

# Front Desk Personnel Qualities and Skills in Applying Upselling Hotel Products: Case Study of the Ritz Carlton Bali

*by K M*

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## Front Desk Personnel Qualities and Skills in Applying Upselling Hotel Products: Case Study of the Ritz Carlton Bali

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### Abstract

Upselling is a program to increase the income of a hotel by introducing higher level products. In the implementation of upselling, it must be supported by standards and procedures for implementation, knowledge of the language of persuasion, and knowledge of products being sold. The Ritz Carlton Bali as a member of the Marriott Bonvoy Elite international chain of hotels, has a market of foreign tourists, so it is very important to master English which is used to direct tourists to increase sales. The Research was conducted using a qualitative descriptive method with the research sample being the front office employees of The Ritz Carlton Bali who were purposely selected. The results of the study indicate that in terms of standards and procedures are very good and clear and describe how the steps in it can make someone interested in upselling.

**Keywords:** *Qualities and Skills; Upselling; Front Desk; Persuasive Communication*

### 1. Introduction

Bali is a very popular tourist destination in the world, thus enabling the tourism industry to develop very rapidly, as well as providing very broad job opportunities for its people (Subadra, 2019). Data on tourists who entered Bali before Covid-19 always experienced a very significant increase. Based on data of Kemenparekraf 2019 (Ginaya et al, 2023) foreign tourist visits reached six million tourists from various parts of the world. In tourism activities, English is a world language that must be mastered when entering the industry, especially for those who have direct contact with tourists. This is because wherever tourists come from, they are at least able to communicate in English (Lestari et al., 2022).

One of the highly developed tourism products in Bali and a mainstay industry is accommodation service products, namely hotels, villas, resorts and other lodging places. In this accommodation business, the front office department becomes a very vital part in the communication process as the first and last impression of the business, as well as how transactions can take place (Bardi, 2021; Astuti et al, 2018). According to the results of research from (Wulandari & Rahmawati, 2020) at a five-star hotel in Bali, it states that English is a substantial requirement, and in selling you must have language skills (Speaking,

Listening, Writing and Reading), Speaking & Listening skills are points the main things that must be mastered by a staff.

If the impression given is memorable, it will give a positive mood to the tourist so that it will be easier to maintain that mood. However, if the first impression is felt through the front office service, it will affect the mood of the tourist which will affect their entire experience at the hotel (Rutherford, 2021). These tourists will be very sensitive to anything that happens, so that the slightest thing that happens can trigger huge complaints. According to Ekhsan et al (2021) as for what must be prepared by a staff in the front office are as follows:

1. Grooming (self-preparation) As the front guard in receiving guests, all front office staff must make good self-preparation or grooming, both in terms of clothing, how to dress according to standards, and personal hygiene must always be maintained.
2. Preparation of the work area All staff and guests who come must feel comfortable, for this reason the work area must be prepared in such a way as to create that comfort. For this reason, all front office staff must know their work area by maintaining cleanliness and tidiness. This is in accordance with the motto that "Front Office is the hub of hotel operations"
3. Equipment preparation After preparing the work area, proceed with preparing all the equipment and making sure all the equipment used is ready to use. For example preparing EDC machines, HT, computer readiness and PMS, as well as other tools.
4. Preparation for receiving guests.

FOs are required to have adequate product knowledge, experience in providing information that is able to accommodate the wishes, needs and expectations of guests, skills in providing services according to guest requests, as well as attitudes and behaviors that are able to provide satisfaction to customer guests (Patriani et al, 2018). For this reason, the front office staff must prepare themselves to serve guests. These preparations also include room preparation where coordination with housekeeping is required to ensure that future guest rooms are ready on time, as well as preparing potential rooms for upselling (Yudha and Seken, 2016). In the category of star hotels, especially 4 stars and 5 stars, they usually have several types of room options that they can offer to tourists, so that tourists' budgets and tourist satisfaction can be maximized. A hotel or resort will also maximize sales of the products they have, one of which is by selling the premium rooms they have, so as to be able to provide greater income (Aristyawati et al, 2020).

The Ritz Carlton Bali is a 5 star hotel located in the Sawangan area, Nusa Dua Bali by applying the concept theme "The Source of Life" in which take the inspiration from the Indian Ocean as The Source of Life in Bali, as the most of the spiritual Balinese traditions centered around water and ocean. One of the KPIs or Key Performance Indicators of the hotel, especially in the front office section, is being able to do upselling. Upselling is a way to increase income or revenue by selling additional products that can be offered to visitors (Bisena, 2022; Fadila et al, 2022). One example that can be done by upselling by front office staff at The Ritz Carlton Bali is Room upselling, in addition to several products such as food, transport, wedding and meeting venues, cooking classes. Room upselling is an attempt to sell a higher or more expensive room type than the room booked by the tourist (Jonathan, 2022). For example, a hotel A has several types of rooms, including: deluxe rooms, suites rooms and grand suites rooms. If a traveler has booked a deluxe room, at check-in there will be an opportunity to offer a more expensive room type if the room is still available (Parantika and Irawan, 2021).

The added value given to guests is that there is a cheaper price difference when they add costs to get a grand suites room from a deluxe room that has been ordered, compared to if they have to book directly at the grand suites room (Tri Hesti, 2022). According to Martina and Andifa (2021) what must be prepared for upselling is (1) understanding the product being offered. When selling rooms, the front office staff must really understand the products being sold, what differentiates one product from another, so that the person being offered knows the image of the value that is obtained by spending more money. It is impossible for people to pay more if the value obtained does not follow, (2) good preparation. Before

upselling, preparations must be made, especially the readiness of the rooms to be sold, so that when guests come to check in, the staff on duty can explain which rooms are available as an option, (3) use persuasive language that is good and right on target. This step is the key to success in upselling. With a good persuasion style and being able to influence tourists' minds to change the room they ordered to a room with a more expensive category, the opportunity to be able to deal with them is very large.

All staff in the front office must try to increase room sales by providing more information needed by guests, so they know where and what is available at the hotel (Krestanto, 2019). In many cases, upselling cannot be successful because of the lack of communication that occurs as an exchange of information to guests, so they do not know that there are prettier and more attractive things or rooms in the hotel. Hutama (2020) suggests that promotional language cannot be separated from the use of diction, the construction of phrases, clauses, sentences, the use of rhetorical staging, patterned expressions, and discourse markers. These steps are the steps that must be carried out by a front office employee in upselling rooms, so that they can be right on target (Wachidati, 2021). He suggests further that in using English to sell something, you have to use English with a persuasive genre.

In carrying out this program, it is not enough for front office employees to only be able to communicate using English, but they must have persuasion skills that are able to invite these tourists to change the room they have ordered, to a room that has a higher category. The much needed persuasion ability is persuasion using English (Fleming, 2019). According to Derin et al (2020) persuasion is a communication process that invites or persuades other people to follow the communicator's directions either with the aim of changing attitudes, beliefs or opinions. Persuasion communication in the essence of marketing communication is an effort made by communicators to market by convincing potential buyers of products or services to buy the products offered (Hunt and Meyer, 2019).

According to Lane and Thomas (2023) the science of communication has been known from ancient times, starting in the Greek and Roman era. At that time they already had the awareness to influence others in various situations involving many people. It is said that persuasion has been the dominant theme in the study of rhetoric since the days of Ancient Greece. This was based on the ability to speak and convince people in front of a grand jury in court at the time, which was a requirement that the citizens of Syracuse (a Greek colony on the island of Sicily) had to meet as they defended their rights and lands taken by force by the tyrannical government (Perloff, 2020). Perloff put forward further that the purpose of persuasion is to change knowledge and attitudes.

Hamilton (2017) suggests that persuasion communication techniques are a communication technique with the aim that other people are willing to accept an understanding or belief, perform an act or other activity and so on. This persuasion technique takes place by means of personal contact which allows the communicator to know, understand, and master: (1) the communicant's complete frame of reference, (2) the communicant's physical and mental conditions completely, (3) the atmosphere of the environment at the time of communication, and (4) direct communication responses (Young, 2016). Based on this background, the research is aimed at finding out how well the standards and procedures for persuasion upselling the front office department of The Ritz Carlton Bali are viewed from the style of language, English language skills used.

## II. Research Methodology

### 2.1 Research Scope

The research was conducted at The Ritz Carlton Bali hotel located in the Sawangan area, Nusa Dua Bali, it is only 30 minutes (20km) away from Ngurah Rai International Airport to the south. The

department that is the object of research is the front office department which consists of 10 people, who are also the samples in the research conducted.

## 2.2 Research Design

The research method used is descriptive qualitative by describing the results obtained through observation and documentation of front office employees in carrying out the upselling process, interviews to find out the steps and style of persuasion used, as well as testing the ability to understand the product you want to upsell, namely all types rooms owned by The Ritz Carlton Bali. The results of the data obtained were processed according to the following research procedures.

## 2.3 Research Procedures

The research began with conducting a location survey at The Ritz Carlton Bali which is located in the Sawangan area, Nusa Dua Bali. The data collected is the procedure for implementing the upselling program from start to finish, by looking at the standard operating procedure SOP, as well as the actual exposure made to tourists who are checking in. The data collected is processed and described qualitatively by describing the steps involved in upselling. The next step is to evaluate the product knowledge of the types of rooms owned which will affect how confident the front office team is in directing tourists for upselling.

## III. Results and Discussion

The Upselling Standards and Procedures implemented by The Ritz Carlton Bali have shown persuasion steps that are able to make tourists who check in very interested in upselling to rooms with a higher level. The standards and procedures carried out are (1) the front office team will coordinate rooms with a higher level to be prepared by the housekeeping department, so that these rooms can become targets for upselling, if there are tourists who check in with rooms of a lower category (2) during the check-in process, the guest will register after confirming the name and room type order. After registering,

This step already shows the style of persuasion how to create more curiosity about other room types, (3) after the guest expresses curiosity about other rooms, the front office employee does not immediately provide what price to pay in addition to the room, but the guest is offered to preview the room, while comparing with the previously booked room, (4) front office employees when inviting guests to inspect the room, the advantages of the room are notified and shown, so that the guest's desire to move to a room with a higher level is increasing strong. After the desire appears, then the employee gives a price, by giving the appearance of the best and special price for his guests.

### 3.1 The Updated Product Knowledge of The Ritz Carlton Bali

In the process analysis carried out, it can be seen that the standards and procedures carried out have shown a very good persuasion style, which provides in principle what is done including (1) introducing the product first with great confidence, (2) inviting tourists to see and feel direct experience of the product that is the target of upselling, (3) pricing is done after tourists have really felt the difference and experience of the upselling target.

This method becomes a very practical way in which the standards and procedures that are made try to show the value or value of the product, before giving a price for that value or value. In the service business, the value of the product or value will be far more meaningful than money. This concept is very appropriate to be applied in the world of hospitality, where if the value or value of a product is packaged and can be felt by tourists, then price will not be a problem. This is the cause of the success of many hotels that are able to sell their rooms up to tens of millions or even hundreds of millions overnight as

well as other hotel products. Table 1 below shows an overview of the overall product knowledge that must be mastered by front office employees to facilitate upselling.

Table 1. Overview product knowledge of The Ritz Carlton Bali

NO	Questions	Answer
1	Location of The Ritz-Carlton, Bali	Located on the southern tip of Bali, in Sawangan, Nusa Dua, the resort only 30 minutes (20km) away from Ngurah Rai International Airport to the south.
2	Resort's Overview	12.7 hectares white beach front and elevated Cliff top settings 313 combined oceanfront suites and villas with view to the ocean and resort's lush garden 3 restaurants and 3 bars <b>Restaurant:</b> Bejana, Senses, The Beach Grill <b>Lounge and Bars:</b> Raku, The Ritz-Carlton Lounge and Bar, and Breezes Tapas Lounge The Ritz-Carlton Club Ritz Kids Majestic, beachfront wedding chapel Meeting facilities with 1 ballroom, 4 breakout rooms, and 1 boardroom The Ritz-Carlton Spa featuring 14 treatment rooms including 4 spa villas
3	Scenography	<b>Theme of the hotel:</b> The Source of Life We take the inspiration from the Indian Ocean as The Source of Life in Bali, as most of the spiritual Balinese traditions centered around water and ocean. <b>Scenes developed to support the theme:</b> - Surf Initiation class by the beach, every day at 14:30 for an hour - Yoga or meditation class by the beach - Kite Runner program - part of the Ritz Kids activities where we invite guests to learn about Balinese Kite making and fly it at the beach afterwards
4	Hotel's unique selling points	Cliff top setting and beachfront location Combined accommodations of expansive suites and villas Remote location for ultimate getaway Wide ranges of indoor and outdoor venues for events Culinary Cave, the culinary centre Majestic, beachfront wedding chapel The Sawangan Junior Suite: 230 units The Ritz-Carlton Suite: 49 units The Pool Pavilion: 18 units The Sky Villa: 6 units The Garden Villa: 4 units The Cliff Villa: 4 units The Ritz-Carlton Cliff Villa: 1 unit The Ritz-Carlton Ocean Front Villa: 1 unit
5	Suites & Villas	

Source: The Ritz Carlton Bali, 2020

### 3.2 English Proficiency of The Ritz Carlton Bali Front Office Employees

The success in the process of upselling a hotel room carried out by front office employees is greatly influenced by the persuasive language skills used by these employees. Bearing in mind that the dominant tourists visiting are foreign tourists and the language used is English, the research was conducted by testing the English language skills of front office employees with results as shown in the following table. Table 2. Average English scores of front office employees.

Table 2. English average score of front desk employees

No	Samples (X)	score
1	X1	95
2	X2	90
3	X3	87
4	X4	94
5	X5	96
6	X6	98
7	X7	89
8	X8	95
9	X9	96
10	X10	88
<b>Average Score</b>		<b>92.8</b>

Source: Processed data

Based on the results in Table 2 above, it can be seen that the English language skills of front office employees at The Ritz Carlton Bali hotel which are used in persuading tourists to do upselling are very even, with an average score of 92.2. From these results it can also be seen that the difference in upselling ability of each person will not be significant which is influenced by their average persuasion English skills. High ability reflects a much better level of communication ability, so that reaching an agreement with tourists will be easier because there are no barriers or barriers in communicating.

### 3.3 Product Knowledge Mastery of The Ritz Carlton Bali Front Office Employees

In addition to English skills used to persuade tourists as well as standards and procedures as a reference in upselling hotel accommodations, knowledge of the product to be upsold is also very important as a determinant of program success. The following are the results of the ability test for understanding hotel products and their facilities as targets for upselling, which can be seen in Table 3 below:

Table 3. Hotel products' average score of front desk employees

No	Samples (X)	score
1	X1	100
2	X2	95
3	X3	90
4	X4	98
5	X5	99
6	X6	100
7	X7	98
8	X8	99
9	X9	100
10	X10	98
<b>Average Score</b>		<b>97.7</b>

Source: Processed data

Based on the results of tests conducted on The Ritz Carlton Bali Front Office employees, the results are as shown in Table 2, where the result of product knowledge is very high with a score of 97.7 which is not significantly different compared to English proficiency with an average score of 92.8. The results of these two analyzes can be seen that there is no significant deficiency in terms of mastery of English and in terms of SOP already has a very good persuasion style. Product knowledge from front office employees is also very good so that what will be explained to target tourists who want to be upsold becomes even more valid and convincing. This is because if someone understands the product they have, it will be easier for that person to sell the product. Accurate information will provide the real experience of tourists, so there will be no miscommunication which will ultimately have a negative impact on the tourist experience. The ability to master product knowledge of The Ritz Carlton Bali front office employees can also be seen from the way one of these employees explains hotel products to foreign guest relations (see figure 1) who must be trained before working at the hotel.



Figure 1. Front office employees are training foreign representatives about hotel product knowledge

Source: Personal collection

Hotel product knowledge that must be mastered by foreign representatives may include several matters related to the hotel's operations in a hospitality industry. The hotel products are divided into location, facilities, and price of the hotel as a matter of debriefing between foreign representatives and hotel employees, as summarized in the following table taken from one of the hotels with the international Marriot *Bonvoy* Elite network, namely the Ritz Carlton, Nusa Two Bali.

Table 4. Information about hotel product knowledge

No	Question	Answer
1	The location of the Ritz Carlton Bali hotel	Located on the southern tip of the island of Bali, in the village of Sawangan, Nusa Dua. The Ritz Carlton resort hotel is only 30 minutes (20 km) from Ngurah Rai airport to the south.
2	Resort's Overview	12.7 hectares of area with access to the white sandy beach which can be reached by elevator from the hotel lobby which is located on a cliff top 313 rooms ranging from suites and villas with views of the sea and green gardens 3 restaurants and 3 bars Restaurants: Laver, Senses, The Beach Grill Lounges and Bars: Raku, The Ritz Carlton Lounge and Bar, and Breezes Tapas Lounge The Ritz Carlton Club Ritz Kids Majestic, Beach Front Wedding Chapel Meeting facilities with 1 ballroom, 4 breakout rooms and 1 board room The Ritz-Carlton Spa featuring 14 treatment rooms including 4 spa villas
3	Upgradesto Club Access	IDR 1,400,000++/person 1 day (nonmember – adult) IDR 1,100,000++/person 1 day (member – adult)

Source: The Ritz Carlton Bali, 2020

Based on general hotel product knowledge as shown in table 4, the hotel operations specifically and in more detail, such as benefits or special treatment for honeymooners and tourists who are members of 'Marriot Bonvoy' as the brand mark of Ritz Carlton hotels starting from ordinary members, gold, platinum based on the number of points accumulated while using 'Marriot Bonvoy' products around the world. Therefore, foreign representatives need to receive technical explanations from experienced hotel employees compared to foreign representatives who are relatively new to working at the hotel.

To maximize the achievement of upselling at The Ritz Carlton Bali, persuasion English skills such as those used in this test, for example the use of the words would, spacious, very special, and others need to be improved. With the synergy between English skills and knowledge of food products, it will create very persuasive communication. Good product knowledge that is not supported by the language skills used to convey or describe the product, it will be prone to occur where the message conveyed about the product is not as expected. As a result, communication becomes less attractive and less persuasive due to the loss of parts in the communication process.

## Conclusion

Research conducted on The Ritz Carlton Bali employees regarding the upselling persuasion style can be concluded that The Ritz Carlton Bali already has very persuasive standards and procedures that can be applied by front office employees so that they can carry out upselling successfully. The English language skills of The Ritz Carlton Bali front office employees need to be improved where currently their English skills are through an average test of 92.8. The product knowledge of The Ritz Carlton Bali's front office employees is very good with a score index of 97.7, so they are very ready to provide product

information and make tourists interested in upselling. It can be further suggested that the management of The Ritz Carlton Bali needs to think about training to improve persuasion skills in English so that they are able to present information in a more interesting and structured manner. This can be done by holding an English language training program either conducted internally by the company or by using a third party. Additionally, hotel management needs to record the upselling achievements of each front office employee, so that later the correlation between language skills and product understanding can be better and more specific, which has not yet been personally assessed. This will also be very helpful in assessing employees in annual assessments and promotion programs.

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**Missing ", "** You may need to place a comma after this word.



**Possessive** You may need to use an apostrophe to show possession.



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**P/V** You have used the passive voice in this sentence. Depending upon what you wish to emphasize in the sentence, you may want to revise it using the active voice.



**Article Error** You may need to use an article before this word. Consider using the article **a**.

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**P/V** You have used the passive voice in this sentence. Depending upon what you wish to emphasize in the sentence, you may want to revise it using the active voice.



**Article Error** You may need to remove this article.



**Article Error** You may need to use an article before this word. Consider using the article **a**.

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**Article Error** You may need to remove this article.



**Proofread** This part of the sentence contains a grammatical error or misspelled word that makes your meaning unclear.



**Missing ", "** You may need to place a comma after this word.



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**Article Error** You may need to remove this article.



**Prep.** You may be using the wrong preposition.



**Run-on** This sentence may be a run-on sentence. Proofread it to see if it contains too many independent clauses or contains independent clauses that have been combined without

conjunctions or punctuation. Look at the "Writer's Handbook" for advice about correcting run-on sentences.



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**Frag.** This sentence may be a fragment or may have incorrect punctuation. Proofread the sentence to be sure that it has correct punctuation and that it has an independent clause with a complete subject and predicate.



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