

HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT

a brief introduction

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IS YOUR ROOM ALRIGHT? ACCOMMODATION MANAGEMENT IN HOSPITALITY

After reading this chapter, you should:

- (a) have acquired a broad range of knowledge pertaining to the management of accommodation in the hospitality industry, and in particular the hotel industry;
- (b) understand issues pertaining to the role of design in hospitality; and
- (c) be familiar with core concepts (e.g. the guest cycle, standard operating procedures, revenue management, outsourcing, sustainability) and key operational functions (e.g. front office, front desk, housekeeping, laundry, IT services, security and loss prevention) in the administration of hospitality organizations.

Introduction

You are checking into the hotel that you booked on the hotel company's own website. You resisted the website's offer to spend an extra €50 to upgrade to an executive room. You are on a business trip and will only be in your room for as much time as you are allowed to sleep and perform your ablutions. A more luxurious and expensive room is therefore not a requirement. At the front desk, the receptionist repeats the offer you have already declined. You decline again. The whole check-in process seems to be taking longer than it should. The receptionist is looking doubtfully at the monitor in front of her. You are then told that as it is before the hotel's advertised check-in time (2 p.m.) your room is not ready. The receptionist will gladly store your luggage for you until it is available. But you have just come off a three-hour flight and need to shower and change your clothes in order to go to a meeting. The receptionist sighs and picks up the telephone handset. She calls the housekeeping department. Naturally, you only hear her side of the conversation. She

hangs up. A room might be available in about an hour. Would you like to have a drink in the bar while you wait? When, finally, you get to your room you run a finger across the furniture and ascertain that it has not been dusted properly. The bathroom appears clean until you look up to the ventilator grill above the bath and see it is furred up with months, possibly years, of detritus. In general, the room does not appear to have been redecorated or refurbished for a considerable time.

The foregoing vignette is a composite of some personal experiences as a traveller. These experiences are not unique, occurring daily all over the world. Other things happen too: being ‘walked’ – that is, transferred to another hotel because the room you pre-booked and pre-paid has been sold to someone else who has beaten you to checking in. Being told on the company website that the hotel has rooms for those who smoke, to find on arrival that it does not. To discover that the hotel is being refurbished and looks very much like the building site it effectively is. The basic message that hotel companies want us to believe is usually expressed in the form: ‘You are our customer/guest, your comfort is very important to us’. The more you travel the more you suspect this is not the case: that hotel companies are often economical with the truth and engage quite shamelessly in what, to customers, appear as apparently dubious ethical business practices but which are, in reality, industry norms.

If this seems harsh then there is a more ‘academic’ way of analysing this type of behaviour which has its roots in the work of the sociologist Boas Shamir (1978) who observed that each hotel guest thinks of service as being rendered to them personally (a similar sentiment applies in restaurants) but, of course, the very rationale of a hotel is to provide service to large numbers of guests on a more-or-less collective basis. When tensions between the macro-objectives of the hotel clash with the micro-management of hospitality as delivered to individual guests, the kinds of experiences described in the vignette emerge. In this chapter, we review some of the key features of accommodation management in hospitality that present challenges to managers.

The Nature and Status of Accommodation Services in Hospitality Management

Accommodation and food and beverage management are the two features of hospitality that distinguish it from general management. In the majority of hotels around the world, accommodation is what makes ‘the’ money – i.e. sale of rooms to guests is the main driver of revenue (Hunter Powell and Watson (2006: 297) cite data from the British Hospitality Association suggesting that 55% of total hotel revenue in the UK is derived from rooms, 23% from food and 10% from beverages). Despite this, in the past, hotel management schools have devoted considerable time and money to food and beverage education. Food and beverage is ‘sexy’, it is not simply confined to hotels but embraces the whole of the restaurant sector and figures as an ancillary service in many other types of organization. For many years in hotels, and to some

extent it is still so, attainment of, and success in managerial responsibility in the food and beverage department was seen as the dominant career route to a general manager position (see Chapters 5 and 7). With the possible exception of front office, accommodation management has not, and still does not, always share the same allure, and this is especially true of accommodation functions including housekeeping, maintenance and engineering, security and design. Nevertheless, as Frapin-Beaugé et al. (2008: 383) note:

Thirty years ago in the UK and elsewhere, it was hardly possible to study for a qualification in hospitality management without touching on all these subjects. Changes in the industry, not least the increasing utilization of external experts (whether lawyers, architects, or interior designers); the increasing limitation of resources in many (especially state-funded) higher education institutes offering hospitality programmes; and a switch from technology based approaches to hospitality to managerially based approaches now make it much less likely that students will encounter these areas in much depth.

As examples, the authors refer to the fact that in the past many hotel schools taught the soft science underpinning housekeeping and maintenance, exploring technical subjects that included lighting, water and sanitary engineering, chemical treatment of various materials and fabrics, and the operation of ventilation and heating systems. One rationale for this approach was to equip students of hotel management with basic knowledge for dealing with specialists. While this approach can still be found in some educational programmes it is no longer the norm, and much of the scientific basis that underpinned – at least in the UK – hospitality higher education has been dropped in favour of a more purely managerial orientation of the curriculum. Indeed, as we shall see in Chapter 5, this retreat from science also applies to the theory and practice of food and beverage management.

Accommodation management is centrally concerned with the protection and management of the fixed assets of the organization and/or buildings' owner(s) with a view to generating profit (Schneider et al., 1999). In large corporate entities, it has, over the last quarter century, largely become an increasingly systemized and standardized process as a result of changes and development in construction technologies, design and business processes. Technological developments include advances in building-structural technologies (e.g. off-the-shelf modular construction packages – Robbins (2012) notes that hotel group citizenM prefabricates its rooms which are transported from a construction centre to the hotel where they are 'slotted' into the building frame – the technology is not new but continues to evolve). In addition to its functional role, design has acquired a greater centrality in hotel and restaurant design branding. Business process developments include those in internal management systems such as growing appreciation of the relationships between the evolution and application of the concept of the guest cycle; the increasing importance of standard operating procedures (SOPs); the theory and practice of revenue management; external opportunities furnished by the growth of specialist companies that facilitate the outsourcing of particular

services (e.g. laundry) or whole functions (e.g. housekeeping); and the ever-present pressure to deal with questions of business and environmental sustainability. Together with comment on key operational areas in accommodation management (especially the 'Rooms Division' of hotels) it is these processes that frame the following discussion of the main aspects of accommodation management.

Design

We begin our discussion of accommodation management with the topic of design and another vignette drawn from personal experience.

An upscale hotel chain 'signatures' its design sensibilities via the postmodern irony of placing a rubber duck with sunglasses in its guest bathrooms. A Dubai hotel of the same chain has invested in a top-class German brand of kettle for the courtesy tray – with a two (round) pin plug in a country that uses the UK three ('square') pin plug system. There is no adaptor. A large international four star hotel chain has bathtubs (incorporating shower) that cannot easily be climbed into (except by those of athletic disposition). The reason – the sides are too high. With all the bathroom fittings being modular, the unusually shaped sink is not deep enough to allow for filling of the courtesy tray kettle provided. The executive rooms of the same chain have low free-form chairs with a seat that is approximately 15 centimetres off the ground making it impossible for the arthritic, the disabled or the elderly to rise from them without difficulty.

Other common design flaws found in hotels include: over-, under- or inadequate lighting; the absence of a bedside switch that turns all the lights in the room on and off; an insufficient number of power points; and power points in difficult-to-access positions that require rearrangement of the room's furniture in order to get to them. To this we can add the small open space with a hanging rail that substitutes for a wardrobe in many hotel guest rooms. Often, the hanging rail is fixed at a level easily accessible to a taller member of the Harlem Globetrotters but nobody else. Then there are the hangers affixed to the rail by a loop which is the hotel's way of unambiguously telling you that 'We charge you the earth but don't trust you not to steal the traditional type of hanger'. The openness of the space to the rest of the room allows the guest to enjoy the thought of the room cleaner daily kicking up clouds of dust that will envelop their clothes. A particular 'despoilment' of the design/brand concept, even more bizarre in the age of the netbook, tablet and smartphone, arises from the littering of guest rooms with different-sized bits of paper advertising, variously: the overpriced cable and internet-via-television daily package; the hotel's 'environmental' policy in respect of the changing of bed linen; a 'pillow menu' advising of the range of said articles available for your comfort; the similar notice in the bathroom extolling the virtues of reusing towels; and, in many upscale hotels, the small piece of paper placed on your pillow during turndown advising on tomorrow's weather (often accompanied by a gratuitous quotation or an 'on this day' factlet). There may be, additionally, an in-room dining menu from

which you can order frequently unappetizing (and by the time it is delivered to your room, tepid) food. All of the above are usually additional to the provision of a hotel directory (usually – somewhat strangely – hidden in a drawer somewhere and often in loose leaf format allowing for the insertion of all that additional information contained on the various bits of paper strewn about).

From the publicity given to them, design and design decisions appear to have assumed greater importance in hospitality operations in recent years. Over the past three decades or so we have been inundated by innumerable picture books and magazines intended to showcase hotel design – and especially interior design. ‘Designer restaurants’ and ‘restaurant chains’ attract similar attention. Reporting on the Ping Pong dim sum restaurant chain, Lander (2006) compliments the Swiss architect and designer concerned, David Marquardt, on the ‘stylish interior’ (of the restaurant) and for, in opening a new branch, ‘the manner in which – with only a simple, regenerating kitchen to install – they can turn round a site in no more than eight weeks, way below the restaurant norm’ (see <http://www.pingpongdimsum.com/>, last accessed 07.04.13).

Academically, relatively little research has been conducted in the field of hospitality design (see Wood, 2011; Marée, 2013, for brief overviews). Design is cited as both a key differentiator of brand and a factor believed to encourage guest and customer satisfaction. Just as chefs have ‘signature’ dishes, for many operators, signature buildings and signature interiors are sought after to increase the marketing appeal of hotels and restaurants, sometimes seeking to employ design to create so-called ‘destination’ venues, i.e. hotels and restaurants that are primary attractions in their own right in much the same way as a museum, art gallery, theme park or particular natural environment is a principal motivation to visitors. Some hotels – called variously design, boutique or contemporary hotels (Strannegård and Strannegård, 2012) – are even operated and marketed on the back of their design appeal. Unfortunately, as the earlier vignette suggests, given the extent of interest in design it remains a mystery as to why most hotels and many other hospitality organizations still get so much wrong (and they do) in this respect. The answer may be quite simple – though not at present verifiable. It is that as the status of the so-called creative and cultural industries has grown (see Hartley et al., 2013), we have come to appreciate certain activities for their intrinsic rather than applied value. In his survey of the design field, John Heskett (2005) recounts the history of the idea that in design, form should follow function, reminding us that this idea became one of the most hotly contested among design professionals in the twentieth century. Common sense might suggest that a principle of design at all levels would be to factor in the needs and wants of a product’s or service’s end users in the spirit of ensuring the ‘fitness to purpose’ of those products and services. It appears, however, that this might be too optimistic a view.

The design devil is in the detail

From the perspective of a regular hotel user the two main issues with design are (a) the apparent disregard for basic human needs (the corollary of which is a tendency

to elevate the designer's or operator's vision or needs over those of other stakeholders), and (b) the tendency to assume that design is an *absolute* process that once completed will be fixed in time for eternity – and this despite the fact that best design practice suggests that the process should – and will, as a result of the need for refurbishment – be otherwise (Heskett, 2005).

All this said, Robson and Pullman (2005; see additionally Goff, 2007) point out that in hotels at least, little has changed in the fundamentals of hotel design over the last 50 years despite the apparent growth in importance of design considerations. Guest rooms and associated spaces account for anything from 65% to 90% of total building area whereas back-of-the-house functions take up between 10% and 15% with the balance going over to lobbies, food and beverage outlets, recreational spaces and meeting facilities. The overall trend has been towards standardization and, in the case of newly built hotels, this extends to everything from room size and configuration and the placement of infrastructure services to the mode, quantity and quality of services available in guest and public areas. As long ago as 1984, Riley (Wood, 1994a, offers a partial development of his argument) noted that traditional modes of hotel service based on human delivery were giving way to forms of service centred on various forms of technology to which customers themselves added the human element (essentially self-service and to the provider, cost saving). In guest rooms, this included the provision of a minibar, complimentary tea- and coffee-making facilities and televisions (older generations can still remember hotel guest rooms *sans* televisions: some hotels had television lounges which could become battlegrounds over the choice of what to watch, a phenomenon captured in 'The Hotel Inspectors' episode of that paean to the UK hotel industry, the BBC's *Fawlty Towers*).

Riley's point about hotels is particularly useful because it captures a trend that at the time of his writing was instantly recognizable and remains so today, though these processes do not appear to have been uniform either in their application or focus. As an example we can take the case of minibars, which are rarely found in the guest rooms of budget hotels and are, indeed, absent from many luxury establishments (in the case of the latter permitting a more expensive 'room service' offering). Moreover, there has been much recent indication that the economics of the guest room minibar are no longer sustainable. Gaining ubiquity in hotel rooms across the world from 1974 when it was introduced by Hilton, Muston (2011) reported that many hotel chains were seeking to improve the quality of products offered in their hotel room minibars despite hotel chains complaining they are loss leaders primarily because of theft and the cost of employing personnel to maintain them. Some two years later, Mesure and Blagoeva (2013) noted that many hotel chains had decided to remove minibars from guest rooms because of the costs of maintenance and policing. They cited the growth of budget hotels providing vending machines instead of in-room minibars as another influence on this trend. Room service itself might be under threat. Muston (2013) again reports the New York Hilton, that city's largest hotel, as abandoning room service. Why? As with the minibar, room service is expensive to provide and not all that profitable, if it is profitable at all. This does not invalidate the arguments of Riley and others as to technological substitution of

services or the role of guests/customers in contributing to product/service delivery. Rather it shows how trends can mutate, or be made to mutate, by operators in search of the elimination of 'unnecessary' costs and/or new and innovative products and the niches in which to market them.

In respect of the latter, the earlier mentioned Dutch group, citizenM, which opened its first hotel in 2008, has been lauded for its design imperatives. Walker and Mielisch (2010: 42) in an article in the UK Institute of Hospitality's magazine enthusiastically note that: 'Dutch hotel group citizenM has an innovative business model that keeps investment, labour and distribution costs low while providing "affordable luxury" to its guests. But it is citizenM's pioneering approach to technology that is making waves.' The article emphasizes the company's attention to detail in designing the guest experience. There is self-check-in; emphasis on 'a comfy bed and a good shower, where guests are unwilling to compromise'; free internet access; and an information technology system that allows guests to use their room's 'MoodPad' to control lights, window blinds and other functions and for preferred settings to be remembered. Robbins (2012) notes that the London hotel's guest rooms are very small (14 square metres) though the finish is to a high standard, and he name checks the use of Frette linen, a Hansgrohe shower and toiletries by Alessandro Gualtieri. However, the hotel's public areas are spacious and incorporate different zones – bar, restaurant (self-service) and office working space.

Without in any way distracting from the creative intentions behind the citizenM brand, it is essentially a budget hotel model that seeks to minimize costs while proposing a superior guest offer. The Chief Operating Officer, Michael Levie, is reported as claiming that the Glasgow hotel employs one employee for every five rooms against an alleged industry norm of one employee for every two rooms. The investment costs are noted as around £79,000 per bedroom against an industry average of £175,000 for a four star chain brand (Walker and Mielisch, 2010: 44). To what extent citizenM is superior in its offer to other budget chains is unclear precisely because its pitch is unashamedly to a niche market, defined by Levie as people 'interested in art and high culture but travel in jeans and T-shirts; they drink champagne but take the bus home' (quoted in Robbins, 2012: 7).

The limits of design standardization

Standardization of products and services is a force in all industries, including hospitality. There are, however, limits. Some limits arise from cultural differences. Thus, compared to Europe, in the Middle East and Asia both operators and guests have expectations of larger rooms and a full range of services. A number of international budget and midprice limited-service brands, when establishing themselves in these regions, are compelled to offer a full service product. Acquisition is a second factor mitigating standardization. Companies that acquire properties from other operators in order to expand and/or establish a presence in a particular geographical market often acquire properties that are by definition non-standard relative to the majority of their existing properties. This poses the danger of diluting a brand by presenting to guests

different norms, standards and facilities within the same brand. In some cases, however, difference can be turned into a brand virtue as with Marriott's Renaissance Hotels, which are mostly non-standard acquisitions where potential guests are invited to:

Choose from one of our historic icons, chic boutiques or luxurious resorts. Each offers its own personality, local flavour, distinctive style and charm. All will stimulate your appetite for discovery. (<http://www.marriott.com/marriott-brands.mi>, last accessed 18.08.13)

Another limit to design standardization is the need for periodic refurbishment. In their survey of the hotel industry for 2013, the consultancy company Ernst and Young (2013: 7) commented:

The physical condition of a hotel property is one of the most important drivers of operating performance. A deteriorating property, whether on the exterior, in common areas, rooms, ancillary facilities or back-of-house, can be a significant challenge for investors and owners. In recent years, stagnant lodging fundamentals and capital constraints, exacerbated by slow economic growth in many parts of the world, have had a negative impact on the ability and/or willingness of hotel companies and owners to address portfolio capital expenditure needs. Today, in light of recovering industry fundamentals, hotel companies and owners are once again assessing the need for capital expenditure investments.

Refurbishment provides a considerable challenge to hotels. It is rarely the case that a whole hotel can be closed for refurbishment although with many prestige projects this does happen: London's Savoy Hotel was closed from 2007 to 2010 for a £250 million refit; the London Connaught for nine months in 2007 for a £70 million refurbishment (Harris, 2012b: 32–34). The scheduling of refurbishment in most hotels (normally) entails the phased closing of floors. Of course, this leads to revenue loss. The ideal balance in establishing the extent (in years) of a refurbishment cycle rests on the judgement as to when accommodation becomes so tired that it has a negative effect on occupancy. Information of this kind is more widely and easily disseminated by customers in a socially networked world. However, as any regular hotel user can report, there are many companies and establishments that apparently extend the life of their inventory to extremes. The reason for this is, of course, money, arising from the unwillingness of building owners to finance refurbishment on a systematic basis – leaving, in many instances, the operator/brand owner with only the threat of withdrawing from the unit (see Hassanien and Losekoot, 2002; JNA and HVS Design, 2013 offer a useful guide to the costs of renovation and refurbishment). Refurbishment/renovation cycles vary from company to company. According to White (2012: 41) guest room carpets are replaced around every five years with furniture expected to last 10–12 years. However, the same author cites numerous instances of poor quality including tired bed linen, outdated televisions

and poor interiors in both guest rooms and public areas despite observing that hotels were expected to spend US\$3.5 billion in 2011 on refurbishment/renovation (this figure appears to pertain only to the USA). Robson and Pullman (2005) indicate a number of fronts on which hotels and hotel companies are addressing specific customer needs, both in 'new builds' and through the process of adapting or refurbishing buildings; for example: providing rooms with longer beds and higher shower heads for taller guests; installing proper ergonomic furniture in work areas to reflect guests' increasing use of mobile computing; and placing soap dishes in elevated positions in the shower to improve safety. Refurbishment is also an opportunity to make existing buildings disabled friendly (in many countries this is, or has been driven by, legislation), both a necessary recognition of the needs of the disabled and a sound marketing decision – in the UK alone the disabled market is worth £2 billion year and accounts for 12% of all overnight stays in the UK, with disabled people staying on average longer (3.6 nights) than the able bodied (3 nights) as well as being more likely to travel with others (friends, relatives, carers) (Anon, 2013: 11).

In summary, the practical implications of design for hospitality organizations are rarely addressed in sufficient depth in the educational process. In the case of hotels, relatively few general or departmental managers will, in their career, have to contend with the opening of a brand new, freshly constructed hotel and even if they are, they are unlikely to be involved in the design standards which will almost certainly have been agreed at the building design stage. This robs the design process of necessary practical experience in conceptualizing the physical framework of a hotel building.

The Guest Cycle and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

The guest cycle is a key concept underpinning the practice of hotel accommodation management. It is a four-part process model of the stages of a guest's stay at a hotel depicting the flow of business in terms of internal service and financial exchanges (see Kooi, 2013, for a brief but useful summary). The four stages are: pre-arrival (reservations); arrival (registration); occupancy (occupancy services); and departure (check-out). The *pre-arrival* stage links to other managerial functions – at executive/corporate *and* unit level – including marketing, sales and revenue management, and is concerned with securing business for the hotel in the form of a room reservation. The key skills required are those that contribute to influencing potential guests in favour of 'this' hotel rather than 'that' hotel. The *arrival stage* entails effective registration and check-in of the guest; procuring and verifying personal details (e.g. credit card validity); conforming to prevailing local legal requirements (e.g. securing a copy of a guest's passport for onward transmission to the public agency responsible for immigration); and attempts at selling additional or enhanced products and services (e.g. a better and more expensive room). The *occupancy stage* is everything between the arrival and departure stages and is committed to ensuring that guests

have a comfortable and enjoyable stay in the hotel, as well as in many cases continuing to try to sell additional services. In the *departure stage*, the principal objective is to secure payment for the guest's stay, sell any onward services that the guest may require (e.g. limousine transfers to airports) and leave the guest with a positive final experience of the hotel.

Earlier in this chapter we noted Shamir's (1978) observation that individual hotel guests think of themselves as having service rendered to them personally whereas the rationale of a hotel is to provide service to large numbers of guests on a more-or-less collective basis. In the contemporary corporate hospitality industry this rationale is embodied in *standard operating procedures* (SOPs) – written guides to physical and process standards and the execution of tasks to meet these standards (see Frapin-Beaugé et al., 2008, for an extended discussion of this topic). Often called 'living' documents ('living' because ideally they should be modified as and when procedures, equipment or rooms change), SOPs often have significant monies invested in them by corporations; in addition to being reference points, they form the basis for training personnel. The guest cycle and standard operating procedures (the latter taken collectively) are *integrative concepts*. The guest cycle integrates customers into the payment and customer relationship management systems of the hotel. In many ways, SOPs perform the same function for an organization's personnel, as well as linking to guests in the sense of specifying the standards they are entitled to expect.

It is on the twin issues of guest expectations and entitlements that SOPs often falter. First, SOPs are not meant to be localized but mutually benchmarked throughout the organization to ensure integration of processes and procedures. For non-standard hotel buildings in a chain (often obtained through acquisitions), uniformity (and thus brand identity) can be undermined by necessary local variations in standards, processes and procedures. Secondly, SOPs are often grown and administered through departments, and integration within and between departments in hospitality organizations is often difficult to attain. A final reason for the frequent lack of success of SOPs is that the emphasis is on 'the standard'. A major objective of SOPs is a reduction in human variability in the delivery of products and services so as to achieve either an explicit or implied level of hospitality. This can constrain operatives' discretion to vary their actions according to guest needs and wants. Further, 'the standard' in SOPs is often constituted by quantitative rather than qualitative indicators in the form of performance criteria (e.g. what and how guest rooms should be cleaned) and productivity criteria (e.g. how many rooms should be cleaned by an attendant in a defined time period). These criteria often *become* the standard and are made manifest (for example in hotel housekeeping departments) in checklists. If all the boxes on the checklist are ticked then the standard has been achieved – irrespective of whether it meets guest expectations, needs or wants, or whether a room has a peculiar odour, or has tired decoration or some other failing that is not included on the checklist. One of the banes of frequent hotel users is the addition of supernumerary cushions to the bed, usually placed on top of the pillows. Remove them and the next day after the room has

been serviced, they will be back. Hide the cushions – if you can – somewhere out of sight, and the room attendant will hunt them down and replace them on the bed: it is the standard operating procedure. There are occasions when a standard operating procedure is subverted by a hotel's management and the act of subversion itself becomes a standard. In higher-end establishments, what is known as 'turndown' service, whereby a guest room is prepared for sleeping (entailing drawing curtains, emptying waste baskets, turning down the corner of the bedding and, of course, leaving the ubiquitous chocolate on the guest's pillow) is costly to the hotel and it is increasingly normal to find management seeking to avoid having to meet this expectation. Consider the signs exhibited in Figure 4.1, found in the rooms of two hotels of the same chain in different countries. Standard operating procedures are, according to *The Economist* (2013d), at the heart of the 'industrial hotel' and they note with glee that:

A veteran chef explains the grip that SOPs have. From Tokyo to São Paulo all omelettes must match a laminated picture (they should be cigar-shaped). A manager in Dubai says he follows 2,300 rules, including the phrases used to greet guests. ... A 2010 Hilton manual stipulates that staff must answer phones after three rings, that guests' pets may not weigh more than 75lbs (34kg) and that scuba-diving boats must provide free pieces of fruit. A 2004 SOP book for InterContinental allows staff to wait until the fourth ring, requires drinks to be refilled when two-thirds empty and specifies that rooms must offer at least four pornographic films.

Example (a): Five star international chain hotel, Cyprus

Evening Maid Service

Dear Guest

Our concern is to make your stay comfortable and enjoyable, by not disturbing you during the early evening hours.

Your bed has not been turned down. If you require this service, please contact our Housekeeping Department on ext. no. 18.

Hospitable [*sic*] yours

The Housekeeping Team

Example (b): Five star international chain hotel, Amsterdam

In order to guarantee your privacy, we offer evening turn down service only at your request.

Should you wish to have your room made up for the night let us know before 9pm by using the Housekeeping button on your telephone.

The Housekeeping team

Figure 4.1 Getting out of the turndown

Revenue Management

Many factors influence hotel guests' purchase decisions but price is always of major importance to customers and hotels because: (a) if a hotel room is not sold for a night it is lost revenue to the hotel (assuming the revenue obtainable exceeds the maintenance and servicing costs of the room); and (b) many hotels operate in markets characterized by the close substitutability of products and services, and price can therefore be a determining factor in customer hotel selection. Hotel pricing is a complex process and one that was initially described in terms of 'yield management' but is now routinely termed 'revenue management' (a useful summary of the field is given by Josephi, 2013). Cross (1997: 3) defines revenue management as 'the application of disciplined tactics that predict customer behaviour at micro market level and optimize product availability and price to maximize revenue growth' and by Kimes (1989: 14-19) as 'allocating the right type of capacity to the right kind of customer at the right price so as to maximize revenue or yield'. Josephi (2013: 140) cites the popular definition of revenue management as selling 'the right *product*, for the right *price*, to the right *person*, in the right *period* and in the right *place*'.

Revenue management is becoming – in many places has already become – a specialist management role in hospitality, principally of course in hotels. The discipline of revenue management is based on a series of interlinked observations about consumer behaviour (especially the times at which bookings are made); about the timing of demand for hotel accommodation; and about the price sensitivity of different types of consumers. The word 'maximize' employed by Kimes in the remark cited above can be construed as a little misleading, as what is being practised in hotel revenue management is a form of optimization encompassing questions and decisions about what percentage of a hotel's total room inventory should be allocated at a particular time to specific market segments in order to 'maximize' revenue. These segments are, in practice, defined and redefined as a compromise between experiential marketing (including the kinds of guests a hotel knows it 'traditionally' attracts, knowledge and awareness of seasonal trends and so on) and guest characteristics (a typical 'business' hotel tends to attract expense-account business visitors with higher spending power during the week, and lower-spending leisure guests at the weekend – corporate or business rates are typically higher than weekend rates). A variety of other rates will be available for different market segments including group rates (where hotels have contracts with tour operators and travel agencies), rates for different numbers of occupants per room, rates according to the characteristics of the room (for example, more for 'a room with a view' or a suite) and conference rates.

The practices of revenue management have gained considerable importance in the hotel industry, possibly because of their veneer of quantitative, pseudo-scientific respectability linked to the prospect of generating greater revenues. However, it would serve us well to remember that as with many other ostensibly 'scientific' techniques, revenue management as a driver of the hotel business relies on a good deal of human judgement and not a little luck. Expertly performed by those with considerable

experience, revenue management can indeed go a considerable way to optimizing income from hotel rooms but there is no magic – or even scientific – formula that can guarantee that outcome. The former British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan was alleged to have responded to a journalist's question as to the most difficult aspect of his job by replying, 'Events, dear boy, events'. The tourism and hospitality industries are particularly susceptible to the impact of events, whether natural disasters or economic and political ones. The tragedy of the loss of a Malaysia Airlines passenger jet in March 2014 (at the time of writing the plane has still not been located) carrying a majority of Chinese passengers saw a significant cancellation of existing airline and hotel bookings and a reduction in online enquiries for travel to Malaysia, not least from China. There is little that can be done in the short term by revenue managers or anyone else to ameliorate the effects of tragic events of this magnitude.

Outsourcing

Outsourcing is a growing phenomenon in many industry sectors. It entails the contracting out of certain of an organization's activities to another organization and is usually justified on the grounds that those activities not core to the host organization's business are best outsourced to specialist providers. What might be called the 'classic' model of outsourcing is where 'back office' functions of mainly western businesses are located in countries in the East with a suitably skilled but cheaper labour force. You telephone the customer care line because the television you bought in Birmingham has developed a fault and end up talking to a customer service agent sitting in Mumbai. In hotels, outsourcing is increasingly becoming a favoured approach to handling many hotel departments (Lamminmaki, 2011), including, notably (at least in the West): hotel car services; security (in many hotels, the person responsible for managing security will be a member of the permanent staff but the hotel will employ other personnel from external providers); laundry operations; and of course, housekeeping. It is, naturally, favoured where a hotel can reduce its costs by outsourcing particular activities, although some researchers, Bolat and Yilmaz (2009) among them, suggest that the actual cost effectiveness of hotel outsourcing is unclear. In part or in total, housekeeping is frequently the first choice of many hotels for outsourcing. As Ball et al. (2003: 151) state, 'The scope of the services contracted out can range from simply employing additional contract labour on a short-term basis through an agency or employing the services of a facilities management company that can take over the complete running of the housekeeping department.' That housekeeping activities tend not to be seen as a core activity, and that the marketing and selling of rooms is, says much about the modern hotel industry – what are hotels about if not the provision of good quality, well-maintained and clean rooms?

As Gunn (2003) notes, there is a tendency for outsourcing to be seen by hotels as a quick way out of providing a service, a form of risk deferral instead of a partnership where both companies stand together to provide a service. The prospect of reducing costs through outsourcing some or all housekeeping services has an obvious appeal

(Kappa et al., 1997). Housekeeping departments are often the numerically largest in the hotel in staffing terms and are no less affected by labour turnover and its concomitant costs than other hotel departments. In the hospitality sector, labour turnover rates are frequently higher than in other industries (Wood, 1997). Some outsourcing companies have grown to be global players. Integrated Service Solutions (ISS, <http://www.issworld.com>) can be found providing diverse services in hotels, airports and hospitals around the world. However, even if they have conglomerate ownership, many companies promote themselves as highly localized, providing support to organizations within a certain geographical area. This may improve symbiosis between a hotel and a service provider and alleviate some of the effects of the abandonment of direct control over services. Of course, a somewhat less sophisticated answer to the question as to why hotels outsource the housekeeping function is because they can get away with it. In an industry where the average stay of a guest is quite short, it seems plausible to assume that, providing a minimum set of standards is more or less maintained in housekeeping, most guests will not be in a position to experience significant causes for complaint (and of course, if they do, the company providing the outsourced service can always be blamed). To avoid a diminution in standards, organizations need to ensure that personnel negotiating outsourcing contracts are properly trained and that once established, specified standards are maintained. However, rarely do the skills of contract negotiation and maintenance/monitoring figure in the formal education of prospective hospitality managers.

Sustainability

The central (and noble) idea at the heart of the desire for sustainability is that physical and human resources should be directed to reducing the negative impacts of human activity on our biosphere and to actively encourage behaviours that have positive consequences for replenishing and/or improving the durability of resources. Occasional, radical, voices break through pointing out that probably the most sustainable forms of tourism and hospitality are no forms of tourism and hospitality whatsoever (or at least minimal tourism) but for the most part, tourism and hospitality scholars hedge their bets in this regard, their angst instead directed towards ways in which the 'negative impacts' of tourism can be ameliorated.

When raising the question of what they do to encourage sustainability with hospitality managers, not untypical responses include rolling of the eyes; a verbal expostulation that could not be repeated in front of a much-loved maiden aunt; and a rapid change of subject. In hotels, commitment to sustainability and environmental integrity is most evident in the rooms division and is/has been most often represented by the now clichéd sign often found in guest rooms illustrated here by Figure 4.2. Sustainability in hospitality has thus far attracted the attention of a limited – though growing – number of writers (see Sloan et al., 2011; Legrand et al., 2012; Nicholls and Kang, 2012). Melissen (2013a, 2013b) has skilfully reviewed some of the key issues, one of which (the central one arguably) is how a successful

business case for sustainability can be made when managers regularly view sustainability measures as unaffordable and/or as not adding value to the products and services they offer, and/or as not a priority with customers and guests in the whole product/service mix.

The content of Figure 4.2 suggests it can be done if one appeals to naked (or enlightened) self-interest. The real meaning of messages of the kind shown in Figure 4.2 is that the guest can help the environment by simultaneously helping the hotel reduce costs even though the guest is not normally a practical beneficiary of the latter. However unthinking or unreasonable the tradition of a room rate including, *inter alia*, the daily change of linen (towels are of course another favourite), for the guest to forgo that convention without reimbursement adds to a hotel's revenue via a reduction in the costs of laundry. Hotel environmental notices, in common with much sustainability propaganda, rely to a large degree on inducing a sense of guilt in the mind of the guest. Many efforts to encourage interest in sustainability in the hospitality industry employ other rhetorical strategies, particularly the use of imperative language. Singh (2010, emphasis added) writes: 'Hotels, by their very nature, draw on huge environmental resources and depending on the positioning have high luxury standards. Hotels *have to* balance out the luxury coefficient of their operations with that of their impact on the environment and adapt accordingly.' 'Have to'? Hotels and other hospitality organizations do not have to do anything which Singh suggests (save where governments have legislated for certain sustainable behaviours). Where they do exist, environmental initiatives in hotels typically focus on energy saving procedures, waste recycling and use of environmentally friendly chemicals following what Schneider et al. (1999: 272) call 'the "reduce, reuse, recycle" credo of the environmental movement'. Frapin-Beaugé et al. (2008) note that sensors or heat detectors can be used to shut down power supply so as to avoid electricity wastage. Simple lock-out systems can be (and are) employed to switch off air conditioning when guest rooms are unoccupied. Other methods of addressing sustainability questions can be found in any of the references cited in this section.

Protect our environment

In an effort to protect the environment, we strive towards conserving water and energy, and minimizing the use of pollutants such as detergents. As our new guest, your bed linen is freshly laundered. Thereafter, bed sheets will be changed on:

- Every other day
- Every check out room
- Upon your request to contact Housekeeping on extension '6'

Thank you for helping us to protect our environment.

Figure 4.2 A typical hotel 'environmental' notice

Source: Four star local chain hotel, Hong Kong.

What, then, is a (potential) hospitality manager to make of demands for more sustainable products and services? Environmental and sustainability initiatives have appealed to some operators in terms of their marketing potential but the impact has not yet been widespread and can attract disapproval – Schneider et al. (1999: 272) arguing that concern for the environment ‘is more than a marketing buzz word, it is a business-building decision’. Again, the sub-text here is that concern for the environment *should* be a business-building decision. One of the central difficulties with commentaries on sustainability in tourism and hospitality is that they often rely too heavily on moral insinuation without much evidence of understanding the wealth of philosophic insight on what it is to be ‘moral’. This has allowed many operators to engage in the ‘sins’ of ‘greenwashing’, defined as ‘the act of misleading consumers regarding the environmental practices of a company or the environmental benefits of a product or service’ (<http://sinsofgreenwashing.org/>, last accessed 25.11.13).

On the other hand, as Melissen (2013a, 2013b) notes, there are many cases where companies in numerous industries have made a (relatively) cost-effective virtue of sustainability policies and practices and there are similarly a number of organizations engaged in the business of conferring independent accreditation for lodging businesses that meet specific standards (although principally confined thus far to the USA and Canada, the Green Key Eco-Rating Program is one scheme designed to encourage a more sustainable lodging industry; see <http://www.greenkeyglobal.com/default.asp>, last accessed 25.11.13). In most cases, progress has been made not because of moral appeals, but of appeals to common sense, in this case common economic sense. If it is indeed possible to make the hospitality industry ‘more sustainable’ then it seems likely that this will only be achieved by showing the benefits of a sustainability orientation to businesses’ ‘bottom lines’. Increasingly, advice to the industry based on this approach is generating a useful *practical* literature (see for example Goldstein, 2012; Goldstein and Primlani, 2012) as well as some small evidence that the economic benefits of sustainability are all of tangible, calculable and attainable (Assaf et al., 2012). One possible barrier to the wider adoption of sustainable practices is the domination of the hotel sector by small, independently owned businesses and indeed, Rahmana et al. (2012) in a study of the adoption of no-cost and low-cost sustainable/environmentally friendly practices in a sample of US hotels found that chains were stronger adopters of green practices than independent hotels (see also Yu-Chin, 2012). An earlier study by Chan (2011: 18) found that adoption of environmental management systems in small and medium sized hotels was hindered by nine barriers; in descending order:

- (a) implementation and maintenance costs, (b) lack of knowledge and skills,
- (c) lack of a sense of urgency, (d) ambiguity of EMS standards, (e) lack of qualified verifiers/consultants, (f) lack of motivation and professional advice,
- (g) conflicting guidance, (h) outcome uncertainty, and (i) inconsistent support.

The demand for sustainable initiatives in industry in general and hospitality specifically is unlikely to diminish in the years ahead – whether or not industry is willing or able to rise to this challenge remains to be seen.

Operational Management of Hotel Accommodation

Hotel accommodation management is, in larger and chain hotels at least, increasingly organized in terms of the 'rooms division' with a single senior manager responsible for all of a hotel's accommodation functions. Depending, as ever, on the size of the hotel and any particular corporate traditions, the rooms division manager/director of rooms will typically have line responsibility for any or all of the key accommodation sub-departments including front office (normally headed by a front office manager or assistant manager depending on the hotel's size, and covering – again any or all of – concierge, switchboard, guest relations and reservations); housekeeping (normally headed by a head or executive head housekeeper); information technology services; security and loss prevention; and engineering and maintenance.

Front office and front desk

The front office is the communication and dissemination centre of the hotel, providing numerous services to guests (including, often, concierge services) and information to the other hotel departments on guests' requirements. It embraces a 'back office' which may be predominantly concerned with reservations and night audit. The 'front office' is not the same as the 'front desk': the front desk is merely the visible focal point of the front office department and normally the first (and often last) contact point a guest has with the establishment (premium service guests staying on executive floors usually have their own check-in facilities and in many deluxe hotels, the front desk has all but disappeared to be replaced by guest service team members who will accompany guests to their room and register them there). Guests' perceptions of the overall level and quality of service provided by the hotel can be extensively influenced by their experience of interactions with the front desk.

In the mythologies that have grown up around the hotel industry, the front office (and certainly the front desk) is often depicted as the 'glamour' end of the rooms division department. Not for front office and front desk workers the low-status 'dirty work' associations of the housekeeping department. Dirty work need not, of course, always involve physical contamination: it can arise from dealing with frequent customer disgruntlement. This disgruntlement can emanate from both reasonable and unreasonable guest dispositions but a major source for front office is overbooking, that is, deliberately accepting more bookings than a hotel's capacity permits (a 'policy' that has penetrated the soul of hotel accommodation management, textbooks directed to students increasingly depicting overbooking as a necessarily integral element of revenue management approaches to guest procurement; see for example Baker et al., 2000: 277). Revenue management approaches to hotel accommodation sales encourage overbooking because opportunities for revenue optimization always contain an element of uncertainty: e.g. guests who do not have guaranteed reservations, or those who have guaranteed reservations but do not materialize (so-called 'no shows' who can account for 10% of capacity

in some hotels and who are increasingly punished by being charged either part or all of their 'guaranteed' booking). To compensate for variability, hotels overbook slightly – all very sensible but a source of considerable frustration to those customers who arrive to find no room at the inn and have, in the parlance of the industry, to be 'walked' to other hotels, similar frustrations are faced by guests who arrive at a hotel to find that their room is not ready (it is a matter of some shame to the hotel industry that hotels in destinations that rely on international guests for the bulk of their business still enforce an afternoon check-in).

Housekeeping and laundry

Frequent surveys show that cleanliness comes top of travellers' lists of must-have hotel attributes (e.g. F.L.C., 2000). Housekeeping work is physically demanding, conducted largely away from the public eye (at least while cleaning guest bedrooms) and goes largely unnoticed in another sense, namely, as Rawstron (1999: 115–117) notes, housekeeping staff are the 'unsung heroes within the hotel', rarely tipped by guests and viewed as relatively low-skilled. Walker (2011: 18) notes that housekeeping has a 'Cinderella' status within the hospitality industry (or at least within the UK hospitality industry), with fewer than 1% of hospitality students choosing to take the housekeeping route into management (useful studies on the occupational image of housekeeping and housekeepers are provided by Hunter Powell and Watson, 2006; Harris et al., 2011).

The main responsibilities of the housekeeping department lie in the need to 'provide clean and serviced bedrooms on a daily basis to the agreed standards' (Rawstron, 1999: 114). These responsibilities extend to the cleaning of the whole property and are obviously 'critical to the smooth daily operation of any hotel' (Kappa et al., 1997:3). The condition and cleanliness of guest rooms are generally asserted as being the most important factors in determining customer satisfaction ratings (Walker, 2011: 20), a point supported by the research of Falbo (1999, cited in Ball et al., 2003). Challenges involved in the delivery of housekeeping services are numerous. The value of the physical assets involved is significant and their care and protection complex. It is not simply a case of a guest room's established assets – the bed, the furniture – but includes movables (e.g. towels and linen). Simpson and Rossiter (2012: 18) suggest that large hotels can hold £30,000 worth of linen at any one time, with around £30 per room, much or all of it rented from specialist commercial laundries. The pursuit of cleanliness can be complicated by infestations. In recent years there has been growing concern over the spread of bedbugs. Henson (2011) reports a USA National Pest Management Association survey of institutions that found that 99% of respondents encountered bedbug infestations in the year prior to the survey with the biggest increase being in hotels and motels, 80% reporting infestation (the delightfully named Bedbug Registry, which sadly only covers the USA and Canada, offers regular updates on the alleged presence of bedbugs in hotels and other forms of accommodation (<http://bedbugregistry.com/>)). Perhaps most importantly, it is difficult to improve the performance of housekeeping tasks beyond the direct labour of

the room attendant. As Ball et al. (2003: 141) note, 'the nature of the work involved and the variety of tasks to be completed in each room mean that introducing technology any more complex than a vacuum cleaner is very difficult.'

Guest information technology services

Travellers now expect as routine the provision of Wi-Fi in hotels and other hospitality establishments. Some larger single hotel establishments will have a small IT department in terms of personnel but in most cases the provision and maintenance of information technology systems is outsourced. Regular hotel guests are well aware of the long history of hotels charging what the website Independent Traveler.com calls 'unreasonable fees' (see <http://www.independenttraveler.com/travel-tips/hotel-and-b-and-b/hidden-hotel-fees>, last accessed 12.01.14; and flyertalk.com, one of many sites offering travellers' insights into the good, the bad and the ugly in transport, hotels and restaurants). Wi-Fi is the latest battleground and increasingly hotels are following many restaurants in providing 'free' Wi-Fi for their clients. In reality, of course, internet access charges are incorporated into general product and service pricing and are not free at all.

Nevertheless, one has to admire the resistance that some hoteliers have put up to the idea of 'free' services in this area. Walker (2010: 40) reports a symposium in Britain between hotels and an IT company to discuss the question of IT provision in hotels noting that 'The IT managers present felt more should be done to prioritise IT needs during the construction or refurbishment of a hotel given IT's increasing importance to the guest experience.' This is fair comment. For hotel new builds those conducting business feasibility studies have a possible interest in keeping cost projections as low as possible, particularly if, in an asset light environment (see Chapter 2), external investors are sought. Reflecting the observations made earlier in Chapter 2 about the economic 'marginality' of the hotel business, one participant in the symposium commented: 'In the hotel business at the moment, it's all about the extra charges as we have become so competitive and price-sensitive. ... We need those extra charges' (Walker, 2010: 41). Smith (2012) for the UK *Daily Telegraph* newspaper surveyed 70 hotel groups. A number of individual properties, some 24, did not impose Wi-Fi charges. Smith found that luxury hotels in London were the most expensive, several charging £20 per day for Wi-Fi access while noting that Holiday Inn in the UK charges up to £15 per day and €24 in the Eurozone. The highest hourly rate identified was €10 per hour in certain Marriott hotels. Smith writes that 'TalkTalk, the internet service provider, estimated that the cost to a business, such as a hotel, of providing broadband, would range from £10 a month for a small property to £300 a month for a 100-room property, or £700 a month for a larger, 300-room property.' He further notes the remarks of Paul Charles, Chief Executive of Perowne Charles Communications, a PR company specializing in travel, that the firm will not work with hotels that still charge for Wi-Fi access. 'Free Wi-Fi should come as standard in a hotel these days', said Mr Charles, 'Hotels that continue to defy the odds will be losers in the long term because customers will go elsewhere.'

Security and loss prevention

Although there has been a growth in public discussion about security in hotels in recent years (see Banerjee, 2013, for a useful short review and Ellis and Stipanuk, 1999; Feickert et al., 2006; and Chan and Lam, 2013, for more wide-ranging commentaries), the very nature of the subject means that there is a certain reticence in circulating too much information for wider scrutiny, or even sharing it within the hospitality community. In many hotels and some other hospitality organizations in certain parts of the world access and egress security is very obvious in the form of barriers, car searches and bag inspections. Sometimes internal security can be very obvious in the form of surveillance cameras or the physical presence of security guards even on guest floors in hotels. Security not only relates to physical and other defences against terrorism but also to routine activities that include theft and fire prevention and, increasingly, prevention of IT fraud.

Much recent activity in the development of hotel and hospitality security is motivated by the increasing tendency of terrorist groups to bomb hotels (18 attacks against hotels since 2002 according to *The Economist*, 2013d; see Table 4.1 for a small selection of more notable examples; for a very useful review of employing anti-terrorist strategies in hotels see Paraskevas, 2013), but security measures are, of course, necessary to discourage and detect more mundane crimes, particularly theft. Many organizations issue advice on security to their personnel. The Department of Safety and Security of the United Nations (2006) has issued 'Special Guidelines for Women', although why these suggestions should be seen as being specific to women is something of a mystery as they might be regarded as having general application (see <http://www.eisf.eu/resources/item/?d=1599>, last accessed 10.04.13).

Increasingly, security is becoming an important element of the hospitality product and service offer. Conference and convention organizers and meeting planners in their routine booking of hotel and restaurant services will consider the level of security prevailing in potential venues as part of the process of due diligence. A key issue facing hotel managers is that hotel owners (as opposed to operating companies) are sometimes reluctant to make the necessary investment in appropriate security. A report by the (British) Institute of Hospitality (2010: 12) pointed out that reduced insurance premiums are a good incentive to invest in security. However, in 2012, Walker (2012a: 22) in the Institute's news magazine reported Dr Alexandros Paraskevas of Oxford Brookes University as stating: 'After the 2008 economic crisis, when I looked at the budget cuts made by hotel companies worldwide, laundry was first and security was second.' Further difficulty can arise in ensuring that strategic risk management is taken seriously as a training objective. Paul Moxness, Vice President, Corporate Safety and Security for Rezidor, is cited in the UK Institute of Hospitality's magazine as saying education is not serving industry needs: '40% of an area manager's or GM's induction is related to risk management ... Today GMs take on huge legal responsibilities and they aren't prepared for them. There is a huge gap in education' (Institute of Hospitality, 2011: 11).

Table 4.1 Some significant hotel bombings

Date	Location	Hotels	Other information
12 October 1984	Brighton, England	Grand Hotel	An attempt by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) to assassinate the British Prime Minister and other government members during their annual party conference. Used a long delay time bomb installed in September 1984 under a guest room bath.
20 September 2008	Islamabad, Pakistan	Marriott Hotel	A dump truck filled with explosives was detonated in front of the hotel killing at least 54 people.
26–28 November 2008	Mumbai, India	Taj Mahal Palace Hotel and Oberoi Trident Hotel	Part of a wider attack on public buildings in Mumbai, over 60 people died in the two hotels shot by terrorists.
17 July 2009	Jakarta, Indonesia	JW Marriott Hotel and Ritz-Carlton Hotel	Seven people died and more than 50 were injured in a suicide bomber attack, the suicide bombers having checked into the hotels previously as paying guests.

Sources: various; see also *The Guardian* (2009) 'Timeline: hotel bomb attacks: bombings and sieges of hotels around the world in recent years', <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jul/17/indonesia>, last accessed 10.04.13.

Engineering and maintenance

Given its centrality to the success of a hotel business, there is remarkably little research into either hotel engineering or the role of the engineering manager in the industry. Two recent studies confirm the paucity of literature (Lai and Yik, 2012; Lai, 2013) beyond a handful of textbooks and textbook contributions (e.g. Adamo, 1999) despite the existence of a number of national and international representative bodies for hospitality engineering (e.g. in the USA the National Association of Hotel and Lodging Engineers, <http://nahle.org>). One possible explanation for this neglect is that the hotel engineering function is sometimes outsourced but a more plausible reason is that a hotel engineer is usually, first, an engineer, and the principles of engineering are well established requiring only adaptation to specific contexts (Corrigan, 2002). Though some hotel schools still offer options in hotel engineering, they do not qualify one to become an engineer. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there are some hotels where the chief engineer is paid substantially more than the general manager, as one might expect of a technical specialist. In the manner of the philosopher Wittgenstein, 'whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent' – but readers interested in learning more about the hotel engineering function could do worse than consult the articles cited in this section.

Concluding Remarks

Accommodation management covers a wide range of functions and activities that are simultaneously core to the success of the hotel business and complex in their coordination. The hotel sector is increasingly experimenting with outsourcing to defer certain kinds of risk but relatively little is known from research about the circumstances that can contribute to an increase/decrease in the complexity of coordination as a result of the pursuit of outsourcing strategies. The accommodation function in lodging has often been treated as subordinate, even on occasions inferior, to the provision of foods and beverages (see Chapter 5) but in recent years a balance of sorts has begun to reassert itself. No longer is the accommodation function seen simply and disparagingly as 'bricks, beds and bathrooms' but, in an era of increased competition, and when integrated with sales and other functions (see Chapter 6), it is (re-)establishing itself as the essence of the lodging sector.

Further Reading



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