

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In this chapter, the researcher highlighted several topics related to the literature review of this research. It consisted of the concept of hospitality, front office desk, front office aspects, and etiquette practices in front office hospitality.

#### 2.1 The Concept of Hospitality

In the area of hotel management, hospitality has always served as a practical skill and standard. In previous times, people defined it as being really kind, giving, and open when they greeted and welcomed guests (Bovier & Nova, 2023). This approach is based on historical customs which place a high importance on fostering interpersonal relationships. Additionally, it emphasizes providing warmth, safety, and support to individuals who are not members of your own family or organization (Lashley, 2015). The conventional point of view still highlights the essential need to make visitors feel welcome. However, this idea now fits within a larger framework in contemporary hotel administration. This covers tactics for visitor encounters, the overall atmosphere of the business, and daily operations (Danurdara & Paramitha, 2022.). The fundamental values of kindness, generosity, and attentiveness remain. The environment in which these traits manifest is shifting. This means that they need to cope with challenging service configurations, online resources, and more competitive market battles (Dewi et al., 2022). Therefore, managers must make such timeless concepts into consistent routines. These behaviors should be ethical, feel distinctive and fit in with many cultures, and use technologies wisely.

The movement from custom to strategy does not displace tradition but extends it. Historically, the “rules” of welcome were carried by ritual and social expectation; today, they are codified through standards, training, and measurement. Yet hospitality is simultaneously an operational system and a human relationship (Belias & Trihas, 2022). Operational competence without affective resonance yields efficiency without loyalty; affective resonance without operational discipline creates goodwill that is fragile and inconsistent. Strategic practice seeks equilibrium: procedures that scaffold, but never replace, the quality of human encounter (Bovier & Nova, 2023). In this framing, hospitality functions as an organizational capability embedded in culture. Policies and technologies matter, but it is the shared beliefs and micro-behaviors of employees that convert inputs into experiences (Belias & Trihas, 2022). Where service culture is strong, courtesy is not performative but habitual; where it is weak, even well-designed processes can degrade at the point of contact. Leadership attention to recruitment for empathy, socialization around purpose, and continuous learning becomes foundational to any durable expression of hospitality (Ali et al., 2021).

Within this architecture, emotional engagement constitutes a pivotal source of value. Accommodation, food, and amenities provide functional utility; what guests remember and retell are the emotions they experienced while receiving those services (Danurdara & Paramitha, 2022). Positive effect being recognized by name, feeling understood, being put at ease amplifies perceived quality and softens the impact of minor lapses. The negative effect of feeling dismissed, hurried, or judged erodes the value of even flawless operations (Susanto, 2024). Emotions are not

decorative to service; they mediate how service quality is perceived and evaluated (Dewi et al., 2022). Consequently, hospitality professionals must cultivate interpersonal competencies such as empathy, active listening, and situational judgment. Staff who can read subtle cues of fatigue, anxiety, or cultural discomfort and respond appropriately elevate routine transactions into encounters that promote satisfaction, advocacy, and repeat visitation (Belias & Trihas, 2022).

Crucially, emotional engagement should be operationalized rather than left to individual charisma. Organizations can build structures that make care more likely and more consistent: pre-arrival profiles that surface preference signals; prompts that encourage staff to use names and acknowledge purposes of travel; short daily huddles that alert teams to special occasions or sensitivities; and service-recovery scripts that begin with acknowledgment and choice rather than defense and instruction (Belias & Trihas, 2022). Follow-up mechanisms: brief calls or messages after an issue is resolved convert a one-time fix into a moment of closure that guests perceive as genuine attention (Diana & Ramadhan, 2022). Over time, these routines transform emotional engagement from an accidental outcome into a repeatable competency.

Hospitality is additionally interpreted, expected, and performed through cultural frames. Norms of greeting, the meaning of eye contact, acceptable interpersonal distance, turn-taking in conversation, expectations of formality, and rituals around food and drink vary across societies and subcultures (Bovier & Nova, 2023). A gesture of friendliness in one context may read as intrusion in another; a signal of respect in one setting may be misread as indifference elsewhere. In many

Asian contexts, for instance, offering refreshments functions as an elemental sign of welcome, whereas in other regions, explicit verbal greetings or deference to personal space may be more decisive signals of respect. Cross-cultural competence thus becomes a core requirement, enabling frontline staff to adapt communication and behavior in real time, reduce misalignment, and demonstrate inclusivity (Pizam & Tasci, 2019).

Building such competence involves more than distributing brief “do’s and don’ts.” Effective programs combine foundational knowledge about cultural norms with reflective exercises that surface assumptions and biases (Belias & Trihas, 2022). Scenario work and role-play allow staff to practice code-switching calibrating tone, pace, and nonverbal language to guest cues while debriefs help unpack what worked and why. Importantly, cross-cultural competence is not license to stereotype. Cultural knowledge should be held as a tentative hypothesis and continually tested against the unfolding interaction with the individual guest. This blend of literacy and humility equips staff to navigate diversity without rigidity, maintaining respect for difference while preventing formulaic treatment (Pizam & Tasci, 2019).

Technological innovation has, in parallel, reconfigured service delivery. Mobile applications enable pre-arrival check-in and preference setting; smart-room features personalize temperature, lighting, and entertainment; and AI-enabled chat interfaces provide instant information, triage routine requests, and route complex issues to human agents (Amirulloh Anwar et al., 2024). These tools compress low-value time in the journey queuing, form filling, waiting for basic information and

can unlock new forms of personalization at scale. Yet technology's promise becomes a liability if it displaces the human warmth guests interpret as genuine care. Automation without empathy risks experiences that are efficient but emotionally thin (Amirulloh et al., 2024).

The managerial challenge is an architectural one: design journeys in which technology removes friction while preserving and even magnifying human attentiveness (Belias & Trihas, 2022). Digitally gathered preference data should be used to anticipate needs before arrival, therefore allowing staff to demonstrate foresight rather than mere responsiveness. It's possible to script chatbots with sensitive language and easy escalation pathways so that automation augments, rather than blocks, access to a person (Amirulloh et al., 2024). Digital tools should free employees to invest in welcome, orientation, service recovery, and farewell the high touch moments through which meaning is constructed and memories are formed (Amirulloh Anwar et al., 2024). In other words, technology should function as an enhancer, not a substitute: let machines do what machines do best while reserving uniquely human capacities empathy, improvisation, and moral judgment for the moments that matter most.

Beyond functional and emotional dimensions, the meaning of "being hospitable" has broadened to encompass ethics, sustainability, and social responsibility. An increasing share of guests evaluates brands not only on comfort and convenience but also on environmental practice.

This ethical expansion has practical implications. Frontline teams translate high-level commitments into visible cues: refill stations and in-room messaging

about water conservation; locally sourced amenities that connect the hotel to place; concise communications about fair-work policies; and community partnerships that guests can see and, where appropriate join (Diana & Ramadhan, 2022). When these cues are authentic and consistent with practice, they extend the guest's sense of being cared for into a sense that the place itself is cared for. When they are performative, guests detect the dissonance quickly. Accordingly, aligning environmental, social, and governance commitments with daily routines at the point of contact is both a reputational necessity and an experiential opportunity (Lashley, 2015).

These strands of emotional engagement, cultural fluency, technological enablement, and ethical responsibility converge most visibly at the front office, the first and often most consequential point of contact (Belias & Trihas, 2022). First impressions anchor expectations and shape how subsequent events are interpreted. A warm greeting, clear orientation, and proactive recognition of needs create a cognitive frame in which later imperfections are more easily forgiven; a cold or confused arrival primes guests to notice faults. Accordingly, frontline etiquette and emotional intelligence are not peripheral "soft skills" but central levers for memory formation and loyalty (Pizam & Tasci, 2019). Practical implications include operationalizing empathy through short daily huddles focused on reading guest cues; producing concise cultural micro-playbooks for major source markets and refreshing them regularly; using pre-arrival data to anticipate preferences so that staff time can be invested in welcome, recovery, and farewell; capturing small personal details and acting on them before checkout; and making ESG

commitments tangible at the desk through visible, credible touchpoints (Bhadekar et al., 2025).

Bringing these practices to life requires alignment across roles and systems. Human resource processes should recruit for service orientation and teachable empathy; training should be continuous and scenario-based rather than episodic and generic; performance management should reward not only outcomes (e.g., satisfaction scores) but also process indicators (e.g., use of names, quality of recovery conversations). Technology teams should work closely with operations so that digital tools reflect frontline realities and minimize cognitive load (Raina, 2020). Leadership communication should reinforce a shared purpose that frames hospitality as care enacted through professionalism kindness expanded through competence (Belias & Trihas, 2022). When such alignment is present, the front office becomes more than a transactional node; it becomes a stage on which the organization's values are performed with credibility and consistency.

In sum, hospitality has expanded from traditional gestures of welcome into a multifaceted discipline that integrates emotional intelligence, cultural sensitivity, technological enablement, and ethical stewardship (Danurdara & Paramitha, 2022). The enduring core of receiving and entertaining guests with generosity and care remains intact, but it is now practiced within systems that demand deliberate design and disciplined execution (Lashley, 2015). As social expectations, technologies, and environmental imperatives evolve, practitioners must continually refine service culture and frontline routines so that experiences are not only efficient and comfortable but also meaningful, respectful, and

sustainable (Belias & Trihas, 2022). Emotional engagement gives hospitality its resonance; cultural fluency offers relevance across difference; technology provides scale and convenience; and ethical responsibility extends care beyond the guest to the wider community and environment (Amirulloh et al., 2024). Nowhere are these dynamics more visible than at the front desk, where first impressions crystallize and the organization's promise is either fulfilled or undermined in the span of a greeting. The challenge is not to choose between warmth and efficiency, standardization and personalization, automation and presence, or guest satisfaction and social responsibility, but to integrate these dimensions into a coherent practice that honors hospitality's origins while meeting contemporary demands (Dewi et al., 2022).

## **2.2 Front Office Desk**

The front office is a pivotal locus of hotel operations and the principal interface between guests and the property. It manages core activities including reservations, arrivals and departures, requests handling, and information provision across the entire stay cycle (Danurdara & Paramitha, 2022). Because it constitutes both the first and the most sustained point of contact, the caliber of front-office service strongly shapes first impressions and, by extension, overall satisfaction (Dewi et al., 2022). While hotels frequently invest in advertising to stimulate trial, sustained performance depends more heavily on satisfied guests who return and advocate based on lived experience; in this sense, positive word of mouth is an outcome of consistently delivered front-office quality (Ganeshkumar et al., 2019).

A practical and guest-centered behavioral framework often used to structure service encounters is the L.E.A.R.N. method: Listen attentively, demonstrate Empathy, Apologize when appropriate, Respond promptly, and Notify guests about information that affects their stay. Applied rigorously, this sequence helps ensure that guests domestic and international feel recognised, understood, and cared for throughout interactions (Bovier & Nova, 2023). Beyond technique, however, the front office functions as the operational hub that consolidates guest information, orchestrates personalised touches, and coordinates with housekeeping, food and beverage, engineering, and security. Its efficiency therefore affects not only guest-facing moments but also the smooth functioning of the wider hotel system (Dewi et al., 2022).

From a quality perspective, front-office performance can be understood along two complementary dimensions: technical quality (what is delivered) and functional quality (how it is delivered) (Susanto, 2024). Guests evaluate both the accuracy and completeness of outcomes such as a correctly assigned room or timely fulfillment of a request and the interactional process, including attentiveness, clarity, and tone (Sangpikul, 2023). The interaction process is particularly salient because it frames how outcomes are interpreted; courteous, transparent communication can mitigate minor lapses, whereas brusque or opaque exchanges can undermine otherwise sound execution. This duality has become even more consequential as digital tools permeate the arrival and in-stay journey (Huda, 2020).

In the contemporary context, technology integration within the front office is not optional but expected. Digital check-in and keyless entry streamline arrivals;

mobile concierge applications facilitate on-demand information and service requests; and chatbots support round-the-clock responses to routine queries. Collectively, these tools help meet modern expectations for speed, convenience, and personalisation when thoughtfully implemented (Wen et al., 2020). However, technology alone does not guarantee superior experiences. Strategic management remains decisive in aligning people, processes, and data: allocating tasks, developing human resources, evaluating performance against clear standards, and utilising guest and operational data to remove friction and improve consistency (Perdomo-Verdecia et al., 2024). When these managerial levers function coherently, technology acts as an enhancer freeing staff to focus on high-touch moments rather than replacing human warmth.

Taken together, the effectiveness of front-office operations rests on an interdependent triad: staff competence in delivering service, managerial systems that guide and reinforce desired behaviors, and thoughtful technological integration that streamlines processes without diluting the relational core of hospitality (Bovier & Nova, 2023). Sustained investment in training particularly interpersonal communication and service recovery underpins warm, open, and professional interactions. Concurrently, structured procedures and data practices enable reliable personalisation at scale, while clearly articulated etiquette standards ensure consistency across shifts and staff. Dewi et al. (2022) emphasized that, to contribute to a satisfying and memorable guest experience, hotel management should strengthen front-office capabilities through continuous skill development, prudent

adoption of innovative technologies, and robust, data-informed systems grounded in etiquette and micro-practices that shape guest perceptions and loyalty.

### **2.3 Aspects and Etiquette Practices in Front Office Hospitality**

Etiquette denotes the socially accepted norms and behaviours that guide polite interaction across settings, including hospitality. Within front-office work, it encompasses the manners, communication styles, and professional conduct expected when staff engage with guests (Fadia Lutfiana Dahlan & Dedi Joko Purnomo, 2023). In this capacity, etiquette helps create a welcoming, respectful atmosphere that supports satisfaction and a positive overall experience by signalling reliability, care, and consideration from the very first contact (Danurdara & Paramitha, 2022). More broadly, etiquette is embedded in personal and social life and is shaped by culture, tradition, and shared expectations. It is commonly understood as conduct that is “very polite, self-respecting, respectful, and well-mannered,” indicating that etiquette is not merely rule following but the practice of treating others and the surrounding environment with regard and restraint (Ali et al., 2021). In this sense, etiquette is a practical tool for sustaining social harmony and constructive relationships in both private and professional domains.

Scholars also characterise etiquette as “the art of good qualities” or exemplary polite behaviour (Perdomo-Verdecia et al., 2024), underscoring its role in enabling positive interactions. While specific practices vary across cultures and contexts, the underlying purpose remains consistent: to cultivate mutual respect and understanding. Etiquette therefore comprises both written and unwritten rules that

help individuals navigate diverse social situations, from family gatherings to formal events and workplace encounters. These guidelines include observable behaviours such as appropriate greetings or table manners as well as the values that motivate them, notably respect, kindness, and courtesy. Framed this way, etiquette is not a superficial performance but a value system that promotes dignity, humility, and sound conduct, blending sophistication with simplicity so that people can express their best qualities while recognising those of others (Pamungkas et al., 2023).

In professional hospitality, and especially at the front desk, etiquette has direct operational significance. Front-office staff are typically the first and most consistent point of guest contact; their conduct sets expectations, frames subsequent interactions, and can shape the entire stay (Dewi et al., 2022). Beyond verbal exchanges, non-verbal signals appearance, posture, facial expression, eye contact, and tone serve as powerful indicators of professionalism. A well-groomed, courteous, and approachable agent reassures guests that their needs will be handled competently, thereby elevating perceived service quality from the outset. At the same time, punctuality, responsiveness, and the ability to anticipate and address needs before they escalate demonstrate attentiveness and strengthen the sense of being well cared for. These behaviours contribute to satisfaction in the moment and, over time, to repeat visitation and positive recommendation, which are vital to a property's performance (Ganeshkumar et al., 2019).

Crucially, etiquette at the front office is not limited to isolated gestures; it functions as part of an integrated service system. Staff apply etiquette while managing information, personalising interactions, and coordinating with other

departments activities that link directly to the smooth running of the hotel and to guests' evaluations of quality (Dewi et al., 2022). Verbal and non-verbal etiquette guide how information is conveyed, how concerns are acknowledged, and how alternatives are offered, thereby affecting both the technical aspects of service (what is delivered) and the functional aspects (how it is delivered). When these dimensions align accurate outcomes delivered through respectful, clear, and empathetic communication guests experience the interaction as both competent and caring.

In sum, etiquette in hospitality is foundational to smooth interactions and to an environment in which guests feel comfortable and valued. It operates as a codified set of behaviours and a deeper normative framework that supports trust, comfort, and service credibility. Building on this foundation, the next section examines the specific components of front-office etiquette that most directly influence outcomes: (1) Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication, (2) Professional Appearance and Grooming, (3) Service Etiquette, and (4) Confidentiality and Privacy (Bovier & Nova, 2023).

### **2.3.1 Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication**

Effective front-office communication depends on the alignment of verbal messages with non-verbal cues that guests intuitively register and evaluate during service encounters. Non-verbal communication facial expression, gaze behaviour, posture and gestures, interpersonal distance, vocal tone and pace functions as a parallel channel that frames meaning, signals intent, and shapes perceived sincerity. Evidence indicates that when hospitality staff understand

and apply appropriate non-verbal behaviours, guest satisfaction and perceived service quality improve; this is especially salient in formative roles such as hospitality management internships, where deliberate practice can enhance customer experience and strengthen guest staff relationships (Basalamah et al., 2022). In practical terms, staff awareness of their own body language is critical. Maintaining friendly eye contact (without staring), adopting an open and non-defensive posture (shoulders relaxed, hands visible), and modulating tone to convey warmth and calmness communicate attentiveness and respect, thereby reinforcing trust and comfort throughout an interaction. Positive body language of this kind can elevate guests' perceptions of service quality by making competence and care more legible in the moment of contact (Sangpikul, 2023).

### **2.3.2 Professional Appearance and Grooming**

Professional appearance is an integral dimension of front-office etiquette because it communicates competence and care before any verbal exchange occurs. Staff are expected to present a neat, tidy look by wearing clean, well-fitted uniforms and meeting basic grooming standards, well-kept hair and, where applicable, subtle makeup that supports a professional image (Ali et al., 2021). As the most visible representatives of the property, front-office employees personify the hotel's brand; consistent, orderly attire and grooming therefore function as signals of reliability and respect for guests (Dewi et al., 2022). Empirically, a clean and coordinated appearance contributes to a welcoming atmosphere and is associated with higher guest satisfaction at the point of first contact and throughout the stay (Bovier & Nova, 2023). In practice,

these expectations require uniform cleanliness and fit, polished footwear, visible name badges, restrained accessories, and attention to personal hygiene, with supervisors ensuring consistency across shifts. By aligning presentation standards with service culture, hotels reinforce the message that details matter thereby strengthening guests' impressions of quality from arrival through departure (Ali et al., 2021).

### **2.3.3 Service Etiquette**

This includes greeting guests warmly, using their names when possible, being proactive in addressing their needs, and ensuring a seamless check-in and check-out experience. Personalized service significantly enhances guest satisfaction, as highlighted in a study on hospitality interactions (Bovier & Nova, 2023). Service etiquette covers several aspects, including how guests are greeted, the use of guest names, and proactive responses to their needs. The importance of warmly welcoming guests and ensuring a smooth service flow such as timely menu explanations and effective handling of guest requests (Perdomo-Verdecia et al., 2024). Perdomo also asserts that staff should not expect tips unless exceptional service is provided. The decline in hospitality service standards and stresses that a focus on proper service etiquette can enhance guest satisfaction and improve the hotel's overall reputation (Perdomo-Verdecia et al., 2024) .

### **2.3.4 Confidentiality and Privacy**

Protecting guest confidentiality is a fundamental part of front office operations. With the advancement of immersive technology, the concept of "unbalanced privacy" has been introduced to reflect the unique circumstances that

arise from sharing biometric data. A new doctrine, the "uncontrollable privacy paradox," highlights the consumer's lack of control over their personal data and emphasizes the importance of careful data management in the hospitality industry (Liyanarachchi et al., 2024). While immersive technologies can offer exciting ways to engage with guests, it is essential for hotels to handle guest information carefully. A key part of front office etiquette is ensuring that personal data stays confidential. Hotel staff must avoid saying things like room numbers out loud and must keep all guest details private. By protecting privacy, hotels can build trust with their guests and maintain a good reputation. Ethical handling of guest information should always be a priority (Bovier & Nova, 2023).

