

Reliability and Assurance as Key Drivers of Luxury Hotel Guest Satisfaction: A Study from Sofitel Bali Nusa Dua

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Abstract

Purpose of the study: This study aims to examine how service quality influences guest satisfaction at Sofitel Bali Nusa Dua, it seeks to identify which SERVQUAL dimensions most strongly affect satisfaction, providing evidence to support strategies for improving loyalty and occupancy in luxury hotel settings.

Design/methodology: A quantitative survey using structured questionnaires was administered to 100 guests. Data were analyzed with SPSS software, employing validity and reliability tests, classical assumption checks, multiple linear regression, t-tests, F-tests, and R² based on the SERVQUAL framework.

Findings: Service quality positively and significantly impacts guest satisfaction. Reliability and assurance are the dominant SERVQUAL dimensions, explaining 64.2% of satisfaction variance, while tangibles, responsiveness, and empathy show lesser effects.

Research limitations/Implications: Results apply to luxury hospitality in Bali and similar resort destinations, aiding hotel management, guest experience design, and strategic planning in hospitality, tourism, and service marketing disciplines.

Novelty/Originality of the study: This study offers hotel-specific evidence on SERVQUAL's reliability and assurance as primary satisfaction drivers in post-pandemic luxury settings, advancing practical knowledge for targeted service enhancements in high-end hospitality.

INTRODUCTION

In the hospitality industry, hotels strive to deliver the best possible service to increase occupancy and revenue. Loyal guests play a significant role in driving a hotel's income. Their extended length of stay directly contributes to higher revenue levels (Shoemaker & Lewis, 1999). Additionally, loyal guests are more likely to recommend the hotel to their colleagues, effectively supporting the company's advertising efforts and boosting sales (Candra et al., 2023). Ultimately, loyal guests contribute significantly to expanding a company's market share (Gopi & Samat, 2020).

Previous researches indicate that service quality has a significant positive influence on guest satisfaction and loyalty from (Bodet, 2008; Ali et al., 2021; Ing et al., 2020). Similarly, Alsaffar (2020) found that guest satisfaction positively and significantly influences guest loyalty. Previous research demonstrates that improvements in service quality led to increased guest satisfaction and loyalty. In research conducted by Anisa (2021), it is explained that a company with a good service quality will make guests with a high level of service satisfaction more willing to join the company's loyalty program

Sofitel Bali Nusa Dua is a luxury 5-star hotel and part of the prestigious Accor brand. Sofitel Bali Nusa Dua hotel maintaining 5-star integrity, it is committed to meeting high expectations of its guests. Sofitel Bali Nusa Dua consistently strives to enhances service quality to foster guest loyalty and achieve optimal guest satisfaction. However, like any hotel, it occasionally faces challenges in meeting these expectations, which can result in a decline in guest satisfaction and lower ratings on various review platforms. The Net Promotion Score (NPS) at Sofitel Bali Nusa Dua for members has increased every year. Net Promotion Score (NPS) is the score that shows the percentage of promotion done by guests who were willing to recommend based on their experience and indicates that the loyalty program has an impact on guest satisfaction (Baquero, 2022).

The Accor program offers many benefits to its members, based on the background the main objective of this research is to analyze the relationship between service quality and guest satisfaction at Sofitel Bali Nusa Dua and to describe the key factors of service quality that most significantly affect guest satisfaction at Sofitel Bali Nusa Dua. The following research problem formulations will be employed:

1. Does service quality influence guest satisfaction at Sofitel Bali Nusa Dua?
2. What is the impact of service quality on guest satisfaction at Sofitel Bali Nusa Dua?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Service Quality (SERVQUAL)

Parasuraman et al. (1988) defined service quality as the difference between customers' expectations of the service they receive and their perception of the service actually provided, service quality can be measured by identifying the gap between customer expectations and perceptions. Service quality is not only determined by the operational standards implemented by the company, but also by subjective customer expectations. Customers have certain expectations before receiving services, and the quality of service is considered good if the customer's perception of the service is at least equal to or higher than their expectations (Gronroos, 1988; Saut & Bie, 2024).

According to Kayumov et al. (2024), service quality is a dynamic condition related to people, processes, service products and the environment that can meet or exceed customer expectations. It is crucial for a business to maintain high service quality to survive and sustain consumer trust. Similarly, Wirtz and Lovelock (2021) define service quality as the overall characteristics of a product or service that enable it to meet stated needs. Zhong and Moon (2020) add that service quality as a benchmark for how well the level of service provided aligns with customer expectations.

Service quality can be manifested in meeting consumer needs and expectations, as well as in the accuracy of delivery to keep pace with consumer demands. Tseng (2021) explains that service quality is a long-term cognitive evaluation of consumers' perception of services provided by the company. According to Slack and Singh (2020), Service quality, the customer's perception of the service component of a product, is also a critical determinant of customer satisfaction. This suggests that service quality is the consumer's perception of a combination of services associated with a product, and it plays a key role in achieving consumer satisfaction.

Every business must consider how it influence purchasing decisions and consumer satisfaction (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2021). Hospitality businesses need to pay attention to service quality in order to satisfy consumers. According to Zhong and Moon (2020) quality is a unity of characteristics and features of products and services that relate to their ability to meet predetermine needs. Good service quality can have a positive impact, as consumers will become loyal, which in turn provides benefits for the businesses. Based on these various definitions, it can be understood that quality determined by comparing consumers' perceptions of services they receive with that services they expect, based on the attributes of the service company.

Parasuraman et al. (1988) conceptualized service quality through five dimensions which are tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, which together reflect the gap between expected and perceived service. SERVQUAL remains the most widely used framework for examining service quality in hospitality because it captures how guests evaluate both the physical and interpersonal dimensions of service delivery (Wu & Ko, 2013; Park et al., 2022).

In hotel businesses, tangibles are especially important because guests form early judgments from the condition of the building, room cleanliness, staff appearance, furnishings, signage, and supporting equipment (Nguyen & Leblanc, 2002). Reliability is reflected in the hotel's ability to deliver services accurately and consistently, such as correct reservation handling, timely check-in, dependable housekeeping, and error-free billing (Roncally et al., 2024). Responsiveness captures the speed and willingness of staff to assist guests, answer questions, and resolve complaints promptly (Lestari & Saputra, 2018). Assurance refers to the competence, courtesy, and trustworthiness of employees, which shape guests' confidence in the hotel's professionalism (Sangpikul, 2023). Empathy concerns personalized attention, flexibility, and the extent to which staff understand individual guest needs (Umasuthan et al, 2017). In hospitality research, these dimensions are closely tied to guest satisfaction because accommodation services are consumed in real time and evaluated immediately through direct experience (Chun Wang et al, 2016).

In practical terms, tangibles remain the most visible cue of quality in hotel accommodation. Guests observe room cleanliness, bathroom condition, lobby design, bed comfort, air-conditioning, safety features, and the overall atmosphere of the property before they evaluate anything else. A visually appealing and well-maintained hotel often signals professionalism and reliability, while poor physical conditions can weaken trust even if the service staff are polite. At the same time, hotel research shows that tangible quality alone is not enough to secure loyalty. Guests also expect services to be delivered accurately and without repeated mistakes, making reliability a core requirement of accommodation performance (Berezina et al, 2016). This includes honoring reservation details, providing the correct room type, ensuring prompt maintenance response, and maintaining consistency across departments. When reliability is weak, guest satisfaction usually declines quickly because hotel stays involve multiple service encounters over a short time (Han et al, 2011).

Responsiveness and assurance are equally important in shaping accommodation experiences because hotel guests often require immediate support. Requests for room service, additional amenities, maintenance, local information, or complaint handling are time-sensitive, and delays can easily create dissatisfaction (Alzoubi et al, 2021). Hotels that respond quickly and clearly tend to be perceived as more attentive and more capable. Assurance further strengthens this perception by making guests feel safe and confident in the competence of front-office and housekeeping staff (Roncally et al, 2024). Courtesy, professional communication, and the ability to solve problems calmly are especially significant in accommodation settings where guests depend on staff to manage comfort and security. In this respect, assurance overlaps with trust-building and contributes directly to the perceived professionalism of the hotel (Sangpikul, 2023).

Empathy adds a more personal layer to accommodation service quality, guests often remember whether staff were willing to listen, recognize special needs, and adapt services to individual preferences (Umasuthan et al, 2017). Personalized greetings, flexible service responses, attention to families or elderly guests, and sensitivity to special requests all contribute to a stronger sense of care. In hotel settings, empathy is often what turns a technically adequate stay into a positive and memorable experience. This is why accommodation studies increasingly treat empathy not as a minor soft skill, but as a strategic service dimension that supports satisfaction, repeat visitation, and positive word-of-mouth (Chun wang et al, 2016).

When combined, the five SERVQUAL dimensions provide a comprehensive framework for assessing hotel service quality, identifying gaps between expectation and performance, and guiding managerial improvement in accommodation services. Prior hospitality studies suggest that not all SERVQUAL dimensions contribute equally in hotel settings. For example, study on hotel service quality found that guests often treat tangibles and reliability as basic or threshold attributes, while the more interactive dimensions such as responsiveness, assurance, and empathy shape the convivial experience that distinguishes satisfactory service from memorable service (Sipe & Testa, 2018). This distinction is particularly relevant in hotels because physical facilities may be expected as a minimum standard, whereas staff behavior determines whether the guest feels welcomed, respected, and supported. More recent literature on luxury hotels showed that tangibility and assurance continue to be strong drivers of satisfaction, but responsiveness and empathy have become increasingly important in the digital and post-pandemic era, when guests expect rapid communication, personalized attention, and flexible problem solving (Bharwani & Mathews, 2021). The emergence of mobile check-in, chatbot support, and data-driven personalization has also expanded the meaning of responsiveness, making speed and convenience part of the perceived quality of accommodation services (Talukder, 2024).

Guest Satisfaction

Guest satisfaction is generally defined as the emotional and cognitive response that emerges when individuals compare the actual performance of a product or service with their prior expectations. Wirtz and Lovelock (2021) explains that satisfaction reflects a person's feeling of pleasure or disappointment after evaluating whether the perceived performance meets, exceeds, or falls short of expectations. In this regard, satisfaction is not only a rational assessment of service outcomes but also an affective reaction shaped by the extent to which the offering fulfills individual needs and desires. When performance is lower than expected, guests are likely to feel dissatisfied; when it is consistent with expectations, they tend to feel satisfied; and when performance exceeds expectations, they may experience a higher level of satisfaction that translates into delight.

Several factors influence guest satisfaction, particularly in hospitality and service settings. Anisa (2021), identifies product quality, service quality, emotional aspects, price, and costs as the main determinants of satisfaction. Product quality refers to the extent to which the goods or services provided meet perceived standards in terms of reliability, usefulness, and overall value. In a hotel context, for example, the quality of rooms, furniture, bathroom facilities, food, and beverages contribute directly to guests' evaluations of their stay. Service quality is equally important because guests assess not only the physical product but also the manner in which services are delivered by staff. Timeliness, friendliness, professionalism, and responsiveness all shape the service experience and influence whether guests perceive the interaction positively. When service is courteous, efficient, and attentive, guest satisfaction tends to increase.

Beyond functional performance, emotional factors also contribute significantly to satisfaction. Guests often respond positively to experiences that create trust, comfort, pride, or happiness, particularly when the service provider demonstrates care and provides memorable treatment. Such emotional connections strengthen the overall experience and may encourage repeat visits. Price is another central consideration because guests evaluate whether the cost they pay is justified by the quality and benefits they receive. A service that is viewed as good value for money is more likely to generate satisfaction, whereas a mismatch between price and perceived quality may result in disappointment. In addition, costs related to time, effort, and additional expenses can influence satisfaction. Convenient processes, easy booking systems, and the absence of hidden charges contribute to a smoother experience, while excessive delays or unexpected fees can reduce satisfaction.

Guest satisfaction is commonly measured through indicators that capture both immediate perceptions and behavioral intentions with three main indicators to be measured which are conformity to expectations, intention

to revisit, and willingness to recommend (Pizam et al., 2016). Conformity to expectations assesses whether the product or service delivered aligns with what guests expected. Intention to revisit reflects the likelihood that guests will return in the future, while willingness to recommend indicates whether they would share positive impressions with others. Together, these indicators provide a useful framework for evaluating the extent to which a service experience meets guest expectations and fosters loyalty. In the context of hospitality, understanding guest satisfaction is essential because it not only reflects service performance but also influences repeat business, reputation, and long-term competitiveness.

The relationship between service quality and guest satisfaction has been widely discussed in the service management and hospitality literature. Service quality is generally understood as a guest's evaluation of how well a service provider performs in comparison with expectations, while satisfaction reflects the emotional response that results from this comparison. When guests perceive that service performance is consistent, responsive, trustworthy, and attentive to their needs, they are more likely to feel satisfied with their experience. In hospitality settings, this relationship becomes especially important because guests evaluate not only the physical environment but also the manner in which services are delivered throughout their stay. Based on this understanding, the present study proposes that service quality has a positive effect on guest satisfaction.

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection

The Methodology approach for this study is a quantitative method that can produce and explain the results of current research by using mathematical equations and drawing conclusions that are relevant to the current theory. According to (Sugiyono, 2020) the quantitative research method can be interpreted as a research method based on the philosophy of positivism, used to research on a certain population or sample, data collection using research instruments, quantitative / statistical data analysis, with the aim of testing a hypothesis that has been determined.

The data sources needed in this study are as follows: the primary data in this study was obtained from the distribution of questionnaires to Sofitel Bali Nusa Dua Resort guests by providing questions related to the variables studied, namely about service quality to Guest Satisfaction. Secondary data is data and information in finished form taken from Sofitel Bali Nusa Dua such as NPS value, number of members and no members of Accor, Occupancy and so on. In understanding or knowing how the influence of independent variables on the dependent, data in the form of numbers (primary) is needed where the data is sourced directly from respondents through questionnaire tools.

The method of collecting information in this study is carried out through the primary data approach, where data is collected through the distribution of electronic questionnaires or web surveys through the Google Forms platform. Web surveys have proven to be effective when surveying populations that have high internet access, such as students, consumers, and employees (Callegaro et al., 2015). Questionnaires, according to Sugiyono (2020), are a data collection tool that involves submitting a series of questions or written statements to respondents to be answered. The questionnaire was distributed to guests who stayed in the January period, so that it could reach respondents from various regional backgrounds and ages. The data collected in this survey uses the Likert scale.

Sample

According to Sugiyono (2020), a population is defined as a generalization area consisting of objects or subjects that have specific quantities and characteristics determined by the researcher for study, from which conclusions are drawn. The population for this study includes all guests who have stayed at Sofitel Bali Nusa Dua. To determine the sample size, the researcher applied a 10% margin of error, calculated using Solvin's Formula. The calculation was based on the year-to-date (YTD) visitor population as of November 2024, which totals 229.000 guests. To determine the sample amount, the author will use the Slovin formula. The Slovin formula is one of the formulas studied in statistics. This Slovin formula is applied in determining the minimum number of samples required in a study (Ghazali, 2006).

Data Analyses

According to Sugiyono (2020), the quality of data for conceptual research is highly dependent on the quality of the data used in the research. The quality of search data is determined by the quality tool. The tests used to confirm the quality of the data in this study are validation, reliability and normality tests. According to Siregar (2020), a validity test is used to measure the extent to which a measuring instrument can measure what it intends to measure. The validity test used in this research is the item validity test, where an instrument is considered valid if the product moment value obtained exceeds 0.30. In addition, the validation test can be conducted by comparing the calculated correlation value ($r_{\text{calculation}}$) with the table value (r_{table}). If the calculated correlation value ($r_{\text{calculation}}$) is greater than the table value (r_{table}), then the instrument (questionnaire) is valid. Conversely, if $r_{\text{calculation}}$ is less than r_{table} , the instrument (questionnaire) is invalid.

The reliability test is conducted using the one-shot method, where the measurement is performed only once and the results are then compared with other questions or the correlation between the answers is measured. A construct or variable is considered reliable if it provides a Cronbach's Alpha value > 0.60 . Based on the results of the instrument reliability test, the instruments for the variables in this study, namely service quality (X) and guest satisfaction (Y), are considered reliable because each variable has an alpha value greater than 0.60.

FINDINGS

The results of the regression analysis in Chapter IV demonstrate that service quality has a positive and significant influence on guest satisfaction at Sofitel Bali Nusa Dua. With a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 64.2%, it can be concluded that 64.2% of the variation in guest satisfaction is explained by the quality of services provided by the hotel. This finding is supported by the theory proposed by Tseng (2021), which states that service quality is a long-term cognitive evaluation of consumers' perceptions of services provided by a company. In other words, the better the guests perceive the quality of service, the higher their level of satisfaction.

Furthermore, the theory by Parasuraman et al. (1988) reinforces this result, emphasizing that service quality can be measured through five SERVQUAL dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. In this study, the dimensions of reliability and assurance were identified as the most dominant factors influencing guest satisfaction. This indicates that consistent service delivery and the ability to foster guest trust are essential for achieving high satisfaction.

From a practical perspective, these findings align with Sofitel Bali Nusa Dua brand identity as a five-star luxury resort under the AccorHotels group, which consistently markets itself on the promise of service excellence. The hotel's strong performance on online platforms such as an average rating of 4.6/5 on TripAdvisor and high ratings on Google Reviews as well as its international awards for guest satisfaction, further reflect the effectiveness of its integrated service delivery approach (Tseng, 2021).

However, the significant F-value also carries a crucial implication when a shortfall in any one service dimension can negatively impact overall satisfaction. For instance, even if tangible elements such as facilities are excellent, poor responsiveness or a lack of empathy from staff may reduce a guest's overall perception of service quality. Therefore, it is vital for Sofitel Bali's management to ensure consistent service quality across all departments, particularly during peak season periods, when operational pressure on staff and service systems is at its highest.

The Dominant Dimensions Influencing Guest Satisfaction

The t-test result reveal that among the five-service quality dimension, reliability ($t = 4.812$, sig. = 0.000) and assurance ($t = 3.933$, sig. = 0.001) are the most dominant in influencing guest satisfaction. These two variables show the highest t-values and lowest significant levels, indicating a strong and statistically significant individual effect. Reliability refers to the hotel's ability to deliver promised services dependably and accurately including timeliness, attention to detail, and execution of standard procedures. Assurance includes the competence, courtesy, and credibility of staff in fostering a sense of trust and safety among guests.

In the context of Sofitel Bali Nusa Dua, these findings are especially relevant. As a premium resort catering to international travelers, guests often arrive with elevated expectations not just of the facilities, but of the professionalism and integrity of the service staff. Any inconsistency in staff behavior, response to requests, or handling of issues can significantly alter the overall guest experience. This in line with theory from Tjiptono and Chandra (2019), who both assert that reliability and assurance are foundational to perceived service quality in luxury service environments. This also explains why repeat guests and loyalty program members often cite staff attentiveness and consistent service as key reasons for returning, even more than physical amenities. These dimensions thus act as deal-makers in the satisfaction equation.

From a practical perspective, the findings resonate with Sofitel Bali Nusa Dua's brand identity as a five-star luxury resort within the AccorHotels group, which positions itself around service excellence and guest-centric experiences. The hotel's strong online presence an average TripAdvisor rating around 4.6/5, prominent Google Reviews, and international guest-satisfaction awards serves as external validation of its integrated service delivery approach. These digital signals reflect guests' overall satisfaction with service quality and provide social proof that the brand's promise of excellence translates into tangible guest experiences. Consequently, the regression outcome and the SERVQUAL-based interpretation align with the brand's strategic positioning and reputation management efforts.

DISCUSSION

Service quality has a positive and significant effect on guest satisfaction. The coefficient of determination (R^2) of 64.2% indicates that service quality explains a substantial portion of the variation in guest satisfaction. This supports study by Tseng (2021) which views service quality as a long-term cognitive evaluation of the services

provided by a company. The findings also align with the SERVQUAL model by Parasuraman et al. (1988), which measures service quality through five key dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Among these dimensions, reliability and assurance were found to be the most influential in shaping guest satisfaction. These results confirm that consistent service performance and the ability of staff to instill confidence play a vital role in the overall guest experience.

Furthermore, the results are aligned with Sofitel's brand positioning as a five-star luxury resort under the AccorHotels group, which emphasizes service excellence. The hotel's consistently high ratings on platforms such as TripAdvisor and Google Reviews, as well as its international awards, reinforce the conclusion that service quality is a key driver of guest satisfaction. Thus, the research successfully answers the research questions and fulfills the stated objectives by confirming the positive and significant relationship between service quality and guest satisfaction, and identifying the key service dimensions that most impact that relationship.

In the Sofitel Bali Nusa Dua context, these findings are particularly salient. As an upscale resort catering to international travelers, guests arrive with heightened expectations not only about facilities but also about the professionalism and integrity of the service team. Any inconsistency in staff behavior, uneven response to requests, or mishandling of issues can disproportionately influence the overall guest experience. The emphasis on reliability and assurance is consistent with perspectives from Bharwani and Mathews (2021) who argue that reliability and assurance form foundational elements of perceived service quality in luxury service environments.

The practical implication is evident where repeat guests and loyalty program members often highlight staff attentiveness and consistent service as primary reasons for returning, surpassing even physical amenities. Thus, reliability and assurance function as deal-makers in the satisfaction equation, shaping guests' willingness to return and recommend. Service quality must be consistent across dimensions, the significant F-test indicates that service quality is most effective when delivered holistically. Regular audits across tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy should confirm that excellence in physical facilities is matched by superb staff performance and credible service delivery.

Prioritize on reliability and assurance with their dominant statistical influence, these two dimensions warrant targeted investment. Approaches include advanced staff training focused on punctuality, problem-solving, and confidence-building interactions particularly within front-office and guest-facing roles. Reinforcement through performance metrics that emphasize reliability and assurance can help align daily activities with the strategic goal of high guest satisfaction. Invest in staff development and retention, high assurance relies on a stable, engaged workforce. Long-term investment in staff well-being, empowerment, and career development can foster consistent, courteous service that sustains guest satisfaction. Programs that recognize and reward reliable service and trusted interactions can reinforce desirable behaviors.

Monitor guest feedback on key dimensions and implementing a structured feedback loop that measures satisfaction across tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy allows management to identify weaknesses early and respond promptly. This proactive monitoring supports continuous service improvement and minimizes the risk of cascading dissatisfaction. Bridge service gaps during high season, where peak periods can strain service delivery and compromise reliability or empathy. Contingency plans such as flexible staffing models, backup resources, and streamlined escalation procedures should be in place to maintain service consistency during busy times.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results and conclusions, several suggestions can be proposed for both practical implementation in the hospitality industry and future academic research. From a managerial standpoint, it is recommended that Sofitel Bali Nusa Dua continues to prioritize and enhance the dimensions of reliability and assurance, which have been identified as the most influential factors in increasing guest satisfaction. Ensuring consistency in service delivery and fostering trust through well-trained, professional, and courteous staff will be critical in maintaining the hotel's reputation for service excellence.

In addition to these dimensions, attention should also be given to responsiveness and empathy, particularly during periods of high occupancy or peak operational hours. While these may not be the dominant factors, deficiencies in these areas can still negatively affect overall guest perception, even when other dimensions perform strongly. To address this, hotel management should implement a service quality strategy that promotes balanced performance across all dimensions. This can be achieved through regular training programs, standardized operating procedures, and systematic guest feedback mechanisms that support continuous improvement.

From an academic perspective, future studies may build upon this research by including a broader sample of hotels or by comparing multiple brands within the same hotel group, such as Accor, to gain comparative insights into how service quality strategies differ by brand or market segment. Further investigation could also include additional variables such as guest expectations, cultural background, or membership in loyalty programs, which may function as mediating or moderating factors in the relationship between service quality and guest satisfaction.

Future research could explore potential moderating factors that influence the strength of the service quality–guest satisfaction relationship, such as guest segment (business vs. leisure), length of stay, or cultural background. More exploration into the interaction effects among SERVQUAL dimensions could also illuminate how combinations of strengths and weaknesses across dimensions affect overall satisfaction. Additionally, longitudinal studies could examine how improvements in reliability and assurance over time translate into sustained satisfaction and loyalty metrics. Moreover, future researchers are encouraged to consider adopting a mixed-methods approach by integrating quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews or observational techniques, to get more insights from the subjective experiences and perceptions of guests. This, in turn, could contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how service quality influences satisfaction in a luxury hospitality context.

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