EXAMINING STAFFING ISSUES IN HOTELS WITH A FOCUS ON THE FRONT OFFICE DEPARTMENT

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ABSTRACT

Guests that stay at a hotel might be referred to as "home away from home" because of the homelike setting and amenities they enjoy. Visitors to hotels expect that they and their possessions will be safe and secure while they are staying at the establishment. This research focused on front office staffing difficulties in hotels. In spite of several studies demonstrating high levels of employee turnover in the hospitality industry, very few studies have attempted to identify the root causes of these problems.
Keywords: Human Resource Management, Hotel Turnover, Front Office, Causal Factors.

INTRODUCTION

As a result of the enormous number of part-time, seasonal, and casual workers employed in the hospitality business, the high rate of staff turnover is exacerbated. In terms of recruiting and training, maintaining product and service quality, and managing employee expenses at an appropriate level this may put a strain on management. [1]

However, hotels and motels have a lot in common, with the notable exception of the latter being roadside establishments that provide parking for travellers. There are other resorts located near the sea, beaches and hot springs as well as in the lakes and mountains of the region. Visitors, especially those in need of some down time, are catered to by these establishments. Catering to both local and international visitors, restaurants are a kind of business. [2]

Human resources (HR) play a critical role in the hospitality sector since they ensure that staff acts responsibly and in accordance with corporate policy while also keeping clients pleased. [3]

The buying, human relations, and accounting divisions are all part of the staff. Only those ingredients are purchased by the buying team that are required by the menu planners. Human resources, staffing, and technical advise on labour regulations, training, and other specialised operations are all part of what human resources does. [4]

Guest service agents are overseen by a front-office supervisor who is in charge of a shift. Managers in the middle, such as department heads, sit between lower-level workers and the highest levels of the organization's hierarchy. Managers report to them, and they are responsible for developing short- and medium-term plans, creating goals, and monitoring the performance of front-line supervisors. [5]

LITERATURE REVIEW

Abhishek Chauhan, Ankit Shukla, Pradeep Negi (2018) Guests that stay at a hotel might be referred to as "home away from home" because of the homelike setting and amenities they enjoy. Visitors to hotels expect that they and their possessions will be safe and secure while they are staying at the establishment. the enhancement of the hotel's reputation and goodwill in the community as a consequence of visitor satisfaction leads to its key goals of profit maximisation and guest contentment. [6]

Eslam Ahmed Fathy Fathy (2018)HR managers in Alexandria, Egypt, are examined in this research for the difficulties they experience and the strategies they use to deal with them. Semi-structured interviews with human resources directors at Alexandria's four- and five-star hotels were conducted by the investigators. Many themes emerged from the results of the research in relation to the difficulties that HR managers confront in the recruiting, selection, training and retention processes. [7]

MohdFaeez Saiful Bakhtiar, Salleh Mohd Radzi, et. al (2018) Human resource management has gained in importance as a consequence of the hotel industry's expansion (HRM). Operational staff are crucial to the long-term viability of this sector. An overview of strategic HRM in the hotel business is provided in this article. Highlights of this article include a description of HPWS and its components, as well as workers' comments on the deployment of HPWS. The findings of this research may have broader implications, which are examined as well. [8]

Adelaide Grace Mensah-Kufuo, Vida Doku (2017)Hotel front-line employees were evaluated on their performance as part of the research. In order to get a representative sample of 75 individuals from five (5) different hotels, the researchers chose 75 participants at random from each of the five hotels and asked them to fill out a survey. Surveys were utilised to gather data, and SPSS was used to analyse the results of the research. According to the data, hotel guests place a high value on "quality services" over all other types of service. [9]

Rasika Gumaste, Ritu Bhagwat, Puneet Thakkar (2015) Research on Vivanta by Taj Blue Diamond in Pune focuses on the Front Office's creative methods and their influence on guest satisfaction. As a result of these results, the hotel's guests reported higher levels of satisfaction with the hotel's creative practises, service quality, politeness, competence, and responsiveness (CCR). [10]

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study included semi-structured interviews and qualitative research methods. Convenience sampling was used to acquire the data in November 2011. Telephone interviews were used to find new hotel general managers. Individual interviews were conducted with 14 front office managers from hotels with varying levels of service. On average, a staffing problem interview lasted 40 minutes. It was questioned, "What are the personnel challenges that front office managers encounter?" and "How are these concerns resolved?" Transcription and analysis of the interviews were done using thematic content analysis (TCA). An important aspect of content analysis is the ability to draw conclusions from a text that can be replicated and validated. Based on the themes that emerge from the dataset, thematic content analysis analyses data. A systematic and comprehensive review of each transcript was conducted to discover any staffing difficulties with the codes assigned to certain sections of the text. Staffing-related codes were condensed into a reasonable number of categories based on the codes' commonalities.

More than a dozen hotel managers and supervisors from throughout India's northern region participated in the study, which was based on an online survey. Front Office Manager, Room Division Supervisor, Assistant Front Office Manager, and Operations and Sales Manager are among the hotel's management roles. To protect their identity, each manager was assigned a pseudonym. Hotel stars, management title and location are all represented in this code name, which is unique to each property. Three of the 14 managers came from Penang's four and five-star hotels, as well as the city's best boutique hotels. They had between eight and twelve years of hospitality industry experience. Four Perlis managers stayed at a three-star hotel and a cheap motel in Perlis. They'd worked in the hospitality industry for anything from three to eight years. One of the managers had previously worked at a three-star hotel in Perak. More than a decade and a half of his career had been spent in the hospitality industry. Participants from three and lower-priced hotels in Kedah made up six of the other participants. They've worked in the hospitality industry for anything from two to twenty years.

ANALYSIS

Eight key themes emerged from the categorization of twenty challenges. Poor performance (inability to use the property management system), low-skilled employees (poor English proficiency and poor communication skill), rude, bad attitude, and rowdy employees were among the eight themes that emerged from the survey. The parts that follow go into great depth on each of these subjects.

1. Staff Shortage

The lack of qualified employees was the most often cited concern when discussing the state of the workforce. In the front office, staff shortages are caused by the difficulty of recruiting and keeping employees owing to a lack of pay and long hours, according to the management. Front desk employees at a four-star hotel may be hired for as low as RM700 (about AUD230) per month. The following is what FOM4SPG said:

> "*The hotel is recruiting people but many do not take the job because of the low pay. In the hotel industry the salary is very low. The starting salary for a front desk staff is between RM750 to RM1000. In the second year, then, their salary will increase to RM1000 and above.*"

A lack of employees makes it more difficult to provide top-notch customer service. As said by one of the people who responded (FOM4SPG):

> "*To give good service it is important to have enough staff. When you have enough staff, they have enough time to provide good service to the customer. When you don't have enough people, you tend to finish everything faster. You cannot provide excellent service when you're rushing.*"

The problem of a personnel shortage was handled in two ways. Managers RDM3SKH and FOM4SPG are forced to hire part-time workers from neighbouring universities in order to deal with a staffing shortfall. Since casual or part-time employment increases employee turnover and suggests employees lack prior job experience, FOM4SPG (a manager) said that paying overtime is his preferred alternative. In addition, part-time employees aren't as skilled as the permanent workforce, but overtime pay gives them the opportunity to earn a higher salary.

2. High Employee Turnover

High employee turnover was mentioned as an issue by FOM4SPG and FOS3SK. According to FOS3SK: "*A number of employees resigned because they were offered better salary by other hotels. They worked for two to three months, and then left.*"In order to solve this issue, the manager performed an exit interview in order to find out why they quit and to attempt to encourage excellent workers not to go.

3. Poor Performance

Eight people said that they were having problems with their performance. Guests were given the incorrect key, there was a cash shortage, and the service was delayed. These are all signs of bad performance. FOS3SPS stated: "There are personnel who are not efficient but very few. The visitor may get the erroneous key from one of these personnel. I believe they lose focus". FOM3SPS has also claimed a difficulty with a lack of funds. After training, some new employees are slow and inefficient, according to AFOMLBPG.

Managers dealt with the issue of poor performance by providing on-going education and development. "We have to send them for training," AFOM3SPS said. Make sure they're properly trained so they can better serve the visitors. Warning letters are provided to employees who have passed probationary periods if their performance standards fall below acceptable levels, according to OSMBPS. An employee may be terminated after receiving a third warning letter. Concerns about a lack of funds were addressed in various ways by various institutions. FOM3SPS stated: "*In this hotel employees are required to cover the shortage by paying in cash or by salary reduction. Some hotels require employee to give a 'show cause' letter.*"

4. Low-skilled Employees

Communication, English proficiency, and problem-solving and computer skills are all lacking among low-skilled workers. Three panellists mentioned a lack of communication skills as a problem, including bad phone conversations, a lack of English proficiency, and customers who were

misunderstood. According to AFOM5SPG, several staff misinterpreted their roles and failed to follow orders. Some members of the workforce, according to FOS3SKH2, have difficulty communicating in English. When it came to answering the phone, AFOM3SPS reported that they were unable to follow the company's regular operating procedures:

"Some staff doesn't know how to answer the phone properly. In hotels we have a standard way to answer the phone. It's not like at home where we just say 'hello'. We have senior staff members who have worked here for a long time. It is very difficult to change their method of answering the phone but we are still trying" (AFOM3SPS).

According to AFOM3SPS, front-office issue solvers are more likely to be promoted because of their abilities. Although most staff were unable to resolve visitor issues, he is still searching for the best method to enhance them. He stated:

"Problems will just come through that door. People will just appear with problems and I'm afraid if there are situations that they don't know how to handle... I will keep trying to train them until they can solve the problems themselves".

AFOMLBPG and FOS3SKH2 discovered that the ability to run the computer property management system was a talent that was required but lacking. A property management system is used by the majority of hotels in this study, except for those with less than forty rooms, As a result, employees must be computer literate. Teaching low-skilled employees was a challenge for all participants in this study, although training senior non-managerial individuals proved to be more challenging.

5. Unpleasant Personality

Six people were concerned about an unpleasant personality, which they linked to roughness, unfriendliness, and a "poor attitude.". According to AFOM3SPS, the organization's new younger employees were facing similar challenges.

"They are very rowdy, and they expect people to accept them the way they are, especially when they live in the area (neighbourhood) where people are used to it. We have to slow down the rowdiness and improve their communication skill. To them it is just being cool... because they are young. But at the Front Office we can't do that. We have to be professional" (AFOM3SPS).

Besides training, the unpleasant personality issue was solved by trying to hire suitable employees and by counselling. AFOM5SPG stated: *"One of the front office staff refused to let a guest borrow a hand phone charger and was rude to the guest. So we had to train this staff, give her counselling and explain to her why her actions led to guests complaints."*

6. Lack of Commitment

Among employees, the most prevalent source of dissatisfaction was a lack of dedication. A lack of commitment was blamed for absenteeism, tardiness, longer lunch breaks, medical absence, and emergency leave. In terms of timeliness and absenteeism, these were the most prevalent concerns. In light of the fact that no one else had raised the problem, RDM3SKH saw it as a non-issue that could be resolved simply by informing the workforce. The front desk section is concerned about regular absenteeism due to a lack of personnel (staff shortages), according to FOS3SKH (staff shortages). A busy day with high hotel occupancy exacerbates the issue. AFOM3SPS said: *"Just because one staff was absent on a busy day it took us a very long time to register the guests. That day we received many complaints because they had to wait for so long".*

Lack of commitment was discussed as a potential solution by participants. Punishment was used to deal with tardiness. In accordance with FOM3SPS, staff members who were late were given three verbal warnings. If the problem continued, a "show cause" letter had to be written. A "show cause letter" must be written by an employee in response to a manager's "show cause" notice. It gives employees the opportunity to explain or defend their actions that are in violation of the policy and terms and conditions of their employment. The letter is placed in a file and entered into the system. This had an impact on their year-end pay raise and performance evaluation. They are given a

warning letter if they don't make any improvement. It's claimed that AFOMLBPG immediately terminated employees who received three written warnings. AFOM5SPG said: *"Usually, when staff are asked to give a show cause letter, he will take note of his mistakes. He realisesthat he is being monitored and he will be more careful of his actions".* AFOM3SPS sort to avoid this issue by checking an applicant's medical background prior to employment to avoid frequent medical leave.

7. Excessive Socialization

Three people said that they had a difficulty with too much socialising. FOMB1KH claims that her front desk staff were constantly engaging in backstabbing and slanderous banter instead of accomplishing their tasks. Her employees, according to FOS3SPS, choose to voice their dissatisfaction with management to their coworkers instead of lodging an official complaint. When a manager makes a mistake and shows favouritism to one employee over another, it causes resentment amongst the rest of the workforce. His hotel's workers misinterpreted that a tardy employee had been disciplined, according to AFOM3SPS. The incident was kept quiet, so no one else was aware of the action that was done. AFOM3SPS said: *"Stafftalk without even confirming*[the problem].*The grapevine*[informal transmission of confidential information] *has created an inharmonious working atmosphere".*With the help of daily briefings and weekly meetings, AFOM3SPS attempted to solve this problem. There was "two-way communication" at these meetings where staff employees had the power to speak. Avoiding "the grapevine" and extensive socialisation was a method to do this.

8. Sexual Harassment

Only one member brought up the subject of sexual harassment. Sex harassment is a severe issue for both male and female workers alike, according to the organisation FOS3SKH. FOS3SKH said: *"For sexual harassment, the front office manager will take a quick action. She will investigate if the report is true or it is just a joke. If the report is true, the manager will punish the harasser by taking disciplinary action and reassess his performance on the job."*

CONCLUSION

Using technology and educating hotel staff to ensure that guests are adequately taken care of in the event of an emergency is a must for every hotel. Safety & Security has become an essential feature of hospitality now a days as the visitors have gotten more safety aware. The qualitative research used to examine staffing issues in hotels of various sizes and locations led to the discovery of several challenges facing the Indian hotel sector, as well as possible solutions. Hotel managers who have read it say that it has brought to light issues that are seldom discussed in the literature and offered answers to problems they are now facing with staff.

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