



## Analyzing Guest Complaints and Resolution Practices in Medium-Sized Resorts on Bantayan Island, Cebu

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### ABSTRACT

This research investigates complaint resolution practices in medium-sized resorts located on Bantayan Island, Cebu, focusing on their influence on guest satisfaction and loyalty. Using a quantitative methodology enriched by qualitative data, the study identifies common complaint types and evaluates guest satisfaction with how these issues are resolved. Surveys were conducted with 214 guests who experienced complaints during their stay. Results indicate that complaints largely pertain to amenities and service efficiency, with guests showing moderate satisfaction regarding current resolution efforts. The study emphasizes the need for staff training and empathetic communication to effectively address guest concerns. Additionally, proactive follow-up and solid recovery practices are highlighted as essential for converting negative experiences into positive ones. The insights gained aim to guide hospitality practitioners in adopting effective strategies for enhancing complaint resolution and improving overall service quality in the medium-sized resort sector on Bantayan Island.

**Keywords:** Complaint Resolution, Guest Satisfaction, Medium-Sized Resorts, Hospitality Management, Service Quality

### 1. INTRODUCTION

For the hospitality industry, resolving complaints effectively is essential, as it profoundly shapes guest satisfaction and loyalty. In a sector where quality of service greatly shapes customer perceptions, how complaints are managed can make all the difference between guests returning or recommending an establishment. Handling issues efficiently and professionally transforms potentially negative experiences into opportunities to showcase a commitment to service excellence.

However, despite the clear importance of complaint resolution, many hospitality operations continue to struggle with managing guest complaints effectively. In today's highly competitive environment, where guests have countless options, failing to address complaints adequately can lead to long-term negative impacts on a business's success and reputation.

Understanding the nuances of how hospitality operations handle complaints is crucial for developing strategies that genuinely enhance service quality. This study seeks to bridge that gap by examining current complaint resolution practices in hospitality operations, pinpointing common challenges, and uncovering best practices for effectively addressing guest concerns.

When it comes to medium-sized resorts, particularly in a competitive landscape, the ability to manage complaints effectively can be a defining factor that sets them apart. Unlike larger resorts that may have dedicated teams and resources, medium-sized establishments often work with limited staff and budgets, making it even more important to develop effective strategies for addressing guest concerns promptly and efficiently.

In Bantayan Island, Cebu, known for its beautiful beaches and warm hospitality, tourism is flourishing. For resorts in this area, maintaining high levels of guest satisfaction is not just about individual success but it contributes to the destination's overall reputation and appeal. Effective complaint management practices can play a pivotal role, not only in resolving issues but also in showcasing a commitment to guest satisfaction, which in turn enhances the resort's reputation and encourages repeat visits.

Given the increasing emphasis on delivering exceptional customer experiences in today's hospitality landscape, this study is timely and aligns with the industry's need for structured and guest-centered complaint resolution approaches. It will serve as a valuable resource for hospitality professionals seeking to enhance service delivery and maintain a competitive edge in an ever-evolving market.

To effectively investigate complaint resolution practices, this research is structured around a series of specific objectives.

- Identify the most common types of complaints reported by guests at medium-sized resorts.

- Measure guest satisfaction with the outcomes of the complaint resolution processes during their stay.
- Describe guests' experiences, perceptions, and suggestions for improving complaint resolution practices at medium-sized resorts.

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## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Resolving complaints efficiently is crucial for protecting a hotel's brand and boosting the overall quality of service. Florencio et al. (2020) highlighted that effective communication and information management in addressing complaints significantly enhance customer loyalty and trust within the hotel industry, with proper complaint resolution acting as a mediating factor. Similarly, Dinnen et al. (2013) advocate encouraging guest feedback and complaints as a strategy to improve relationships with customers. A robust complaints management system not only helps retain customers but also provides opportunities to refine services and enhance overall guest experiences.

Empowering frontline employees to effectively accept, process, and respond to complaints is a key factor in efficient complaint management within hospitality organizations. Ogbeide et al. (2016) emphasize that well-trained staff play a crucial role in the successful resolution of complaints. Equipping employees with the skills to manage complaints professionally ensures more effective resolution, resulting in higher guest satisfaction and smoother service operations.

Effective complaint management in the tourism sector positively affected customer satisfaction and was instrumental in mitigating the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the industry. Mijde Aksoy et al. (2022) highlighted that a proactive approach to handling complaints during this challenging period strengthened customer relationships and enhanced overall resilience in the hospitality sector. This emphasized the critical need for maintaining high standards in complaint resolution, particularly during crises.

The hospitality industry faces unique challenges when dealing with opportunistic and illegitimate complaints. Heejung Ro et al. (2011) highlight the need for hospitality employees to improve their handling of opportunistic complaints to reduce customer resentment and enhance service quality. On the other hand, Z. Huang et al. (2016) investigate illegitimate complaints, showing that frontline employees often respond with distinct emotional and evaluative reactions. Effectively managing such complaints is critical for maintaining service consistency and protecting employee morale. Ensuring both valid and opportunistic complaints are resolved promptly and professionally can mitigate potential negative impacts on guest perceptions.

Cultural factors also influence how customers express dissatisfaction. Heung & Lam (2003) found that Chinese hotel restaurant diners often resort to private complaint behaviors such as negative word-of-mouth or ceasing to patronize an establishment. This behavior suggests hospitality managers should not rely solely on direct guest feedback but remain proactive in identifying potential issues. Tailoring complaint resolution strategies to the cultural norms and communication preferences of different guest groups enhances the effectiveness of these efforts.

Customer reactions to complaints extend beyond their own experience, as witnessing how other complaints are handled influences future behavior. Kim & Baker (2019) found that customers observing the resolution of illegitimate complaints develop altered emotional responses and future intentions to visit, tip, or complain. This emphasizes the importance of consistently handling complaints professionally, as guests who observe these interactions may change their perception of the resort and its services based on what they witness.

Complaint patterns vary depending on the type of hotel. Qiao et al. (2022) revealed that high-end hotels typically face complaints related to service quality, whereas low-end hotels are more likely to receive complaints about facility-related issues. Understanding these differences allows hotels to tailor their complaint resolution approaches to address the most common concerns in their category, ensuring more effective problem-solving and guest satisfaction.

Although existing literature emphasizes the importance of effective complaint management in enhancing customer satisfaction and mitigating negative impacts within the hospitality sector, a gap remains in understanding how these practices specifically manifest in medium-sized resorts. Most studies focus on larger hotel chains or specific geographic regions, resulting in limited insights into the unique challenges and complaint resolution strategies employed by medium-sized resorts.

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## 3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative research design, enriched with qualitative insights, to assess complaint resolution practices in three medium-sized resorts in Santa Fe, Bantayan Island, Cebu. The target population comprised guests who experienced complaints during their stay, with a minimum sample size of 214 respondents established to ensure adequate statistical power and validity. Convenience sampling was utilized to select participants from the guest register of each resort, focusing on guests who were readily available and willing to participate at the time of checkout, thereby ensuring a diverse demographic representation.

Surveys were administered upon checkout, with assistance from front desk staff to encourage participation and ensure guests could provide feedback while their experiences were still fresh. Participants were informed about the study's purpose, assured of confidentiality, and their informed consent was obtained prior to participation. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics to summarize the prevalence of various complaints and assess guest satisfaction levels with complaint resolution practices. The qualitative insights from open-ended responses were analyzed using word frequency analysis, which helped identify recurring themes and key suggestions for enhancing complaint resolution practices. This method was done with the help of spreadsheet software.

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## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the results and discussions based on guest survey responses regarding complaint resolution practices in medium-sized resorts in Santa Fe, Bantayan Island, Cebu. The analysis highlights guests' experiences with handling complaints during their stay, focusing on the most common types of complaints reported and their satisfaction with the resolution outcomes. The findings provide valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the current practices. Understanding how effectively these resorts address guest concerns aims to enhance service quality and overall satisfaction. This discussion emphasizes areas for improvement and recognizes successful strategies identified by guests that can assist other resorts in enhancing their service standards.

The survey included a diverse group of guests, providing valuable insights into their demographics. In terms of age, 5% of respondents were under 18, 20% were aged 18-24, 30% fell within the 25-34 age range, 25% were between 35-44, 15% were aged 45-54, and 5% were 55 and above. Regarding sex, the distribution comprised 43% male and 57% female. Finally, the nationality of the respondents revealed that 50% were Filipino, 30% were European, 15% were Asian, and 5% were American. This demographic diversity enhances the understanding of the varying expectations and experiences of guests at medium-sized resorts in Santa Fe, Cebu.

The data revealed the prominence of amenities-related complaints, followed by food and beverage-related complaints, and service efficiency. Respondents frequently cited problems such as outdated or poorly maintained facilities, including room cleanliness, malfunctioning air conditioning, and unreliable Wi-Fi connectivity. These amenities-related concerns significantly impacted their overall stay experience. Additionally, guests noted limited menu options, inconsistent food quality, and slow service times in dining areas as common frustrations. Addressing amenities-related issues, improving food and beverage services, and enhancing service efficiency, resorts can create a more enjoyable experience that fosters positive reviews.

In terms of guest satisfaction, the findings showed that the complaint resolution practices in medium-sized resorts were generally moderate, with certain areas needing improvement. Staff professionalism and timeliness in addressing complaints were rated as fair, indicating that while some standards were met, guests felt these could have been more consistent. Empathetic communication was also rated moderately, suggesting that guests sometimes felt their concerns were not fully understood. Service recovery practices, such as the actions taken to resolve issues, were seen as somewhat lacking, with guests feeling these efforts didn't always address their concerns satisfactorily. While the post-resolution process received the lowest satisfaction score, highlighting that guests often felt there was not enough effort to ensure they were pleased with the resolution. Overall, these findings suggested that while some practices met expectations, resorts could improve by focusing more on empathy, consistency, and effective follow-up to enhance guest satisfaction with their complaint resolution processes.

The word frequency analysis revealed several important themes in guests' responses about improving complaint resolution practices. One key theme was staff and training, with frequent mentions of "staff," "guide," and "training." This highlights the need for effective training and clear guidelines for staff handling complaints. Guests wanted knowledgeable and confident staff during service interactions, suggesting that better training could improve how complaints are resolved. Another significant theme was communication, indicated by terms like "communication" and "follow-up." Guests expressed a desire for clearer communication about the complaint process and appreciated proactive follow-ups. This shows that enhancing communication could lead to better experience when addressing complaints. As pointed out by Dinnen and Hassanien (2011), it is important to train employees effectively in complaint management to enhance customer relationships and promote retention. Martyn and Anderson (2018) asserted that for improving guest satisfaction, it is essential to provide staff with training that specifically enhances their ability to handle the emotional aspects of interactions with guests. This reinforces the necessity of preparing staff to tackle issues, which can contribute to increased satisfaction among guests.

The findings presented several key insights for medium-sized resorts aiming to improve guest satisfaction through more effective complaint resolution practices. Foremost among these is the necessity for comprehensive staff training. Ensuring that team members possess the skills to handle complaints both professionally and promptly will lead to a more consistent and positive experience for guests. Additionally, the emphasis on empathetic communication is critical. Training staff to genuinely understand and address guest concerns can foster trust and enhance the perception of value among guests. The study further suggests that resorts should evaluate their service recovery strategies. Successful recovery goes beyond merely rectifying issues; it involves exceeding guest expectations and transforming potentially negative experiences into positive ones. Furthermore, the low satisfaction scores related to follow-up after complaints indicate the importance of proactive communication. Checking in with guests and showing that their feedback matters can foster loyalty and leave a lasting impression. In essence, addressing these areas of training, empathy, effective recovery, and follow-up will create a more guest-friendly environment that not only boosts satisfaction but also encourages long-term loyalty.

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## 5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, improving complaint resolution practices is critical for medium-sized resorts seeking to boost guest satisfaction. Attention must be directed toward upgrading amenities and food services to address common grievances. Implementing rigorous staff training programs and promoting a culture of empathetic communication are necessary steps for ensuring that team members effectively manage guest concerns. Proactive follow-up measures will further enhance guest relations and showcase a dedication to customer relationship. These specific actions will not only create a more positive guest experience but also encourage guest loyalty and strengthen the resort's competitive position in the market.

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