

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Travelling abroad is now one of the activity people do to spend their holiday. This resulted a massive effect to the tourism industry. Technology which ease the access of people to grab information, makes it easier for travelling abroad. Tourists now no longer need to go on group tour in order to reach a foreign country for travelling. Instead they can now just use their computers or mobile phones to grab some information. Starting from places to visit in that foreign country or even accommodation itself. Not only to search about new places that people are curious about, but also the influence of social media has attracted the public. Such as posts posted in social medias for example, Facebook or Instagram will draw attention of where that place is, giving them a thinking of going there for planning their next holiday.

According to the UNWTO, it says that the international tourist arrivals has risen to become the highest growth ever since 2010. UNWTO is an abbreviation from United Nations World Tourism Organization. And based on the data statistics obtained in the year 2017 for mode of transport and purpose of visit, it is 57% by air and 55% for leisure and travel. This shows the demand of tourism is high. (World Tourism Organization, 2018)

One of the countries that is also growing in tourism is Japan. It can be seen from the journal of UNWTO Tourism Highlights of 2018 under the headline of World's Top Destinations, it said about Japan entered the top then of receipts (tourism receipts) after six straight years of double-digit growth.

As stated by Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO), it shows data of the trends of visitor arrivals to Japan, states in the year 2017 from January till December, the visitor arrival reached 28,691,073 and in the year 2018 from January till December it rises 8.7% with a number of 31,191,856.

Every year, there's always an increase of tourist arrivals to Japan, their purpose of visit for tourism is always rising too. Rising of tourist arrivals will therefore leads to the necessity of accommodation.

Rise of tourism not only benefit the country but also the tourism industry. Especially in the hotel industry, in other words for lodging. Hotel is a place where it provides accommodation and services that to be enjoyed to customers.

One of the most important department in the hotel is the front office department, since it is the department which guest encounter the most. Since upon their arrival in the hotel, they will be greeted by the front desk staff and then on the day of their departure, they will also have to meet the front desk staff to check out. Guests requests or information are passed through the front office department, making them one of the important departments in the hotel.

That can be referred to the statement said by Ahmed Ismail,

“Being one of the first (and often the last) points of contact with hotel guest, the front desk plays a big role in the hotel. Often called as the “hub” or “command centre” of the rooms division because many information is being funnelled through them. They are also the person to contact for the central of information to guests and the hotel employees.”

Front desk does not only do check in and check out, they also are the ones who will handle in keeping in contact with guests. This is due to, the place where guests express their worries or feelings or ask assistance generally is directed to the front desk. These activities can indirectly be said to be multitasking activity. This is because, they must master the PMS System (Property Management System) in the hotel. Secondly, the language used in hotel must be polite and well structured. Not only when communicating with guests but when indirect communication within staffs. Such as, through typing in the system to communicate internally. As it is also mentioned by Adams, “Multitasking becomes an art form at the front desk, calling upon all of your communication, typing, and computer skills.” (John R. Walker, 2017, p. 110)

Therefore, Front desk staffs must be knowledgeable and always ready to assist guests. Just as stated by John Walker (2017), “People constantly approach the front desk with questions. Front-desk employees need to be

knowledgeable about the hotel.” (p. 141) Especially in overseas, being multi-lingual is a must to be able to understand guest’s request. This is because communication is one of the ways to deliver a message from one person to another.

“Communication can be defined as the exchange of an information, thought and emotion between individuals of groups, in other words, communication plays a fundamental role in balancing individual and organizational objectives.” (Eisenberg, E. M., Trethewey, A., Greco, M. L., & Goodall, H. L., 2010, p. 4). This is why communication is very important as it is related in what the sender is trying to convey and what the sender wants the receiver to understand Especially in organizations, in which many people are involved, therefore it’s very crucial if the message is misunderstood. For example, in hotel industry not only communication is done internally but also externally. The department which guests often encounter most is simply the front office department. And they are the ones who is delivering the hospitality service to guests. There are guests who might be their first time to stay at that certain hotel for leisure or even for business. (Bardi, 2011)

Generally, there are several forms of communication that is carried out in daily lives. However, the way of communication that are very familiar to people are verbal and non-verbal. Under verbal communication, there are oral and written communication. These two ways communications indeed are carried daily by everyone. Oral communication is messages being passed through mouth and written is usually messages transmitted through a medium. To illustrate, such as social media applications, paper or etc.

On the basis of observing in Karaksa Hotel, Japanese language is the general language used in the hotel. Among the guests and colleagues is using Japanese language. However, if there are foreign guests who requires English language speaking, then staffs will use English to communicate. The hotel does not have a specific department as generally found in a standard hotel business operation. For instance, a telephone operator, concierge, front desk clerk, bell staff and etc.

However, Karaksa Hotel came up with a unique system of operation, in which they apply a multi-tasking system where front desk are not only responsible for handling check in and check out. But also, are in charge of concierge and telephone operator tasks.

In relation to the theory explained by John Walker (2017, p.138), it is said that front office is part of the room's division. The staff includes desk clerk, cashier, reservations manager, concierge, night auditor, telephone operator, bell staff, room key clerk, and elevator operator. Not all of these positions are found in every lodging establishment. In some operations, So, it can be concluded that actually in Karaksa Hotel, the front desk staff has to encompass in being a concierge; assisting guest's request like what is the closest train station, ordering a taxi, storing a luggage upon check-in and etc. Secondly, the front office staffs will also take calls directly from guest rooms or even from exterior guests. Thus, this is the multi-task job that is implemented in the hotel.

Actually, not only that front desk made interactions with guests but also with the internal staffs such as the housekeeping department. This is because, for example, if the guests requested on their room to have their room to be cleaned up early or if they require extra towels; this is where the internal communication takes place. This is stated in the theory of the James Bardi that (2011), "The front office staff interacts with all departments of the hotel, including marketing and sales, housekeeping, food and beverage, banquet, controller, maintenance, security, and human resources. These departments view the front office as a communication liaison in providing guest services."

1.2 Problem Identification

Not only that, Karaksa Hotel has a multi-cultural working environment which involves people from different countries to work together. But by using Japanese language as the main language to communicate. And only some have been certified in their proficiency of Japanese language. Thus, causing the possibility of miscommunications to occur. Thereupon, it became the topic of research for this thesis.

1.3 Problem Formulation

Based on the identification of possible problems that may occur as said above, there are several research formulations that can be done in this research. The purpose of this research is to see the effectiveness of communication in a multi-cultural team in front office department of Karaksa Hotel. The problem formulation is listed as below;

1. How effective is the communication done in a front office department in a multi-culture environment?
2. How to minimize the chances of miscommunication to occur?

1.4 Purpose of Research

The purpose of this research is to see the effectiveness of communication in a multi-cultural team in front office department of Karaksa Hotel. Since in this hotel, this is where world-wide staffs are gathered working together using Japanese language as their main both internally and externally in their working operation period.

1.5 Benefit of Research

Benefits for the author:

- a. This research is expected to help researcher to find out how effective communication is done throughout the hotel in a multi-cultural environment.

Benefits for the hotel

- a. This research is hope to benefit the hotel to overcome problems in relations to miscommunications