

## 2

# THE NATURE AND STRUCTURE OF HOTEL INDUSTRY

## (A) THE NATURE AND STRUCTURE OF HOTEL INDUSTRY AND INDUSTRY KNOWLEDGE

Hotel industry is an international industry and perhaps one of the oldest commercial endeavours in the world. It is understood that the first hotel goes back to the sixth century B.C., which was ventured by husband and wife teams and in which the entire cooking service and recreation was provided by the husband and wife team and his family.

This condition prevailed for several years and changed by the "Industrial Revolution" in 17th century. The seventeenth century saw an improvement in the roads and invention of steam engine which enabled more people to travel. These developments made far-reaching effects on the hotel industry. The turn of the century saw an era that was called the 'belle epoch' when the grand and luxurious hotels flourished. The coming of motor car and air travel has helped to create modern hotels.

In India, the growth of hotel industry started late compared to the hotel business elsewhere in developed countries. Here the hotel industry has operated in the western style particularly in the American style. It is regarded that the true hotel construction in India took shape after the advent of railways. The hotel era of India was first dominated in New Delhi by the Oberoi Group which was quickly followed by ITC, ITDC and other luxurious group of hotels. By and by the hotel business proliferated throughout India and has become more attractive to private investors with assurance of financial incentives from government.

Some interesting historical milestones in the growth of the hotel industry are as follows :

- (a) Indoor plumbing was introduced in the hotel industry for the first time in the year 1834.
- (b) Steam elevators were first used in hotels in 1853.
- (c) The Netherland Hotel in New York city was the first to have telephones in the room in 1894.
- (d) The Waldraf Astoria was built in New York city in 1896. The original hotel was demolished in 1929 from Empire State Building. The new Waldraf Astoria was built in 1931 at its present location of Park Avenue. The hotel of today is a highly organised

## QUALITIES OF FRONT OFFICE STAFF

It is well known that the people who are on duty at the front desk are among the most important contacts between an arriving guest and the hotel. Guests often derive their initial and sometimes, most lasting impression about the hotel from the moment they first make eye contact with a front desk clerk. It is important for the front desk personnel to greet every guest with a pleasant, personable smile and a warm greeting regardless of the time of day or the amount of activity. At check out time a conscientious front desk clerk bids every guest a front farewell and invites him or her to return again. So in view of its image building and revenue generating activities, the staff working in it should have special qualities because they play a key role as :

1. **Sales man** : They should have the quality of salesmanship to motivate the guest to spend more on the various hotel facilities.
2. **Problem solvers** : Guests invariably approach the front office for help in case they have a problem or a complaint. The staff have to be diplomatic and resourceful to solve the problem at the shortest possible time.
3. **Reference point** : Guests who want information or want to pass on information use them for this purpose.
4. **Co-ordinator** : Since they are reference point, the front office staff are required to coordinate with other departments, airlines, travel agencies and city tour offices to give the guest personalised service.
5. **Image builders** : As an extension to their salesman's role, front office staff can certainly generate a good image for the establishment in their manner of dress, communication, personal conduct and efficiency.

In view of the important role they play, the front office staff must have the following essential attributes :

- A. **A High sense of personal grooming** : Uniforms must be clean and neatly pressed. Hair should be groomed well. Nail should be manicured. A soft cologne is preferable to heavy perfumes. Jewellery should be restricted to one ring and a necklace for ladies. In short, front office staff must be seen at their best at all times.
- B. **Personal Hygiene** : This is imperative to front office personnel. As they are constantly exposed to hotel guests, a clean appearance helps to project a good image not only of themselves but of the establishment as well.
- C. **Self confidence** : This is necessary as front office staff meet guests of different countries, status and cultures. They should be comfortable and feel at ease in dealing with these people.
- D. **Communication must be clear** : It is preferable that front office staff know more than one language. It helps in communicating with guests who cannot speak English or the local language.
- E. **Diplomacy** : Very often there are situations when a guest is irritated over something. A diplomatic dealing helps in diffusing the explosive moment. It is quite common for a busy hotel to have no rooms to offer a guest who have come with a confirmed booking. A diplomatic approach is the only way by which the guest can be pacified.
- F. **Calmness** : Being the nerve centre of the hotel, the front office is constantly in touch with guests and therefore invariably comes under tremendous pressure. The guest always expect personalised, priority treatment and the pressure of demand never ceases. Coupled

duration of stay. The main purpose of the key-card is to provide security to the guest as well as to inform the guest various services offered by the hotel. A guest can never receive from key unless he produces his key - card. A key card acts as a reminder to the guest of his room number and his hotel.

**Key Card Front**

WELCOME TO THE HOTEL BLUE SKY	
Tel. 265398	Telex : 833291
Name _____	
Room No. _____	
Rate _____ + taxes _____	
Date of departure _____	
<i>Please show this card each time you collect your key.</i>	

**Key Card (Back)**

<p>Guests requiring on early call please inform the Hall Porter</p> <p>Safe Deposit Locker is available at the cashier.</p> <p>Restaurant open for    Lunch    12.00 - 15.00 hours</p> <p>   Dinner    12.30 - 23.00 hours</p> <p>Coffee shop open        7.00 - 1.00 hours</p> <p>Car and guide available for local sight – seeing</p> <p>Check out time 12.00 hrs. Guests wishing to leave later, please inform reception.</p>
--

**DEPARTMENTAL NOTIFICATION FORM SLIPS**

In large hotels, a departmental notification form is used to notify various departments about guests arrival, changes of room and so on. This type of notification is essential for various departments to run the hotel smoothly especially for the Housekeeping department, the telephone room, the enquiry office and the bill office.

The arrival notifications are made out by the receptionist at the time of the guest’s arrival. The move or change notification are made out by the receptionist in the case of guest being transferred from one room to another. The departure notification is made out and distributed as soon as a guest has checked out of the hotel by the bill office clerk or cashier. Notification are sent out for all guests, including chance arrival means those guests who arrive without a previous reservation. A chance guest has to pay in advance if he has no luggage, but if he is with luggage and he can produce credit cards or identification no deposit is required. The receptionist must use tact at the time of guests’ identification or deposit in advance.

A notification form is of two types.

## ISSUING AND CONTROLLING ROOM KEYS

Room keys authorize the guest to his room and use the facilities offered by the hotel. Room keys act as an identification to the fact that the guest is an in-house guest. The responsibility for issuing and controlling room keys always lies with the front desk. In some hotels the porter or enquiry desk may have this responsibility and in smaller hotels the receptionist will be responsible.

### KEY SYSTEMS

Most hotels operate either a traditional key system or the new electronic system which is now widely available. The two most common key systems in operation are :

1. **Manual Keys** : The standard manual key system in operation comprises.
  - (a) **Master keys** : It opens all doors and is held by a few senior members of staff, e.g. Duty Manager and the Housekeeper.
  - (b) **Room keys** : There are two sets of keys for every room, the first set is allocated to the guest and the second is kept on a duplicate key board which is kept secured and is usually located at reception.
2. **Electronic Keys or Cards** : There is a new electronic system of "keyless locks" where each guest is issued with an individual plastic card which looks something like a credit card.

### ISSUING ROOM KEYS

In many hotels keys and letters are stored on racks located at the Front Desk.

The rack consists of a number of 'pigeon holes' large enough to hold regular size mail, with a key hook above. Each 'pigeon hole' is clearly numbered by floor and by room. In it incoming mail or messages are kept in the appropriate slot. The key corresponding to the floor and room number is also kept on the hook. Keys are issued from here on request and keys which are not in use remain on the appropriate hook.

### Issuing Keys to Individuals

Room keys are issued to guests on completion of the registration process. The room key may be issued to the guest personally, or to the member of staff accompanying the guest to the room, e.g. the 'porter'. At all other times keys should only be issued to guests on presentation of identification, e.g. the key card.

### Issuing Keys to Groups

For group arrivals, keys may be organised in advance and distributed to guests in individual envelopes.

### DIFFERENT SETS OF KEYS AND THEIR CONTROL

There are four sets of keys.

1. Guest keys
2. Duplicate keys
3. House keeping keys
4. Master keys.