

Implementation of Waiter Service Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) in Improving Service Effectiveness at Boulevard Bistro Restaurant, Lion Hotel & Plaza Manado

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Article History	Abstract
Received: 12 September 2025 Accepted: 05 November 2025 Published: 10 December 2025	<p><i>This study aims to examine the implementation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in improving the effectiveness of waiter service and to identify the challenges encountered at Boulevard Bistro Restaurant, Lion Hotel & Plaza Manado. The research employed a descriptive qualitative method with data collected through observation, interviews, and literature review. Informants included the Head Chef, Restaurant Coordinator, and waitstaff directly involved in SOP implementation. The study was conducted from July 2024 to April 2025. The findings show that SOPs have been consistently applied in technical aspects such as punctuality, order accuracy, and service sequence indicating a strong procedural discipline among staff. However, inconsistencies were found in the soft skills dimension, particularly friendliness, proactive communication, and guest engagement, which are critical to enhancing service effectiveness. Operational challenges were also observed, including limited equipment availability and increased workload during peak hours, which constrained full adherence to SOPs. The study concludes that while the technical application of SOPs is well established, improvements in behavioral aspects, staff training, and supervisory consistency are essential to achieve comprehensive service quality and guest satisfaction</i></p> <p>Keywords: Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), Waiter, Service Effectiveness</p>



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INTRODUCTION

In the hospitality industry, service delivery plays a pivotal role in determining customer satisfaction, loyalty, and the overall competitiveness of a business. Service performance is largely dependent on the consistent and disciplined implementation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), which serve as formal guidelines to ensure efficiency, uniformity, and quality in daily operations. However, the actual execution of SOPs in service environments such as restaurants often encounters discrepancies due to variations in human behavior, fluctuating customer demands, and dynamic work environments (Jang & Namkung, 2021).

The Boulevard Bistro Restaurant at the Lion Hotel & Plaza Manado represents a particularly relevant and challenging case for examining SOP implementation. As a full-service restaurant operating within a four-star hotel environment, Boulevard Bistro caters to two distinct markets: in-house hotel guests and outside visitors, including business travelers, families, and banquet attendees. The restaurant operates from early morning breakfast service

to late-night dining, frequently handling high-traffic periods during breakfast buffets and weekend events. This operational intensity, coupled with a diverse clientele and multiple service modes (*à la carte*, buffet, and banquet), makes the consistent application of SOPs both complex and critical. The fluctuating guest volume, staff rotation, and event-driven scheduling create a unique environment where technical consistency and behavioral discipline are constantly tested.

Theoretically, service effectiveness in such a setting can be explained through the lens of service quality and emotional satisfaction. Ladhari (2009) emphasizes that perceived service quality in hospitality is not limited to technical performance (accuracy, speed, and efficiency) but also involves emotional components such as empathy, courtesy, and attentiveness, which strongly influence customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions. Similarly, Jang and Namkung (2021) highlight that service consistency and employee compliance with operational standards are essential to maintaining guest trust and organizational credibility. Therefore, any inconsistency whether technical or emotional can undermine the guest experience and the restaurant's overall service reputation.

Despite the importance of SOPs in maintaining quality assurance, existing studies in Indonesia have largely focused on front office or housekeeping operations, with limited attention given to restaurant service performance where both tangible and intangible service dimensions interact. This creates a research gap in understanding how SOPs are implemented in real-world restaurant operations, particularly in environments that require simultaneous attention to procedural accuracy and interpersonal interaction.

This study, therefore, aims to analyze the implementation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in improving waiter service effectiveness at Boulevard Bistro Restaurant, Lion Hotel & Plaza Manado, and to identify the key operational challenges affecting service consistency. By examining both technical and soft-skill dimensions of SOP compliance, this research contributes to the broader discourse on service quality management and employee performance behavior within the hospitality sector. The findings are expected to provide theoretical insights into the relationship between SOP adherence, emotional satisfaction, and service consistency, while offering practical guidance for hospitality managers to strengthen quality control and staff development in high-pressure service environments.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative method to explore the implementation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in enhancing waiter service effectiveness at Boulevard Bistro Restaurant, Lion Hotel & Plaza Manado. The qualitative approach was chosen to allow an in-depth understanding of real-world operational practices and human interactions that cannot be captured through quantitative measurement (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Research Site and Informants

The research was conducted at Boulevard Bistro Restaurant, located within the Lion Hotel & Plaza Manado, from July 2024 to April 2025. Data were collected through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation review of the restaurant's SOPs and service manuals. A total of five informants were selected using purposive sampling, consisting

of three waiters, one Head Chef, and one Restaurant Coordinator. These informants were chosen because they are directly involved in the restaurant's service operations and have first-hand knowledge of SOP application, monitoring, and challenges.

Data Collection Procedures

Primary data were obtained through semi-structured interviews focusing on three main aspects: (1) SOP implementation in daily service, (2) challenges and deviations encountered, and (3) managerial strategies to ensure compliance. Non-participant observations were conducted to verify consistency between stated procedures and observed practices during breakfast, lunch, and dinner service. Documentation data, including internal SOP manuals, training materials, and operational checklists, were also examined to support triangulation.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), consisting of three major steps:

1. Data Reduction – organizing and simplifying interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents into meaningful units relevant to SOP implementation and service effectiveness.
2. Data Display – presenting the reduced data in tabular and thematic forms to visualize patterns of compliance, challenges, and managerial interventions.
3. Conclusion Drawing and Verification – interpreting recurring patterns and relationships to generate conclusions supported by direct quotations from informants.

All interview data were transcribed verbatim and coded manually to identify recurring concepts. The coding process produced three main themes: (1) SOP Compliance in Technical Procedures, (2) Barriers in Behavioral Consistency, and (3) Managerial Supervision and Corrective Actions. These themes formed the analytical foundation for the discussion section.

Data Credibility and Validation

To ensure the credibility and traceability of findings, methodological triangulation was employed by cross-validating information obtained from interviews, direct observations, and SOP documentation. The use of multiple data sources allowed convergence and verification of evidence. Furthermore, member checking was conducted by confirming the interpreted findings with key informants to ensure accuracy and authenticity.

Researcher reflexivity was maintained throughout the process to minimize personal bias and ensure that interpretations were grounded in the data rather than researcher assumptions. This approach strengthens the reliability and confirmability of qualitative findings, ensuring that conclusions reflect the participants' real experiences and perceptions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Observation Results.

Table 1 Results of SOP Implementation Observations

No.	Item Observed	Yes	No	Notes
1.	Tables and chairs are neatly arranged	✓		The dining area is well-arranged according to the standard layout, supporting guest comfort and service efficiency.
2.	Tableware is complete and set up according to standards		✓	Some tables were found incomplete, indicating inconsistency in the set-up procedure.
3.	Buffet equipment is complete and in accordance with SOP		✓	Some equipment did not meet standards, such as using a saucer instead of a BNB (Bread & Butter plate), which affects service standards.
4.	All equipment is prepared in a clean condition	✓		Tableware and serving equipment were maintained clean before operational hours.
5.	Waiters are present on time according to the work schedule and already in the service area before guests arrive	✓		Waiters arrived on time, showing punctuality and discipline.
6.	Waiters attend a short briefing before the shift starts	✓		Routine briefings were conducted to deliver important information related to tasks, promotions, or VIP guests.
7.	The restaurant area is clean	✓		The dining area was kept clean, supporting guest comfort.
8.	Guests are welcomed with a smile, friendly greeting, and polite body language		✓	Some waiters did not smile or greet guests.
9.	Waiters ask the number of guests and guide them to a table with appropriate capacity		✓	Guests were left to enter and choose their own seats.
10.	Waiters present the menu properly and explain important information such as specials, promotions, or last order time	✓		Menu presentation and explanation were done properly, including promotions and specials.
11.	Waiters maintain proper posture and neat appearance when welcoming guests	✓		The appearance and body posture of the waiters reflected professionalism.
12.	Waiters take orders neatly, systematically, and confirm them with guests	✓		The order-taking procedure was carried out according to SOP.

13.	Orders are delivered to the kitchen accurately and without delay	✓		Communication with the kitchen was smooth, supporting service accuracy.
14.	Food and beverages are served on time according to the type of service (à la carte/buffet)	✓		Service was provided according to the standard timing for buffet and à la carte.
15.	Waiters remain on standby while guests are dining	✓		Waiters remained present to respond quickly if guests needed assistance.
16.	Additional guest requests (e.g., extra cutlery, drink refills) are responded to quickly and politely		✓	Responsiveness declined during peak hours, indicating the need for additional staff or better task distribution.
17.	Dirty tableware is cleared promptly without guests having to ask	✓		Clear-up was done proactively, showing initiative and service accuracy.
18.	Waiters check guest needs periodically (water refills, bread, buffet items, etc.)	✓		Waiters actively refilled water and checked needs without being asked.
19.	Waiters maintain professionalism, avoiding mobile phone use or chatting with colleagues while on duty	✓		No violations of work ethics were observed.
20.	Waiters show initiative without waiting for instructions, such as replacing dropped or damaged cutlery	✓		Proactive actions were observed, such as replacing equipment or assisting guests without being asked.
21.	Tables are cleared immediately after guests finish	✓		Tables were cleaned right after guests left, preparing them for the next guests.
22.	Dirty tableware is promptly taken to the dishwashing area	✓		The dirty tableware flow followed SOP, avoiding accumulation in the dining area.
23.	Tables are reset quickly and neatly for the next guests	✓		Resetting was done quickly and neatly according to standards.
24.	Waiters thank guests politely and warmly as they leave the restaurant	✓		Service closure was carried out with a positive attitude, leaving a good impression on guests.

Source: research data analysis, 2025.

Based on the results of observations conducted by researchers on the implementation of SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) for waiter services at Lion Hotel & Plaza Manado, it was found that most procedures were carried out properly in accordance with established standards. The observation was conducted using a checklist containing 24 items that reflect the

steps in restaurant service, ranging from area readiness, guest reception, order taking and serving, to the service closing process.

In general, the waiters' implementation of the SOP showed a high level of compliance. This was evident from the neat and clean dining area, the waiters' punctuality, and the briefing held before the start of work. In addition, waiters also demonstrated a professional attitude by maintaining their appearance and not engaging in activities that violate work ethics, such as playing with their cell phones or chatting with colleagues while on duty. Guest service was also carried out according to procedure, such as presenting the menu in a polite manner, taking and confirming orders, and serving food on time.

However, the observation also showed that there were still several aspects of the SOP that were not consistently implemented. For example, there were still incomplete cutlery sets on some tables, and the use of saucers instead of BNB (Bread & Butter plates) was not in accordance with serving standards. In terms of welcoming guests, not all waiters greeted guests and smiled as stipulated in the SOP, and guests were left to choose their own seats without being directed by the waiters. In addition, during busy hours, the waiters' responsiveness to additional requests from guests decreased, indicating the need for additional manpower or more efficient task management.

2. Interview Results

A. Interviews with Waitstaff

To gain a deeper understanding of the implementation of restaurant service SOPs at Lion Hotel & Plaza Manado, researchers conducted interviews with three waitstaff staff. These interviews aimed to gain direct perspectives from those implementing the SOPs in the field regarding their understanding, implementation, and the challenges they face in implementing them.

a. Understanding of SOPs

All three informants understood that SOPs are guidelines or work standards that must be followed in carrying out tasks, particularly in serving guests from start to finish. SOPs are considered written rules that govern every step of the service process.

b. Ease of Understanding and Implementing SOPs

The informants stated that SOPs are generally easy to understand because they are explained at the beginning of their employment. However, during busy times, some procedures are difficult to implement optimally, particularly regarding the use of equipment.

c. SOP Training

All three informants reported receiving training, including theory, hands-on practice at the start of their employment, daily briefings, and formal training such as Sequence of Service training.

d. Benefits of SOPs for Work Efficiency

All informants stated that SOPs significantly helped their work become more structured and efficient, and served as a reference in the event of guest complaints.

e. Obstacles in Implementing SOPs During Peak Hours

During peak hours, all informants acknowledged difficulties in fully implementing SOPs. Informant I stated that time constraints led to some procedures being violated. Informant II stated that the high guest load often led to procedures being skipped. Meanwhile, Informant III added that the high number of guest requests made it difficult for staff to fully follow SOPs.

f. Facilities and Staff Size

All three informants felt that facilities and staff size still did not fully support optimal SOP implementation. Informant I complained about a lack of equipment during peak hours, Informant II mentioned a lack of spare equipment, while Informant III assessed that facility availability was only 70%, despite the addition of additional staff.

g. Co-Worker Consistency in Implementing SOPs

Two out of three informants stated that not all co-workers were consistent in implementing SOPs. Some still tended to ignore procedures.

h. Situations That Hinder SOP Implementation

All informants mentioned that certain situations, such as a surge in guests, special requests, lack of equipment, or time pressure, forced them to disregard the full implementation of SOPs. This demonstrates the need for flexibility in work practices in the field.

i. Cleanliness and Tidiness of the Work Area

All three informants emphasized the importance of workplace cleanliness and tidiness. Informant I stated that cleanliness is a priority, Informant II called it an obligation for guest comfort, and Informant III reported that training from central management has improved cleanliness and grooming standards.

j. Efforts to Create Guest Comfort

Staff strive to provide the best possible service with a polite, friendly, and responsive attitude to ensure guest satisfaction.

k. Ensuring Order Accuracy

All informants stated that they always record, repeat orders, and confirm with guests and the kitchen to ensure there are no errors.

l. Guest Response to SOP Implementation

All three informants reported that most guests respond positively to service based on SOPs. Guests are satisfied because the service is neat, friendly, and timely as long as the SOPs are strictly implemented.

m. Management Oversight

There were varying opinions regarding management oversight. Informant I stated that management direction only occurred during the morning briefing, Informant II stated that supervision was still lacking, while Informant III felt that supervision was quite frequent, especially during briefings.

n. Handling Equipment Shortages

Waiters and waitresses addressed equipment shortages in various ways, such as reporting to supervisors or using available equipment that was still usable. However, this also presented a challenge in maintaining consistent SOP implementation.

o. Suggestions for SOP Improvement

All three waiters suggested strengthening supervision and adding equipment to ensure optimal SOP implementation.

Based on interviews with the three waiters, it can be concluded that SOP implementation at the Lion Hotel & Plaza Manado restaurant has been generally implemented, but not yet fully consistent. Staff have a good understanding of SOPs and recognize their benefits in improving work efficiency and guest satisfaction. However, various operational constraints, such as limited equipment, a lack of manpower during peak hours, and minimal daily supervision, prevent some procedures from being implemented optimally. Therefore, management support is needed in the form of regular training, additional facilities, and more intensive monitoring and evaluation to ensure optimal and sustainable SOP implementation.

B. Interview Results with the Head Chef and Restaurant Coordinator

To gain a comprehensive understanding of SOP implementation from a managerial perspective, researchers conducted interviews with two key informants: the Head Chef and the Restaurant Coordinator. These interviews explored policies, supervision, and challenges faced in maintaining consistent SOP implementation in the Food & Beverage Service department.

a. Understanding of SOPs and How to Disseminate Them to Staff

Both informants agreed that SOPs are important guidelines in hotel operations, particularly in the Food & Beverage department. SOPs are designed as systematic guidelines that govern what is and isn't permitted in service. Socialization is carried out through daily briefings, management training, and direct examples in the field.

b. Supervision of SOP implementation by waiters

Both the Head Chef and the Restaurant Coordinator stated that supervision is conducted daily. If a violation of the SOP is found, the staff concerned will be immediately reprimanded.

c. Evaluation of SOP implementation

SOP evaluations are conducted periodically, especially if problems are identified in the field. This evaluation can form the basis for revising the SOP or adjusting new operational standards.

d. Level of staff understanding and compliance with SOPs

Both informants emphasized that all staff must understand and consistently implement SOPs. Failure to do so will result in sanctions or reprimands.

e. Impact of SOPs on the accuracy and speed of service

SOPs are considered to significantly impact staff work efficiency. They help staff work in a structured, fast, and procedural manner.

f. The Role of SOPs in Minimizing Errors and Complaints

Both informants stated that SOPs are very effective in preventing procedural errors and guest complaints because each service step is clearly defined.

g. Key Challenges in Maintaining Consistent SOP Implementation

Challenges faced include individual discipline factors and dynamic operational conditions, such as a surge in guests or equipment shortages.

h. Strategies for Addressing Equipment and Labor Shortages

Both informants stated that equipment shortages are usually addressed by using available equipment first. For human resource shortages, management has added staff.

- i. Management Support for SOP Implementation
Hotel management provides support in the form of training, such as on grooming, sequence of service, and regular training related to SOPs.
- j. Suggestions for Improving the Effectiveness of SOP Implementation
The Restaurant Coordinator and Head Chef suggested the need for increased supervision by supervisors and ongoing training to ensure staff discipline and competence.

Interviews with the Head Chef and Restaurant Coordinator indicate that management recognizes the importance of SOPs as a tool for ensuring efficient, consistent, and professional service. They have implemented measures such as public awareness, supervision, evaluation, and staff training. However, SOP implementation in the field remains challenging, particularly in maintaining consistency amidst limited equipment, staffing, and dynamic operational conditions. Therefore, more intensive supervision, additional supporting facilities, and enhanced training are needed to ensure the SOPs are implemented comprehensively and sustainably by all staff.

Based on interviews with the three waitstaff, the Head Chef, and the Restaurant Coordinator, it can be concluded that the implementation of SOPs for restaurant service at Lion Hotel & Plaza Manado has been generally implemented and well understood by all staff. SOPs are seen as essential guidelines for ensuring efficient, professional, and consistent service. However, their implementation still faces various obstacles in the field, such as limited equipment, a lack of staff during peak hours, and suboptimal supervision. These conditions result in some SOP procedures not being fully implemented. Therefore, to increase the effectiveness of SOP implementation, stronger management support is needed through regular training, intensive supervision, and the provision of adequate supporting facilities and infrastructure.

Discussion

1. Implementation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in Waiter Services at Lion Hotel & Plaza Manado

Based on the results of research conducted through observations and interviews, it can be concluded that the implementation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in the waiter services at Lion Hotel & Plaza Manado has generally been running quite well. Nearly all service stages, from pre-service preparation, welcoming guests, taking orders, serving food and beverages, to table handling after guests have finished, have been carried out by waiters in accordance with the established SOPs.

Waiters appear disciplined in their work, arriving on time, attending pre-shift briefings, and demonstrating professionalism in serving guests. They also understand SOPs as important daily work guidelines, as they help make work more focused and efficient. This aligns with Rifka's (2017) theory, which states that SOPs function to provide consistent work results and reduce errors in service.

However, there are still several shortcomings in their implementation. For example, some tables lacked cutlery, saucers were used instead of BNBs, and not all waiters greeted guests in a friendly manner according to procedure. In some cases, guests were even allowed to choose

their own seats without guidance. These findings indicate that SOP implementation is not yet fully consistent across all aspects.

Judging from the SERVQUAL theory (Parasuraman et al.), which is used to assess service quality, the implementation of SOPs at Lion Hotel & Plaza Manado reflects strengths in tangibles and assurance, namely the physical appearance and confidence and professionalism of waiters. However, responsiveness and empathy remain important, particularly in providing prompt and personalized attention to guests, particularly during busy times.

When SOPs are not consistently implemented, it directly impacts the quality of service provided. Inconsistent procedures can lead to guests feeling underserved, slow service, and complaints about issues that should have been addressed through SOPs. If allowed to persist, this will not only decrease guest satisfaction but also negatively impact the hotel's overall image and reputation.

Thus, it can be said that SOPs have become an important guideline for waitstaff service, but their implementation in the field still needs to be improved to be more consistent and comprehensive. More attention from management is needed to ensure that SOPs are implemented evenly by all staff.

2. Obstacles to SOP Implementation at Lion Hotel & Plaza Manado

Although SOPs have been implemented as work guidelines, several obstacles remain in their implementation that hinder the effectiveness of waitstaff service. Based on interviews, the main obstacle encountered is the limited availability of cutlery and drinking utensils, especially during peak hours. This shortage of equipment sometimes forces waitstaff to use substitutes that do not meet SOP standards.

Furthermore, a shortage of staff is also a significant obstacle, especially when the restaurant is busy. In such situations, waitstaff struggle to manage their time to serve all guests according to procedures. This results in a decrease in responsiveness and empathy towards guests, which ultimately can lower guest satisfaction levels.

Another obstacle is that not all waitstaff staff consistently implement SOPs. Some tend to ignore them, especially without direct supervision from superiors. Management oversight is also considered suboptimal, as most staff stated that SOP instructions are only provided during morning briefings or during evaluations.

When SOPs are not implemented properly, various negative impacts can arise. Service that should be carried out according to procedure becomes inconsistent, even careless. This can lead to errors in service, delays in service, and even an unprofessional impression from guests regarding staff and the hotel as a whole. In the long term, neglecting SOPs will impact guest trust and loyalty.

Another common problem is changing operational conditions, such as surges in guest numbers or sudden requests that force staff to improvise and sometimes deviate from SOP guidelines. This indicates that SOPs need to be adapted to field conditions and supported by adequate facilities and human resources.

To overcome these obstacles, regular SOP training, additional cutlery and drinking utensils, and increased staffing during peak hours are required. Furthermore, more active and

comprehensive supervision must be carried out to ensure all waiters and waitresses remain disciplined in implementing SOPs.

Overall, even though SOPs are in place and implemented, their effectiveness is still less than optimal due to several inhibiting factors in the field. Therefore, the role of management is very much needed in providing support in terms of facilities, training, and supervision so that the implementation of SOPs can truly improve the quality of waiter service as a whole.

3. Theoretical Implications

The findings empirically reinforce the SERVQUAL model (Ladhari, 2009), particularly the relationship between SOP consistency and the dimensions of reliability and assurance. Consistent adherence to technical SOPs enhances service reliability, ensuring predictable outcomes and guest trust. However, this study also identifies that emotional labor and local service culture significantly influence the empathy component—an area underexplored in standard SOP frameworks. This supports Jang & Namkung's (2021) argument that employee compliance is not merely procedural but also affective, shaped by interpersonal dynamics and workplace culture.

The study further contributes to hospitality service theory by contextualizing SOP implementation within Indonesia's cultural environment, where collectivist values and hierarchical communication patterns affect staff motivation and guest interaction. It suggests that service quality cannot rely solely on procedural precision; it must integrate culturally responsive training that bridges formal standards with authentic hospitality expressions.

4. Practical Implications

Practically, the research highlights several actionable strategies for hotel and restaurant managers:

- a. Continuous On-the-Job Coaching — Supervisors should provide regular mentoring focused on both procedural accuracy and emotional intelligence, enabling staff to maintain composure and friendliness even under pressure.
- b. Reward and Recognition Systems — Implementing incentives for consistent SOP compliance can enhance employee motivation and accountability, especially in high-volume service environments.
- c. Soft Skills Training — Incorporating role-playing and scenario-based training in complaint handling and guest communication can strengthen empathy-driven service behavior.
- d. Operational Coordination — Streamlining communication between service and kitchen teams through real-time feedback channels (e.g., order-tracking apps or visual dashboards) can reduce response time and service delays.

These managerial interventions can help balance technical efficiency and emotional engagement, aligning operational standards with the holistic service excellence expected in the hospitality industry.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the implementation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in waiter service at Boulevard Bistro Restaurant, Lion Hotel & Plaza Manado has generally been

carried out quite well, particularly in technical aspects such as service punctuality and adherence to standard procedures, although challenges remain, including limited equipment, insufficient staff during peak hours, and inconsistent service attitudes such as friendliness and communication. Academically, this study contributes to the development of hospitality operational management studies by emphasizing that SOPs function not only as technical guidelines but also as strategic instruments in shaping the quality of waiter–guest interactions. Practically, the findings suggest the need for improved facilities, continuous soft skills training, and stronger supervision to ensure consistent SOP implementation. However, this study is limited in scope as it was conducted in a single restaurant with a small number of informants and employed a descriptive qualitative method, making the results not yet generalizable. Therefore, future research is recommended to adopt a quantitative approach, expand the study to multiple star-rated hotels, and further investigate the relationship between consistent SOP implementation and guest satisfaction levels.

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