

Efforts Of Guest Relations Officer Of Hotel Tentrem Semarang In Handling Guest Complaints

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Abstract. *In the daily operation of a hotel, it is inevitable that guest complaints will occur. Even though all the facilities and services provided are up to standard, it is not uncommon for hotels to encounter obstacles or problems that cause guests to be disappointed and guests submit them in the form of complaints. With this complaint phenomenon, a hotel provides a complaint service that connects guests with the hotel as a complaint handling strategy. This section is the Guest Relations Officer, Guest Relations is responsible for complaints submitted by guests and ensures that the service that guests receive during their stay is the best service. The author conducts research on Guest Relations efforts in handling complaints that occur at hotels. Because the Guest Relations Officer is tasked with handling complaints, a complaint handling system is needed that is systematically arranged. As an effort to handle complaints, a standard for handling complaints has been established. This standard is a benchmark for a hotel in providing Guest Relations services for guests. This study uses a qualitative descriptive research method. To obtain the data needed for writing this research using four methods, namely interviews, observation, documentation, and literature study so as to obtain accurate data. The data obtained is arranged in a research result that will be used as the author's final project. From the results of research conducted by the authors found that the handling of complaints carried out by the Guest Relations Officer at Hotel Tentrem Semarang went well so that complaints that occurred could be resolved properly. In addition to handling complaints, the authors also found that the Guest Relations Officer was also in charge of handling VIP guests, where these VIP guests were important people or members of the government. The results of this study indicate that the Guest Relations Officer is very influential in the service of a hotel, because listening to guest complaints and dealing with complaints can maintain guest confidence in the services provided by the hotel.*

Keywords: *Guest Relations Officer, Front Office Department, Complaint*

Abstrak. Dalam operasional sehari-hari sebuah hotel, tidak dapat dipungkiri bahwa akan terjadi keluhan dari tamu. Walaupun semua fasilitas dan pelayanan yang diberikan sudah sesuai standar, tidak jarang pihak hotel menemui kendala atau masalah yang menyebabkan tamu kecewa dan tamu menyampaikannya dalam bentuk komplain. Dengan adanya fenomena pengaduan tersebut maka suatu hotel menyediakan layanan pengaduan yang menghubungkan tamu dengan pihak hotel sebagai strategi penanganan pengaduan. Bagian ini merupakan Guest Relations Officer, Guest Relations bertanggung jawab atas keluhan yang disampaikan oleh tamu dan memastikan bahwa pelayanan yang diterima tamu selama menginap adalah pelayanan yang terbaik. Penulis melakukan penelitian tentang upaya Guest Relations dalam menangani komplain yang terjadi pada hotel. Karena Guest Relations Officer bertugas menangani pengaduan, maka diperlukan sistem penanganan pengaduan yang disusun secara sistematis. Sebagai upaya penanganan pengaduan, telah ditetapkan standar penanganan pengaduan. Standar ini menjadi tolak ukur sebuah hotel dalam memberikan pelayanan Guest Relations bagi para tamu. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian deskriptif kualitatif. Untuk memperoleh data yang diperlukan untuk penulisan penelitian ini menggunakan empat metode yaitu wawancara, observasi, dokumentasi, dan studi pustaka sehingga diperoleh data yang akurat. Data yang diperoleh disusun dalam sebuah hasil penelitian yang akan digunakan sebagai tugas akhir penulis. Dari hasil penelitian yang dilakukan penulis didapatkan bahwa penanganan pengaduan yang dilakukan oleh Guest Relations Officer Hotel Tentrem Semarang berjalan dengan baik sehingga pengaduan yang terjadi dapat diselesaikan dengan baik. Selain menangani pengaduan, penulis juga menemukan bahwa Guest Relations Officer juga bertugas menangani tamu VIP, dimana tamu VIP tersebut adalah orang-orang penting atau anggota pemerintahan. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa Guest Relations Officer sangat berpengaruh dalam pelayanan suatu hotel, karena mendengarkan keluhan tamu dan menangani keluhan dapat menjaga kepercayaan tamu terhadap pelayanan yang diberikan oleh pihak hotel.

Kata Kunci: Guest Relations Officer, Front Office Department, Pengaduan

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INTRODUCTION

Advances in information technology bring various impacts on the economic and business sectors. One of the areas affected by technological advancements is hotels. Technology is utilized by hotel management to improve service quality. While hotel guests use technology to access information about hotels, hotel facilities and other information as a comparison between one hotel and another. In addition, guests read reviews from other guests who have stayed at the hotel. Reviews listed can influence guests' decisions to stay, therefore a hotel must always be able to meet guest expectations in order to get positive guest reviews. To meet guest expectations, of course, we must understand and understand what guests expect. In a hotel will definitely encounter complaints because guests are not satisfied or dissatisfied with the service of a hotel. This complaint is very influential on the image and image of the hotel, therefore in a hotel a *Guest Relations Officer* is needed to respond quickly and appropriately to guest complaints.

Guest Relations Officer is a form of attention that many hotels give when building relationships with their guests. Various ways are also done to provide maximum service. Even so, there must be some problems in the process of providing services in such hotels, which will cause the service not to reach the best level and cause dissatisfaction among the guests. (Meirina & Pramudia, 2017). The guest then expresses his dissatisfaction in the form of a complaint. In most hotels, guest complaints are usually submitted to the *Front Office* or other staff and then handled by a *Guest Relations Officer* who is responsible for handling complaints. Complaints occur when the service is not in accordance with Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) or when guests/customers feel that they are not being served properly. For example, when guests see hotel staff unfriendly or unsmiling when meeting with guests, guests will feel the service provided is not professional and guests can complain. Another interesting phenomenon is the existence of a complaint handling service called *Guest Relations Desk*. *Guest Relations Desk* is a special department where guests can complain which will be handled directly by the *Guest Relations Officer* / *Guest Relations Manager*.

Guest Relations Officer needs someone who is able to communicate and relate well with everyone. Good communication is needed in order to communicate with guests about the complaints they want to convey so that they can find solutions to the complaints / problems that occur. *Guest Relations Officer* is the first hotel staff to greet guests when they arrive. Guest satisfaction is the responsibility of the *Guest Relations Officer*, from the moment the guest arrives to the guest leaves.

Dealing with guest complaints is one of the jobs of a *Guest Relations Officer*. *Guest Relation Officer is the spearhead in handling guest complaints and it is the obligation of a* Guest Relation Officer to provide good hotel services for guests. Facing complaints is certainly not a pleasant thing, even though we have tried to keep everything going well to avoid complaints, of course complaints will still exist. Complaints occur due to guest dissatisfaction with hotel services or facilities that do not meet the wishes of guests. According to Islamy (in Saleh, 2010), complaints are defined as expressions of dissatisfaction with service standards, actions or inactions of service personnel that affect customers. Complaints become a 'scourge' for hotels because complaints will affect the image of the hotel and guest ratings of hotel quality, especially now that guests can easily submit complaints through social media or hotel rating sites. Of course, we do not want these complaints to occur in order to maintain the quality of the hotel, every hotel must have a way to handle complaints that occur. Therefore, in an effort to ensure the best service provided for guests, Hotel Tentrem Semarang provides *Guest Relations Officer* services to handle guest complaints. *Guest Relation Officer* at Hotel Tentrem Semarang is tasked with handling complaints submitted by guests, handling VIP guests and *special occasion* guests. In an effort to handle guest complaints, *Guest Relations Officer* Hotel Tentrem, has a complaint handling system that is proven to be able to handle guest complaints. If a complaint occurs, a *Guest Relations Officer* will immediately approach the guest and listen to the guest's complaint, then apologize for the complaint that occurred, after that the complaint will be submitted to the relevant department for handling the complaint.

RESEARCH METHOD(S)

This type of research uses qualitative descriptive. According to Cresswell (2015), qualitative research begins with opinions and compiling theories that can form a research result on problem formulations that can be used by individuals and groups in a problem. According to Rukin (2019), qualitative research is research that is descriptive and tends to use analysis with an inductive approach. According to Thabroni (2021), qualitative research methods are research that uses methods, steps, and procedures that include more data and information obtained through resource persons as subjects who can issue their own answers and feelings to get a general picture of something under study.

Data Collection Techniques

In this study the author used interview, observation, documentation and literature study methods. The following is the description of the method used by the author:

1. Interview

Tersiana (2018) interview is a way of collecting research information by giving questions to resource persons that are directly related to the problem under study. The results of the interview were in the form of resource persons' answers to the *Guest Relations Officer's* efforts in handling complaints. In this study, the author conducted interviews with 2 (two) staff *Guest Relation Officer* and *Front Office Supervisor* of Hotel Tentrem Semarang.

2. Observation

Tersiana (2018) explained that observation is a process of direct and comprehensive observation on a particular problem. In this study, the author made direct observations in *On The Job Training* as a *trainee* in the *Guest Relation Officer section* at Tentrem Hotel Semarang.

3. Documentation

Documentation techniques are ways that the author can do to obtain data directly from the place of research, so that the author obtains relevant data. Data obtained from the research site can be in the form of regulations, photos, and other data (Sudaryono, 2017). The documents that will be used by the author are the organizational structure of Hotel Tentrem Semarang, Front Office Department organizational structure, *Front Office SOP*, *Guest Relation Officer SOP* and other data.

4. Literature Study

To get references about the research conducted, the author then the author conducts a literature study that supports the problem studied. Tersiana (2018) said that the data obtained from written documentation materials, in the form of text journals, manuscripts, articles, and so on. Reference knowledge obtained by the author in the form of books, journals, theses, and other sources related to handling complaints by *Guest Relations Officer*

Data Analysis Techniques

According to Sugiyono (2018), data analysis techniques are the process of compiling data systematically. This research was conducted to find out what opinions employees want to convey regarding the facilities provided. Data analysis in this study was obtained at the time of data collection by means of interviews with *Guest Relations Officers*, observation and documentation.

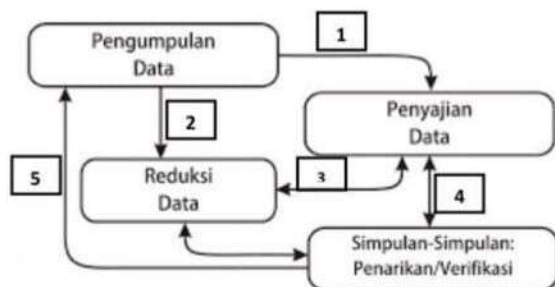


Figure 1: Qualitative Analysis of Miles and Humberman

Source : Sugiyono 2018

The information in the analysis can be described among others as follows:

1. Data collection by presenting data: data collection techniques through interviews, observations, and documentation to show the results of the study.
2. Data collection with data reduction: how to summarize, select, group and focus on parts that are in accordance with the objectives and formulation of the research problem.
3. Presentation of data, with data reduction: data that has been collected is analyzed and then presented in the form of summaries or shorter notes to improve the research.
4. Conclusion with the presentation of data; Correcting again that the conclusions are in accordance with the presentation of data that have been grouped.

Conclusion with data collection: draw conclusions that the answers to the problem formulation and questions have been expressed by the researcher from the beginning

FINDINGS AND DUSCUSSION

Based on the results of data collection that has been carried out, the author will describe the discussion on the efforts of the *Guest Relations Officer* in handling guest complaints. This discussion is based on data from observations, interviews with *Guest Relations Officer staff*, documentation and literature studies. The occurrence of complaints always has a because, based on the cause, according to Norwel (2005) there are 4 types of complaints including *mechanical complaints, atitudinal complaints, service related complaints, unusual complaints*. *Guest Relations Officer* is responsible for dealing with various types of guest complaints. *The Guest Relation Officer* is also in charge of handling VIP guests, the *Guest Relations Officer* also handles VIP guest complaints. The following are examples of VIP guest complaints of Hotel Tentrem Semarang based on their type:

a. *Mechanical Complaint*

This complaint is related to the facilities of Hotel Tentrem Semarang, such as the air conditioner is not cold, then *the Guest Relation Officer* will contact the engineering department to repair the air conditioner.

b. *Atitudinal Complaint*

Complaints related to service and staff behavior that makes guests feel uncomfortable. During the author's observation at Hotel Tentrem Semarang, the author found this type of complaint, for example not smiling when meeting guests, not greeting guests and not looking at guests when talking to guests.

c. *Service-Related Complaints*

This complaint occurs due to the lack of reliability of staff in providing services. For example, guests complain about coffee orders when breakfast is not served immediately, making guests wait a long time.

d. *Unusual Complaint*

This complaint can be called a far-fetched complaint. Usually, guests make this complaint just because they want to be listened to. For example, complaints about the wind in the pool area are too strong, and the food menu is not much.

Complaint Handling Flow

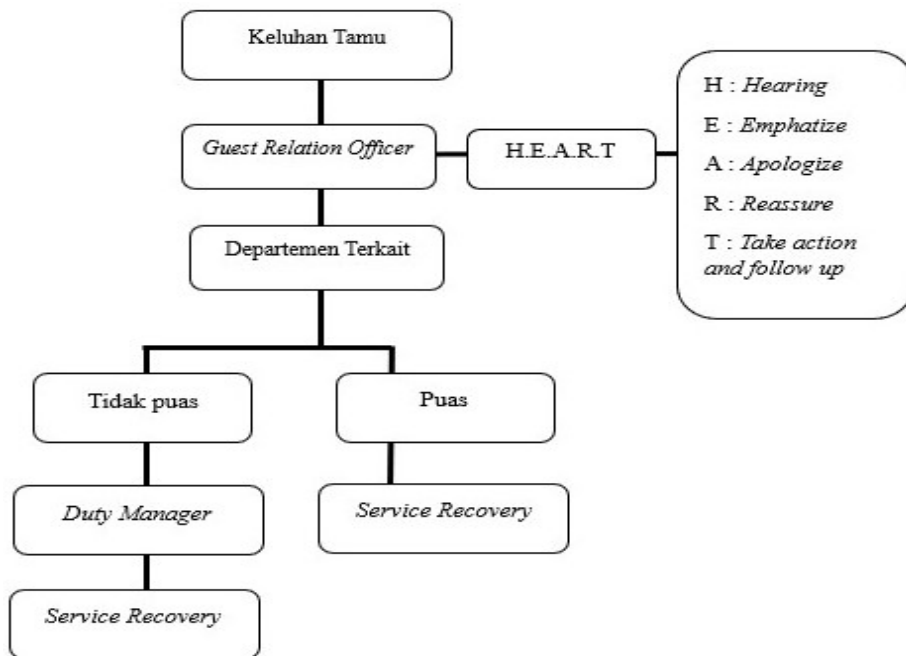


Figure 2 : *Complaint Handling Flow*

Source : *developed author,2023*

The following is an explanation of the complaint handling flow above:

1. When the guest has a complaint, the guest will submit it to the *Guest Relations Officer*. After receiving the guest's complaint report, *the Guest Relations Officer* will approach the guest.
2. When meeting guests *The Guest Relation Officer listens to the guest's complaint without interrupting the moment*, the Guest Relation Officer understands the guest's complaint and the reason why the guest made the complaint. According to Rizal and Furianto (2009), an effective complaint handling process starts from identifying and determining the source of problems that cause customers to be dissatisfied and complain. In handling complaints, *Guest Relation Officer* uses the HEART method (*Hearing, Emphatize, Apologize, Reassure, Take action and Follow up*). So after listening to guest complaints, the *Guest Relations Officer* apologized for the problem that occurred.
3. *Guest Relations Officer* ensures that complaints that occur in order to determine the problems that occur will be handled by the relevant department. For example, guests submit complaints about *the Air Conditioner* not cold, the *Guest Relation Officer* will contact the *engineering* department for *Air Conditioner repair*.
4. After contacting the relevant department, *the Guest Relations Officer* assures guests that their complaints will be addressed promptly so that guests do not have to worry about their complaints not being addressed.
5. If the guest is satisfied with the handling of the complaint, *the Guest Relations Officer* will thank the guest for their cooperation, and provide *service recovery*. But if the guest is not satisfied and the complaint gets bigger, *the Guest Relations Officer* can ask the *Duty Manager* for help to handle the complaint that occurs.
6. If you need the help of the *Duty Manager*, the *Guest Relations Officer* first tells the chronology of the complaint to the *Duty Manager* and asks for a solution from the *Duty Manager*, but if the solution from the *Duty Manager* is not accepted by the guest, the *Duty Manager* will take over the handling of the complaint. When the complaint has been resolved, *the Duty Manager* provides *recovery service* by providing *spa vouchers, welcome drinks* or *welcome snacks* for guests.

In handling complaints, the HEART method is used, this method is used because it is considered appropriate and effective in handling complaints. The following is an explanation of the HEART method used:

1. *Hearing*

A *Guest Relations Officer* must listen to guest complaints because listening is the main and most important thing in handling complaints, because from listening to guest complaints can be understood.

2. *Empathize*

Empathy is needed to handle complaints, so that what guests experience can be understood. Position yourself as a guest who is submitting a complaint so that later the solution and handling provided are in accordance with what guests expect.

3. *Apologize*

An apology is mandatory for every complaint that occurs because the complaint occurs due to the guest's fault or dissatisfaction with the service provided. Apologies are also a way of respecting guests. As *Guest Relations Officer*, when guests complain we must understand that guests are not satisfied with the service provided, therefore we must apologize for the lack of service or facilities provided.

4. *Reassure*

Handling complaints requires the ability to reassure guests that their complaints have been heard and resolved properly. This aims to maintain guest trust in the services provided by the hotel. A *Guest Relations Officer* must have the ability to assure guests that their complaints have been heard and dealt with immediately, the goal is that guests become calmer and their emotions more subdued because they know that their complaints will be resolved soon.

5. *Take action and Follow Up*

Immediate and appropriate handling of complaints that occur is needed, because complaints are important and sudden, fast handling is also needed. A *Guest Relations Officer* must take quick action on complaints that occur, immediately contact the relevant department so that complaints are resolved according to the wishes of guests and carried out by departments that understand the problems that occur. Do not forget to follow up after the complaint is resolved, namely ensuring guest satisfaction, convey if the guest needs other things or there are other complaints, you can contact *the Guest Relations Officer* or other staff on duty. Understanding guest complaints and providing quick handling, providing empathetic assistance is not just a desire to help but also requires concrete action.

Guest Relation Officer Efforts in Handling Complaints

As an effort to handle complaints well, *the Guest Relation Officer of Hotel Tentrem Semarang* has a complaint handling procedure. Based on the results of an interview with the *Guest Relation Officer staff of Hotel Tentrem Semarang, the resource person (Ratih Bunga, Guest Relation Officer, 2023)* gave an example of handling complaints according to procedures that occurred at Hotel Tentrem Semarang. The following is an example of a guest complaint regarding the availability of connecting rooms at Hotel Tentrem Semarang handled by the *Guest Relation Officer*:

1. Listen to guests

When a guest submits a complaint, the first thing a *Guest Relations Officer* does is listen to the guest's complaint. When listening to complaints, a *Guest Relation Officer* must be able to position himself as a guest who is disappointed because of the unavailability of a *connecting room* so that guests submit complaints.

2. Explain hotel constraints

After the guest has finished submitting his *complaint, a Guest Relations Officer will apologize first for the complaint that occurred, then the Guest Relations Officer will explain the problem that occurred and provide a reasonable reason or cause of the complaint. The Guest Relation Officer will explain that the connecting room is not available or fully booked.*

3. Provide solutions

A guest who submits a complaint certainly needs a solution to his complaint, this is where the role of *the Guest Relations Officer* is to find solutions to the obstacles that occur. *Guest Relation Officer* will provide a solution by offering rooms that are opposite but not *connecting rooms*. When the *Guest Relations Officer* has provided a solution, the final decision is in the hands of the guest whether to take the solution or not.

4. Service Recovery

Of course, not all guests want to follow the solution provided by a *Guest Relation Officer*. If guests do not want to, a *Guest Relation Officer* can provide *recovery services* such as *spa vouchers* or *welcome snacks* to ease guest complaints. When a guest agrees to take a room that is not as requested, the *Guest Relations Officer* can provide a *voucher* to enjoy *spa services* at the hotel or may be able to provide *complimentary meals* or *snacks* for guests. After the complaint is resolved, of course, the *Guest Relations Officer* must thank you for the guest's cooperation so that the guest can get a solution to his complaint. Of course, also apologize for the problems that occurred so that guests feel that the hotel has apologized for the complaints that occurred.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Guest Relation Officer is one part of the hotel that serves as a liaison between the hotel and guests. *Guest Relation Officer* plays an important role in the operation of a hotel, especially in handling VIP guests and handling complaints that occur. A *Guest Relations Officer* himself must have good speaking skills, have the ability to solve problems to help guest complaints, and be able to remain calm when facing guest complaints. *Guest Relation Officer* of Hotel Tentrem Semarang has a significant role in improving the quality of hotel services. In handling complaints, the *Guest Relations Officer must be able to assess the urgency of guest complaints, must be able to empathize with guests and take appropriate steps in handling complaints* . At Hotel Tentrem Semarang, handling complaints is done quickly and precisely so that guests still trust the hotel service and continue to return to stay because the service they can trust. In an effort to handle guest complaints, *Guest Relation Officer* of Hotel Tentrem Semarang has standard operating procedures in handling complaints. Standard operating procedures that have been prepared and implemented properly are proven to be able to maintain the quality of service and guest trust to stay and subscribe at Hotel Tentrem Semarang.

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