Why ask the guests? : An examination of mechanisms and efficacy of guest feedback used in hotels in Perth

Selly Sugio

Edith Cowan University

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Why ask the guests?:

An examination of mechanisms and efficacy of guest feedback used in hotels in Perth

Selly Sugio

May 2010

Bachelor of Hospitality Management (Honours)
# Chapter One

1. Share your thoughts! .................................................................................................................. 2

1.1 Introduction .............................................................................................................................. 3

1.2 Research problem ..................................................................................................................... 5

1.3 Research questions ................................................................................................................... 7

1.4 Significance ................................................................................................................................ 8

# Chapter Two

2. Literature review ......................................................................................................................... 11

2.1 What are feedback mechanisms ............................................................................................. 12

2.2 The reason of having feedback mechanisms in place ................................................................ 13

2.3 The needs of customer feedback mechanisms ..................................................................... 15

2.4 The importance of customer feedback mechanisms ........................................................... 17

2.5 Understand your customer better ......................................................................................... 19

2.6 The benefits of using feedback mechanisms ........................................................................... 20

2.7 Different types of feedback mechanisms ................................................................................. 20

2.7.1 Guest comment cards, survey or questionnaires ............................................................... 21

2.7.2 Blog or forum or consumer review sites ................................................................... 23

2.7.3 Employee feedback and customer direct interview ........................................................ 24
Chapter Four
4. Qualitative Results ................................................................. 54
  4.1 Quantitative Results ............................................................. 54
  4.2 The Research tool ............................................................... 56
    4.2.1 Respondent’s characteristics ......................................... 57
    4.2.2 Summary of data analysis ............................................. 64
  4.3 Conclusion .......................................................................... 64

Chapter Five
5. Qualitative Results ................................................................. 66
  5.1 Types of feedback mechanisms ............................................ 67
    5.1.1 The advantages & disadvantages of feedback mechanisms 68
    5.1.2 The most useful feedback mechanisms ........................... 71
    5.1.3 The online web review from the interviewee’s point of view 72
    5.1.4 The benefits of feedback mechanisms in the organisation 74
    5.1.5 Ways of seeking customers’ feedback ............................ 77
    5.1.6 Action after feedback collection ..................................... 79
    5.1.7 Encourage and value your employee .............................. 82
    5.1.8 What can be improved? (Recommendation) .................... 84
  5.2 Summary of data analysis .................................................... 85

Chapter Six
6. Discussion ............................................................................... 87
  6.1 Types of feedback mechanisms .......................................... 88
    6.1.1 Which feedback mechanisms do you currently use? .......... 89
    6.1.2 What do you think about the online web review? ............ 90
6.2 Ways to encourage customers' feedback ................................................................. 91
   6.2.1 How you encourage customers' feedback? ....................................................... 92
6.3 Employee observation or feedback ........................................................................ 93
   6.3.1 Have you been given a chance to share? ...................................................... 94
6.4 An organisation's growth ........................................................................................ 95
   6.4.1 Will it have an impact on the growth of the organisation? ......................... 95

Chapter Seven
7. Let's gather and hear the guests' voice .................................................................. 98
7.1 Why is customer feedback important for a hotel? ............................................. 98
7.2 What are the advantages and disadvantages of each mechanisms? ................. 98
   7.2.1 Guest comment cards .................................................................................. 99
   7.2.2 Customer survey or questionnaires ............................................................... 100
   7.2.3 Social networking ......................................................................................... 101
7.3 Which is the most useful feedback mechanism? ................................................. 102
7.4 Implications the findings ..................................................................................... 103
7.5 Challenges faced in the research design ............................................................ 105
7.6 Future study ........................................................................................................ 106
7.7 Limitations .......................................................................................................... 107
7.8 Ethical considerations ......................................................................................... 108
7.9 Conclusion ........................................................................................................... 109
References ................................................................................................................ 111
Appendix 1 ................................................................................................................ 114
Appendix 2 ................................................................................................................ 117
Appendix 3 ................................................................................................................ 119
USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.
ABSTRACT

This study has explored the importance of feedback mechanisms in the hospitality industry. A mixed methodology was adopted so that the main or major issues could be identified and the respondents' feelings and emotions examined and discovered. In-depth interviews were conducted to discover and explore hotel managers' feeling, emotions, thoughts and understanding of feedback mechanism in the hotel. A questionnaire was developed to investigate the hotel front office or room division staff perspective on feedback mechanisms in the hotel. The rich data is very important because it gives the study more significance and detail. This research found that using feedback mechanisms in the hotel will have a positive impact and also leads an organisation to improve the hotel in terms of product and service quality. The study also found that feedback mechanism is important for the organisation not only fulfilling the needs of the customers but also helping the organisation to serve the customers better by providing their needs and meeting or exceeding their expectancy. In addition, it will also help the organisation to identify any spot weaknesses of the organisation's product or services or employees' that the management could not identify. The analysis of the results showed that guest comment cards' is the most useful feedback tools for the hospitality industry. However, this fact is in contrast with the statement in the literature review. Although customer feedback is both positive and negative, how can an organisation make an improvement based on customers' perspectives only viewing the management's perspective? Also, when there is negative customer feedback, management is able to settle or to solve the problem quickly (i.e. compensation).

This study showed the importance, the usefulness and the benefits of feedback mechanisms and found the most useful feedback mechanism which is the guest comment card. Future research will be able to use the findings from this research to develop a model for measuring customer benefits focusing on the hospitality industry.
DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis, to the best of my knowledge:

I. Does not contain any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institutions of higher education without any acknowledgement;

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Selly Sugio

May 2010
There are many people I would like to thank for their help, support, encouragement and advice throughout this year.

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Chapter One:
Share your Thoughts!

An introduction to this study
1. Share Your Thoughts!

A guest does have a say! Most hotels all around the world understand a guest’s views by listening and collecting feedback from them. Different hotels use different feedback mechanisms. However, how many hotels actually realise the importance of collecting guests’ voices through the usage of different feedback mechanisms? Imagine yourself visiting a 5 star hotel, and during your visit, there is an incident where you as a customer experienced that, on making an enquiry or reporting breakdown. You inform a hotel staff member and he/she attends to you in a very unpleasant attitude, how would you feel?

Referring to the incident above, without having a feedback mechanisms (such as: feedback form/guest comment card, etc), guests will not be able to share their opinions about the products/services quality that they have received and experienced in the hotel. In other words, guests have not been given an opportunity to share what they feel and think about the hotel they had visited. Furthermore, hotel management will only make an adjustment/improvement based on their own point of view, not a customer’s point of view. By using feedback mechanisms, a customer is able to help management to identify blind spots or weaknesses in the organisation. Feedback is not only listening to guest voices, but also about adjusting and improving the products/services quality, to serve customers better.
1.1 Introduction

In today’s global competitive environment, every organisation is trying to maintain and improve its service quality to achieve organisational goals, as well as to satisfy customers with their products and services, in order to maintain and increase their customer base, and most importantly, to achieve maximum profits for the organisation.

The hotel industry’s main focus is on people and customer service. Because the human factor is a major role in the hospitality industry, it is very important that all employees understand the organisation’s standard of value, culture, attitude, and the quality of services. People can be seen in two different perspectives – tangible and intangible. Tangible, because we are able to see how well they enjoy the product and services that have been received from the first time the services have been delivered. At the same time, also intangible, because though we are able to see them tangibly, we are not able to see or to know their feelings, emotions and thoughts. What makes customer service very important in this role is that as people are tangible, they are also unpredictable and difficult to measure. This is where customer feedback mechanisms are important and useful for every organisation to maintain standards of quality.

The hospitality industry is all about customer service. “Customer service means being aware of needs, problems, fear and aspiration” (Hanks, 2007), how much more costly it is to acquire a customer than to retain one” (Liswood, 1987). According to Hanks (2007), the hospitality industry has certain ways of maintaining and improving service quality in the organisation. One way of maintaining and improving this is by listening, hearing and collecting customer feedback.

According to Watkins (2008) and Clung (1997), employees are very important assets of an organisation. Engaging employees in a decision or designing improvements or changes in the hotel will enhance a stronger foundation of the hotel. It is because as employees are positioned in the front-line to service the customers, they are more likely to understand and know what customers really seek in services. They will also know more about “fresh” feedback from the real-customer, which will influence the growth of the hotel, as well as taking any further action if needed.
There are a number of methods to collect customer feedback which most hotels have already been using. According to Wisner (1997), the hotel industry has its own way of collecting customer feedback, such as guest comment cards placed in hotel rooms. There are many choices of feedback mechanisms, such as: guest comment cards, customer’s surveys, a questionnaire, telephone or face to face interviews, focus groups, employee feedback, following up on guests through email/phone calls/letters, web reviews, blogs, informal meeting with employees, private built-in system in an organisation, etc. Nevertheless, individual hotels have their own way of collecting customer feedback. Therefore, it is essential for organisations to first identify how they want to hear from a customer about products and services, and also understand the purpose of having customer feedback mechanisms in place.

The guest feedback mechanisms were chosen for this study because of the researcher’s interest and the urge to understand the importance of hearing customers’ voices. This study investigates the need of guests’ feedback in hotels, utilising different mechanisms. Which are the most useful for the hotel industry? Most of the literature considers feedback mechanisms important and notes there are many different types available for the hotel industry to use. However, in reality, many hotels still do not value feedback as an important and useful tool for the organisation. Although hotels use guest comment cards to interact with customers, very often the customers’ voices are ignored. There is no point in collecting guest feedback if no post collection evaluation and action is taken. This study conducts specific research on this topic to help the current hospitality industry grow in terms of understanding and serving customers better by hearing, listening and collecting guest voices or feedback. It aims to fill the gap in the literature and also to assist in informing hotel management of the importance of feedback mechanisms. It is acknowledged that many hotels operating around the world offer different services and facilities for their customers, however, this research only examines systems in place in hotels in Perth; therefore the results will limit the generalisations of findings to those in other countries.
1.2 Research problem

Many studies have noted that a feedback mechanisms is a most powerful tool for an organisation to evaluate how satisfied its customers are with their products and services (Cross, 2002; Hanks 2007). Hotels are using many different types of feedback mechanisms (Barsky & Huxley, 1992) (Clung, 1997); (B. Baker, 2009); (Burns, 2007); (Dwivedi, Shibu, & Venkatesh, 2007); (Meyer, 2001); (Goldman, 2007); (Garvey, 2003). The problem for this study is that although the available literature discusses different types of feedback mechanisms, no studies were found to investigate which among all the different types of feedback mechanisms is the most useful. Nor were any studies found on why it is necessary for hotel management to ask/seek guest feedback. The problem with the available literature is that it mostly informs the reader about the effectiveness of feedback mechanisms; however, much of it has never been empirically tested.

The purpose of a feedback mechanisms' is to help an organisation serve customers better and also to meet guests' expectations in terms of products and services. The difficulty in measuring the needs of each guest is that it is unmeasurable collectively, because each guest has his or her own uniqueness, desire, needs, expectations and levels of satisfaction.

Figure 1.1 shows the research framework and how it contributes to the project. The literature informs and helps shape the research project. Various articles enable the project to be more focused to obtain better understanding about the feedback mechanisms that will benefit the hotel industry. Through primary and secondary data collection and analysis, recognition of the use of feedback mechanisms in hotels and their success in hotels are expected to be found.
The literature review will discuss differences in customers’ and management’s perspectives on services and leads to why hotels need a feedback mechanisms in place. When guest feedback is collected, action should be taken. The literature helped shape the research mechanisms for this study. The primary data was collected through employee questionnaires and interviews with hotel managers. The questions for both questionnaires and interview were developed based on the literature review.

Several outcomes are expected to evolve from this project. First, it will provide a better understanding of how an effective feedback mechanism can have a positive impact on an organisation’s growth, in terms of quality improvements in both product and services and also to better understand customers and their needs with a view to meeting their expectations. Secondly, this research will identify the advantages and disadvantages of each feedback tool. This will be investigated through in-depth interviews with hotel managers, staff questionnaires and a review of the related literature. Thirdly, this research aims to identify which is the most useful feedback mechanism in the hospitality industry.
Finally, by using feedback mechanisms an organisation, may improve their products and services quality.

1.3 Research questions

Why do organisations need to ask for guests' feedback? Specifically, this study attempts to answer the following questions:

- Why is customer feedback important for a hotel?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of each customer feedback mechanisms?
- Of all the feedback mechanisms, which one is the most useful for the hotel industry?

The research questions are developed to help to manage this project to be more focus in developing the interview questions and employee questionaries. The literature was reviewed to gain a better understanding of how important feedback mechanisms are and the following predictions were made:

- The hospitality industry has certain ways of how to maintain or improve service quality in organisations. One way of maintaining and improving the service quality of an organisation is by listening, hearing and collecting customer feedback.
- Employees are one of the important assets in the organisation, but many organisations still neglect the importance of building a good relationship between employer-employee.
- There are several choices of mechanisms, such as: guest comment cards, surveys, questionnaires, direct interviews, employee feedback, blogs, etc.
- Although most hospitality service industries such as: hotels/restaurants/cafes, collect guest feedback, many operations still do not value customer feedback as important.
- Feedback mechanisms not only function to collect customer feedback, but also function to help organisations meet customers' expectations and increase the percentage of customer returns.
This research will contribute to a better understanding of the importance of feedback mechanisms in the hospitality industry and how it will help organisations to understand and serve customers better. This research through, interviews with managers and employee questionnaires, will focus on discussing each feedback mechanisms, their own strength and weaknesses and which is the most useful feedback mechanisms for the hotel industry.

1.4 Significance

This study will provide a greater understanding of the efficacy of feedback mechanisms in the hospitality industry and how they influence organisations in terms of improving knowledge about guests and the organisation’s product and service quality. To date as no literature has been found that documented the most useful feedback mechanisms; this study aims to fill the gap between theoretical concepts and actual outcomes on how feedback mechanisms influence quality in the hospitality industry. A key strength of this study is that it focuses on one particular section of one industry, the hotel industry. Feedback mechanism is a very well-known topic, where in every service industries; hotels are aiming for perfection in providing their product and services quality which is to satisfied their customers. Having feedback mechanisms in place helps organisations to interact with customers indirectly. At the same time, it helps organisations to identify their weaknesses and to keep improving their level of service. However, this study will only focus on the Perth hotel industry.

It will identify why customer feedback is important for hotels and also explore each feedback mechanism’s advantages and disadvantages. It will also address which mechanisms are the most useful for the hotel industry and the most cost effective. With the support of the data collected from both primary and secondary sources, the study will show how feedback mechanisms impacts on the service quality in the hotel industry and also allow managers to understand and serve customers better by meeting their expectation and level of satisfaction. The study aims not only to fill the gap in the existing literature, but also to further develop the understanding of the importance of feedback mechanisms to the hotel industry.
By listening, hearing and collecting information, input, criticism, ideas and comments from real-customers, the hotel industry is able to maintain and improve customer service quality. In addition, the findings of this research may help organisations understand the importance of guest feedback, especially for the hospitality industry. By collating opinions from real-customers, an organisation is able to develop and understand what their customers are really seeking from service. Furthermore, an organisation may be able to meet these expectations and serve customers' better.

Hotel management needs to understand that it is not only providing products and services to their customers, but they need to have a good relationship with customer's by acknowledging their desires (needs and wants) and also by meeting their expectations and level of satisfaction. Therefore, the needs for customer feedback are very important for a hotel. Without an opportunity for guests to express what they feel about their experience with the hotel or even to share what they think about the hotel, management will not be able to improve or adjust their product/services based on the customers' perspectives. Moreover, management will not be able to know their customers' desires and expectations during their visit because there is no relationship or follow up between customers and a management. In effect the findings from this study will assist hotel management to gain a better understanding of the efficacy of feedback mechanisms for the hotel industry.
Chapter Two:
The history of feedback mechanism in Hospitality industry

A review of the literature
2. Literature review

The previous chapter established the need for research into which is the most useful feedback mechanisms in the hotel industry. To fill gaps in the existing literature and also to assist hotel management to understand customers' better by using these tools. The review of the literature will explore and define feedback mechanisms, the needs for and the importance of them in the hotel industry. It will also discuss different types, the advantages and disadvantages of each feedback mechanism that hotels used. It also identifies possible actions that a hotel can take. A review of different research methodologies including qualitative, quantitative and mixed methodology is presented.
2.1 What are feedback mechanisms?

According to the Compact Oxford English Dictionary, “feedback is information given in response to a product, performance, etc., used as a basis for improvement”, (Oxford, 2009). It is difficult to define it clearly for it is used in so many different industries in so many ways. This can be seen by looking in a dictionary where there could be up to five different definitions. The Oxford English Dictionary, however, has a very clear definition but organisations still neglect the importance and the purpose of feedback mechanisms.

Hospitality is all about people and customer service. According to Harris (2009), every organisation needs to value customer feedback for it is an important asset for their organisation. He has also noted that “everyone of us must remember that at the end of the day, companies live and die by how well they provide solutions for their customers – their primary asset” (Harris, 2009, p.18). Every organisation must remember that the customer is an asset for their organisation so it is important not to ignore what they say but to listen and make any adjustment or improvement or even to give compensation if needed.
2.2 The reason of having feedback mechanisms in place

There are many hotels around the world, but what makes them different from one another? Is it the facilities (product) that make the hotel stand out, or the service that they provide that makes the hotel different? Are the luxury product/s provided by the hotel what the customers are really seeking? However, the more luxury facilities the hotel offers, the more are the expectations of the customers’ in terms of staff behaviour or attitude and high customer service quality.

".....offers too little service, and customers will not come back. Offer too much service, and no matter how happy you make your customers, you property will be priced out of the market” (Lewis & Nightingale, 1991, p.20). So, how do organisations know what customer needs and expectation are? And how does an organisation know whether customers are satisfied or not with the service provided? This is where customer feedback mechanisms are needed as they enable organisation to understand and meet the needs and wants of customers.

Lewis (1991) states that every hotel will provide similar products, so the only way for them to make a difference with their competitors is through service. However, is the service provided by the hotel what the customer is seeking? By using customer feedback mechanisms, an organisation is able to cut down or diminish any product/services that are not making any profit for the organisation. Why is that so? By hearing views from real-customers, an organisation is able to save costs by providing those needs that customers’ value as important in a more efficient or effective matter. What management values as important is not the same as what customers’ value.

For example, in reality with reference to a high class hotel, with a star rating of 4 and above, they have more than 100 staff members in the organisation. Each has a different personality, character, attitude, and lifestyle. Without proper training and coaching, they would not be able to perform and provide a similar standard of service. One hotel can react to another to have a similar standard of service through coaching and training. However, a more distinctive difference that makes hotel hard to imitate one another is that the products that one hotel offers is not the same towards the others (Boughton & Fisher, 1999).
In other words, a hotel is able to imitate the services of other hotels but they are not able to imitate the products of the other hotels because each hotel has their own target market, goals and missions.

In other words, every hotel will provide similar products, facilities and services, but what makes the hotel look different is not the outside appearance (luxurious hotel), but the pleasant environment that is given by each member of staff. Management should know the importance and purpose of coaching and training staff so that the value, culture and mission statement of the organisation is passed down to every single person in the organisation. Why is this related to feedback mechanisms? Although every hotel may have feedback mechanisms in place as part of their tools to communicate or interact with their customers, without coaching and training employees about maintaining their customer service quality, the hotel will not provide an acceptable standard of service.

Management firstly needs to focus on customers’ needs and expectations then concentrate on the areas that need improvements or adjustments; do not always think of what to give in services, instead think of what customers want to receive in a service or as a service.
2.3 The needs of customer feedback mechanisms

The previous section of this chapter discussed the purpose of having feedback mechanisms in place is to help the organisation to be customer-oriented. Similarly, Lewis (1991) claims that hotels will keep trying to give the best services to serve the customers better. However, without hearing the real-customers' points of view directly, the hotel will only keep striving to give the best services without knowing what the customers are really seeking.

Every hotel needs to have a customer feedback system because by using it management will understand more about customers’ needs and expectations of services, so they can increase these levels, as well as make any changes or improvements if needed. Customer feedback is about hearing and valuing the voice of your customer. Only having a customer feedback mechanism in place on its own, without everyone knowing the purpose and the reason for it, is useless. It will only become a tradition and not bring any positive impact to the organisation.

Management needs to understand the purpose and reason for having feedback mechanisms in place. Without having this understanding, management will not be able to impact nor influence their employees to encourage the customers to give feedback to the organisation. Below are some of suggestions from Lewis (1991) article on the title of “targeting service to your customer”, of what management needs to do:

- Firstly, to set a strategy to identify their target market (leisure/corporate/traveller needs are different).
- Secondly, identify what they want to hear from the customer (i.e. quality of the hotel product, services, etc).
- Third, identify the needs of their customers as to what their expectations are and choose the optimal mix and level of service that customers will enjoy.
- Lastly, evaluate the current service performance and customer satisfaction and then make any improvement/ changes/ adjustments that ensure they provide the right service with a right price.
Most importantly, by seeking for customer feedback, hotel should create a convenient facilities for the guests' to give feedback about their stay in the hotel – to the front desk or a suggestion box. Management has to make sure that if its considers customer feedback as a very important issue, they should have a place/system, where customers can feel free and easy for them to give feedback. For example: if a hotel uses guest comment cards as their feedback mechanism it must make sure there is a suggestion box in a visible area to which a customer has access, for example, in the lobby close to the reception desk or during the check out process. Front line staff may also ask guests directly about their stay or ask the guest to fill out the comment cards/survey.

Using a printing company example, Cross (2002) stated that by using customer feedback, it helps them to develop their products and services, make decisions on equipment purchases, cut down any unnecessary items, and also offer services to meet individual customer needs and expectations.
2.4 The importance of customer feedback mechanisms

According to Cross (2002) and Hanks (2007), customer feedback is the most powerful mechanism for an organisation to evaluate how satisfied their customers are with their services and products. The mechanism in place should evaluate the products and services that are being provided to customers so that management is able to identify customer satisfaction regarding the services and the product quality. The organisation needs to be aware of any unsatisfied comments (complaints) or suggestions about the product quality and service, which will help the organisation to serve and to understand customers better by discovering their needs.

Similarly Harris (2009), commented that negative feedback is a reflection that the customer does not feel that he/she has been treated fairly or has experienced an unpleasant act on their visit. Management should not take this as a negative impact on the organisation because by experiencing and receiving negative feedback, the customer has given the management a second chance and it should embrace the feedback and use it to make a positive change.

According to Barsky and Huxley (1992), the large group of people in the hotel who will return the guest comment card to the front desk or insert the guest comment card in the suggestion box are those who are unsatisfied with the services. In other words, they are the ones who give negative feedback to the hotel as they want their complaints to be heard. However, it is not always the case, in a hotel; there will be both positive and negative feedback from customers.

Unfortunately, no matter how good services are given to customers, there will be complaints. However, a complaint not only gives a negative impact, but also an opportunity to the organisation for a positive impact (Barsky & Huxley, 1992). Many people think that if a hotel experiences customer complaints, it means that it is a negative impact for the organisation, but they have not seen the positive side of customer complaints. Complaints help the organisation to have a good relationship with the customer because it reacted to demonstrate that the organisation values their comments and cares about what the customers feel about product quality and services.
But what is most important is that, once customer feedback is received, the management should take corrective action if necessary, especially when there is a negative feedback, the organisation needs to quickly act and address it, or compensate if needed. If no action is taken after the feedback collection, customers will stop giving feedback because they feel the organisation is not listening or taking any action regarding faults.

Barsky and Huxley (1992) point out that when receiving a complaint from a customer survey, it must never be taken personally. In other words, when an organisation receives a complaint from a customer, it must never be taken emotionally, but, seen from the customer's perspective. Management should put themselves in the customers' shoes - if they experienced it, how will they react? For example, a customer complains about taking too much time in providing guest needs. The management is in the customer position, what would they do. Those customers who complain the most and write down all the unpleasant experiences they have encountered, are the best customers. "The best way to ensure a positive experience for customers' is to treat them as equal business partners" (Harris, 2009).
2.5 Understand your customers' better

Regular customers love to be recognised and be known for what they want before being asked. Especially in terms of the hospitality industry, it is all about people and service. Barsky and Huxley (1992) suggested that by remembering, recognising, understanding and documenting customers needs, the organisation is able to assess how well they are meeting those needs and what they need to do if they are not.

Barsky and Huxley (1992) and Keith (1991) claim that, to deliver an excellent service, there is never a word called 'enough'. An excellent organisation will keep searching, looking, collecting, hearing, maintaining and improving their quality of services before their customers request them or before their competitors do.

According to Barsky & Huxley (1992); Cross (2002); Hanks (2007); Keith (1991), every hotel or organisation needs to have customer feedback mechanisms in place. It is through these the organisation can avoid delivering products and services ineffectively and understand the needs of each customers, and meet their expectations.
2.6 The benefits of using feedback mechanisms

The advantages/benefits for using/having feedback mechanisms in place, includes:

- The organisation is able to understand the needs of their customers which will thus increase their profitability.
- The organisation will also increase customer loyalty or customer returns.
- An organisation is able to cut down its expenses and also to eliminate equipment or products that are not functioning productively.
- It will decrease or even eliminate having unhappy customers. A complaint from a customer does not always bringing negativity to the organisation. Customer complaints mean that customers are aware of what they want to receive as services.
- It helps the organisation understand customers’ needs and to meet their expectations.

2.7 Different types of feedback mechanisms

There are several known methods of collecting customer feedback that most hotels used and still using. According to Wisner and Corney (Wisner & Corney, 1997), the hospitality industry collects customer feedback through guest comment cards placed in each hotel room. Other types of feedback mechanisms also used in today’s hotel operations are:

- Questionnaires or surveys
- Interviews or direct conversation with customers
- Employee feedback or employee observation
- Blogs or feedback online website

Although, hotels have their own ways of collecting their customer feedback, the most common mechanisms in use is guest comment cards.
2.7.1 Guest comment cards, survey or questionnaires

Guest comment cards, surveys or questionnaires, are similar types of feedback mechanisms but deliberately in different setting/ways. This type of feedback mechanism has been available for many years and are still popular ways of interacting or communicating with customers in hotels, cafes and restaurants.

According to Barksy & Huxley; Clung (1992; 1997) some guest comment cards are no longer useful for today’s society because they do not contain enough space for customers to fill in and to give their opinion. However, almost every organisation use guest comment cards as their customer feedback mechanism. The difference is that guest comment cards in organisations contain different types of questions. Some may ask questions requiring a yes or no tick boxes, some have scale rates (i.e. 1 is very unsatisfied, 5 very satisfied), or some use both, and at the bottom, they leave a small space for guests to write down comments that have not been covered in the questionnaires/survey. Although Barsky & Huxley; Clung (1992; 1997) mentioned that the guest comment card is no longer useful because guest comment cards do not contain enough information for the guest to express their feeling, but in reality, according to the survey data collection, most hotels use guest comment cards as one of the ways to collect feedback from customers.

The difference between guest comment cards, surveys, and questionnaires are:

- A guest comment card is about certain major quality issues in the hotel (such as: the product quality/ cleanliness of the room/ staff friendliness, etc) and there will be a small space at the very end for guest to write an overall comment, usually known as “other comments”. Guest comment cards are normally given out by the front desk during check out or left in guest rooms.

- Survey contains more questions for a guest to fill in based on scale ratings (1- strongly dissatisfied, 5- strongly satisfied), and usually does not provide any empty space for guests to write their own comments. They are only asked to circle the number that indicates the rating of the service. Usually, a survey takes much more time to fill in and customers rarely want to fill out the survey and hand it back to the front desk.
A questionnaire is a mix of both survey and guest comment cards. It usually provides a few questions that can be answered by ticking boxes, select a yes/no answer, short answers question, and some open ended questions. It contains much more information and customers are free to write any comments about that they experienced in the hotel or give suggestion that they think it will help to improve the growth of the quality of their product and service in the hotel.

In using guest comment cards, surveys or questionnaires, management should firstly identify why they are asking the guests and they should also be prepared to 'hear' what the guests have to say. The reasons for asking the guests for input need to be identified before anything else. Without knowing what they want to hear about, feedback mechanisms will not bring any positive impact for the organisation. These mechanisms are quite similar but the benefits of each have not yet been identified in the literature review.
2.7.2 Blog or forum or consumer review sites

In today's world of the internet era, there is a new system of giving feedback through website reviews or blogs. According to Baker; Burns; Dwivedi et.al; Meyer (2009; 2007; 2007; 2001), the use of blogs or feedback reviews from the internet is currently useful, but the accuracy and reliability of the information through these mechanisms is questionable. This assumption may not be true as so many people go into the websites to drop their comments, write about what they think about the places, and give ranks or ratings.

This type of feedback mechanism has both a positive and negative impact on an organisation, because by using social networking or an online feedback review site, anyone can access the website and leave a comment on the website (for example: Tripadvisor.com). How Blog or consumer review sites has a negative impact on the organisation is that after someone leaves a comment; the organisation is not able to contact the person who posted it because the person who left the comment on the review website is not allowed to give any personal identification. Also, when the comments have been posted, it is permanent and anyone can read and review it years afterwards even though the problem may have been fixed. Moreover, an organisation has no opportunity to do any follow up or corrective action if there is any negative comment on the web, because there is no contact detail for the organisation to contact the guest.

No matter whether it is positive or negative feedback, everyone has the right to leave his/her comments on the review website, as well as to give ratings on the hotel products/services on the review website. On the other hand, using a consumer review website gives a positive impact to the organisation, as this type of feedback mechanism is open to anyone across the world when there is a positive feedback, it will give a positive feeling or desire of wanting to give it a try to visit the organisation. In this technology era, every organisation should be aware in delivering services to the customers. They should understand that word of mouth is contagious – it can bring positivity and negativity in the same way and it spreads very fast.

In addition, using social networking and feedback websites not only allows people to provide feedback on products and services, but also permits consumers to interact with like-minded people in order to receive better recommendation from them (Goldman, 2007).
2.7.3 Employee feedback and customer direct interview

Hotel owners know and understand that employees are their most important assets, but few know how important it is to communicate with their staff, value them and motivate them to serve customers better.

Similarly, Clung (1997) agrees that employee feedback is very important for hotel managers. As front line staff, they are more knowledgeable about the characteristics of guests, the kind of staff needed to be hired for the organisation, training needs, etc.

As managers are often backstage, it often means that they do not have any direct close relationship or close contact with customers. However, although most hotels use guest comment cards, surveys, questionnaires as their feedback mechanisms, these are not enough to maintain a close relationship between the hotel and customers. It is very important hotel management encourage their front line staff to engage to connect with the customers, because as they are in the front-line service, they are the ones who have the closest contact with every hotel guest.

When there is an opportunity, such as a staff meeting or performance appraisal or even a short catch up during their lunch break, management should ask for feedback from employees regarding comments they have collected from customers. By doing so, this will encourage and welcome the employee to be more open to management whenever feedback is provided. Also, this will bring a positive impact for the organisations because staff will feel that they belong to the organisation, as the management values their feedback. Moreover, this will also tell staff that management is not only customer-oriented, not only focusing on the business growth or where the source of income comes from, but is also staff-oriented.

It is very important that management do seek feedback from their staff as well because not every customer will fill in a guest comment card or go to the review site to comment on their products/services. Sometimes, customers tend to drop their feedback directly to the front-line staff during check out only or interaction with other hotel staff (i.e. house-keeping, room service, concierge, potters, etc).
Staff must understand how to communicate well with customers. For example, instead of directly asking the guest for their credit cards during check outs, staff may use the opportunity to ask the customer about the product and services provided or any other comments that they think the hotel needs to hear to make some improvement in certain areas in the hotel. This type of feedback is known as ‘customer direct interview’.

There is another way of obtaining feedback from a hotel guest. While the receptionist or front desk person is processing a customer’s account, they may also encourage him/her to fill in guest comment cards or survey/questionnaires. Customer interviews can also be done through phone calls/email. The disadvantages, however of using phone calls/email, is they are more time consuming, not happening immediately and a customer tends to ignore them and they do not think it is necessary to answer.

Focus group or indirect interview is also one way to obtain customers feedback. A focus group is a small number of people gather together with one moderator who will discuss on a specific topic. A focus group aims at a discussion level instead of personal questions just like direct interview (face-to-face interview). Nevertheless, through this research project, there is no evidence saying that focus group is being used in the hospitality industry.

2.8 The advantages and disadvantages of each feedback mechanism

As stated in the previous section, there a number of different types of feedback mechanisms available to an organisation. However, they are only tools, without knowing the purpose and understanding why feedback is useful; it will not have any positive impact on the organisation. They help an organisation to understand and to serve their customers better by meeting their expectations. Nevertheless, a feedback mechanism is still a tool or system, so although each is useful, they can still have a down-side effect on the organisation. In this section, each mechanism will be discussed in more detail regarding their advantages and disadvantages.
2.8.1 Guest comment cards

Wisner and Corney (1997) discuss the design of guest comment cards. The availability and the use of guest comment cards is very popular, especially in the hospitality industry, such as hotels, cafe and restaurants; to obtain customer feedback. Many organisations in the hospitality industry use guest comment cards to reveal the advantages and disadvantages of their organisations product and service quality from the customers' point of view or opinions. Wisner and Corney (1997), list them, as follows:

- Advantages of guest comment cards:
  - Inexpensive.
  - Easy to process the collected feedback.
  - They help management to direct strategies for service improvement.
  - They get the real feedback from real customers.
  - Both positive and negative feedback from real-customers is received.
  - They provide feedback from real customers on products and services.
  - Guest contact details are revealed so management is able to follow up on a guest if needed and able to send an appreciation letter.

- Disadvantages of guest comment cards:
  - Guests tend to ignore the existence of guest comment cards.
  - Bias feedback from customers is very common.
  - Not all customers are able to complete the guest comment cards, due to limited time.
  - There is a time delay in between receiving and processing customer feedback.
  - It is time consuming for management to read each guest comment card.
2.8.2 Customers survey/ questionnaires

Most organisations use a feedback mechanisms not only to serve and understand their customers’, but it is also to evaluate client satisfaction by discovering how happy and satisfied they are with the service, product quality, delivery and the overall experience with the organisation (Cross, 2002). Customer surveys or questionnaires are one of the mechanisms employed to collect guest feedback. They are similar to guest comment cards, their main difference lies in the style of questions. However, all feedback mechanism provide benefits to the organisation, but it is still a system or a tool with its own advantages and disadvantages. Cross; Schall; and Barsky (2002); (2003); (1992) suggest that, customer survey or questionnaires have the following advantages and disadvantages:

- **Advantages of customer survey or questionnaires:**
  - Identify unhappy customers before they leave.
  - Identify the products and services that customers actually want and need.
  - Identify any areas (such as: products/ services/ cleanliness/ staffs behaviour, etc) that needs to be improved or adjust or changed.
  - Solidify relationships with customers.
  - Able to reveal how an organisation compares to its competitors in the eyes of customers.

- **Disadvantages of customer survey or Questionnaires:**
  - Time consuming for guests to complete the survey or questionnaires.
  - Time consuming for management to process the survey or questionnaires.
  - By giving ratings of 1 very dissatisfied – 5 very satisfied, does not give enough information how the guest really feels.
  - The focuses survey or questionnaires on the hotel products and how the service is delivered to the customers, instead of focusing on what the organisation can improve on to make the customers feel satisfied and meet their needs.
  - There is not enough space for guests to say or write what they feel about the organisation.
2.8.3 Social networking – blog/forum/online website review

In today's world, anyone with an internet connected computer, or even via mobile phone, can reach out to a potential audience of billions. Anyone can easily access the internet anytime and anywhere they want. What is Social networking? “Social networking is an online community, where users from various part of the globe can come across and connect with each other” (Dwivedi et al., 2007). It is changing the way information gets reported online and affects business in general. “Customers have started talking back with a few clicks of a mouse” (Dwivedi et al., 2007). For today's world generation, the internet is well known in society and is also having a huge impact on the hospitality industry. Social networking is not only for people to browse about something that they want to search or compose or send an email as it has become a system or one feedback mechanism for people to send comments to a certain organisation (i.e. restaurant or cafe) that they have visited or even if they only want to review certain places. They are able to go to the online web, for example: Tripadvisor.com, eatingwa.com.au, etc. This social networking has brought both a positive impact and also the negative impact for the hospitality industry. Dwivedi et.al (2007); Burns (2007); Goldman (2007); Baker (2009); Murphy and Edward (1996), outline the following advantages and disadvantages of on social networking:

- Advantages of social networking:
  - Blog is an easy to maintain website where one can write on an ongoing basis.
  - Any reader has access to leave a comment (after free registration) on the blog or on the online web.
  - Social networking has the power to spread the message through word of mouth or viral communication.
  - It encourages consumers (members) to review and share their experiences on a wide range of the organisation products and services through online review.
  - When there is a compliment or positive comments from a consumer, it will automatically raise the interest of someone to visit to the organisation.
The advantage of social networking is also can be a challenge for management, as when they receive either positive or negative feedback, it is an opportunity for them to prove it to customers that their organisation quality is not as portrayed on the web.

It gives customers an opportunity to interact with like minded people in order to receive recommendations from the right people (source) or consumers.

- Disadvantages of social networking:
  - When there is a complaint or negative comment from a consumer, this feedback will automatically affect the feeling or interest of someone to visit the organisation.
  - Negative feedback shown in the online web review, spreads very fast, as anyone from anywhere can review or to see the comments. Word of mouth is contagious.
  - Information left in the online web review is unreliable as anyone (staff, customers, managers, societies or communities) can make their comments on the online web.
  - The online web review can also be used as a competition between organisation because competitors are able to make their comments and indicate themselves as anonymous.
  - When a customer drop off comments on the online web review, there is a little chance of the management following up on them, for there is no identification of the customers should be left on the online web.
  - The online web review is not only for people to write about their experiences by linking to each other, but also gives them the capacity to spread the messages or issues on mainstream media.
  - As today's technology is growing very fast, online web review, is not only provides feedback in writing, but a user (up-loader) is able to upload an audio, photographs or video of the organisation.
2.8.4 Online survey

An online survey is given to a customer to fill in via an online website or email. It is similar to the survey and questionnaires available nowadays in hotels or restaurants or cafes'. This type of online survey is similar to the social networking feedback mechanism. Its difference lies in the format, not in writing but in ratings between 1 – strongly dissatisfied – 5 strongly satisfied, just like a normal survey but through online networking internet connection support (such as: email or private organisation web). Meyer (2001) has also suggested that this online review provides an advantages and disadvantages for an organisation.

• Advantages of online survey:
  ➢ Simple and easy to access for both customers and management.
  ➢ Management is able to keep on track for guest history record and feedback.
  ➢ Management does not waste time sorting out the feedback and is able to do a follow up action A.S.A.P (As Soon As Possible) if needed.
  ➢ Gives the opportunity to interact with customers as they have been asked to leave contact details.
  ➢ It is only takes a few minutes to complete and feedback participants are automatically registered on the private web.

• Disadvantages of online survey:
  ➢ Customers tend to be lazy or feel it unnecessary to fill the survey.
  ➢ It is little chance for customers to spend time on the computer to fill in the online survey form for they have their better things to do, (i.e. work, relax, etc).
  ➢ Need internet connection support to fill in the online survey.
  ➢ People might feel insecure with this type of online survey as they are being asked to leave their personal contact details or information on the web.
  ➢ Similar to a paper format of a survey or questionnaires by ratings on products or services of the organisation, it does not provide solid differences between the numbers 1 & 2 (strongly dissatisfied and dissatisfied), 3 (neutral), 4 & 5 (satisfied and strongly satisfied). In other words, management is not able to identify the real feelings of their real-customers.
2.8.5 Direct communication or face to face

Direct communication or face to face interviews normally happen during check out as it is also one of the ways for management to interact and build a relationship with their customers. Cross (2002), suggested that direct communication or face to face interviews also provide advantages and disadvantages for the organisation, although this type of feedback mechanism is used on a day-to-day basis.

- The advantages of direct communication or face to face interview:
  - Free of charge.
  - Increases the sense of trust and loyalty between management and customers.
  - Guests will feel pleased that their feedback is appreciated.
  - Customer-oriented.
  - Direct communication – problem solved on the spot or immediately.
  - Builds a friendly environment atmosphere within the organisation.

- The disadvantages of direct communication or face to face interview:
  - Regular customers that often stay in an organisation and close to the management are the least likely to tell the truth.
  - Limited time.
  - Management does not get enough information through customers.
  - Customers' – not enough information by management, as communication often takes place during the check-out process with customers rushing to leave for another appointment (i.e. flight departure, meeting, etc).
2.8.6 Employee feedback or employee observation

As stated in the previous sections, customers’ feedback does have a positive impact on the organisation, but many organisations forget that the main assets that help it run the operation are the employees. Although customers are the main assets for the organisation, the sources of income from which profit comes, employees are also assets, the source of operating and providing all the services, as well as engaging with the customers. Management should understand the importance of seeking feedback or opinions from their employees because they are the ones in the front-line interacting with the real-customers. They are the ones who are more experienced and who understand the needs of the customers more than the managers. Watkins (2008); Clung (1997); Hinkin and Schriesheim (2004); Brymer (2008); Wisner & Corney (1997); Hinkin & Schriesheim (2004); Lewis (1991) suggested that employee feedback or employee observation also provides advantages and disadvantages for the organisation.

- The advantages of employee feedback or employee observation:
  - Increases staff-loyalty and trust between employee and employer.
  - By seeking feedback from employee, will be built a good relationship between employer – employee. There will be no hierarchy or a mentality of boss – staff.
  - Increase the good relationship between employer and employee and this will cause employees to be more open to share whatever that they have received or heard from customers.
  - Increases employee enthusiasm as they are also being valued and respect in the organisation.
  - Increase employee morale and cause a friendly environment in the organisation.
  - Staff will also feel empowered to handle guests’ needs or problems immediately not waiting or handing over to managers to solve a problem.
  - Improves guest service and satisfaction.
The disadvantages of employee feedback or employee observation:

- Staff who are not loyal to the organisation will not tell the truth. For example, giving positive feedback just to impress the management, although there is negative feedback that they have received from customers.
- Staffs who are not customer-oriented will perceive the services quality view differently.
- Time is limited.
2.9 Customer feedback being ignored

Every organisation has its own way of responding to, or taking further action after they have received customer feedback. Some value customer feedback as very important and take immediate action to contact every guest who has left behind/given a comment/feedback. On the other hand, some organisations may not respond to feedback because they do not place any value on it.

Although customer feedback is highly regarded by most organisations, the responds to feedback mechanisms are still very disappointing (Oleary, 2009). According to Oleary (2009), research undertaken with 500 marketing chiefs, only 16% regularly check or monitor their online message boards for feedback. Oleary (2009) also stated that, “there is a disconnect between how the organisation collect customer feedback and then utilizes it” (Oleary, 2009, p.6).

In today’s technological world, anyone from any background or age group, is able to review or leave comments through any of the review websites (i.e. blog/forum/site), where sometimes the comments are not reliable thus making it hard for an organisation to take any further or immediate action to act upon the comments of customers because they do not leave any contact details. For this reason, most organisations ignore customer feedback through online message boards. 58% of the marketers believed that the new internet era and social networking/media have changed the level of influence and expectations of customers (Oleary, 2009).

The marketers who took the survey realise their weaknesses regarding handling or dealing with online customer feedback. Through the survey, only 33% think that their organisation is very good at resolving or handling customer complaints, and just 31% think that their organisation highly values hearing customer feedback.

Although online comment is not reliable, people who view the site may be affected by it. It is important for management to be creative and quickly react and address this problem eventhough it is not able to do anything about the comments, it should take it into consideration, and check for further improvement on the growth in the organisation.
It may be able to spend a considerable amount of money to create demand, but if it experiences customer disconnection, their marketing dollar has been wasted. In other words, it means that if it only focuses on how to increase profitability, but ignores customer feedback or cuts-off communication with customers; it has wasted the financial cost of marketing/advertisement. Customer feedback should not be ignored, for it will bring negative impacts on the organisation.

It was also found that 60% of the marketers claimed that their organisation does not rely on or use compensation to increase customer satisfaction and loyalty, 23% believed their organisation tracked customer feedback through emails, and only 37% gathered feedback from customer engagement situations. As a result, most marketers do not highly value customer feedback. The 60% result shows they do not think compensation is important but it really does play a major role in an organisation, especially in the service industry. The 23% result indicates, they only track customers’ feedbacks from emails, maybe because customers may not understand the technology, especially the elderly, or others who do not have a personal email.

Lastly, 37% of organisations’ does not have a fixed program or system to track customers feedback; instead they are only observing their level of product and services quality through customer engagement situation. This will impact or influence the organisation for they are not able to understand what customers really seek in a service, or what exact expectation of service the customers have. An organisation might only see and improve their quality of product and services of the organisation from their own point of view instead of both customer and management point of view. The overall result from the Oleary (2009) survey reveals 56% of marketers do not have any program for tracking customer feedback.
2.10 Action after feedback collection

Boughton & Fisher (1999) noted in their article “how one club boosted business by listening to its members”. They used survey as the research methodology in 1994 and in 1997. They sent questionnaires to 658 households and received 278 in return giving a 42% response rate. In 1997, they mailed 715 questionnaires, 364 of which were returned, giving a 53% response rate.

Approximately 100 more respondents participated in the second survey, with a slightly better response rate.

The surveys of 1994 and 1997 showed a significant increase to achieve the level of product or facilities satisfaction. In 1994, the satisfaction rate on the products/activities of the club (i.e. golf, restaurant, fitness, tennis, children’s event, etc) and services (i.e. quality of the preparation, presentation, taste, staff appearance, atmosphere, location, price, etc) was between 3.5 and 4.0. Between the years 1994 - 1997, changes and improvements were put into place which increased to the satisfaction rate in 1997 with ratings above 4.0 and 4.5 overall of both products and services.

Boughton & Fisher (1999) used a straightforward survey process which demonstrates that customer feedback can be used to develop a strategy for improving the quality of services within an organisation. It presented their customers with a list of club activities which customers were asked to rate on a scale of 1 (not important) to 5 (most important). To get the total, he combined the activities’ scores by summing the mean for each.

For example, regarding the quality of food: “the satisfaction level for food quality as the mean of the satisfaction measures on food preparation (well prepared), presentation (visually pleasing), taste (properly seasoned), and food temperature” (Boughton & Fisher, 1999).

Boughton & Fisher (1999) suggested collecting customer feedback, will help an organisation to understand the needs of its customers. To have a successful organisation, management should not only be focusing on services and customer feedback, but also listen and value employees’ feedback. Top managers should explain the organisation’s values and culture to their entire staff.
For example, a hotel manager can demonstrate a willingness to take risks and learn to accept mistakes that occur. By doing so, employees will feel free to share information and be creative in finding ways to please customers without any fear of failure. Managers should encourage their employees to work as a team and also help the organisation set standards for customer service. For example: telephone calls should be answered within three rings.

After the survey results had been analysed, improvements were designed, and changes made. It is important that an organisation not stop analysing or improving products and service quality and management should continuously monitor both customer needs and the market environment from time to time (Boughton & Fisher, 1999).
2.11 How to manage guest feedback

The previous section has already mentioned how important guest feedback mechanism is for an organisation and how it enables managers to understand customers better by meeting their needs and expectations. However, after feedback is collected by the management, what are they supposed to do? Without any corrective action on how to manage guest feedback, either positive or negative, all of it will become a waste if is not being handled properly. Leahy (2009) has suggested how to manage guest feedback:

1. After feedback is collected, management should be gather and keep track of feedback.
2. If management has received a customer complaint or negative feedback, it should respond to complaints promptly and be creative when making it right with guests.
3. When there are compliments, management should not only glance through the feedback and feel satisfied, but to send an appreciation letter to guests’ so they may feel their feedback has been valued and respected by the organisation.
4. A system to track all responses should be set up. Whether positive or negative. This may help the organisation to be more organised and able to solid data to see how well the organisation has improved monthly or yearly.
5. Regular meetings with staff should be arranged to let them hear the positive and negative feedback that the organisation has received from customers.
6. No matter what types of feedback mechanisms the organisation uses, the advantages or disadvantages of each should be disregarded, but guest feedback should never be ignored.
7. Corrective action should be taken if needed, i.e. compliments or adjustment or changes that need to be made.

By following these guidelines, the purpose of having feedback mechanisms in place is no longer a theory but a practical issue that will bring success to the organisation, in terms of understanding and serving their customers better; as well as meeting their expectations and increasing customer satisfaction.
2.12 Research focus

This review reveals that there is a limited literature on how useful feedback mechanisms are and the availability of feedback mechanisms, and which one is the most useful for the hospitality industry in today’s world. The literature mentions there are numbers of different types of feedback mechanisms available, nevertheless, no studies have been found on which type is the most useful. This is interesting as there are so many different types of feedback mechanisms being used as tools to interact with customers and to earn and increase customers’ loyalty. It would be beneficial to investigate what types are being used in hospitality industry are being used and does an organisation know which one is the most useful to help the organisation to meet customers’ expectancy, as well as to understand their customers better. Moreover, does an organisation know why it is important to ask for guest feedback? Why are they seeking feedback from customers? Is it just a tradition that every organisation uses feedback mechanisms? These questions will be brought into focus throughout this research.

Interestingly, a gap in the literature has been identified which shows that although feedback mechanisms are needed and important in an organisation, they are just tools or systems that have their advantages and disadvantages. Surprisingly, no research has been conducted to find which types of feedback mechanisms are the most useful for the hospitality industry. The literature review has enhanced the understanding of service and related topics. This study recognises the different types of feedback mechanisms on which one is the most useful, why is it important to ask for guest feedback and to influence customer service quality in a hotel.
2.13 Summary

Hospitality is all about people and customer service. Every organisation must remember that as customers are their chief assets, it is important that they do not ignores what customers say but to listen and make any adjustments or improvements or even to give compensation if needed. Customer feedback mechanisms are installed in an organisation is to seek customers’ feedback to meet their needs or expectations. Management needs to firstly focus on customers’ needs and expectations then more to areas of services which needs improvements or adjustments; not always think of what to give, but what customers want to receive. Customer feedback is about hearing and valuing the voice of your customer. Only having mechanisms in place without everyone knowing their purpose is useless as they will only become a tradition and not bring any positive impact to the organisation. By having mechanisms installed, an organisation can identify unhappy or unsatisfied customers. Through complaints the organisation can have a good relationship with customers because it demonstrates that it values their comments and cares about what customers feel about the product quality and services. There are a number of different types of mechanisms, each with its their own strengths and weaknesses. It is important to understand that guest feedback should not be ignored, no matter whether it is positive or negative and that it should always be appreciated and taken into consideration (i.e. compensation or appreciation).

From the available literature it can be seen that research has explored the needs and importance of having customer feedback mechanisms in an organisation and also suggested its benefit, as well as ways to manage the system. However, no literature was found that focuses on the most useful and cost-effective of feedback mechanisms and why it is important to seek guest feedback. Therefore research must be conducted to investigate why it is important to seek customers’ feedback and as the hospitality industry uses different feedback mechanisms, which type is the most useful. This will be beneficial for the hospitality industry enabling it to have an understanding of how it is to serve their customers better in more productive ways of collecting guest feedback. This study has adopted a mixed methodology (qualitative and quantitative) which will be explained and justified in the next chapter.
Chapter Three:

Would you like to leave a comment?

The adopted methodology for this project
3. Methodology

The previous chapter discussed the existing literature on the needs and the importance of feedback mechanisms that will have positive impacts on an organisation, but only if management understands their purpose and knows how to manage and take feedback into consideration. This chapter explains the methodology of the research project, its conceptual/theoretical model, research design, quantitative and qualitative data collection.
3.1 Conceptual or theoretical framework

This study explored the efficacy of feedback mechanisms, based on the research questions. It focused on 3 major areas: each type of feedback mechanisms advantages and disadvantages, the most useful feedback mechanisms and the improvements for the organisation in terms of guest knowledge and customer service quality. This study not only focuses on customers’ points of view, but will help organisation to firstly understand the purpose of feedback mechanism and the benefits they bring. This study was undertaken to gain an understanding of how feedback mechanisms will help organisations to understand their customers better by meeting the customers’ expectations.

In addition, the research will also include recommendations, suggestions and the limitations of customer feedback mechanisms in the hospitality Industry, which aim to improve customer service quality.

Figure 3.1 has been developed to illustrate the potential outcomes of customer – hotel interaction. The contribution of feedback mechanism (1) can be divided into 2 groups; satisfied customers (2) and unsatisfied customers (3).

Satisfied customers give good feedback and a hotel may also experience customers’ return (4). When products and service quality of the organisation are always maintained and improved when needed, this could possibly lead to return customers’ or guests to become loyal customers (16). On the other hand, a customer may leave satisfied, gives good feedback, but never returns and chooses to try other organisation or hotel competitor, this indicate those type of guest that does not really care about the hotel improvement (5).

Unsatisfied customers can be divided into two groups, those who complain (6) and those who do not (7) but spread their negative experiences to others by the word of mouth. Customer complains need to be settled as soon as possible, if not, this will have a bad influence on the organisation (discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.4).

However, customers who complain have two possible outcomes; receive a follow-up from the hotel management or action taken into consideration (8) or there is no follow up or action (9). In the cases where nothing is done, the customer leaves unsatisfied and there will be no further follow up and no customer relations (12).
When follow up action is taken, then customers can be again divided into two further groups of people; customers who are satisfied with the compensation given by the hotel (10) and those who are unsatisfied with the compensation or management has not successfully delivered a successful compensation to them (11). Unsuccessful deliver will generally lead to the customer leaving unsatisfied and does not encourage repeat patronage. Those who do leave satisfied could either leave satisfied but choose not to return to the hotel again (14), for whatever reason, or to continue to return and become loyal customers (13). If unsuccessful compensation occurs, customers leave the hotel unsatisfied which causes management to lose potential loyal customers and not have customers’ relation (15).

Figure 3.1 – The process of a feedback mechanism
3.2 Research design

The purpose of the study, the available resources and the ability and skills of the researcher must be considered when deciding on a research design. Both primary and secondary data were collected and analysed. Primary data was obtained by surveying 3 – 5 stars hotel employees and interviewing hotel managers in Perth, Western Australia. Secondary data was obtained from the available literature. Interview questions for managers and questionnaires for employees were designed based on the literature review of how to value feedback mechanism and their understanding of the systems. They were designed to incorporate issues raised from the literature review (secondary data) to investigate the validity of feedback mechanisms in today’s hotel operations. The chosen methods of data collection are justified below.
3.3 Mixed methodology

Quantitative methods aim to construct statistical models in an attempt to explain what is observed and is efficient but may miss contextual details. They focus on the measurement of the characteristics and the researcher is being objective. In contrast, qualitative methods which aim to get a complete and detailed description is time consuming and less able to be generalised. They involve the researcher's emotions and understanding in describing the characteristics (Neill, 2007). In order to use the strengths of both methods of data collection, a mixed methodology has been chosen so that issues relating to the feedback mechanisms in the hotel industry can be explored. A mixed methodology also enables the researcher to investigate different respondents' feelings, thoughts and opinions about the feedback mechanisms that have been used by the organisation.

This study will use both quantitative and qualitative research methods, a combination of in-depth interviews, questionnaire surveys and triangulations because it aims at a number of important issues in the use of feedback mechanisms. These methods will bring a deeper understanding and also show the perspectives of each view about why feedback mechanism is very important in the organisation. For the quantitative research, the study used questionnaires to seek employee opinions or thoughts about what they think of feedback mechanisms in their organisation, on the other hand, in-depth interviews with hotel managers were also be used as a qualitative research method. The interviews with hotel managers were clarified and explored interesting facts or conflicting findings against the literature review. Both interview questions for managers and employee questionnaires were constructed from the available literature.

Emails were sent to managers of hotels in Perth, Western Australia to seek their approval and agreement to participate in the research. The interviews were conducted in their office or any other meeting place, depending on the convenience and preference of the interviewee and lasted about 10 – 15 minutes. The email to hotel managers seeking their approval can be seen in - Appendix 3.
The research also used phenomenology to support the theories of this study. Based on Baker (1992), Phenomenology is a combination of description and interpretation, describing people’s perceptions of their experience and interpreting the central themes that give structure to these meanings. The objective of this study is to explore which feedback mechanism is the most useful and cost effective for the hospitality industry, and why is it important for organisations to ask for guest feedback.

The next section will explain in detail the mixed methodology of both quantitative methods and qualitative methods.

3.4 Quantitative Research

Quantitative analysis is about achieving the objectives of the researcher who has a clear direction in advance, for he/she already knows what they are seeking in the research itself (Neill, 2007). According to Neuman (2006), quantitative analysis is developed based on numbers or builds on mathematics. “Quantitative researchers do not begin data analysis until they have collected all of the data and condensed them into numbers. Then they manipulate the numbers in order to see patterns or relationships” (Neuman, 2006).

Similarly, another author has described quantitative methodology as “... based mainly on the collection and analysis of statistical data, and hence tends to obtain a limited amount of information which focus on a large number of respondents or observations; if statistically significant, these results can be then extrapolated to the wider population of the subject matter” (Jennings, 2001, p.15.). For this study, quantitative research was conducted through the distribution of questionnaires to hotel staff. In this study, the questionnaires explored the thoughts and the attitudes of respondents’, hotel staff, about feedback mechanisms and how their organisation manages or influences their use. The expected number of respondents was more than 50.
3.4.1 Quantitative data collection and analysis

Questionnaires or surveys are very useful tools for collecting and gathering information from targeted respondents (hotel staffs). The benefits are that respondents’ are able to express their feelings in writing yet remain anonymous. After information is gathered, the next step is summarising and analysing the data. A cover letter about the staffs questionnaires was sent to confirm to explain to respondents the purpose of this study and the confidential treatment of personnel and organisational information. The employee questionnaire cover letter is in - Appendix 3.

Using self completed and anonymous questionnaires was a very functional way as who are required to answer the questions on their own, without necessarily identify their personal status and completing them at a convenient time. The manager has the right and authority to choose their own staff on which they think it will gives the right answer that representing their organisation. After respondents finished answering the questions, they were asked to seal the envelope to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. This means employees have the opportunity to answer the questionnaires without worrying that management will have a chance to review the questionnaire before collection 2 weeks after the interview. Asking for hotel employees’ points of view is to identify whether they understand why their organisation has feedback mechanisms in place, and also to identify whether their organisation has given them a chance to share what feedback they have received from customers, thus ensuring the answers were guaranteed to be from an employee perspective. The results of the questionnaires were analysed using Microsoft Excel.

The questionnaire questions were based on the literature review. Respondents were asked to select which types of feedback mechanisms their organisation is currently using and whether they think that feedback mechanisms are useful for the hospitality industry. As the respondents were from the front office, they asked whether they encourage customers to give feedback to the hotel and to specify the reason. They have also been asked whether the organisation gives them an opportunity to share what they had received from customers.
3.5 Qualitative research

Qualitative analysis entails expressing the feelings or emotions of the respondents and to achieve the results as the research study goes by. Researchers who use qualitative analysis as their research method are not be able to have a clear direction in advance on what they are seeking, unlike quantitative analysis (Neill, 2007). According to Neuman (2006), qualitative analysis is looking for relationships or patterns in the early days of the research project, while the researcher is still collecting data. “Qualitative analysis does not draw on a large, well established body of formal knowledge from mathematics and statistics. The data are relatively imprecise, diffuse, and context-based, and can have more than one meaning. This is not seen as a disadvantage” (Neuman, 2006, p.20). Qualitative research involves an in depth understanding of human behaviour, character, feelings and emotions, and it is also more descriptive, discovering reasons behind the various aspects. Qualitative research is about the “why” and “how”, whereas quantitative research is about the “what”, “where” and “when” (Jennings, 2001 ). This type of research is designed to capture meaning once the researcher is engrossed in the data. It is also beneficial because it is able to show how respondents behave, the feelings and beliefs, and attitudes of a large number of people in a short period of time (Neuman, 2006).

The interview questions were developed based on the literature review to explore the thoughts and understanding of the respondents’ as to how important a feedback mechanism is for them, and whether they think it is useful for the organisation or not.
3.6 Qualitative data collection and analysis

In depth-interviews are a common technique used in qualitative research. "Interviewing is a paramount part of sociology, because interviewing is interaction and sociology is the study of interaction. Thus the interview becomes both the tool and the object, the art of sociological sociability, an encounter in which both parties behave as though they are of equal status for its duration, whether or not this is actually so" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

In this study, the interviews were conducted face-to-face at either the interviewees' offices or at any other place convenient for both the interviewee and the researcher. The advantage of conducting an in depth interview is that the interviewee is able to explore the feelings and emotions on any specific issues and share their true feeling and their experience of specific issues. The interviews took place at a convenient time for both interviewer and interviewee. Hand written notes were taken and field notes were also taken noting the interviewees' body language and vocal expressions.

"Triangulation is meant here primarily in the sense of collecting data by multiple members of a research team" (Wallendorf & Belk, 1989). According to Kimchi (n.d), there are many different types of triangulation. This study will use an involvement of a combination of textual (qualitative) triangulations, which is the theoretical triangulation.

"Theoretical triangulation refers to analysis findings from more than one theoretical perspective or relevance scheme. It does not mean that findings are massaged or made to fit an existing theoretical framework, but that they are related at the conceptual level, to other conceptualisations that may be found within theories" (Kimchi et al., n.d).

This research has triangulated the results but in this research, the method of triangulation is neither quantitative nor qualitative. It is a combination of both. All the information based on interviews with the managers was gathered and will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.
3.7 Research consideration

For this study, a number of considerations concerning respondents to the questionnaires need to be taken into account. A sample of employee questionnaires is given in - Appendix 2. With the questionnaires, what needs to be considered are:

- Firstly, respondents need to be working in the hospitality industry and either in the department of front office, room division, or restaurants and cafe.
- Secondly, respondents are restricted by the criteria of age, means respondents must be over the age of 18 and to avoid any inexperienced respondents on any specific issues.
- Thirdly, there is no restriction on how they are employed. In other words, casual employees, part time employees or full time employees are eligible or qualified to complete the questionnaire.
- Fourthly, respondents were a mixture of age (over 18 years old), gender, nationality, cultural background, race, religion and experience.

As regards the qualitative research interview, only one major point needs to be considered. Respondents need to be hotel room division managers, front desk supervisors, on hotel managers’ because they are required to answer questions regarding their hotel feedback mechanisms issues. A sample of the interview questions is in - Appendix 2.

These judgements or considerations were introduced to minimise the effects of the limitations or to avoid any biased respondents’ that might affect the results of the research project.
3.8 Summary

This study adopted a mixed methodological approach of both qualitative and quantitative research methods so that the strengths of both types of data collection could be utilised. The quantitative component of this study aimed to investigate hotel staff and whether they understand the purpose of feedback mechanisms in their organisation and also to analyse how many organisations seek employee feedback or use it as one of their mechanisms. The qualitative component of the study explores the respondents' feelings, emotions, thoughts, experiences and motivations behind their actions. The purpose of using in-depth interview (qualitative research) is that the interviewee is able to share, explain and explore in their understanding, feelings and experience of feedback mechanisms currently in use in their organisation. Triangulation of the two methodologies has also been used in this study for it gives a greater understanding or clearer view of specific issues from different views or perspectives. Using both types of data collection and data analysis, helped the researcher gather information from both perspectives, that of employers and employees. By gathering the real facts from these sources information can be added to what was found in the literature review. This project focuses on the management and staff perspective and is also limited to only 3 – 5 star hotels in Perth, Western Australia. It used questionnaires to gather employees' views on how they value or view feedback mechanisms and also to discover whether have they have been given an opportunity to share customer feedback that they have received. Also, in depth interviews were used to add meaning and facts to the study.

The results from both the employees' questionnaires and interviews with hotel managers will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.
Chapter Four:

Please rate your satisfaction!

Results from the Quantitative Data Collection
4. Quantitative Results

4.1 Quantitative Results

This chapter discusses the findings from the quantitative data collected from the hotel staffs' questionnaires. The analysis was done manually with support from Microsoft Excel. The analysis will be discussed and explained according to the sequence of the questions in the questionnaires which were collected without any identification of which questionnaires belonged to which hotels.

The questionnaire was to identify whether staff understands why their organisation has feedback mechanisms in place, and also to discover whether they have been given an opportunity to share feedback they have received from customers.

The study was broken down into 4 sections to make the quantitative data more organised and manageable and addresses the following questions:

- Which type of feedback mechanism does your hotel currently use?
- Does your hotel encourage feedback from customers, how?
- Have you been given a chance to share suggestions that you have received from customers with the Hotel management, how?
- Do you think using feedback mechanisms will help the growth of the organisation, in terms of product or services quality, and if so how?

The first section enquired about feedback mechanisms, to discover which type the organisation used and whether the hotel staff think it is useful for the hospitality industry.

The second section considered whether the hotel encourages feedback from customers, and if so how, whether it is via receptionist, questionnaires or guest comment cards in hotel rooms, a website or other way.

The third section raised the questions of employee feedback, whether hotel staff have been given a chance to share suggestions they have received from customers with the management, how it approaches its staff and who is the responsible person doing the follow up with employees.
The fourth section considered whether of the feedback mechanisms were a success and whether or not they would help the growth of the organisation, in terms of product or service quality.

The questionnaire sample (available in Appendix 2) does not have separate sections and is in a question and answer format where respondents’ are asked questions regarding the feedback mechanisms that their organisation currently uses and what impact it has on the organisation. To make this study more manageable and easier to understand, the collected data will be discussed section by section.
4.2 The Research Tool

As mentioned in Chapter 3 (3.6 Research Consideration), to ensure that the data obtained was both usable and reliable, a number of considerations concerning the respondents needs to be taken into account. Firstly, they must be working in the hospitality industry either in the front office, room division, or restaurants or cafe. Secondly, they must be over 18 to avoid any biased respondents and any inexperienced respondents. Thirdly, there must not be any restriction on how they are employed, casual employees, part time employees or full time employees are all eligible to answer the questionnaire. Fourthly, respondents were a mixture of age, gender, nationality, cultural background, race, religion and experience.

A total of 140 questionnaires were delivered to hotel staffs’ but only 65 were returned. The questionnaire consisted of 11 questions in all.

Questions 1 – 4 asked respondents about themselves. Data were collected on gender, age group, departments they were working in, and terms of employment.

Questions 5 – 6 asked about feedback mechanisms. In Question 5, respondents were asked to tick which type of feedback mechanisms their hotel currently uses. They have an opportunity to tick more than 1 answer. In Question 6, respondents were asked whether they think feedback mechanisms are useful for the hospitality industry.

Questions 7 – 8 asked respondents how their organisation encourages customers to give feedback.

Questions 9 – 10 focused on employee feedback or employee observation whether the management gives the staff any chance to share what they have received or heard from customers. If the respondents answered a “yes”, they need to explain how the organisation seeks their feedback and who asks them (i.e. duty supervisor or general manager, etc).

Question 11 enquired of respondents whether they think feedback mechanisms will help the growth of the organisation, in terms of product or service quality. Respondents were asked to answer “yes” or “no” and needed to explain “why” they agree or disagree.
4.2.1 Respondent characteristics

The total numbers of respondents of the questionnaires were 65, of whom people 58% were female and 42% were male (See Figure 4.1)

![Figure 4.1 Respondents' gender categories.](image)

The majority of the respondents' were between 18 and 25, 49%. 34% were between 26 and 35, those between 35 to 40 amounted to 11% and lastly, respondents over 41 and above totalled 6% (See figure 4.2.)

![Figure 4.2 Respondents' age categories](image)
Respondents were asked to select the department they are working in, reception, concierge, housekeeping (indicate as H.KEEPING), room service (indicate as R.SRVC), restaurant or cafe, and others. The majority of the respondents were from reception with 74%. The second highest percentage came from the department of concierge, 18%, and only 5% came from different front office or room division departments. Respondents' from housekeeping totalled 3% and there were no respondents from room service and restaurant or cafe (see Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3 Respondents' working department categories

The respondents were asked to select their terms of employment, whether full time, part-time, or casual workers. 62% were full time employees. 21% casual workers and 17% part time employees (see Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4 Respondents' terms of employment
Respondents were asked to select the type of feedback mechanisms their organisation is currently using and of it uses more than one. The highest percentage was 39% for the use of guest comment cards. The second highest was 27% for questionnaires or surveys, 19% said web online review. 10% stated employee feedback was used. Only 5% used the face to face interview feedback mechanism. From the total of 65, no one has chosen the phone interview as one of the feedback mechanism in their organisation. (see Figure 4.5).

Figure 4.5 Types of feedback mechanisms

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they agree or disagree that feedback mechanisms are useful for the hospitality industry, either tick “yes” for agree or “no” to disagree. There was 100% agreement that feedback is useful for the hospitality industry (see figure 4.6).

Figure 4.6 Responses on the usefulness of feedback mechanisms
Respondents were asked if they encourage customers to provide feedback about the quality of products and services in their organisation to show how they encouraged feedback. Most of the respondents, 91% said “yes”, signifying their organisation does encourage feedback regarding the quality of products and services, but 9% “no”, meaning their organisation does not encourage this practice (see Figure 4.7). Surprisingly, in Figure 4.6, 100% of the respondents agreed that feedback mechanism is useful for the organisation.

![Pie chart showing the percentage of organisations that do and do not encourage customer feedback.](image)

**Figure 4.7** The percentage of organisations that do and do not encourage customer feedback
Respondents were asked to select how their organisation encourages feedback from customers, for example, through reception during check in or check out, a questionnaire or guest comment cards in each guest room, by the use of online web review or private website, or others. Respondents were able to select more than 1 option. 40% of the respondents said they are using a questionnaire or guest comment cards located in each guests room and 39% said that they seek customer feedback from the reception during check outs. While their bill or account is being processed, customers are asked to fill in one of the survey forms or guest comment cards available at the counter. Only 15% said they are directed to an online website review, either a private web if the organisation has one or an online web review (for example: Tripadvisor.com or eatingwa.com.au). 6% of the respondents said that their organisation’s shared their opinions among their management team during the staff meeting and they have their own personal ways of encouraging feedback from customers for example: through telephone calls, informal communication (see Figure 4.8).

Figure 4.8 Respondents’ ways to encourage feedback from customers
Respondents were asked whether or not their organisation has given them an opportunity as employees to share feedback that they have received from customers and to explain if the organisation uses employee feedback mechanisms. They were also requested to say how management encourages or seeks feedback from employees and who is responsible. The majority, 87% said that they have been given an opportunity to share but 13% were not given any opportunity to share what they had received from customers. In other words, the hotel is not using employee feedback or employee observation as one of their feedback mechanisms (see Figure 4.9).

![Figure 4.9 Employee feedback or observation](image-url)
Figure 4.10 asked respondents for their point of view, whether they thought that feedback mechanisms will help the growth of the organisation in terms of the product or service quality. Respondents were asked to indicate their answer by “yes” or “no” and explain their choice. Most, 92% of the respondents said that they agreed that using feedback mechanisms in the organisation would help the growth of the organisation in terms of the product and service quality. Only 8% disagreed (see Figure 4.10).

Figure 4.10 Organisational growth in terms of product and service quality
4.2.2 Summary of data analysis

This study consisted of 65 respondents (58% of which were female) most of whom (49%) were aged between 18 and 25 years and full time employees (60%). The questionnaire had 11 questions, looking at the respondents characteristics, types of feedback mechanisms in their organisation, its usefulness, whether the hotel encouraged to improve quality of its products and services, how it sought customer and employee feedback, and lastly, whether the mechanisms would have a positive impact in terms of the growth of the product and services quality provided by the hotel.

Of the various types of feedback mechanisms, 39% of respondents choose guest comment cards as one of the tools and 100% commented that feedback mechanisms are very useful for the hospitality industry. 91% of the respondents encouraged customers’ feedback in the organisation, 40% said this was through guest comment cards in rooms. 87% said that they have been given the opportunity to share the customer feedback with management and lastly, 92% agreed that using feedback mechanisms in the organisation would definitely help the growth of the organisation in terms of the product and services quality. There is no differences in the responses for different ages, gender nor employment terms.

4.3 Conclusion

The findings from the questionnaires revealed that respondents from different organisations agreed that feedback mechanisms are useful and will definitely help the growth of the organisation in terms of the product and services quality. Analysis of the data indicated that the most useful and cost effective feedback mechanism is the guest comment cards and that most organisations do encourage feedback from customers, as well as from the front line staff. The findings will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 6.
Chapter Five:

Do you enjoy your stay?

Results from the Qualitative Data collection
5. Qualitative Results

Qualitative research methods are very useful and valuable research tools as they provide detailed, deep and rich information which cannot be obtained through any other methods. For the qualitative data, emails were sent to hotel managers to seek for the approval of interviews. Respondents must be working in the hospitality industry as a supervisor, duty manager or hotel manager in the front office. Qualitative data was collected by conducting 9 interviews (hotel managers) with interviews lasting approximately 10 – 15 minutes long, at a location convenient for both the researcher and the respondent. Respondents were asked about their experience in providing the services to the hotel guest, what type of feedback mechanisms they used, the benefit they received from the mechanisms and whether who recommendations would have a positive impact. In this era of technology some organisations still do not know about the online feedback system known as online web review. Interestingly of the 9 interviewees, 3 had never heard about it.

The characteristics of the respondents are as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Star Rating</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>40-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>30-40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>35-45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>20-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>20-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>20-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>20-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>25-35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>30-40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1 Interview respondent’s characteristics with hotel star rating
The interview explored each individual respondent’s experience with a feedback mechanism. This project research did semi-structured interviews. There were 16 open-ended questions, seeking answers as to the usefulness of feedback mechanisms, the advantages and disadvantages, which mechanism is the most cost effective and how they may influence the quality of the product and service in the organisation (Refer to Appendix 2 for the sample interview).

Although each respondent used a different type of feedback mechanism, they all agreed they were useful and they benefit the organisation, especially in the hospitality industry. The interviewee responses will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

5.1 Types of feedback mechanisms

Among the several different types of feedback mechanisms, only 3 respondents used a different type from the other 6. 6 respondents used guest comment cards as their main mechanism, whilst 3 used questionnaires, private hotel systems and a guest book (email questionnaire). Each mechanism has its advantages and disadvantages and can have a positive influence on an organisation only if management understands why it has been installed. This section is divided into 3 sub sections:

- The advantages and disadvantages of feedback mechanisms.
- The most useful and cost effective feedback mechanism in the hospitality industry.
5.1.1 The advantages and disadvantages of feedback mechanisms

Feedback mechanisms can be used in any organisation, especially in the hospitality industry (hotels, restaurants, cafes, etc). Feedback mechanisms can bring a positive influence on the organisation, if management understands the purpose, the benefits and the effectiveness of feedback mechanisms and delivered it to the employee. By just having feedback mechanisms in place, without having the understanding of the purpose of feedback mechanisms, means that feedback mechanisms be used simply because they are a tradition in the hospitality industry. Each respondent views the advantages and disadvantages of the feedback mechanisms that they currently use in their organisation differently.

Their comments are listed below:

Interviewee 1 said:

*Normally we used guest comment cards and ask the guest to fill it in and bring it back to the reception desk. Although, not everyone will fill in the guest comment cards, but we still received some. Those who fill in the guest comment cards are those who are most likely to complaint due to certain dissatisfaction with the hotel facilities or services. The advantages is that customers will tell us what are the things that need to be improved and their own point of view on our services. The disadvantage is that not everyone is filling in the guest comment cards and so it is hard for us to know whether or not they satisfy with the services that has been provided.*

Interviewee 2 used both guest comment cards and the online web review as her feedback mechanisms, she said:

*We used guest comment cards. We certainly encourage guests to fill out the guest comment cards that we place it in each room. Advantages: well both feedback mechanisms that we used in our organisation are very useful and give a positive impact. With the guest comment cards, we easily get feedback voices through the comment cards and the feedback that we've received is from the real-customers. Whereas with the tripadvisor.com, everyone is able to see the comments that our customers have posted on the website, as people read their posted comments, it will also attract the new people to visit the hotel for a try.*
Disadvantages: with the guest comment cards, not all guests have enough time to fill in those comment cards and whereas with tripadvisor.com, sometimes there is a little bit of competition, because due to the reason of public accessibility, it allows anyone to post a comment on the website and sometimes the person who posted a comments on the review website is not really our customer, but its actually our hotel competitors.

Interviewee 3 used several types of feedback mechanism as, this will benefit the organisation because each has benefits another mechanisms do not provide. The mix will help the organisation to be more customer-oriented; as well as to underlie value and the importance of feedback mechanisms. Interviewee 3 explained:

We are using a mix of guest feedback mechanisms in our organisation. We used guest comment cards or internet service or verbal communication. But our main feedback mechanism is guest comment cards. The advantages of using guest comment cards is that the organisation received an essential feedback from the real-customers, whereas the disadvantages is that not everyone has time to complete the guest comment cards.

Interviewee 4 also used guest comment cards and commented as follows:

For the advantage, it is a very helpful tool, for making sure where we are at the position right now in terms of guest perception. And for the disadvantage, I don’t think we find it a lot. But as long as we really utilize it and then we are making sure that the guest, has the opportunity to measure us. And then one of other tools is supporting each other actually. Guest comment card is really depending on the guest opinion.

Similarly, interviewee 5 also used the guest comment card as her feedback mechanism, but also used an independent body survey owned by the company. Below is explanation of her perspectives of both mechanisms and whilst both systems are about getting the customers’ views guest comment cards are the most useful in her view. She said:
Guest comments cards will be the most useful feedback mechanism from a fixing a problem perspective. Because with guest comment cards, we are able to see the feedback directly and also it gives us the opportunity to handle or to solve a problem immediately when its needed. By using guest comment cards, guests’ are also being given an opportunity to write an overall comment of how satisfied they are during their stay in the hotel. Whereas with the independent body survey (owned private system), we don’t get to see what the guest real feeling is, because there’s no space for them to write. All of the questions require the guests’ to tick with a yes/no answer or a rating out of 5. What we normally do to solve a problem with our customer is firstly apologies to the customers as soon as possible via the customers’ contact (phone/email), secondly explain what we are doing to fix it. However, it provides a great statistics analysis of how we are going in the management which is very important for the growth of our organisation, but it doesn’t gives us the opportunity to react quickly when there is a problem.

Interviewee 7 also used guest comment cards as her main feedback mechanism and maintained the benefits she has experienced provide both positive and negative feedback about products and services.

Whilst the other 3 Interviewees answered that they use different feedback mechanisms in their organisation. Interviewee 6 mentioned a private hotel owned system which provides the organisation with useful information. Interviewee 8 used GSTS, known as Guest Satisfaction Tracking Survey and also an in-room guest questionnaire (similar to guest comment cards). Lastly, Interviewee 9 used the guestbook to collect guest feedback in which guests are asked for their email address during check out and so that a feedback survey can be sent for them to complete and return via email.
5.1.2 The most useful and cost effective feedback mechanism in the hospitality industry.

The previous section mentioned the types of feedback each organisation uses and their advantages and disadvantages.

The results of which is the most useful and cost effective feedback mechanisms is based on the responses 9 interviewees. There is a possibility other organisations will disagree with the collected results. Although each respondent was in a different organisation in the same industry and provided the same services, however, each used a different type of mechanism to collect customer feedback.

Nevertheless, the result indicate all the 9 interviewees agreed that the guest comment card is the most useful and cost effective types of feedback mechanisms for the hospitality industry. It is not time consuming and management is able to hear directly from real customers.

Interviewee 5 used guest comment cards and survey questionnaires and feel that although both mechanisms had a positive impact on the organisation, guest comment cards were more useful and cost effective. Moreover, they were able to help the hotel maintain its quality products and services as well as quickly solve a problem when one arose.
5.1.3 The online web review from the interviewee’s point of view

Referring back to the literature review where most of authors said Tripadvisor.com or any other online web review had a negative influence on public due to they felt that posted comment may not be written by the real-customers, but from the competitors. Some organisations, however still use and rely on online website sources as one of their customer feedback tools.

Interviewee 6 stated that they used guest comment cards as their main feedback tool but also used the Tripadvisor.com, as well as their own private website to which guests’ are directed and leave their comments.

Interviewee 5 had experienced receiving negative feedback from Tripadvisor.com. Below is what Interviewee 5 experienced:

*They are not really reliable. Unfortunately it is what it is, and if someone posts something on there then you’ve just have to accept it. Unfortunately, for something like that, is that the competitors hotel will put something on there and pretended that they are one of the customers that visited the hotel. I spoke to some of the staff from the Tripadvisor.com, they refused to delete the posted comments, but despise the fact, that I could demonstrate that it is not really the hotel guests’ who posted it. So that, we know that we don’t trust those websites. Also, we actually have a log book in house, which is a book that where our duty receptionist will always record any complaints or compliments from the customers in the log book. It is to help us to re-check our hotel condition when we review any customers’ feedback that we received.*

Interviewee 5 also added:

*... And I said valid or invalid. If it is valid, then we do something about it, the trouble is that with Tripadvisor.com, you know we get along to those website very rarely, but they’ve come up every couple of months, so we don’t have the opportunity to properly respond to the guests. Anyway, in terms of responding, we don’t respond on those websites, responding on those websites will looks unprofessional or the public may think that we are defensive towards our organisation.*
In today's world of technology almost everyone, anywhere of any age understands how to use the internet. They are able to browse websites and leave a comment (free access) without being asked for their personal username or password. Moreover, people who want to leave comments are able to stay anonymous (unknown user). This type of feedback mechanism sometimes does have both a positive and negative influence on the organisation.

The Tripadvisor.com online web review is quite well-known and some interviewees use as their back-up tool to collect feedback from customers. However, using this type of feedback mechanism does not allow management to build a close relationship with customers. The down-side of using this type of feedback mechanism is when there is negative feedback or comments as management is not able to take corrective action for there is no personal identification. It is good as a back-up tool, but not as a primary feedback mechanism for organisations.

On the other hand, Interviewees 4 and 2 felt that there is nothing wrong with using an online web review as a feedback tool. Interviewee 4 stated:

*Yes, I know about the online web, well it's coming from different resource and it is also one of the valuable tools as well, because it comes from third party, I mean in outside opinion, if we want to measure something, it has to come from the customers (our users that use our product and services), so it’s still useful. And yes it's still bringing a positive impact in terms of improving the quality.*

Often, reviewers on internet websites or word of mouth are not reliable sources of information as people can be bias and comment according to their own experiences, attitude, and differences. Therefore, we cannot be easily influenced by what we hear or read about hotels. Nevertheless, using an online web review can be a challenge for the organisation, especially when there is a negative comment on the internet review website. It may offer the hotel a chance to improve or even to prove to the public that the organisation does not like what has commented on the website review.
5.1.4 The benefits of feedback mechanisms in the organisation

This study has explored the benefits of feedback mechanisms that respondents had experienced in their workplace and also how the mechanisms influenced and had positive impacts on the organisation.

Interviewee 1 commented that feedback does influence the organisation in many ways, in terms of improvements in the product and services quality, as well as employee and staff morale. She said:

\[
\text{Without the customers’ feedback, we are not able to improve our service and product quality. Because we are not in the premises for 24/7, so by the help of feedback mechanisms, it is able to help us to keep track and to improve our hotel quality.}
\]

Similarly, interviewees 1 – 2 mentioned that a feedback mechanism will not function on its own but needs help from management to function so that it can influence and provide benefits for the organisation. She said:

\[
\text{We do take guest feedback very seriously and it does influence the customer service quality of the hotel, because if we have to create a new procedure, we need to take guest feedback into consideration. The guest has the fresh eye (new ideas) when they are visiting our organisation means, as they are not seeing things in the hotel every day; they are able to easily pick up the things that are not relevant. Whereas the management is working in the organisation every day and it is hard for us to be sensitive. we as the management see things from the management perspective but by hearing and collecting the feedback from the customers, this will help us to be more customer oriented and when we set a new procedure, we will bring customers perspective into the centre of the new procedure.}
\]

Interestingly, although most of the respondents used the same type mechanisms (i.e. guest comment cards), they experienced or received different benefits in their organisation. In this case, Interviewee 4 said the system is not only about meeting the needs of their customers but is also a measurement tool for staff to increase their level of quality. He commented:
Yes, feedback mechanism is a very important tool for us; in fact, feedback mechanism functions as a measurement tool for our organisation, in terms of whether or not our organisation provides a good quality for the guest. Staffs need to know what the level of satisfaction of our hotel customers’ is and so we inform them about the current percentage of our customers’ level of satisfaction. By doing so, it actually motivates us to go forward and reach the goal that we have set since the start of the year. So, really our customer feedback mechanism is not only a mechanism that helps our organisation to improve our product and services quality but it is also a measurement tools where we are able to know our current customers’ level of satisfaction is.

Interviewee 5 considers feedback mechanisms as tracking tools or history records and said that by using them, he is able to make the right decisions and to handle customer complaints, stating:

...with good management it gives you a great opportunity to improve the hotel, if you continuously track it consistently, you will find that when there’s things that pop up on the regular basis, you are able to focus on those areas and fix them as soon as possible. There’s some comments that comes up very rarely, and you understand that, you can’t really change the facilities because of one complaint that happened maybe once in couple years, so it’s not financially viable to change. But if the same problems keep coming up week after week and you received the feedback about the same stuff consistently then you are going to make an appropriate change. So that there’s a purpose which will bring a fantastic influence and impact to the organisation.

Interviewees 6, 7, 8 and 9 made similar responses on how feedback mechanisms benefit their organisation, E.G: in terms of improvements in the products and services quality, as well as increasing staff morale (attitude and behaviour). Interviewee 7 stated:

...I personally feel that feedback mechanism is very important, as it tells us what our guests’ value the most. And on many other occasions, we are able to use customer feedback to make improvements to the hotel.
Interviewee 8 said:

Definitely will lead to improvements because if you do not know what you are doing wrong, how can you fix it? It is very important to let our customers tell us what we need to improve, for they are our first and main target market.

Interviewee 9 explained that:

Feedback mechanisms’ leads the organisation into improvements as it helps us to gauge how the hotel and staffs are performing in day to day basis. It is also allowing the relevant teams to assess their strengths and weaknesses. As we always strive for a high level of customer service.
5.1.5 Ways of seeking customers’ feedback

Every organisation has its own unique way of seeking customer feedback, for example, questionnaires in each guest room, guests being directed to a website or even enquiries in reception during check ins or check outs. No matter how each organisation uses different ways of seeking customer feedback, the aim is to understand customers better and to meet their expectations.

In Interviewee 1’s case, they do not encourage customers to give feedback, for they believe that if they do not press them, customers will give genuine and sincere feedback. She said:

Normally we just put it in the guest hotel rooms and we do not encourage customers to give us feedback, because we believe when the guest wants to tell us what they think of our hotel, they will be willing to tell us without being forced or to ask them to do so.

Similarly, Interviewee 4 also does not encourage customers to give feedback; however, she does remind guests that the hotel would like to hear if they were satisfied with their stay and added:

We do not encourage the guest to fill in the guest comment cards, but we provide it in the area that the guest can see. So it’s either in their room or in the reception desk. So it is all up to the customers, whether they want to fill it or not and we do not push them to fill the comment card. Not every single customer fills in the guest comment cards. It depends on the customers, whether they want to fill in or not. So, we do not push the customers to filling in, but we do remind them. After they finished filled in the comment card, they can just leave it in their room and then our housekeeping attendants will picks it up and deliver it to the HR department or room division department.

In contrast, Interviewee 2 encourages customers’ to leave feedback by directing them to a specific online web review; in this case the organisation is using Tripadvisor.com. She said:

How we do it is, during the check outs, we encourage them to gives feedback through the Tripadvisor.com.
Interviewee 7 used different ways of seeking customers’ feedback. The management trained front-line staff to encourage customers’ to complete comment cards. In this way staffs are being taught to understand the importance of customers’ feedback. She said:

*Yes, reception staff are told to ask all guests to fill out comment cards.*
5.1.6 Action after feedback collection

As already stated, feedback mechanisms are very useful and important tools to enable an organisation improve their products and services quality, increase staff morale, help the management to make right decisions, as well as to understand the needs of customers and meeting their expectancy. However, if management does not take guest feedback seriously, the mechanism will just become a dead tool. In other words, it will only be a system that will remain in the organisation as a tradition because every hotel has guest feedback (guest comment cards or questionnaires) no matter what star rating. All guest feedback should be taken into consideration, regardless of whether it is positive or negative and management should give it serious consideration, if not customers will not give any further feedback. It needs to be reviewed all the time, because there is no such word as “enough” in providing good quality service.

In Interviewee 1’s case, the hotel reviews customers’ feedback on a daily basis and takes everything seriously. She explained:

> Once we have collected the customers’ feedback, what we normally do is the management will first have a review on those feedback and we will see the problem. If there is a problem with the staffs, we will talk with the staffs and ask them to improve and send them for a training course if it is necessary, and with the guests’ we normally send them an appreciation letter for giving us their valuable feedback.

Similarly Interviewee 5 reviews customers feedback at the beginning of the week as their target market is corporate guest, rather than leisure guest. Corporate guest are unlikely to leave comments when something goes wrong during their stay. He explained:

> Reviewing guests’ feedback is the first thing I do in the morning. I go to the feedback box, where they’re kept, and I read every one of them. Probably, on Monday I see about 10 comment cards. During the week day basis, I will see it either 1 or 2 comment cards. The leisure guests are more likely to comment, whereas the corporate guest, generally do not comment much unless there’s something wrong. Whereas the leisure guests, will comment more often, whether they had a good time or not.
Every organisation has its way of reviewing guest feedback and although they may use the same mechanisms, how they value customers’ comments is not the same. Some organisations may value feedback as highly important, but others may not consider it important at all. In contrast, interviewee 8 reviews customer feedback not on a day-to-day basis, he said:

*I value customers’ feedback every once a month, feedback being analysed and areas of focus revised and actioned.*

Interviewee 2 considered all customer feedback valuable to the organisation. Management should understand it, whether either positive or negative feedback for it needs to be taken seriously. Once ignored, customers would not make any further comments and he explained that:

*So after we received the guest comment cards, we’ve read it and then it goes directly to the general manager and whether it is positive or negative feedback, we always do a follow up on there. If it was a negative feedback, we will definitely follow up on them. What we normally do is we call them up and compensate them if its’ needed. Whereas when we received a positive feedback, we’ve also send an appreciation letter. We take every single guest feedback very seriously.*

A feedback mechanism not only functions or helps organisations to obtain a better understanding of their customers, but also helps them to know their level of service conditions from customers’ perspectives. It needs to be reviewed and updated daily because everyday there are customers from different backgrounds with different needs and different expectancies. It is important that an organisation reviews customer feedback on a daily basis to prevent any repetition of complaints or dissatisfaction. This ensures that, when there is an error or a fault, management is able to solve the problem quickly and not let other customers experience the same fault. Interviewee 4 explained:

*We will do a certain follow up, so in our HR department, we are analysing all collected guest comment cards. So, if the guest comment card leads to F&B department that needs to do something to follow up, we will pass on the guest comment cards to F&B department and they will need to solve the problem solving*
process, and then involve the F&B staff in the meeting. So we do the statistics and then we set our goals, in terms of where we want to be in the next 3-4 months from now, and then it needs to be achievable and then when we achieve it, we will feel passionate and of course we feel happy. We update it daily, and then we communicate the finding and calculate the percentage based on the guest comment cards monthly and then we have a year to date achievement and day to date achievement as well. By doing so, we are able to set a higher goal for our organisation to achieve it within a period of time.

When customers give feedback to an organisation, it is an opportunity for management to start interacting with them to build a close relationship. How does it work? After leaving comments, it is the managements’ responsibility to take the next step, whether positive or negative, and send an appreciation letter or compensate customers if necessary by giving a complimentary or gift voucher. A complimentary gift is not necessarily in monetary term but it can be a free dinner in the restaurant or even a welcoming gift (i.e. bottle of champagne or a basket-full of fruits), during their first day to the hotel. Interviewee 5 shared this experience when he received a customers’ feedback:

We’ll contact the guest within 48 hours if possible. After we called, they might not answer, but that’s what our first intention to do. So, after we’ve researched the matter, if someone makes a small complaint, we will look to it, we will then give them a call and apology if it is required. Also, we will offer compensation if required. And then we will generally offer them an opportunity to visit our hotel, sometimes it can be a voucher to stay at our hotel for free of charge. Sometime, we will also offer them a reduced rates for return. Just to try to get them back to the hotel as our sincere apology for the mistakes that we have done during their visit.
5.1.7 Encourage and value your employee

As discussed in the literature review in Chapter 2, in today’s business world, still many organisations do not value their employee as important. In other words, many organisations still do not value employees, who in reality are the main assets of the organisation, besides customers’. Employee feedback is a mechanism where management asks staff about the feedback they have received from customers. Sometimes, customers do not fill in the form provided by the hotel, however, during check out, the front-line staff usually will ask guests how their stay was and this when customers can share their thoughts directly with the front-line staffs.

This study also explored how management needs to teach employees the importance of feedback mechanisms. These are a tool and need someone to organise and operate them in the organisation. Management should encourage every employee to seek feedback from customers and to realise this information is very valuable for the organisation’s growth in terms of product and service quality, as well as increasing customer satisfaction and staff morale.

When employees understand the importance of customer feedback, they will start to be more open and honest so that whenever they receive a suggestion from customers, they will not keep them to themselves but will bring the matter to the attention of management or to the duty supervisor or manager. This will only happen when employee and employer enjoy a sense of trust and a close relationship. Interviewee 2 said:

We are very open between employer and employee. Because for us, by working in the friendly environment, we believe that this will influence the atmosphere of the hotel and customers will feel it. By doing so, employee will be more open and honest, also they will easily and comfortably tell us the feedback that they have received from the customers without being intimidate or scared.
Interviewee 4 also encourages employees to give feedback to management stating:

Yes, we do ask their opinion. We also ask them directly in both formal and informal ways of what feedback they have collected from the customer. Not only we asked of their opinions about customers view on the products/services that has been delivered, but also we ask for their feedback on how to serve our customers better. Every feedback that we received from our staff, we will then take a note at it and we will again have a meeting with our management team to discuss in more detail on those feedbacks that we have received from our staffs. Sometimes, we also see that feedback collection is not only limited to the guest comment card, but to other resources like our employee (ladies and gentleman) is the most important resources in the service delivery to the guest. So they are in the field and they have the relation with the guest itself.

Similarly, Interviewee 5 used employee observation as a feedback tool in his organisation. They are not asked, but at regular meetings staffs are encouraged to share what they have received or heard from customers. He said:

We consistently having meetings with the staff like the front desk team, the duty management team, we talk a lot about service, the team probably think I talked too much about service, but there’s where we are looking to improve.
5.1.8 What can be improved? (Recommendation)

As has been mentioned, feedback mechanisms are a useful tool for any service industry, especially in the hospitality industry (hotel) which is all about providing services to people (customers). It is highly important, that management needs to listen to customer feedback and to address any problem quickly when it takes place. Collecting and listening to customer feedback is designed to meet customers’ expectancy so that management is able to maintain or to increase the level of customer satisfaction and provide a high quality of product and services in the organisation.

Of the 9 interviewees, only 2, had willingly made recommendations to the hospitality industry on how to improve its products and quality services. Interviewee 4 said:

Well, the recommendation that I am able to give is learn to listen to our customers; this is one of the ways to making sure that they are fully satisfying our guest.

Similarly, Interviewee 5 noted that management in every organisation needs to take customer feedback seriously and should learn how to put themselves in the customer’s shoes. He said:

In terms of customer feedback, the most important thing is to take every piece feedback seriously, until you can prove that it’s invalid. A lot of managers will just say what do they know as they are very dismissive of every little bit of feedback, but when you look at it, there’s a reason why the guest felt that way, regardless of what you feel, you weren’t in the room with the guest. We always learn to look in to the matter with a serious view towards remedying until you prove that it’s an invalid complaint. Too many managers dismiss before they research, so take it all seriously and I guess treat every pieces of feedback as a statistical data point. So measure it, so you know if things are coming up consistently, such as: people are not being able to get into non-smoking rooms, because you’ve got too many smoking rooms, if the complaints keep coming up twice a week, then if it is, well then reduce your smoking rooms. You need to analyse data and then put into action to rectify that.
5.2 Summary of data analysis

The analysis of the qualitative data collected through interviews has revealed several interesting facts which not only support outcomes from the quantitative data but also add depth and a greater understanding of the research.

Most interviewees used guest comment cards as their feedback mechanism in their organisation, but their ways of reviewing the feedback were not the same. Some reviewed the feedback on a day to day basis, others weekly or monthly. It all depends on how management values customers’ feedback as important, highly important or not important at all. Interviewees felt that among the mechanisms’ they used, guest comment cards were the most useful. The analysis also revealed that using feedback mechanisms not only meets customers’ expectations but also benefits the organisation in terms of improving their product and services quality.

Besides identifying the advantages and disadvantages of various feedback mechanisms being used in the organisation and noting which are the most useful, the interviews revealed how interviewees responded to the online web review feedback mechanism. They were also asked if they encouraged feedback from customers. This was supported in the outcomes of the quantitative analysis. The interviewees were also asked if they had been given an opportunity to share any recommendations they thought would help hospitality industry to improve product and services quality and increase customer satisfaction.

Eleven questions in the interviews addressed the advantages and disadvantages of feedback mechanisms being currently used in the organisation, identified the most useful feedback mechanisms, how they could influence the quality of the hotel and lastly they were asked to give recommendation on how to improve the quality of customer feedback mechanisms.

The main outcome from the analysis revealed the usefulness and the importance of feedback mechanisms in the hospitality industry and how they can influence product and service quality. It shows that feedback mechanisms are very important and helpful in identifying weaknesses and what customers are really seeking in a service. The understanding of both employers and employees in the organisation also had a significant impact on the outcome of the efficacy of feedback mechanism. The implications of these findings are discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter Six:

Why asks the guests?

Discussion of results
6. Discussion

This chapter explores the relationships and outcomes from both qualitative and quantitative components of this study. Again, a mixed research methodology was adopted so that answers to the research questions could be quantified and supported by the feelings and motivation behind the employee and employer’s actions. This enabled richer and more in depth data to be collected so that a better understanding of the issues and feelings could be explored.

The title of this study was “why asks the guest? - An examination of the mechanisms and efficacy of guest feedback used in hotels” Five questions were developed to assist in answering the main research questions:

- Which type of feedback mechanisms does your hotel currently use?
- Does your hotel encourage feedback from customers, how?
- Have you been given a chance to share suggestions that you have received from customers with the Hotel management, how?
- Do you think using feedback mechanisms will help the growth of the organisation, in terms of product or services quality, how?

This chapter explores the outcomes from the data collection and analysis and answers the research questions.
6.1 Types of feedback mechanisms

The concept “feedback mechanism” in this context is about a tool or a system an organisation has installed or uses to build an intimate relationship with its customers. It also can be used to help identify facilities or products that do not function very well in the organisation, as well as those that do. Also, it can be used to maintain and improve product and service quality. Lastly, it is also able to help an organisation increase staff morale and customer satisfaction. The research tools for this study incorporated both quantitative (via employee questionnaires) and qualitative (short interviews with hotel managers or supervisors) research methods. The questionnaires were then analysed using Microsoft Excel. Qualitative data was analysed manually and will be discussed in depth according to each interviewees’ responses.
6.1.1 Which feedback mechanisms do you currently use?

From the quantitative data analysis, this study revealed that hospitality industry; especially hotels in Perth used guest comment cards as their main feedback mechanism in the organisation. Some hotels are using questionnaires or surveys and also online web review or email instead. This was confirmed by interviewees most of whom used guest comment cards because they believed they would reveal the true feelings of their customers. The organisation could then solve or settle a problem quickly when it arose. By using guest comment cards, customers also have an opportunity to share their feelings or give suggestions on how they feel about the products and service provided by the organisation. One of the interviewees mentioned that guest comment cards are not only about meeting the customers’ expectancy but also enables them to comment on the hotel. Although management endeavours to review the organisations activities on a day to day basis, it cannot spot every fault or error but with the support of guest comment cards, customers are able to help organisations find their weaknesses.

The findings of both the questionnaire and the interview reveal almost all respondents consider the guest comment card is the most useful type of feedback mechanism for it helps a hotel to understand and to serve customers better, in the literature review, however it states that the guest comment cards is no longer useful because it does not contain enough information or give space enough for customers to give their opinion. (Barsky & Huxley, 1992; Clung, 1997).

The literature review mentions each type of feedback mechanism has its own advantages and disadvantages and is available for an organisation to use to improve growth in terms of product and services quality. It assists in helping managers to understand customers better by meeting their expectations. However, there is still a basic concept for managers to understand, namely, why they need feedback mechanisms installed. Having feedback mechanisms in an organisation without management influence or with front-line staff ignorant of their usefulness and of the importance of collecting, hearing and listening to guests’ feedback, means the systems will not be able to function and have positive influence on organisation’s growth will not lead to improvement.
6.1.2 What do you think about the online web review?

As stated in the literature review (Chapter 2), in today's world, the new internet era, there is a new system of giving feedback through website reviews or blogs. Although it is very useful, the accuracy and reliability of the information through these tools are questionable. Moreover, this type of feedback mechanism is wide open to anyone, anywhere and people of different ages can to post comments on a specific website (Baker, 2009; Burns, 2007; Dwivedi et al., 2007; Goldman, 2007; Meyer, 2001).

Although usage of this online web review is very easy to access, according to the literature review, it has some negativity. In contrast, of the 9 interviewees, 3 had actually used Tripadvisor.com as one of their feedback mechanisms. They believed some of the information is not reliable on account of hotel competition issues. Some interviewees mentioned that their organisations are actually sending a form of survey to their guests' personal email address or in other words, they are using Email (personal communication) as their main feedback mechanisms. Although the disadvantages of using social networking have been exposed, some organisations are not too concerned because they believe all comments are supposed to be gives positive impact to the organisation.
6.2 Ways to encourage customers' feedback

The quantitative data analysis, shows that feedback mechanisms' are very useful and that every organisation encourages customers to give or leave feedback. This just reiterates how important customers' feedback is, not only to the hospitality industry but to any industry around the world. “The client knows that you’re asking, you’re interested, you’re listening, and you’re responsive – and because of that, your stock with this client just increased a notch” (Phillips, 2009). This statement again supports the quantitative data analysis, as organisations understand the importance of feedback mechanisms and how it can influence and lead to improvements in the organisation’s growth. Management needs to understand that customers’ will sense whether or not the organisation is genuinely and sincerely interested in listening to their feedback. Customers will only give feedback if management is really serious and is responsive (by making compensation, introducing improvements, sending apologies and writing letters of appreciation, etc).
6.2.1 How you encourage customers' feedback?

As every hotel uses similar types of feedback mechanisms, how do they encourage customers to make comments on the hotel? Every hotel has its own way of how to attract customers and satisfy their needs. However, they will have their own way of obtaining feedback about the quality as is stated above, most organisations or hotels will use similar types of feedback mechanisms. Many hotels may use similar type of feedback mechanisms. However each will have their own ways of using the feedback. Also each hotel will have its' the own goals regarding what they want to hear from the customers'. In other words, a hotel may use a similar type of feedback mechanism to another hotel but the information on the feedback form will not be the same. The most common way takes place at reception during check out, questionnaires in guest rooms are collected or the latest way is by directing the guest to leave a comment via a website (such as: tripadvisor.com or personal private website).

According to the questionnaire data analysis, most hotels encourage feedback from customers via the guest comment cards or direct verbal communication and also by offering survey forms during the check out process. The research identified that most hotels encouraged customers to give feedback via the receptionist. Interestingly, Interviewee 1 and 4 are not in the habit of encouraging customers to provide feedback but they do make it a point to remind guests’ to fill in the comment card available in each hotel room.

Surprisingly, in the past, interviewee 9 has actually used guest comment cards as a feedback mechanism; however, the newest way is to ask a guest to fill out a form which contains name and email address so management can directly send out a feedback forms. This type of feedback mechanism is owned by a private company and has been designed for the convenience of both customers and management. Using this email form, customers are able to make their comments when they are free from management’s influence. It is easy to track customers’ preferences.
6.3 Employee observation or feedback

The literature review covers employee feedback as one type of feedback mechanism. Many people realise that employees not only complement an organisation, but are also like customers the assets who support the organisation as a whole. Employee feedback is very important for hotel managers (Clung, 1997; Garvey, 2003). Management should understand that in addition to other feedback mechanisms, such as guest comment cards, surveys, etc, employee feedback also has an important role in the organisation. Some customers do not wish to leave their comments using the system on the premises, but choose to directly communicate with the staff. This normally takes place during check out when the front-line staff is processing a guest’s accounts.

Hotel management also needs to understand the importance of a good relationship between employer and employee. Without doing so hotels will not be able to create a friendly, home-environment, welcoming environment. In addition, if there is no close relationship between employer and employee, whenever front-line staff receives customer feedback through direct communication (face-to-face communication), he/she will not feel comfortable to share what they had received from the customers with the management (supervisor/ duty manager) due to the hierarchy and no openness in the organisation. In other words, staff may not feel comfortable to share their thoughts about a product or service quality in the organisation because they might not have the courage to share with their management.
6.3.1 Have you been given a chance to share?

According to responses to the questionnaires, most hotel staff stated they have been given a chance to say what they think or feel about the organisation's product or services quality. Management during staff meetings not only ask staff to share what they have heard from the customers but give them an opportunity to suggest innovation ideas and opinions to improve the quality in the organisation.

One respondent said she had been asked how the organisation could be improved. It was normally the head of department and guest relation staff who asked for opinions on the organisation's improvements.

Another respondent announced that in her hotel, the general manager is the one who asks staff their opinions on guest feedback. Normally he will email all feedback that has been collected no matter how big or small the issue and arrange regular monthly meetings to discuss any improvements or adjustments that they may have to be made.

This was supported by Interviewees 2 and 5 who agreed that employee feedback is very important. As managers they encouraged employees to be open and honest about any suggestions that they would like to raise or to disclose feedback they had heard from customers. Interviewee 2 felt that being open towards both employer and employee would have a good impact on the working atmosphere. Similarly, Interviewee 5 confirmed that feedback mechanisms definitely bring positive impacts to the organisation but what is more important is not the tools but how well the management engage with customers.
6.4 An organisation's growth

The reason for having feedback mechanisms in an organisation is to help it to serve customers better and to meet guests expectations. Moreover, if customers are being served well, they will certainly be satisfied and this will automatically impact on the growth of the organisation. Besides that, customers will return if they are satisfied with their first visit, they will definitely be back again demonstrating customer loyalty (Refer to Figure 3.1 in Chapter 3).

6.4.1 Will it have an impact on the growth of the organisation, if so how?

Feedback mechanisms will definitely affect an organisation’s growth in terms of product and services quality, as well as customer returns. The mechanisms are installed in the organisation to involve customers opinions in terms of improvements in the product and services quality of the hotel. Customers may feel it convenient and comfortable to visit the hotel due to the provided facilities and services of the hotel. But by having customers’ feedback in house, it will help the whole management of the hotel to improve and to understand what guests are seeking in hotel products or services. By doing so, hotel management will be easily match and meet customers’ expectations.

Feedback mechanisms bring a number of benefits and have a positive impact on an organisation when management succeeds in explaining their purpose to the whole staff. Besides encouraging the organisation to improve its product and service quality, it also allows management to see things from different points of view, both positive and negative. One respondent was of the opinion that customer feedback is always important to ensure problems are fixed in the early stages and that all products be improved. Having feedback mechanisms in an organisation enables management to be more focused on problems that arise and to provide better service to customers. Another respondent maintained that a feedback mechanism is always the best way to make improvements and seek out areas that require adjustments. It enables the organisation to identify things or issues that they never know but which guests do know.
This was supported by Interviewee 2, who noted blind spots could be identified with help of customers. Management is present in the hotel, day in day out, so sometimes it is hard for managers to identify blind spots in the organisation.

One respondent also believes a feedback mechanism definitely assists in the growth of the organisation because guests are very important and managers are always trying to ensure they either return or tell others about what products or services the hotel offers. It allows employees to reassess and rethink their performance and direct individuals towards a group goal in addition to help monitoring service standards.

Most respondents thought a feedback mechanism enables them to understand their customers better and also gives customers a chance to tell management what they are looking for in a service. Without a feedback mechanism in place, a hotel will not be able improve for they do not know what the problem is and will always rely on their own perspective not that of customers.

Interviewees 1 to 9 agreed that feedback mechanisms do lead organisations to introduce improvements; not only regarding product and services quality, but they can lift staff morale and increase customer satisfaction. An organisation can measure its level of product and services quality from a customer’s perspective. Whenever there is positive or negative feedback from customers, management should accept it as a challenge the organisation to keep moving forward, providing, adjusting or changing a strategy to provide a higher quality of service to exceed customers’ expectations.

The results from both the quantitative (employee questionnaires) analysis and qualitative (interviews with hotel managers) analysis have been reported and discussed. The results of the overall study are discussed in Chapter 7).
Chapter Seven:

Thank you for your feedback!

We really appreciate it!

The Answers
7. Let's gather and hear the guests' voice

The answers to the research questions derived from the questionnaire and interview responses are discussed below, showing how feedback mechanisms impact the hotel industry.

7.1 Why is customer feedback important for a hotel?

The results showed that customer feedback enables a hotel to make any adjustments or improvements which customers value most, thus serving them better and meeting their expectations. In addition, the hotel is also given the opportunity to ask customers to tell the hotel what they think or feel about the services that have been provided. Customers too are able to share ideas and help the organisation to identify blind spots. Without, collecting and listening to the customers’ feedback, management is not able to improve their products and services quality according to the customers’ expectation level, because management is only hearing and discussing how to satisfy their target market (which are their customers) based on their own satisfaction level and perceptions. The results also show that both employer and employee agree that customer feedback is very important for a hotel and a very useful and helpful tool for the hotel to identify its level of services.

7.2 What are the advantages and disadvantages of each customer feedback tool?

A number of different customer feedback mechanisms are put in place by hotels. This study has only discussed those mentioned by interviewees and questionnaire respondents. All the hotel respondents used guest comment cards, online web review and guest survey or questionnaire forms as their type of feedback mechanism, each of the mentioned feedback mechanisms provides advantage and disadvantages for the organisation.
7.2.1 Guest comment cards

The advantages and disadvantages are:

- The advantages of guest comment cards:
  - Inexpensive.
  - Getting feedback from real customers.
  - Receive both positive and negative feedback from real-customers.
  - Includes guest contact details, where management is able to do a follow up on guest if needed and also able to send an appreciation letter.

- The disadvantages of guest comment cards:
  - Guests tend to ignore the existence of guest comment cards.
  - Not all customers are able to complete the guest comment cards due to limited time.
7.2.2 Customer survey or questionnaires

The advantages and disadvantages are:

- The advantages of customer survey or questionnaires:
  - Identify the products and services that customers actually want and need.
  - Identify any areas (such as: products/services/cleanliness/staff behaviour, etc) that needs to be improved or adjust or changed.
  - Able to reveal how an organisation compares to its competitors in the eyes of customers.

- The disadvantages of customer survey or Questionnaires:
  - Time consuming for both guests and management.
  - By giving ratings of 1 very dissatisfied – 5 very satisfied, they do not show enough information how a guest really feels.
  - It is more about the hotel products and how the service is delivered to customers instead of focusing on how the organisation can meet their needs to make the customers feel satisfied.
  - There is not enough space for the guest to say or write what they feel about the organisation.
7.2.3 Social networking or online web review

Based on the data, the advantages and disadvantages are:

- The advantages of social networking:
  
  ➢ Social networking has the power to spread the message through word of mouth or viral communication.
  
  ➢ Encourage consumers (members) to review and share their experiences on a wide range of the organisation’s products and services through online review.
  
  ➢ When there is a compliment or positive comments from the consumer, it will attract people interest to visit to the hotel.
  
  ➢ The advantage of social networking can be a challenge for the management as well. Due to the public accessibility anyone around the world could leave a comment on the review website. However, this is not a negative issue; instead it is an advantage for the management to take opportunity to improve their quality and to prove to the reviewers that the organisation does not like what the reviewers said.

- The disadvantages of social networking:
  
  ➢ When there is a complaint or negative comments from the consumer, this feedback will automatically affect the feeling or interest of someone to visit the organisation.
  
  ➢ Information left in the online web review is unreliable. As anyone (staff, customers, managers, societies or communities) is able to drop their comments on the online web.
  
  ➢ The online web review can also be used between organisations, because competitors are also able to leave their comments and remain anonymous.
  
  ➢ When a customer drops comments on the online web review, there is a little chance for the management to do a follow-up, for there is no customer identification on the online web.
7.3 Which is the most useful and cost effective feedback tool for the hotel industry?

Based on the data from both questionnaires and in depth interviews, the results showed that the most useful feedback mechanism is the guest comment card. Although it has been used for a long time, according to research respondents, guest comment cards' are still very useful and helpful as an organisation can identify particular issues, especially in terms of product and service quality. Besides that, it is able to create its own card based on what they want to hear from guests. All questions, methods, and style are based on what kind of information management is seeking from customers.

Figure 7.1 illustrates the benefits of how feedback mechanisms will help organisational growth.

Figure 7.1 the benefits of Feedback Mechanisms
7.4 Implications the findings

The outcomes of this project has a number of implications for hotel managers, employees and customers.

The study examined the importance of feedback mechanisms, their advantages and disadvantages, which are the most useful and cost effective and the positive benefits for the organisation. The outcomes of the study will especially assist hotel management to understand the importance of customer feedback and how it can influence product and service quality. The results show that feedback mechanisms are very important and helpful in identifying weakness areas, what customers are really seeking in a service and what they value the most. This means a hotel needs to have feedback mechanisms in place to understand customers' preferences so that it can differentiate itself from competitors, thus reiterating the need for a feedback mechanism. Hotel management needs to understand why the mechanism is in place and ensure everyone in the organisation also needs to know the reason why a specific feedback system has been chosen. Organisations use similar types but they contain different information because each organisation has its own strengths and weaknesses. Hotels use feedback mechanisms as a tool for management to build customer relations and to identify weaknesses to improve their product and services quality so they may achieve higher customer satisfaction.

The quantitative aspects of this research examined employees' points of view on feedback mechanisms. The questionnaire identified the employees understanding of them in their organisation, especially to identify if they work as front-line staff dealing with hotel guests on a day-to-day basis. It also reveals whether they have been given a chance to share customer suggestions they have received with management. The results imply that employees do understand the importance of customer feedback and the benefits it has for the organisation enabling improvement in product and services quality.

As customer satisfaction is very important in a competitive business environment, the quantitative and qualitative aspects of this study explored the influencing factors and prerequisites to achieve it. The results highlighted the relevance of customer feedback in an organisation, not only as a tool that identifies the strengths to be promoted but also discloses the weaknesses in need of improvement.
The existence of feedback mechanisms in the hotel will give both positive (compliments) and negative (complaints) regarding the quality of products and services of the hotel showing that customers do care about the organisation and that they are willing to take time to voice their dissatisfaction or satisfaction regarding its growth. All these factors have been identified in the literature (Browning, 2008; Burgess A & Bott, 1990; Cadotte & Turgeon, 1988; Comen, 1989; Hayward, 2008; M. Pullman, McGuire, & Cleveland, 2005; M. E. Pullman & Robson, 2007).

As stated in the literature review, in addition to the data, both qualitative and quantitative, a feedback mechanism is necessary for an organisation although its effectiveness in each organisation will differ. Despite using different or similar types of feedback mechanism they still benefit the organisation, however, much depends on how well the questions have been developed to obtain customer reaction to the services on offer and how well management has stressed the importance of the mechanism among departments.
7.5 Challenges faced in the research design

This study was designed to explore the usefulness of feedback mechanisms in the hotel industry. More specifically it investigated the most common types being used and how they impact on the organisation. Also investigated were the most useful and cost effective feedback mechanisms in the hotel industry, from both employer and employee perspectives they could lead to the organisation growth and improvements. Understandably, confidential documents such as samples of feedback mechanisms could not be reviewed or released in public for obvious reasons such as competition with other hotels.

However, these challenges did not hinder the project but rather assisted in making it more focused and specific for considering employer and employee perspectives, a deeper and more in-depth study was completed. There is an opportunity for further study adopting the same methodology but researching it from customers’ perspectives to investigate what actually occurs from all aspects and why.

Another difficulty that had to be overcome in the study was the reluctance of managers to give approval to participate in the short interview. Only 9 managers participated and 65 employees completed questionnaires relating to the research questions and objectives. Their feelings and motivation could not be fully explored. Future researchers may consider taking both a quantitative and qualitative approach to such a study, with longer interviews and larger numbers of participants.
7.6 Future study

As customers’ expectations are forever changing there is an unlimited opportunity for future study. There is a lack of empirical studies in the area of the usefulness and the benefits of feedback mechanisms in the hotel industry thus any future study would be beneficial. Possible future research could take the findings from this study and develop a model for measuring customers’ benefits. A major difficulty is the actual replication of the study in a variety of different environments. There is literature, however in this area describing scenario-based situations.

To fully understand the reasons behind the importance of feedback mechanisms, a cafe or restaurant could be used as a case study because it can be used in any industry no matter the type of organisation where the customer’s voice must be heard. This would be beneficial for both the hotel and the researcher as not only will there be more reliable data, but management will have a case study showcasing their strengths and weaknesses highlighting potential areas for improvement.
7.7 Limitations

There were some limitations for this project. As the duration of an honours thesis is only one year, this factor poses constraints and limitations. The methodology was adopted bearing these in mind thus minimising or eliminating possible difficulties. The time limit of was a major constraint as was the budget which restricted the scope type and scale of data collection. This limited the number of questionnaires that could be realistically administered and processed as well as the number and length of interviews. Another restriction was hospitality industry being so broad. The research could only focus on hotels with a rating of 3 stars and above. This research was meant to interview between 15 - 20 hotel managers in Perth (Western Australia), but unfortunately due to organisational policies and restrictions some hotels refused to participate. Although the results from the interviews and questionnaire provide information about the most useful and cost effective feedback mechanism, they are subjective, useful for some organisations, but not for others.

This study also focuses only on feedback mechanisms that will impact the customer service quality in an organisation and results may not be generalised to other industries. It only examines the feedback mechanisms at a project level, such as customer loyalty or customer returns level, not organisation profitability. Another restriction regarding this research was the problem of hotel procedures and related resources. Although efforts were made to contact individual hotels, there was a lack of approval from individual hotels to hold short interviews. And throughout data collection, the researcher experienced difficulty in getting the permission from most well-known 5 star hotel managers to conduct interviews. Had these been possible, they could have strengthened the study.

This study focuses on the impact on an organisations quality not on its productivity. Another potential limitation was that of conducted interviews with single key respondents in each organisation. If he or she is may be biased or lacks knowledge in these factors this could affect the results. To conclude, the research only examines feedback mechanisms of hotels in Perth, Western Australia limiting any generalisation of the findings to hotels in other countries.
7.8 Ethical considerations

Ethics is important when conducting research that involves human beings, organisations, or animals. Ethical approval was not required for the secondary data collection as it was all available and in public. Ethical clearance is a critical issue. The researcher must understand the basics of ethical research and how this might affect the research project (Smith & Quelch, 1992). This applies to respondents and the organisations, as well as those sponsored for the study research. Ethical approval from the University Human Research Ethics Committee was granted interviews. To adhere to these ethical guidelines, a cover letter was included with the questionnaires explaining to respondents that they would remain anonymous throughout the entire process, that there would be no personal or private questions asked at any time and that all data collected would be used only for the purpose of this study (See Appendix 2). Participants were also given contact details of the researcher, the supervisor, and the ethics committee. Respondents were also informed that all the data would be destroyed after the analysis stage of the project. Full assurance was given to all interviewees, respondents and organisations that names involved in the research will be kept confidential and respondents’ privacy guarded. In addition, as a student at Edith Cowan University, the researcher will also abide by the ethical codes of conduct set up by the University.
7.9 Conclusion

This study adopted a mixed methodology which utilised the strengths and minimised the weaknesses of either quantitative or qualitative methodology. A questionnaire was developed so that the results would not only focus on employers alone but include the employees' perspective which would support the answer to the research questions. The semi-structured interviews aided in adding depth and meaning to the information and the feelings and motivation of respondents' actions and behaviours.

From the qualitative in-depth interviews with hotel managers, it was found that management believed that by using feedback mechanisms in the hotel, there would be positive impacts that would lead to improvements in the hotel in terms of product and service quality. This was a significant result, as from the employees' points of view that a feedback mechanism is important not only for fulfilling the needs of customers. Also, helping the organisation to serve customers better by providing their needs and meeting or exceeding their expectancy. In addition such systems also help the organisation identify any weaknesses of products, services or employees that the management could not identify by themselves. The in-depth interviews with hotel managers reiterated what was found in the questionnaire results and added more understanding and thoughts to these findings.

Analyses of the results also revealed that of the available feedback mechanisms, guest comment cards are the most useful feedback mechanisms for the hospitality industry. However, this fact contrasts with the statement in the literature review. The results showed that although some respondents were using the same type feedback mechanisms, they had individual ways of collecting feedback from customers. Employers and employees thoughts, feeling, attitudes to and understanding of, feedback mechanisms were explored in both the questionnaires and the interviews. The results from both quantitative and qualitative showed that customer feedback is very important for an organisation. Even though they contain both positive and negative aspects. This is how an organisation is able to make improvements based on customers' perspective and not only considering those of the management. Also, when there is negative feedback, management is able to solve a problem quickly (i.e. compensation).
The results from this study indicated that 100% of the respondents agreed that feedback mechanisms are useful in the hospitality industry, however, they are systems or tools requiring support from the whole management who must know the purpose of the system and operate it by promoting and encouraging customers to give and share their thoughts to the organisation. Again, a feedback mechanism is not only about achieving, maintaining, improving or increasing customers’ satisfaction, it helps the organisation to eliminate or diminish any unused or unnecessary items that is not functioning properly.

This study’s results support the literature in identifying the importance of feedback mechanisms and also adds understanding about why they are useful and important for the hospitality industry. The study reiterates the need to understand the importance of customer feedback. The research also identifies that negative consequences will result from ignoring guest feedback or taking no corrective action once feedback is collected.
References


http://wilderdom.com/research/QualitativeVersusQuantitativeResearch.html


http://www.askoxford.com/concise_oed/feedback?view=uk


Appendix 1 – Research tools

MANAGEMENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

These questions are prepared based on the secondary data that has been collected throughout the semester. This is intended to be a loosely structured interview. It is anticipated that the specific questions asked will be dependent on the responsive of the interviewee.

1. (ICE BREAKER) The history of the Hotel
2. Have you used any of the feedback collecting tools in the Hotel? Which one?
3. What are the advantages and disadvantages for each of the feedback mechanism that you used in your organisation?
4. Which one from all the tools you have mentioned is the most useful?
5. Which feedback mechanism do you think is the most cost effective feedback tools in Hotel industry?
6. Do you think the feedback mechanisms will help the organisation to be more successful?
7. How does customer feedback influence the customer service quality in Hotel?
8. In your point of view, do you think customer feedback is useful and important for the Hotel?
9. Does the customer feedback lead to improvements for the Hotel or is it just a tradition of putting guest comment cards in their rooms or putting cards on the table in restaurant, etc?
10. What action does the hotel management take after the feedback collection? How often?
11. Do you know about the web accessible reviews or blogs?
12. Does your Hotel review these websites?
13. What is your opinion on these webs blogs?
14. Do you encourage employee to seek feedback from customers?
15. How do you encourage customers to give feedback?
16. Is there any recommendation that you are able to share to improve the quality and efficacy of customer feedback? Any method?
Employee questionnaire

This is an anonymous questionnaire. You should read the Information Letter carefully as it explains fully the intention of the research project. Please ensure that you do not write your name (or any other comments that could identify you) on the questionnaire. By completing the questionnaire, you are consenting to take part in this research.

INSTRUCTION: Please tick (V) to indicate your answer and explain where it’s asked

1. Gender:
   - Male
   - Female

2. Age:
   - 18 – 25
   - 26 – 35
   - 36 – 40
   - 40 and above

3. Which department are you working in?
   - receptions
   - Concierge
   - Housekeeping
   - Room Service
   - Restaurant/Café
   - Other: Please state______________________________

4. Are you employed?
   - Casual Employment
   - Part-time Employment
   - Full-time Employment

5. Which of the following guest feedback mechanisms does your hotel currently used?
   - Guest comment cards
   - Survey/Questionnaire
   - Telephone Interview
   - Face-to-face Interview
   - Website Online Review
   - Employee feedback/Observation
   - Other: Please explain________________________________________
   - None

6. Do you think feedback mechanisms are useful for hospitality industry?
   - Yes
   - No
7a. Do you personally encourage customers to give feedback about the quality of products and services in your hotel?
   Yes [ ]
   No [ ]

7b. If yes, how?

8a. Does your hotel encourage feedback from customers?
   Yes [ ]
   No [ ]

8b. If yes, how?
   Reception ask for feedback and comment [ ]
   Questionnaire is left in guest room [ ]
   Guests are directed to a website [ ]
   Others: _______________________

9. Have you been given a chance to share the suggestions you have received from the customers with the Hotel management?
   Yes [ ]
   No [ ]

10a. Are you asked by management for your opinion on guest feedback?
   Yes [ ]
   No [ ]

10b. If yes, how and by whom?

11. Do you think using feedback mechanisms will help the growth of the organisation, in terms of product/service quality?
   Yes, why?
   _______________________

   No, Why?
   _______________________

Thank you for your time ☺ I appreciate it very much.
Appendix 2 – Ethics Documentation

Email Informant letter

*Feedback Mechanisms in the Hospitality Industry - Why ask the guests?*

*An examination of the mechanisms and efficacy of guest feedback used in hotels*

To whom it may concern,

Thank you for your time. My name is Selly Sugio and I am a Bachelor of Hospitality Management (Honours) student of Edith Cowan University. Currently, I am conducting a research project into *customer feedback tools* used in Perth Hotels. The research project has been approved by the Faculty of Business and Law Ethics Committee.

The aim of this project is to identify the range of guest feedback collection mechanisms, their relative efficacy and cost effectiveness in the Perth hotel industry.

I would like to interview a supervisor/manager who deals with customer feedback in your organisation. I envisage the interview would take approximately 20 mins.

As I am interested in the perceptions of both management and staff, I would like to also have the opportunity to survey your Room Division employees. The survey will only take about 5-10 minutes to complete. I will supply the surveys for distribution to your employees and collect the surveys.

All information and details will be kept confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this project. You will not be identified in any written assignment or presentation of the results of this project.

Participation in this project is voluntary. If you choose to participate, you are free to withdraw from further participation at any time without giving a reason.

If you have any questions or require any further information about the project, please contact:

*Students name & Contact number: Selly Sugio & [Redacted]*

*Supervisor name & Contact number: Nevil Alexander & 6304 5540*

If you have any concerns or complaints about the project and wish to talk to an independent person, you may contact: Research Ethics Officer Phone: 6304 2170. Email: research.ethics@ecu.edu.au

I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you.

Kind Regards,

Bachelor of Hospitality Management with Honours
Feedback Mechanisms in the Hospitality Industry -

Why ask the guests?

An examination of the mechanisms and efficacy of guest feedback used in hotels.

Thank you for your time. My name is Selly Sugio and I am a Bachelor of Hospitality Management (Honours) student of Edith Cowan University. Currently, I am conducting a research project into customer feedback tools used in Perth Hotels. The research project has been approved by the Faculty of Business and Law Ethics Committee.

The aim of this project is to identify the range of guest feedback collection mechanisms, their relative efficacy and cost effectiveness in the Perth hotel industry.

All information or details provided by you will be kept confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this project. You will not be identified in any written assignment or presentation of the results of this project.

Participation in this project is voluntary.

The attached questionnaire is expected to take 5-10 minutes to complete.

If you have any questions or require any further information about the project, please contact:

Students name & Contact number: Selly Sugio

Supervisor name & Contact number: Nevil Alexander & 6304 5540

If you have any concerns or complaints about the project and wish to talk to an independent person, you may contact: Research Ethics Officer Phone: (08) 6304 2170 Email: research.ethics@ecu.edu.au

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you.

Kind Regards,

Bachelor of Hospitality Management
E-mail: ssugio@student.ecu.edu.au
Mobile number:
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