



# The art of good service

**H**ead & Shoulders dandruff shampoo used to have a funny ad slogan in the 1980s. A gentleman in a business suit frantically brushes dandruff off his shoulders. The punchline:

“Head & Shoulders, because you never get a second chance to make a first impression” must have been catchy because I still remember it.

I’m often reminded of this ad when I travel (No, I do not have a problem with dandruff). I wonder how it is that we form the first impression of a country we have not yet visited.

Now, we probably have some kind of preconceived image in mind. We have read about the country in question and know approximately what to expect. But in the end, our first impression actually starts with the people working in the service sector.

We step onboard the national airline’s plane. A smile and a friendly greeting give us the first vibe. Alternatively, a shabby airplane with unfriendly service can be a turn-off. It might get us off to a bad start, but we don’t give up yet.

Step two, the airport. Is it nice and clean? Do you get your luggage quickly? How far do you have to walk? What are the shops, restaurants and services like? These things matter.

Both when you fly in and when you fly out.

Next, you will likely jump into a taxi or hop

on a bus. Again, you’ll be looking at the condition of the vehicle and probably at the price of transport. It will help if you feel that you are not being ripped off by the driver. And if you are hiring a car, a free upgrade never hurts (not that I ever know what I am being upgraded from).

Then, it’s time to check into the hotel. A friendly receptionist will help you settle in. A quick change of clothing and off you are to check out the scenery. Time for restaurants, shops, museums and sightseeing. Is the food good? Do you like the shops and museums? Are the sights worth seeing?

**ALL OF THESE** individual things start giving you an overall impression. You

start to get a feel of the country through its people. I am not saying that nature and climate are irrelevant, but it is the human touch that creates the full picture.

The thing with service is that you can’t experience it in any guidebook, and you can’t generalise about it. It is all about personal experience - how you perceive a given service.

We have all had good and bad experiences. I have come out of airplanes, taxis, hotels and restaurants bouncing with joy, raving about good service. I have also come out of places fuming at the arrogance of someone working in the so-called service industry.

My own impression of Finland is naturally positive. I love the service I get from Finnair. Helsinki Airport works well. Transport into town is smooth and there are plenty of services, often friendly. But, then again I am a subjective Finn.

Of course I hope that your first impression of Finland is so good that you decide to come back a second, third, and fourth time. And as with everything, we learn through feedback. Let me know how things went. Send me a tweet on @alexstubb. At your service, without dandruff. ●

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ALEXANDER STUBB is Finland’s Minister for European Affairs and Foreign Trade.  
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