

# Is the customer a king?

## 1. Adjectives for describing customer service

Which of the following adjectives describe good customer service, and which describe bad customer service?

**Businesslike**   **child-friendly**   **cold**   **efficient**   **honest**   **impersonal**  
**indifferent**   **laid-back**   **personal**   **smooth**   **unobtrusive**   **unprofessional**  
**warm**

Good service	Bad service

Read the article and tick the adjectives describing customer service.

## Is the customer king?

Where in the world can you expect the best from staff at hotels and restaurants?

- 1 Good service is serious stuff - it's often what we remember most from our travels and it makes us come back for more. Ask a frequent traveller for their opinion on the subject and they barely pause for thought.
- 2 "In my experience, the best service is in the Far East and Middle Eastern countries - they really try to please the clients and if you are travelling with your family it's genuinely child-friendly," says Marjan Farhad, a London-based knitwear buyer. Farhad thinks the US has a good grasp of what it's all about as well - she travels to New York several times a year: "they still realise the customer is everything".
- 3 Other frequent travellers have very similar opinions. The level of service in the international hotels in Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore is "among the best in the world" according to music company executive Richard Piercy who lived in Singapore for three years. "It's very good; it's very personal and very intensive. There's a human touch to it, there's a lot of warmth, and it's not just transactional. The Asians do it very well because they are very personable and very charming." However, Piercy, who is now based in London, says when it comes to bars and restaurants it's the Americans who win hands

down precisely because of their system of tipping. "The staff have a strong incentive to give good service so they largely rely on their tips and if you do tip quite well then you do get very good service."

4 Management consultant John Erik Ellingsen believes as a business traveller you can be well protected from bad service. Choose the brand names and you get what you pay for. Ellingsen's job takes him on a regular basis to major cities in India, the US and Europe: Barcelona, Amsterdam and Paris. At all these destinations he stays in business hotels. "They're efficient and businesslike, you're not pampered but you do feel they work. You know exactly what to expect. In many ways they're interchangeable you feel you could be in any major city. But when you're making short, brief, visits for meetings, it's what you want: everything functions well and things happen when they're meant to".

5 And if you don't get the service you feel you're entitled to you should let it be known says Ellingsen. He did, to great effect, on a recent trip from London to Mumbai. "I landed at midnight and got to my hotel around one. Crucially I was in time for the second half of a match between Manchester United and AC Milan. Despite the fact that my room had been booked two months in advance the receptionist told me the hotel was full and they were relocating me to another one. I never usually get angry but I insisted I was not moving. Within minutes they found a room for me and I was in time to see a fantastic late goal from Rooney."

6 Of course many would argue it's all very subjective: if you're in a good mood, if work is going well, you might not even notice the effort being put into making your trip a smooth one. It's only when things go wrong, or you're finding the journey a chore, that you're aware of what's going on around you. "On a long a busy trip even the smallest issues get magnified," says Scott Thomson, a brand creation manager. "A card rejection, the buzz from the almost silent air-conditioning, a room key not working, the mini bar missing the peanuts. I hardly ever notice the things that go well and the service that is good or even great."

7 Ironically publishing executive Ian Bartley actually believes the best service is unobtrusive and unseen: "My vote goes to Amsterdam for the most natural, laid-back and invisible service - how it should be."

### Find a word or phrase in the text which means.

1. stop to think about something (*phrase, P1*) \_\_\_\_\_
2. pleasant and likeable (*formal adj., P3*) \_\_\_\_\_
3. win very easily (*idiom, P3*) \_\_\_\_\_
4. something that encourages or motivates someone to do something (*noun, P3*) \_\_\_\_\_
5. treated in a special way by being given anything you want and made to feel as comfortable as possible (*adj., P4*) \_\_\_\_\_
6. an unpleasant task (*noun, P6*) \_\_\_\_\_

### Expressions for describing customer service

Look at the following expressions from the text and match them to the comments below:

- A. There's a human touch to it.
- B. They have a good grasp of what it's all about.
- C. You get what you pay for.
- D. You know exactly what to expect.
- E. They realise the customer is everything.

1. They did everything they could to please me.
2. It was a cheap hotel and the service wasn't very good.
3. They take care of you as an individual person.
4. They understand what they need to do to provide good customer service.
5. You can always rely on the service in this hotel, wherever you are in the world. There are no unpleasant surprises.