



INFLUENCE OF SERVICE EXCELLENCE DIMENSIONS ON GUEST COMPLAINT HANDLING AT PREMIER PLACE HOTEL SURABAYA AIRPORT

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E-ISSN : 3109-9777

Received: August 2026

Accepted: August 2026

Published: August 2026

Abstract :

Strategically located within the Juanda International Airport area, Premier Place Hotel Surabaya Airport faces unique challenges driven by the expectations of transit guests who have high time sensitivity and low error tolerance. In hotel operations, guest complaints cannot be completely avoided, making the effectiveness of complaint handling crucial to maintaining the hotel's image. This study aims to analyze the effect of Service Excellence dimensions, which consist of Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy, both partially and simultaneously, on the effectiveness of guest complaint handling. A quantitative approach was employed, utilizing questionnaires distributed to 37 employees (after outlier adjustment) at Premier Place Hotel Surabaya Airport. Data analysis was performed using multiple linear regression. The results indicated that simultaneously, all five dimensions of Service Excellence have a significant effect on complaint handling. Partially, the Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy dimensions have a positive and significant effect, whereas the Tangibles dimension proved to have no significant effect. These findings provide managerial implications that the hotel needs to focus more on the technical speed and empathetic sensitivity of the staff rather than merely physical attributes when handling guest complaints.

Keywords : Service Excellence, Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy, Complaint Handling, Airport Hotel.

INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry in Surabaya is experiencing highly competitive growth, especially post-global economic recovery. In this fierce competition, Service Quality has become the main differentiator that distinguishes one hotel from another. For star-rated hotels, providing standard service is no longer sufficient; Service Excellence is required to exceed guest expectations in order to create long-term satisfaction and loyalty.

The challenge of providing service excellence becomes even more complex for hotels located in strategic areas such as airports. Premier Place Hotel Surabaya Airport, as one of the leading hotels in the Juanda International Airport area, serves a unique market segment: transit guests, airline crews, and business travelers with high mobility. The characteristics of guests at airport hotels tend to show a very low tolerance for errors (zero error) and delays. For them, the speed and accuracy of problem-solving are absolute priorities.

However, in daily operations, service failure is something that cannot be



completely avoided, whether in the form of complaints about room facilities, delays in the check-in/out process, or miscommunication between departments. This is where the crucial role of frontline employees is tested. The ability of employees to respond to complaints (complaint handling) becomes the critical point determining whether the guest will forgive the hotel's mistake or instead leave a negative review (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Failure to handle complaints effectively (service recovery) can be fatal to the hotel's image.

Previous research by Mawaddah (2020) proved that Service Excellence consistently improves the response speed and professionalism of employees. However, this effectiveness is tested more rigorously in an Airport Hotel environment. As noted by Saputro & Fakhri (2021), airport hotel guests are characterized by high mobility and strict time sensitivity, thus demanding a much faster and more accurate service recovery process. Therefore, this study aims to complement Rosyid & Akasia's (2023) findings regarding the importance of complaint handling SOPs by focusing the test specifically on its effectiveness at Premier Place Hotel Surabaya Airport.

Based on the literature review above, it is evident that the implementation of Service Excellence is crucial for improving service quality (Mawaddah, 2020), and complaint handling requires standardized operational response speed (Rosyid & Akasia, 2023). This challenge becomes even more complex when faced with the characteristics of transit hotel guests who have a very low time tolerance (Saputro & Fakhri, 2021). Although the three pieces of literature have discussed service elements, there has been no research that comprehensively measures the effectiveness of the five dimensions of Service Excellence—namely Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy—directly against complaint handling performance in a fast-paced work environment like an airport hotel. Therefore, this research at Premier Place Hotel Surabaya Airport exists to fill this gap by evaluating empirically the extent to which these five dimensions affect the effectiveness of service recovery. Based on this explanation, the formulation of the problem in this research is as follows:

1. Does Tangibles have an effect on guest complaint handling at Premier Place Hotel Surabaya Airport?
2. Does Reliability have an effect on guest complaint handling at Premier Place Hotel Surabaya Airport?
3. Does Responsiveness have an effect on guest complaint handling at Premier Place Hotel Surabaya Airport?
4. Does Assurance have an effect on guest complaint handling at Premier Place Hotel Surabaya Airport?
5. Does Empathy have an effect on guest complaint handling at Premier Place Hotel Surabaya Airport?
6. Do Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy simultaneously have an effect on guest complaint handling at Premier Place Hotel Surabaya Airport?

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach with a causal associative research type. The research was conducted at Premier Place Hotel Surabaya Airport in February 2026. The sampling technique used was Purposive Sampling, resulting in 40 questionnaires collected. After outlier adjustment, the final valid sample was 37 respondents. Primary data was collected via a 5-point Likert Scale questionnaire.

Operational Definition of Variables

1. Variable X (Independent Variable) The independent variable in this study is the Service Excellence implemented by the employees of Premier Place Hotel Surabaya Airport. This variable is broken down into five dimensions of service quality (SERVQUAL), each acting as a sub-variable (X1 to X5), which are:

a. Tangibles (X1): Everything that is physically visible and can be directly evaluated by guests when submitting a complaint, including the neatness of employees' appearance, as well as the readiness and completeness of the hotel's operational facilities. *Indicators Used:*

- 1) Neat, clean, and professional staff appearance (X1.1).
- 2) Completeness and readiness of operational facilities (X1.2).
- 3) Comfort and cleanliness of guest interaction areas (X1.3).

b. Reliability (X2): The ability and consistency of employees in accurately fulfilling service promises, providing correct information, and resolving guest problems without errors from the first handling.

Indicators Used:

- 1) Conformity of service with what was promised (X2.1).
- 2) Accuracy of information data provided to guests (X2.2).

c. Responsiveness (X3): The level of alertness and speed of employees in responding to calls, receiving complaints, and providing certainty of estimated completion time to transit guests who have low time tolerance.

Indicators Used:

- 1) Speed of responding to guest calls or requests (X3.1).
- 2) Alertness to immediately take action in assisting with complaints (X3.2).
- 3) Clarity of the estimated time for problem resolution (X3.3).

d. Assurance (X4): Technical competence (product knowledge) and employee manners that are able to foster a sense of trust, security, and confidence in guests that their complaints are being handled by the right party.

Indicators Used:

- 1) Mastery of Product Knowledge and Workflow (X4.1).
- 2) Politeness and friendliness in under-pressure situations (X4.2).
- 3) Ability to foster a sense of security in guests (X4.3).

e. Empathy (X5): A genuine caring attitude shown by employees through the ability to listen to complaints thoroughly, offer professional apologies, and demonstrate sensitivity to the psychological condition or specific needs of guests.

Indicators Used:

- 1) Listening attentively without interrupting the conversation (X5.1).

- 2) Delivering a sincere and professional apology (X5.2).
- 3) Understanding the specific needs of transit guests (X5.3).

Variable Y (Dependent Variable): To facilitate measurement, the aspects of complaint handling are summarized into the following indicators:

1. Identification and Responsibility Aspect (Input)

- a. **Indicator 1: Accuracy of Problem Identification** *Description:* The ability of employees to listen, capture, and note the root cause of guest complaints accurately at the first opportunity without miscommunication.
- b. **Indicator 2: Level of Responsibility (Ownership)** *Description:* The professional attitude of employees in taking full ownership of problem resolution without shifting the responsibility or blaming other departments in front of guests.

2. Process and Time Efficiency Aspect (Process)

- a. **Indicator 3: Handling Time Efficiency** *Description:* Operational speed and agility in executing solutions without wasting time or disrupting the rest schedule of transit guests.
- b. **Indicator 4: Transparency of Progress Communication (Proactive Update)** *Description:* Employee initiative in providing periodic reports regarding the status of problem resolution so that guests do not feel neglected during the waiting period.

3. Effectiveness and Solution Fairness Aspect (Output)

- a. **Indicator 5: Effectiveness of Technical Solutions** *Description:* The success of concrete actions taken by employees (and related teams) in resolving the physical or technical issues complained about by the guest.
- b. **Indicator 6: Fairness and Equity of Compensation** *Description:* Guest assessment of the equivalence between the final solution (or substitute compensation) provided by the hotel and the loss of time or comfort experienced by the guest.

4. Confirmation and Trust Recovery Aspect (Outcome)

- a. **Indicator 7: Implementation of Follow-up** *Description:* Employee compliance with the final complaint handling procedure by re-inquiring about guest satisfaction after the solution has been provided.
- b. **Indicator 8: Level of Trust Recovery** *Description:* The final impact of the overall employee performance process, which is assessed as successful in mitigating disappointment and restoring guest trust in the hotel's reputation.

Data analysis was performed using SPSS, including Validity and Reliability Tests, Classical Assumption Tests (Normality, Multicollinearity, Heteroscedasticity), and Multiple Linear Regression Analysis.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

General Description of Respondents

Respondent characteristics are grouped into four main indicators: tenure, gender, latest education, and age, as shown in Table 4.1 below:

Table 1 Respondent Characteristics (Employees)

No	Characteristic	Classification	Total	Percentage (%)
1	Tenure	< 1 Year	13	32.5 %
		1 - 3 Years	7	17.5 %
		> 3 Years	20	50 %
	Total		40	100 %
2	Gender	Female	9	22.5 %
		Male	31	77.5 %
	Total		40	100 %
3	Education	High School	5	12.5 %
		Bachelor's (S1)	32	80 %
		Master's (S2)	0	0 %
		Others	3	7.5 %
	Total		40	100 %
4	Age	20 - 30 Years	27	67.5 %
		30 - 40 Years	9	22.5 %
		> 50 Years	4	10 %
	Total		40	100 %

After adjusting for 3 outlier data points to meet the classical assumption requirements, the final sample used for regression analysis was 37 respondents.

Data Quality Test Results

Validity Test

Table 2 Validity Test Results for Service Excellence (X)

Statement Item	r-count	r-table	Sig. (2-tailed)	Description
Item X1.1	0.890	0.312	<0.001	Valid
Item X1.2	0.899	0.312	<0.001	Valid
Item X1.3	0.898	0.312	<0.001	Valid
Item X2.1	0.888	0.312	<0.001	Valid
Item X2.2	0.878	0.312	<0.001	Valid
Item X3.1	0.926	0.312	<0.001	Valid
Item X3.2	0.863	0.312	<0.001	Valid
Item X3.3	0.929	0.312	<0.001	Valid
Item X4.1	0.886	0.312	<0.001	Valid
Item X4.2	0.890	0.312	<0.001	Valid
Item X4.3	0.893	0.312	<0.001	Valid
Item X5.1	0.908	0.312	<0.001	Valid
Item X5.2	0.773	0.312	<0.001	Valid
Item X5.3	0.871	0.312	<0.001	Valid

Table 3 Validity Test Results for Complaint Handling Performance (Y)

Statement Item	r-count	r-table	Sig. (2-tailed)	Description
Item Y1.1	0.879	0.312	<0.001	Valid
Item Y1.2	0.877	0.312	<0.001	Valid
Item Y1.3	0.779	0.312	<0.001	Valid
Item Y1.4	0.833	0.312	<0.001	Valid
Item Y1.5	0.869	0.312	<0.001	Valid
Item Y1.6	0.692	0.312	<0.001	Valid
Item Y1.7	0.896	0.312	<0.001	Valid
Item Y1.8	0.910	0.312	<0.001	Valid

Reliability Test

Table 4 Reliability Test Results

Research Variable	N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Critical Value	Description
Service Excellence (X)	14	0.926	0.60	Reliable
Complaint Handling (Y)	8	0.938	0.60	Reliable

Descriptive Variable Analysis

Table 5 Respondent Responses to Service Excellence Variable (X)

Item	Mean	Category
X1.1	4.43	Very Good
X1.2	4.33	Very Good
X1.3	4.48	Very Good
X2.1	4.30	Very Good
X2.2	4.35	Very Good
X3.1	4.38	Very Good
X3.2	4.40	Very Good
X3.3	4.28	Very Good
X4.1	4.45	Very Good
X4.2	4.43	Very Good
X4.3	4.33	Very Good
X5.1	4.43	Very Good
X5.2	4.40	Very Good
X5.3	4.33	Very Good
Total Mean X	4.38	Very Good

Table 6 Respondent Responses to Complaint Handling Variable (Y)

Item	Mean	Category
Y1	4.40	Very Good
Y2	4.35	Very Good
Y3	4.40	Very Good

Y4	4.42	Very Good
Y5	4.45	Very Good
Y6	4.38	Very Good
Y7	4.45	Very Good
Y8	4.38	Very Good
Total Mean Y	4.40	Very Good

Classical Assumption Test

1. Normality Test

Table 7 Shapiro-Wilk Normality Test Results

Statistical Test	Value	Description
N (Sample Size)	37	
Test Statistic (K-S Value)	0.953	
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.117	Normally Distributed

2. Multicollinearity Test

Table 8 Multicollinearity Test Results

Independent Variable	Tolerance	VIF	Description
Tangibles (X1)	0.618	1.617	No Multicollinearity
Reliability (X2)	0.297	3.367	No Multicollinearity
Responsiveness (X3)	0.182	5.505	No Multicollinearity
Assurance (X4)	0.109	9.155	No Multicollinearity
Empathy (X5)	0.119	8.410	No Multicollinearity

3. Heteroscedasticity Test

Table 9 Heteroscedasticity Test Results (Glejser Test)

Independent Variable	Sig. Value	Critical Limit	Description
Service Excellence (X)	0.689	0.05	No Heteroscedasticity

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

Table 10 Multiple Linear Regression Results (Coefficients)

Model	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Standardized Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	-0.502	1.286	-	-0.390	0.699
Tangibles (X1)	0.179	0.103	0.066	1.734	0.093
Reliability (X2)	0.882	0.188	0.255	4.682	<0.001

Responsiveness (X3)	0.352	0.157	0.157	2.247	0.032
Assurance (X4)	0.473	0.224	0.190	2.109	0.043
Empathy (X5)	1.123	0.228	0.424	4.918	<0.001

The regression equation formed is: $Y = -0.502 + 0.179X_1 + 0.882X_2 + 0.352X_3 + 0.473X_4 + 1.123X_5$. Empathy (X5) has the highest coefficient, indicating it provides the greatest leverage on successful complaint handling.

Table 11 F-Test Results (ANOVA)

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	544.227	5	108.845	219.949	<0.001
Residual	15.341	31	0.495	-	-
Total	559.568	36	-	-	-

The ANOVA results showed an F-count of 219.949, which is > F-table (2.53), and a Sig. value < 0.001 (< 0.05). Thus, H6 is accepted. The dimensions simultaneously have a significant effect on guest complaint handling.

Coefficient of Determination (R²)

Table 12 Coefficient of Determination Test Results

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.986	0.973	0.968	0.703

Based on Table 4.12, the Adjusted R Square value obtained is 0.968. This indicates that the five Service Excellence dimensions simultaneously contribute 96.8% to the effectiveness of Complaint Handling, while the remaining 3.2% is influenced by other factors outside this model.

Partial Hypothesis Test (t-Test)

Table 13 Summary of Partial Hypothesis Test Results (t-Test)

Hypothesis	Independent Variable	Sig. Value	Significance Level (α)	Decision	Description
H1	Tangibles (X1)	0.093	0.05	H1 Rejected	No significant effect
H2	Reliability (X2)	<0.001	0.05	H2 Accepted	Positive & significant effect
H3	Responsiveness (X3)	0.032	0.05	H3 Accepted	Positive & significant effect
H4	Assurance (X4)	0.043	0.05	H4 Accepted	Positive & significant effect

H5	Empathy (X5)	<0.001	0.05	H5 Accepted	Positive & significant effect
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Discussion

The findings of this study prove that the implementation of Service Excellence encompassing reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy is an absolute foundation in managing guest complaints, with an influence contribution reaching 96.8%.

A specific interesting finding is the rejection of the first hypothesis (H1), showing that the Tangibles dimension does not have a significant partial effect during the complaint handling process. This is very logical considering the characteristics of Premier Place Hotel Surabaya Airport guests, who are predominantly transit or airport guests. For highly mobile guests experiencing problems, they are no longer focused on the neatness of staff uniforms or the beauty of the hotel lobby. Their main priorities during a crisis are accurate problem resolution (Reliability), fast handling (Responsiveness), certainty of information (Assurance), and staff who listen to their frustration sincerely (Empathy).

Evidenced by the t-Test results, the Empathy (X5) and Reliability (X2) dimensions are the largest contributors of influence. This confirms that in an airport hotel operational environment, the success of service recovery is determined much more by the emotional capabilities and technical speed of frontline employees compared to mere physical attributes.

CONCLUSION

Based on the data analysis, it can be concluded that:

Tangibles does not have a significant partial effect on guest complaint handling. In crisis situations, transit guests focus more on problem resolution itself rather than visual aspects.

Reliability has a positive and significant partial effect on guest complaint handling.

Responsiveness has a positive and significant partial effect on guest complaint handling.

Assurance has a positive and significant partial effect on guest complaint handling.

mpathy has a positive and significant partial effect on guest complaint handling. This is the most dominant variable influencing the effectiveness of complaint handling.

Simultaneously, the dimensions of Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy significantly affect guest complaint handling, contributing 96.8% to complaint handling performance. The remaining 3.2% is influenced by other factors.

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