

# **Customer Service for Hospitality and Tourism**

**Second 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 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 behavior, among other factors. Customer service is therefore more important than ever before, especially given that expectations continue to rise and consumers are less forgiving of mediocre service.

But despite its importance, quality customer service is the exception rather than the norm in many parts of the world. There are a number of 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. Also, many companies wrongly believe they are providing service excellence. A study by the Bain Company, reported in the Harvard Management Update, revealed that 80% of companies surveyed believed they delivered superior service to their customers. When the customers of those same firms were surveyed, only 8% agreed. Nine out of ten companies who confidently assert the high level of their customers' satisfaction are completely misinformed. 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 is 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 will

also be 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 second edition of this book – like the first – is easy to read, very current, and full of references to all the latest research from both academic and practitioner literature. 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. In addition to fresh, up-to-date material, the second edition contains 12 new cases covering contemporary topics such as the sharing economy, virtual reality, spiritual tourism, trends in the cruise industry, social media, and culinary tourism.

An ‘At Your Service’ spotlight at the beginning of each chapter focuses on the achievements of successful individuals related to the art of customer service. In the middle of each chapter there is a ‘Service Snapshot’ – these are 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 will cover a variety of sectors, organizations and regions. Designed to foster critical thinking, the cases illustrate actual business scenarios that stress concepts found in the chapter. All cases have been developed following a personal visit or in-depth interviews conducted by the authors, and there is an international flavor throughout the book. Cases analyse customer service in the USA, Canada, South America, South Africa, Europe, Russia, Australia, Japan, China, South Korea and India.

The last chapter of the book is a handbook that practitioners can use to implement a generic customer service program. The handbook has a number of structured activities and each exercise is accompanied by a facilitator’s guide that a trainer can follow (with an explanation of their purpose and learning outcomes).

## About the authors

**Dr. Simon Hudson** is an Endowed Chair in Tourism at the University of South Carolina. He has held previous academic positions at universities in Canada and England, and has worked as a visiting professor in Austria, Switzerland, Spain, Fiji, New Zealand, the United States, and Australia. Prior to working in academia, Dr Hudson spent several years working in the tourism industry in Europe, and he now consults for the industry in North America. Dr. Hudson has written eight books. His first, published in 2000 and called *Snow Business*, was the first book to be written about the international ski industry, and *Sports and Adventure Tourism* was an edited text that came out in 2003. His third book (in two editions), *Marketing for Tourism and Hospitality: A Canadian Perspective*, has sold more than 10,000 copies, and *Tourism and Hospitality Marketing: A Global Perspective* was published in 2008. His 2010 book, *Golf Tourism*, was the first text written about this vast and growing worldwide industry, and he has since written a second edition. In 2013 he published the first edition of this book, *Customer Service for Tourism & Hospitality*, and then in 2015 he published *Winter Sport Tourism: Working in Winter Wonderlands*. His latest book is called *Marketing for Tourism, Hospitality, and Events* and is published by Sage in London. The marketing of tourism is the focus of his research, and in addition to the books, he has published around 70 refereed journal articles from his work. Hudson is frequently invited to international tourism conferences as a keynote speaker.



**Louise Hudson** is a freelance travel journalist. She has collaborated with Dr Hudson on many of his books and research projects and co-wrote *Tourism and Hospitality Marketing: A Global Perspective*, *Golf Tourism*, *Customer Service* and *Winter Sport Tourism: Working in Winter Wonderlands* with him. Originally trained in journalism in England, she now writes for many publications including *USA Today*, *LA Times*, *Dallas Morning News*, *Houston Chronicle*, Canada's *Globe and Mail* and *Dreamscapes Magazine*, *Calgary Sun*, *Calgary Herald* and Canada.com network, *Edmonton Sun*, *Ottawa Citizen*, Canada's *MORE* magazine, *Sheen Magazine*, *Wink Magazine*, *Alberta Parent*, *Calgary's Child*, *Travel Alberta*, *Fresh Tracks*, *Alberta Hospitality* and *BC Inn Focus* magazine among others. Louise has also collaborated with Dr Hudson in writing and presenting retail workshops and handbooks to help small businesses in marketing, customer service and social media networking. You can read more of Louise's travel stories at [www.onetwoski.blogspot.com](http://www.onetwoski.blogspot.com).

