

# Service Quality and Beverage Sales Analysis of Barback Role Using SWOT Method at Artotel Gelora Senayan Jakarta

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## Abstract

Hotels play a key role in supporting sustainable tourism at tourist destinations. The exceptional service provided by hotels is one of the main attractions for international tourists. As a result, hotels consistently strive to offer comprehensive facilities to meet their guests' needs. One such facility is the bar, which hotels provide as a relaxation area and business space. Similarly, the smooth operation of the bar is supported and contributed to by the barback. In daily bar operations, the barback plays a significant role in influencing the quality of service and beverage sales at the hotel. This study aims to analyze the contribution of barbacks in supporting bar operations, especially in service quality and beverage sales. This study employs a qualitative descriptive method with data collection through observation, interviews, and documentation. The findings indicate that barbacks, although not directly interacting with guests, have a crucial role in ensuring efficiency and supporting the bartender's work. SWOT analysis results show that professional barbacks enhance service quality and support beverage sales through effective teamwork and workflow.

## INTRODUCTION

The hospitality and tourism industry in Indonesia has undergone significant transformation in the past five years, particularly in Jakarta as the nation's capital and one of its main tourist hubs. Based on data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS, 2025), the number of domestic tourist trips to Jakarta increased from 3.5 million in 2020 to 6.86 million in 2024. This surge illustrates not only the recovery of the tourism sector after the pandemic but also the strengthening of Jakarta's position as a sustainable urban tourism destination. Alongside the rise in tourist arrivals, hotel occupancy rates have shown steady growth, exceeding 60% in 2024 (BPS, 2024). Such figures highlight the increasing demand for hospitality services, including accommodation and supporting facilities. The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy emphasizes that food and beverage (F&B) is one of the creative economy's backbones, as it contributes both to national economic growth and guest satisfaction (Kemenparekraf, 2023). Events such as the Food & Hotel Indonesia (FHI) 2024 further demonstrate the importance of F&B by connecting over 450 companies from 20 countries. Within hotels, the F&B department is divided into food production and food service, each of which directly impacts guest experience. In particular, beverage operations have gained greater prominence in recent years due to global trends toward creative, lifestyle-driven, and health-conscious consumption.

Bars in hotels, therefore, serve not merely as complementary outlets but as strategic facilities that enhance guest experiences. They function as social spaces where visitors enjoy both alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks while engaging in leisure or business interactions. The growing popularity of mocktails, specialty coffee, and healthy drinks reflects shifting consumer preferences, especially in urban markets (Maharani et al., 2024; Nusa Beverage, 2024). To maintain competitiveness, hotel bars must ensure operational excellence through innovative products, effective service delivery, and seamless teamwork. One critical yet often overlooked role in bar operations is the barback, also known as a bartender's assistant. Barbacks are responsible for stocking ingredients, preparing garnishes, maintaining equipment, replenishing supplies, and ensuring cleanliness in the work area. Although their duties are carried out behind the scenes, their performance is essential to the efficiency of bar operations. Without well-prepared barbacks, bartenders may face delays that disrupt service speed, beverage quality, and customer satisfaction. Conversely, professional and proactive barbacks support the delivery of excellent service, which contributes directly and indirectly to beverage sales. From a management perspective, the barback's contribution can be assessed not only in operational terms but also strategically. By applying the SWOT analysis framework, this study identifies the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to the role of barbacks in hotel bar operations. This analysis provides a comprehensive view of how barbacks influence service quality and beverage sales, highlighting areas where improvements, innovations, and training programs are needed.

The objectives of this study are threefold: (1) to explain the contribution of barbacks in supporting bar operations, particularly in terms of preparation, cleanliness, and equipment readiness; (2) to analyze the

importance of professionalism and responsiveness in barback performance as factors that enhance service quality; and (3) to describe how barbacks indirectly affect beverage sales through improved workflow and bartender efficiency. By addressing these objectives, the study contributes both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it adds to the limited academic literature on supporting staff in hospitality, specifically barbacks, whose role has not been widely explored. Practically, the findings provide insights for hotel management to optimize human resources, improve training programs, and strengthen F&B operational strategies. In the long term, acknowledging and improving the contribution of barbacks will enhance overall service quality, boost beverage sales, and support the competitiveness of hotels in Indonesia's rapidly growing tourism industry.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Service Quality (SERVQUAL)

Service quality is a central concept in the hospitality industry, as the success of hotels depends largely on their ability to deliver excellent services to guests. The Service Quality Theory developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) remains one of the most influential models in this regard. According to the theory, service quality is not determined solely by the actual delivery of services but also by the gap between customers' expectations and their perceptions of the services received. A small or nonexistent gap results in high-quality service, while a wide gap indicates poor service quality. Parasuraman et al. (1988) introduced the SERVQUAL model, which remains one of the most influential frameworks for evaluating service quality. The model consists of five dimensions:

1. Tangibles refer to the physical aspects of service that are visible to customers, including facilities, equipment, and the appearance of staff. In hotel bars, tangibles cover the cleanliness of the bar counter, the neat arrangement of bottles and glassware, the professional appearance of bartenders, and the readiness of bar tools. Although barbacks work behind the scenes, their responsibilities in cleaning, restocking, and organizing equipment significantly contribute to this dimension. A messy or poorly stocked bar creates a negative impression, while a clean and organized bar conveys professionalism and trust (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Lee & Lee, 2023).
2. Reliability is the ability to provide consistent and dependable service. Guests expect their drinks to taste the same each time they order them, regardless of the day or bartender. Reliability is achieved when barbacks prepare ingredients systematically, manage stock carefully, and ensure all tools are in proper condition. Without barback reliability, bartenders may fail to deliver consistent quality, resulting in guest dissatisfaction. Previous research by Fadhilah, Pratama, and Lestari (2024) shows that reliability is one of the most critical factors influencing guest loyalty in hospitality.
3. Responsiveness reflects staff willingness to provide prompt assistance. In bars, responsiveness is often seen in how quickly guests are served, but it also depends on backstage efficiency. A barback's responsiveness in replenishing ice, preparing garnishes, or cleaning spills ensures bartenders can serve guests without delay. The absence of responsiveness can lead to longer waiting times, which negatively affects service evaluations (Dong, Kim, & Lee, 2020).
4. Assurance relates to staff competence, courtesy, and professionalism that instill trust in customers. While bartenders project assurance through interaction, barbacks support assurance indirectly by ensuring hygiene and safety. For example, sanitized glassware and properly stored ingredients reassure guests of the bar's quality standards. According to Grönroos (2015), assurance is not only about staff demeanor but also about the operational system that ensures service safety and professionalism.
5. Empathy represents caring and personalized attention to guests. Although barbacks rarely face customers directly, their support enables bartenders to give more personalized attention. When barbacks handle routine operational duties, bartenders can spend more time listening to guest preferences, recommending drinks, and building rapport. This aligns with research by Jiang and Wen (2021), which shows that empathy is a critical factor in fostering customer satisfaction and loyalty.

The SERVQUAL model is particularly relevant to this study because it provides a structured way to analyze how barbacks, despite working behind the scenes, influence the five dimensions of service quality. Several studies, such as Abukhalifeh and Mat Som (2012) and Abdullah et al. (2023), have emphasized that F&B service quality significantly determines customer satisfaction. Therefore,

evaluating barback performance through the SERVQUAL framework highlights their strategic contribution to hospitality operations.

### **Sales Behavior**

While service quality theory explains how guests perceive services, it does not fully address how these perceptions translate into business outcomes such as sales. For this purpose, the Sales Behavior Theory developed by Churchill, Ford, and Walker (1993) is employed as the middle theory in this study. This theory conceptualizes sales as a structured process consisting of seven stages: prospecting, approach, needs identification, presentation, handling objections, closing, and follow-up.

In the hotel bar context:

- a. **Prospecting and Approach.** Bartenders prospect by engaging with new guests, often through casual conversation or by highlighting menu specials. A smooth approach requires confidence, which depends on whether the bar is clean, stocked, and well-organized by barbacks.
- b. **Needs Identification.** Bartenders identify guest preferences (e.g., sweet, strong, or non-alcoholic drinks). Barbacks contribute indirectly by ensuring a variety of ingredients and garnishes are readily available to meet diverse needs.
- c. **Presentation.** Presenting a drink involves not only explaining it but also showcasing its visual appeal. Uniformly cut garnishes and polished glassware prepared by barbacks improve presentation quality.
- d. **Handling Objections.** Guests may question drink prices, flavors, or availability. Bartenders can address these confidently when barbacks ensure supply readiness and consistency.
- e. **Closing and Follow-up.** Successfully closing a sale may involve upselling a signature cocktail or offering another round of drinks. Follow-up could mean remembering guest preferences for future visits. These behaviors are enabled when barbacks maintain workflow efficiency, giving bartenders time to engage with guests.

Dixon and Tanner (2012) argue that selling should not be understood solely as an economic activity but as a form of social interaction that creates mutual value between service providers and customers. In this sense, bartenders function as the face of the sales process, but barbacks provide the support that enables smooth social interaction. Hartmann et al. (2020) further note that sales behaviors must be analyzed within organizational and team contexts, as they are rarely the result of individual effort alone. This perspective underscores the importance of barbacks as part of the bar team whose backstage contributions create the conditions for successful frontline sales. The relevance of Sales Behavior Theory lies in its explanation of how indirect staff roles can influence sales outcomes. Efficient barback performance reduces waiting times, prevents service disruptions, and allows bartenders to focus on persuasive interactions with customers. As a result, beverage sales increase not merely because of direct selling efforts but also because of the seamless support provided by barbacks.

The relevance of Sales Behavior Theory in this study lies in its ability to explain how indirect roles, such as those of barbacks, contribute to sales outcomes. Efficient barback support reduces waiting time, enhances bartender focus, and ensures that service delivery flows seamlessly. This creates favorable conditions for successful sales interactions, demonstrating that barbacks, though not directly involved in selling, play a crucial role in the sales process.

### **Food and Beverage Management and Bar Operations**

At the applied level, the theories of Food and Beverage (F&B) Management and Bar Operations are essential to contextualize the role of barbacks. Grönroos (2015) explains that service quality consists of two dimensions: technical quality and functional quality. Technical quality refers to the outcome of the service, such as the taste, presentation, and freshness of a drink. Functional quality, on the other hand, refers to the process of service delivery, including timeliness, courtesy, and cleanliness. Both dimensions are crucial because even a technically perfect product may fail to satisfy if delivered poorly, while excellent service cannot compensate for a defective product. In hotel bars, barbacks contribute directly to both dimensions. On the technical side, they ensure that ingredients are fresh, garnishes are prepared, and tools are sanitized, which affects the final quality of drinks. On the functional side, their efficiency in organizing supplies, cleaning the workspace, and assisting bartenders ensures that drinks are served quickly and smoothly. Potts (2018) describes barbacks as the “backbone” of bar operations, emphasizing that their backstage role is indispensable to front-stage performance. Nugraha et al. (2020) also argue that supporting staff such as barbacks improve operational efficiency and indirectly enhance guest satisfaction.

Empirical studies reinforce the strategic importance of support staff in hospitality operations. Jiang and Empirical research supports these perspectives. Jiang and Wen (2021) demonstrate that hotel service quality has a significant impact on customer loyalty, particularly in food and beverage services. Herlina and Muliani (2020) find that customer perceptions of hotel experiences are strongly influenced by the performance of F&B staff, both frontline and support roles. Abdullah et al. (2023) highlight that effective management of supporting staff plays a strategic role in maintaining consistency and reliability of service. These studies confirm that barbacks, although not directly visible to customers, are integral to ensuring smooth bar operations, high-quality service delivery, and increased beverage sales.

Synthesis of Theories.

The integration of these theories provides a holistic framework for this research. The grand theory of service quality (SERVQUAL) explains how customers perceive and evaluate services. The *middle theory of sales behavior* illustrates how effective service delivery translates into successful sales outcomes through structured behavioral processes. The applied theory of food and beverage management and bar **operations** situates these concepts in the practical context of hotel bars, where the work of barbacks ensures both technical and functional quality. Together, these theories demonstrate that barbacks are not simply assistants to bartenders but essential contributors to bar success. Their backstage role enables bartenders to focus on customer engagement, ensures consistency and efficiency in service, and indirectly drives beverage sales. Understanding the role of barbacks through these theoretical lenses emphasizes their strategic importance within the hospitality industry, where customer satisfaction and revenue performance depend not only on visible interactions but also on invisible support systems.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study applied a qualitative descriptive method to analyze the role of barbacks in supporting bar operations at Artotel Gelora Senayan Jakarta. The research design emphasized describing real conditions and practices without manipulation, focusing on how barbacks contribute to service quality and beverage sales. Data were collected through observation of daily bar activities, semi-structured interviews with bar staff including barbacks, bartenders, and managers, as well as documentation such as photos and operational records. The collected data were then analyzed using SWOT analysis, identifying internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) and external factors (opportunities and threats) that affect barback performance. The study was conducted at Artotel Gelora Senayan Jakarta over a six-month period (August 2024 – February 2025), during which the researcher was placed in the Food and Beverage Department, specifically the bar section, and engaged directly with operational staff as research respondents.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study focused on analyzing the role of barbacks in supporting the operational success of the Lidah Lokal Bar at Artotel Gelora Senayan Jakarta. The results presented here are based on direct observations, interviews with staff, and documentation collected during the six-month research period. The analysis emphasizes both the contribution of barbacks to service quality and their indirect influence on **beverage** sales performance. Lidah Lokal Bar serves as one of the hotel's main food and beverage outlets, catering to both in-house guests and walk-in customers. The bar is designed to accommodate casual meetings, business discussions, and social gatherings. Its product offerings include cocktails, mocktails, specialty coffees, teas, and infused beverages that cater to modern consumer demands for health-oriented and lifestyle-focused drinks. The bar's organizational structure consists of a head bar, bartenders, servers, and barbacks. While bartenders and servers are front-facing roles, barbacks operate behind the scenes, ensuring the smooth delivery of services.

1. Service Quality Indicators Service quality in bar operations at Artotel Gelora Senayan Jakarta was analyzed using the SERVQUAL framework which consists of five dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Each dimension provides insight into how the role of barbacks indirectly contributes to service excellence and guest satisfaction.

- a. Tangibles (Physical Evidence)

Tangibles refer to the physical aspects of service that can be directly observed by customers, such as the cleanliness of the bar area, the tidiness of staff uniforms, the presentation of beverages, and the availability of proper facilities. At Lidah Lokal Bar, tangibles were strongly supported by the barback's daily tasks. Barbacks ensured that glassware, utensils, shakers, and garnishes were always

clean and neatly arranged before the bar opened. They also monitored the cleanliness of work surfaces and back bar areas throughout operations. When tangibles were well-maintained, guests perceived the service as professional and trustworthy, which improved their overall experience. Conversely, if cleanliness was neglected or tools were unavailable, guests tended to associate it with poor service quality. The barback's consistent contribution in this dimension created a strong first impression that influenced customer satisfaction and willingness to reorder drinks.

b. Reliability

Reliability is the ability of service providers to consistently deliver what has been promised to customers, both in terms of accuracy and timeliness. In the bar context, reliability means that drinks must be prepared quickly, served in the correct form, and consistent in taste and presentation. The study found that barbacks played a vital role in supporting this reliability. By ensuring that ice, syrups, fruit garnishes, and mixers were always replenished and available, bartenders could focus solely on mixing and serving beverages without unnecessary delays. For instance, during peak hours when order volumes were high, barbacks who anticipated shortages and replenished supplies before they ran out directly prevented service disruption. This reliability increased guest trust in the bar's consistency and contributed to repeat purchases.

c. Responsiveness

Responsiveness involves the willingness and ability of staff to help customers quickly and provide prompt service. Although barbacks do not interact directly with guests, their behind-the-scenes responsiveness was critical to customer satisfaction. Observations showed that barbacks were highly attentive to bartenders' needs, particularly during rush hours. When bartenders signaled that a certain ingredient was low, responsive barbacks immediately refilled it without waiting for explicit instructions. This reduced guest waiting time and allowed bartenders to focus on hospitality. Moreover, responsiveness also extended to cleaning and resetting the bar area quickly after service, ensuring that the next customer received their order without delay. High responsiveness indirectly motivated bartenders, enabling them to upsell premium drinks and maintain positive guest interaction.

d. Assurance

Assurance refers to the ability of staff to inspire trust and confidence in guests through knowledge, courtesy, and consistency. While assurance is more visible in customer-facing roles such as bartenders, barbacks also played a part in ensuring that bartenders could confidently deliver services. A bartender's confidence often depended on the readiness of equipment and ingredients prepared by barbacks. When barbacks performed their duties thoroughly, bartenders were less likely to face errors such as missing ingredients or dirty tools, which enhanced their confidence and professionalism when serving guests. This sense of assurance strengthened guest trust in the bar's quality standards and increased customer loyalty.

e. Empathy

Empathy is the ability to provide personalized attention and care to guests, making them feel valued. Although empathy is not directly expressed by barbacks, their support enabled bartenders to focus on building rapport with customers. For example, by handling operational duties such as cleaning up spills, preparing garnishes in advance, and refilling stock discreetly, barbacks freed up bartenders' time to engage with guests—listening to their preferences, recommending suitable drinks, and creating personalized experiences. In this way, barbacks indirectly contributed to the empathy dimension, as guests felt that the service was attentive and tailored to their needs. This personal touch often led to repeat visits and increased beverage sales.

2. Contribution to Beverage Sales

The contribution of barbacks to beverage sales at Artotel Gelora Senayan Jakarta was found to be highly significant, even though it occurred indirectly. Their role primarily shaped the operational efficiency that allowed bartenders to deliver quality drinks promptly and consistently.

a. Operational Efficiency – One of the clearest contributions of barbacks was reducing delays during service. For example, when ice and mixers were always prepared in advance, bartenders could process more orders within the same time frame. This efficiency was crucial during peak hours (evenings and weekends), when demand was highest. Increased efficiency translated directly into higher sales volume.

b. Support for Upselling Strategies – Bartenders often focus on upselling signature cocktails, mocktails, or premium beverages. Barbacks contributed by ensuring bartenders had the tools and ingredients ready

for such upsells. Without distractions related to restocking or cleaning, bartenders could dedicate more time to engaging with guests, suggesting higher-value drinks, and narrating the uniqueness of the menu. This indirectly raised the average transaction value per customer.

c. Consistency in Beverage Presentation – Guests often judge service quality by the consistency of drinks in terms of taste, garnish, and presentation. Barbacks played a vital role in this aspect by preparing garnishes uniformly, maintaining glassware cleanliness, and organizing ingredients. This consistency created a sense of reliability, which encouraged repeat purchases and customer loyalty.

d. Indirect Customer Satisfaction – Even though guests rarely interacted with barbacks, their presence was “felt” through the smoothness of service delivery. Customers who received their drinks without long waits and with consistent quality often reported higher satisfaction levels, which influenced their decision to stay longer at the bar and order more beverages.

While barbacks do not directly engage in selling, their support is essential to successful sales behaviors performed by bartenders. The findings reveal several indirect ways in which barbacks influence sales outcomes:

1. Enabling Upselling. Bartenders can recommend premium cocktails when they are confident that all necessary ingredients and tools are ready. Barbacks ensure this readiness, making upselling feasible.
2. Reducing Waiting Time. Guests are more likely to order additional drinks when service is fast. Barbacks’ efficiency in restocking and cleaning shortens waiting times, thus encouraging repeat orders.
3. Supporting Presentation. A well-presented drink relies on fresh garnishes, polished glassware, and proper tools, all prepared by barbacks. This enhances product appeal and increases the likelihood of purchase.
4. Maintaining Bartender Focus. With barbacks handling routine tasks, bartenders can focus on engaging customers and applying sales techniques such as cross-selling or suggestive selling.

These findings support Churchill et al.’s (1993) Sales Behavior Theory, which emphasizes that sales outcomes are shaped by systematic behaviors and organizational support. Barbacks create the enabling conditions for bartenders to perform effectively, thereby contributing indirectly to beverage sales performance.

### 3. SWOT Analysis of Barback Role

The SWOT framework provided deeper insight into the position of barbacks in bar operations:

#### a. Strengths

Barbacks possess operational skills that are crucial for maintaining the workflow of bartenders, such as preparing ingredients, replenishing ice, cleaning glassware, and organizing bar tools. Their physical stamina and multitasking abilities enable them to handle high workloads during peak hours. Moreover, barbacks’ willingness to work in supportive roles fosters teamwork and ensures that bartenders can focus on guest interaction.

- a) Strong teamwork with bartenders and servers, ensuring efficient workflow.
- b) Professionalism in maintaining cleanliness, readiness, and organization of tools and ingredients.
- c) High adaptability to operational demands, especially during peak hours

#### b. Weaknesses

Despite their importance, barbacks are often under-recognized and under-trained. Many lack formal hospitality education, relying instead on on-the-job training, which limits their capacity for innovation. Furthermore, their lack of direct customer interaction means that their contributions are often invisible to guests and managers alike, resulting in limited opportunities for career advancement.

- a) Minimal direct interaction with customers, leading to a lack of recognition of their contribution.
- b) High physical workload and multitasking demands, which may cause fatigue.
- c) Dependence on bartender instructions for certain tasks, limiting independent decision-making.

#### c. Opportunities

Hotels can leverage barbacks by providing structured training programs that enhance both technical and soft skills. By expanding their knowledge of mixology, customer service, and hygiene standards, barbacks can be prepared for promotion to bartender positions. In addition, the growing emphasis on service excellence in the hospitality industry provides opportunities for hotels to redefine barback roles as strategic contributors rather than invisible assistants.

- a) Training programs to enhance technical skills (e.g., garnish preparation, basic mixology).
- b) Innovation in beverage preparation support, such as creating pre-made syrups or creative garnishes that add value to drinks.
- c) Career development pathways to transition from barback to bartender, which motivates staff to perform better.

d. Threats

The main threats include high turnover rates, job dissatisfaction due to limited recognition, and the possibility of role redundancy caused by automation and self-service technologies. Additionally, intense competition among hotels requires higher efficiency and innovation, which may challenge barbacks who lack professional development opportunities.

- a) High turnover rates in the hospitality industry, which disrupt continuity of service.
- b) Work pressure and fatigue during large events, which may reduce service quality.
- c) Lack of managerial acknowledgment, which can demotivate barbacks in the long term.

## CONCLUSION

This study highlights the crucial role of barbacks in supporting bar operations at Artotel Gelora Senayan Jakarta. Although they do not directly engage with guests, barbacks ensure the availability of ingredients, maintain equipment readiness, and keep the bar area clean and organized. These contributions allow bartenders to focus on customer interaction, thereby improving workflow efficiency, service quality, and ultimately beverage sales. The SWOT analysis indicates that strengths of barback performance include responsiveness, thorough preparation, and support for bartenders, while weaknesses lie in the heavy workload and limited recognition of their role. At the same time, opportunities are found in the growing market for creative non-alcoholic beverages and the potential for skill development through structured training. Meanwhile, threats include high staff turnover in the hospitality sector and inconsistent performance due to insufficient training.

By addressing weaknesses and mitigating threats through better management strategies—such as formal recognition programs, continuous training, and workload balancing—hotels can maximize the contribution of barbacks to overall operations. This research demonstrates that a professional and well-trained barback not only improves efficiency behind the bar but also enhances customer satisfaction and supports sustainable beverage sales growth. The key insight from this research is that barbacks should be recognized as a strategic component in food and beverage service management, not merely as support staff. Their role has direct implications for customer experiences, operational performance, and revenue generation. For future research, it is recommended to explore barback roles in various hotel categories or independent bars to compare practices and outcomes. Longitudinal studies can also provide deeper understanding of how barback training and development programs influence employee performance, guest satisfaction, and business sustainability in the hospitality industry.

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