

MODULE 2

HANDLING GUESTS COMPLAINTS

GUEST COMPLAINTS

When guests are not satisfied with some services and express their discontent to hotel employees, most often to the front desk staff, their grievances are recorded as guest complaints. When guests find it easy to express their opinions to the staff, both the hotel and the guests benefit. While the hotel receives a feedback about its staff and services and can initiate corrective actions, the guest can have a comfortable stay if his/her problems are addressed.

Types of Guest Complaints

The guests' complaints can be grouped into the following four major categories:

- Mechanical Complaints
- Attitudinal Complaints
- Service Related Complaints
- Unusual Complaints

1. **Mechanical complaint:** Mechanical complaints are related to the malfunctioning of non-functioning of systems and equipment installed in guest rooms, such as television mini-bar, weather control, channeled music, and geyser.
2. **Attitudinal complaint:** When a guest feels insulted by the rude or tactless hotel staff and lodges a complaint, it is referred to as attitudinal complaint. A guest may also make attitudinal complaints when the hotel staff bothers him/her with their problems.
3. **Service-related complaint:** Service-related complaints are concerned with the problems related to the services provided by the hotel, such as delay in the room service for lunch, or delay in the clearance of soiled crockery from the room after meals.
4. **Unusual complaint:** Unusual complaints are those over which the hotel does not have any control. For example, a guest may complain about the lack of facilities such as a golf course in or central heating facility in the hotel.

Guidelines for Handling guest complaints

Front office management and staff should keep the following resolution guidelines in mind when handling guest complaints. The main steps in handling the guest complaints are

- Listen
- Empathies
- Apologize
- Take action
- Follow up.

When expressing a complaint, the guest may be quite angry. Front office staff members should not make promises that exceed their authority.

Honesty is the best policy when dealing with guest complaints. If a problem cannot be solved, front office staff should admit this to the guest early on.

Front office staff should be advised that some guests complain as part of their nature. The staff should develop an approach for dealing with such guests.

Points to be kept in Mind while Handling Guest Complaints

The front office should handle guests' complaints tactfully, exercising patience, empathy, and decision-making skills. As hospitality is a service-oriented industry, the hotel staff should always try to resolve the customer's problems immediately and thus appease him/her. If a front office agent is unable to handle a guest's complaint, he/she should call his/her superior before the situation gets out of control or becomes worse. The following guidelines may be followed while handling guest complaints:

- Listen silently without interruption and with empathy.
- Show concern and take complaints seriously.
- Never argue and remember that the guest is always right.
- Never try to win an argument you may win the argument but lose the guest forever (remember it takes a lot to attract fresh customers but only a little to retain existing customers)
- If possible, isolate the guest so that other guests may not overhear.
- Offer choices and never make a false promise.
- Monitor the corrective measures • Follow up and inform the guest about the solution.

- If unable to resolve the guest problem, consult your superiors.

In the hotel industry, service standards are very important. The services should be of exemplary standard to ensure the guest satisfaction and delight. This would lead to repeat business and positive word-of-mouth publicity.