

การบริการแบบไร้รอยต่อและการนำเสนอวัฒนธรรมท้องถิ่น  
ในการบริการแบบเอเชีย  
Seamless Service and Appearances of Local Cultures  
in Asian Hospitality

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### บทคัดย่อ

การบริการแบบเอเชียให้ความสำคัญกับการมอบบริการแก่ลูกค้าแบบไร้รอยต่อ เพื่อให้ลูกค้าได้รับประสบการณ์บริการที่พึงพอใจและราบรื่นตลอดระยะเวลาที่เข้ารับบริการ บทความนี้นำเสนอการบริการแบบไร้รอยต่อของการบริการแบบเอเชีย โดยยกตัวอย่างกรณีศึกษาโรงแรมในเอเชียที่สามารถให้บริการแบบไร้รอยต่อเพื่อสร้างประสบการณ์ที่ดีให้กับลูกค้าโรงแรม ซึ่งกระบวนการบริการแบบดั้งเดิมที่ลูกค้าต้องเคลื่อนที่เพื่อติดต่อกับแต่ละแผนกงานที่รับผิดชอบ เพื่อตอบสนองความต้องการของลูกค้า อาจทำให้เกิดความคลาดเคลื่อนของบริการ หรือไม่ได้รับการตอบสนองอย่างเหมาะสม การบริการแบบไร้รอยต่อมีลักษณะของการใช้พนักงานหนึ่งคนหรือมากกว่า รับผิดชอบและดูแลความต้องการของลูกค้าโดยตรงและตอบสนองได้อย่างรวดเร็ว โดยกระบวนการทั้งหมดสามารถดำเนินการภายในการติดต่อเพียงจุดเดียว ซึ่งลดความซ้ำซ้อนของการบริการที่ต้องใช้พนักงานจากหลากหลายแผนก ทำให้ลูกค้ารู้สึกสะดวกสบายและเพลิดเพลินกับการรับบริการในโรงแรม บทความนี้นำเสนอตัวอย่างกระบวนการบริการแบบไร้รอยต่อที่เชื่อมโยงกับทรัพยากรมนุษย์ และเสนอตัวอย่างที่โรงแรมเอเชียผสมผสานอัตลักษณ์ท้องถิ่นในกระบวนการนำเสนอบริการได้อย่างมีประสิทธิภาพ

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## Abstract

In Asian hospitality, seamless service is essential to satisfying customers' demands during their stay. This paper examines how selected Asian hotels can use seamless service to create a positive guest experience when the traditional service process (i.e., where the customer has to move around and contact each responsible function to answer his/her enquiry) may not be delivered. Seamless service assigns one or more staff to handle customers' requirements or respond to their needs and preferences by allowing all processes to be completed within a single contact or through less repeatable tasks, thus enhancing the comfort of customers by reducing the number of their transactions. This paper illustrates the seamless service process in relation to human assets and explains how Asian hospitality can successfully blend local characteristics into their service processes and service recovery.

**Keywords:** Hotel Service, Asian Hospitality, Culture

## Introduction

Hospitality services are characterised by their intangibility, perishability, heterogeneity and inseparability (Grönroos, 1998), of which the last two greatly rely on human interactions. With the increasing prevalence of commercial hospitality, relying on physical goods alone is not enough to effectively compete in the 21st-century business environment (Harris, 2004; Mohsin, 2006; Richards & Wilson, 2006). The term 'service experience' was introduced to distinguish major products by demonstrating how the experiences delivered by these products can exceed the customers' expectations (Piuchan, 2023). Asian hospitality organisations offer mysterious services with value-added local characteristics to distinguish themselves from their global competitors (Nankervis, 2000; Shen, 2015). The Asian hospitality industry is expected to continuously flourish as can be seen in the many international awards received by Asian hospitality brands for their outstanding performance. Many Asian countries, including Japan, Vietnam, Thailand and the Philippines, have also been recognised for their outstanding hotel and hospitality services (International Hotel Awards, 2022). Other Asian countries, such as Thailand and Vietnam, have also actively promoted their local hospitality industry by addressing the notion of natural feeling. According to industry specifications, customers measure service performance in the hospitality industry based on their interactions with their hosts. Nonetheless, the challenge for Asian hospitality organisations is to differentiate individual properties based on their unique intangibility related to

geography, culture, social factor and the professionalism of their service providers (Fakfare et al., 2019; Nankervis, 2000; Piuchan, 2023). Asian hospitality organisations seem to focus on elements that lift up their service processes, high touch and offer pleasurable services to their customers. And it is presenting as a seamless service to reduce the obstacles which this paper tends to have the extended understanding.

This paper aims to investigate the Asian hospitality service process, which integrates local characteristics and human assets to offer seamless service to customers. This paper divides the discussion into the following topics: 1) the seamlessness of service processes in Asian hospitality; 2) human asset as an actor in crafting seamless service; 3) integrating local characteristics into service processes; and 4) service recovery in Asian hospitality. Given that the topic at hand is descriptive in nature, this study conducts a narrative literature review where the topic is discussed based on the author's experiences (Ferrari, 2015; Pae, 2015). Unlike systematic reviews that investigate a question in a specific context by using a pre-specified method, a narrative literature review mainly analyses the published literature related to the topic and then investigates such topic from a contextual perspective (Rother, 2007). All the information and explanations in this narrative review are obtained from the literature and from the author's observations during her professional work in Thailand and hotel site visits.

### **Seamlessness of the Service Process in Asian Hospitality**

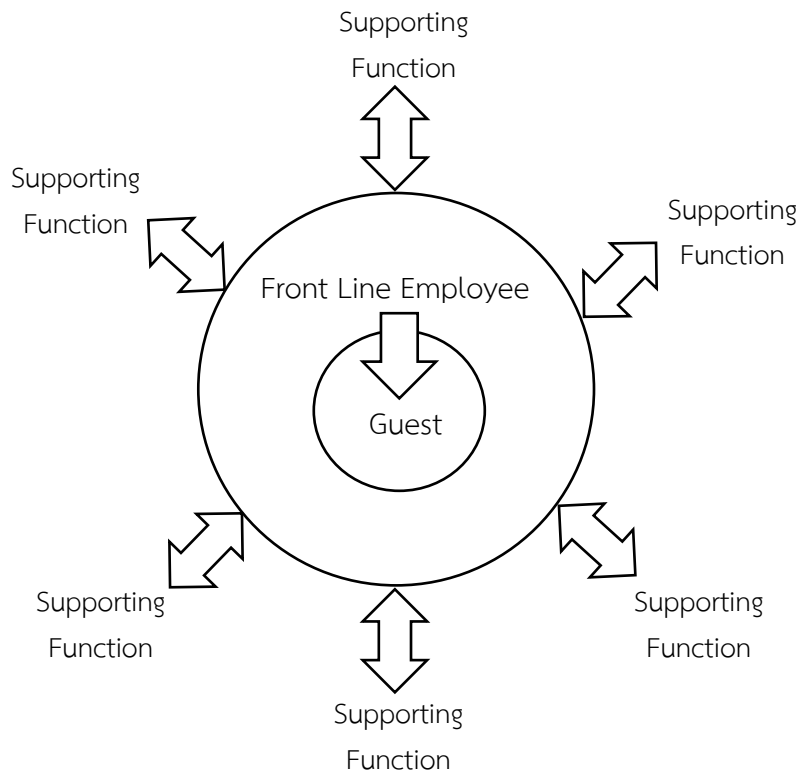
The hospitality industry has a dynamic nature, and the service process starts from guests reserving their rooms up to their departure from hotels. Physical goods are prepared in factories, whereas services are produced when customers interact with production resources (Grönroos, 1998). The service process in the hospitality industry involves the three elements of products (e.g. meals and beds), the behaviour of employees and the environment of service providers (King, 1995). To provide a smooth service, many organisations rely on seamless service where they deliver their services to customers in a smooth, courteous, efficient (Chacko, 1998) or flawless manner (Mattila & Patterson, 2004a). Heath (1998) illustrated the concept of seamlessness by using the needlework industry as an example. The seams are used to hold the whole process together. The seams overlap the edges of various pieces that give the seam its strength though decreasing the appearance of a seam as much as a manufacturing procedure can, is the one strength of productivity. One challenge in seamless hospitality is 'providing a service that blends seamlessly with customers' lifestyles and ensuring that customers never have to make same request twice' (Tsang, 2008). Therefore, this

paper defines seamless service as single service encounters where one or more service provider(s) respond to service enquiries and collect customer information to reduce service barriers and achieve customer satisfaction. A personalised individual service involves a very high degree of seamless service.

Seamless service is crucial to reducing service barriers in the Asian hospitality industry. Many organisations achieve a seamless service by utilising technologies (Kim & Han, 2022; Park et al., 2022; Shin & Jeong, 2022). Whilst customers nowadays prefer receiving services with the help of technology, others still prefer receiving services from human staff. Therefore, seamlessness is an important consideration for service providers. Chacko (1998) argued that the seamlessness of hotel organisations should be *circular* so that employees can serve customers with equal access, *flat* in order to minimise the number of hierarchical levels and *dynamic* in order to provide enough flexibility to serve the changing needs of guests. Amongst these elements, *circular* and *dynamic* are widely perceived in the Asian hospitality industry. Customers prefer services that are tailored to their unique lifestyles. Although the provision of a seamless service experience lacks a unified standard, there is an example that can deliver the context for seamless service experience in Asian hospitality.

Dusit D2 Thailand, under Dusit International trade, differentiates itself from traditional service by offering a relaxing, modern hotel service that respects the individual style of its customers. Upon their arrival to the establishment, guests of Dusit D2 are greeted by a doorman who will carry their luggage and escort them to the lobby area. The hotel front officers will then step in by escorting guests from the hotel lobby doors to the lobby sofa and offering them refreshments. Afterwards, these officers will assist guests in checking in without even going to the counter. This practice is also observed in many hotels across Thailand, including the Western hotel brands of Le Meridian Phuket and Four Season Tent Camp Golden Triangle Chiang Rai (see section ‘Integrating local characteristics into the service process’ for more examples). The staff at these hotels welcome their guests in a relaxed manner, and the themes of their hotels are designed based on their respective locations. In other words, these hotels abandon the traditional check in process in favour of a smooth service where they fulfil many service processes in just a single interaction with the customers. Guests are the central focus of this service design, and staff only move around to assist them. Offering a seamless service can also reduce service failures and interruptions.

Based on Chacko's study and the aforementioned examples, the seamless service process in the Asian hospitality industry is illustrated in Figure 1. In this framework, the guest is at the core of the service, whilst the service providers, including the frontline staff, interpret the guests' needs and preferences, which are shared to them through verbal and non-verbal communication. The service providers respond to guest enquiries by communicating with other departments or supporting functions specialising in such enquiries before responding to the guests' demands. In this process, one or more staff member directly interacts with the guests and then transfers the obtained information to others within the organisation. However, the behaviour, service attitudes and willingness of employees to carry out multifunction tasks and fulfil the guests' needs in this process require attention to detail.



**Figure 1 Seamless Service Process in Asian Hospitality**  
Adapted from Chacko (1998)

This paper also highlights some elements that help support seamless service in the Asian hospitality industry, such as using human assets as an actor to craft seamless service, integrating local characteristics into the service process and achieving service recovery in Asian hospitality.

## Human Asset as an Actor to Craft Seamless Service

A seamless service is delivered by human assets. In Asia, human assets play a critical role in achieving high service standards and demonstrating local culture. Previous studies on service (Lipkin & Heinonen, 2022; Piuchan, 2023) argued that the tangible attributes of seamless service have received limited research attention and that its intangible attributes, including the behaviour and attitude of service providers and the social environment of customers (i.e. peers and co-customers), are given the highest priority by hotel customers. Human assets can help hotels differentiate themselves from other properties. The usual stereotypes associated with Asian service providers include friendliness, joy, courtesy, humility and respect (Heffernan & Droulers, 2008; Piuchan, 2023). However, these stereotypes may be perceived differently by each customer based on the experience they had received in reality. To further emphasise the importance of human assets in the industry, the Tourism Authority of Thailand launched the slogan ‘*Amazing Thailand: It begins with the people*’ in 2013 (Amazing Thailand: it begins with the people, n.d.) and continued highlighting the local Thai people and culture in its 2023 tourism campaign. This movement further strengthened the role of Thai culture and locals in Thailand’s hospitality industry (TAT Newsroom, 2023). In sum, Thailand’s tourism product is mainly its own people, their way of living and their mentality and hospitality, which are shaped based on their religion and upbringing. Meanwhile, in 2012, the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism announced its slogan ‘*Vietnam Timeless Charm*’ with the symbol of five lotus petals representing the sea, ecology, culture, adventure and Vietnamese hospitality (Vietnam’s timeless charm, 2012). Since then, Vietnam has garnered attention as a rising star in Asia due to its natural beauty and rich culture (VVC Hospitality, 2023).

These remarkable slogans are products of human-centric advertising and draw attention to Thai and Vietnamese mentality by using locals as manifestations of Asian hospitality. These countries offer a unique form of hospitality that integrates local characteristics into the whole service process.

To achieve seamless service, service providers should be able to work across different functions, practise cross-cultural sensitivity and be skilled in dealing with different issues (Harris, 2004; Mok & Armstrong, 1998; Nankervis, 2000; Piuchan, 2023). Edward T. Hall provided an illustrative example of seamless service by discussing the concepts of monochronic versus polychronic culture (Geert Hofstede’s dimensions of culture and Edward T. Hall’s time orientations, n.d.). The monochronic concept follows

the notion of doing one thing at a time, whilst the polychronic concept follows the notion of handling multiple tasks at a time. Service providers from a polychronic culture can manage interruptions well and are willing to change easily. These providers tend to establish relationships with people, especially those that are closely related to their functions. Given their polychronic culture, Asians can work efficiently across multiple functions and ascribe high value to human relationships.

In seamless service, the seams represent the supporting teams and departments. Therefore, a seamless service cannot be provided without an overlap among different seams. A seamless service is delivered by multifunctional teams, including front officers and food and beverage attendants. Each member of a team brings different skills and creates unique experiences for customers. To offer coherent services and achieve customer satisfaction, the different areas of a service interaction should sufficiently overlap with one another. Working as a team in Asia is related to social bonds, where relationship building brings the social community together even in the workplace. Thais use ‘*pukpuak*’ to identify who belongs to their group (Patterson & Smith, 2001). Members of a group may also assist one another if needed. Therefore, ‘*pukpuak*’ becomes a powerful tool for creating service teams where each member can easily connect with others and maintain stable relationships. Such connection is largely absent in the Western culture, where people prefer working independently.

Another interesting issue relates to Asian service providers’ perceptions towards their socio-cultural context and the general public’s perception of pursuing hospitality careers in Asia. Perceptions towards hospitality careers greatly vary across Asian countries. For instance, people in Indonesia, Malaysia, China (Nankervis, 2000) and Singapore (Debrah, 1994) view hospitality service careers negatively, with people in China going so far as perceiving hospitality workers as having low social status (Huang & Gamble, 2015). Singapore, Hong Kong and Brunei share the same perception due to the low salaries being offered in the industry. By contrast, Thailand actively promotes the advantages of having a career in the hospitality industry given that the country’s economy mainly rests upon this industry (Ashton, 2018; Weerasombat et al., 2022). The negative image associated with the hospitality industry results in labour shortages at the operational level and demotivates hospitality employees from delivering high-quality services, thus affecting the overall service performance of the industry.

Debrah (1994) observed that hotels in Singapore consider their managerial staff an asset but do not offer the same recognition for their operative staff. Interestingly,

the hotel operating methods and service in Singapore interpreted service standardization by the efficiency outcome so that the method of cutting down the range of services offered due to labor shortage is more common. For instance, providing a full turn down service, including greeting customers or opening doors for them, may not be necessary, and the human resources reserved for such services should be reallocated to more important duties. Some contradictions can also be observed in the services being offered across Asia due to heterogeneities in Asian culture. The concept of providing a good service depends on the insights of each culture and nationality.

Unlike their neighbours within Asia, people in Thailand hold a highly positive image of service workers (Ashton, 2018; Etd & Krancharoen, 2021; Panmunin, 1993; Piuchan, 2023). Thai hotel employees have a positive outlook on hotel jobs and even regard hotel work as a lifetime career (Panmunin, 1993). The Thai hotel industry also welcomes the participation of women in the workforce, older staff tend to wear their uniforms with pride and college graduates are offered high salaries and stay long in their jobs due to the trust they earned from their employers (Panmunin, 1993; Piuchan, 2023).

In sum, the human asset is valuable in producing and offering services that make customers feel at ease. Hotels in Asian countries tend to distinguish their services and impress their customers by highlighting their cultural practices and atmosphere through their local staff. In this case, humans are part of hospitality products. Hospitality organisations in Asia greatly benefit from the cultures and attitudes of locals towards the hospitality industry.

### **Integrating Local Characteristics into the Service Process**

Culture is a foundation for hospitality and service (Thai hospitality: its reputation and culture, 2012) and is associated with personal and organisational characteristics that benefit all types of services (Radojevic et al., 2019). Hotels in Asia benefit from the guests' perception of the friendliness and approachability of their local employees (Fakfare et al., 2019). However, such observation may differ even for the same brands operating across different locations. Properties operating in Asia may benefit from the outstanding characteristics of Asian hospitality by offering service experiences with value-added local characteristics that distinguish their products and services from those of their competitors. This trend can be widely observed amongst Western hotels operating in Asia that have built a solid reputation for their hotel products and services. These establishments include the Anantara Golden Triangle Elephant Camp and Resort



(Chiang Rai, Thailand), Amapuri (Phuket, Thailand), Capella Hotels and Resorts (Singapore, Vietnam and Bangkok), Four Seasons Hotel (Kyoto, Japan) and The Oberoi Beach Resort (Indonesia) (Walkout, 2023). However, due to geographical and cultural differences, the guests of these Western hotels operating in Asia may have a different experience when staying with the same brands located in other regions.

For instance, the Four Seasons Tent Camp Golden Triangle has adapted local characteristics into its operations by escorting its guests to the property through a long-tail boat and banging a traditional gong at the camp port three times to announce the arrival of new guests. These guests are then welcomed to the camp by several department managers who will escort them to the lobby area with a scenic view, offer them refreshments and complete their check in process without going to the counters. The restaurant chef will also approach these guests to ask them about their food preferences and other special requirements, such as food allergies. After these interactions, the guests will be escorted to their tents. This process not only demonstrates the local characteristics of the area but also introduces a seamless service orientation where the entire service process for each guest is completed in just a single encounter between the guests and service providers. The guests can just remain seated in one place, and all the important processes are completed. The communication flow between staff and management at all levels helps develop a unique form of customer service (Heffernan & Droulers, 2008). To provide a seamless service and achieve guest satisfaction, an effective cooperation amongst different human resources should be ensured. The challenges associated with consolidating the local cultures represented in each property may be ascribed to the differences in the levels of commitment demonstrated by the operators and owners of each property.



Figure 2

The Camp Map made from Local Material



Figure 3

The Refreshment with Bamboo Glass and Straw

Figure 2 And 3 Four Seasons Tent Camp Golden Triangle, Chiang Rai, Thailand

In sum, seamless service aims to provide customers with a great experience without too much interruption from service providers. Integrating local characteristics into the service process allows hospitality organisations to create positive, lasting impressions on their guests and uplift their overall service experience. Such integration has been proven to result in positive service experiences for customers.

#### (1) Use of joint ventures to accommodate local characteristics

Despite the heterogeneity in their culture, many Western brands operating in Asia have successfully integrated local characteristics into their service processes. This success may be ascribed to foreign investment policies that prohibit enterprises from being entirely foreign owned. One country that implements such policy is Thailand, where foreign hotels are required to have at least 51% Thai ownership (Glanzberg, 1993; Panvisavas & Taylor, 2006). Panvisavas and Taylor (2006) added that 75% of hotels in Asia operate under a management contract that typically trades under the name of the foreign hotel chain. In this case, hotel owners become involved in the operation decision making of these hotels, and hotel operators are given full freedom to run the business as they see fit. These policies also grant some flexibility for hotels to integrate local characteristics into their organisational culture and service processes.

There are also cases of Asian hotel brands expanding their business to other regions. Due to cultural heterogeneity, these hotels face challenges in adapting

to a foreign culture whilst retaining an oriental Asian characteristic in their services. The culture of a hotel may not be easily transported to a new social and cultural environment without some adjustments. Heffernan and Droulers (2008) cited the case of Shangri-La, a Hong Kong hotel brand that struggled in its cultural adaptation to Sydney. At the primary stage of the hotel's operations in Sydney, one senior manager recalled the following feedback left by a guest.

*'...I called down to say if I can get my suit pressed. In any hotel throughout Asia, they would say, "sure, absolutely. What time do you need it by?", but the response I got was, "sorry mate, laundry is closed". To me, that was the quintessential Australian culture. It was not the guy at the end of the phone being rude, it was him saying "sorry that the laundry is closed", and it was a very Australian response'. (Heffernan & Droulers, 2008, p. 301)*

The Asian service attitude is generally customer centric. However, transferring the Asian organisational culture and service process to other locations requires an examination of the challenges associated with cultural adaptation to the host country. For example, in terms of power distance, the Asian culture simply accepts inequality between people in society, which contradicts the views of Western countries, including Australia (Debrah, 1994; Guzley, 1992; Nankervis, 2000; Patterson & Smith, 2001). Therefore, Asian hospitality organisations are at an advantage when serving hospitality customers, who generally prefer keeping distance when receiving services (Ladhari et al., 2011). To adapt to these challenges, Asian hospitality businesses should arrange cross-cultural trainings or transfers for their staff. Mohsin (2006) defined intercultural sensitivity as a learnable attitude that allows individuals to interact effectively with people from other cultures. As such, intercultural sensitivity needs to be instilled amongst employees coming from different cultural backgrounds. Nonetheless, the ability of an individual to absorb and learn about other cultures and adapt his/her service performance accordingly ultimately rests on his/her own attitude.

## **(2) Service Performance and Number of Employees**

Nankervis (2000) proposed a qualitative approach for studying the service production process in the Asia-Pacific region based on the efficiency of employees and the proportion of hotel staff compared with other countries. The number of hotel employees in Asia is three to four times larger than that in Australia and New Zealand

due to the lower remuneration being offered in the former. Therefore, the single-service model is more favourable for hotels in Asia due to the higher number of service providers available for each customer. Nevertheless, the number of employees is not actually being used in practice to judge the service quality of hospitality services. For instance, hotels in Indonesia and Malaysia still suffer from poor guest responsiveness and reliability despite having a large workforce. However, these setbacks may also be caused by the cultural and religious restrictions being observed in these countries. In sum, Asian hospitality services may outperform their Western counterparts in some cases due to their larger number of service providers, but their quality of service still depends on their team's efficiency, individual performance and organisational culture and not solely on their number of employees.

### **Service Recovery in Asian Hospitality**

Service failures warrant a prompt response with service recovery and often contributes to customers' final level of satisfaction. Customers expect service providers to compensate them for their losses, demonstrate fairness and offer their explanations and apologies for these failures. A cross-cultural service failure tends to occur due to cultural divergence or confusion. People from the same culture share the same ways of living and solve their problems in a similar way. Thus, in the case of service recovery, employees from different cultures should agree on a course of action based on their own cultural thinking and controlled behaviour. Asian staff generally provide genuine verbal and non-verbal communication. Moreover, different cultures need different solutions such as East Asians need to regain 'face' in the eyes of their society so that staff should be aware of this (Harris, 2004; Mattila & Paterson, 2004b; Mohsin, 2006).

Service providers, especially the customer-oriented ones, aim for zero defects in their service delivery (Mok & Armstrong, 1998). A seamless service process aims to reduce the occurrence of service failures. Asian hospitality is largely driven by the desire and willingness of staff to serve their customers (Grandey et al., 2005). Therefore, in cases of service failures, Asian hospitality workers tend to offer their sincerest apologies in a calm and gentle manner.

Mueller et al. (2003) argued that the service recovery process may vary across Asian countries due to the differences in the ability and willingness of staff to correct the effects of their service failures. For instance, Taiwanese hotels follow a standardised operation procedure in case of service failures, but such procedure often fails to satisfy

their customers' demand for fairness. Meanwhile, Thais use words related to 'jai' (heart) to describe their own perception of services and their thoughts and actions when interacting with customers. 'Jai' is a profound term in Thai Buddhism as the heart is one's inherent 'pure awareness'. When facing service failures, Thais adopt the concept of 'jai yen' (cool heart) and keep calm to avoid conflicts, confrontations and feelings of anger when receiving complaints. Therefore, the reaction of Thais to service failures is generally perceived as gentle.

### Proposed Supportive Elements of Seamless Service in Asian Hospitality

This paper also aims to shed light on those elements that support the provision of a seamless service in the Asian hospitality industry and to understand how service providers can provide a better customer experience by using these elements. The proposed framework is illustrated in Figure 4

A seamless service process involves the provision of more service outcomes with minimal interactions between customers and service providers. A seamless service not only offers a memorable service experience for customers that goes beyond their expectations but also lowers service barriers and reduces instances of service failures. To achieve a seamless service in the Asian hospitality industry, this paper highlights the importance of local characteristics, which can be either tangible (i.e. presenting the process as physical local materials) and intangible (i.e. the local cultures of employees that become consolidated during service delivery). These characteristics also exhibit the value-added of Asian properties that adapt to local environments to differentiate themselves from other properties.

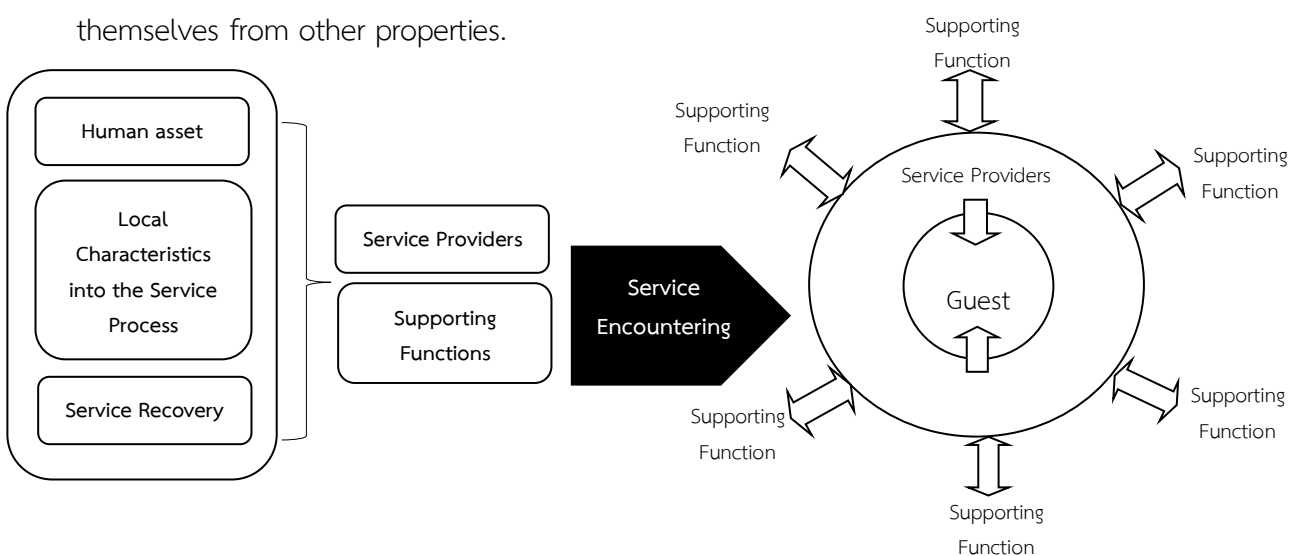


Figure 4 The Proposed Supportive Elements of Seamless Service in Asian Hospitality

A seamless service process requires many elements as shown in Figure 4. Firstly, the human asset acts as the core that drives service provision and a functional support that allows teams to complete all services and fulfil customers' needs, whilst guests are the central part of this service process. Instead of products, people are treated as the key service experience in Asian hospitality mostly because the diversity of cultures in Asia highlight the differences in the natural habits and feelings of people from each country.

Secondly, local characteristics emphasise the uniqueness of the tangible and intangible components of individual properties. It is the creative ideas of blending culture and location theme to present the whole property differently. Asia offers a relatively good combination of culture and flavour of service due to its heterogeneous culture, mode of thought and work behaviour. The local owners of Western brands operating in Asia are also given more freedom to run their business, thus offering them more flexibility to integrate the local culture into their management and operations. Culture is a central part of each nation's hospitality industry, and integrating culture into service can ensure the smoothness of service transactions, thus resulting in a seamless service experience (Fakfare et al., 2019; Piuchan, 2023; Sucher & Cheung, 2016; Wattanacharoensil et al., 2014).

Thirdly, service recovery is more flexible and responsive in the Asian hospitality industry as employees react to service failures together and individually contribute their solutions to the problem.

Services consumption leads to service experience (Grönroos, 1998). Products, processes and people establish a strong connection to strengthen the link between the physical products and outcomes of experience. A seamless service can become a trademark of excellent Asian hospitality if service providers efficiently plan their management and organisational culture and ensure the preparedness of their human resources to achieve the objectives of seamless service whilst integrating the local characteristics into their service orientation.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

This study proposes some recommendations that may contribute to service improvement. Asian hospitality focuses on a people-centric approach where service providers, as a human asset, are perceived as actors that offer service value and experience to customers. Meanwhile, customers generally prefer limited contact with service providers but have high demands for personalised services. A seamless

service can hold all service initiatives together and coherently. Hospitality organisations should thus invest in their employees' capacity development and training. They should also formulate a comprehensive standard operating procedure that outlines their seamless service process, their agenda for dealing with customers and the scope of their personalised services to ensure consistency in their services.

Asian countries benefit from their service culture and labour issues. Asian hospitality organisations may benefit from having a large workforce to fulfil various duties. They should seek highly talented staff who are willing to serve customers and are able to adapt to different cultures. The service culture may also differ across countries in Asia due to their cultural heterogeneity. However, Asians share the same mentality and attitude towards service, thus contributing to the favourable image of Asian hospitality. Cultural blending in service, which is demonstrated by service providers, is strongly related to hospitality organisations. Highlighting the cultural practices in service functions and advertising local characteristics may help these organisations develop a unique business image.

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