

**UNDERGRADUATE THESIS**

**THE EFFECT OF SERVICE QUALITY BY  
FRONT OFFICE STAFF ON GUEST SATISFACTION  
AT HILTON CLEARWATER BEACH RESORT & SPA**



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**Writer**

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## **ABSTRACT**

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Keywords: front office service, guest satisfaction, service quality

The tourism industry in Indonesia shows a growth trend, with the hotel sector playing an important role in supporting tourist satisfaction. This study aims to analyze the implementation of service quality at the front office of Hilton Clearwater Beach Resort & Spa Florida and evaluate the level of guest satisfaction with the service. The research method used is descriptive analysis and simple linear regression with quantitative data from guest surveys and qualitative data through interviews. The results of the study indicate that front office service quality has a significant effect on guest satisfaction. Factors such as speed of check-in, staff friendliness, and responsiveness to complaints contribute greatly to guest perceptions, guest satisfaction is also influenced by additional factors such as facilities and comfort offered during the stay. This study concludes that improving service quality at the front office can improve overall guest satisfaction. Therefore, it is recommended that hotel management more improve on training front office employees and improving service procedures to improve guest experience.

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## ABSTRAK

Dewani, Ni Gusti Ayu Putu Anggitha (2025). *The Effect of Service Quality by Front Office Staff on Guest Satisfaction at Hilton Clearwater Beach Resort & Spa*. Skripsi: Manajemen Bisnis Pariwisata, Jurusan Pariwisata, Politeknik Negeri Bali.

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Kata Kunci: front office service, guest satisfaction, service quality

Industri pariwisata di Indonesia menunjukkan tren pertumbuhan positif, dengan sektor perhotelan memegang peranan penting dalam mendukung kepuasan wisatawan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis implementasi kualitas pelayanan di front office Hilton Clearwater Beach Resort & Spa Florida dan mengevaluasi tingkat kepuasan tamu terhadap pelayanan tersebut. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah analisis deskriptif dan regresi linier sederhana dengan data kuantitatif dari survei tamu dan data kualitatif melalui wawancara. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kualitas pelayanan front office berpengaruh signifikan terhadap tingkat kepuasan tamu. Faktor-faktor seperti kecepatan check-in, keramahan staf, dan responsivitas terhadap keluhan berkontribusi besar terhadap persepsi tamu. Selain itu, tingkat kepuasan tamu juga dipengaruhi oleh faktor-faktor tambahan seperti fasilitas dan kenyamanan yang ditawarkan selama masa tinggal. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa peningkatan kualitas pelayanan di front office dapat meningkatkan kepuasan tamu secara keseluruhan. Oleh karena itu, disarankan agar manajemen hotel lebih fokus pada pelatihan karyawan front office dan perbaikan prosedur pelayanan untuk meningkatkan pengalaman tamu.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Research Background

Hospitality industry is a national strategic sector with strong socio-economic impacts, showing growth in tourist visits to Indonesia over the past five years. Despite a sharp decline in 2020 due to the pandemic, foreign arrivals began recovering in 2022, reaching 7.4 million in 2023 and growing by 24.85 percent in 2024. (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2024). In the hospitality industry some service quality particularly from the Front Office Departments, is crucial in shaping guest satisfaction, as it directly affects guests' experiences from arrival to departure.

Research on the relationship between front office services and guest satisfaction has been extensively conducted within the broader context of the hospitality industry. However, there is a notable lack of in-depth, location-specific studies that focus on how front office service quality impacts guest satisfaction in upscale hotel properties located in leading tourist destinations in the United States. This gap becomes particularly evident in the case of the Hilton Clearwater Beach Resort & Spa, a four-star beachfront property in Florida that attracts a substantial number of both domestic and international tourists year-round. The hotel's prime location, branding under the global Hilton network, and reputation for upscale service position it as an ideal case study for assessing the influence of front office service performance on overall guest satisfaction and perception.

Preliminary observations, along with an initial review of guest reviews on platforms such as TripAdvisor and Google Reviews, reveal several recurring issues related to front office service delivery. While numerous guests have expressed satisfaction, praising staff as friendly, attentive, and professional with some even citing this as the reason for their return visit (see Appendix 8) a significant portion of reviews highlight negative encounters. These include being met with unfriendly, dismissive, or impatient behavior from front desk staff, receiving incorrect or insufficient information about hotel amenities, long wait times at check-in and check-out, and poor handling of complaints or requests. In several instances, guests reported confusion during the check-in process due to inadequate explanation of resort policies and fees, leading to frustration and disappointment. Additionally, reports of being transferred between departments without resolution, and front office staff appearing visibly overwhelmed during peak check-in times, further emphasize the inconsistency in service delivery.

Direct field observations further support these claims. It was observed that front office personnel often failed to adhere to the expected grooming standards, including inconsistent use of uniforms, missing name tags, and lack of professional appearance factors that affect not only visual impression but also perceived credibility. Moreover, inconsistencies in staff behavior were evident during guest interactions. For example, while some staff were seen providing detailed local information and proactively assisting guests with luggage or directions, others appeared disengaged, reluctant to assist, or provided vague and unhelpful responses. These discrepancies can cause confusion, dissatisfaction, and a perceived lack of professionalism particularly harmful

in a property that caters to international guests who may rely heavily on front desk assistance due to language or cultural differences. This situation highlights a critical gap in service quality particularly in the reliability dimension where guests expect consistent, dependable, and accurate service from front office personnel. Despite the hotel's implementation of global service standards through staff training, SOPs, and digital support systems, these procedures are not always translated into consistent practice. The empathy and assurance dimensions are also undermined when staff fail to listen to guest concerns, exhibit a lack of care in handling issues, or seem ill-informed about hotel policies and local information. Furthermore, the tangibility dimension is compromised by inconsistencies in appearance and presentation, which detract from the professional image expected at a four-star resort.

Additionally, during high season or major events hosted at the hotel, complaints spike in both frequency and severity, suggesting a lack of adequate staffing or poor peak-time management by the front office. Guests have reported waiting over 30 minutes to check in, receiving no apology or assistance with baggage, or encountering miscommunications regarding room assignments and upgrade options. In several online complaints, guests mentioned that although they had booked specific room types or view categories, front office staff could not accommodate them upon arrival due to internal coordination issues further widening the service gap.

This study is therefore essential not only for addressing a theoretical gap in academic research but also for providing practical, evidence-based recommendations

that could be implemented by Hilton Clearwater Beach Resort & Spa and similar properties. It will explore how each of the five SERVQUAL dimension's reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibility relates to guest satisfaction outcomes, especially from the front office perspective. Prior research, such as that by Kumar and Wang (2020), predominantly focuses on service expectations and delivery within the East Asian context, which differs in cultural norms, guest behavior, and service protocol compared to Western-based hospitality operations. Given the front office's critical role as both the first and last touchpoint of the guest journey, any shortcomings at this stage can disproportionately affect overall satisfaction and brand loyalty. Thus, this study aims to fill this crucial research and practical gap by investigating front office service delivery at Hilton Clearwater Beach Resort & Spa and its direct and indirect effects on guest satisfaction.

Based on the explanation above and the research gap, a study entitled "The Effect of Service Quality by Front Office Staff on Guest Satisfaction at Hilton Clearwater Beach Resort & Spa" was prepared.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

Based on the background that has been described, the following research problem formulation is raised:

1. How does the front office staff at The Hilton Clearwater Beach Resort & Spa in Florida implement service quality?

2. How does the service quality by front office staff affect guest satisfaction at The Hilton Clearwater Beach Resort & Spa?

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

Based on the formulation of the problem above, the research objectives of this study are:

1. Identifying the implementation of service quality by front office staff at The Hilton Clearwater Beach Resort & Spa, Florida.
2. Analyzing the effect of service quality by front office staff on guest satisfaction at The Hilton Clearwater Beach Resort & Spa.

### **1.4 Research Significance**

Based on the objectives of the above research, the results of this research are expected to provide the following benefits:

1. Theoretical significance

The results of this study are expected to be useful and provide additional knowledge to other researchers who want to research similar topics related to the influence of front office services on guest satisfaction.

2. Practical significance

The results of this study are expected to provide information to managers about the influence of front office services on guest satisfaction at The Hilton Clearwater Beach Resort & Spa, so that managers can better understand the service aspects that need to be improved to create a more satisfying guest experience.

### **1.5 Limitations and Scope of Research**

The scope of this study is limited only examining the effect of front office services on guest satisfaction at Hilton Clearwater Beach Resort & Spa. The research specifically focused on front office functions, including check-in and check-out procedures, staff professionalism, communication quality, and responsiveness. The study is conducted exclusively at this property over six months, from December 2024 to June 2025, using questionnaires distributed to 100 hotel guests.

The limitations of this study include its restriction to a single hotel location, which may limit the generalizability of the findings into other hotels or Hilton branches. The study does not examine other departments, such as housekeeping or food and beverage, which may influence overall guest satisfaction. Furthermore, individual guest responses may be subjective and influenced by personal expectations and experiences, potentially affecting the objectivity of the data collected.

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## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

#### 5.1 Conclusion

From preliminary observations and guest feedback from online platforms such as TripAdvisor and Booking.com, it is evident that guest perceptions from front office service quality at The Hilton Clearwater Beach Resort & Spa vary. Despite these mixed reviews, the front office staff's overall service quality implementation level reached 86percent, placing it in the "well implemented" category. Furthermore, the average score of 4.3 across all five service quality dimensions, such as reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibility, demonstrates that the front office team has generally delivered services professionally and consistently that align with guest expectations. Therefore, it can be concluded that most guests are reasonably satisfied with the front office service, though there remains room for improvement in transparency and communication, particularly regarding additional fees.

This high percentage also reflects a strong and positive related between front office service quality with guest satisfaction. Also, consistent scores across all dimensions suggest that guests perceive every aspect of the front office service positively, including the staff's reliability in fulfilling promises, their responsiveness to guest needs, their ability to provide assurance, the empathy shown to guests, and their overall appearance. These findings show that excellent service quality gave important role in increasing guest satisfaction and enhancing the overall guest experience at the hotel.

## 5.2 Suggestion

Based on the findings from the descriptive analysis, it became evident that among the various indicators within the tangibility dimension, the cleanliness of staff uniforms received the lowest perception score from guests. While still falling within the “excellent” category, this indicator lagged others, suggesting that the professional appearance of front office staff may not consistently meet guest expectations. This subtle gap implies a need for more proactive efforts from hotel management to ensure that every staff member’s appearance aligns with the high standards of the property. To address this, it is recommended that the hotel implements routine uniform checks before each shift, ensures sufficient laundry resources are available, and reviews the overall feasibility of the current uniform design and materials to maintain both comfort and cleanliness. Beyond aesthetics, these enhancements are likely to contribute positively to how guests perceive professionalism, thereby influencing overall satisfaction.

Addressing the broader scope of the research, the regression analysis confirmed that the quality of front office service plays a significant role in shaping guest satisfaction. However, it is important to note that this is only part of a more complex picture. The findings imply that while front office interactions do matter, the majority of what drives a guest’s overall satisfaction stems from other elements of the hotel experience. Therefore, future studies should consider incorporating additional variables such as the quality of guest rooms, pricing fairness, the functionality and

cleanliness of hotel facilities, as well as the general ambiance and atmosphere provided by the hotel environment.

Moreover, special attention should be given to the responsiveness dimension, which received the lowest average score among all service quality dimensions. This signals a critical area for improvement, especially given its strong influence on guests' emotional responses and perception of service reliability. Management should not rely solely on standardized training programs or procedural systems such as SOPs or digital service aids. Instead, they must cultivate a service culture that encourages staff to be alert, proactive, and sensitive to the needs and situations of each guest. Empowering employees to make quick, thoughtful decisions and respond efficiently in unexpected situations will bridge the gap between expectation and experience.



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