which leads the researcher to believe that focus is moving away from the use of compensation. H5 mentioned that they try to talk and listen to the guest before making any decisions. As illustrated in the results, the stages of service recovery are highlighted and are similar to many previous findings (Johnson & Thunderbird 2013 & Maxhan & James 2001).

All participants mention how they apologise to the guest and show that they care about them. The importance of empathy in service situations is highlighted by Bayne, Pusateri, & Dean-Nganga (2012) who found that *“managing aspects of recovery often necessitates the use of empathy in order to correctly understand issues and build trusting relationships”*. This again leads the researcher to believe that recovery is based on emotional aspects as opposed to physical.

### **5.8. Implications for service quality management:**

Service quality can be defined as: *“The extent of discrepancy between a customer's expectations or desires and their perceptions”* (Hirmukhe 2013 p.267)

The management of hotel services typically includes an overview of the entire system to include staff, the management, training as well as the customer receiving the service. With customers becoming ever more picky and competition becoming more prevalent, people working in hotel services should not overlook these important aspects.

Service management was identified as one of the main areas influencing the service offering with participants referring to training as being the prevailing issue in

managing services. Managers advocate ensuring training in all aspects of the hotel. This study accentuates the need for managers within hotels to incorporate and continuously improve training applications in all service environments.

Service quality is also reliant on customers and what you do with them (Dominici & Guzzo 2010). As demonstrated in this study, participants identified two factors in relation to customers; retaining them and attracting in new ones. Service quality is based on both of these and this study suggests that managers in the hotel environment need to develop a balance of both to remain successful.

### **5.9. Strengths and limitations:**

The use of in-depth, semi-structured interviewing was a successful tool as it not only gave the ability to gain data based on service offerings but also gave the participants the freedom to give opinions which gained valuable insights through the collection of data.

There are four primary methodological limitations to consider when interpreting the results.

Firstly, due to the unreliability of the participants the researcher found it difficult to acquire a larger sample size. There were multiple attempts to arrange meetings, with the researcher making himself readily available for any time that suited the participant. As the study was revolved around hotel services, many participants declined as they felt they would be giving away important information.

Secondly, the results are based on a relatively small sample size which makes it difficult to generalise the findings to all hotels in the Dublin region. An original sample of eight people was reduced to six due to pilot interviewing and a last minute decline.

Thirdly, the *“raison d’être of qualitative studies is to inform deep, case-oriented analysis”* (Sandelowski1995). However, due to the researcher’s inexperience the methodology and results may be limited. As a researcher, I sought supervision and guidance from a more experienced supervisor throughout the stages of this study.

Finally, as this is a qualitative study, information from the participants has been taken at face value and assumed to be accurate. The truthfulness and openness of responses from the participants may have been affected due to their reluctance to give away any confidential information.

Despite these limitations, the researcher's findings do give some insights into the area of hotel service offerings.

## **5.10. Conclusions:**

The literature suggests that there are numerous perceptions to service quality that include the customer(external) and the manager(internal) and what they believe to be a service. Numerous studies of hotel services found that aspects of management were important. However, participants in this study engage in all aspects of a service offering which is shown to have a positive effect on service quality.

In order to obtain a clear picture of a hotel's service offering and aspects involved, it was necessary to highlight the area of service management and the training involved as well as the importance managers play in the mix. Studies show that the management of services is the base of all successful services. This is in line with the researcher's findings as participants mentioned a number of areas that are in line with service management, such as training where the need, importance and level of it were all mentioned. These are improved by management and staff capabilities and confidence are subsequently increased.

The role of the manager was also depicted in this study. Empowerment of staff, Interaction with guests, monitoring of staff and acknowledging failure were recognised as being the main roles managers implement in a service offering. There are a number of studies depicting the influential nature that a manager has on a service and how it is run.

Communication was also identified as an important factor in the running of a service and keeping it successful. Many literary articles refer to methods of feedback and adoption of technology in the area of communication. While the research details some aspects of communication with staff and management, the study found that that

the use of online methods is becoming prevalent with all participants adopting a range of methods (Social media, 3<sup>rd</sup> party website etc.)

Customers and services were also deemed to be significant aspects of a hotel's service offering. Many studies highlight the importance of a service and how it is reliant on those you serve it to. The researcher identified aspects of service failure and recovery as being the primary focus of participants as they don't wish to get any bad word of mouth communication from guests. The study found that successful recovery methods are reliant of high levels of empathy, interaction with guest and analysis of reviews. It is also implicated that successful recovery can also lead to retention of guests.

In terms of customers, both attracting in new ones as well as retaining existing ones was acknowledged by the researcher as being a part of the service offering of hotels and can be seen in countless studies that are based on the importance of both. This study found that the methods of attracting in new customers were primarily internet based and that digitalisation of advertising is evident with all participants. Retention is also found to be based on the ability to recognise familiar faces while repeatedly treating the same, high quality way.

Finally, as a student of marketing, I feel that the management of service quality is an integral area of practice. I am aware that due to the high level of competition within the hotel industry of Dublin and Ireland as a whole, newer brand names are emerging and popping up everywhere and sometimes the little aspects that make a difference can be overlooked by those involved in delivering a service which can be detrimental to the success of the business. Rejecting the area of service quality management can have a negative impact an all the aspects that have been highlighted in this study.

# Summary

## **Conclusions:**

A need was identified for this study due to limited evidence documenting the hotel's involvement in service quality offerings within the hospitality industry, particularly in Ireland. The researcher employed a qualitative approach to develop an understanding of the services within a hotel and how the overall offerings are viewed upon. In using this approach, information was gathered through the use of in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The data collected was then analysed thematically using Braun & Clarke's (2006) guide to thematic analysis.

From a comprehensive review of the literature it can be concluded that service quality management is one of the most important domains of concern for managers of hotels. Service managers emphasise the need for a combination of managerial involvement, focus on tangibles, empathy and acknowledgement as being pivotal in all aspects of service offerings (Parasuraman et al 1985).

It was observed throughout the literature that service quality in all aspects of hospitality is not reliant on just one channel/method but rather a range of aspects that include staff managers, the customer and so on (Bitner 1990). Therefore, it is important for a hotel to focus strongly on all aspects, both great and small, that have an implication on the services they provide. Reoccurring areas that appeared in the literature included staff, management, customers and the service itself (Crawford 2013, Leisen & Prosser 2004 & Malik, Yaqoob & Aslam 2012). These categories were consistent with the findings from the data collection phase and provided classifications of the quality of service offerings. It has been recognised that studies by (Parasuraman et al 1985) highlight findings similar to this study which focus on service quality and that it is important for a service to succeed. This was felt to be of importance as some participants did not have as strong an appreciation for quality management as others.

An important component of answering the research question was obtaining an indication of what the participants believe to be appropriate methods of assessing the quality of the services they provide. The assessment of service quality was identified as being reliant on the manager's involvement as well as the methods of customer feedback used by the hotel. As participants frequently referred to feedback and

customer integration it was felt that further integration of both may lead to improved assessment procedures.

In order to understand the hotel's service offering appropriately it was essential to ascertain the aspects of a failed service and what is done to recover the situation effectively. The literature suggests that failure is down to both aspects of human error and physical problems arising. Interestingly, this study found that a failure to acknowledge guests was a prevailing factor of service failure with all participants. In terms of recovering a service back to its expected level, this study found that demonstrating a high level of empathy with guests and acknowledging that there is a problem seemed to be the primary approaches. These findings are similar to a study by Parasuraman et al (1985) who believed Acknowledgement, empathy and responsiveness play a big role in maintaining service quality.

The retention and attraction of customers was also an important aspect of this study as they both reflect the quality of the service, both to existing customers and new ones. While many studies focus on the retention of customers, the researcher felt the ability to attract new customers was a reflection of the quality of the service offering and are just as important as retention. Accepted methods of retention included the recognition of repeated customers, rewards and meeting expectations. In terms of attraction, the researcher found that the use of online methods such as third party websites and social media were most prevalent among the standard routes of advertising such as print and radio which suggests that moving to online advertising is the way forward

### **Summary of contributions:**

The most important finding followed from the hypothesis. In terms of assessing service offerings, the researcher believed that following procedures and implementing set strategies would be the most prevalent aspect. However, the study found that participants directed their focus towards the human side of the service such as interaction with staff and guests, getting to know the customer population, talking to them to get better perspectives and empathizing when something goes wrong.

Another finding that was important to the researcher was the various applications the manager plays within the hotel. The researcher believed their sole purpose was to implement practices and follow procedure but the findings from the data suggest that they play a larger role by empowering and coaching the staff, building relationships with existing guests, analysing and dealing with feedback and dealing with failure if and when it occurs. All the above mentioned are believed to have an impact on the service offering within a hotel.

Customers were also identified as an important aspect of the overall service as without customers the service will fail. There is not much literature solely based on just the customer, however aspects of retention and attraction are mentioned. The researcher felt that the ability to bring in new customers was a reflection of the service offering. Interestingly, the study found that retention was based on interaction and human contact as opposed to procedure which was thought to be the primary methods prior to research with communication being consistently highlighted by all participants. As well as this, another interesting finding was the move to social networking sites as a means of advertising as more hotels are becoming digitalised to stay competitive.

Finally, it was found that services are broken into aspects of failure and recovery. Failures were identified as being down to mostly human error and tangible issues. The study found that recovery methods were predominantly based on interaction with customers to see what they want done, showing empathy and that you care about the situation and monitoring and dealing with feedback. This changed the researcher's preconception of the use of standardised procedures to resolve problems. The findings of this study can provide similarity to the results of previous studies on the vast and important domain of service quality management.

## **Further research:**

Further research should hopefully address the issues of service quality management that are presented to managers in order to reduce the possibility of failure occurring and to promote a successful service to guests.

Additional investigations in identifying the importance of communication channels in hotels and their applications with staff and management are advocated as they are an inherent part of the running of a successful service offering.

Further focus should be placed on the causes of a service failure within the hospitality industry and the recovery strategies that are implemented by management in an attempt to further enrich the field of the study. This may lead to new aspects of failure being identified, reducing the levels of issues in the process.

Further study should be carried out on the influences customers play on the level of success that a service provides, in particular, the methods used to retain loyal customers and the processes involved in attracting new customers to the hotel as the identification of new methods can be of benefit to all aspects of the hospitality industry. As well as this there is a need to focus on the implications of communication and digital technology, For example, focusing on the customer use of popular blogs such as TripAdvisor and ability to communicate on service failure to widen audiences very easily.

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# Appendices

# **Appendix A**

## Interview question guide

## **Questions and themes for Hotel Management regarding service quality management, service failure and recovery strategies;**

### Service quality

1. What do you consider to be good service management within the hotel industry?
2. What steps would you take to manage the level of service quality for guests?
3. How do you gather feedback from customers to improve service quality?
4. How do you use the information you have gathered?
5. Do frontline staff pass on feedback from customers to higher levels of management?
6. Do managers interact with guests, if so what is the purpose of the interaction?

### Service failure/recovery

7. What do you consider to be a service failure?
8. If a service failure occurs (customer complains about room, service etc.) what do you do to recover the situation?
9. How are your service recovery methods applied and developed?
10. Are staff (frontline staff in particular) prepared and trained to deal with service failures? If so, how?
11. In your opinion, what can be done to further resolve issues in service quality to avoid negative feedback?

### Customer attraction & Retention

12. Are there any methods of attracting new customers in? If so, how?
13. How do you keep loyal customers happy (loyalty schemes etc.)?

# **Appendix B**

Sample of  
transcribed  
interview

## Interview with Hotel one

**Researcher:** so the first question I'm looking to ask is what would you consider to be good service management?

**H1:** Service management, I suppose the most important thing would be the managers! And especially the top management are involved in all operations because the staff are there and they will see and do within their capacities. As a manager, you need to lead by example so you need to show them how to deal with the customer, not to be afraid of the customer because it can happen! A lot of the time you will find that people will become very territorial, so, if somebody is working behind a bar in a hotel, they will remain there because the bar counter gives them a feeling of security, and for them to step out and deal with issues on the floor it can become a big issue for them, something they are afraid of doing, only because they are so comfortable there so they need to be shown how to deal with that! There is a need to demonstrate that you can deal with the customers, you just need a little bit of confidence. So yes, leading by example is the most important thing as well as maintain an eye on detail because, like I said, the staff will do what they're told to do and generally work through checklists, doing a b c and d, beyond that though they will not see little details such as dirt on the ceiling because it not on the list. This is why you as a manager are there, to assist them and widen there scope. Giving staff a feeling of confidence to deal with issues is the key! Can they deal with it on the spot? What can they offer and so on, this gives them a sense of authority and empowerment as opposed to just passing it on to a manager, leaving the customer waiting? In our company we have a policy that if an issue is brought to management's attention, then it is dealt with within 24hours. If a staff member hears an issue they deal with it and record it so it is not left so then a deputy manager, duty manager or I can deal with it. Management is all about leading by example and empowering your staff as they're the frontline people

**Researcher:** Perfect, so similarly, with that in mind, what steps would you take to manage the level of service quality for guest?

**H1:** I suppose it,s similar but a lot of the times, especially when there's a recession, we start emphasising on training as it is crucial for hotels. We find that the first

interaction with the world most people have is jobs such as bars restaurants and so on as it is easy with little training but when done properly, a lot of training is involved. We generally get a lot of younger staff and we teach them many roles because at the end of the day they're interacting with the customer, who doesn't really care who serves them as long as the service is good and so on. So there is a lot of training involved to ensure the customer has a good time and if they come to us again they experience the same level of service. If training is down then the service is down so training is important. I also know that if staff see a manager around, they automatically step up their game because they know they're being watched. If you have staff that are happy it is easier to make sure customers get what they expect. so if you have an employee in an unhappy position we've a problem! So it starts from the recruitment process and onwards to create a happy workforce.

**Researcher:** So have you any method of gathering feedback from customers to improve services?

**H1:** Well these days you don't need to collect feedback, although we do, but have you heard of trip advisor? It gives people a forum to write what they feel, and actively use it. 85% of the comments are positive and there are some that are really negative and there are those that don't feel comfortable complaining and just post it on the website instead. It's all about recovery then and how you deal with it. It is very important that we acknowledge negative feedback and demonstrate it has been dealt with. As long as the problem has been comfortably dealt with its positive for us. We, in the hotel encourage the use of comment cards with our guests and issues are dealt with. Guest who book through our web site also get an email asking how they're stay was and to give feedback on what we use called "louder voice" in which we publish reviews from that directly onto our web site. Feedback comes straight to me and they're dealt with. All feedback is dealt with, good bad or indifferent. We always tell them the issue has been dealt with. Its good because nowadays people don't expect and response

**Researcher:** Right, so do the front line staff pass feedback on from customers to higher management such as yourself?

**H1:** It depends, if you create a culture and give people tools to use for feedback they do and other times they do. We have set parameters on how to deal with feedback so

if a customer was checking in or out and contacted reception, reception have a log to note all feedback. If they feel like they can't deal with the feedback then they call the duty manager and record it in their log. They have a forum to record these issues. Generally staff are trained to deal with issues, but if they can't then they contact the duty manager. Once they have a channel then they will use it... Most of the time.

**Researcher:** Oh right, and do manager interact with guests and if so, why?

**H1:** well firstly we have a section in our feedback form that asks if you noticed management presence and we ask that question because we employ managers for a good reason, and they're there to ensure that the service level standards and the way we do things do not drop. We deal with people and things are standardised, clean table, cups and so on. With human interaction comes issues and is why we have managers to monitor and demonstrate that they are present so that if a customer is feeling that they didn't get the level of service that they wanted, they have somebody to whom they can go to and the issue can be resolved. A lot of the time, customers do not feel comfortable doing this as they have come out to enjoy themselves and don't want to dwell on something negative and secondly, for the staff members who have just served them are still around and so they will not say anything. But if managers approach them and ask how they're meal was, then most of the time was the customer will say something. They can do two things, address the issue straight away and secondly identify why the issue happened in the first place. This can help to prevent the same issue happening again. And this is why managers are present and interact with customers and as well as this, if positive feedback, the manager is empowered to share it with everyone which further motivates the staff.

**Researcher:** So in a normal day, what would be considered as a failed service?

**H1:** I think the biggest service failure issue happens when a customer highlights an issue to you and you do nothing about it, it's highlighted again and nothing is done to the point where a manager stops paying attention. This is bad because for every 1 person that says something, there's easily another 10 who haven't said something and it can keep escalating. This is a major service failure. Issues do happen, but once it's acknowledge and dealt with, people can be very forgiving. If nothings done, the business will fail. In the last 5 years hotels have improved dramatically and competition is fierce so they can afford to let failures go unnoticed.

**Researcher:** and if a service failure occurs, what steps are taken to try and recover the situation?

**H1:** I think the most important thing is to listen to the guest without interruption and try to understand what it is that has caused the issue. A lot of the time, people have experienced something that they didn't like such as an unfriendly receptionist and they won't say anything, then they go to the bedroom and the shower doesn't work and still won't say anything, then they'll come down for a meal and they don't get a desert menu and then they've had enough and start giving out to the first person they see. So I tell staff to listen to them, ask them the right questions, apologize and maybe give a complimentary dessert, find out what was not to their standards, deal with it and then record it so it can be followed up by management. It is very difficult to get rid of a negative experience. If the customer is communicated with, it makes them feel heard, hopefully reducing the negative experience. So that's generally how we go about recovering failures

**Researcher:** On the same topic, how do you develop your service recovery methods?

**H1:** We're a part of a group but most of our developments are based on our own personal experiences, we all travel, we've all stayed in a hotel and been to a restaurant and a lot of the time we can be left feeling let down so it's easy for us to sit down and come up with plans. Processes are standardized but can be developed from personal perspectives. In many cases, staff give their own perspective on situations and improvements. Standard procedures can be changed to make a customer smile. If it's been heard, acknowledged and sorted then the customer will know they've been listened to. Recognition and identification of resolved issues is key.

**Researcher:** Are staff, mainly frontline staff, trained in any way to deal with service failure?

**H1:** Yes, we start with our induction programme with those who join us which is standardised for all positions and give an overview of the company, with the core of it being customer service. They're told the minimum standard expected of them, the tools they have and who is the person they can talk to above them so that the customer is satisfied. While on the job, colleagues spend time with them, guiding

them. We have topic sheets so everything is recorded. Everything is standardised and constantly reinforced. Acknowledgement is run through our staff to ensure the issues are resolved. All these logs really help solve issues. It is done in a way that all staff can hear about the problem to show high levels of communication and awareness among staff. That is how people know what they've to do and hopefully do what they've to do. Sometimes customers write that they were not even acknowledged by any staff during their stay! I want staff to have acknowledgement drilled into their head!

**Researcher:** so what type of things would you do to avoid negative feedback?

**H1:** I think right now, most hotels do not have a manager dedicated to customer service, recovery and standards and that if there was a manager solely there for that purpose we could make improvements. If time constraints were lifted we'd get more done, but if you're prepared to listen and take action then things will be ok. If you're prepared to listen then things will change. You could even make it a science and develop plans and strategies furthermore but it's useless if you're not prepared to listen.

**Researcher:** with customers on the topic, have you any methods of attracting in new customers?

**H1:** What I think is important to mention is the fact of customer issues and failure and that we have customers already and are first focus is to keep them and maintain their loyalty as they already trust us, we don't need to advertise to these because they know us so if we keep them happy they'll keep coming back to us. Marketing loyalty is what we focus on and a lot of the times it is as simple as acknowledging a repeat customer when they approach the desk. The feeling of recognition and being welcomed and being known. We try to do special nights for these people, complimentary desserts, Christmas presents and so on. The other side is exposing your business to the larger market place and we do that in a number of ways such as 3<sup>rd</sup> party sites, who trade on our behalf as they have a broader audience, we use print advertising and radio. We put a lot of focus on the web now with pay per click campaigns and a lot of social media pages. The best form of advertising will always be word of mouth communication amongst customers. A lot of the time staff are encouraged to tell friends and family with incentives given for doing so.

**Researcher:** Thank you for my time, I appreciate the information you've given me.

# **Appendix C**

## Example of coding process

## Codes for Hotel 1 (H1)

Role of manager	<p><b>H1:</b> “I suppose the most important thing would be the managers! And especially the top management are involved in all operations”</p> <p><b>H1:</b> “. As a manager, you need to lead by example so you need to show them how to deal with the customer, not to be afraid of the customer”</p> <p><b>H1:</b> “the staff will do what they’re told to do and generally work through checklists”</p> <p>H1: “This is why you as a manager are there, to assist them and widen there scope”</p> <p><b>H1:</b> If a staff member hears an issue they deal with it and record it so it is not left so then a deputy manager, duty manager or I can deal with it”</p> <p><b>H1:</b> “Management is all about leading by example and empowering your staff as they’re the frontline people”</p> <p><b>H1:</b> “I also know that if staff see a manager around, they automatically step up their game because they know they’re being watched”</p> <p><b>H1:</b> “. Feedback comes straight to me and they’re dealt with. All feedback is dealt with, good bad or indifferent”</p> <p><b>H1:</b> “And this is why managers are present and interact with customers and as well as this, if positive feedback, the</p>
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	<p>manager is empowered to share it with everyone which further motivates the staff.”</p> <p><b>H1:</b> “They’re told the minimum standard expected of them, the tools they have and who is the person they can talk to above them so that the customer is satisfied. While on the job, colleagues spend time with them, guiding them”</p>
Staff capabilities	<b>H1:</b> “because the staff are there and they will see and do within their capacities.”
Fear of failure	<b>H1:</b> “, they will remain there because the bar counter gives them a feeling of security, and for them to step out and deal with issues on the floor it can become a big issue for them”
Interaction among staff	<p><b>H1:</b> “There is a need to demonstrate that you can deal with the customers, you just need a little bit of confidence”</p> <p><b>H1:</b> “so if you have an employee in an unhappy position we’ve a problem! So it starts from the recruitment process. and onwards to create a happy workforce.”</p> <p><b>H1:</b> “They’re told the minimum standard expected of them, the tools they have and who is the person they can talk to above them so that the customer is satisfied. While on the job, colleagues spend time with them, guiding them”</p>
Customer interaction	<b>H1:</b> “There is a need to demonstrate that you can deal with the customers, you just need a little bit of confidence”

	<p><b>H1:</b> “we teach them many roles because at the end of the day they’re interacting with the customer”</p> <p><b>H1:</b> “As a manager, you need to lead by example so you need to show them how to deal with the customer, not to be afraid of the customer”</p> <p><b>H1:</b> “if it’s been heard, acknowledged and sorted then the customer will know they’ve been listened to”</p>
Staff Confidence:	<p><b>H1:</b> “There is a need to demonstrate that you can deal with the customers, you just need a little bit of confidence”</p> <p><b>H1:</b> “Giving staff a feeling of confidence to deal with issues is the key! Can they deal with it on the spot? What can they offer and so on”</p>
Empowerment of staff	<p><b>H1:</b> “This gives them a sense of authority and empowerment as opposed to just passing it on to a manager, leaving the customer waiting.”</p> <p><b>H1:</b> “. Management is all about leading by example and empowering your staff as they’re the frontline people”</p> <p><b>H1:</b> “And this is why managers are present and interact with customers and as well as this, if positive feedback, the manager is empowered to share it with everyone which further motivates the staff.”</p>
Leading by example	<p><b>H1:</b> “, leading by example is the most important thing as well as maintain an eye on detail”</p>

	<b>H1:</b> “. Management is all about leading by example and empowering your staff as they’re the frontline people”
Fast resolution	<b>H1:</b> “that if an issue is brought to management’s attention, then it is dealt with within 24hours”

Need for training	<b>H1:</b> “I suppose its similar but a lot of the times, especially when there’s a recession, we start emphasising on training as it is crucial for hotels”
Importance of training	<b>H1:</b> “We find that the first interaction with the world most people have is jobs such as bars restaurants and so on as it is easy with little training but when done properly, a lot of training is involved” <b>H1:</b> “: Yes, we start with our induction programme with those who join us which is standardised for all positions and give an overview of the company, with the core of it being customer service”
Training standards	<b>H1:</b> “. So there is a lot of training involved to ensure the customer has a good time and if they come to us again they experience the same level of service” <b>H1:</b> “if training is down then the service is down so training is important”
Monitoring of staff	<b>H1:</b> “I also know that if staff see a manager around, they automatically step up their game because they know they’re being watched”
Methods of feedback	<b>H1:</b> “Well these days you don’t need to

	<p>collect feedback, although we do, but have you heard of trip advisor?"</p> <p><b>H1:</b> "85% of the comments are positive and there are some that are really negative and there are those that don't feel comfortable complaining and just post it on the website instead"</p> <p><b>H1:</b> "We, in the hotel encourage the use of comment cards with our guests and issues are dealt with."</p>
Use of internet	<p><b>H1:</b> "Well these days you don't need to collect feedback, although we do, but have you heard of trip advisor?"</p> <p><b>H1:</b> "It gives people a forum to write what they feel, and actively use it."</p> <p><b>H1:</b> "85% of the comments are positive and there are some that are really negative and there are those that don't feel comfortable complaining and just post it on the website instead"</p>
Recovery methods	<p><b>H1:</b> "It's all about recovery then and how you deal with it"</p>
Acknowledgement of customers	<p><b>H1:</b> "It is very important that we acknowledge negative feedback and demonstrate it has been dealt with"</p> <p><b>H1:</b> "if its been heard, acknowledged and sorted then the customer will know they've been listened to"</p> <p><b>H1:</b> "Everything is standardised and constantly reinforced. Acknowledgement is run through our staff to ensure the issues are resolved."</p>
Customer Recognition	<p><b>H1:</b> "We always tell them the issues has</p>

	<p>been dealt with.”</p> <p><b>H1:</b> “if it’s been heard, acknowledged and sorted then the customer will know they’ve been listened to”</p>
Feedback tools	<p><b>H1:</b> “It depends, if you create a culture and give people tools to use for feedback they do and other times they do.”</p>
Communication levels	<p><b>H1:</b> “It depends, if you create a culture and give people tools to use for feedback they do and other times they do.”</p> <p><b>H1:</b> “If the customer is communicated with, it makes them feel heard, hopefully reducing the negative experience”</p>
Feedback tracking	<p><b>H1:</b> “We have set parameters on how to deal with feedback so if a cu We have set parameters on how to deal with feedback so if a customer was checking in or out and contacted reception, reception have a log to note all feedback if someone was checking in or out and contacted reception, reception have a log to note all feedback”</p>
Human error	<p><b>H1:</b> “With human interaction comes issues”</p> <p><b>H1:</b> “Sometimes customers write that they were not even acknowledged by any staff during their stay! I want staff to have acknowledgement drilled into their head!”</p>
Customer satisfaction	<p><b>H1:</b> “ if a customer is feeling that they didn’t get the level of service that they wanted, they have somebody to whom they can go to and the issue can be</p>

	resolved”
Reluctance to complain	<b>H1:</b> ” customers do not feel comfortable doing this as they have come out to enjoy themselves and don’t want to dwell on something negative”
Failure prevention	<b>H1:</b> “And this is why managers are present and interact with customers and as well as this, if positive feedback, the manager is empowered to share it with everyone which further motivates the staff.”
Staff motivation	<b>H1:</b> “And this is why managers are present and interact with customers and as well as this, if positive feedback, the manager is empowered to share it with everyone which further motivates the staff.”
Failure to acknowledge	<b>H1:</b> “: I think the biggest service failure issue happens when a customer highlights an issue to you and you do nothing about it”
Failure recognition	<b>H1:</b> “, it’s highlighted again and nothing is done to the point where a manager stops paying attention.” <b>H1:</b> “If nothing is done, the business will fail”
Word of mouth	<b>H1:</b> “This is bad because for every 1 person that says something, there’s easily another 10 who haven’t said something and it can keep escalating.” <b>H1:</b> “The best form of advertising will always be word of mouth communication amongst customers.”

Negative experiences	<b>H1:</b> “. A lot of the time, people have experienced something that they didn’t like such as an unfriendly receptionist and they won’t say anything, then they go to the bedroom and the shower doesn’t work”
Experience based development	<b>H1:</b> “were a part of a group but most of our developments are based on our own personal experiences, we all travel, we’ve all stayed in a hotel and been to a restaurant and a lot of the time we can be left feeling let down so it’s easy for us to sit down and come up with plans” <b>H1:</b> “Processes are standardized but can be developed from personal perspectives.”
Procedures implemented	<b>H1:</b> “Everything is standardised and constantly reinforced. Acknowledgement is run through our staff to ensure the issues are resolved.”
Expectations of staff	<b>H1:</b> “Sometimes customers write that they were not even acknowledged by any staff during their stay! I want staff to have acknowledgement drilled into their head!”
Methods of retention	<b>H1:</b> “The feeling of recognition and being welcomed and being known” “We try to do special nights for these people, complimentary desserts, xmas presents and so on”
Methods of attraction	<b>H1:</b> “The other side is exposing your business to the larger market place and we do that in a number of way such as

	<p>3rd party sites, who trade on our behalf as they have a broader audience, we use print advertising and radio. We put a lot of focus on the web now with pay per click campaigns and a lot of social media pages”</p>
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# Appendix D

## Theme development sheet

Service management	Role of Management	Communication	Customers		Services	
<p>Training###            -Need for            -Importance of            -Standards of            -increases staff capabilities            - increases staff confidence            -provides ability in managing feedback, managing service failure,            Managers important in all service management##            #            Presentation of staff            # = level of importance</p>	<p>Leading by example#            Empowering staff##            Customer interaction##            Maintaining loyalty #            Presence of authority            Monitoring of staff##            Staff motivation &amp; encouragements            Acknowledging service failure##            Developing policies            Being a step ahead#            Passing on feedback to staff (boosting motivation)            Tracking feedback##            Important role in the management of service            Procedures &amp; policies            Problem analysis</p>	<p>Staff#            Customers            Management            Methods of communication- internet, logs, computers, face to face#            Methods of feedback (table) (internet)            Recording information#</p>	<p><b>Retention</b>            satisfaction            Recognition of existing customers#            Meeting            Changing tastes expectations</p>	<p><b>Attraction</b>            Changing tastes and expectations            Advertising # (internet)            Word of mouth#            expectations</p>	<p><b>Failure</b>            Failure to acknowledge an issue##            when a person has a negative experience            failure when standards have dropped            failure to meet expectations</p>	<p><b>Recovery</b>            -internet (reviews)##            -interaction with customers (listening &amp; acknowledging)##            -recognise/acknowledge problem            -demonstrating empathy##            -Problem analysis            - gaining staff perspectives            Analysis of negative feedback            Quick response            Making improvements (quote)            Experience based development</p>

Coding/theme development sheet

