

# OPTIMIZING EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION SKILLS TO ENHANCE SERVICE QUALITY IN THE FRONT OFFICE DEPARTMENT OF RADISSON BLU HOTEL BALI ULUWATU

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## ABSTRACT

In the current era of globalization, business competition in the tourism industry is becoming increasingly fierce. One of the critical factors in attracting consumer interest is the quality of service. Communication skills are the ability to convey information clearly and effectively to others. In the context of service, good communication skills help employees understand the needs and desires of consumers, thus providing service that meets expectations.

**Purpose:** of this study that is optimize the communication skills of employees in the Front Office Department at Radisson Blu Bali Uluwatu Hotel to improve service quality.

**Methods:** of This study employs a descriptive qualitative method to determine the research results.

**Implications:** Interviews with three receptionists, each answering five identical questions, revealed that communication skills need to be continuously enhanced to improve the quality of service at the hotel. Observations of 4 employees showed poor results in several aspects, such as politeness in speech, tone of voice, and English proficiency, indicating that communication skills in the Front Office Department of Radisson Blu Bali Uluwatu Hotel still need significant improvement. Good communication skills are essential for Front Office employees, as they represent the first point of interaction between guests and the hotel. Optimal communication quality can enhance a guest's first impression, influence their level of satisfaction, and strengthen customer loyalty. High-quality service in a hotel depends on how well employees can effectively respond to guest needs. Good communication ensures that messages are conveyed clearly and promptly, minimizing misunderstandings and improving service efficiency.

**Keywords:** Communication Skills, Front Office, Service Quality, Radisson Blu Hotel Bali Uluwatu

## **INTRODUCTION**

In this era of globalization, competition in the tourism industry is becoming increasingly fierce. One significant factor that greatly influences consumer interest is service quality. Good service quality provides a positive experience for consumers and can enhance customer loyalty. An essential element in delivering quality service is the communication skills of employees, particularly for those in the Front Office Department at Radisson Blu Hotel Bali Uluwatu. According to Jones and George (2016), communication skills are the ability to convey information clearly and effectively to others. In the context of service, good communication skills help employees understand consumer needs and desires, enabling them to provide service that meets expectations. Additionally, Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons (2014) state that good service quality can also enhance the image and reputation of a company in the eyes of consumers.

However, in practice, employees in the Front Office Department at Radisson Blu Hotel Bali Uluwatu face several challenges regarding their communication skills, as evidenced by consumer complaints about unsatisfactory service. A study by Smith et al. (2018) indicates that employees lacking good communication skills often struggle to understand consumer needs, leading to discomfort for customers. Therefore, this research aims to optimize the communication skills of employees in the Front Office Department at Radisson Blu Hotel Bali Uluwatu to improve service quality. It is hoped that this research will contribute to enhancing service quality at the hotel and provide recommendations that can assist management in improving employees' communication skills.

Communication skills refer to a person's ability to convey information, ideas, and feelings effectively and efficiently through various communication media. According to Peter Hartley (2018), communication skills involve the ability to speak, listen, write, and read clearly and effectively. This also includes the ability to understand and interpret messages from others, as well as to use modern communication technology. Teri Kwal Gamble and Michael Gamble (2020) further state that communication skills encompass the ability to interact with others in various contexts and situations. This includes interpersonal skills, presentation skills, negotiation, and the ability to adapt to digital communication technologies. Based on these definitions, it can be concluded that communication skills are not just about speaking or listening but also involve using both verbal and non-verbal messages and adjusting interactions to fit various contexts and situations.

Optimization is an effort to achieve effective value or to design and create something optimally. By combining various efforts, effective values can be achieved, resulting in optimal outcomes. Optimization involves efforts in achieving the best possible outcome; through these efforts, effective values can be realized, leading to what is termed optimization. Muhammad Nurul Huda (2018), in his book "Teknik Optimasi: Konsep dan Aplikasinya dalam Teknik Industri," defines optimization as a process or methodology for finding the best solution among all possible solutions, aiming to maximize or minimize a certain objective function within predetermined constraints.

Based on this understanding, optimizing communication skills among employees to improve service quality at the Front Office Department of Radisson Blu Bali Uluwatu means making efforts that achieve effective values and render them optimal, with the goal of maximizing or minimizing certain objectives or constraints. This involves seeking the best solutions from various available alternatives to achieve optimal performance within a system or process.

According to Zeithaml, Bitner, and Gremler (2018) in "Services Marketing: Integrating Customer Focus Across the Firm," service quality is defined as the overall assessment of service excellence, measured by the alignment between customer expectations and their perceptions of service performance. Sulastiyono (2011) identifies five dimensions of service quality that serve as benchmarks:

**Reliability**

The ability to provide promised services accurately and reliably.

Responsiveness: The awareness and willingness to act quickly to assist customers and provide timely service.

**Assurance**

Knowledge, politeness, and confidence of staff in providing service. This dimension includes characteristics such as competence in service delivery, politeness, and respect for customers.

**Empathy**

Providing individualized attention to customers. This dimension includes the willingness to approach, protect, and understand the desires, needs, and feelings of customers.

**Tangibles**

The visible or tangible aspects, such as employee appearance and physical facilities, equipment, and other resources that support service delivery.

## **METHODS**

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method using interview techniques and the use of questionnaires. According to Moleong (2017), qualitative research aims to understand phenomena experienced by research subjects, such as behaviors, perceptions, motivations, actions, and more, in a holistic manner and descriptively in the form of words and language, within a specific natural context by utilizing various natural methods. Qualitative research, as stated by Hendryadi et al. (2019), is a naturalistic investigation process that seeks in-depth understanding of social phenomena in a natural setting. Meanwhile, Sugiyono (2019) explains that qualitative research methods are based on post-positivist philosophy, used to study natural object conditions (as opposed to experiments) where the researcher serves as the key instrument. Data collection techniques are performed through triangulation (a combination of methods), data analysis is inductive/qualitative, and qualitative research results emphasize meaning and generalization.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Based on the interviews with informants I, II, and III, it can be concluded that employee communication skills require education and evaluation for each individual. This is due to factors such as some employees being shy, lacking interaction with guests, having poor public speaking abilities, and limited English proficiency. The efforts made by employees include self-training through evaluations with team members and learning English independently or gradually, using frequently spoken and easily understood words.

Communication skills are one of the key points in providing guest services. However, there are challenges in communication, particularly in delivering information inaccurately to guests. Additionally, some factors that hinder effective communication include employees being unable to explain guest requests in detail or misinterpreting those requests. Efforts made by management, such as conveying information to more than one person and providing timely information – sometimes several days in advance – have shown improvements both in the department and among employees.

## Observation

### Front Office Department

The Front Office at Radisson Blu Bali Uluwatu Hotel is considered the heart of the hotel, located at the front. This semi-resort hotel does not have a main entrance, and the lobby is located in front of the reception desk. This area is the busiest in the hotel, and being located at the front, the Front Office is the most easily accessible and visible department for guests.

The Front Office staff schedule is divided into four shifts:

1. Morning shift: 07:00 AM - 03:00 PM
2. Middle shift: 12:00 PM - 08:00 PM
3. Evening shift: 02:00 PM - 11:00 PM
4. Night shift: 11:00 PM - 08:00 AM

The Telephone Operator (OTS) is on standby 24 hours a day. The author's working schedule during the training period was five working days and two days off each week, with a daily work shift lasting nine hours.

Due to a shortage of staff, the work performed by all hotel employees often overlaps. For example, staff members who usually handle check-ins or check-outs may also take on the role of bellboys/concierges or even drivers to transport guests to and from the airport or other locations (for male employees). Female employees are typically scheduled to work at reception and as telephone operators (One Touch Service).

During the six-month training period at Radisson Blu Bali Uluwatu, the author observed the communication skills possessed by all Front Office staff members. The following table outlines the communication skills of the employees in the Front Office department:

**Table 1. Communication skill of FO staff**

No	Front Office Staff	Very Good	Good	Deficient	Not Good
1	Reservation	3	-	-	-
2	Reception	7	5	-	-
3	Telephone Operator	2	1	1	-
4	Concierge	-	1	-	-

Source: Author's Observation Results

**Explanation:**

- The Reservation department has 3 employees.
- The Reception has 12 employees.
- The Telephone Operator has 4 employees.

Based on the table above and the results obtained by the author, there are 3 reservation employees with good communication skills, while in the reception, 7 employees have excellent communication skills, and 5 others have good communication skills. In the Telephone Operator division, 2 employees have excellent skills, 1 employee has good skills, but 11 employees have poor communication skills. They are classified as having poor skills because, during the training period, the author observed that these employees were not skilled in using the correct vocabulary and had poor tone of speech. On several occasions, the author noticed that these employees did not understand what the guest meant due to their limited English proficiency. Lastly, in the Concierge department, there is 1 employee with good communication skills.

This study discusses communication patterns related to how communication skills improve service quality, as well as the communication barriers that may hinder interactions with guests and other departments, and the efforts made to overcome these barriers at Hotel Radisson Blu Bali Uluwatu. The data collected by the author through observations, interviews, and documentation with Front Office department staff at Hotel Radisson Blu Bali Uluwatu, along with a distributed questionnaire, serve as supporting data to complete the study. All staff provided their own answers and decisions in responding to several questions regarding communication at Hotel Radisson Blu Bali Uluwatu.

**Communication Skills in the Front Office Department at Radisson Blu Bali Uluwatu Hotel**

All employees in the Front Office Department at Radisson Blu Bali Uluwatu have the experience, understanding, and communication skills that can trigger improvements in service quality. In response to this study, each respondent provided their own answers, and the author summarized them into several main topics about how communication occurs at Radisson Blu Bali Uluwatu, specifically among the Front Office Department employees, with the goal of enhancing service quality.

Good communication skills are essential for a Front Office employee because they are the ones who interact most with guests and create the first impression of the hotel. If guests feel well attended to upon their arrival, they will remain happy and have positive memories of the hotel, possibly becoming repeat guests.

Based on the data collected by the author and from Google Reviews, there were some negative guest comments regarding their satisfaction. It turns out that some employees have poor communication skills, which makes them less responsive in handling objections. Staff still need to improve in terms of conveying ideas and solving problems, as many employees misunderstand situations and lack the courage to identify errors. Problem-solving skills are one of the critical aspects employees must have when it comes to communication. This issue significantly impacts the level of service and guest satisfaction.

### **Interpersonal Skills and Coordination**

As service staff, particularly in the Front Office department, employees are required to be sensitive to everything that happens, whether it is a problem or any other matter. Constant coordination with colleagues and other departments can enhance communication skills. In this department, Front Office employees interact directly with guests, providing them with the necessary information, as well as engaging in small talk to make them feel more comfortable. This is referred to as interpersonal communication, which is essential for conveying ideas or addressing issues, whether with colleagues or guests. This greatly impacts staff performance in delivering quality service.

### **Communication Media**

The importance of communication among colleagues and with guests significantly impacts guest satisfaction. Communication also serves as a tool to promote or enhance quality, as it is a means that enables a hotel to achieve its goals. One of the elements of communication is that a communicator sends a message through a communication medium so that the recipient (communicant) receives and provides feedback from the information. Various communication media can be used as tools for transmitting this information.

This shows that media greatly influences the quality of service in achieving customer satisfaction, as evidenced by the interviews conducted by the author with the Front Office Department staff at Radisson Blu Bali Uluwatu. The media facilities available at Radisson Blu Bali Uluwatu serve as tools to facilitate interaction with guests. When guests do not wish to interact directly, the front office staff can use gadgets (tablets) to send short messages through a chat application. The communication carried out by the Front Office staff at Radisson Blu Bali Uluwatu has been well-executed, utilizing media to convey the information guests need. This creates a sense of personal connection in their work.

### **Communication Barriers in the Front Office Department at Radisson Blu Bali Uluwatu Hotel**

Barriers are any interference in the communication process that alters or distorts the message being conveyed by the sender. Communication does not always go smoothly; there are often errors in delivery, reception, and even in interpreting the message or information received. In addressing the research questions of this study, respondents provided individual answers, which the author has summarized into several main topics related to communication barriers experienced by Front Office employees at Hotel Radisson Blu Bali Uluwatu in improving service quality. These barriers are detailed in sub-sections as follows: communication barriers that occur during interaction can greatly impact the quality of service provided.

From the analysis of this research, the author found that frequent communication barriers at the Front Office of Hotel Radisson Blu Bali Uluwatu fall under mechanical barriers, such as issues arising from the communication media used and language barriers.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the observation of 11 employees, the results show weaknesses in several areas, such as politeness, tone of speech, and poor understanding of English. These findings indicate that communication skills in the Front Office Department at Hotel Radisson Blu Bali Uluwatu are still lacking and need improvement.



Overall, the common communication barriers encountered in the Front Office of Hotel Radisson Blu Bali Uluwatu are interpersonal communication barriers and media communication barriers. It can be concluded that these two types of barriers have a significant impact on service quality, employee performance, and customer satisfaction. The interpersonal communication barriers that occur include a lack of coordination between employees and impolite behavior, which leads to misunderstandings. Communication skills are crucial for improving the quality of service in the Front Office Department of Hotel Radisson Blu Bali Uluwatu, helping to attract guest interest.

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