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Introduction

Foreign languages and cultures are significant factors to take into account in conducting business, especially the hotel business. Thousands of international customers visit the UK every year and personalised services can play a crucial role in targeting this audience to ensure business growth. In this assignment, the discussion will be made on a scenario where cultural misunderstandings may occur because of the language barrier alongside the possible remedies for the future. Then, a presentation will be developed to showcase the benefits of multilingualism and cultural awareness in the hotel business context. Additionally, a self-reflection section will be in place to reveal the learning from this module.

Assignment 1

PROFESSIONAL REFLECTION

In terms of the hotel business, 'Cultural Misunderstandings' refer to situations where individuals from different cultural backgrounds interact within a hotel setting and misinterpret each other's customs and behaviours (Mariani, Borghi and Okumus, 2020). It can be raised due to differing norms, values, beliefs, and practices between guests and hotel staff (Malik, Madappa and Chitranshi, 2017). This can potentially lead to conflicts or dissatisfaction among the customers and affect the overall business. Cultural misunderstandings can occur in various aspects of the hotel experience such as communication, service delivery, etiquette, and guest expectations (Cheng and Zhang, 2019). Failure to address and solve cultural misunderstandings can have terrible consequences for the brands. It can ultimately lead to negative reviews from the customers, reduced customer satisfaction, and overall damage to the brand value (Reguieg, 2020).

In my role as a Front of House employee at a prestigious hotel in London, I recently encountered a scenario that highlighted the significance of cultural understanding to me. The incident involved a language barrier between a guest from Japan and myself which led to a cultural misunderstanding.

The guest, Mr. X, arrived at our hotel and approached the front desk to check-in. As is customary, I extended a warm greeting and initiated the check-in process. However, Mr. X's English proficiency was limited, and my knowledge of Japanese was rudimentary at best. This language barrier immediately set the stage for a potential cultural misunderstanding. Despite my best efforts to communicate and ensure Mr. X's comfort, he seemed increasingly frustrated and agitated. His gestures and tone conveyed his growing dissatisfaction which left both of us feeling helpless and frustrated.

Upon reflection, I recognize that cultural misunderstandings can occur in such situations due to a lack of effective communication. Language is a fundamental aspect of culture and when guests and employees cannot communicate clearly, there's a high likelihood of misinterpretation and frustration (Akhtar et al. 2022). Mr. X, for instance, may have been accustomed to a different check-in process or set of expectations in Japanese hotels which I failed to understand and accommodate.

To prevent such cultural misunderstandings in the future, I realize that I need to develop my language skills, particularly in languages commonly spoken by our international guests. Additionally, I should undergo cultural sensitivity training to better understand the customs and expectations of guests from various backgrounds. Learning basic greetings and polite phrases in multiple languages can go a long way in making guests feel more at ease. Moreover, I must cultivate patience and empathy when faced with language barriers or other cultural differences. By adopting a more attentive and accommodating approach, I can mitigate misunderstandings and ensure that every guest, regardless of their cultural background, enjoys a positive and memorable experience at our hotel.

PRESENTATION

Slide 1



Slide 2



Notes:

Multilingualism can bring a host of advantages for the Diversity Hotel & Spa. It directly enhances the guest experience to make travellers feel more welcome and valued by allowing

effective communication in their native language (Karpishina and Petrashevskaya, 2019). This improved experience leads to increased bookings as guests are more likely to return and recommend the hotel to others. Cultural sensitivity plays a crucial role in ensuring that the diverse needs and expectations of guests are met, further enhancing customer satisfaction (Lin et al. 2017). In a competitive industry, being able to cater to a wider range of international guests will give Diversity Hotel & Spa a clear advantage. The cumulative result is not only happier guests but also a more successful and reputable hotel business.

Slide 3

LANGUAGE OF CHOICE FRENCH



- **Location (Spoken):** France, Canada, Belgium, Switzerland, Many Countries of Africa.
- **A Challenging Language to Learn.**
- **Polite/Impolite Business Phrases:**
 - **Polite:** "Bonjour, comment puis-je vous aider?" (Hello, how may I assist you?)
 - **Impolite:** "Qu'est-ce que vous voulez ?" (What do you want?)

Notes:

Multilingualism in the hotel industry, with a focus on languages like French, offers distinct advantages and it can be equally beneficial for Diversity Hotel & Spa. French is widely spoken in diverse locations, including France, Canada, Belgium, Switzerland, and various African countries (Wood, 2023). Being able to communicate in French facilitates interactions with guests from these regions. However, French is considered moderately challenging due to its complex pronunciation and gendered nouns (Aries, 2020). Multilingual staff capable of mastering this complexity can become invaluable assets to Diversity Hotel & Spa.

Understanding polite and impolite business phrases in French is crucial. Greeting guests with "Bonjour, comment puis-je vous aider?" (Hello, how may I assist you?) conveys warmth and respect, while avoiding impolite phrases like "Qu'est-ce que vous voulez?" (What do you want?) is essential to maintaining a positive guest experience (Kaplan, 2018). These language

and cultural nuances enhance guest interactions and satisfaction, ultimately positioning the hotel as a welcoming and accommodating destination for French-speaking guests.

Slide 4



IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE AWARENESS OF HOTEL STAFF

- To Be Good at Greetings
- To Build Great Customer Relations
- Offering Room Amenities
- Offering Concierge Services
- Avoiding Misunderstandings

Notes:

In the hospitality industry, the benefits of multilingualism, particularly in the context of serving French-speaking guests, extend to various aspects of the guest experience. Greeting guests with a warm "Bonjour" and offering assistance politely creates an immediate sense of welcome and respect (Bowie, 2018). Understanding that French guests often prefer to leisurely enjoy meals allows staff to cater to their dining pace to enhance customer relations. Offering room amenities such as French-language newspapers or TV channels demonstrates thoughtfulness and a commitment to personalizing the guest experience. Concierge service takes on new dimensions as multilingual staff can recommend French dining options, cultural events, and attractions, leading to deeper guest engagement. Finally, preventing misunderstandings by learning key phrases to address common issues or requests ensures smoother guest-staff interactions. These multilingual skills collectively can enhance Diversity Hotel & Spa's ability to cater to French-speaking guests and offer a more personalized service.

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STUDENT SELF-REFLECTION

My journey of preparing the presentation on the benefits of multilingualism in the hotel business has been a valuable learning experience, employing Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle. This model consists of four stages: Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualization, and Active Experimentation (Botelho et al. 2016). These stages provided a structured framework for my self-development in this process.

In the Concrete Experience stage, I engaged in the task of creating the presentation. I delved into research, gathered information, and synthesized the content according to the requirements. At this point, my knowledge about the subject was limited, and I was essentially collecting raw data. During the Reflective Observation stage, I started to reflect on my initial understanding of multilingualism in the hotel business (Chiu, 2019). As I delved deeper into the research, I began to comprehend the intricacies and advantages more profoundly. This stage allowed me to recognize the significance of multilingualism in the hospitality industry.

The Abstract Conceptualization stage was where I began to connect the dots (Moorhouse and Jung, 2017). I contemplated how multilingualism impacts guest satisfaction, operational efficiency, and the hotel's competitive edge. The benefits started to crystallize as I developed a more comprehensive understanding. The final stage, Active Experimentation, allowed me to apply this newfound knowledge. I not only crafted the presentation but also gained insights into how this understanding could be put into practice. I realized the importance of not just conveying information but also actively promoting language training and cultural sensitivity among hotel staff to harness the benefits discussed in the presentation effectively.

Throughout this process, I continually asked myself self-reflective questions to gauge my learning and development. From this task, I learned the profound impact of multilingualism on the hotel business and its potential benefits both for guests and the hotel itself. At the same time, my understanding evolved from a surface-level appreciation of multilingualism to a deeper comprehension of its role in enhancing guest experiences and increasing bookings. Now, I can actively advocate for language training and cultural sensitivity workshops for hotel staff. By doing so, I can help any hotel unlock the full potential of multilingualism in delivering exceptional guest experiences.

However, things were not smooth at all. Researching and organizing the content required a huge amount of time and effort for me. Additionally, aligning my understanding with the needs and expectations of the hotel staff presented a unique challenge. What I have understood is that my strength lies in research and content creation, but I identified a need to improve my communication and training skills to effectively convey the message to others. Overall, my self-development journey during the preparation of the presentation has not only broadened

my understanding of the subject but has also provided insights into how this knowledge can be practically applied.

Conclusion

The scenario with Mr. X highlights the urgency of cultural understanding in the hotel industry if a business wants real growth and success. A business can have significant benefits through multilingualism which includes enhancing guest experiences, increasing bookings or sales, getting competitive advantages, etcetera. Thus, it becomes easy to ensure personalised services to international customers and meet the business objectives. My journey, guided by Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle, allowed me to develop a more comprehensive grasp of the subject. Together, these experiences underscore the critical importance of cultural sensitivity and language awareness in delivering exceptional service and elevating the guest experience in the dynamic world of hospitality.

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