

Programme: BA

International Hotel Management

**Module: Hotel Administration and
Front Office**

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Component 1: Student Journal

Introduction



Figure: Gibbs Reflective Model

Source: (Dutta *et al.* 2023)

The placement experience that I had during my selection as a Front Office Executive at Hilton Hotels was quite interesting. I faced both the opportunities and the challenges during the process and growth. Therefore, by the process of Gibbs's Reflection Model, I am going to reflect on my experiences, reactions, and emotions that I encountered in my position.

Gibbs Reflective Cycle

Description

The assignment of Front Office Executive at Hilton Hotels entails an extensive list of tasks ranging from the reception of guests to the solving of queries and complaints, making reservations, and guaranteeing guest satisfaction. Due to the fast-paced nature of the hospitality business, being able to think fast, communicate well, and give great customer service was mandatory (Roy, 2023). This is one of the memorable experiences I recalled when I dealt with a disappointed guest who came into the room not meeting her expectations. At first, I got anxious and panicky and didn't know how to fix things quickly. While I could tell he was extremely upset, I managed to stay calm and sympathetic. I listened actively to the guest's concerns. By understanding the

customers' discontent and immediately providing an alternative, I could fulfil the concerns to their satisfaction.

Feelings

I experienced the future event of confronting a disgruntled guest as a looming storm in my mind that I was sure I lacked the requisite skills to sufficiently resolve the incident. There was self-doubt that began to creep in as I began to question my ability to fulfil a swift solution bigger than their expectations. Notwithstanding this, applying my previous knowledge and grasping courage from the previous successful conversations led me to face the situation with empathy. As I witnessed the nature of the guest turning positive and the expression of gratitude, I felt greatly encouraged and I was affirmed that I am qualified and dedicated for a long life in hospitality career. Realizing that in whatever stressful situation I faced I could turn it into a positive guest experience through caring customer service was a real eye-opener.

Evaluation

The self-reflection through the process of this event generated valuable self-assessment. I realized almost instantly that hospitality staff also have a big task of turning dissatisfaction into satisfaction. I showed my strength to carefully analyse situations as well as act with consideration thus, boosting my confidence. Moreover, I comprehended that on top of everything else interpersonal skills are inseparably and highly deemed in providing a class guest service that just requires more sensitivity to elevate the encounters to the highest level (Weber *et al.* 2020). That was the first time I drew the line between book studies and hands-on experiences, appreciated the power of empathy, and emphasised the importance of communication in the guest experience.

Analysis

Additional evaluation was completed, which found that my earlier worry and concern came from a fear of not being good enough and dissatisfying guest wants as a new server. By reliving my actions again in my mind during stressful events, I gained insight into those areas that are my growth areas in need of improvement and could make me perform better (Stein *et al.* 2020). Initially, I tended to disregard the huge role that front office staff plays in brand building by focusing on the experiences that every guest encounters-from the seemingly mundane matters to the major ones. Therefore, ethical practice and the same sensitivity in communicating are a necessity. Beyond this, I learned that there's no textbook shortcut for thinking off the cuff, and real cases are

awesome in terms of learning opportunities. The self-reflection process and the crossroad moments became the time to rise and improve my skills. Instead of allowing defeats to erode confidence in my skills, I confronted them as tools to cushion the process of applied learning and develop my repertoire.

Conclusion

The internship period spent with the front office team of the Hilton Hotels will be regarded as an invaluable time that brought the true essence of hospitality and the exact responsibilities and skills necessary for individuals preferring roles directly dealing with guests. In addition, my emotional reactions and behavioural responses were systematically evaluated through Gibbs's reflective cycle which helped in deal with difficult situations but was also important for self-development. Evaluation of skills that are essential for the resolution of issues putting them before others as communication, composure, and creative problem-solving revealed development areas; which were to be strengthened through continual learning. Aside from my development, self-analysis helped model my guest-centred approach to service excellence. It was this placement opportunity that without doubt solidified my career aspiration to be in the hospitality industry, where the hospitality staff creates positive memories for guests. I am looking forward to paying forward these skills to build an empathetic and dedicated approach to hospitality which I am going to pursue in my future.

Action Plan

Objectives	Action to be Taken	Timeline
Enhance Knowledge of Hotel Systems and Procedures	Participate in training sessions and workshops	1 month
	Shadow experienced colleagues to learn best practices	Ongoing
Improve Handling of Complex Reservations	Seek guidance from supervisors on challenging scenarios	Weekly
	Review reservation protocols and procedures	2 weeks
Enhance Time Management Skills	Prioritize tasks and create daily to-do lists	Daily

	Set realistic goals and deadlines for completing tasks	Ongoing
Solicit Feedback from Colleagues and Supervisors	Schedule regular check-ins with supervisors for feedback	Bi-weekly
	Request feedback from colleagues on performance	Monthly
Further, Develop Communication Skills	Practice active listening during guest interactions	Daily
	Participate in communication workshops or courses	Quarterly

Component 2: Practical task – Scenario

Tripadvisor review

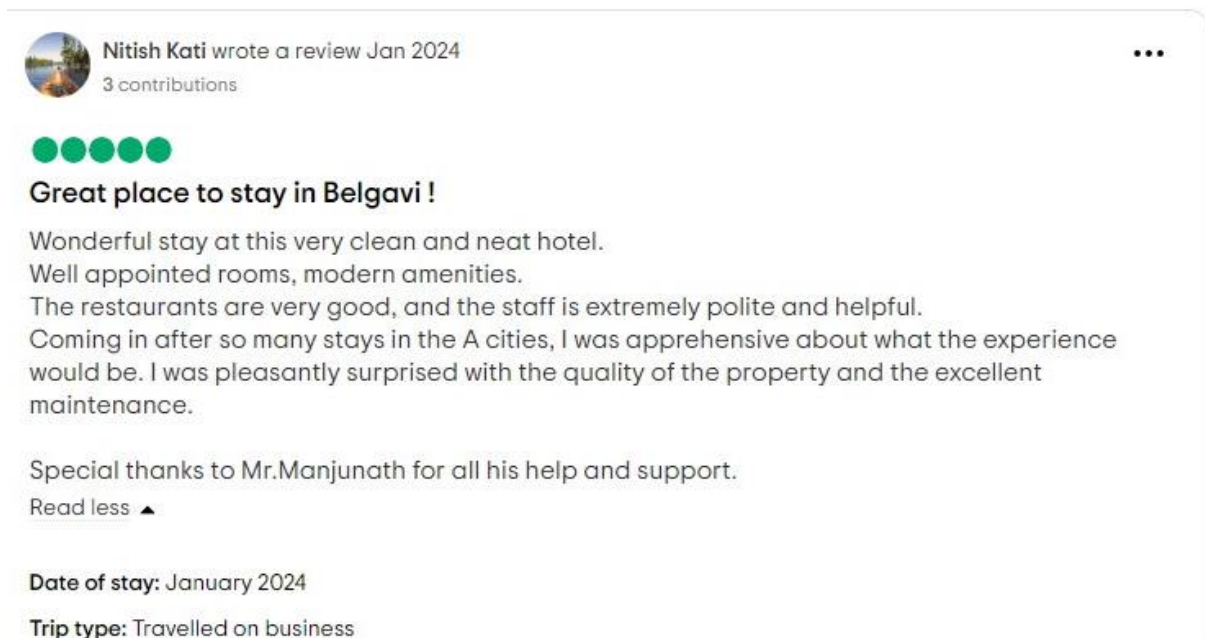


Figure: Tripadvisor review

Source: *Tripadvisor*, (2024)

When receiving an expression of appreciation from a customer who took the time to share their experience, it is necessary to show genuine appreciation for it. In particular, mention those things they liked regarding their remarks, doing this will illustrate that the opinions they shared have been carefully considered. Don't forget

to pass on praises to any staff members mentioned if any as this will help in boosting staff morale (Anshari *et al.* 2019).

Response

The hotel team is really glad to know that our guest had a great time and a wonderful stay in our hotel. It is also satisfying knowing that the guest found the rooms clean, with modern and tastefully furnished living spaces that provide the necessary amenities. The hotel puts its effort into ensuring the highest degree of comfort, convenience and service to all the guests. The hotel staff, who are polite and helpful, focus on making every guest's time as memorable as possible (Islam *et al.* 2019). The hotel was happy the guests managed to have a taste of fine dining and were outdone by the property standards. The guest's compliments are highly appreciated and I am particularly thankful to Mr. Manjunath for his kindness and for making the stay comfortable. The hotel also hopes that its guests will come around again and will explicitly promise that the high standards will be maintained. Such feedback keeps us, as a hotel team, motivated for the facilities and services to be further improved.

Letter of complaint

Subject : Complaint

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to express my disappointment and dissatisfaction with my recent stay in room 330 at your hotel. Unfortunately, my experience fell far short of the standards I had expected, and I believe it is important to bring these concerns to your attention.

Firstly, I was extremely disappointed with the cleanliness of my room. The floors were dirty, there were stains on the bedding, and the bathroom had not been properly cleaned. Secondly, the Wi-Fi service provided during my stay was unreliable and slow. It was frustrating to experience constant disruptions and slow speeds, which hindered my ability to work and stay connected for my work calls.

Additionally, the noise levels in the hotel were excessive. I was disturbed by loud conversations and noise from neighbouring rooms throughout the night, making it difficult for me to get a restful night's sleep.

The customer service I received during my stay was terrible. The staff members were unresponsive and unhelpful to my requests and inquiries.

I hope that my feedback will be taken seriously, and I look forward to hearing from you soon regarding the steps you plan to take to address these concerns.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Joanna Blake

The hotel staff needs to ensure that empathy and sympathy have been given to the customer while responding to a complaint. Good communication is the first principle that has to be kept in mind while responding to complaints and then the customer

should be informed about the decisions that have been taken by the hotel to resolve their complaints (Rita, 2019).

Response

Dear Ms. Blake,

We do appreciate that you brought your concerns to our attention and sorry for your disappointing experience at our hotel. We deeply regret not having achieved the high standards of service and hospitality that we all work for, and which we wish to provide to all of our guests.

When I found that the room was very neglected, I had some worry. The first concern for quality housekeeping is cleanliness, so it is not permitted that the room you stayed in was left dirty and the floors and bedding were not clean as well. This is not the visit we want our guests to have. The issue of oversight by some housekeeping staff has been immediately brought to our attention; reinforcing attention to details in room cleaning is going to be our priority. Similarly, you should rest assured that we would check all rooms daily to make sure they adhere to our high cleanliness standards.

Lastly, I am truly sorry for the flawed WiFi connection during the stay. Our goal is to deliver a reliable internet that sufficiently works at the time you need it for work and connection. Our IT personnel have investigated your floor WiFi routers and found out the reason for this issue, it has now been resolved. We have also designed a new internet bandwidth upgrade to ensure faster connections from here onwards.

The noise interruptions that you received are not allowable either. We have had a meeting with staff and hence 10 pm to 6 am quiet hours are to be enforced in all hallways while guests should keep their rooms silent as much as possible. Your comments will guide us to know where the transfer of noise is weak and therefore should be reduced. For your next visit, we will book you into one of our large quiet rooms off the beaten path.

This distressed me even more when I knew that you were not provided with our timely services. Customer care and customers' slack periods are of utmost importance to us. Service procedures will be taught to the front office staff and the Guest Relations Team will do this more closely (Uzir *et al.* 2021). Please report the duty manager in case you have poor service in the future to be rectified first hand.

Miss Blake, we pay close attention to each customer and your comments will help to reveal where our norm went wrong. In conveying how sorry we are, we would be glad to have you for a 2-night free stay, so that we can restore your confidence in our hotel. We strive to ensure the experience is excellent. Please let me know if there are any more things, we can do to rectify this. Once again, we hope you will decide to come back to us to be served better.

Sincerely,

Customer service of the hotel

Component 3: Portfolio – 4 Elements

Introduction

Hotel front office employees play a crucial role in shaping customer experience. The hotel guest-frontline employee interaction is one of the key factors in determining the service quality, affecting the person's repeat visit intention (Hu *et al.*, 2022). Different kinds of front-office employees exist, like receptionists, reservationists, cashiers, bellboys, night auditors, guest relation officers, etc. Key skills required for a front office employee include customer service skills, proper communication skills, organisational skills, and problem-solving skills (Tewari, 2009).

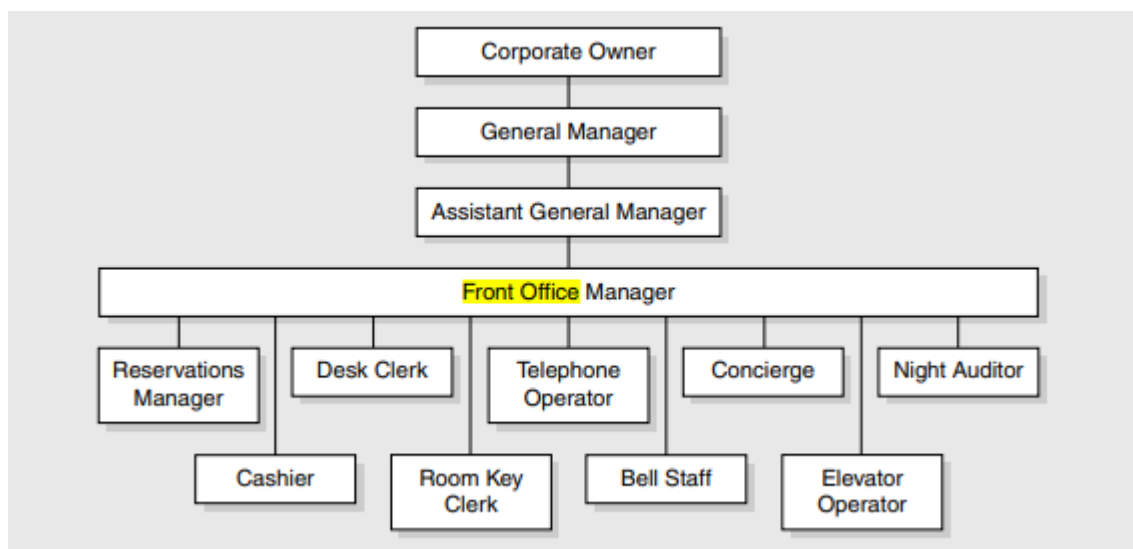


Figure: Different kinds of front-office roles

Source: Bardi (2011)

Body of the essay

Customer service skills

Service quality helps a hotel boost its credibility from the customer's perspective. Any business's survival is heavily dependent on the quality of service provided to its

customers. In the context of the hotel industry, the key factors determining service quality are cleanliness and maintenance of the rooms, safety, and the attitude of its staff Malik *et al.* (2020). Price plays a mediating role in determining the perceived service quality. The costlier the hotel, the higher the people's expectations regarding its amenities making it necessary to adopt higher quality service. According to Bhebhe (2020), frontline employees lie at the heart of customer service. As the guests interact with the frontline employees daily, the nature of these interactions dictates the level of customer satisfaction. As customer satisfaction is key to the success of a business, the front-office staff are trained to behave politely, listen to customer complaints, and take prompt action to eliminate any discomfort. Bellboys are responsible for attending to customers' needs at any time of the day and night to ensure customer needs are taken care of. The receptionists and the front-desk employees have the responsibility to ensure reduced waiting time and a seamless checking-in process. A study on Marriott International Inc., UK reveals that the average check-in time at the hotel was around 10 minutes during which the desk agent politely asked the guests to note down their names, addresses, and purpose of the visits. Some basic amenities like warm towels, assorted sweets, and water were also provided during the check-in process creating a great first impression (Fagyas and Datta, 2023). The check-out process, on the other hand, took around 3 minutes on average, again suggesting a quick service. The service continued with the porter carrying the luggage up to the door where the doorman took them over and offered further assistance.

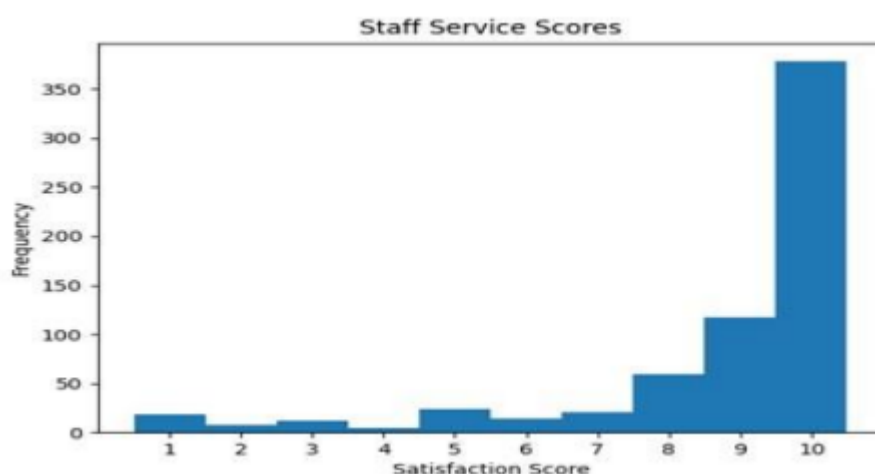


Figure: Staff service scores. Marriott International

Source: Fagyas and Datta, 2023

Communication skills

Communication refers to the process of passing ideas and information from one person to another. Psychologists claim that 60% of the communication between two people happens non-verbally, through gestures or overtones, and hence as a hotel front-line employee, one needs to keep the customer's body language in mind. In the opinion of Jawabreh *et al.* (2022), front-desk employees should possess a pleasant demeanour and dress in a tidy manner to convey prestige and authority. They should also be well-versed in the hotel operation to be able to explain to the guests the details of the rooms and amenities with utmost clarity. They are also supposed to have good language skills. English and local languages as applicable are crucial to learn. Understanding different accents is also important. Moreover, the front-desk employees also need to have the competence to deal with any complaints raised by the guests efficiently. Parasnis *et al.* (2023) stated that good listening skills are also crucial to ensure effective two-way communication. Good communication has several advantages. It makes the guests feel that the front-line employee is paying them full attention. Timely services help create a long-lasting impression resulting in repeated visits, word-of-mouth publicity, and increased profitability. Marriott International Inc., UK is one of the hotel chains that performs exceptionally well regarding communication with the customers. As found by Fagyas and Datta (2023), the doorman of the hotel is responsible for greeting every arriving customer with broad smiles, a deep welcoming voice, and offering assistance with luggage handling. The success of the doorman was measured by the individual guest's reaction to the greeting. 90% of the guests were found to smile back at the doorman ensuring a good first impression.

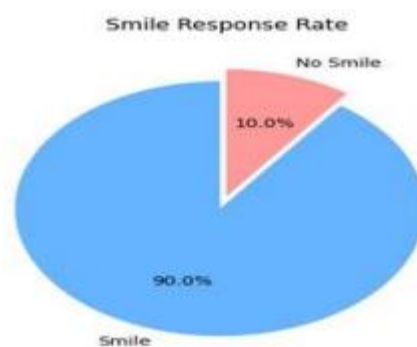


Figure: Smile response rate at Marriott International Inc., UK

Source: Fagyas and Datta, 2023

Other aspects that produced a positive image of the hotel in terms of communication were the friendliness of the staff, warm welcoming at the reception, complaints attended to, etc., as revealed from the guest feedback.

Organisational skills

The key organisational skills needed for hotel front-line employees are effective time management and proper organisation of tasks. This helps them forecast any potential issue and always perform the task at hand. It also helps track the available resources in the hotel inventory and act accordingly. The desk managers, responsible for doing the paperwork need to show good organisational skills to ensure a hassle-free check-in and check-out process (Corgel *et al.*, 2011). An organised team thus ensures less waiting time boosting customer satisfaction. Another aspect of showing good organisational skills is for the front-office employees to work closely with other departments like sales and marketing, food and beverage, security, and human resource departments (Bardi, 2011). Welcoming its guests by providing face towels, water, and sweets, and minimum check-in and check-out time shows good organisational skills and inter-departmental communication in Marriott International.

Problem-solving skills

Hotel services face several issues causing customer dissatisfaction. Thus, one of the key skills needed by front-line employees is quick problem-solving skills to bring customers on board. Some common customer complaints in the hotel industry include poor maintenance of rooms, slow service, poor ancillary services, lack of privacy and safety, etc. To counteract a negative experience faced by the customer, the frontline employees first need to show empathy and earnestly seek an apology to somewhat soothe the complainer. Then they need to take action to eliminate the cause of customer distress, if possible. For long-term stability, however, the employees should be able to identify repeating issues and ask the managers to make some permanent changes in the hotel operation. They should also anticipate future problems and take necessary actions, for example, overstocking resources before a potential environmental calamity. A study by Punitharaj *et al.* (2021) found that the Marriott franchise's training program for its front-line employees includes the development of problem-solving skills, by mirroring real-life issues.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the front-office staff of the hotel industry is crucial for customer satisfaction. Service quality, communication skills, organisational ability, and problem-

solving aptitudes have been identified as four crucial skills through which a front-office employee establishes a strong connection with their customers.

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