

Analysis of Front Office's Role in Managing Guest Voice to Increase Guest Satisfaction at Natra Bintan a, Tribute Portfolio Resort

Andres Ferdana Putra^{1*}, Rahmi Fadilah²

^{1,2}Hospitality Management, Universitas Negeri Padang

Copyright©2025 by authors, all rights reserved. Authors agree that this article remains permanently open access under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Licence 4.0 International License.

Article Info

Article history:

Received August 1, 2025

Revised August 10, 2025

Accepted August 11, 2025

Keywords:

Front Office, Guest Voice,
Role Theory, Guest
Satisfaction, Hospitality
Management.

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of the Front Office in managing guest voice to enhance guest satisfaction at Natra Bintan, a Tribute Portfolio Resort. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with Front Office staff, direct observations, and documentation review, and validated using methodological triangulation. The findings reveal that the Front Office plays a central role in facilitating communication between guests and management, addressing complaints promptly, and implementing service improvements based on guest feedback. Key functions identified include guest reception, complaint resolution, service personalization, and follow-up actions, which collectively contribute to positive guest experiences. The study highlights that effective guest voice management not only increases satisfaction but also strengthens guest loyalty and brand image in the competitive hospitality sector. Theoretically, this research extends role theory by demonstrating how frontline staff can function as mediators of service quality perception through systematic feedback handling. Practically, it provides actionable insights for hotel managers to integrate structured guest voice management systems into service operations. This integrated approach can serve as a strategic tool to enhance service excellence and maintain competitiveness in the hospitality industry.

Corresponding Author:

Andres Ferdana Putra

Hospitality Management, Universitas Negeri Padang

Email: andrasputra63@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry is experiencing rapid growth driven by the increasing number of domestic and international tourists, alongside technological advancements that facilitate easier access to travel information and reservation systems. This growth highlights the rising demand for diverse and high-quality accommodation services and reinforces the strategic role of the tourism sector in the global economy [1], [2]. In response, hotels must continuously innovate, personalize services, and adopt digital technologies to deliver unique and memorable guest experiences [3], [4].

In today's competitive environment, guest satisfaction is a critical determinant of success. One increasingly recognized strategy is guest voice management, which involves systematically collecting and analyzing guest feedback from online reviews, social media platforms, and direct interactions to identify service gaps and inform operational improvements [5], [6]. The adoption of digitalized feedback systems and automation technologies has been shown to enhance service responsiveness and decision-making processes in hospitality operations [7], [8].

Within this context, the Front Office (FO) department plays a pivotal role as the primary touchpoint between guests and the hotel. The FO is responsible for welcoming guests, managing check-in and check-out procedures, handling complaints, ensuring prompt follow-up, and contributing to revenue through upselling and cross-selling initiatives [9]. Effective guest voice management within the FO typically follows a structured process that includes listening to feedback, analyzing concerns, and implementing corrective actions [10].

However, internal operational data from Natra Bintan, a Tribute Portfolio Resort, reveal significant fluctuations in occupancy and guest numbers between July and December 2024, which may indicate underlying challenges in maintaining consistent guest satisfaction levels.

Table 1. Guest Visits and Occupancy at Natra Bintan, July–December 2024

No.	Month	Room Sold	Occupancy (%)	Number of Guests
1	July	1,333	43.00	3,145
2	August	1,462	47.16	3,627
3	September	1,162	38.73	2,809
4	October	1,293	41.70	2,879
5	November	1,303	43.43	3,014
6	December	2,097	67.64	5,510

Source: Front Office Natra Bintan, a Tribute Portfolio Resort

In addition to these quantitative fluctuations, qualitative feedback from guests highlights several service-related issues. Complaints include unfriendly and unresponsive FO staff communication, lack of follow-up on reported problems, cleanliness concerns, disruptive music, and perceptions that prices are not commensurate with service quality. Such patterns suggest that guest voice management practices may not yet be fully optimized or strategically integrated into service improvement efforts.

These challenges can be examined through the lens of role theory, which underscores the importance of role clarity, effective conflict management, and the prevention of excessive workloads to ensure service quality [11], [12]. By applying this theoretical perspective, the present study aims to analyze how the Front Office department manages guest voice to enhance guest satisfaction at Natra Bintan. The findings are expected to provide actionable managerial insights for strengthening FO operations, refining service systems, and improving the hotel's competitive advantage.

2. METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design, which is appropriate for exploring phenomena in their natural settings with the researcher as the primary data collection instrument. The research was conducted at Natra Bintan, a Tribute Portfolio Resort, during the period of June to July 2025. Data were obtained through three complementary techniques: (1) in-depth interviews with seven purposively selected informants, comprising one Front Office Manager, two Guest Service Managers, one Front Office Supervisor, one Front Desk Agent, and two Reservation Agents/At Your Service (AYS), all chosen for their comprehensive knowledge and direct involvement in guest voice management; (2) direct observation of Front Office operational activities, including guest interactions, complaint handling procedures, and interdepartmental coordination; and (3) document analysis, encompassing internal records, photographs, operational notes, and relevant online sources. The selection of informants followed a purposive sampling strategy to ensure rich, relevant insights into the management of guest voice. To ensure the trustworthiness of findings, data triangulation was applied across sources and methods, thereby enhancing validity. The data analysis process followed a three-stage approach—data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing—integrated with a role theory framework to systematically map role expectations, performance, conflicts, ambiguities, and workload challenges encountered by Front Office staff in managing guest voice for improving guest satisfaction.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Result

3.1.1. Role Expectation

The findings reveal that role expectations for the Front Office (FO) staff at Natra Bintan, a Tribute Portfolio Resort, are shaped by multiple stakeholders, including guests, hotel management, and other operational departments. From the guest perspective, expectations primarily involve receiving service that is friendly, communicative, responsive, and empathetic to individual needs. Repeat guests, in particular, tend to hold higher expectations, often anticipating personalized treatment and faster service. From management, the FO is expected to uphold the hotel's image through strict adherence to service standards, professional complaint handling, and the ability to create positive first and last impressions

during the guest's stay. Meanwhile, operational departments such as Housekeeping, Food & Beverage, and Engineering rely on the FO for effective coordination to ensure smooth service delivery. Observational data and interview insights confirm that the FO is not merely a reception desk but functions as a central coordination hub within the hotel's operational ecosystem.

Table 2. Sources and Patterns of Role Expectations for Front Office Staff

Stakeholder	Specific Expectations	Patterns Identified
Guests	Friendliness, effective communication, quick response, empathy	Repeat guests expect higher service personalization and faster handling of requests
Management	Uphold hotel image, maintain service quality standards, resolve complaints swiftly and professionally	FO serves as brand representative and sets tone for overall guest experience
Other Departments	Coordination for smooth operations (Housekeeping, F&B, Engineering)	FO acts as central communication hub to relay and follow up on operational needs across departments

3.1.2. Role Performance

The Front Office (FO) department at Natra Bintan demonstrates active role performance by delivering courteous, responsive, and guest satisfaction-oriented services. Interviews reveal that all guest complaints are promptly recorded and forwarded to the relevant department for immediate action. Several FO staff adopt a personalized approach, such as maintaining records of returning guests' preferences to ensure a more tailored experience on subsequent visits. This approach fosters a sense of care and attention, which is particularly valued by repeat guests. Operational consistency is supported by daily briefings conducted before shifts, enabling staff to share updates on pending guest feedback and coordinate with other departments. Cross-departmental meetings are also held to address ongoing service issues, while continuous monitoring of online reviews serves as an additional tool for identifying service improvement opportunities. Negative guest feedback is reviewed collectively during team briefings to ensure quick corrective action. This evidence positions the FO not only as a service touchpoint but also as a proactive driver of overall guest experience quality.

Table 3. Role Performance Practices of Front Office Staff

Performance Dimension	Implementation in FO Operations	Impact on Service Quality
Complaint Handling	Recording and forwarding guest complaints immediately to relevant departments	Faster issue resolution, improved guest perception of responsiveness
Personalized Service	Tracking and recalling guest preferences for repeat visitors	Enhanced guest loyalty through tailored service
Daily Briefings	Sharing updates on pending feedback and service issues before operational shifts	Improved team coordination and service readiness
Cross-Departmental Coordination	Meetings with Housekeeping, F&B, and Engineering to address service-related concerns	Increased efficiency in addressing multi-departmental guest needs
Monitoring Online Reviews	Regularly reviewing feedback on platforms and addressing negative comments during team discussions	Continuous service improvement and strengthened hotel reputation

3.1.3. Role Conflict

Role conflict in the Front Office (FO) at Natra Bintan arises when the expectations of guests are not aligned with hotel policies or standard operating procedures. Staff frequently face dilemmas in balancing strict adherence to rules with the need to provide exceptional guest service. Requests from loyal guests, such as complimentary upgrades or special privileges, often conflict with established operational

guidelines. Additionally, management's emphasis on rapid service delivery sometimes clashes with the limited human resources available during high-demand periods. Under such circumstances, FO staff tend to prioritize direct guest interactions—such as assisting at the desk—over administrative tasks like recording feedback, which are then completed later. These conflicts can lead to increased work stress, slower follow-up on certain matters, and potential inconsistencies in service quality.

Table 4. Sources and Impact of Role Conflict in FO Operations

Conflict Source	Examples in FO Operations	Impact on Service Delivery
Guest Expectations vs. Hotel Policies	Loyal guests request services beyond standard entitlements	Pressure on staff to bend rules, potential inconsistency in service
Management Expectations vs. Resource Limits	Requirement for fast service despite limited staffing during peak hours	Increased workload stress, delayed administrative follow-up
Service Prioritization Dilemmas	Serving walk-in guests vs. completing complaint documentation	Delayed data recording, possible gaps in guest feedback tracking

3.1.4. Role Ambiguity

Role ambiguity occurs when FO staff encounter situations where their decision-making authority is unclear, especially when dealing with requests that fall outside standard procedures. Staff often hesitate to make immediate decisions without supervisor approval for fear of making errors that could negatively impact guest satisfaction or breach hotel policy. Ambiguity is further compounded by unclear boundaries of responsibility between the FO and other departments, leading to delays in service delivery. This hesitation can reduce operational agility and, in some cases, diminish the guest experience when issues are not addressed promptly.

Table 5. Sources and Consequences of Role Ambiguity in FO Operations

Ambiguity Source	Examples in FO Operations	Impact on Service Delivery
Unclear Decision-Making Authority	Handling unusual guest requests without defined protocol	Delays in resolving guest concerns, reduced guest satisfaction
Undefined Interdepartmental Responsibilities	FO unsure whether certain service issues fall under its remit or other units	Slower coordination, possible miscommunication between departments
Fear of Policy Breach	Staff reluctant to act without managerial consent	Reduced responsiveness and operational flexibility

3.1.5. Role Overload

Role overload is a significant challenge for FO staff, especially during high occupancy periods when multiple operational demands occur simultaneously. Staff are required to handle guest check-ins and check-outs, address complaints, maintain rapport with regular guests, and ensure real-time coordination with other departments—all while keeping administrative tasks up to date. Limited staffing exacerbates these pressures, forcing individuals to multitask extensively. As a result, some administrative functions, such as complaint logging and report preparation, are often postponed or completed hastily after peak service hours. Such workload imbalances not only heighten staff fatigue but may also compromise service consistency.

Table 6. Factors and Effects of Role Overload in FO Operations

Overload Factor	Examples in FO Operations	Impact on Service Delivery
Simultaneous Task Demands	Managing check-ins, check-outs, and complaint handling concurrently	Staff fatigue, reduced attention to detail
Limited Staffing Levels	One staff member covering multiple service areas	Increased error risk, slower response to guest needs

Overload Factor	Examples in FO Operations	Impact on Service Delivery
Deferred Administrative Work	Complaint logs and reports completed after peak service periods	Possible data inaccuracies, delayed managerial follow-up

3.2. Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the centrality of the Front Office (FO) department in managing guest voice as a strategic driver of guest satisfaction at Natra Bintan, a Tribute Portfolio Resort. Consistent with prior research highlighting the FO as the primary interface between guests and the organization [9], [10], the present results reveal that FO staff are not only responsible for operational transactions such as check-in and check-out but also for receiving, processing, and following up on guest feedback. This role places the FO at the nexus of service delivery, complaint resolution, and interdepartmental coordination, thereby directly influencing guests' perceptions of service quality.

The data indicate that effective guest voice management requires the integration of interpersonal communication skills, rapid response mechanisms, and cross-functional collaboration. This aligns with Buhalis and Leung [6], who emphasize that smart hospitality ecosystems depend on seamless interconnectivity between operational units. In the context of Natra Bintan, the proactive practices of recording guest preferences, conducting daily briefings, and monitoring online reviews demonstrate an alignment with best practices in customer experience management [5]. Such measures have the potential to enhance loyalty by personalizing service and ensuring that feedback translates into tangible improvements.

However, the study also identifies structural and operational challenges that hinder optimal guest voice utilization. Role conflict emerges when guest expectations exceed hotel policy boundaries, compelling staff to negotiate between compliance and service flexibility. This is consistent with Unguren and Arslan [11], who found that unresolved role conflict negatively impacts employee performance in hospitality settings. Similarly, role ambiguity—manifested in uncertainty over decision-making authority—delays service resolution and can erode guest trust. Tang and Vandenberghe [12] note that role clarity is essential to maintaining service efficiency, particularly in high-contact service environments where real-time decisions are required.

Role overload further compounds these issues, as FO staff often juggle multiple high-priority tasks simultaneously, particularly during peak occupancy periods. The resultant time pressure and multitasking demands can lead to deferred administrative tasks, reduced attention to detail, and potential declines in service consistency. This finding corroborates prior studies linking excessive workloads with diminished service performance and employee well-being [12].

From a managerial perspective, these findings suggest that effective guest voice management extends beyond mere feedback collection; it requires structural support, clear role delineation, and adequate staffing. Interventions such as delegating certain administrative tasks, empowering FO staff with greater decision-making authority, and enhancing interdepartmental protocols could mitigate the negative effects of role conflict, ambiguity, and overload. Additionally, embedding digital tools for real-time feedback tracking could further streamline communication and accelerate problem resolution, in line with service automation trends in the hospitality sector [7], [8].

In summary, the discussion reveals that while the FO at Natra Bintan demonstrates several best practices in guest voice management, operational constraints and role-related challenges limit their effectiveness. Addressing these issues through targeted managerial strategies would not only improve guest satisfaction but also strengthen the hotel's competitive positioning in an increasingly digital and service-driven tourism market.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the Front Office (FO) department at Natra Bintan, a Tribute Portfolio Resort, plays a strategic and multifaceted role in managing guest voice to enhance guest satisfaction. Beyond its operational duties, the FO functions as a central coordination hub, receiving, processing, and following up on guest feedback while facilitating interdepartmental communication. Effective practices identified in this study—such as personalized service through guest preference tracking, daily briefings, and systematic monitoring of online reviews—align with global best practices in hospitality service management.

However, the findings also reveal critical challenges, including role conflict between guest expectations and hotel policies, role ambiguity regarding decision-making authority, and role overload during peak service periods. These constraints can delay service resolution, reduce operational efficiency, and potentially undermine guest trust. Addressing these issues requires clear role definitions, adequate staffing levels, empowerment of FO personnel with greater decision-making authority, and integration of digital tools for real-time feedback tracking.

From a theoretical perspective, applying role theory provided valuable insights into how role expectations, clarity, conflict, and workload influence the effectiveness of guest voice management in a resort hotel setting. From a managerial standpoint, the results underscore the need for systemic improvements in FO operations to ensure that guest feedback is transformed into actionable service enhancements. Implementing such measures will not only strengthen guest satisfaction and loyalty but also enhance the hotel's competitiveness in the increasingly digitalized and experience-driven hospitality market.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors wish to express their sincere appreciation to the management and staff of Natra Bintan, a Tribute Portfolio Resort, for their invaluable cooperation and willingness to share insights and operational data that made this research possible. Special thanks are extended to the Front Office team members who participated as informants, providing detailed perspectives on guest voice management practices. The authors also gratefully acknowledge the academic guidance and constructive feedback from the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality, Universitas Negeri Padang, throughout the research process. Finally, heartfelt gratitude is conveyed to the authors' families for their continuous encouragement and moral support during the completion of this study.

REFERENCES

- [1] D. Buhalis and R. Leung, "Smart hospitality—Interconnectivity and interoperability towards an ecosystem," *Int. J. Hosp. Manag.*, vol. 71, pp. 41–50, 2018, doi: 10.1016/j.ijhm.2017.11.011.
- [2] J. Kandampully, T. Zhang, and A. Bilgihan, "Customer experience management in hospitality: A literature synthesis, new understanding, and research agenda," *Int. J. Contemp. Hosp. Manag.*, vol. 30, no. 1, pp. 21–56, 2018, doi: 10.1108/IJCHM-10-2015-0549.
- [3] D. D. Fadhillah and T. Putra, "The Influence of Price and Quality of Service on Guest Satisfaction at Sky Lounge The Premiere Hotel Padang," *JoMM*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 32–38, Jan. 2025, doi: 10.63076/jomm.v1i2.14.
- [4] R. Makivić, M. Praničević, J. Peršić, and J. Lekić, "AI impact on hotel guest satisfaction via tailor-made services," *Informatics*, vol. 15, no. 11, art. 700, Nov. 2024, doi: 10.3390/informatics15110700.
- [5] D. Mandić, A. Panić, and M. Čičin-Šain, "Automated service delivery in hotels: Balancing efficiency and human interaction for optimal guest satisfaction," in *Proc. Int. Sci. Conf. on Economy, Management and Information Technologies (ICEMIT)*, 2023, pp. 167–174, doi: 10.46793/ICEMIT23.137M.
- [6] W.-G. Tang and C. Vandenberghe, "Role overload and work performance: The role of psychological strain and leader–member exchange," *Front. Psychol.*, vol. 12, p. 691207, 2021, doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2021.691207.
- [7] S. Praharaj, B. B. Mishra, U. S. Mishra, R. R. Panigrahi, and P. C. Mishra, "Role of service automation on guest experience of hotel industry," *Tourism and Hospitality Management*, vol. 29, no. 2, pp. 265–278, Apr. 2023, doi: 10.20867/thm.29.2.11.
- [8] E. Unguren and S. Arslan, "The effect of role ambiguity and role conflict on job performance in the hotel industry: The mediating effect of job satisfaction," *Tourism and Management Studies*, vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 45–58, 2021, doi: 10.18089/TMS.2021.170104.
- [9] T. Baum, S. K. K. Mooney, R. N. R. Robinson, and D. Solnet, "COVID-19's impact on the hospitality workforce – New crisis or amplification of the norm?," *Int. J. Contemp. Hosp. Manag.*, vol. 32, no. 9, pp. 2813–2829, 2020, doi: 10.1108/IJCHM-04-2020-0331.
- [10] World Tourism Organization, *Tourism Innovation and Digital Transformation*. Madrid, Spain: UNWTO, 2020.
- [11] Salsabil Haura and Kurnia Illahi Manvi, "The Influence of Service Quality and Price on Repurchase Intention at Mumu Kopi in Padang City," *JoMM*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 66–72, Jun. 2025, doi: 10.63076/jomm.v1i1.19.

- [12] H. Miranda Sousa, F. J. C. de Melo, and E. F. M. Sobral, "Hospitality feedback system 4.0: Digitalization of feedback system with integration of Industry 4.0 enabling technologies," *Sustainability*, vol. 14, no. 19, p. 12158, Sep. 2022, doi: 10.3390/su141912158.
- [13] K. Ivanov and C. Webster, "Adoption of robots, artificial intelligence and service automation by travel, tourism and hospitality companies – A cost–benefit analysis," *Int. J. Contemp. Hosp. Manag.*, vol. 31, no. 6, pp. 2547–2566, 2019, doi: 10.1108/IJCHM-08-2018-0645.
- [14] N. Tussyadiah, "A review of research into automation in tourism: Launching the Annals of Tourism Research Curated Collection on Artificial Intelligence and Robotics in Tourism," *Ann. Tourism Res.*, vol. 81, p. 102883, Jan. 2020, doi: 10.1016/j.annals.2020.102883.