

Service Excellence Training: Enhancing Professionalism in the Culinary Service Industry at Omboburi Space

Pelatihan Service Excellence: Peningkatan Profesionalisme Pelayanan di Industri Kuliner pada Omboburi Space

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Makalah: Diterima 30 Maret 2026; Diperbaiki 25 Mei 2026; Disetujui 28 Mei 2026
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Abstract

Service quality in the culinary industry is a key factor in creating customer satisfaction and business sustainability. Omboburi Space, as a hospitality-based creative space, still faces challenges related to inconsistencies in service standards, particularly in grooming, service sequence, and complaint handling due to differences in employees' backgrounds. This community service program aims to enhance service professionalism through service excellence training using an interactive and practical approach. The activities included needs assessment, development of hospitality-based training materials, and an online workshop conducted via Zoom with 14 participants. The training covered personal grooming, service sequence, and complaint handling. The results of the activity indicate an increase in employees' understanding and awareness of professional service standards, as reflected in the evaluation scores: Personal Grooming Understanding at 3.85, Service Sequence Execution at 3.78, Complaint Handling Ability at 4.00, and Professional Attitude Satisfaction at 3.92. This initiative demonstrates that industry-based training with a participatory approach is effective in enhancing human resource competencies in the hospitality sector and strengthening collaboration between higher education institutions and industry.

Keyword: Service Excellence, Culinary Industry, Hospitality, Complaint Handling

Abstrak

Kualitas pelayanan dalam industri kuliner merupakan faktor kunci dalam menciptakan kepuasan pelanggan dan keberlanjutan usaha. Omboburi Space, sebagai ruang kreatif berbasis hospitality, masih menghadapi tantangan berupa ketidakkonsistenan dalam standar pelayanan, khususnya pada aspek grooming, service sequence, dan penanganan keluhan akibat perbedaan latar belakang karyawan. Program pengabdian kepada masyarakat ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan profesionalisme pelayanan melalui pelatihan service excellence dengan pendekatan yang interaktif dan praktis. Kegiatan yang dilakukan meliputi identifikasi kebutuhan, pengembangan materi pelatihan berbasis hospitality, serta pelaksanaan workshop daring melalui Zoom dengan melibatkan 14 peserta. Materi pelatihan mencakup personal grooming, service sequence, dan penanganan keluhan. Hasil kegiatan menunjukkan adanya peningkatan pemahaman dan kesadaran karyawan terhadap standar pelayanan profesional, yang tercermin dari hasil evaluasi dengan nilai: Personal Grooming Understanding sebesar 3.85, Service Sequence Execution sebesar 3.78, Complaint Handling Ability sebesar 4.00, serta Professional Attitude Satisfaction sebesar 3.92. Dampak kegiatan ini terlihat dari meningkatnya kesiapan karyawan dalam memberikan pelayanan yang lebih konsisten, komunikatif, dan solutif, sehingga berkontribusi pada peningkatan pengalaman pelanggan. Inisiatif ini menunjukkan bahwa pelatihan berbasis kebutuhan industri dengan pendekatan partisipatif efektif dalam meningkatkan kompetensi sumber daya manusia di sektor hospitality serta memperkuat kerja sama antara perguruan tinggi dan dunia industri.

Kata Kunci: Service Excellence, Industri Kuliner, Hospitality, Menangani masalah

1. Introduction

The hospitality industry demands consistent, professional, and customer-oriented service quality. In the context of tourism and the culinary sector, service quality plays a crucial role in influencing visitation and

revisit decisions, which are shaped by visitors' expectations and perceptions of the services they receive [1]. Studies show that service quality has a significant impact on tourist satisfaction, trust, and loyalty in the tourism industry [2]. Furthermore, every tourist visiting a destination requires various services and conveniences to support their travel activities [3]

In the development of the modern hospitality industry, service quality is not only an operational factor but also a key strategy in enhancing competitiveness and business sustainability. Research indicates that service quality in tourism is a primary factor influencing tourist behavior, including satisfaction and destination choice decisions [4]. This highlights that service quality has a broad impact, not only on customer experience but also on the growth of the tourism sector.

Along with the rise of experience-based tourism, visitors no longer seek merely products or services, but also meaningful and personalized experiences. In the hospitality industry, the interaction between employees and customers becomes a critical element in creating value and memorable experiences. Studies reveal that service quality significantly influences customer satisfaction and loyalty

Omboburi Space, as a creative space based on hospitality, relies heavily on direct interaction between employees and visitors to create positive and memorable experiences. Conceptually, service quality is not only determined by physical facilities but also by the quality of human resources, including professional appearance (grooming), service sequence, and the ability to handle customer complaints effectively, all of which contribute to competitive advantage [5]. Research also shows that dimensions of service quality such as reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles play an important role in shaping customer satisfaction in the hospitality sector [6]. The identification of service inconsistency at Omboburi Space was established through a structured pre activity interview with the cafe's operational manager and a one week initial observation phase. The internal data revealed that during peak hours, approximately 25% of customer feedback highlighted operational friction. Specifically, the data showed that 25% of the complaints were related to *service sequence* delays, where food and beverage delivery exceeded the standard 15-minute window due to unstandardized station-to-table coordination. Furthermore, 20% of customer dissatisfaction stemmed from poor *complaint handling* methods, where staff members frequently failed to offer standardized empathetic responses or clear solutions when order mistakes occurred. Lastly, 25% of the feedback noted minor but noticeable inconsistencies in *grooming standards*, such as non uniform attire and improper posture during table service. These baseline statistics and direct observations verified that the operational staff, who mostly came from non-hospitality backgrounds, critically required standardizing interventions. These inconsistencies may create a gap between customer expectations and actual experiences, which can ultimately affect customer satisfaction and loyalty [7]

On the other hand, improving human resource quality through training is a key strategy to enhance service quality. In the hospitality industry, service excellence is not only related to service procedures but also encompasses interpersonal skills, communication abilities, and consistency in service delivery. The implementation of service excellence has been proven to improve customer experience and encourage loyalty as well as positive word-of-mouth [8] Furthermore, other studies also show that service quality significantly affects customer satisfaction as well as customer loyalty [9] Therefore, this community service activity aims to improve employee professionalism through an interactive and practical training approach. This activity is expected not only to enhance service quality but also to strengthen the competitiveness of Omboburi Space as part of the experience-based hospitality industry.

2. Materials and Method

The partner involved in this community service activity is Omboburi Space, a creative space and culinary business located on Pramuka Street No. 69, Ponorogo, East Java. Operating in the competitive food and beverage sector, Omboburi Space serves as a modern hangout and gathering hub for youth, families, and creative communities. The establishment currently employs a small-to-medium team of operational staff, with 14 employees actively participating as core trainees in this program. Through an initial situation analysis, it was identified that the cafe faced challenges regarding inconsistent daily service standards. Because the employees came from diverse and non-hospitality educational backgrounds, discrepancies often occurred in personal grooming, basic service flows (service sequence), and tray-handling techniques, which occasionally led to customer dissatisfaction or order handling delays. Furthermore, staff lacked a standardized, empathetic protocol for complaint handling when service failures occurred. Consequently, there was a critical need for structured hospitality training to bridge this operational gap and enhance employee professionalism

The implementation of this community service activity was carried out through three main stages: preparation, implementation, and evaluation. The preparation stage began with a needs identification process, which involved analyzing the challenges faced by Omboburi Space employees related to grooming, service sequence, and complaint handling.

The implementation phase was executed as a structured, intensive 3-hour workshop divided into three sequential sessions, utilizing a coordinated hybrid learning approach via the Zoom teleconferencing platform. While the speakers delivered the training remotely via Zoom, all 14 operational staff members were gathered

physically at a single location inside the Omboburi Space restaurant to bridge the gap between virtual instruction and hands-on hospitality operations.

1. Session Breakdown and Duration

Session 1: Professional Personal Grooming (60 Minutes): Focused on establishing the visual standards of hospitality. The material covered uniform cleanliness, hair and facial grooming neatness, posture, and non-verbal communication principles.

Session 2: Standard Service Sequence (60 Minutes): Covered the step-by-step operational flow from guest arrival, greeting protocols, order-taking techniques, upselling strategies, to food and beverage serving and billing processes.

Session 3: Empathetic Complaint Handling (60 Minutes): Taught psychological approaches to managing customer dissatisfaction, focusing on the LAST method (Listen, Apologize, Solve, Thank).

2. Session Breakdown and Duration Hybrid learning and On-Site Simulations Forms

Ensure the operational training remained highly interactive despite the remote delivery, the workshop employed an active, camera-on practical approach. The simulations were not merely passive demonstrations by the speakers; instead, the restaurant's on-site device was positioned to capture the designated practical area of the venue, allowing all 14 participants to practice the techniques simultaneously using the restaurant's actual operational equipment.

For the psychomotor sessions (grooming alignment and tray-handling), staff members took turns executing the carrying techniques, balancing glassware, and verifying uniform setups under the live visual guidance of the speakers, who provided real-time verbal corrections regarding hand positioning and posture through the main screen. For the cognitive and communication sessions (complaint handling), the simulation was conducted through live, in-person role-playing pairs on the restaurant floor. Participants simulated staff-customer conflict dynamics based on real-world culinary scenarios in front of the camera, enabling remote evaluation of their verbal empathy, tone of voice, and facial expressions synchronously.

3. Speakers' Roles and Material Distribution

The training was delivered by two professional speakers

Specializing in hospitality operations, with clearly designated roles:
Speaker 1 (Feronika Berutu): Responsible for designing and delivering the Professional Personal Grooming and *Standard Service Sequence* materials, as well as leading the physical posture and tray handling technical demonstrations via the remote feed.

Speaker 2 (Sofiani): Responsible for conducting the *Empathetic Complaint Handling* module, managing the synchronized case-study analysis, and evaluating the participants' communication skills during the live on-camera role-play simulations.

The evaluation stage showed that a total of 14 participants attended the activity. The materials and practical sessions were considered highly relevant to the tourism industry, particularly in the food and beverage sector. Participants demonstrated active engagement through discussions and questions during the session. Overall, this activity is expected to improve the knowledge and skills of Omboburi staff and contribute to enhancing service quality at Omboburi Café.

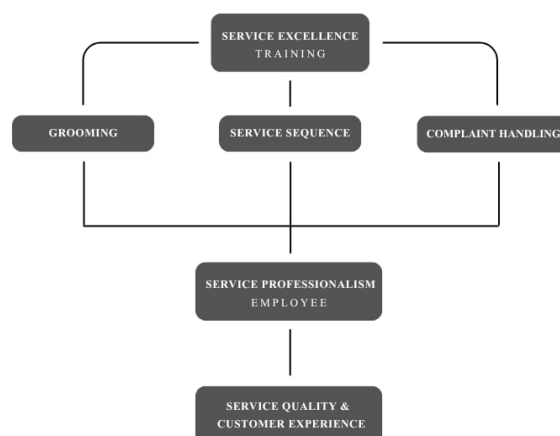


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Service Excellence Training in Enhancing Service Professionalism and Quality

2.1 Data Analysis or Evaluation Method

To measure the effectiveness and quality of the training program, a post-training evaluation questionnaire was distributed to all 14 participants. The evaluation model assessed four core indicators: Personal Grooming

Understanding, Service Sequence Execution, Complaint Handling Ability, Professional Attitude and Satisfaction. Educational value, objectivity, accountability, and transparency. Each indicator was measured using a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). The final score for each component was calculated using the average mean.

3. Results and Discussion

The community service activity at Omboburi Space led to measurable improvements in employees' service competencies, particularly in personal grooming, service sequence, and complaint handling. The results from the service excellence training demonstrate the positive impact of an interactive and practice-based approach in enhancing employees' professionalism and readiness to deliver consistent and high-quality service.

3.1 Personal grooming and service sequence

The community service activity was conducted on Thursday, March 5, 2026, at Omboburi Space through an online platform (Zoom). The main session consisted of *service excellence* training and service sequence was delivered by Mrs. Feronika Berutu. Personal grooming refers to the maintenance of both physical appearance and inner qualities to create a professional image [10]. In the hospitality and tourism industry, personal grooming plays an important role in shaping customer perceptions and representing the overall image of a business [11]. This is consistent with the study by [12], which emphasizes that the *tangibles* dimension including employee appearance is a key factor in perceived service quality. In addition, factors such as service quality, customer satisfaction, accessibility, and employee involvement contribute to shaping the overall customer experience [13]. Furthermore, previous research has shown that employee appearance and professionalism significantly influence customer perceptions and overall service evaluations [14]. Other studies also show that service interaction quality and employee engagement significantly influence customer experience and satisfaction. Therefore, improving employees' awareness and understanding of grooming is essential to support daily service operations.

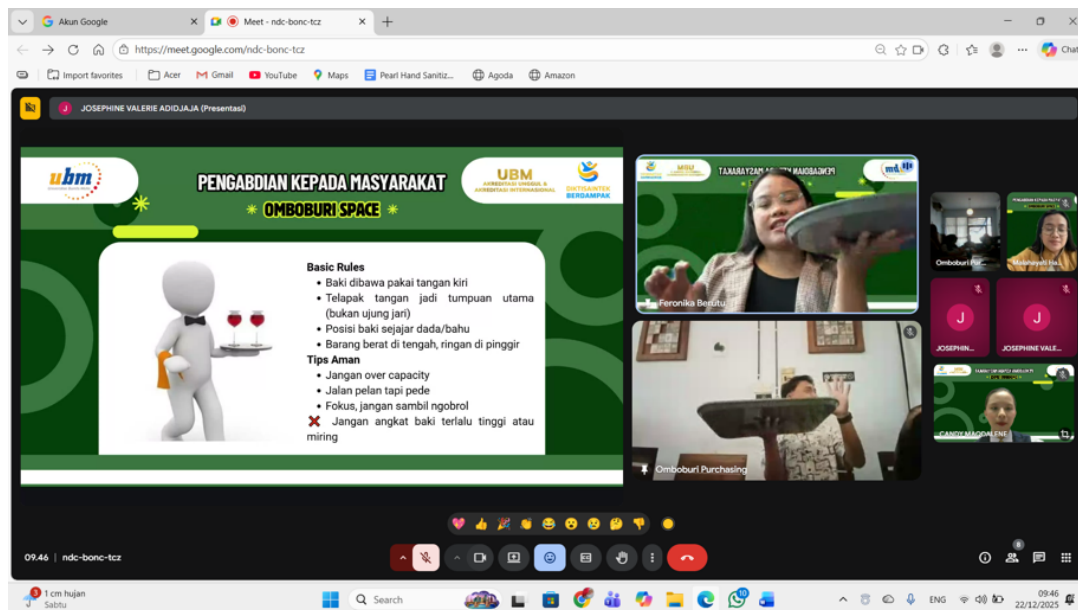


Figure 2. The role play activity on tray handling conducted by participants as part of the service excellence training at Omboburi Space.

Furthermore, service sequence refers to the stages of food and beverage service provided by staff, from guest arrival to departure [15]. A well-implemented service sequence contributes to operational efficiency and service consistency. This is supported by the study of [12], which found that service consistency directly affects customer satisfaction and loyalty. Additionally, research by [16] highlights that service process design significantly influences customer experience and operational efficiency. However, initial observations at Omboburi Space revealed inefficiencies in service flow due to differences in employees' backgrounds, which resulted in order delays and customer complaints. This phenomenon aligns with findings that inconsistent service can create a gap between customer expectations and perceptions (*service gap*), ultimately reducing satisfaction [12]. Furthermore, it indicates that inconsistencies in service delivery can negatively affect customer satisfaction due to unmet expectations [17].

Therefore, this training aimed to improve employees' understanding and implementation of structured service procedures to enhance overall service performance. Training-based service excellence approaches have been proven to effectively improve employee competence and service interaction quality. This is supported by

research by Service quality is a critical factor in determining customer satisfaction and long-term loyalty in the service industry. Previous studies have shown that employee training plays a crucial role in improving employees' skills and performance, which directly contributes to better service delivery. [18]

Figure 2 shows the implementation of tray handling training conducted through an online workshop at Omboburi Space. The activity involved both demonstration and direct practice by participants, focusing on proper tray-carrying techniques, including balance, posture, and safety.

Active participation in the role play indicates that the interactive training approach is effective in improving practical skills. This activity helps enhance employees' readiness and confidence in delivering more professional service in daily operations.

3.2 Complaint Handling

The second session, delivered by Sofiani, S.Tr.Par., M.Par., focused on complaint handling. Complaints are feedback from customers directed to a company that tends to be negative in nature. This feedback can be delivered either in written or verbal form [19]. Proper complaint management plays an important role in improving customer satisfaction and service quality [20]. Effective complaint handling through service recovery strategies has been shown to have a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction following service failures, as well as enhancing trust and brand credibility [21]. Prior to the training, Omboburi Space experienced several service-related complaints, which highlighted the need for improved employee competence in handling customer issues effectively.



Figure 3. Complaint handling simulation conducted by participants in the service excellence training at Omboburi Space

The results of the training indicate a significant improvement in employees' ability to handle customer complaints. Employees demonstrated better understanding in identifying the source of complaints, responding with empathy, and providing appropriate solutions. They were also able to apply structured complaint handling steps, such as active listening, apologizing, clarifying problems, and offering solutions. This improvement reflects increased confidence and communication skills among employees when dealing with dissatisfied customers. Furthermore, employees showed a more professional attitude in managing complaints, including maintaining emotional control and avoiding defensive responses. This aligns with the findings of [22], which emphasize that effective complaint handling strategies can lead to higher customer satisfaction and positive behavioral intentions. In addition, Training-based approaches in hospitality have been shown to enhance employees' service recovery performance, particularly through the implementation of error management training [23].

The implementation of complaint handling skills during post-training observation also indicated a reduction in negative customer reactions and an increase in positive feedback. This suggests that improving employees' competence in handling complaints can directly contribute to better service quality and customer experience. As supported by [24], effective service recovery and complaint management play a crucial role in building customer trust and loyalty in the hospitality industry. Furthermore, empirical studies also confirm that service recovery has a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction following service failure [25]. Overall, the

complaint handling training session provided a meaningful impact on employees' ability to manage customer dissatisfaction in a more structured, professional, and customer-oriented manner.

Figure 3. shows the instructor explaining the concept of complaint handling to participants during the service excellence training at Omboburi Space. The material covered includes the definition of customer complaints, the importance of appropriate responses, and strategies for handling complaints in a professional, communicative, and solution-oriented manner.

The training was attended by 14 participants who were staff members of Omboburi Space. During the activity, participants showed active engagement through question-and-answer sessions and interactive discussions, indicating a positive response to the training materials.

Based on the evaluation results collected through questionnaires, the average scores for each indicator were as follows:

Table 1. Evaluation results of service excellence training at Omboburi Space			
No.	Evaluation Components	Pre Test Average	Post Test Average
1	Personal Grooming Understanding	3.00	3.85
2	Service Sequence Execution	3.24	3.78
3	Complaint Handling Ability	3.10	4.00
4	Professional Attitude & Satisfaction	3.22	3.92
Total respondents			14
Total speakers			2

As illustrated in Table 1, the comparative analysis between the pre-test and post-test data highlights a substantial proficiency upgrade across all four targeted domains. Prior to the Zoom-based training, the participants displayed a moderate baseline understanding, with initial scores ranging between 3.00 and 3.24. This data indicates that while the operational staff possessed a basic conceptual awareness of cafe operations, they lacked standardized professional delivery due to their non-hospitality backgrounds.

Following the intensive workshop, a significant upward shift was observed, reflecting a holistic improvement in both the cognitive and psychomotor domains of the 14 participants. In the cognitive domain (knowledge), the interactive delivery of theoretical material via Zoom effectively enhanced their systematic retention, leading to a marked progression in Service Sequence Execution (+0.54) and a prominent surge in Complaint Handling Ability (+0.90 from 3.10 to 4.00). This theoretical mastery successfully shifted the staff's approach from defensive to empathetic when managing customer friction. Simultaneously, in the psychomotor domain (practical skills), direct camera-on simulations and physical demonstrations of tray-handling techniques and grooming alignment successfully transformed abstract hospitality concepts into muscle memory, resulting in an increase in Personal Grooming Understanding (+0.85 from 3.00 to 3.85). Finally, the Professional Attitude & Satisfaction scored an excellent average of 3.92 (up from 3.22), proving that this multi-method curriculum successfully built long-term operational confidence and standardized service excellence for Omboburi Space's daily operations.

3.2 Institutional Implications for Omboburi Space

The measurable improvements achieved through this community service program carry vital practical implications for the business sustainability of Omboburi Space. First, the standardization of *grooming* and *service sequences* directly eliminates the operational friction and service delays that previously occurred during weekend peak hours, thereby ensuring a predictable and professional customer experience. Second, the newly acquired competence in *complaint handling* provides the cafe with a resilient defensive line against negative customer retention; by resolving errors empathetically on-site, the staff can prevent minor operational mistakes from escalating into damaging online reviews. Ultimately, by transforming a non-hospitality workforce into a synchronized, service-oriented team, this program has established a robust framework for service excellence that safeguards customer satisfaction and reinforces the long-term brand equity of the partner.

4. Conclusion

The community service activity conducted by Universitas Bunda Mulia at Omboburi Space on March 5, 2026, successfully improved participants' competencies in professional hospitality service standards. The evaluation results showed highly positive outcomes across all measured dimensions, particularly in Complaint Handling Ability (4.00) and Professional Attitude & Satisfaction (3.92), while the aspects of Personal Grooming Understanding (3.85) and Service Sequence Execution (3.78) also demonstrated significant mastery. These findings indicate that the hybrid-coordinated service excellence training framework effectively enhances employee competence and daily service quality in the hospitality sector. Future programs should continue to utilize active-learning practical methods, such as camera-on simulations and physical role-plays, combined

with continuous monitoring to ensure consistent long-term implementation in daily cafe operations. Based on the evaluation scale interval, the post-test mean scores ranging from 3.78 to 4.00 fall solidly into the 'Excellent' or 'Highly Satisfactory' category, confirming a high level of operational proficiency and professional consensus delivered throughout the workshop sessions.

5. Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank Universitas Bunda Mulia for supporting the implementation of this community service activity. Appreciation is also extended to Omboburi Space for their cooperation and participation, as well as to all staff members who actively contributed to the success of this program.

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