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Reflection on Cultural Misunderstandings

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Reflection on Cultural Misunderstandings

Cultural aspects are not universal. It differs from country to country. As people visit another country, they encounter such differences. Employees who work within an organisation that has international guests or a hotel company where they have to encounter guests from different cultural backgrounds must know the cultural differences and achieve the capabilities to deal with the guests (Brion, 2019).

I am used to British culture. Because I was exposed to the culture for a long period and so I know how to interact with people courteously. As I was working at the front desk staff, I encountered a cultural misunderstanding as soon as a South Korean guest arrived at the Hotel. It was my responsibility to interact with the guests and provide a positive experience. However, I had very little understanding of South Korean culture. It was a difficult situation for me to deal with the situation.

When the South Korean guest approached the front desk, I greeted him with a warm and friendly "How do you do?". Because British people like to have such greetings and they appreciate it as a form of polite gesture. But my greeting made the South Korean Guest puzzled and confused. Later I discovered that South Korean culture initiates a conversation with different greetings. In response to my greeting, the guest made a polite smile. If I had shown a simple bow and greeted him with "Annyeonghaseyo" (hello), the greeting would have been more suitable for the South Korean Guest (Fithratullah, 2021).

The scenario that I encounter at the front desk has challenged my cultural competence to handle cultural differences. I realised that I must bring changes and improvement in myself and enhance my knowledge of cultural differences. These are necessary for my career development in the hospitality industry. To develop and improve my cultural awareness and communication skills, I can perform the following activities:

- ⇒ Cultural Sensitivity Training: This is the first and most formal way I can develop my skills. At first, a study will be performed to understand which cultural background people frequently visit at the hotel. Then insights can be gained from those cultures' customs and preferences (Christiansen et al., 2020).
- ⇒ Active Listening and Observation: As a front desk employee, I must be listening to every word the guest speaks, his cues and body language. I should adjust my behaviour based on the observations. As soon as I noticed that the guest was confused, I could change my approach to make the interaction effective.

⇒ Effective Communication: One of the prerequisites of making effective communication with the guest is to have an adequate understanding of his cultural expectations and customs (Deresky, 2017). From now on, I should inquire about the cultural aspects of the guests before greeting and interacting with them. It will show my willingness to accommodate guests' cultural norms.

As people face the differences in cultural aspects, they get to learn the new culture. A front desk employee needs to have a solid cultural awareness and understanding for dealing with the guests effectively. I can overcome my limitations and insufficiency of cultural knowledge by continuously reflecting upon myself and making improvements.

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