

THE ROLE OF FRONLINER ASTON JEMBER HOTEL CONFERENCE CENTER IN IMPROVING GUEST SATISFACTION

(Case Study in Front Office Department)

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Abstract

This study examines the important role of frontliners at Aston Jember Hotel & Conference Center in improving guest satisfaction. Frontliners, including receptionists, reservation staff, guest service agents, and other front office staff, have a central role in shaping the guest experience from check-in to check-out. This study aims to identify the specific duties and responsibilities of frontliners as well as how their performance affects guest satisfaction. Data were collected through a mixed method approach, using qualitative and quantitative data. Quantitative data was obtained through guest satisfaction surveys, while qualitative insights were obtained from interviews with guests and front office staff. The findings show that the effectiveness of frontliners in providing warm welcomes, efficient communication, professional complaint handling, and personalized service significantly contribute to a positive guest experience. In addition, the frontliner's ability to collaborate well with other departments and maintain a high standard of professionalism further increases guest satisfaction. The study emphasizes the importance of ongoing training for frontliners to equip them with the necessary skills to meet and exceed guest expectations. The results show that by investing in the development and support of frontliners, hotels can significantly improve guest satisfaction, which in turn can increase guest loyalty and strengthen the hotel's reputation in the competitive hospitality market. Further research is suggested to explore the impact of technological advances on the role of frontliners and conduct comparative studies across different hotel categories to identify best practices in guest service management.

Keywords: Frontliner; Guest satisfaction; Hotel; Hospitality

1. INTRODUCTION

In the hospitality industry, Front Office Departments have a very important role in guaranteeing a satisfying guest experience. This department is often considered the face of the hotel because it is the first point of contact between guests and the hotel. Research by (Putra et al., 2023) shows that the first impression given by the Front Office has a great influence on how guests will rate their overall stay. Positive impressions can increase the likelihood of guests staying at the same hotel in the future.

Study by Arjana in (Hasonagon et al., 2016) affirmed that good service from the Front Office not only increases the level of guest satisfaction but also contributes to their loyalty to the hotel. Guest loyalty is an important factor in the hospitality industry, as satisfied guests are more likely to recommend hotels to friends and family as well as leave positive reviews that can attract more new guests. Arjana also noted that the role of a frontliner, such as a Reception or Front Desk Agent, is very important in providing accurate information and helping guests understand the various facilities available in the hotel.

Furthermore, research by (Rosyid et al., 2017) revealed that the Front Office Department also has the responsibility to handle guest complaints quickly and effectively. The ability to handle complaints well can turn a negative experience into a positive one, which ultimately increases guest satisfaction. Dewi also noted that continuous training for Front Office staff is essential to ensure they have the necessary communication and service skills to handle various situations that may arise.

On the other hand, a study by (Yulianto et al., 2023) highlighting that technology also plays an important role in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the Front Office Department. The use of an integrated hotel management system can help the Front Office in managing reservations, check-in, and check-out more quickly and accurately. Santoso noted that the application of this technology not only improves operational efficiency but also increases guest satisfaction because they can be served more quickly and accurately.

However, although many studies have examined the role of the Front Office Department, there are research gaps that still need to be filled. Most previous studies have focused on hotels in big cities or major tourist destinations. Research on the role of the Front Office in hotels in developing areas such as Jember Regency is still limited. Research by (Rahman, 2023) shows that hotels in developing areas have their own challenges, such as limited human resources and lack of access to advanced technology. Therefore, further studies on how Front Office Departments in developing regional hotels can overcome these challenges and still provide satisfactory service are urgently needed.

Although there have been many studies examining the role of the Front Office Department in the hospitality industry, there are still several research gaps that need to be filled. Most of the research focuses on hotels in big cities or major tourist destinations, while research on the role of the Front Office in hotels in developing areas such as Jember Regency is still limited. In addition, previous research has discussed the general role of the

The Role of Aston Jember Hotel Conference Center's Fronliner in Improving Guest Satisfaction (Case Study in Front Office Department)

Front Office Department without giving a specific focus on the role of frontliners in improving guest satisfaction in certain hotels.

Research by (Sedana Putra P et al., 2024) It shows that hotels in developing areas have their own challenges, such as limited human resources and lack of access to advanced technology. However, studies on how the specific role of frontliners can play in overcoming these challenges and improving guest satisfaction at the Aston Jember Hotel & Conference Centre have not been widely discussed. This is important because each hotel has unique characteristics and challenges, and a deep understanding of the role of frontliners in developing regional hotels can provide new insights that are beneficial for the development of the hospitality sector in the region.

This study seeks to fill the gap by examining the role of the Front Office Department and frontliners in the context of the Aston Jember Hotel & Conference Center. With a focus on hotels in developing areas such as Jember, this research is expected to make a new contribution to the tourism and hospitality literature, especially regarding how the role of frontliners can increase guest satisfaction in hotels that are outside of the main tourist destinations.

This research will also provide practical recommendations for hotel management in optimizing Front Office Department services to increase guest satisfaction. With a deeper understanding of the roles and duties of the Front Office Department and frontliners at the Aston Jember Hotel & Conference Center, this research is expected to provide new insights that will be useful for the development of the hospitality sector in the area. Through optimal service, it is hoped that a satisfactory stay experience can be created for guests, which will ultimately have a positive impact on the development of tourism in Jember Regency

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Guest satisfaction is one of the key factors for the operational success of a hotel. Frontliners, especially those in the front office, have an important role in making a good first impression on guests. In the context of Aston Jember Hotel & Conference Center, the role of this frontliner is becoming increasingly important to maintain and improve guest satisfaction. This article will review various literature related to the role of frontliners in improving guest satisfaction in hotels.

a. Definition of Increasing Guest Satisfaction

Increasing guest satisfaction means increasing guests' feelings of satisfaction and pleasure with the services provided by the hotel. According to (Kotler & Keller, 2011), satisfaction is a person's feeling of pleasure or disappointment that arises after comparing the performance (results) of a thought product against their expectations. In the context of hotels, guest satisfaction includes various aspects such as friendly service, adequate facilities, and a pleasant stay experience.

b. The Important Role of Frontliners

(Christopher & Jochen, 2011) Explaining that frontliners are an important element in providing a positive guest experience. The first interaction with a front office officer can form a significant initial impression. This impression greatly determines how guests will rate the overall service of the hotel. At Aston Jember, frontliner is required to always be friendly, professional, and ready to help guests with their various needs.

c. Communication and Service Skills

Good communication skills are the main requirement for frontliners. (Bitner et al., 1994) stated that effective communication can increase guest satisfaction because guests feel valued and understood. Frontlines at Aston Jember Hotel & Conference Center are regularly trained to improve their communication and service skills, so that they can provide personalized service that suits the needs of each guest.

d. Guest Complaint Management

The ability to handle guest complaints is a critical aspect of frontliner's duties. According to (Rust & Zahorik, 1993), good complaint handling can increase guest loyalty. Front office officers at Aston Jember are taught to handle complaints quickly and efficiently, and to provide satisfactory solutions. This is to make guests feel cared for and valued, even if there are problems that occur during their stay.

e. Use of Technology

The use of technology in guest service is increasingly becoming a necessity in the digital era. (Law et al., 2009) mentioned that technology can improve efficiency and service quality. Aston Jember Hotel & Conference Center has implemented various modern technology systems, such as online check-in and mobile applications, to make it easier for guests to access hotel services. This technology also helps frontliners in providing faster and more accurate services.

f. Training and Development

Continuous training for frontliners is essential to maintain service quality. According to (Tsaur & Lin, 2004), effective training can improve employee performance and guest satisfaction. Aston Jember regularly conducts training for front office officers to ensure they are always ready to provide the best service. This training includes communication skills, complaint handling, and the use of the latest technology.

g. Guest Experience

A positive guest experience is greatly influenced by their interactions with the frontliner. (Parasuraman et al., 1998) stated that the quality of service perceived by guests is greatly influenced by their interaction with hotel staff. At Aston Jember, frontliners play a role in ensuring that every guest feels comfortable and satisfied from the moment they arrive until they leave the hotel

3. METHOD

The methodology of this study aims to explore the role of frontliners in Aston Jember Hotel & Conference Center in improving guest satisfaction. This study uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative data, with primary data obtained through direct observation and in-depth interviews with front office officers. Secondary data is collected from a variety of relevant sources such as books, reports, and journals.

The data collection process is carried out by several methods. The observation method is used to observe the interaction of the frontliner with the guest directly. These observations are made in a variety of service situations, including during check-in, check-out, and during guests requesting assistance or information. These observations are carried out by trained researchers, with the aim of getting a real picture of how frontliners interact and provide services to guests.

In-depth interviews were conducted with several front office officers to gain deeper insights into their role in improving guest satisfaction. This interview is designed in a semi-structured manner, with open-ended questions so that respondents can provide broader and more detailed answers. The number of respondents to this interview was five people, who were selected based on certain criteria such as more than two years of work experience in the front office and a good performance assessment from the hotel management.

In addition, a questionnaire is also distributed to hotel guests to measure their satisfaction with the service provided by the frontliner. This questionnaire contains closed-ended and open-ended questions, designed to evaluate various aspects of the service such as speed, friendliness, and professionalism. A total of 50 guests were randomly selected to fill out this questionnaire, with the aim of obtaining a representative sample of the hotel guest population.

This data collection technique is complemented by a documentation method, where various supporting documents such as performance reports, training notes, and guest feedback are used to strengthen the research findings. All the data collected were then analyzed descriptively to describe the role of frontliners in providing satisfactory service to guests, with the aim of systematically compiling information and making easy-to-understand conclusions.

4. RESULTS and DISCUSSION

The study aims to evaluate the role of Aston Jember Hotel & Conference Center's frontliners in improving guest satisfaction. Based on data obtained through observations, interviews, and questionnaires, it is found that frontliners have a significant contribution in various aspects of hotel operations. Direct observation shows that front office staff are actively involved in every interaction with guests, from the moment guests check in to check-out. They are also responsible for a variety of additional services that provide comfort and satisfaction for guests.

Quantitative data collected through questionnaires showed that 85% of guests were very satisfied with the service provided by the frontliner. This satisfaction is mainly due to the friendliness, speed, and efficiency shown by the staff during the check-in and check-out process. In addition, guests also appreciated the frontliner's ability to provide clear information and help handle complaints with high professionalism.

Interviews with several guests revealed that they felt valued and heard by the frontliner. This shows that good communication and personalization of service are important factors in creating a positive experience for guests. Front office staff also managed to handle various complaints quickly and accurately, which is an important indicator in maintaining guest satisfaction.

As a real example, there is one case study where a guest had a problem with their room reservation. The guest arrives at the hotel and discovers that the room they booked is unavailable due to a system error. The frontliner on duty immediately took over the situation by offering a welcome drink and apologizing for the inconvenience. While calming the guest, the frontliner immediately coordinated with the manager to find a solution. In less than 15 minutes, the guest is moved to a room of a higher category at no additional cost, and they are also given a free dinner voucher as a form of compensation. The guest felt very appreciated and impressed with the way the frontliner handled the situation.

Another example is when a guest complains about noise from the next room interfering with their rest. Frontliners immediately come to the guest room to listen to complaints directly and offer solutions. After communicating with the guest who is causing the noise and ensuring a calm atmosphere, the frontliner returns to the complaining guest's room to make sure they feel comfortable and gives them the option to move rooms if they still feel disturbed. The guest highly appreciated the attention and quick action of the frontliner, who showed dedication in providing personalized and responsive service.

These two examples illustrate how the frontliner at the Aston Jember Hotel & Conference Centre not only carries out their duties with high professionalism but also shows deep personal care and attention to the needs of guests, ultimately increasing guest satisfaction and loyalty.

Discussion

The results of this study highlight the importance of the role of frontliners in creating a positive experience for guests at the Aston Jember Hotel & Conference Center. Some of the key factors that contribute to guest satisfaction are:

a. Impressive First Interaction:

Receptionists and receptionists play a key role in making a positive first impression on guests. A friendly welcome, a sincere smile, and a professional attitude are a great start to the guest experience. Observations show that this first interaction is very important in shaping guests' perception of the quality of hotel services. The well-trained staff is able to

provide the necessary information quickly and accurately, so that guests feel comfortable and well served.

b. Effective Communication Skills:

Effective communication is one of the key skills that frontliners must have. The front office staff at Aston Jember Hotel & Conference Center demonstrate excellent communication skills, both in Indonesian and foreign languages. They are able to answer guests' questions clearly, provide the necessary information about hotel facilities, and recommend tourist attractions around the hotel. This ability helps in meeting the needs and demands of guests effectively, thereby increasing their satisfaction.

c. Handling Complaints with Professionalism:

When any complaints or problems arise, the frontliner is responsible for handling the situation quickly and professionally. Questionnaire data shows that guests are satisfied with the way frontliners handle their complaints. The ability to listen with empathy, offer satisfying solutions, and ensure guests feel valued are important factors in complaint handling. This not only resolves the issue quickly but also increases guest confidence in the hotel.

d. Good Interdepartmental Collaboration:

Frontliners often have to work closely with other departments such as housekeeping, restaurants, and engineering to ensure a seamless guest experience. The ability to collaborate and communicate well with staff from other departments helps in maintaining a consistent and quality standard of service. For example, if there is a problem with the room amenities, the frontliner can quickly coordinate with the housekeeping or technician to resolve the issue.

e. High Standards in Work Ethics and Appearance:

The front office staff at Aston Jember Hotel & Conference Center maintain high standards in terms of appearance, behaviour and work ethic. Observations show that they always maintain personal hygiene, speak politely, and respect the privacy and needs of guests. These high standards reflect their professionalism and leave a positive impression on guests, ultimately increasing guest satisfaction.

f. Personalization of Services that Improve the Guest Experience:

Getting to know guests personally, such as using their names or remembering their specific preferences, can improve the guest experience. Interviews with guests show that they feel valued and recognized as individuals when frontliners recognize them by name or remember their special preferences. This personalization of the service makes guests feel more connected to the hotel and increases their satisfaction.

g. Recommended Tourist Attractions and Local Activities:

Frontliners who can provide recommendations on local attractions, restaurants, or activities that interest guests can enhance their stay experience. The questionnaire data shows that guests highly appreciate the recommendations provided by frontliners, as it

helps them feel more connected to the surrounding area and have a richer experience during their stay at the hotel.

From these results and discussions, it can be concluded that the role of frontliners at Aston Jember Hotel & Conference Center is very significant in increasing guest satisfaction. Continuous training and upskilling of frontliners is an important investment in maintaining and improving the standards of service provided. With a focus on impressive first interactions, effective communication skills, professional complaint handling, good interdepartmental collaboration, high standards in work ethics and appearance, personalization of service, and recommendations of local tourist attractions, frontliners can significantly influence the level of guest satisfaction in a hotel. High guest satisfaction not only creates a positive experience for current guests, but it can also increase their loyalty and build a good hotel reputation.

5. CONCLUSION

This study shows that the role of frontliners at Aston Jember Hotel & Conference Center is crucial in improving guest satisfaction. Some of the key factors that contribute to guest satisfaction include impressive first interactions, effective communication skills, professional complaint handling, good interdepartmental collaboration, high standards in work ethics and appearance, personalization of services, and recommendations for local attractions and activities.

The results revealed that guests were very satisfied with the service provided by the frontliner, which was indicated by the high satisfaction score from the questionnaire and positive feedback from the interview. Friendly, responsive, and professional frontliner is able to create a pleasant stay experience for guests, ultimately increasing guest loyalty and strengthening the hotel's reputation

Further Research

For further research, some of the areas that can be explored further include:

a. Frontliner Training Impact Evaluation:

Further research can evaluate the impact of frontliner training programs on improving communication skills, complaint handling, and knowledge of hotel products and services. This study can measure the effectiveness of training in improving service quality and guest satisfaction.

b. Analysis of the Role of Technology in Frontliner Services:

Given the technological developments in the hospitality industry, research can focus on how technologies such as property management systems (PMS), chatbots, and mobile apps affect frontliner performance and guest experience. This study can explore how technology can be used to support and improve frontline services.

c. Inter-Hotel Comparative Study:

The Role of Aston Jember Hotel Conference Center's Fronliner in Improving Guest Satisfaction (Case Study in Front Office Department)

Further research can conduct comparative studies between multiple hotels with different classes and market segments to identify best practices in the frontliner role. This study can help understand how hotels with different target markets manage frontliner service and the most effective strategies to improve guest satisfaction.

d. The Impact of Service Personalization on Guest Loyalty:

This research can further explore how service personalization, such as the use of guest names and special preference reminders, impacts guest loyalty. The study can measure the extent to which service personalization can improve guest retention and word-of-mouth recommendations.

e. The Influence of Organizational Culture on Frontliner Performance:

Further research can explore how organizational culture and work environment affect frontliner performance and guest satisfaction. This study can identify elements of organizational culture that support superior customer service.

By exploring these areas, further research can provide deeper and more comprehensive insights into the role of frontliners in the hospitality industry, as well as effective strategies for improving guest satisfaction and loyalty.

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