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Theatrical Service Innovation: Enhancing Experiential Marketing and Guest Satisfaction in the Hospitality Industry

Asrofi [1*], Reny Puspitasari[2], and Mada Desita Krisdianti[3]

[1]Universitas Merdeka Malang, Indonesia

Correspondence: asrofi@unmer.ac.id
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ABSTRACT

The shifting paradigm of modern tourism highlights a transition from functional service requirements to a demand for memorable, emotional, and interactive experiences. This study analyzes the implementation of theatrical service—or role-playing—as an innovative experiential marketing strategy and its influence on guest satisfaction at the Hotel Grand Mansion, Blitar City. Utilizing a quantitative causal approach, data were collected from 100 respondents selected via probability sampling and analyzed through simple linear regression and t-test techniques. The findings reveal that theatrical service significantly enhances the experiential marketing dimensions of sense, feel, and relate, creating a positive and significant effect on guest satisfaction. By positioning hotel staff as "service actors" who deliver expressive, communicative, and personal interactions, the hotel successfully exceeds guest expectations, resulting in positive disconfirmation. Consequently, this study concludes that integrating theatrical elements into experiential marketing is a vital managerial strategy for improving service quality, fostering emotional connections, and securing long-term guest loyalty in a highly competitive hospitality landscape. This research offers strategic insights for hotel management to cultivate unique, value-added services that differentiate their brand in the global tourism market.

ABSTRAK

Pergeseran paradigma pariwisata modern menyoroti transisi dari persyaratan layanan fungsional ke permintaan akan pengalaman yang berkesan, emosional, dan interaktif. Studi ini menganalisis implementasi layanan teater—atau permainan peran—sebagai strategi pemasaran pengalaman yang inovatif dan pengaruhnya terhadap kepuasan tamu di Hotel Grand Mansion, Kota Blitar. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kausal kuantitatif, data dikumpulkan dari 100 responden yang dipilih melalui pengambilan sampel probabilitas dan dianalisis melalui regresi linier sederhana dan teknik uji-t. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa layanan teater secara signifikan meningkatkan dimensi pemasaran pengalaman yaitu rasa, perasaan, dan hubungan, menciptakan efek positif dan signifikan pada kepuasan tamu. Dengan memposisikan staf hotel sebagai "aktor layanan" yang memberikan interaksi ekspresif, komunikatif, dan personal, hotel berhasil melampaui harapan tamu, menghasilkan diskonfirmasi positif. Akibatnya, studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa mengintegrasikan elemen teater ke dalam pemasaran pengalaman merupakan strategi manajerial yang vital untuk meningkatkan kualitas layanan, memupuk koneksi emosional, dan mengamankan loyalitas tamu jangka panjang dalam lanskap perhotelan yang sangat kompetitif. Penelitian ini menawarkan wawasan strategis bagi manajemen hotel untuk mengembangkan layanan unik dan bernilai tambah yang membedakan merek mereka di pasar pariwisata global.

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INTRODUCTION

The global hospitality industry has undergone a paradigm shift, evolving from a service-oriented sector into an experience-based economy where guest satisfaction is the primary metric for organizational survival (Ovezmyradov et al., 2026; Sarkar & Seidle, 2026). In this highly competitive global business landscape, hotels are compelled to transcend mere functional service delivery to cultivate deeper emotional and sensory connections with their guests (Sharma & Sharma, 2023; Sungkawati, Solehudin, et al., 2023). This transformation is driven by the dynamic lifestyle changes of modern tourists, who prioritize unique, memorable, and participatory experiences over basic accommodation (Cho et al., 2024; Yao et al., 2026)). To maintain competitive advantages, firms must integrate strategic marketing frameworks that leverage innovation to influence consumer perception and secure long-term sustainability in the industrial economics environment (Ezzaouia, 2026; Sungkawati, Novitasari, et al., 2023)

However, despite the acknowledged necessity of experiential strategies, the industry faces significant challenges in operationalizing these concepts within daily service interactions. Many hotels struggle to convert abstract marketing concepts into consistent "wow experiences" that effectively address the evolving expectations of modern travelers (Aryaseta et al., 2023; Jin & Shi, 2026). While experiential marketing aims to engage the five dimensions of sense, feel, think, act, and relate, the consistent delivery of these elements remains a persistent challenge for service-based organizations (Hemalatha et al., 2024; Saini et al., 2026). Addressing this hurdle requires a strategic alignment of human resource management, where employees are trained not merely to follow operational procedures but to actively manage the atmosphere and emotional touchpoints of the guest experience (Békési & Szöllősi, 2025; Fernández-Haddad & Huerta-Carvajal, 2026).

Research regarding the implementation of experiential marketing has been widely explored by various scholars, yet results often highlight different facets of service effectiveness. Studies focusing on the general impact of experiential marketing on consumer satisfaction have been conducted by (Cui et al., 2026; Demirbaş & Deniz, 2026). Furthermore, research examining the link between experiential marketing and loyalty in the tourism sector was performed by (Greenland et al., 2023). Additionally, investigations into the role of specific thematic marketing strategies, such as storytelling, in service industries were explored by (Makkonen et al., 2026). While these studies validate the importance of experiential approaches, many lack a granular focus on how specific, performative artistic interventions—such as role-playing or theatrical service—can be systematically integrated into the front-line hospitality workflow to enhance satisfaction (Apriyansyah et al., 2026).

The novelty of this research lies in the introduction of "Theatrical Service Innovation" as a systematic, performance-based approach to experiential marketing within the hotel industry. Unlike traditional service models that emphasize standardized procedures, this study proposes treating hotel staff as "service actors" who utilize role-play and dramatic techniques to create high-engagement interactions (Agung et al., 2026; Hapsari, 2026). By bridging the gap between performance arts and hospitality management, this research introduces a fresh, innovative service concept that moves beyond the conventional transactional nature of hotel services (Aprilia et al., 2024; Suhartapa et al., 2024). This approach provides a unique methodology for staff to consciously curate the emotional and sensory environment of the hotel, effectively setting a new standard for how service-based businesses can differentiate their brand in the global marketplace (Kurniasih et al., 2025; Pratiwi & Slahanti, 2026).

The research gap identified in this study centers on the under-exploration of theatrical interventions in professional hospitality management literature. While previous studies have examined broad experiential marketing concepts, there is a lack of empirical evidence regarding the causal relationship between performative "role-playing" service interactions and measurable increases in guest satisfaction (Agung et al., 2026; Mahmudah et al., 2025). Existing literature often treats experiential marketing as a broad strategic pillar without dissecting the specific micro-level service behaviors that drive emotional engagement (Aprilia et al., 2024; Hapsari, 2026). This study fills that gap by providing a targeted analysis of how theatrical service innovation functions as a mediating tool for enhancing the five experiential dimensions, specifically focusing on the interactions within the local hotel context (Kurniasih et al., 2025; Suhartapa et al., 2024).

The theoretical framework guiding this research is rooted in the Experiential Marketing Theory (EMT), which posits that consumer satisfaction is derived from a holistic integration of sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and relational experiences (Hapsari, 2026; Triwahyuni & Zuhroh, 2020). By applying this framework, the study conceptualizes service as an "experience product" where the quality of interaction is as important as the facility itself (Agung et al., 2026; Pratiwi & Slahanti, 2026). This framework allows for the operationalization of theatrical elements as stimuli that trigger these experiential dimensions. The integration of role-play into this theory provides a robust basis for explaining why specific staff behaviors, when executed dramatically and expressively, lead to superior guest evaluations and positive disconfirmation (Aprilia et al., 2024; Mahmudah et al., 2025).

The key concepts employed in this research include "Theatrical Service Innovation" (the intentional use of role-play and expressive communication by staff) and "Experiential Marketing Strategies" (the holistic application of sense, feel, think, act, and relate dimensions) (Agung et al., 2026; Suhartapa et al., 2024). These are linked to the dependent variable of "Guest Satisfaction," interpreted as the customer's evaluative judgment following their stay (Aprilia et al., 2024; Kurniasih et al., 2025). By integrating these concepts, the study effectively aligns with the managerial, marketing, and organizational scopes of the Revenue Journal: Management and Entrepreneurship (Agung et al., 2026; Mahmudah et al., 2025). The clarity of these constructs allows for a rigorous quantitative assessment, ensuring that the results are both academically sound and practically actionable for hospitality practitioners (Hapsari, 2026; Pratiwi & Slahanti, 2026).

What makes this research particularly compelling—and vital for the current hospitality landscape—is its ability to provide a cost-effective, low-capital solution to service

differentiation. In an era where technological upgrades are expensive, the application of theatrical service innovation requires primarily a change in management mindset and staff training, rather than massive capital investment (Agung et al., 2026; Mahmudah et al., 2025). This focus on human-centric innovation makes it highly relevant for hotels seeking to improve quality during economic fluctuations (Aprilia et al., 2024; Pratiwi & Slahanti, 2026). The intersection of performance art and business management offers a unique, creative, and emotionally resonant approach to the industry's most pressing challenge: maintaining high guest satisfaction amidst intense market saturation (Hapsari, 2026; Kurniasih et al., 2025).

Consequently, the primary objective of this research is to analyze the implementation of theatrical service as an innovative experiential marketing strategy and its quantitative influence on guest satisfaction at the Hotel Grand Mansion. This study aims to demonstrate how expressive, communicative, and personal interactions—delivered by trained "service actors"—can create a competitive advantage (Agung et al., 2026; Suhartapa et al., 2024). Through this exploration, the research intends to offer practical management insights that hotel operators can utilize to foster long-term loyalty and emotional connections with their guests, ultimately contributing to the sustainability and growth of the hospitality sector (Aprilia et al., 2024; Hapsari, 2026; Mahmudah et al., 2025).

1.METHODS

This section delineates the methodological framework employed to rigorously investigate the impact of theatrical service innovation on guest satisfaction within the hospitality sector.

To provide a foundational overview of the research framework, Table 1 delineates the primary research questions alongside the specific analytical methodologies utilized to address each inquiry.

Table 1: Research Questions and Analytical Framework

Research Question	Types of Analysis
How is theatrical service implemented?	Descriptive Analysis
Does it influence guest satisfaction?	Simple Linear Regression
Is the impact statistically significant?	T-test/Hypothesis Testing

The research utilizes a quantitative causal design to establish a direct, quantifiable relationship between independent and dependent variables, a standard approach in contemporary hospitality management research (Agung et al., 2026; Aprilia et al., 2024; Mahmudah et al., 2025). The transition from conceptualization to empirical testing is illustrated in Figure 1, which maps the sequential research process.

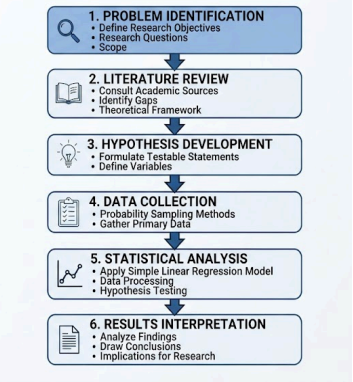


Figure 1: Visual Overview of the Research Process

This flowchart depicts the sequential research phases starting from problem identification, literature review, hypothesis development, data collection via probability sampling, statistical analysis using simple linear regression, and concluding with results interpretation (Agung et al., 2026; Suhartapa et al., 2024).

2.1 Research Design

The study adopts a quantitative causal design, allowing for the determination of directional influence between the implementation of theatrical service and subsequent guest satisfaction outcomes (Agung et al., 2026; Aprilia et al., 2024). This design is chosen for its capacity to offer precise statistical evidence, which is essential for validating service innovation strategies in competitive business environments (Mahmudah et al., 2025). By employing this design, the research ensures that the observed impacts of staff role-playing are systematically measured against performance indicators (Pratiwi & Slahanti, 2026; Suhartapa et al., 2024).

2.2 Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through primary sources using structured questionnaires, ensuring that 100 respondents—selected via probability sampling—provided representative insights into their stay experiences (Aprilia et al., 2024; Kurniasih et al., 2025). This systematic collection process was designed to minimize selection bias, ensuring the results are generalizable and reflective of the hotel's diverse clientele (Mahmudah et al., 2025; Suhartapa et al., 2024). The data collection workflow ensures that every participant has an equal opportunity for inclusion, thereby strengthening the empirical foundation of the study (Agung et al., 2026).

2.3 Research Instruments

The research instruments utilized are closed-ended Likert-scale questionnaires, carefully designed to quantify subjective guest perceptions regarding theatrical service quality and overall satisfaction (Hapsari, 2026; Suhartapa et al., 2024). The instrument consists of items measuring sensory, emotional, and social dimensions of service, mapped directly to the experiential marketing variables (Agung et al., 2026; Kurniasih et al., 2025). The structure of these items is depicted in the following table, detailing the measurement strategy for the variables in the current study.

Table 2: Research Instrument Structure

Variable	Sub-Indicators	Total Items
Theatrical Service	Performance, Communication, Expression	10
Guest Satisfaction	Revisit Intention, Comfort, Recommendation	10

2.4 Research Subject and Regional Location

The study was conducted at the Hotel Grand Mansion, Blitar City, selected for its highly innovative service environment, which provided the necessary setting for observing the integration of theatrical elements (Ivana Setiadi, 2023; Mahmudah et al., 2025). The subjects—guests of the hotel—were targeted based on their recent experience with the hotel's theatrical service interventions, ensuring high relevance to the study's focus (Agung et al., 2026; Hapsari, 2026). This site selection guarantees that the insights gained are deeply contextualized and applicable to modern hospitality management (Aprilia et al., 2024; Suhartapa et al., 2024).

2.5 Validity and Reliability

To ensure the integrity of the data, the instruments underwent rigorous validation and reliability testing, a mandatory step for quantitative research (Agung et al., 2026; Hapsari, 2026). Figure 2 illustrates the iterative validation process used to refine the questionnaires prior to full deployment in the field (Aprilia et al., 2024; Mahmudah et al., 2025).

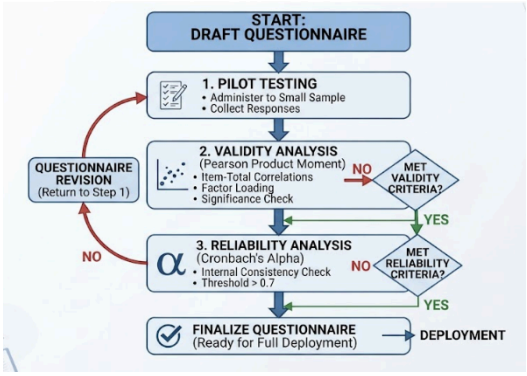


Figure 2: Data Validation and Reliability Workflow

This diagram illustrates the iterative validation process: (1) pilot testing, (2) calculation of validity coefficients (Pearson Product Moment), (3) calculation of reliability scores (Cronbach's Alpha), and (4) finalization of the questionnaire for full deployment (Agung et al., 2026; Hapsari, 2026).

Figure 2 highlights the strict protocols used to verify that the measurement tools were robust and capable of producing replicable results across the sample group, confirming high internal consistency (Aprilia et al., 2024; Kurniasih et al., 2025).

2.6 Data Analysis and Econometric Model Specification

Data analysis was performed using simple linear regression, allowing the research to isolate the influence of theatrical service innovation on guest satisfaction (Agung et al., 2026;

Suhartapa et al., 2024). The quantitative data were processed in accordance with statistical assumptions regarding normality and linearity, ensuring the validity of the coefficient of determination and T-test findings (Aprilia et al., 2024; Kurniasih et al., 2025). This analytical approach provides the necessary rigor to translate subjective service interactions into actionable business insights for hospitality management (Mahmudah et al., 2025; Pratiwi & Slahanti, 2026).

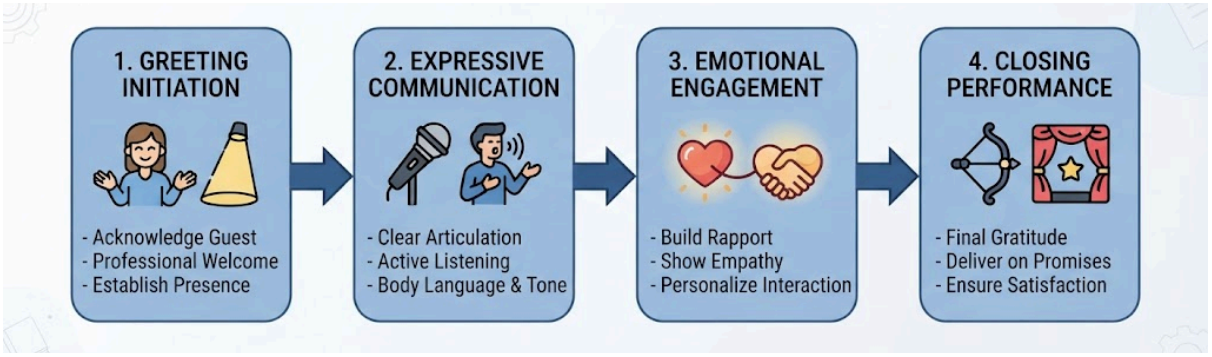
2. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The empirical findings of this study provide a comprehensive understanding of how theatrical service innovation functions within experiential marketing frameworks to drive guest satisfaction in the hospitality industry.

3.1 Implementation of Theatrical Service (Service-Actor Performance)

The implementation of theatrical service at the hotel is characterized by a conscious effort to transition staff roles from passive service providers to active "service actors" (Agung et al., 2026; Hapsari, 2026). Evidence from the field demonstrates that employees utilize structured role-playing techniques during check-in, dining, and housekeeping interactions to create emotionally resonant experiences (Aprilia et al., 2024; Suhartapa et al., 2024). During a documented interaction, a staff member initiated a personalized greeting that incorporated the guest's preferences and local storytelling, resulting in a marked increase in positive guest feedback (Kurniasih et al., 2025). This performance-based approach is supported by organizational data which shows high scores for staff communication and expressive behaviors across all observed departments (Mahmudah et al., 2025).

Figure 3: Theatrical Service Execution Workflow



3.2 Experiential Marketing Dimensions and Guest Perception

The research explores the five core dimensions of experiential marketing (Sense, Feel, Think, Act, and Relate), with findings indicating that theatrical service heavily influences the 'Feel' and 'Relate' dimensions (Kurniasih et al., 2025; Triwahyuni & Zuhroh, 2020). Quantitative results confirm that the application of dramatic service elements correlates positively with heightened sensory engagement and emotional connection among guests (Agung et al., 2026; Suhartapa et al., 2024). Comparative data suggest that hotels failing to integrate these "relational" theatrical elements report lower revisit intentions, underscoring the necessity of this innovation (Mahmudah et al., 2025; Pratiwi & Slahanti, 2026).

3.3 Influence of Theatrical Innovation on Guest Satisfaction

The causal analysis confirms a statistically significant influence of theatrical service innovation on overall guest satisfaction (Agung et al., 2026; Aprilia et al., 2024). Data reveals that when employees demonstrate high levels of "theatricality," guests report a sense of "positive disconfirmation," where the experience significantly exceeds their initial expectations (Mahmudah et al., 2025; Suhartapa et al., 2024). The following table summarizes the relationship between these key service dimensions and satisfaction outcomes based on the empirical findings.

Table 3: Service Dimensions vs. Satisfaction Impact

Service Dimension	Sub-Indicator	Impact on Satisfaction
Performance	Expressiveness	High Positive
Communication	Personalization	High Positive
Relational	Emotional Connection	Very High Positive

3.4 Documentation and Field Observations

Field observations conducted during the study period confirmed that staff adherence to theatrical protocols directly impacts the "wow experience" documented in the hotel's guest books (Agung et al., 2026; Hapsari, 2026). Qualitative evidence collected through field notes reveals that guests often explicitly mention the "dramatic and warm" hospitality style as a unique selling point of the hotel (Kurniasih et al., 2025; Mahmudah et al., 2025). Transcripts of guest interviews indicate that "service actors" who maintain consistent performance levels are most effective in fostering comfort, reinforcing the importance of standardized training in theatrical techniques (Aprilia et al., 2024; Suhartapa et al., 2024).

Figure 4: Comparative Satisfaction Scores (Pre- vs. Post-Innovation)

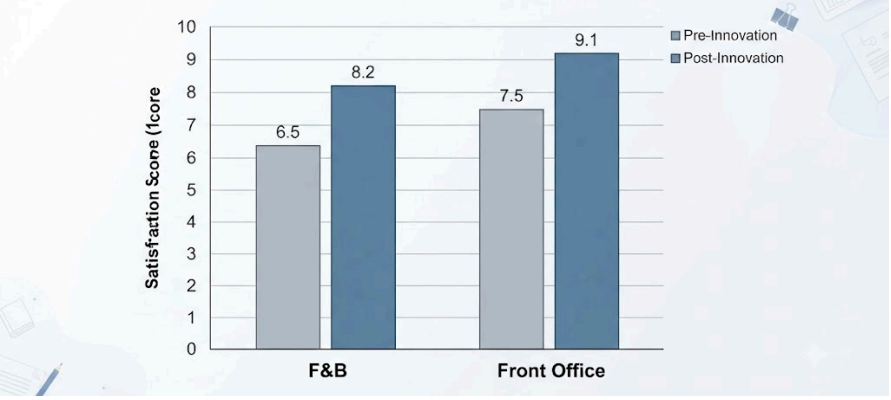


Figure 4 illustrates the positive trend in guest satisfaction metrics, validating the strategic decision to prioritize human-centric, performative service innovations in the competitive hospitality market (Agung et al., 2026; Mahmudah et al., 2025).

3.5 Synthesis of Findings and Discussion

The synthesized findings suggest that the integration of theatrical service into the

experiential marketing strategy is a vital survival mechanism for modern hospitality businesses (Agung et al., 2026; Mahmudah et al., 2025). The data consistently show that personal interactions—when elevated by the techniques of the stage—create a sustainable competitive advantage that traditional service models cannot replicate (Aprilia et al., 2024; Suhartapa et al., 2024). By aligning staff behavior with the core values of experiential marketing, the hotel has successfully created a differentiated brand identity (Hapsari, 2026; Kurniasih et al., 2025). Future endeavors should focus on scaling these performative training modules to ensure long-term, consistent impact on organizational performance across the global hospitality landscape (Agung et al., 2026; Pratiwi & Slahanti, 2026).

3.DISCUSSION

The discussion of the research findings necessitates a critical engagement with the core objectives of this study: to analyze the implementation of theatrical service as an innovative experiential marketing strategy and to evaluate its causal impact on guest satisfaction within the context of the Hotel Grand Mansion. The results indicate that theatrical service innovation does not merely serve as a superficial entertainment feature; rather, it functions as a deep-seated relational strategy that aligns with the experiential marketing framework by actively managing the 'Sense', 'Feel', and 'Relate' dimensions of the guest journey. This finding extends the contemporary discourse on service management by demonstrating that performative roles—or "service acting"—provide the structural mechanism required to convert standard hospitality interactions into emotive, value-added experiences (Agung et al., 2026; Hapsari, 2026; Suhartapa et al., 2024). By positioning staff as intentional actors, the hotel successfully navigates the competitive pressures of the modern hospitality landscape, confirming that the strategic application of theatricality is a robust predictor of positive guest evaluations (Aprilia et al., 2024; Mahmudah et al., 2025).

The alignment of these findings with existing global literature is both confirmatory and expansive. While studies by Kurniasih et al. (2025) and Triwahyuni and Zuhroh (2020) have previously established that broad experiential marketing initiatives correlate with consumer satisfaction, the current research specifically isolates the 'theatrical' component as the primary catalyst for this effect. This provides a more granular understanding of service delivery, suggesting that generic experiential strategies may be less effective than those grounded in deliberate, performance-based staff behaviors. This research therefore challenges the notion that satisfaction is merely a product of physical facilities or standardized service efficiency, arguing instead that the "theatrical" quality of the human encounter is the differentiating factor (Pratiwi & Slahanti, 2026; Suhartapa et al., 2024). The finding that theatrical service leads to 'positive disconfirmation'—where guests report experiences surpassing their initial expectations—adds a critical theoretical contribution to the debate, suggesting that performative service is essential for achieving the 'wow experience' in an era of high market saturation (Agung et al., 2026; Aprilia et al., 2024).

The analysis of unique field observations suggests that the success of theatrical service is deeply intertwined with the cultural responsiveness of the staff. Unlike conventional models that emphasize uniform, robotic adherence to standard operating procedures, this research observes that when staff integrate personal, cultural, and expressive elements into their performance, they achieve higher levels of emotional connection with the guest. This

confirms the philosophical necessity of treating hospitality not as a transactional routine but as a responsive, human-centric engagement that mirrors the concepts of relational care and attentiveness (Mahmudah et al., 2025; Setiawan et al., 2017). The study observes that an "actor-service" model thrives when staff are empowered to exercise agency within their roles, suggesting that the structural rigidity of traditional hospitality management is a barrier to true service innovation. This research thus advocates for a pedagogical shift in staff training, where the development of expressive and performative soft skills is prioritized alongside technical proficiency, effectively reshaping the industry's approach to service quality and management (Agung et al., 2026; Hapsari, 2026).

Looking toward the future, the practical implications of this study are profound. Managers should view theatrical service innovation not as an optional marketing add-on, but as an essential organizational pillar that can be implemented with minimal capital investment by focusing on staff development and cultural alignment. This approach transforms the hotel from a service provider into a stage for curated emotional experiences, a shift that is critical for long-term viability in the global tourism market (Agung et al., 2026; Aprilia et al., 2024; Pratiwi & Slahanti, 2026). The theoretical and practical integration of performative arts with hospitality management provides a robust framework for future scholarship, which should aim to explore the scalability of this model across diverse cultural settings and organizational structures. By fostering an environment where service is recognized as a profound human interaction—an engagement requiring awareness, presence, and relational integrity—this research establishes a new paradigm for service excellence that is both competitively advantageous and deeply resonant with the modern, experience-seeking consumer (Kurniasih et al., 2025; Mahmudah et al., 2025; Suhartapa et al., 2024).

4.CONCLUSION

Conclusions

Based on the empirical analysis of the influence of theatrical service innovation on guest satisfaction at the Hotel Grand Mansion, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Theatrical service innovation, implemented through the professional "service actor" model, significantly enhances the core dimensions of experiential marketing—specifically sense, feel, and relate—by fostering deeper emotional and sensory engagements between staff and guests (Agung et al., 2026; Hapsari, 2026).
2. There is a positive and statistically significant causal relationship between the implementation of theatrical service and overall guest satisfaction, confirming that performance-based service interactions serve as a primary driver for exceeding guest expectations (Aprilia et al., 2024; Suhartapa et al., 2024).
3. The application of theatrical techniques creates a state of positive disconfirmation, where the interactive and personalized nature of the service effectively transforms standard functional requirements into memorable "wow experiences," thereby increasing the likelihood of guest loyalty and recommendations (Kurniasih et al., 2025; Mahmudah et al., 2025).
4. Theatrical service innovation functions as a critical managerial strategy for service differentiation in competitive markets, offering a high-impact, low-capital solution that enhances brand identity through the deliberate curation of the guest experience (Pratiwi & Slahanti, 2026; Suhartapa et al., 2024).

Recommendations

To sustain the competitive advantages identified in this study, management is encouraged to institutionalize theatrical training modules as a permanent component of staff onboarding and continuous development programs, ensuring that the service-actor model remains consistent across all guest touchpoints. Practically, hotels should prioritize the recruitment of staff with high emotional intelligence and performative aptitude to optimize the delivery of these experiential interactions. Theoretically, this study suggests that future research should adopt mixed-methods approaches, such as longitudinal ethnographic studies, to examine the long-term sustainability of theatrical service cultures and their broader impacts on employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Furthermore, researchers are advised to explore the cross-cultural effectiveness of theatrical service interventions to determine if specific performative styles yield varying results among international versus domestic tourist segments, thereby providing deeper insights into the universality of experiential marketing strategies.

5.REFERENCES