

**SERVICE DELIVERY CHALLENGES FACING THE
HOUSEKEEPING DEPARTMENTS IN HOTELS WITH
CHAIN AFFILIATION IN HARARE**

Miriam Mbasera*

Abstract:

Research elsewhere, within Tourism and Hospitality industry has shown that service delivery in the hotel departments influences the guest's choice of a hotel and the ultimate room and bed occupancy. Housekeeping is one of the departments within the rooms division of a hotel that maintains the guestrooms, public areas and provides a range of services required by guests. To that end the quality of service in this department should be acceptable and in conformance to customer specifications so as to encourage repeat business. The researcher raised an argument on the proposition that the hotel establishment's quality of service delivery is dependent on its expertise in housekeeping operations. This article is on service delivery challenges facing the housekeeping departments in hotels with chain affiliation in Harare. The study was carried out against the background of a considerable decrease in bed and room occupancies in hotels with chain affiliation in Harare, coupled with a remarkable exodus of hotel employees leading to constant recruitment of new employees in hotels where study was carried out.

Key words:

Internal customers: Marshal et al cited in Paraskavas (2001) note that internal customers are "paid" professional consumers of services. Kotler et al (2007) note that internal customer in the

* Tourism Leisure and Hospitality Studies, Faculty of Commerce, University of Zimbabwe (UZ), P.O Box MP 167, Mt Pleasant, Harare, Zimbabwe.

service firm are customer contact employees who must be well trained and motivated to deliver quality service.

Housekeeping: The department of a hotel that provides a range of services such as cleaning, laundry, dry cleaning, valet, and child minding.

Introduction:

Wagen(1996) notes that housekeeping is one of the departments within the rooms division of a hotel that maintains the public areas and the guest rooms. A hotel is defined by Medlik(1994) as an establishment providing for reward accommodation, food and drink for travelers and temporary residents and usually also meals and refreshments and sometimes other facilities for other users. Jones (1998) notes that customers are only concerned that the service is of the standard that they expect. Guests expect the quality of service, which is in conformance to customer specifications, service that is in line with the promise to perform set by the hotel organization in all its marketing efforts. Hogan (1994) asserts that service quality is a measure of how well the organization service level matches customer expectations. Johns (1995) notes that it is how the customer perceives the hotel service provider that determines whether the level of service you provide is acceptable. Wagen (1991) describes perception as a person's way of looking at the world. This means one guest's perception may lead to negative word that has remarkable contribution to reduction of hotel or lodge occupancy rate. Housekeeping department is an important department in the rooms division of a hotel. The researcher sought to carry out a study on service delivery in the housekeeping department of the rooms division, because it is an area which has not been researched on in Zimbabwe. Most researches done by Zimbabwe Tourism Authority on hotels, as revealed through the documentary study, focused mainly on room occupancy, bed occupancy and tourist visits in Zimbabwe as a tourist destination.

This study was confined mainly to the housekeeping departments of the hotels that were studied. Housekeeping services as part of the hospitality product create an experience based on the physical surrounding and all associated services that the organization provides during the guest's stay. Foster (1993) observes that a product based on experience depends to a large extent on the abilities and personalities of people delivering the services. He notes that customer needs are

satisfied by benefits not by products themselves. Thus in the housekeeping department benefits of a guest's stay include security, comfort and convenience and compatible stimuli. Service delivery standards within a hotel's departments have a bearing on the guests' choice of a hotel and what they all communicate to the general public by word of mouth. In Harare, hotel utilization statistics compiled by Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA), during the period (January to December) of 2006,2007,2008 and 2009 showed a considerable decrease in bed and room occupancies when compared to the similar period in 2005. The statistical figures reveal that on the average, bed occupancies in hotels experienced a 5% decrease from 28% in 2005 to 23% in 2006. Room occupancies fell correspondingly by 5% from 38% in 2005 to 33% in 2006. (ZTA research And Development Division 2006). In Harare lodge occupancy rate on the average was 40% in the first half of 2006 as compared to 42% in 2005. It is for this reason that the researcher sought to establish any service delivery challenges facing the accommodation sector in Harare. This was done with a view to establish skills in housekeeping operations that may have a bearing on room and bed occupancy in hotels with chain affiliation. Service delivery is a marketing tool in the hotel organization, yet the housekeeping services are inseparable from the individuals who provide them. For example a room cleaned by a housekeeping aide who is an expert in his/her field and has developed a unique reputation and certainly reflects such expertise in service delivery is most likely to lure more clients to the establishment through word of mouth marketing. There has been a remarkable exodus of employees in search of greener pastures to neighbouring countries. This leads to constant recruitment of new employees in the housekeeping department.

Statement of the problem:

In Harare hotel utilization statistics compiled by Zimbabwe Tourism Authority from the year 2000 to 2010 reveal that there has been a considerable decrease in room and bed occupancy. There also has been a remarkable exodus of hotel employees in search of greener pastures to neighbouring countries. This leads to constant recruitment of new employees, particularly in the housekeeping department which is labour intensive. This has lead the researcher to seek to establish skills in housekeeping and quality of services in hotels with chain affiliation in Harare where there has been a notable decrease in room and bed occupancy.

Proposition:

Hotel establishment's ultimate quality of service delivery is dependent on its expertise in housekeeping operations.

The objectives of this study were

1. To establish the operations within the housekeeping department in hotels under study.
2. To find out service delivery systems that ensure environment for living in the hotels under study.
3. To establish the skills and knowledge needs amongst supervisors and operations managers in the housekeeping department.
4. To establish whether managers develop interpersonal competencies, and emotional attributes within employees in the housekeeping department of the hotels under study

Assumptions:

The researcher assumed that;

1. The housekeeping department of the hospitality organization takes care of its internal and external customers.
2. The management set standards when delegating tasks to subordinates in the housekeeping departments and productivity is in accordance with the set standards.
3. Supervisors and their subordinates have expertise in the tasks that they perform
4. Operations supervisors and managers know their department's training needs.

Literature Review:

The Housekeeping Department

Wagen (1990) says that housekeeping is the department within the rooms division of a hotel that maintains the guestrooms public areas and provides a range of services such as cleaning, valet, laundry, dry cleaning and child minding.

The housekeeping department has the responsibility to clean rooms, public areas and décor. The department also makes sure that all fittings are in good working order, including lights fittings and furnishings. Housekeeping department also sees to guest services such as shoe polishing, morning paper, replenishing supplies such as toiletries and mini bar stock, care and maintenance of recreational area such as pools, health clubs, saunas, game rooms and storage areas. The housekeeping department sees to the cleaning of restaurants, banquet rooms, ballrooms and employee cafeteria as well as landscaping. (Kasavana and Brooks 2005). All environmental health concerns are a responsibility of the housekeeping department

Morrison (1996) says a desirable environment should provide a variety of compatible stimuli that are necessary for mental and physical wellbeing, as well as fundamental physiological needs of hotel guests. Human senses are of paramount importance in the overall running of the housekeeping department. Hurst (1992) notes that a hotel is expected to be clean from an aesthetic point of view than any other buildings. Dust and dirt accumulation spoils the reputation of the hotel in the society.

The nature of housekeeping service operations

Schroder (2000) notes that housekeeping operations deals with the production of goods and services. Housekeeping is the key department that ensures availability of clean rooms for sale to the customers in a hospitality establishment. Johns and Edwards (1994) observe that there is duality in housekeeping subsystems, comprising 'production' operations concerned with producing tangible products such as a clean room and 'service' operations. The rooms and furniture are tangible aspects, which have a physical existence and can be evaluated in an objective way. The intangible 'service' element is often perceived only by staff and customers who actually participate in the service encounter.

Morrison (1996) observes that production and consumption of hotel services take place at the same time and in the same location, hence guests need to stay in a hotel to experience the service they purchase. As the accommodation services cannot be tested and evaluated before a customer buys them, people tend to rely on word of mouth based on other people's experiences. Holloway and plant (1996) add that services cannot be sampled or inspected in advance of their purchase; therefore an element of risk is involved on the part of the purchaser. It is imperative that quality service be delivered in the housekeeping as Gronroos (1990) remarks that what counts is quality

as it is perceived by the customers. While good quality procedures can help to reduce extreme variations in performance they cannot overcome the human problems inherent in the hotel services, hence control of the services is neither precise nor easy to achieve because of the human factor, affecting service providers and also manifested in human resources management dynamics.

Morrison (1996) considers that hospitality services are perishable in nature. They cannot be inventoried, hence if a hotel room is unsold in a day it is just like water down the drain and as Holloway and plant (1996) put it, is revenue lost forever. This character of perish ability means that capacity and demand management are important for the success of a hospitality organization. Morrison (1996) asserts that distribution channels of hotel services are such that customers have to come to the service and hence there is dependence on complementary organizations such as airlines and other transport services. Holloway and plant (1996) consider that there is a relationship of services to service providers which they describe as 'inseparability' of some services from individuals who provide them. In hotels for example, whatever the quality of the food and however attractive the décor, service is so much an integral part of the product that it would be unlikely to be purchased from a poor service provider. In a hotel organization it also implies that both the service provider and the customer must be present for the transaction to occur.

Cost determination of hotel services is not easy particularly the variable costs, cannot be precisely estimated as some customers may require more cleaning of a room by the housekeeping room attendants.

Housekeeping and the internal customer

Two key maxims underlie internal marketing: namely that every member of the organization has a customer; and those internal customers must be sold on the service and be happy in their jobs, before they can effectively serve the final customer. (Albrecht, 1990 P4 cited in Paraskavas 2001)

In all service delivery systems, employees are seen as part of a "customer chain" which starts with the external suppliers and ends with the external customers. All exchanges taking place

within this chain are considered supplier-customer interfaces, with each department which precedes it and supplier of the department which follows in the chain.

This view of different internal suppliers and customers some which deal directly within the service delivery process and some which provide support services to the service delivery process, appear to be closely related to the concept of value chain by Porter (1995). The section between the external supplier and the external customer can be defined as the internal service chain. Successful customer orientation should be an integrated approach implemented along the entire service chain taking into consideration needs, reciprocal obligations and satisfaction of both internal and external customer

Within a hotel there are numerous service chains. In certain hotels the use of cleaning contractors has resolved possible inadequacies of housekeeping departments. (Paraskavas 2001). Subcontracting, also termed outsourcing, in hotel organizations is mainly on the non-core activities such as dry cleaning and laundry services. In the outsourcing philosophy, focus of the department is on the core business in the value chain, while non-core business tasks are carried out by the supplier. (Samuel 1996)

Internal service Encounters

An internal service encounter may be defined as the dyadic interaction between employees in different departments of the organization and management has the responsibility to respond to the needs of their internal customers.

Gronroos (1990) suggests that any analysis of the internal dynamics of the organization should consider the internal customer concept, describing the service delivery process as a network of systems consisting of interrelations and interdependence between a number of sub-processes which support one another and performance in one of them will eventually affect the service delivered to the external customer. This view has been supported by Heskett et al(2006) who state that the quality of internal service encounters is characterized by the attitudes that the employees have towards one another and the way employees serve each other inside the organization. In that sense an internal service encounter is rather different from the one of "internal marketing," in that the former is about how employees of one department serve

employees from another department, while the latter is about how the organization, mainly through human resources department serves its employees.

Managing service quality in housekeeping

Managing quality in the housekeeping department as in any department in a service organization is important as Kotler et al (2003) notes that a service firm can differentiate itself by delivering constantly higher quality than its competitors. There has to be a strategy in housekeeping which identifies when, where and how the service product shall perform. Systems with measurable criteria for easy of working procedures are desirable in providing the services. As in all hospitality establishments people providing housekeeping services have to be people-people, who are interested in others. Caring for guests' welfare, comfort and satisfaction have to be given priority. It is therefore important to note that people providing the services directly to the customers such as those in the housekeeping department have the support of everyone in the organization, hence there is need for effective internal marketing. Kotler et al (2007) argues that internal marketing involves training and motivating customer contact employees. The idea of an internal customer and of a customer driven system that matches internal services to users needs emerged in the literature in the late 1980s (Parakavas 2001; Bowen and Griener 1987; Vandermerwe and Gilbert, 1989).

The concept evolved originally through the idea of making jobs in the service industry more attractive to potential and existing employees (Sasser and Arbeit, 1976). The house keeping is labour intensive and in most cases people in the operations are trained on the job. Johns and Lockwood (1989) note that it is possible to train staff to follow a particular house style of cleaning a room or making a bed for instance, or any other transformation process comprising goods and services.

Others tackle quality from the customers' point of view "fitness for purpose" or "something flawless" or "good value for money". In the housekeeping department, management should monitor and maintain the service standards to ensure that service delivery process draws together customer expectations, needs and wants and the service provider. This will bring about a situation where customer gets value and the provider gets revenue and thus everyone's satisfaction. In Service delivery the main objective is to provide customers with quality experience which will turn them into regular patrons of the establishment who are also firm

advocates who will 'sell' the place to the extra detail on quality of service leading to growth in market share. Gregory (1972:6) relates quality to the match between product and production specification. One challenge facing the hospitality industry is reconciling the quality of the service actually produced with that perceived by the guest.

The first management concept to appear in the hospitality industry concerning quality is quality control. "Quality control recognizes that quality should be designed into a detailed specification and that quality checks should be made throughout the process". Lockwood (1996:6) Checking would be done by staff specifically employed for the purpose. If defects are discovered then the product will be rejected as 'non conforming' and will be taken back for rework.

Quality control is therefore a measure used to identify mistakes during service delivery process so as to reduce rework such as cleaning a room the second time as per customer's request. The approach is such that an operation identifies and segregates a non conforming product or service and there is an identified procedure where emphasis is on find and fix mentality amongst service providers. This includes the inspection of materials at the receiving bay such as recyclable linen to check for defects on laundered materials before they get to the customer. It also involves checking of expiry dates on non recyclable materials such as shampoos, lotions and bath soap.

In order to maintain quality of products and services available to guests and customers, most hospitality organizations implement a quality service assurance.

John and Nick (1996:57) note that quality assurance aims to maintain a precise control of the process so that no rework and no failures are encountered. This necessitates setting measurable standards for activities such as carefully cleaning rooms and avoiding culturing bacteria in bath tubs or toilet chambers. In the housekeeping department equipment for room service must be checked, holding times of cooked food for room service can be observed, continuous inspection of rooms as well as noting unsatisfactory conditions to the customer, form part of the quality assurance approach. In hotels, quality assurance can be maintained through quality circles. Nick and Johns (1996:58) defines quality circles as a voluntary group of employees who meet regularly to identify and solve problems arising at their work place. Quality assurance involves other measures as total quality management (TQM). Cronje (2004:518) says TQM is a

management philosophy, or a method of 'thinking and doing' with the primary aim of satisfying the need' and expectations of customers by means of high quality products or services. It endeavors to shift the responsibility for quality from merely the operations management function to the entire business. In principle this will assure the quality of the process as a whole and therefore of the product or services which make up the output. Main features of TQM are that: all employees recognize, take the responsibility for their inputs and outputs in the housekeeping department and are committed to monitoring, documenting and correcting faulty inputs and output.

Research gap

After sourcing the literature, the researcher identified a research gap, as to the best of her knowledge no research had not been carried out on Service delivery challenges facing the housekeeping departments in hotels with chain affiliation in Harare. The researcher then sought to establish Service delivery challenges facing the housekeeping departments in hotels with chain affiliation in Harare.

Methodology

The method used was a qualitative research. Leedy (1997) notes that qualitative research is a research design used in all research approaches that are interpretive in nature. Qualitative refers to research approaches that do not use statistical methods of collecting data and processing it.

Research design

This research was carried out using descriptive survey. Saunders Lewis and Thornhill (1997) define a survey as a technique in which information from a sample of people is collected by use of a questionnaire. The study was carried out using self-administered questionnaires, on a face to face basis with operations managers and supervisors in the housekeeping departments at the City's leading hotels which include Sheraton, Jamison hotel, Crown Plaza, Quality International Hotel, New ambassador hotel and Holiday Inn.

Data collection instruments

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill(2003) distinguish between three types of data variables that can be collected through questionnaires. These include opinion, behaviour and attribute variables. The questionnaires for Rooms division managers/supervisors included all three variables mentioned above with questions on services provided, skills, knowledge and training requirements needed within the organisation.

Population

Population is described as any complete group of people or entities sharing some common set of characteristics. (Zimukund (2000) Cooper; and Schindler 2003) concur and say that a population is a group of individuals that have one or more characteristics in common, that are of interest to the researcher. The population under study comprised supervisors and managers in housekeeping operations in the aforementioned hotels

Sample

A sample is described by Cooper and Schindler (2003) as the element selected from the population on which we may draw conclusions about the entire population and is the unit of study.

In this study a total of ten (30) operations managers/supervisors were selected using probability sampling method. Probability sampling is described by Saunders et al (1997) as a method of sampling in which the probability of each case being selected from the population is known and usually equal for all cases. To that end, the sample made it possible to get responses concerning the organizations under study, addressing research questions and achieving objectives which required the researcher to estimate statistically the characteristics of the population interviewed. Twenty- (40) research assistance participated in the housekeeping operations and completed an observation schedule.

Chapter 4:

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the data concerning the service delivery challenges facing the hospitality sector in Harare. Data is presented in relation to responses given to address the objectives of the study. Firstly responses to managers/supervisors interview in Rooms Division are given in descriptive narrations. Responses to observation checklist are also given in a graph showing frequency of responses followed by narrations

Findings

Responses to questionnaire used to interview rooms division Manager/Supervisors.

Question number 1 sought to establish the services provided by the housekeeping department in these hotels where the research was carried out. All responses indicated that the housekeeping department maintains the guestrooms, public areas and provides a range of services such as, valet, laundry, dry cleaning child minding services, shoe polishing, supplying morning paper, replenishing supplies such as toiletries and mini bar stock, care and maintenance of recreational area such as pools, health clubs, saunas, game rooms and storage areas. The housekeeping department sees to the cleaning of restaurants, banquet rooms, ballrooms and employee cafeteria as well as landscaping.

Question number 2 sought to establish the type of services that are done by outside sources. As given in the table above, all respondents representing 60% of the interviewed managers/supervisors indicated that establishments do their own housekeeping and so no services from outside the organization. 40 % said they outsource laundry of linen and dry cleaning only but most laundry is done internally. This reveals that the workers have knowledge and skills to do the various laundry operations except that of linen which is bulk.

Question number 3 sought to establish the methods used to delegate responsibility to guestroom attendants by manager/supervisors 100% of respondents indicated that they delegate responsibility to their subordinates through results expected, setting of performance standards

and establishing procedures through morning brief meetings on procedures. This implies that there is a lot of guidance required every morning on how to perform tasks.

Question number four (4) sought to establish the procedures of washing up of equipment used in the guest rooms for guest services. 100% of the respondents indicated that they use machines to wash up with hot water and detergents. All utensils are sterilized and kept dry. This reveals that level of hygiene in handling guestroom equipment is high,

Question five (5) sought to establish skills knowledge or training expected in a guestroom attendant on recruitment. 100% respondents indicated that knowledge and training expected in a guestroom attendant on recruitment ranges from 5 'O' levels with good communication skills, and training in all the procedures and standards of work to be performed. 15% respondents added that room attendants should have general knowledge of the hospitality industry. 25% said they need good customer care skills and grooming, 30% said they should have good interpersonal skills, assertiveness with problem solving and decision making skills. 15% respondents added that room attendants should have general knowledge of the hospitality industry. 25% said they need good customer care skills, 15% of respondents indicated that guest room attendants should be honest. These responses imply that there is need for training in good communication skills. General knowledge of hospitality industry, good interpersonal skills, assertiveness, problem solving and decision making skills. This indicates that there is need for training in the aforementioned areas.

Question number six (6) sought to establish staff development opportunities or training given to staff while on the job. 30% respondents indicated that they are trained to perform tasks in housekeeping such as bed making, 35% customer care skills and 30% said guest handling, 15% said hygiene standards, 25% said supervisory skills, 20% said knowledge of the hospitality industry, 15% said world standards and benchmarking, 30% information technology in hospitality. 30% in communication skills. The above findings imply that there is need by the department to staff develop employees to enhance their service delivery through training in

housekeeping and customer care guest handling and all the above mentioned areas. It is possible to translate all these gaps into teachable content that can be offered within the organization or by outside consultancy to train staff while on the job.

Question number seven (7) sought to establish if there is any participation of housekeeping staff in a relevant continuing education programme outside the organization 60% of respondents indicated that their housekeeping staff participates in relevant continuing education outside the organization. 40% said the department staff develops workers in their organizations on the job only. This reflects that there is need to come up with training courses in institutions that offer continuing education in housekeeping to complement in-house training in these hotels. Appropriate training programmes relevant to address the aforementioned areas would enhance service delivery skills in housekeeping staff.

Question number eight (8) sought to establish the programmes or training that would enhance the skills and knowledge of housekeeping division of the hotel. Frequency of the responses as given in the above table indicate that 30% need training in customer care, 15% said grooming and hygiene, 10% said HIV aids, 20% said general knowledge of the hospitality product, 20% said guest services, 5% said standards maintenance 5% said bed making skills, 5% bathroom cleaning and 5% supervisory skills. This implies that the housekeeping staffs have challenges in all the above areas and all these areas can be translated into teachable content to allow supervisor and operations managers in these divisions of the hotel to improve service delivery in their departments.

Question number nine (9) sought to establish continuing education programmes for linen and laundry staff in the establishments that were under study. Frequency of responses indicate that 5% require more of on the job training, 5% requires training on new methods of cleaning, 5% in changes in laundry, 10% in dress making basics, 5% want training in hotel computer systems such as Fidelio, Galileo etc. 5% need telephone answering skills, 15% need skills in washing and ironing. 5% need skills in operating washing machines and laundry in general. 10% said they

need skills in supervisory skills. 5% said they need outsourcing expertise in linen and laundry. This implies that these hospitality organizations have the aforementioned service delivery needs which will need to be translated into content laundry and textiles so as to train supervisors and operations staff responsible for linen and laundry in the housekeeping department.

Question number ten (10) sought to find out quality assurance procedures that have been put in place for cleaning of rooms and guest services. Frequency of responses to this question indicated that in the organization that were studied 10% ensure sound communication between guests relations and floor attendance, 5% said they ensure sound communication between guest relations and security who are at the receiving bay, 45% said they make sure that there is compliance in housekeeping with set standards in hospitality industry. 10% said they use the appropriate cleaning materials to maintain good quality laundry. 5% said they follow a cleaning schedule and everyday rooms are inspected after they have been cleaned. 5% said they maintain quality by checking on drying of clothes and pressing. 15% of respondents said they check for damaged linen, implying that there is need to equip them with textiles knowledge and handling skills. 5% indicated that they contract a reputable dry cleaner to do laundry for their guests. All the above responses indicated that there is need for training of staff in standardizing through techniques such as area inventorying and quality assurance in their organizations.

Responses to Observation Checklist:

Question number one (1) sought to establish cleanliness of the facility. 40% of responses said that facilities were above average in cleanliness, 30% said excellent while another 30% said the facility is excellent. This implies that the facilities have high standards of cleanliness and generally there is no dirt that can be seen with a necked eye.

Question number two (2) sought to find out bacterial prevention chemicals used when cleaning. As given in the above table, 95% said they use multipurpose chemical, 5% said they use handy Andy and a sanitizer. This implies that in all the organizations studied, there is use of chemical to sanitize the rooms and all facilities.

Question number three (3) sought to establish the names of chemical used and responses had the following frequency; 20% said lime wash for kettles, 15% said Jik, 95% said all purpose chemicals. However, responses also imply that there is need for culture and sensitivity of bacteria on the facilities in the room for example in toilets so as to come up with specific types of chemicals to destroy specific types of bacteria.

Question number four (4) sought to establish methods of disposal of dry refuse from the hotel establishment. 100% respondents indicated that dry refuse is placed in bins which are collected by municipality vans for disposal. This implies that the housekeeping department abides with the city by-laws in refuse disposal

Question number five (5) sought to establish methods of disposal of waste water. 100 % respondents said they use sewage system disposal. Sewage disposal is in compliance with city health and safety by-laws

Question number six (6) sought to establish how cleaning materials are stored. 80% respondents said they store in cool, dry store rooms all chemical, tissues and brushes. 40% said they store in locked up cupboards. This reflects that storage of cleaning materials is being done in a way which ensures security and prevention of pilferage.

Question six (7) sought to establish protective clothing used at work in the housekeeping department. 100% said they put on uniforms. 30% of respondents said they put on uniforms. 30% said they wear gumboots to protect feet. 20% said they put on closed. This implies that all hotels ensure protection of staff through use of protective clothing.

Question number eight (8) sought to establish how cleaning of tubs is rated. 40% of respondents said it can be rated as excellent. 60% said it is rated as above average. This implies that room attendants clean to ensure the facility is sparkling clean to the eye.

Question number 9 sought to establish How cleaning of toilets is rated 45% of respondents said it is above average while 55% said its rated as excellent. This implies that there is need for more training in the operations staff on cleaning of toilets

Question number ten (10) required information on cleaning of floors. 65% of respondents rated cleaning of floors as excellent, 30% as above average 5% as above average another 5% as average. This implies that the appearance of the hotel enhanced by the floors which are thus rated. The 5% that rated cleaning of floors as average imply that there is need to upgrade science of cleaning skills to ensure bacteria free hotel.

Question eleven (11) sought to establish rating of cleanliness of utensils for room service.

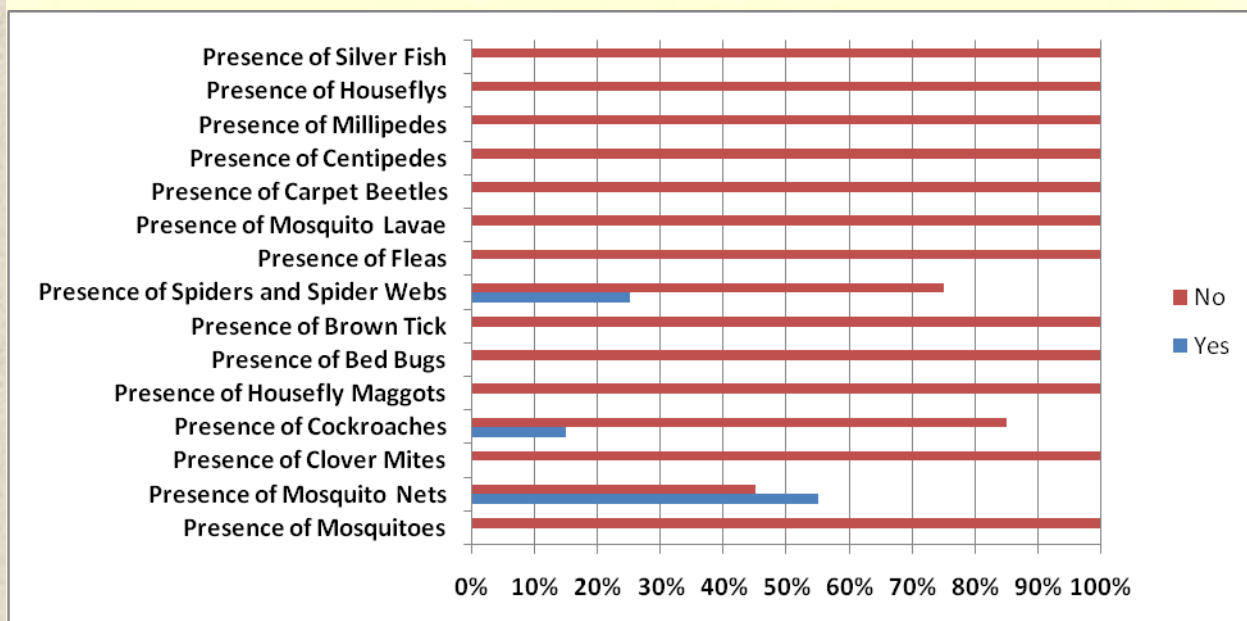
45% rated the cleanliness as excellent, 15% said above average and 25% say average, while 15% of respondents rated cleaning the room service water jugs as below average. This implies that water glasses and water jugs are well cleaned. However the findings also reveal that there is need to incorporate more hygiene skills into the training of workers in the housekeeping departments.

Question number twelve(12) sought to find out on ventilation of guest rooms. As shown in the table above, 10% of respondents rated ventilation of guests' rooms as excellent, while 85% rated it as good while 5% rated it as fair. This implies that the hotel rooms, lobby areas in these hotels are well ventilated. However there is need to impart more skills to housekeeping department staff on ventilation, as this is an aspect which has a bearing on customer satisfaction.

Question number thirteen (13) sought to establish information on room temperature rooms 20% of respondents rated the room temperature as excellent, 75% said the room temperature is good while 5% rated room temperature as poor. This implies that the room temperature in rooms is highly rated except for the 5% poor rating which implies that in some housekeeping departments there is need to keep temperature within the acceptable range.

Question number fourteen (14) sought to establish the cleanliness of walls in the hotels under study. As shown in the diagram above 20% of the respondents said walls in the organizations under study are rated as excellent. 45% rated walls as good while 30% said that walls can be rated as fair. This implies that there is a need to equip housekeeping staff with skills on cleaning of walls.

Question number fifteen (15) sought to establish the presence of any insects indicated on the checklist in the hotel rooms.



As shown in the diagram above, all 100% of respondents indicated that there were no mosquitoes. 55% of respondents said rooms have mosquito nets. This implies that some hotels go to great lengths to protect guests from mosquitoes. 100% said there are no clover mites. 85% of respondents indicated that no cockroaches were seen in the hotel room while 15% of respondents indicated the presence of cockroaches. This implies that there are some small food particles that are perhaps left on the floor possibly after room service, allowing the insects to survive. This implies that there is a need to train housekeeping staff in the roach control skills. 100% said there are no bed bugs, 100% no ticks in rooms.

25% of respondents indicated the presence of recluse spider in rooms, while 75% said there are neither spiders in rooms nor cobwebs in rooms. Absence of maggots, bed bugs, carpet beetles,

centipede, millipede, and houseflies, reflect a high standard of cleanliness of rooms. Absence of brown tick and fleas indicate that the rooms are clean enough for occupancy without fear of tick borne diseases or flea borne diseases.

Discussion:

Conclusion reached from analysis of data in this study was best considered in relation to the research objectives, how they agreed with or nullified the proposition.

Objective number one sought to establish the operations within the housekeeping department in hotels under study. The findings revealed that the housekeeping department is responsible for cleaning of guest rooms, public places, as well as landscaping in hotels that were studied. This implies that the housekeeping department is tasked with the important task of keeping the establishment clean. This suggests that workers within the housekeeping departments should be knowledgeable in all the various housekeeping activities for which they have responsibility. Cleanliness of the establishment directly influences the customer's view of the establishment and the decision to stay in a hotel room. One's dress, grooming and demeanor impart an attitude, mood and/or identity to others (Solomon 1985). This in a way can add tangibility to a service. (Berry 1980). The findings of this study support the proposition that hotel establishment's ultimate service delivery is dependent on the expertise of employees in the housekeeping department.

The study also revealed that some of the establishments outsource laundry services and dry-cleaning services from outside the organization. One concludes that the hotels studied lack human resources with expertise in some non-core activities outsourced. Adoption of the outsourcing management philosophy would enable the hotel to shed off responsibility over non-core activities so as to focus on the core business of maintaining and selling rooms. Marshall (1998) cited in Paraskavas (2001) notes that the use of cleaning contractors in certain hotels has resolved some inadequacies of housekeeping departments. On the contrary, Samuel (2001) observes that there are problems brought about by outsourcing related to the internal services chains and satisfaction of the internal and the external customers. If these problems go on

unnoticed or unresolved there is a possibility that they might affect service delivery and lead to reduction in hotel room and bed occupancy percentages.

Objective number two sought to find out service delivery systems that ensure a welcoming environment to resident customers in hotels under study. Findings revealed that within the establishments that were studied, there is considerable delegation of responsibility amongst the various members in the housekeeping departments through routine morning gatherings and briefings in order to achieve goals. This suggests that workers need to continuously be updated on knowledge and skills and sharing responsibility and delegating authority in the housekeeping operations. There is a lot of guidance required every morning on how to perform tasks. Witt and Ferris (2003) state that social skills are developed over time so it would appear that many of the new employees may not have had the opportunity to fully develop the required skills prior to commencing work. The researcher concluded that the establishments where research was carried out still face a challenge to train the employees, equipping them to deliver quality service without gathering for routine morning briefings. This calls for the adoption of the concept of internal customer, where each department within the hotel should treat recipients of their output as internal customer and strive to provide quality outputs for the external customer, the hotel guest.

Objective number three sought to establish skills and knowledge needs if any, amongst supervisors and operations staff in the housekeeping department. It was established that on recruitment, training is inevitable as guestroom attendants for example, are semi-skilled, with five 'O' level subjects or less plus functional communication in English language. In addition, it was revealed that some room attendants on recruitment are required to just have a general knowledge of the hospitality industry, good customer care skills, smartness, assertiveness, honest, good interpersonal and decision making skills. The study also revealed that continuous training of staff is necessitated by high staff turnover as members of the departments leave the establishments to neigh by states in search of greener pastures. One concludes that these hotels have a challenge to continuously train their housekeeping staff and ensure the desired expertise and quality service delivery to match the set standards. Moreover, Rutherford (1995) says that housekeeping is one of the most labour intensive functions and largest cost-centres in the hotel. The executive housekeeper has the responsibility to establish performance standards. Kasavana

and Brooks (2005) concur with the adage “you can’t expect what you don’t expect”. The executive housekeeper develops area inventory lists and sets performance standards, answering to the question “what must be done to clean or maintain the major items within this area?” Standards are required quality levels of performance, describing in detail how the job must be done.

From the findings the researcher came to a conclusion that there is need for training in good grooming, deportment, business communication and customer services as well as the science of cleaning bed making, hygiene, communication skills, hotel management systems, environmental health, laundry and textiles to cater for the disparities in skills requirement amongst housekeeping staff. The researcher concluded any appropriate training programmes may be welcome in the organization for as long as they would be relevant to address the aforementioned areas to so as to enhance skills amongst workers.

The researcher concluded from the findings that workers in the housekeeping departments abide with the city by laws and are to a great extent well skilled in refuse and waste water disposal. The researcher concluded that the training gaps identified, are necessitated by high staff turnover and recruitment of new unskilled personnel.

Objective number four also sought to establish whether managers develop interpersonal competencies, and emotional attributes within employees necessary for quality service delivery in the housekeeping division of the hotels that were studied. Findings lead the researcher to conclude that the housekeeping staff has challenges in customer care, hygiene, awareness of HIV and AIDS, general knowledge of hospitality product and guest services, maintenance of standards and supervisory skills. Interaction between employees and customers is a central aspect of the hotel product and the hospitality it seeks to provide (Nickson, Warhurst, & Dutton, 2005). Customers’ perception of quality, and to a large extent, their view of the hotel product, are influenced by the behaviour and capabilities of the employees they interact with (Farrell, Souchon, & Durden, 2001,). Ray and Wieland (1985) advocate for product knowledge and excellence. They note that all workers in hospitality operations should be knowledgeable about

hospitality product or service on offer and know how to perform all duties required of them. Johns and Edwards (1994) note that services are produced by complex interpersonal interactions. In addition there should be a close liaison between housekeeping and front office so that the information about guest- room is kept accurately up to date. (Baker Bradley and Huyton 2000). The customer is not merely the object of focus of interaction, but actually participates and affects the quality of the service. In hotels customers seek memorable experiences that develop positive feelings (Baum, 2006). Customers want to feel special, to be treated as individuals and have their unique needs met during customer service interactions. (Korczyński, 2002). Hotel employees should be able to answer all questions posed by guests and should be able to handle all potential conflicts with tact and skill. The researcher concluded that some housekeeping staff lack such important skills there is need for training. The lacking skills could be translated into teachable content to be taught to supervisors and operations managers in housekeeping departments in the hotels to enable them to achieve results in their departments. Findings also revealed that linen and laundry supervisors in the establishments that were studied needed more training in information technology, basics of dress making, hotel management computer systems such as Fidelio and Galileo, telephone answering skills, purchasing, inventorying, quality management, customer relations, ethical issues and outsourcing skills.

From the findings of the study the researcher concluded that generally the rooms and public places are made pest and bacteria free and no dirt can be seen by a naked eye. Most establishments use all purpose cleaner to sanitize facilities in rooms. However the absence of culture and sensitivity swab testing leads the researcher to conclude that the hotels face a challenge of harboring bacteria which cannot be seen by a naked eye. Millions of bacteria exist in the housekeeping facilities, with capacity to cause infections. (Martin 1998) In addition to that Garman (2001) acknowledges that bacterial infection can be transmitted to a guest in one of the following ways. from one part of his body, to another, from previous guest to the next guest, or from another person, either a staff or a guest in the hotel. Transmission can be direct or indirect but in either cases it can be controlled by the housekeeping department to safe levels by removing conditions necessary for their growth and multiplication.

Recommendations:

- The researcher commends the development of a course entitled Hospitality operations management (ECHOM), for hospitality operations managers and supervisors which she prepared.

New areas of Research:

- There is need for research involving culture and sensitivity of bacteria on the facilities in the rooms, for example toilet chambers and bath tubs. Culture and sensitivity of bacteria on the facilities in the rooms, toilet chambers and bath tubs will ensure a match of the right chemical to destroy specific bacteria rather than using all purpose cleaner.

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