



A qualitative study of communication management to stabilize the hospitality staff performance in the digital age

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ABSTRACT

The tourism industry has many components that are needed to meet the needs of tourists and face globalization. In facing the dynamics of globalization that affect the work system in the tourism industry, especially hospitality, an understanding of effective communication is a key factor in maintaining smooth operations and adapting to change, especially in the digital age. The emergence of misunderstandings of the work system, poor communication between departments through the hotel's digital system, and poor staff relations can affect the internal performance of the hotel. This can lead to data entry errors, delays in interdepartmental work, and disharmony in the work environment. This study applies a qualitative method through participant observation. The purpose of this research is to examine the understanding and delivery of communication between hotel staff in the context of digital transformation and its impact on staff harmony and staff attitudes towards guests. In addition, it provides an understanding of communication between hotel staff to stabilize the hotel internally. The main contribution of this study is the recommendation of structured communication standards as a practical guide for hotel management, helping stabilize staff performance and significantly improving overall service quality.

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1. Introduction

Tourism is not limited to the physical activity of traveling from place to place, but has evolved into an economic, social, and cultural system. A cross-border phenomenon, especially in the economic sector, tourism has become the main driver of the financial sector, which is capable of enabling the government to function properly. In its transformation, globalization has become a major force that has encouraged the tourism industry to become more open and connected. The process of globalization has influenced trade, work systems, communication, and technology. Technological advances play an important role in increasing human mobility, expanding the tourism market, and creating new economic opportunities in several aspects. The factor of globalization in tourism brings changes to culture and society. The flow of globalization that brings international culture accelerates the process of cultural exchange and global values in local communities. Tourism management in the era of globalization must consider the balance between economic and cultural values that can strengthen local communities from the local tourism system.

Globalization in tourism has made it easier to attract tourists to visit a destination. However, tourism activities do not only include travel and destinations, but also various supporting sectors, one of which is accommodation. To meet the needs of tourists, especially in terms of accommodation, good and reliable accommodation is required. Accommodation always refers to the widespread hospitality industry with various capacities and facilities available. Hotels are the initial accommodation choice for tourists when traveling long distances or for business purposes. Although previous studies have examined internal communication in hotels, most have focused on general aspects of interdepartmental coordination without highlighting the role of digital communication in maintaining staff harmony and performance stability in the era of digital transformation. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the understanding and delivery of communication among hotel staff through digital systems, and its impact on staff relationships and service quality.

Advances in information and communication technology have also accelerated the globalization process in the hospitality sector. It is an inevitable phenomenon that today's technological advances have brought about major changes in various sectors, including the hospitality industry. The advent of the digital age has changed the way hotels operate and interact with their guests, one of which is through system upgrades. Around the world, technological innovation in the hospitality industry has become an important source of competitive advantage because it facilitates the way hotels communicate with customers [1]. From a communication perspective, technology can change the pattern of coordination between hotel staff and departments within the hotel environment. Communication is a fundamental element in the hospitality industry's operations because all service processes, coordination, and relationships between staff and guests depend on effective communication. According to Febriani et al. [2], communication has an influence on improving employee performance because the better the communication carried out by the company, the more positive the impact on employee motivation, which in turn affects the performance of each staff member. In the hospitality industry, communication not only functions as a means of conveying information but also as a means of building performance between staff and enhancing guest experience and satisfaction. Work will

be easier if cohesiveness and two-way communication can run well. It is important to have a two-way conversation between the listener and the speaker.

Digital transformation requires every hotel staff member to be able to adapt to changes in systems, technology, and interaction patterns at an increasingly rapid pace. By strengthening communication, technical, and digital competencies, hotels can create a responsive, collaborative, and service-oriented work environment. Effective communication implementation not only improves coordination and task understanding between departments but also minimizes operational errors and work pressure arising from digitalization. Thus, communication management in the context of digital transformation plays a crucial role in ensuring staff performance remains optimal, stable, and capable of meeting the ever-evolving standards of the hospitality industry.

2. Literature Review

The development of digital technology has brought significant changes to the hospitality industry, especially in coordinating communication and managing human resource performance. [3] explain that internal communication plays an important role in shaping organizational culture. In an industry that depends on service quality, communication culture, loyalty, and staff performance stability are essential. Effective communication management, both interpersonal and digital, is necessary to maintain service quality and staff performance in the digital era.

Research by Ramadhan et al. [4] confirms that digital transformation has become a profound phenomenon in various industries, including hospitality. Advances in information and communication technology have significantly changed hotel operations, enabling greater efficiency and an enhanced customer experience. Technology has been a major driver of change in various aspects of hotel operations, including reservations, room management, customer service, and marketing. By adopting the right technology, hotels can improve operational efficiency, reduce costs, and increase guest satisfaction.

3. Method

This study was conducted in a five-star hotel located in the city center of Semarang, Indonesia, which highlights the city's aesthetic character and cultural atmosphere. The research focused on two to three departments that interact within the hotel's digital work system, such as reservation with finance, as well as front office with finance and other related departments. The observation involved fewer than 10 staff members and examined up to 10 communication interactions, both through digital systems and direct communication during the research period. The method used in this study was qualitative through participant observation. Qualitative methods apply an approach that focuses on a deep understanding of social phenomena, human behavior, or specific situations based on the perspective of the subjects being studied. The aim is to understand the

meaning of interactions and the existing social context. Observation was carried out through several research stages.

3.1. Pre-observation

This study uses active participant observation techniques. This data collection method involves researchers directly participating in the activities or social dynamics being studied without taking a dominant role. The researchers' involvement lasted for 6 months, with a duration of 5 times a week, in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the patterns of social interaction that occurred.

3.2. Observation implementation

Data analysis was carried out by researchers who participated in the lives of the research subjects to obtain authentic data and understanding of the phenomena being studied. The focus of the observation was directed at patterns of social interaction and communication between participants.

3.3. Reflective recording

Observation data is grouped based on the results of discussions and facts found in the field. In addition to the results of the discussions, the data is also reinforced by including real examples of social interactions that occurred and then validated by documents/activity records.

3.4. Data verification

Data validity is obtained by conducting social interactions through informal discussions and reinforced through source triangulation. Source triangulation in this study involves time, documents, and the actual situation of the researcher. It aims to obtain factual data by comparing the results of observations and documents to ensure consistency of findings.

Based on the stages of the method, this is in accordance with the statement by Fendrik, et al. (2022), in participant observation, researchers not only observe but also participate in the daily activities of participants to obtain sharper and more contextual data. This method will provide factual and actual data to understand the phenomenon from the participant's perspective.

4. Results and Discussion

Tourism is an industry that depends on the existence of humans. According to Setiawan [5], tourism can be realized through the interaction of humans who travel as consumers, namely those who take tourist trips, and humans as producers who offer tourism products and services. The driving force behind the sustainability of this industry is humans. The importance of human resources in the tourism industry also affects the quality of service provided to consumers. In several sectors, human resources play a key role in the success of work, especially in the hospitality sector. Hotels are managed by human resources who

are able to contribute and always innovate to provide unforgettable service to guests. They are managed by providing services and facilities to guests who are traveling for leisure or business. Similarly, as explained by Annishia [6], hotels are accommodations that provide facilities to facilitate and provide convenience for guests in their travels. It can be concluded that tourism and hospitality are two sectors that are closely intertwined and symbiotic. Hospitality is part of tourism, a labor-intensive industry that opens up many job opportunities for the community. Specifically, tourism can be defined as a series of human travel activities supported by services and facilities. Hospitality is a business unit that focuses on providing accommodation services with certain standards. Both are intertwined with the success of tourist destinations, which of course depends heavily on the quality of hotel services, while the existence of hotels arises from direct demand from the growth of tourists. The growth of tourism requires hotels to innovate, starting with digitalization, such as guest management systems in the era of globalization, which will continue to develop.

In the era of globalization, human mobility between countries has become easier and more affordable, resulting in a significant increase in the flow of local and international tourists. The tourism and hospitality industries are inseparable because they work together to create travel experiences for tourists. Hospitality, which provides facilities and accommodation, is an important element in the global travel system because it plays a role in providing comfort and services of a certain standard. Globalization has also expanded the market scope, indirectly demanding consistent service quality so that hotels can compete in an increasingly competitive global market environment. With increasing demand that raises tourist expectations, hotels are adapting with service innovations and the use of digital technology. Digital transformation enables hotels to optimize operations, from online reservation systems to data-based guest experience personalization. As stated by Nahak [7], globalization has an impact on society, which can change their lifestyles to be more modern, resulting in the adoption of new cultures that are considered more practical than local cultures. However, the new things that are adopted still prioritize positive values that can be applied, such as the use of digital systems in the hospitality industry.

The development of digital technology in the hospitality industry requires employees to be able to adapt to various website-based work systems and specific devices. In reality, not all employees have the same level of ability or proficiency in understanding the new technology implemented by hotel management. Differences in digital literacy, work experience, and educational background are often factors that influence the effectiveness of their adaptation to the updated system. Digital transformation in the hospitality sector is not without challenges, such as a decline in the quality of employee relations, limited human resource competencies, and the complexity of determining and operating the most appropriate technology. The utilization of large amounts of data requires a well-integrated system with a high level of security and the right strategy. It is common to find that employees do not understand how the website works, which causes their performance to decline compared to other employees. Therefore, infrastructure improvements and human resource training are needed to help employees adapt to using the hotel management website system, according to Marques [8].

Improving and training human resources to adapt to specific hotel management systems still requires structured communication between departments. In practice, there are still misunderstandings that affect relationships between employees. Communication problems between departments can occur if clear and structured two-way communication is not established. This phenomenon often involves one to three departments, such as when Front Office staff make inaccurate payment records, which will affect the guest folio and bill data received by Finance staff. This can also involve Reservations as the first department to receive guest data when reservations are made in advance by telephone, email, OTA, website, or cooperating travel agents. If a Reservations staff member provides inaccurate information when recording guest payments to the Front Office, the Finance staff on duty will also receive the incorrect data. To overcome this problem, Finance staff must reconfirm the accuracy of guest data with the Front Office and Reservations Departments if the Reservations or Front Office Departments do not provide additional information on changes to guest data. If this problem is left unresolved without structured communication, each staff member on duty must perform double-checking, which will take a lot of extra time that could otherwise be spent on other tasks. Another problem that may arise is that poor staff relations can affect the hotel's internal performance and the quality of service provided to guests. Disharmonious staff relations due to differences in perception, lack of face-to-face interaction, and poor communication can worsen internal work dynamics. The combination of communication barriers and digital work systems can be overcome by reviewing the website system and workflow to reduce data errors and prevent the development of poor relationships between staff. As stated by Suryani and Yoga [9], conflict management is necessary so that the individuals involved can understand the causes of the conflict and resolve it. The conflict management step to resolve communication issues is conflict management by taking an approach that emphasizes communication between the individuals in conflict to resolve it.

The impact of communication problems and poorly managed digital work systems will affect the hotel internally. Continuous data entry errors, delays in performance between departments, disharmony in the work environment, and poor guest service emphasize the need for structured communication management. Data entry errors can occur if department staff are not careful in recording guest data, which affects the workflow of other departments. If this continues, it will cause delays in the performance of other departments concerned in carrying out their job descriptions properly. This habit can cause disharmony among staff, starting from personal perceptions to departmental perceptions. These perceptions will continue to grow if the problems are not reviewed and resolved. Various existing problems will affect guest services. For example, when the guest folio provided does not match the billing data or there is an error in the guest's payment method input, it will result in a lost guest experience. Guests can also form personal perceptions if the same mistake is repeated, assuming that there has been no optimization of problems that have occurred before or for the first time, that staff are unresponsive or incompetent, or that there is a lack of coordination between departments. These problems indicate weak internal communication management in hotels. Unstructured communication has the potential to cause information distortion and work conflicts, thereby hampering operational efficiency. Recurring operational errors in the hospitality industry are caused by poorly managed internal communication systems between departments.

[3] argue that internal communication plays a central role in shaping organizational culture and influencing employee performance in hospitality workplaces. Their study emphasizes that a strong communication culture contributes to employee loyalty, service consistency, and overall organizational stability. The present study supports this argument, as the findings indicate that ineffective communication between departments can lead to operational errors, disharmony among staff, and decreased service quality. This confirms that communication remains a foundational element in maintaining performance stability within hotel operations.

However, this study extends the findings of [3] by situating internal communication specifically within a digitally integrated work system. While [3] focus on communication culture in general organizational settings, the present research highlights how digital transformation reshapes communication patterns between departments, particularly in relation to digital data entry, system-based coordination, and real-time information exchange. The findings show that communication problems are not solely cultural or interpersonal, but are also influenced by technical system integration and digital workflow complexity. Therefore, this study adds a contextual dimension by demonstrating that structured digital communication management is not only a cultural necessity but also a technical and procedural requirement in maintaining staff harmony and performance stability in a five-star hotel environment.

Furthermore, unlike [3], who primarily examine communication as a determinant of employee performance outcomes, this study identifies structured communication standards within digital workflows as a stabilizing mechanism that prevents recurring operational errors, reduces interdepartmental conflict, and protects service quality. This indicates that in the digital era, communication management must move beyond general cultural values and incorporate structured communication flows, system integration, and periodic digital training as strategic organizational practices.

Digital transformation in the hospitality industry requires an understanding of effective and structured communication between hotel staff as a solution to stabilize internal conditions. The use of digital systems in hotel operations not only changes work patterns but also affects how staff understand, convey, and interpret information between departments. Differences in communication understanding in a digital work environment can lead to work errors, discomfort in work relationships, and poor service to guests. It is important to learn how staff understand and convey information in a structured manner in order to create harmonious work and form a professional attitude in serving guests. This is in line with the explanation by [10], who state the need to manage structured communication to improve the harmony of hotel staff work and encourage consistent service for guests. To manage structured communication among hotel staff across departments, communication flow standards can be established, integrated digital systems can be maximized, and regular training on digital work systems and hotel staff competencies can be provided. Establishing communication flow standards is similar to emphasizing the development of communication SOPs between departments, regarding who conveys information, through which media, and the time frame for delivery. SOPs facilitate workflows, minimize recurring errors, and prevent miscommunication. When SOPs are implemented, maximizing integrated digital systems such as Point of Sales (POS) and accounting systems enables real-time and accurate data exchange between

departments, thereby reducing work delays and double data posting. However, in practice, digital systems still require periodic system training based on the relevant departments. For example, Reservations-Front Office-Finance still require special training in their workflow when starting guest data entry to payment methods, where the data will be received by the Front Office for service confirmation, followed by data receipt by Finance in terms of billing, income recording, reconciliation, and financial reporting. System training and staff competency aim to enhance staff's ability to understand work instructions, use digital systems, and communicate professionally, both directly and through internal digital media. This aligns with Wibowo's (2022) perspective that coordination between hotel departments heavily relies on clear communication workflows, particularly in managing guest data and interdepartmental services.

The implementation of structured and integrated interdepartmental communication management methods is a key factor in maintaining internal hotel stability, creating harmony among staff, and improving the professional attitude of staff in providing services to guests. To create these conditions, it is necessary to implement a structured and clear method. Observation, analysis, preparation, and implementation methods are needed to conclude concrete steps for internal performance stability, but also contribute directly to improving the overall quality of hotel services. Management of communication between staff does not only focus on how information is conveyed and received, but also influences the work components used, such as digital work systems. If the digital systems used by hotel staff are not taken into account, communication management will only stop at the analysis stage because, in reality, the problems that arise also originate from the work support systems. Globalization will certainly continue to provide a constantly evolving digital system. To cope with digital transformation, managerial and periodic training are needed to maintain and improve the competence of hotel staff. It can be concluded that barriers to communication management in digital work systems include psychological, technical, and semantic aspects. Psychological aspects related to the mental condition of hotel staff regarding work pressure and differences in character between employees can affect harmony between departments. Technical aspects focus on obstacles in the communication flow that often cause miscommunication or information not being conveyed in real-time. The final aspect is the semantic aspect, which refers to differences in understanding of terms or digital system workflows. It is undeniable that digital transformation has become an important part of hotel workflows to provide innovative work systems and tangible upgrades to staff competencies in improving hotel service quality.

5. Conclusion

Referring to relevant theories, empirical evidence in the field, and the results of researcher discussions, we conclude that communication management is essential as a fundamental basis for stabilizing and improving hotel staff performance in the era of digital transformation.

- 1) The need to develop and establish standardized communication and workflow procedures (SOPs)
The development and establishment of standard operating procedures (SOPs) for communication and workflows is an appropriate step in creating uniformity of understanding among department staff. SOPs help clarify information delivery flows, division of responsibilities, and minimize operational errors in improving internal performance efficiency.
- 2) Optimizing integrated digital systems
Interconnected systems play an important role in supporting smooth communication and data exchange between hotel departments. Operational data obtained in real-time reduces double posting errors, thereby maintaining internal performance stability and quality of service to guests. However, this also requires regular training on digital transformation.
- 3) Developing hotel staff competencies through continuous training
Structured training will not only improve the technical abilities of hotel staff in operating digital systems but also strengthen their understanding of work communication, professional attitudes, and quality of service to guests. Training on hotel digital systems is essential to maintain stability and improve staff capabilities. In addition to focusing on digital systems, training staff competencies on hotels and digital transformation is necessary to ensure the readiness of human resources in facing the dynamics of digital work systems.

Through the discussion outlined above, this study aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the role of communication management in facing digital transformation, operational dynamics, and increasingly complex service demands.

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Author1: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing and Project Administration.

Author2: Review & Editing, Validation, and Supervision.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTERESTS

The author declares that he/she has no financial, commercial, or personal interests that could be considered to potentially influence the objectivity, integrity, or interpretation of the work presented in this article. The entire research and writing process was conducted independently without any conflicts of interest.

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