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UWTSD

BMIH6002 - Managing Food and Beverage Operations

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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.

The Food and Beverage department at Marriot International, Cardiff has an important role in providing an exceptional guest experience, by providing thoughtful dining considerations that reflect the brand standards of Marriott. The department is mainly responsible for menu planning, ingredient sourcing and catering for a range of dietary requirements. It is clear that every meal is served with quality and sustainability, ending in excellent customer satisfaction. During my placement, I had set out the following objectives:

- Develop a wider understanding behind different dietary requirements
- Analyse the importance of sourcing and sustainability
- Build on my problem solving and adaptability skills
- Strengthen my communication and teamwork skills

I regularly shadowed the head chef and the food and beverage manager as they discussed and evaluated different options for dishes for the seasonal menu. There were various details that I found out had gone into considering the dishes, including whether it aligned with the hotels brand image, e.g. considering their sophistication and sustainability. One fact I quite appreciated was how the company prioritised sourcing ingredients locally wherever possible. I was also introduced to the importance of sourcing high-quality ingredients that were both cost-effective and aligned with guest expectations.

I also learned about the importance of thinking about dietary requirements for customers. The menu that we offered at the restaurant included vegan, gluten-free and allergen-free options. It was also ensured that these options were integrated into the main menu, so ensure inclusivity, compared to just isolating them as options that would make it appear as they are afterthoughts (Martinez, 2024). I had the opportunity of reviewing ingredients lists and monitoring how recipes were adapted by the culinary team to ensure that the dietary requirements were met without sacrificing quality or taste.

A key experience during my placement was where there was unexpectedly a shortage of a specific locally sourced ingredient. Being able to witness the decision-making process, I noticed the care taken by the chef and procurement team to arrive to a prompt solution, as they were able to use a suitable alternative. This highlighted the need for flexibility and creative problem-solving when designing menus.

The key lesson I learned from menu planning, is the need to balance creativity within operational limitations. Previously I was under the assumption that menu planning was mainly based on the presentation and taste of food. After this experience, I realised that it also requires a significant understanding of the financial constraints and the guest demographics. For example, I was told by one of the members of staff that the seasonal menu that was offered was designed in a manner that was to suit both local guests and international travellers. They were able to do this by being able to analyse past trends and feedback, using their historical data to guide the current menu choices.

A crucial lesson that I had also learnt was the importance of considering dietary requirements, to be able to create a more inclusive and welcoming atmosphere. There is an expectation from guests that the hotel restaurant should serve both high-quality food that also are considerate of diverse dietary needs (Leite-Pereira, Filipa Brandão and Costa, 2023). Not being considerate of such customers can actually be alienating for them and has potential to negatively impact their guest experience. This made me appreciate how much these careful considerations can contribute to the guest satisfaction and hence loyalty (Selander, 2024)

– both of which are imperative for the success of the hotel in the current competitive industry.

Reflecting on the situation where there had been a shortage for a specific ingredient, I realised the need for resilience and adaptability in managing Food and Beverage operations. The quick thinking of the team had helped prevent potential delays, whilst still being able to ensure that the guests had a positive experience. Minimising disruption is imperative, yet there is still a need to maintain the integrity of the menu (Pantelidis, 2017). This demonstrates how flexibility is as important as planning when it comes to designing the best menu.

The menu planning process and consideration of dietary requirements are closely linked with guests-centred service theory (Lacalle, 2023), suggesting that the preferences of the guest should be at the core of the design consideration. This was achieved by considering options including vegan, gluten-free, and allergen-free, demonstrating the customer first approach, which is of paramount importance, especially in the current market. It further highlights an understanding of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Cherry, 2024). Especially drawing upon the levels related to safety and belonging, the inclusive catering options are able to match the basic and psychological needs of the guests. This further fosters a sense of care and belonging that is likely to encourage further visits by guests.

Furthermore, there has been a noticeable push towards sourcing ingredients in sustainable manner. Especially become a significant part of modern hospitality, they align well with corporate social responsibility(CSR) principles (Dzage and Pierog, 2023). Sourcing locally ultimately helps reduce the environmental footprint of the hotel. It can also add another layer of value for guests who may be especially environmentally conscious. Such a strategy is able to help support local businesses and communities, whilst also being able to cater for the growing trend of ethical consumerism (Fenech, Walton and Majury, 2024).

Lean management principles can be identified when reflecting on the financial analysis behind menu planning (Gładysz, Buczacki and Haskins, 2020). These values aim to maximise the value for the guests, whilst avoiding unnecessary costs and minimising waste. Considerations for both the quality and cost effectiveness had to be made for each ingredient choice, demonstrating how Lean principles which typically applied in manufacturing, can also be used in hospitality contexts (TWI, 2022). Careful management of resources and sourcing cost effective ingredients without compromising on quality help the hotel maintain a good balance.

Through this experience, I was able to build on several skills which could make me more than suitable for a career in this food and beverage department. I built on my analytical skills by learning to assess ingredient choices based on multiple factors including cost, seasonality and their relevance to guest preferences. Analysing dietary requirements reminded me of the importance of understanding the demographics of the hotel guests, as well as the need to tailor the dining experience to meet these diverse needs.

Through regular interactions with the chef, the suppliers and the manager, I was able to develop my communication skills. Clear and effective communication was required when discussing ingredient sourcing and menu adjustments. This helped all team members be on the same page when it came to being aligned on the objectives and expectations. I observed the importance of teamwork and problem solving, especially at a time where things may unexpectedly go wrong, such as the ingredient shortage incident.

I was able to build on my attention to detail especially when needing to consider dietary requirements in menu planning. The processes had to be double checked in order to verify that there was no cross-contamination occurring. I realised that even the smallest oversights in menu planning may be potential to lead to significant guest dissatisfaction or in extreme cases, health risks.

In conclusion, the experience of showing staff at the Food and Beverage department provided me with valuable insights into the attention to detail required in menu planning. Being able to observe the decision-making processes of experienced professionals reminded me of the importance of balancing creativity with practical considerations for cost, availability and preferences of the guest.

Moving on from this placement experience, I plan to study further to widen my understanding behind sustainable sourcing practices and dietary trends. Based on my placement, those are the two qualities that I recognised there is an ever increasing need to incorporate, with a current push towards customer satisfaction and global sustainability goals. I also realise the need to develop a stronger foundation in budgeting and financial analysis. This would help me to be able to have a balance between quality and cost when it comes to sourcing ingredients. Finally, I plan on continuing to develop my adaptability skills, especially when working in a fast-paced environment like food and beverage. In order to cultivate this still, I could try and participate in projects that would test my problem-solving abilities in environments where last-minute changes may occur frequently, e.g. event catering for weddings, parties etc.

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