

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTIONS

This chapter presented background of study, research problem, research objective, scope and limitations of the study, research significance, and definition of key terms.

#### 1.1 Background of Study

Since staff at the front desk are expected to anticipate guests' needs and go beyond their expectations, they play a critical role in building the hotel's image for guests. As the hotel's most visible department, front desk staff must communicate effectively with many kinds of guests, especially in challenging situations. Additionally, front-desk staff should be able to address complaints, resolve complaints, and handle specific challenges when guests have problems (Danurdara & Paramitha, 2022). The staff at the front desk is the first line of communication, and thus their behaviors are vital for the reason this interaction sets the tone for the guest's extensive stay. The performance of the front desk staff significantly impacts overall guest satisfaction because of their important role in the guest experience. The feeling visitors have after receiving a service, such goods or hospitality, is known as guest satisfaction. When guests get service which matches their expectations, they feel satisfied. If the service reaches the expectations of the guests, they will be satisfied with it. On the other hand, visitors will be disappointed if the standard of service falls short of their expectations. As a result, it is critical for

businesses to comprehend what customers expect and deliver excellent service that either matches or exceeds their expectations of it. Keeping sure guests feel satisfied adds to a satisfying experience and encourages them to come back (Dewi et al., 2022). The way front desk staff handle guests, especially those who are under pressure has a big impact on how satisfied customers are. In addition to making visitors feel at home, staff members with empathy, good manners, and excellent communication skills make sure that any problems or complaints are resolved quickly and professionally.

In the context of the front office, etiquette is a vital component to giving excellent client service, not merely an extra service. Guest perceptions and loyalty might have been significantly influenced by the established conventions and behavioral standards regulating interpersonal interactions, which are commonly referred to as etiquette (Amirulloh et al., 2024). Etiquette in the hospitality sector includes professional appearance, the ability to handle challenging circumstances with poise and respect, and both verbal and nonverbal communication. Front desk staff have to show strong interpersonal and intercultural communication skills, such as language proficiency, appropriate body language, and cultural sensitivity, as customer expectations for individualized and superior service continue to rise (Dahlan & Purnomo, 2023). These dimensions of etiquette contribute not only to fostering a welcoming and professional ambience but also to enhancing service responsiveness and conflict resolution. Ultimately, adherence to proper etiquette practices plays a vital role in minimizing service failures, reinforcing guest

satisfaction, and elevating the hotel's brand reputation (Danurdara & Paramitha, 2022).

One of the primary roles of the front office staff is to maintain the professional image of the hotel through their appearance and conduct. Guests often form their first impression of a hotel based on their interaction with the front desk staff (Lashley, 2015). A positive first impression is crucial, as it can set the stage for a satisfactory stay. Staff are expected to be courteous, presentable, and professionally dressed front office staff member reassures guests of the hotel's high standards and commitment to quality service. In the context of the front office, etiquette is a vital component to giving excellent client service, not merely an extra service. According to Amirulloh et al. (2024), guest perceptions and loyalty might have been significantly influenced by the established conventions and behavioral standards regulating interpersonal interactions, which are commonly referred to as etiquette. Etiquette in the hospitality sector includes professional appearance, the ability to handle challenging circumstances with poise and respect, and both verbal and nonverbal communication. Front desk staff have to show strong interpersonal and intercultural communication skills, such as language proficiency, appropriate body language, and cultural sensitivity, as customer expectations for individualized and superior service continue to rise (Dahlan & Purnomo, 2023).

The ability to handle stressful situations with calmness and professionalism is another important aspect of front office etiquette. Front office staff are frequently the first to encounter problems that arise during a guest's stay from reservation errors to maintenance issues. As such, staff must remain composed and polite while

addressing concerns. The importance of problem solving skills, noting that when front office staff manage problems effectively, they can turn a potentially negative experience into a positive one (Amirulloh et al., 2024). The ability to listen to guests' concerns, acknowledge their frustration, and offer prompt solutions is an essential part of front office etiquette. Furthermore, front office staff are expected to demonstrate empathy and understanding toward guests, especially during difficult situations. Empathy in service interactions significantly enhances guest satisfaction. Guests who feel that their concerns are genuinely acknowledged and addressed by the front office staff are more likely to leave positive feedback and return in the future. This emotional connection not only improves the guests' immediate experience but also strengthens their overall perception of the hotel's customer service.

In addition to emotional intelligence, effective verbal and nonverbal communications are essential in maintaining proper etiquette. Non-verbal cues, such as body language, eye contact, and facial expressions, often posture can convey warmth and approachability, which is crucial when dealing with guests in both welcoming and stressful circumstances. Non-verbal communication has a direct impact on guest perceptions and can either reinforce or undermine the professionalism of the staff (Basalamah et al., 2020). Moreover, the ability to adapt to different guest needs and preferences is a vital part of front office etiquette. As hotels often cater to diverse guests from various cultural backgrounds, front office staff must be culturally sensitive and aware of different customs and expectations. This can help ensure that all guests feel respected and valued during

their stay, fostering an inclusive environment. Ultimately, front office etiquette is not just about adhering to a set of guidelines but about creating meaningful and lasting relationships with guests. This involves building trust through consistent, professional behaviour and ensuring that all interactions leave a positive impression. Proper etiquette in the front office plays a key role in achieving service excellence, enhancing the hotel's reputation, and ensuring guest loyalty (Sangpikul, 2023). Beyond maintaining a professional appearance and calm demeanor, front office staff must also be skilled in identifying guest needs before complaints arise. This combination of etiquette and anticipation forms the foundation of excellent service delivery.

Furthermore, the consistent application of etiquette by front office personnel is intrinsically linked to the strategic enhancement of service quality within the hospitality sector. The integration of effective communication, and cultural competence in every guest interaction not only contributes to elevated levels of guest satisfaction but also fosters sustained guest loyalty and institutional trust (Susanto, 2024). Proactive behaviour, as an integral aspect of professional etiquette, plays a significant role in preventing service failures and creating a seamless guest experience (Noorani, 2024). In this regard, etiquette training should be positioned not as an ancillary component, but as a fundamental element of human resource development. Comprehensive training initiatives that emphasize the refinement of interpersonal communication, cross cultural sensitivity, and emotional regulation are essential in equipping staff to navigate complex service encounters with professionalism and poise (Susanto, 2024). Consequently, the systematic

implementation of front office etiquette functions as a pivotal mechanism in the pursuit of service excellence, the reinforcement of a positive organizational image, and the maintenance of competitive advantage in an increasingly dynamic and demanding hospitality landscape (Diana & Ramadhan, 2022).

Building on this, the internalization of service ethics and professional etiquette must be supported by a strong organizational culture that promotes ethical behavior and continuous professional development. The front office environment, which serves as the first point of contact between the hotel and guests, requires staff not only to understand these ethical standards intellectually but also to consistently embody them in practice. This necessitates a combination of well-structured standard operating procedures (SOPs), leadership support, and a work atmosphere based on feedback, where staff performance especially when dealing with high pressure or ethically ambiguous situations (Bovier & Nova, 2023). Therefore, to ensure that etiquette becomes an ingrained professional habit and not just a superficial requirement, hotels must adopt a holistic approach aligning policies, practice, and personnel development. Only through such integrative efforts can front office etiquette become a sustainable drive for survival excellence and long-term guest satisfaction.

The importance of service ethics lies in the fact that, as human beings, we naturally process certain negative tendencies or behaviors. If not properly managed, these negative behaviors can emerge during interactions with customers and negatively affect the quality of service. Such behavior may include rudeness, impatience, dishonesty, or lack of empathy traitor that are clearly inappropriate in

a service environment. When these negative attitudes or behaviors appear in frontline service staff, they can significantly harm the experience of the customer. Therefore, it is essential to recognize and address such behavior quickly and effectively. Ignoring or tolerating negative actions from staff can lead to serious consequences, including a decline in service quality and ultimately, damage to the company's public image and reputation. In order to build trust and satisfaction among customers, it is critical that service personnel always demonstrate ethical behavior and maintain professional conduct in all aspects of their work (Jawabreh et al., 2022).

The failure to apply proper front office etiquette consistently can have a big negative impact on the overall guest experience. It can lead to more customer complaints, damage the hotel's good image, and cause a loss of trust and loyalty from the guests. Research shows that one of the main reasons guests feel unhappy is because of poor communication skills and unprofessional behavior from front office staff (Yunyao & Ying, 2019). Since the front office is the first and most frequent point of contact for guests, having good manners and etiquette is very important. In this sense, etiquette becomes a crucial tool for ensuring that guests feel respected and valued.

Front office etiquette includes things like speaking politely, keeping a professional appearance, using good body language and showing friendliness, responsiveness, and empathy to guests. When staff follow these rules of etiquette, they create a good first impression and make guests feel welcome and satisfied. On the other hand, ignoring these manners can lead to bad experiences and hurt the

hotel's reputation. The negative consequences of prior etiquette, such as dissatisfaction and complaints can lead to long term damage to the hotel reputation, potentially impacting revenue and guest loyalty. Positive front office etiquette directly influences guest satisfaction, as it fosters an environment of trust and professionalism. Furthermore, guests are more likely to return to a hotel where staff exhibit proper etiquette, as it creates a sense of comfort and reliability (Dewi et al., 2022). The professional demeanor of front office staff, especially during check in or addressing concerns, sets the tone for the entire guest experience.

The research aims to address the gap by focusing not only on the importance of etiquette but also on the strategies that front office staff can use when facing situations where etiquette is not properly applied. Additionally, the role of training and awareness programs in enhancing staff performance and ensuring consistent implementation of etiquette will be further explored. Unlike previous studies that have primarily focused on the theoretical aspects of etiquette or its role in improving service quality, Sangpikul's study emphasizes that staff behavior and the way employees build guest trust through professionalism, polite communication, and the ability to handle guest needs are essential elements of hotel service. However, the discussion remains largely focused on a conceptual understanding of service dimensions and does not specifically explain how etiquette is practiced, the challenges of its implementation, or the strategies front office staff use to maintain etiquette consistently in dynamic service conditions (Sangpikul, 2023). Unlike previous studies that tend to focus on theoretical discussions within service quality frameworks, this research emphasizes the implementation of etiquette by front

office staff in maintaining appropriate behavior and professional communication in real service contexts.

Another gap addressed is the limited number of comparative studies that examine the implementation of service etiquette in thematic hotels versus conventional hotels. This study offers a comparative analysis between a ship-themed hotel and a hotel with a conventional building design, including how the thematic concept influences service behavior, communication style, and the overall service atmosphere. Therefore, this research is expected to contribute both academically and practically by improving the understanding of front office service etiquette and enhancing the guest experience, particularly within the context of thematic hotels such as Kapal Garden Hotel Malang.

## **1.2 Research Problem**

Based on the background of the study above, the writer formulates the research problems as follow:

1. What types of etiquette aspects should be demonstrated by front office staff at Kapal Garden Hotel Malang?
2. How is etiquette implemented to influence the quality of front office hospitality services?

### **1.3 Research Objective**

Based on the problem formulation above, this study was intended to:

1. To explore and identify the types of etiquette aspects that should be implemented by the front office staff at Kapal Garden Hotel, in accordance with the expected professional standards operations.
2. To elaborate on the implementation of etiquette by front office staff in maintaining proper conduct.

### **1.4 Research Significance**

This research is important for several reasons. Academically, it helps add more knowledge about customer service in the hospitality industry. Practically, it gives hotel managers and staff useful insights on how to improve front office service. In the hospitality industry, it can help hotels create better training programs to maintain high service standards.

### **1.5 Scope and Limitations of Study**

This study focuses on front office etiquette at Kapal Garden Hotel, specifically the types of etiquette and their implementation in daily interactions within the front office. Data were collected from the Front Office SOP, a semi-structured interview with one Front Office Leader, and observations at the front desk to corroborate and enrich the interview results.

### **1.6 Definition Key Terms**

To avoid reader misunderstandings, there were several terms used in this research regarding the title of the research that need to be defined for better understanding:

1. **Front Office** – The primary point of contact for guests in a hotel, responsible for managing reservations, check-ins, and check-outs, as well as providing information and assistance throughout the guest's stay (Pamungkas et al., 2023).
2. **Etiquette** – Refers to the conventional rules and practices that govern polite behavior in social and professional settings, ensuring respectful interactions and fostering a positive atmosphere (Diana & Ramadhan, 2022).
3. **Aspects of Etiquette** – The front office includes effective communication (Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication), active listening, Professional Appearance and Grooming, and Service Etiquette (Diana & Ramadhan, 2022).
4. **Kapal Garden Hotel Malang** – Kapal Garden Hotel Malang is a ship themed hotel located in Malang that offers a distinctive stay experience through a ship architectural design and a service atmosphere aligned with onboard ship services (Bait et al., 2023)