A Quantitative Study on the Influence of Authenticity and Employee Helpfulness on Customer Delight at The Balcone Hotel & Resort

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	This study investigates the influence of authenticity and employee helpfulness on customer delight in the context of a luxury hospitality environment. Using a quantitative, causal-associative approach, the research was conducted at The Balcone Hotel & Resort Bukittinggi, with data collected from 90 guests using a structured questionnaire. The variables measured include authenticity (uniqueness, concept consistency, and staff sincerity), employee helpfulness (responsiveness, problem-solving, and attentiveness), and customer delight (satisfaction, exceeded expectations, and willingness to recommend). Multiple linear regression analysis revealed that both authenticity ($\beta = 0.270$, $p = 0.002$) and employee helpfulness ($\beta = 0.670$, $p = 0.000$) have significant positive effects on customer delight. Furthermore, the F-test confirmed a significant simultaneous influence of the two variables. These findings highlight the importance of integrating authentic service design with emotionally responsive staff behavior to create memorable guest experiences. The study provides theoretical insights and practical implications for hotel managers aiming to achieve emotional differentiation and customer loyalty in competitive hospitality markets.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry has become an essential driver of economic and tourism development, requiring hotels not only to offer superior facilities but also to deliver emotional experiences that exceed customer expectations. In increasingly competitive markets, customer delight—a state where satisfaction is surpassed—has emerged as a strategic priority for sustaining customer loyalty and competitive advantage [1], [2].

Customer delight is not merely the result of excellent service quality; it often arises from a combination of authentic experiences and meaningful employee interactions [3]. Authenticity in hospitality refers to the degree to which guests perceive their experiences as real, sincere, and reflective of local culture and values. It has been associated with enhanced emotional engagement, greater guest satisfaction, and positive word-of-mouth behavior [4], [5]. For instance, Kolar and Zabkar emphasized that authenticity contributes significantly to memorable tourism experiences and is positively associated with revisit intentions [6].

Simultaneously, employee helpfulness—defined as the perceived willingness, responsiveness, and problem-solving attitude of service staff—plays a critical role in shaping guest perceptions of service encounters [7]. Helpful employees who demonstrate empathy, efficiency, and attentiveness are more likely to create lasting positive impressions and foster emotional connections with guests [8]. Recent empirical

studies have shown that helpfulness, especially in frontline service roles, is a predictor of customer delight and retention [9].

Despite its prominence, the literature reveals limited studies that integrate both authenticity and employee helpfulness as antecedents of customer delight in the context of upscale hotels, particularly in emerging tourism destinations. This research seeks to address this gap by investigating the simultaneous influence of authenticity and employee helpfulness on customer delight at The Balcone Hotel & Resort Bukittinggi, the first five-star hotel in the region. Located in a culturally rich area of West Sumatra, the hotel presents an ideal setting to explore how local authenticity and personalized service shape customer experience.

By employing a quantitative, causal-associative approach, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on experiential service quality and emotional engagement in hospitality. It also provides actionable insights for hotel managers seeking to differentiate their service through emotionally resonant guest experiences.

2. METHOD

This study employed a quantitative research design with a causal-associative approach to examine the influence of authenticity and employee helpfulness on customer delight at The Balcone Hotel & Resort Bukittinggi. The causal-associative method was selected to identify the direction and strength of the relationship between independent and dependent variables based on observed statistical patterns [10]. The target population comprised all guests who had stayed at the hotel within the last six months, reflecting a relevant timeframe for accurate recall of service experience. The sample size was determined using the minimum indicator-to-sample ratio suggested by Hair et al., recommending 10 respondents per observed indicator, resulting in 90 respondents across 9 indicators [11]. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, which is widely applied in hospitality studies where researchers aim to include respondents with specific, experience-based insights [12]. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The instrument included three constructs: authenticity (measured through perceived uniqueness, concept consistency, and staff sincerity), employee helpfulness (measured by service responsiveness, problem-solving, and attentiveness), and customer delight (measured by satisfaction, exceeded expectations, and willingness to recommend). To ensure measurement accuracy, the instrument underwent validity testing using Pearson correlation and reliability testing through Cronbach's alpha, adhering to a threshold of $\alpha \geq 0.70$ for internal consistency [13]. Data were analyzed using multiple linear regression, preceded by assumption testing for normality (Kolmogorov–Smirnov) and heteroscedasticity to meet classical linear model criteria. The regression analysis assessed both the partial effects (t-tests) and simultaneous effects (F-test) of the independent variables on customer delight, with a significance level set at 0.05. This methodological framework aligns with recent hospitality research practices that emphasize rigorous statistical validation and contextual relevance in service experience studies [14], [15].

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Result

3.1.1. Descriptive Statistics of Variables

The descriptive analysis evaluated respondents' perceptions of three main constructs—authenticity, employee helpfulness, and customer delight—using multi-item measures on a 5-point Likert scale. To standardize interpretation, average scores were converted into percentage achievement, with >70% categorized as good and 60–70% as moderate [16]. As presented in Table 1, authenticity achieved a score of 68.07%, indicating a generally favorable perception among guests. This suggests that most visitors experienced the hotel environment as culturally aligned and genuinely delivered, echoing previous findings that emphasize the importance of authentic service encounters in enhancing emotional engagement and loyalty [18].

Meanwhile, employee helpfulness scored 64.96%, and customer delight recorded 64.22%, both falling within the moderate range. These results highlight that although guests found the service staff relatively helpful and were generally satisfied, the hotel has yet to consistently exceed expectations or generate memorable emotional responses. Prior studies have similarly shown that variability in frontline staff behavior can undermine customer delight in luxury hospitality contexts [19], [20]. Taken together, these findings underscore the need for service consistency and innovation in experience design to move beyond satisfaction and achieve lasting guest delight.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	Indicators	Mean Score Achievement	Category
Authenticity	Uniqueness, Concept Consistency, Staff Sincerity	68.07%	Good
Employee Helpfulness	Responsiveness, Problem Solving, Attentiveness	64.96%	Moderate
Customer Delight	Overall Satisfaction, Exceeded Expectations, Recommendation Intention	64.22%	Moderate

3.1.2. Assumption Testing

Prior to regression analysis, diagnostic tests were conducted to ensure that the data met the classical assumptions required for multiple linear regression. First, the Kolmogorov–Smirnov (K–S) test was used to assess normality, yielding a significance value of 0.169, which exceeds the threshold of 0.05. This result indicates that the residuals are normally distributed, satisfying the assumption of normality [16], [17]. Next, a heteroscedasticity test was performed to verify the homogeneity of variance across residuals. The significance values were 0.261 for authenticity and 0.063 for employee helpfulness—both above the 0.05 cutoff—demonstrating that the error terms are homoscedastic and that no systematic variance patterns are present.

Additionally, the multicollinearity test was conducted using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and Tolerance values to evaluate potential intercorrelation between predictors. A VIF value below 10 and tolerance above 0.10 indicate the absence of multicollinearity. As shown in Table 4, both authenticity and employee helpfulness had VIF values of 1.524 and tolerance values of 0.656, suggesting that the independent variables are statistically independent. Taken together, the results of these assumption tests confirm that the data satisfy all necessary conditions for regression analysis.

Table 2. Normality Test Result

Test	Residuals	Sig. Value	Conclusion
Kolmogorov–Smirnov	Residuals	0.169	Data are normally distributed

Table 3. Heteroscedasticity Test Results

Variable	Sig. Value	Conclusion
Authenticity	0.261	No heteroscedasticity detected
Employee Helpfulness	0.063	No heteroscedasticity detected

Table 4. Multicollinearity Test Results

Independent Variable	Tolerance	VIF	Conclusion
Authenticity	0.656	1.524	No multicollinearity detected
Employee Helpfulness	0.656	1.524	No multicollinearity detected

3.1.3. Regression Analysis

To test the proposed hypotheses, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the partial influence of authenticity (X_1) and employee helpfulness (X_2) on customer delight (Y). The resulting regression model is expressed as:

$$Y = 0.680 + 0.270X_1 + 0.670X_2 + e,$$

Where $\beta_1 = 0.270$ and $\beta_2 = 0.670$. Both predictors demonstrated statistically significant effects, with p-values of 0.002 for authenticity and 0.000 for employee helpfulness. These values are below the 0.05 significance threshold, confirming that each independent variable contributes positively and significantly to the prediction of customer delight. Notably, employee helpfulness had a stronger standardized coefficient, indicating a more substantial impact on the outcome variable. This aligns with previous research highlighting the dominant role of service staff behavior in shaping emotional guest outcomes in luxury hospitality settings [18], [19].

Furthermore, an F-test was performed to assess the simultaneous influence of both independent variables on the dependent variable. The computed F-value was 109.006, which exceeds the critical F-table value of 3.10, and the model's significance level was p = 0.000, indicating strong statistical significance. These results confirm that authenticity and employee helpfulness jointly explain a significant proportion of the variance in customer delight, thereby supporting all proposed hypotheses. The detailed results are presented in Table 5 and Table 6.

Table 5. Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Predictor Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient (B)	Standard Error	Beta (Standardized Coefficient)	t-value	Sig. (p-value)	Conclusion
Constant	0.680	1.522	–	0.447	0.656	Not significant
Authenticity (X_1)	0.270	0.083	0.215	3.245	0.002	Significant effect (H1 supported)
Employee Helpfulness (X_2)	0.670	0.062	0.717	10.817	0.000	Significant effect (H2 supported)

Table 6. ANOVA (F-test) Results

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig. (p-value)	Conclusion
Regression	605.835	2	302.918	109.006	0.000	Significant simultaneous effect
Residual	241.765	87	2.779			
Total	847.600	89				

3.2. Discussion

The results of this study provide empirical evidence that both authenticity and employee helpfulness are significant predictors of customer delight in a luxury hospitality setting. The multiple linear regression analysis showed that authenticity has a positive and statistically significant effect on customer delight ($\beta = 0.270$, $p = 0.002$). This finding implies that guests who perceive the service experience as authentic—reflected through uniqueness, consistency, and sincerity—are more likely to experience heightened emotional satisfaction beyond routine expectations. This supports previous studies which have identified authenticity as a critical factor in enhancing the perceived quality of experiences and fostering emotional engagement in hospitality environments [18], [20].

More notably, employee helpfulness demonstrated a stronger influence on customer delight ($\beta = 0.670$, $p = 0.000$), underscoring the central role of human interaction in service delivery. When frontline employees exhibit attentiveness, responsiveness, and effective problem-solving, guests are more likely to feel valued and emotionally connected to the service provider. This is in line with the findings of Jiang and Chan [18], who emphasized that emotional outcomes such as delight are predominantly shaped by the interpersonal behavior of service staff in hospitality contexts. Such results reaffirm the growing body of literature indicating that affective service components are fundamental to creating extraordinary guest experiences [19].

In addition, the F-test result ($F = 109.006$, $p < 0.001$) confirmed that authenticity and employee helpfulness simultaneously have a significant effect on customer delight, validating the conceptual framework proposed in this study. This supports the notion that delight is not merely a product of individual service elements but emerges from the synergistic interaction between service environment authenticity and staff behavior. These findings resonate with previous theoretical frameworks that advocate for integrated service design, where both tangible and intangible factors work in harmony to exceed customer expectations [20].

From a managerial perspective, these findings suggest that hotel operators, especially in upscale and culturally embedded properties, should simultaneously invest in designing authentic service environments and in training programs that enhance employee responsiveness and emotional intelligence. A strategic focus on aligning service design with cultural narratives while empowering staff to act with agility and empathy may enable hotels to consistently deliver not just satisfaction, but true customer delight.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that both authenticity and employee helpfulness significantly influence customer delight in the context of luxury hospitality services. Authenticity contributes to guest delight by offering experiences perceived as genuine, consistent, and culturally relevant. Meanwhile, employee helpfulness—through responsiveness, attentiveness, and effective problem-solving—plays an even more critical role in shaping positive emotional responses from guests.

The findings emphasize that customer delight is not the result of isolated service attributes, but rather the outcome of an integrated approach combining authentic service design with high-quality human interaction. For hotel managers, this underscores the importance of aligning service environments with meaningful guest experiences while simultaneously enhancing staff capabilities through ongoing training and empowerment initiatives. Future research may explore the inclusion of mediating variables or extend the model to other hospitality sectors to broaden the applicability of these findings.

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