

FOURTH EDITION

CUSTOMER SERVICE FOR **HOSPITALITY** AND **TOURISM**



SIMON AND LOUISE HUDSON



Customer Service for Hospitality and Tourism

Fourth Edition

Simon and Louise Hudson

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Preface

Providing high quality customer service should be at the top of every CEO's agenda. In the last few decades, businesses have changed dramatically as the global economy has shifted from a dependence on manufacturing to a focus on providing timely, quality service. The service economy is now in full swing, driven by increased technology, globalization, de-regulation and changing consumer behaviour. The COVID-19 pandemic has also dramatically altered the service landscape with the acceleration in the use of technology and an increase in customer demands impacting service delivery for many organizations. Customer service is, therefore, more important than ever before, especially given that expectations continue to rise and consumers are less forgiving of mediocre standards.

But despite its importance, quality customer service is the exception rather than the norm in many parts of the world. There are various reasons for this. When economic conditions become more demanding, many organizations focus on cost cutting and acquiring new customers which invariably puts the relationships with their existing customers at risk. Quite often training budgets are the first to get cut. In addition, many organizations simply don't understand the significance of customer service, despite the exhaustive literature that has made the connection between service excellence, satisfaction and loyalty – and, therefore, profits. Customer service training is often viewed by these organizations as a cost rather than an investment. Finally, even if companies recognize the importance of customer service, they don't know how to deliver consistent, high quality customer service on an on-going basis.

Given the critical importance of customer service for the tourism and hospitality sector, it is remarkable that (until now) there was no comprehensive text that deals with this important topic. There are a number of service marketing textbooks that are strong theoretically, but they only pay lip-service to the actual delivery of customer service. There are also many customer service handbooks with worksheets for practitioners to use, but they lack the theory behind the practice. So, this book is useful for both students and practitioners as it explains not only the theory behind the importance of customer service but also acts as a guidebook for those wishing to put this theory into practice. In essence it is the 'whys' and 'hows' of customer service. By focusing on tourism and hospitality businesses, this text makes a unique contribution to the literature – no other book of this kind exists. In addition to making a theoretical contribution, the text is also of great value to those planning to join – or already working in – the service industry, since customer service is critical to most businesses in this sector.

The fourth edition of this book – like the first three – is easy to read, very current, and full of references to all the latest research. Chapters cover important topics such as the financial and behavioral consequences of customer service, consumer trends influencing service, developing and maintaining a service culture, managing service encounters, the importance of market research, building and maintaining customer relationships, providing customer service through the servicescape, the impact of technology on customer service, the importance of service recovery, and promoting customer service internally and externally. The fourth edition also pays special attention to two important influences on customer service for organizations – sustainability and artificial intelligence (AI). A new chapter in this fourth edition is dedicated to sustainability, focusing on sustainability initiatives in different sectors of hospitality and tourism, and the links between customer service and sustainability. There is also a new section in the book on the impact of AI on customer service and service recovery, and a section on intelligent servicescapes.

In addition to fresh, up-to-date material, the fourth edition contains several new case studies from around the world that highlight exceptional customer service in practice. These include cases on the Marina Bay Sands in Singapore, Taj Hotels in India, the Ivy Collection, Marriott Bonvoy, Soho House, and Expedia's AI tool 'Romie'. In fact, there are 33 case studies in total. An 'At Your Service' spotlight at the beginning of each chapter focuses on the achievements of successful individuals or organizations related to the art of customer service. In the middle of each chapter there is a 'Service Snapshot' – short, real-life cases to illustrate a particular concept or theoretical principle presented in the chapter. At the end of every chapter there is an up-to-date, relevant and detailed 'Case Study', and as a collection, these case studies cover a variety of sectors, organizations and geographic regions. Designed to foster critical thinking, all the case studies illustrate actual business scenarios that stress concepts found in each chapter. Most of the case studies have been developed following a personal visit or in-depth interviews conducted by the authors.

About the authors

Dr Simon Hudson is a tourism and hospitality professor at the University of South Carolina. Simon has also held academic positions at universities in Canada and England, and has worked as a visiting professor in Australia, Austria, Fiji, New Zealand, Portugal, Spain, Aruba and Switzerland. He has also taught four times on Semester at Sea, a floating shipboard campus that integrates multiple-country study, interdisciplinary coursework, and hands-on field experiences for meaningful engagement in the global community. He has written



12 books on subjects such as tourism marketing, golf tourism, the international ski industry, sports and adventure tourism, COVID-19 and travel, and, of course, customer service!

Louise Hudson is a freelance journalist living in Portugal during summer and Canada in winter. She has collaborated with Simon on many of his books and research projects and co-wrote *Tourism and Hospitality Marketing: A Global Perspective*, *Golf Tourism*, *Winter Sport Tourism*, and *Worldwide Guide to Retirement Destinations*. Originally trained in journalism in England, she has contributed as a freelancer to many publications including *Ski Canada* magazine, *USA Today*, *LA Times*, *Dallas Morning News*, *Boston Globe*, *Houston Chronicle*, *Canada's Globe and Mail*, *Calgary Herald*, *Canada's MORE* magazine, and *SNOW* magazine. She still writes travel blogs as well as articles for *Ski Canada*, *Sun Peaks Independent News*, *Tomorrow Algarve*, and *Style Altitude* magazine. Follow her travels at: www.onetwoski.blogspot.com.

