

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

In the hotel industry, demands for service quality continue to grow especially in the Food and Beverage (F&B) sector, where every guest interaction shapes the overall dining experience. At the heart of these interactions is communication, both verbal and non verbal, which is the primary medium through which staff convey professionalism, warmth, and responsiveness. Namkung and Jang (2007) found that F&B service quality directly affects consumer satisfaction and behavioral outcomes such as loyalty and word-of-mouth promotion, with interpersonal communication playing a critical role. Ha and Jang (2010) similarly found that staff attentiveness, tone of voice, and non-verbal cues such as eye contact and posture significantly shape the guest experience.

Communication quality also shapes how guests perceive service encounters more broadly. Bitner (1990) found that employee-customer interactions mediated through verbal expressions like greetings and empathetic responses, and non-verbal signals like smiling and body language are a key driver of perceived service quality. While research on F&B service is extensive, less attention has been paid to how verbal and non-verbal communication strategies work together in delivering excellent service. Reisinger and Turner (2003) note that in hospitality settings, cultural values and local context heavily influence guest expectations yet how mid-scale hotel staff navigate these communication demands in everyday service remains under explored.

In order to address this gap, this study examines the verbal and non-verbal communication strategies employed by F&B staff at Aston Inn Batu, analyzing how these strategies contribute to the delivery of excellent service and the overall guest experience.

This study aims to fill that gap by providing practical insights for hospitality professionals on how communication based training can be developed, how service interactions can be better adapted to guest needs, and how both satisfaction and loyalty can be fostered through more deliberate communication practices.

Research consistently highlights the multidimensional nature of guest satisfaction in F&B settings. Zhang and Zhao (2023) note that both physical environment and the quality of human interaction simultaneously contribute to dining satisfaction meaning that communication behaviors cannot be separated from service outcomes. Specific verbal (Sudiran, 2026) and non-verbal strategies used by staff, and their differential impact on guest perceptions, remain under explored. Smith and Johnson (2022) further argue that cultural and contextual variables shape communication expectations, and more research is needed to understand how these dynamics play out in specific hotel environments.

As the hospitality sector evolves, understanding how staff communicate through both spoken language and body language becomes increasingly important to meeting the expectations of discerning guests. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of how interpersonal communication functions as a vehicle for service excellence, with implications for staff training, SOP development, and guest experience management at Aston Inn Batu.

Despite the growing body of literature on service quality, studies specifically examining how verbal and non-verbal communication strategies are integrated into the daily service routines of mid-scale hotel F&B departments remain scarce. Reisinger and Turner (2003) note that local circumstances and cultural values substantially influence how service is delivered and perceived in hospitality settings. This study addresses that gap

by focusing on Aston Inn Batu as a case study, analyzing how its F&B staff deploy communication strategies to achieve consistent, excellent service.

A. Research Questions

How are verbal and non-verbal communication strategies employed by F&B staff at Aston Inn Batu in delivering excellent service to guests?

B. Research Purposes

This study aims to identify and analyze the verbal and non-verbal communication strategies employed by F&B staff at Aston Inn Batu in the delivery of excellent service. It further seeks to examine how these communication strategies interact with service standards, guest expectations, and complaint handling procedures to create a positive guest experience and foster satisfaction and loyalty.

C. Significance of the Study

1. For Hotel Management

This study provides insight into how F&B staff apply verbal and non-verbal communication strategies in service delivery, offering practical recommendations for developing communication focused training programs and improving guest interaction standards with the F&B department.

2. For the Hospitality Industry

The findings may contribute to broader discussions on communication-based service standards and best practices in the hospitality industry. Training modules for hospitality professionals particularly those focused on verbal responsiveness, non verbal signaling, and culturally adaptive communication can be developed based on the study's outcomes.

3. For Future Research

Future studies could build upon this research by incorporating guest perspectives on how they perceive and respond to staff communication behaviors, thereby achieving a more comprehensive

understanding of verbal and non-verbal communication in service delivery.

D. Scope and Limitations

1. Scope

This study focuses exclusively on the food and beverage department of Aston Inn Batu, including its main restaurant, dining outlets, bar, and room service. The primary areas examined are the verbal and non verbal communication strategies employed by staff during service interactions, including greetings, order-taking, complaint handling, and service recovery, as well as how these strategies align with the hotel's Standard Operating Procedures and service quality standards.

2. Limitations

The research is limited to the perspectives of current employees at Aston Inn Batu. It does not include data from guests or former employees, which may limit the generalization of the findings. Additionally, due to the qualitative case study design, conclusions are specific to this context and may not reflect broader industry trends.

E. Definition of Key Terms

- 1. Food and Beverage Services:** All aspects of food and beverage provision are referred to, including restaurants, bars, room service, and banquet operations.
- 2. Excellent Service:** Service that meets or exceeds guest expectations through quality interactions across multiple service dimensions tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy with verbal and non-verbal communication serving as the primary channels through which these dimensions are expressed and perceived.
- 3. Guest Satisfaction:** The overall contentment of a guest based on their service experience and whether their expectations were fulfilled or surpassed.

F. Verbal Communication

The use of spoken language, tone, word choice, and phrasing in direct interaction with guests, including greetings, order-taking, complaint handling, and service explanations.

G. Non-Verbal Communication

The transmission of meaning through body language, facial expressions, eye contact, gestures, physical posture, and spatial proximity during service interactions, independent of spoken words.

