

# A Hotel Front Desk Receptionist and Catur Paramita Values: A Study of Implementing Local Wisdom in Hospitality Industry

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**Abstract**— The position of a hotel front desk receptionist is extremely important in a hotel because the person who is in charge in the reception can be literally the face that the customers see. The receptionist will be expected to be friendly, professional and help guests with all sorts of everyday tasks. Therefore, it is needed Communication skills that are utilized a significant amount of time when interacting with guests and employees. *Catur paramita* or four genuine main characters of a person as an underlying reference of a daily life can be applied by a receptionist since it has the values of friendliness, courtesy, helpfulness, and respectfulness. This study aims at investigating the implementation of *catur paramita* values by a receptionist. By applying the descriptive qualitative research method, the data, both primary and secondary, were collected through participant observation, interview, and literature study of the *catur paramita* library. The study found, so far, the implementation of *catur paramita* values for the hotel front desk receptionist has been effective. The essence of *catur paramita* is regarded as the local wisdom of a share knowledge and skills including cognitive, affective, and psychomotor with certain values and norms that arise from the result of living-experienced adjustment of Balinese Hindu community. Consequently, it has been able to facilitate the receptionists to obtain the required competencies; firstly, in accordance with their attitude and aptitude in performing the hospitality services, and secondly in accordance with their prospective upselling products for the quality assurance in fulfilling guests' satisfaction.

**Keywords**— *receptionist; catur paramita; local wisdom, hospitality industry; quality assurance*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The globalization era nowadays is identically to an era of competition in every life aspect or sector, especially in the economic business sector including the hospitality industry. This can occur due to a significant increase in the number of star hotels every year, as happened in Bali. As a matter of fact, it was recorded in 2006 that the number of hotels was only 147-star hotels and then increased to 281-star hotels in 2015, in other words the number of star hotels has doubled in the last 9 years [1]. However, this boosting quantity was not followed by the increase number of room occupancy and the average guests' length of stay in the aforementioned star hotels.

Consequently, it has created competition among star hotels themselves to increase their room occupancy. It can be seen where every star hotel in Bali tries its best to show off its uniqueness through special programs and facilities offered to guests. This effort is urgently needed in order to win such a tight competition, although basically every star hotel in Bali follows the standard operation procedures that are applied according to the hotel chain, so the hoteliers can provide services which refer to an international standard in each department.

Every endeavor to win a competition of the star hotels, it is required to have a uniqueness that is excellence in providing services for achieving guests' satisfaction in accordance with quality service dimension [2-3]. However, unfortunately, the encounter between guests and hosts will not always successfully. Rosalina [4] and aligned with Boniface [5] stated that maintaining relationship among the hosts and the guests thus becomes inevitable and an important issue as the different cultural background could spark the cultural conflict, which could create notion that tourism is obviously related to the cultural differences and the wide gap among the hosts' and guests' cultures could elicit conflicts due to the actual scene of the tourist-host encounter. Additionally, Robinson and Picard [6] stated that close interaction between tourists and the locals generates conditions to dispel myths and stereo types on both sides. Based on this situation, therefore, Reisinger and Turner [7] suggested that in order to diminish this conflict, it is the obligation for both hosts and guests to understand each other and keep the social interaction balance by seeing the adverse wisely that it could be minimized and even eliminated if tourists and hosts are aware of their cultural differences.

In reference to the above-mentioned problem, Bali where philosophies are immersed in every details of its way of life, it is evident for Bali to improve the development of tourism by linking to its philosophy [8]. Concerning the cultural tourism developed in the island of God, Bali with its local cultural concept has a distinguished character which can attract tourists to visit the island. This point of view is listed in Bali Provincial Regulation No. 2 year 2012 concerning Balinese Cultural Tourism which states that Balinese culture as part of

Indonesian culture is the main foundation of Bali's tourism development, which is able to operate tourism potential in the dynamics of local, national and global life. Additionally, there is part of the regulation which states about the local genius of *Tri Hita Karana* (THK) or three-genuine underlying philosophical concept of harmonious life, where the Balinese Hindu believe that this universe will be harmonious when humans can maintain good relations with God, fellow human beings, and the universe in a balanced way [9-12]. Therefore, the three-folding concepts consisted of *parhyangan*, the vertical relation of humans to the almighty God, *pawongan*, the horizontal humans' relationship, and *palemahan*, the way how humans respect their environment where they live. This concept has been applied as a parameter in determining the consideration of green hotel category through THK Award. By applying the THK Award assessment indicator, it is required that every department should be able to give the local culture character in providing services to guests. In this case, every hotel department is expected to play an important role in providing quality assurance of services to guests. The concept of *pawongan* in THK derives *Ttri Kaya Parisuda* or three genuine human characters, *manacika* or positive thinking, *wacika* polite words, and *kayika* or good behavior. In addition, the horizontal relationship of human fellow derives another local wisdom which is termed as *Catur Paramita* or four genuine personal characters which is consisted of *maitri* or friendliness, *karuna* or courtesy, *mudita* or helpfulness, and *upeksa* or respectfulness

One of the hotel department that plays a vital role in the hotel operation is the Front Office Department. This department consists of several sections, namely reception, reservation, telephone operator and cashier. The Front Office Department is one of the first departments to welcome guests who come to a hotel. The receptionist is in the front office which is responsible for welcoming guests at the hotel, helping in the check-in and check-out process, and providing information to guests. Agusnawar [13] defines receptionist as a person who registers and helps guests to check-in and check-out, making notes by hand or computer, dealing with housekeeping departments and other departments and being a center of information and records. Furthermore, the receptionist at the hotel is the first person to welcome guests to come, from registering guests, providing rooms according to orders, providing room keys and as a center of information about services available at the hotel and other information outside the hotel. Referring to the international service standards combined with local culture based on the THK, especially the second concept of *pawongan* which derives *catur paramita* can give positive contribution to and inspire the performance of the receptionist front desk in hospitality industry.

## II. RESEARCH METHODS

This research was conducted by applying descriptive qualitative method. The sources and types of data are including both primary and secondary data. The primary data was obtained directly in the field through participant observation and interview techniques [14-15]. Whereas, the secondary data was collected through literature review technique [16]. The

related informants, such as Front Office Managers and front office staff including receptionists, guest relation officers, guest services as well as guests in house were selected based on purposive sampling technique. The additional information to complete the data which is considered still insufficient was done by using snowball sampling technique as one of the non-probability sampling techniques in qualitative research by looking for key informants in field research that helps researchers find other key informants or open access to respondents to be studied [16]. This sampling technique is applied for the purpose of examining those which are related to the local wisdom of *Catur Paramita* in developing cultural tourism of Bali which its soul spirit underlying principles is Hindu religion, such as priests, scholars of Hindu religion institute.

The data, subsequently, were analyzed with qualitative descriptive methods based on an inductive methodological paradigm that departs from specific principles general [17]. Additionally, by applying descriptive analysis method, the data that has been collected in the form of implementing *catur paramita* when the front desk receptionist communicated with the guest is by describing information obtained from triangulation data collection, namely by comparing data obtained from interviews with the front office manager, observations made by researchers and documents related to the problem. So that later the results obtained can be tested for validity and can be described or explained in the discussion. The results of the study are presented in formal and informal methods. According to Sudaryanto [18] the method of informal presentation is to present the results of the analysis with a description or regular words, while the method of formal presentation is the formulation with signs and symbols. Muhammad [19] states that the symbols or signs are used to present or formulate the results of the analysis so that the meanings of rules and concepts, inter-rule and concept relations, and the rules and concepts of peculiarities can be identified and understood the method of formal is informal presentation is to present the results of the analysis with a description or ordinary words.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Results of the Study

A receptionist must have reliable and professional abilities, because the first service at the hotel occurs at reception. The receptionist's performance in a hotel that is most important is how reception staff are able to provide effective and efficient service by prioritizing guest services so that guests feel comfortable properly handled before being accommodated as guest in house in the hotel where they have spent some amount of money to settle all the outstanding payment before the cut of date stated during the reservation. Therefore, they have the self-esteem of expectation to have comfortable and good services so the amount of money they spend worthfully for the accommodation. The maximum services should be provided starting from the arrival during their stay and until they leave the hotel. Considering such the job description, a receptionist, therefore, require job qualifications to support the

task including product knowledge, friendliness and politeness, attitude, grooming, loyalty and dedication, discipline, efficient and practical, honesty, and self-confidence. A receptionist needs to be expertise on the product knowledge about the hotel as the basis for serving guests properly and correctly in order to achieve effective and efficient results. Additionally, regarding to the product knowledge, a receptionist requires the repertoire information about the conditions, facilities, and activities in the hotel. Service courtesy like friendliness and politeness in providing services to guests will provide a pleasant atmosphere and make guests feel at home in the hotel.

Furthermore, good attitude and fun in the sense of readiness to give service with sincerity, like to be helpful, respecting, enthusiastic which are completed with smile, cheerful it will give the positive impression especially when guests check in in the hotel. Grooming which is more concern about appearance like wearing work uniforms provided by the company, clean in all aspects of the appearance in terms of good hygiene and self-care plus always shows cheerful face with cheap sincere smiles. Loyalty and Dedication is very important because awareness of carrying out orders and completing tasks properly is an important requirement for front office staff. Discipline highly requires because it involves direct service to guests where the ultimate goal is to achieve the guests' satisfaction. A front office staff it is important to be efficient, fast, precise and neat in every action taken. As a matter of fact, efficient and non-repetitive service is highly expected by hotel guests. Honesty is the best policy is deeply required to spring trust for the guest so they feel that they like stay at home. Self-confidence, high self-esteem will affect work performance, including in terms of a quick decision maker while serving guests.

Mastery of Foreign Languages, is also an essential factor and it absolutely necessary to support the smoothness of services especially for foreign guests where an international communication is required. The communicative competence, linguistics, socio linguistics, and strategic of a foreign language [20-21] in Bali cultural tourism is required to further strengthen and advance international communication and exchange with highly cultural confidence due to the demand of quality service assurance towards guests' satisfaction. Great efforts should be put into developing cultural tourism that can give both economic impact and cultural preservation. Tourism resources should be integrated with other featured products to drive the integrative development. The local wisdom that inspired the tourism business industry for creating optimum the hospitality services should be implemented, especially in the front office of a hotel accommodation. Moreover, a batch of key tourist satisfaction and excellent tourist hospitality services, such as friendliness, kindness, and helpfulness have been known worldwide in Bali as the best tourist destination in the world are explicitly indicated in development target of hospitality service industry specified in Plan for Central Indonesia Economic Tourism officially issued by the Indonesian government. The Central Indonesian Economic

Tourism is located spread out throughout the island of God, which is the core cradle of the Indonesian nation and Indonesian civilization. The Bali tourism has abundant humanistic cultures, such as Besakih, the Mother Temple of Bali, Taman Ayun, the Royal temple which gain the world cultural heritage from UNESCO, Bali Museum that are well known with historical and cultural background. They constitute a route, which perfectly integrates the cultural landscape with the natural landscape. International publicity work for tourism culture is significant to complete information dissemination of tourism culture for the purpose of publicity. As a new-type mass communication channel, Internet is accepted by an increasing number of people for its convenience and fast speed.

In regards with the implementation of the local wisdom in the hospitality industry, it can be described the results of interviews with some stakeholders of several hotels in Nusa Dua resort Bali, such as Conrad Hotel Bali as one of the 5-star hotels in Bali under Hilton Management, St. Regis under the Starwood management international hotel chain the same as The Westin and Laguna, Nusa Dua Beach Hotel, Grand Hyatt, and Ayodya Resort. Based on the results of interviews with the Front Office Managers, receptionists including the guests in house, it can be identified three working mechanisms of reception at Conrad Bali Hotels in general, namely: Guest Arrival, hotel check-in or registering, check-out. When the guest arrives in the hotel, the service activities include greeting, offering valet parking, assisting the guest with their luggage. After that the guest proceed to the reception for hotel registration and the receptionist is ready to deal with the guest through greeting, offering cold towel and welcome drink, and helping the guest to fill-in the registration form. When the guest check-out, the service activity include greeting, checking the extra expenses of the guest during staying, and saying words of farewell. The table below shows the philosophy essence of *catur paramita* that portrays one's personal traits.

TABLE 1. THE PERSONAL TRAITS IN CATUR PARAMITA

<i>Catur Paramita</i>	Personal Traits
<i>Maitri</i>	courteous, gentle and polite
<i>Karuna</i>	compassionate, sharing
<i>Mudita</i>	friendly, cheerful, smile
<i>Upeksa</i>	forgiving, sincere

The implementation of *catur paramita* in hospitality industry has been able to facilitate the receptionists to obtain the required competencies both firstly, in accordance with their performance of having positive thinking, attitude, politeness, friendliness with smile, sincerity and using courteous language, and secondly in accordance with their prospective upselling products for the quality assurance as the service dimension in fulfilling the demand of guests' satisfaction. Therefore, the underlying philosophy of *catur paramita* can be derived a concept related to the green ethics, especially for the communicative competence a receptionist should possess in handling guests in the front office desk as it is shown in figure 1.

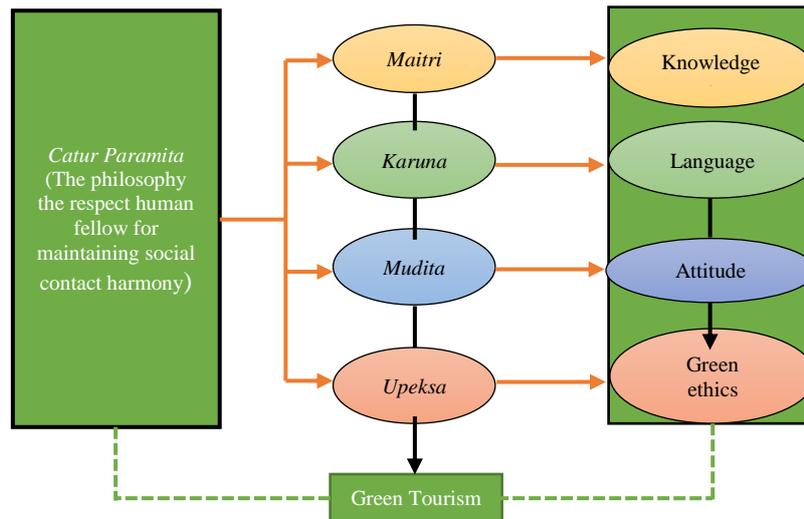


Fig. 1. The philosophical concept of *catur paramita*

Handling guests in front office desk. The performance of the receptionist in completing the taskforce can be inspired by *catur paramita* philosophy can be related to three taxonomic domain-cognitive, affective, and psychomotor [22]. If it is related to the job description of a receptionist with the three taxonomic domains, cognitively, a receptionist should be equipped with hotel product knowledge, affectively, is concerned with feeling and emotion, and psychomotor or kinesthetic domain which refers to natural, autonomic responses or reflexes. The relation of *catur paramita* and the taxonomic domain can be seen in figure to 2 below.

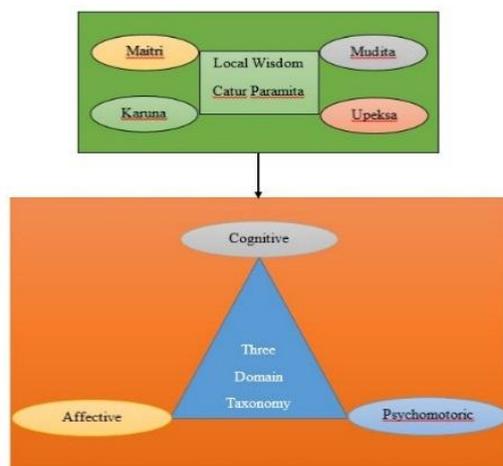


Fig. 2. Catur Paramita and taxonomic domain

**B. DISCUSSION**

Based on the results of the study, the model of handling guests related to local culture-based reception is inspired by the concept of Tri Hita Karana, especially the *paawang* aspect and then it is derived *catur paramita* concept which can be implemented by a receptionist in handling guests in a front

desk reception. The underlying philosophy of the local genius concept is not apart from the examination of the relationship between human fellow or social society relationship. Humans as social beings with their nature cannot live without socialization with other humans which have become the main basis for this social relation process. Humans from birth are basically equipped with good and compassionate qualities in each person so that humans have good manners, morals and ethics. This trait in local preaching of Hindu in Bali is more clearly discussed in the *catur paramita* preaching, namely the four main traits or attitudes that become ethical in social interaction and communication. The four genuine characters, namely *Maitri*, which means gentle, polite, which is part of noble character; *Karuna* which means compassion, where a human being must do something without violence or never make people feel hurt by their actions and words; *Mudita* which means to smile, in the sense that a receptionist in carrying out a job always shows a cheerful and happy face to anyone; *Upeksa* which means having the nature of succumbing to others for the sake of goodness, does not repay the evil treatment of others and does not hold grudges, does not look down on others and is always able to control themselves to avoid conflict. If, courtesy, friendly attitude and other good attitude is absolutely necessary for the hotel hospitality services. Receptionist staff are the first staff at the hotel who provide services to guests until they leave the hotel. *Catur Paramita* will be the basic concept in providing services to guests during their stay at the hotel. Each star hotel certainly has a service standard that must be followed in providing services to guests. In the study of qualitative analysis, the forms of service at Reception at some hotels in Nusa Dua tourist resort is based on the preaching of *catur paramita* concept contains good qualities and ethics of human traits, such as courteous, gentle and polite, compassionate and be willing to share with others, cheerful and friendly with always smile in performing the service, and be able to apologize others sincerely.

Based on the aforementioned results of the qualitative analysis study, the attitudes stated in the *catur paramita* have been applied in the provision of reception services at some hotel in Nusa Dua Resort. How important the role of a receptionist in welcoming guests arrives, in the provision of services at the respective reception desk of the hotels investigated has reflected excellent service that puts forward good attitudes contained in the *catur paramita*, it could be seen at the time of greeting the guest, smiles and pleasant greetings are always provided by the receptionist and guest relation staff, especially for newly arrived guests, of course they are tired from traveling far away who want to get a place to rest quickly. The receptionist is also very attentive to the needs of guests, including guest luggage that has security guarantees. The appearance of the staff receptionist is neat and clean is adopted the grooming standard. The handling procedure of check-in and check-out processing time is effective, efficient and fast by prioritizing friendly, polite and positive attitude and the receptionist provides services according to the promises offered and can be trusted. The ability of the receptionist in resolving problems that occur during the check-in or check-out process was done accurately and quickly, by prioritizing the interests of guests, prioritizing the nature of giving in, listening to complaints from guests well, keeping a friendly smile, providing solutions quickly without having to involve highest leader, the problem will be completed right away. Overall, the receptionist service at some hotels in Nusa Dua Resort has reflected services based on local Balinese culture in this case the human good qualities contained in the *catur paramita* as the local wisdom, starting from the arrival of guests, the check-in process until the check-out process. This model must be maintained, of course, in order to sustain the positive image of the hotels and to support Bali as the best tourist destination in the world.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Service delivery at the front desk reception in Nusa Dua tourist resort has reflected an excellent service that promotes good attitudes contained in the *catur paramita*, which means that the concept of local culture has been already applied in the front desk reception service at some hotels in the enclave tourist resort. This can be seen from the whole hospitality services provided based on the standard operational procedure of the respective hotels, such as greet the guest with smiles and pleasant greetings which are always provided by the receptionists and guest relations, especially for newly arrived guests. In this case, the new arrival guests, of course, are feeling tired from traveling far away and want to get a place to rest quickly. The receptionist is also very attentive to the needs of guests, including guest luggage that has una guarantees. The appearance of the staff receptionist is neat and clean in accordance with the standard grooming of each hotel, the implementation of check-in and check-out processing time is effective, efficient and fast by prioritizing friendly, polite and positive attitude and the receptionist provides services according to the promises offered and trustworthy. Considering the beneficial orientation of implementing *catur paramita* concept in the hotel front office department, it is, then, suggested to consider the values of the local wisdom being

applied in the hospitality industry for the sake of providing quality assurance to meet guests' satisfaction which is highly demanded as they deserve to obtain high quality services in return to the expenses they spend for the accommodation.

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