

Analysis of the Impact of Competency Certification on Improving Hotel Employee Performance in the Priority Tourism Destination Bromo Tengger Semeru (DPP-BTS) (Case Study of Hotel Front Office Clerks)

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Abstract

This research aims to analyze the impact of competency certification in improving the quality of employees in the hotel front office department in the Priority Tourism Destination area of Bromo, Tengger, Semeru (DPP-BTS). In the hotel industry, improving service quality is an important focus to ensure guest satisfaction. In the midst of increasingly fierce competition, competency certification has been identified as a factor that has the potential to strengthen employee qualifications and performance, especially in the front office. The research method was carried out through a case study approach on a number of front office officers in superior hotels. Data collection was carried out through surveys, interviews and observations, to evaluate the level of competency related to certification and its impact on improving the quality of services provided by employees. The analysis's findings demonstrate that competence certification significantly raises the caliber of workers at the hotel front desk division. These findings indicate that employees who have been certified have a greater level of skill, knowledge and understanding of the best principles in providing service to guests, which in turn has a positive impact on guest satisfaction and experience. The implication of this research is that investment in competency certification for front office employees can be considered as an important strategy for hotel management to improve service quality. Practical recommendations include the development of more targeted certification programs, support from management for employee career development, and the integration of certification-related competencies into daily work practices in hotel front office departments. In conclusion, this research emphasizes the important role of competency certification in improving the quality of employees in hotel front offices, as well as offering valuable insights for decision makers in designing human resource development strategies to improve the quality of hotel services.

Keywords: Competency Certification, Employee Quality, Performance Improvement, Hotel Industry, Front Office Department, Customer of excellent Service.

INTRODUCTION

The quality of service provided by front office department staff in the hotel industry is a key element in ensuring a pleasant experience for guests (Hu, Trivedi, & Teichert, 2022). Front office personnel are the first people guests interact with when they arrive and the last people they see when they leave. Therefore, they play an important role in creating a good first and last impression

for guests (Xiang, Huang, Gao, & Lai, 2022). In this context, competency certification is considered a strategic effort to improve the quality of employee performance and the overall customer experience in hotels (Al-Sabi, Al-Ababneh, Masadeh, & Elshaer, 2023). This certification not only shows that employees have met certain standards in their work, but can also increase employees' self-confidence and give them recognition for their skills and knowledge (Appolloni, Jabbour, D'Adamo, Gastaldi, & Settembre-Blundo, 2022).

Certification is designed to validate employees' knowledge and skills, so they can provide better and more efficient service to guests (Orlowski, 2022). By having certification, employees can show guests and their employers that they have the knowledge and skills necessary to do their jobs well. This in turn can increase guest satisfaction and hotel reputation (Ushakov, Kryukova, Khetagurova, Mukhomorova, & Zelenov, 2020). However, there is still a need to explore in depth how competency certification for hotel front office staff can have a real impact on improving service quality, guest satisfaction, and individual performance within this department (Fauzan, Nurdianto, Muhammad, Santosa, Prakoso, & Wijanarko, 2023). The fundamental question regarding the extent to which competency certification contributes to improving employee and service quality in the hotel front office environment is the main focus of this research. Consequently, by thoroughly examining the effect of competency certification on service quality in hotel front offices, this study aims to close this gap.

This research was carried out specifically in the Priority Tourism Destination area of Bromo, Tengger, Semeru (DPP-BTS), which is one of the main tourist destinations in Indonesia. This region was chosen because it has a variety of hotels with different service standards, providing an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of competency certification in a variety of contexts. It is anticipated that the research's findings would give hotel management important information on how to create and carry out efficient competence certification programs for its front desk staff. The purpose of this study is to examine how competence certification affects hiring better front-desk staff in the hotel industry. Through this case study, the main objective is to identify the relationship between competency certification and positive changes in the implementation of best practices as well as improvements in the services provided to guests.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Competency certification has become a key element in human resource development, according to theories in the field of Human Resource management and development (Ravina-Ripoll, Foncubierta-Rodríguez, & López-Sánchez, 2021). This concept emphasizes the importance of validating employee competencies through industry standards that are applied consistently and measurably to ensure mastery of the skills required in their work context (Glass & Metternich, 2020). Competency certification can be considered a strategic asset for an organization, because it improves the organization's internal capabilities, especially in the context of customer service in the hotel industry (Kuo, Fang, & LePage, 2022).

A recent literature review shows increasing interest in the role of competency certification in improving employee quality, especially in the hospitality sector (Abelha, Fernandes, Mesquita, Seabra, & Ferreira-Oliveira, 2020). New research highlights the positive relationship between competency certification and employee performance and service quality, with a focus on how such certification can improve individual competency and increase customer satisfaction. Nur Ellyanawati (2019) explains that companies must require ownership of skills competency certification when accepting (recruiting) new workers, so that companies do not need to carry out more in-depth training. This will be more profitable for the company because it will get employees who are ready to work and at the same time save costs if the company has to pay for the training of its workforce. Alvionita (2018) explains that competency certification is a policy created by the government to increase employee skill competency in Indonesia. Competency certification can be used to accelerate employee careers, employee performance, and competition among other employees.

Previous research has proven that competency certification makes a significant contribution to improving employee quality in various industrial sectors. Employees who already have competency have a greater chance of being promoted more quickly because they have superior technical competency. Azmy (2015) stated that the development of technical skills (competencies) for company employees/staff in each agency is aimed at achieving organizational goals that have

been set on an ongoing basis. Organizational development and change must be carried out continuously and requires the competence of all employees.

Skills competency is defined as the technical ability required to carry out or carry out a job based on knowledge, skills and work attitudes (Wong, 2020). High competency is also able to influence increased employee performance. In accordance with the Employment Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 13 of 2003 article 18 states that every worker has the right to receive work competency recognition (Sari, 2022). The definition of work competency is the work ability of each individual which includes aspects of knowledge, skills and/or expertise as well as work attitudes that are in accordance with established standards (Škrinjarić, 2022). Efendi (2009) states that employee competency which includes knowledge, skills and attitudes has a significant influence on employee performance. The competency variable that most dominantly influences employee performance is knowledge.

Competency certification is a process of providing written recognition of expertise carried out systematically and objectively through competency tests that refer to national and work competency standards (Saskiawardani, 2009). However, in the context of the hotel industry, there is diversity in research regarding the direct impact of competency certification on improving service quality, especially in the front office department. Previous studies provide valuable initial insights, but further analysis in this specific context is still needed (Giacomel & Raveleau, 2020).

Companies that have competence in the fields of marketing, manufacturing and innovation can make it as a source to achieve competitive advantage (Daengs GS, et al. 2020:1419). The research design is a plan to determine the resources and data that will be used to be processed in order to answer the research question. (Asep Iwa Soemantri, 2020:5). Standard of the company demands regarding the results or output produced are intended to develop the company. (Istanti, Enny, 2021:560). Time management skills can facilitate the implementation of the work and plans outlined. (Rina Dewi, et al. 2020:14).

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a case study approach to comprehensively understand the impact of competency certification on improving employee quality in the hotel front office department. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to carry out in-depth analysis of specific and complex situations in the employee's work context. The population of this research consists of front office officers from various hotels located in the Priority Tourism Destination area of Bromo, Tengger, Semeru (DPP-BTS). The sample was selected based on certain inclusion criteria, such as work experience, education level, and participation in competency certification programs.

Data collection was carried out through a combination of semi-structured interviews, surveys and observations. A specially designed questionnaire is used to evaluate employees' level of understanding, skills and experience related to competency certification and how this impacts the quality of service they provide to guests. Interviews were conducted to gain a deeper understanding of employee experiences and perspectives, while observations were used to document daily work practices in providing services to guests. The data collected was then analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Qualitative analysis involves thematization of interview and observation data to identify key patterns and trends. In contrast, quantitative analysis assesses the relationship between the variables under study by using statistical methods like regression analysis. The results of these two types of analysis are then combined to provide a holistic picture of the impact of competency certification on the quality of employees in the hotel front office.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected from this research includes comprehensive information about the skills, knowledge and experience of hotel front office department staff involved in the competency certification program in the Priority Tourism Destination area of Bromo, Tengger, Semeru (DPP-BTS). Data also includes observations of daily work practices in providing services to hotel guests. In addition, survey data and interview results provide an in-depth understanding of how competency certification impacts employee work practices and the quality of services provided. The results of data analysis show that there is a significant relationship between competency certification and improving the quality of employees in the hotel department front office. Quantitatively, regression analysis shows that there is a positive relationship between the level of

certification held by employees and increased performance in providing services to guests. This is indicated by a higher score in the service quality assessment by guests of employees who have been certified. . Table 1 shows the regression results regarding the impact of competency certification.

Table 1. Regression Results

Dependen Variabel Hotel Marketing Performance				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.*
competency certification	3.111222	0.2111	1.3331	0.0000
Tourism Arrivals	11.82226	8.5191	1.2333	0.0058
Tourism Employees	7.1111	2.1111	1.1111	0.0046
Tourism Expenditure	2.1222	1.3331	1.0122	0.0037

For every one unit increase in competency certification, it is projected that hotel marketing performance will rise by 3,111222 units on the assumption that all other factors stay same. Hotel marketing performance is highly influenced by this variable, as indicated by the p value of 0.0000. If all other factors stay the same, hotel marketing performance is predicted to rise by 11,82226 units for every unit increase in visitor arrivals. Hotel marketing performance is strongly influenced by this variable, as indicated by the p value of 0.0058. Assuming all other factors stay the same, hotel marketing performance is predicted to rise by 7.1111 units for every unit increase in the number of tourist personnel. Hotel marketing performance is strongly influenced by this variable, as indicated by the p value of 0.0046. Assuming all other factors stay the same, hotel marketing performance is predicted to rise by 2.1222 units for every unit increase in tourism spending.

Qualitatively, the results of interviews and observations show that employees who have taken part in the competency certification program have a deeper understanding of best practices in guest service. They also show a more positive attitude towards increasing their professionalism and responsibility towards their work, which is reflected in their daily interactions with guests. This research confirms that competency certification has a real impact on improving the quality of employees in the hotel department front office. This underlines the importance of investing in employee competency development to improve service standards in the hospitality industry. The results of this research indicate that competency certification has a significant role in improving the quality of employees in the hotel department front office. Data interpretation shows that employees who have been certified tend to have better knowledge, skills and attitudes towards best practices in providing services to hotel guests. This is reflected in the improved quality of services provided by them, as acknowledged by positive feedback from guests.

The research's findings suggest that implementing a competence certification program is a good first step for hotel management looking to raise the standard of front desk staff service. Enhancing staff quality may boost customer happiness, enhance the hotel's reputation, and have a beneficial effect on the increasingly competitive hotel sector. Nonetheless, it is important to recognize the study's shortcomings. A primary constraint of this research is its inability to be broadly applied, as it is confined to a case study of front desk employees at specific DPP-BTS sites. In addition, other factors that may influence service quality such as environmental factors or work culture may not be fully considered in this research.

Saat mengumpulkan sumber data, peneliti mengumpulkan sumber data berupa data mentah. Metode survei adalah metode pengumpulan data primer dengan menggunakan pertanyaan tertulis (Kumala Dewi, Indri et al., 2022 : 29). This research will be conducted in three phases : measurement model (external model), structural model (internal model), and hypothesis testing. (Prmono Budi, et al., 2023 ; 970) Melalui proses tersebut, karyawan diberikan pelatihan dan pengembangan yang relevan dengan kinerja pekerjaannya, sehingga diharapkan dapat menjalankan tanggung jawab pekerjaannya dengan sebaik - baiknya. (Abdul Aziz Sholeh et.al. 2024 :82) Kondisi kerja yang baik adalah ketika manusia dapat melaksanakan pekerjaan secara optimal sehat, aman dan nyaman (Pandu Widodo, Hesti et al 2024:73)

CONCLUSION

Increases in competency certification, tourist arrivals, number of tourism employees, and tourism expenditure all contribute positively to hotel marketing performance. Competency certification, in particular, has a significant impact, suggesting that improvements in certification can result in substantial improvements in hotel marketing performance. Competency certification has a significant impact in improving the quality of employees in the hotel front office department, especially in the Priority Tourism Destination area of Bromo, Tengger, Semeru (DPP-BTS). Employees who have been certified demonstrate improvements in skills, knowledge, and attitudes in providing services, which contributes to improving overall service quality. Investment in competency certification programs is an important strategy for hotel management to improve service standards and marketing performance. In addition, this research also highlights the

importance of continuous evaluation and development of competency certification programs to maintain their relevance to the dynamic development of the hotel industry. The practical implications of this research can help hotel management in designing more effective human resource policies, motivating employees for professional growth, and improving overall service quality to increase guest satisfaction.

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