

Nuri Begum

UWTSD

BMIH6003 - Managing Guest Service Operations

Lecturer: Jessica Newport

Student Learning Log

INTERNATIONAL HOTEL MANAGEMENT Lvl 6

I confirm that I have not used any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment. I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

During my placement at Marriott International, Cardiff, I had the opportunity to join the guest service department. I was able to gain valuable hands-on experience including guest management, reservations, check-in/check-out, personalised services and safety protocols. At the beginning of the placement, I had set out 3 main objectives that I wanted to accomplish by the end. Firstly, I wanted to be able to develop my practical skills in handling guest interactions, applying what I have learned in theory. Secondly, I want to improve my understanding of operational standards, especially whilst working in fast-paced environments. Lastly, I wanted to be able to build on my communication skills, especially in hospitality contexts where there is a need to have constant adaptability. For my reflection I've chosen to use the Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (Wolstenholme and Chairman, 2020). This will detail my experiences and key insights following a structured approach to personal and professional development.

One of the initial tasks I took on involved managing hotel guest reservations. This involved following a set routine of asking the guest a series of questions. I also had to handle special guest requests and ensure consistency between different information in platforms, including the hotel's website and third-party agencies. The impact of effective reservation management is further supported by Onderi (2024), who suggests that a well-organised booking system is directly proportional to guest satisfaction. I also realised the significance that personalisation can have on the customer experience. One such example includes when a customer specifically requested for her room to be north facing for religious reasons. By us catering specifically towards her request, she had left a very positive review at the end of her stay. The power of personalised service is also further emphasised by Tong, Wong and Lui (2012), who suggest that personalised services can have a significant influence on customer loyalty.

Reflecting on some of my first interactions with the hotel guests, I recognised the need to use a genuine greeting, as these first impressions can have a long-lasting impact on the entire guest experience. Similarly, it is emphasised by Tulcanaza-Prieto, Aguilar-Rodríguez and Lee (2022) that first impressions can directly contribute to customer perceptions of service quality, a warmer greeting indicating a more caring and higher quality service. By the second week, I felt confident enough to be able to address the guests by their names to ensure that their experience feels personalised and that all the processes went smoothly. This helped me build on my communication skills, as I was able to cater towards different guests, helping solve different tasks. This is further proven to be a valuable skill according to Gomez (2021), as personalised communication is essential in building positive guest relationships.

Throughout my time at Marriot, I was able to understand various different technical aspects which I realised were crucial for delivering a quality guest service. Especially, during high pressure and busy times, skills such as time management and attention to detail were imperative. This is further emphasised by Singh (2024), suggesting that improving time management skills in guest service settings does not only improve operational efficiency but also can improve guest satisfaction. During my second week, I was in a scenario where there was a high-demand period where I felt the challenge of time pressure when it came to managing room assignments and check-ins. It ultimately reminded me the importance of remaining calm whilst working under pressure, which is also echoed by Percy (2024), suggesting that it can also boost individual resilience and team cohesion, to improve the productivity of the team.

Through my time in the department, I also gained a larger sense of appreciation for the technical knowledge required in sanitation protocols and safety standards. Especially considering the recent COVID-19 pandemic, I realised how strict the team at Marriot were still adhering to guidelines that had been set by the company. This is highlighted further by Mustang (2024), noting the increased expectations for cleanliness in the hospitality industry post-pandemic. I was told by my supervisor how during cleaning operations, I had to ensure compliance with local regulations, and especially recognising Marriot's global stance, I was also recommended to follow frameworks set by the World Health Organization (2023). Through reflection I realised how this ultimately also contributes to guest satisfaction as these are also what many customers appreciate, as suggested by Fong (2023).

An organisational problem that I had noticed, involved sorting out a complaint that a guest had regarding a reservation error which had caused an unfulfilled room request. This specific case helped me understand the importance of service recovery. According to Hwang (2024), being able to address service failures such as a reservation can help enhance customer loyalty. Observing the way in which the manager had handled the complaint, I had seen how she had gone on to immediately apologise to the customer and offered her a complementary gesture. Later I realised that this was an example of the "service recovery paradox", where customers may become more satisfied if their complaint is resolved satisfactorily (Lindenau, 2024). Upon a prompt room reassignment, the guest had felt satisfied and also left a good review on her departure. From this, I also realised the importance of empathy and transparency when it comes to solving these problems in the hospitality scene as suggested by Robinson (2015). I would recommend the hotel to incorporate some type of digital checklist so that similar errors can be prevented in the future.

Overall, my placement experience has greatly impacted my understanding of guest service operations, reinforcing the significance of effective communication, operational efficiency, and service recovery. I've had the opportunity to build a solid foundation in sanitation and safety principles and have improved my ability to tackle diverse guests' requests, as well as being able to know what it takes to be able to manage complaints effectively.

Moving forward, I plan on undergoing additional training in cultural sensitivity and communication, as I recognise how increasingly important it is to be culturally aware. Furthermore, I intend on exploring courses on digital management systems, to start to recognise the role of technology in modernising guest service operations. This action plan reflects my efforts towards continuous improvement and excellence in the industry.

In conclusion, this placement experience has been able to provide me with invaluable skills and insights that I plan to carry forward with me into my future career. By incorporating the lessons I've learned, I am better equipped to deliver exceptional guest service and create an impact in the hospitality industry.

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