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An undervalued department or a *terra incognita*? Hotel housekeeping from the perspectives of executive housekeepers and room attendants

Abstract

Work in the housekeeping department is related to the sale of guest rooms, which is principally the main product in hotels. Nevertheless, considering a career in the housekeeping department of a hotel is beyond consideration among students studying tourism and new university graduates. This paper's aims are two fold, the first is to explore the reasons why housekeeping work remains undesirable. The second is to illustrate the importance of raising the visibility of this department as a career. Findings from 14 in-depth interviews with executive housekeepers and room attendants revealed that the perception of the work in housekeeping as "unskilled" is still quite common; however there are also some unnoticed career opportunities. After the discourse on these inquiries, the study concludes with recommendations for tourism graduates and tourism academicians, and also includes some suggestions for hotel managers.

Key words: housekeeping department; executive housekeeper; room attendant; career opportunity; Turkey

Introduction

Staying away from home is a function of travel and correspondingly accommodation is mainly the core consumer product of all hotels. Moreover, as Medlik and Ingram (2000) suggested, most of the revenue of a hotel derives from the sale of guest rooms. In other words, more than half of a hotel's revenue originates from the sale of hotel rooms, and room sales produce the greatest gross profit margins. Hence, room sales contribute the largest proportion of the hotel operating profit, as room sales yield the highest profit margin. With this in mind, preparing profit-generating rooms for sale should logically be the main objective of any hotel.

Many scholars have also mentioned that customer satisfaction is related to accommodation standards. For example, Lewis (1987) identified "cleanliness" as the most significant factor for business guests; Atkinson (1988) found that "cleanliness of accommodation" was at the top among the hotel selection criteria of guests, even above the factor "safety and security". Similarly, Knutson (1988) mentioned "a clean and comfortable room" as the first factor that guests look for while choosing a hotel and Weaver and Oh (1993) indicated that "clean surroundings" were perceived as a "very important" factor especially by business travelers.

With this being the case, and despite the fact that there has been a considerable amount of research showing the importance of clean rooms for guests, the question is, why does the work of the housekeeping department remain largely and perhaps frequently "unseen" by tourism graduates and even tourism researchers, by other hotel employees and also hotel guests? The answer is actually multifaceted. The first reason is, the majority of housekeeping activities occur prior to the arrival of hotel guests

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and they do not see the process. When they are in the hotel; the work of the department is serviced while they are not in their rooms. Hunter Powell and Watson (2006) suggested that this absenteeism of guests during the housekeeping service creates the remoteness of this department. Secondly, the job in the housekeeping department is thought to be "dirty work" sociologically as Hughes (1971) stated, characterized by low-pay and physically demanding work (Onsøyen, Mykletun & Sterio, 2009), symbolized by a lack of dignity and status (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999), and viewed as the bottom of the occupational hierarchy in terms of benefits and intrinsic worth (Jones, 2005). It's quite clear that this has been, and remains an undesirable sector for employment. Furthermore, no one wants his or her child to become a guest room attendant. Even management positions in the housekeeping department have an image problem, as it attracts only those individuals with minimal levels of education or skills. Consequently, many new graduates tend to gravitate towards other departments that they perceive as having a higher status as searching for a career in the front office, marketing and sales, or even human resources, before considering a job in the housekeeping department.

Lastly, and most alarmingly, the housekeeping department has rarely been the primary subject of academic research and it can be said that there has been a disproportionate emphasis on other more "glamorous" departments of hotel establishments. Therefore, the main objective of this research is to fill this gap, by examining the probability of career opportunities in housekeeping. This will be done by revisiting the nature of the work, with the help of research representing the views of both executive housekeepers and room attendants. The paper begins with an overview of existing literature that examines the shortcomings of housekeeping work, followed by qualitative research with one-on-one interviews. After the results of the study are discussed, the final section concludes with recommendations and suggestions for tourism graduates, academicians and hotel managers.

Prior literature examining housekeeping work

The housekeeping department's role is fundamental to the presentation of a hotel's product since any problems in their work have a profound effect on both guests' comfort and overall impression of the establishment (Faulkner & Patiar, 1997). The housekeeping work is mainly defined as cleaning and tidying guest rooms, corridors, and public areas such as the lobby, management offices, storage areas and laundry rooms. The cleaning responsibilities of the department can vary from property to property and even more in today's challenging competitive structure. This is seen particularly in "chain hotels", where one can notice that the work of the housekeeping department is getting more complex and goes far beyond cleaning tasks. There is a rising emphasis on meeting quality standards, adopting energy conservation measures, responding to customers (Hunter Powell & Watson, 2006) and applying techniques that improve the managerial skills of the personnel in housekeeping departments.

Scherzer, Rugulies and Krause (2005) identified room attendants as the second-largest group in a hotel in terms of occupation. Despite the crucial importance of housekeeping activities in a hotel's day-to-day operations, the work is still perceived as being carried out by an unskilled person or by a woman and the job is accepted as low-waged, physically demanding (Jones & Siag, 2009; Liladrie, 2010; Sherman, 2011; Knox, 2011), dirty, or repetitive and the workers seen as easily replaceable (Wood, 1997). Possibly for these reasons, little attention has been given to the housekeeping department in academic literature.

Previous research has informed us about some features of the working conditions in the housekeeping department. However, a limited number of studies have examined the room attendants' perception of the nature of their work as workers. Lennon and Wood (1989) found that room attendants'

perceptions were such that their work offered little personal fulfillment and carried with it an aura of low social esteem. Faulkner and Patiar (1997) compared the work related stress of the front office and the housekeeping staff in their research, finding that room attendants identified "feeling undervalued" and "hard work" as being key stressors. Madanoglu, Moreo and Leong (2003) focused on low pay and its relationship to staff turnover in their study. Hunter Powell and Watson (2006) described a room attendant's work as hard, dirty and invisible. They also noted that the management often failed to respect housekeeping workers. Boon (2007) inquired about the difficulties that room attendants encountered when negotiating with the front office. Moreover, there is an accepted belief that the job provides few opportunities for those seeking advancement (Faulkner & Patiar, 1997).

It has been demonstrated through prior research that the work in the housekeeping department is hard, low-paid and excluded from managerial activities. Most of the research also noted the tendency for a room attendant's job to be a gendered occupation for woman. Surprisingly, no research has been conducted into the probability for promotional job opportunities offered by the housekeeping department, as it is impractical that the work only has disadvantages. Similarly, it can be easily recognized that little academic attention has been given to housekeeping department workers in Turkey, where this study has taken place. Therefore, the aim of the present study is to contribute to a better understanding of housekeeping work, in terms of the perceived image of the occupation, and possible opportunities for advancement by giving voice to the executive housekeepers and room attendants at the same time. Moreover, it is expected that these up-to-date research findings will assist managers in reviewing the current conditions of the housekeeping department in their own hotels and tourism graduates in reconsidering their career paths for the future.

Research methodology

The research was carried out with the cooperation of five (5) chain affiliated city-center hotels in Izmir, which is the third biggest city in Turkey. The research was conducted with permission from the management staff and a letter explaining the aim of the research was posted to the general managers of the hotels prior to the research. The managers and the participants were also informed about the study's purpose during this process. Four of these hotels were international chains whereas one hotel was a national chain. The criteria for choosing these hotels were simply that they have similar characteristics in terms of type of guest, price, ownership and concept. The selected hotels were located in the city-center of Izmir and were categorized as business hotels within walking distance of the business and shopping districts, as well as the trade-fair grounds. Their top priority was serving the highest levels of comfort for business travelers. The occupancy rates of the selected hotels were changing from 78% to 86% by the time of data collection when there were some ongoing special business events in the city. The numbers of employees working in these hotels ranged between 185 to 310 and the employee turnover rates were 26% on average. It should also be mentioned that departmental turnover rates were not available. Due to some managerial decisions, two of the hotels did not want to share information about their employee turnover rate and their hotel's employment policies and practices. Three of the hotels stated that they valued the preservation of good relations with their employees and empowered them through honesty and integrity. Moreover, one hotel manager emphasized that no discrimination was allowed with regard to any characteristic of their employees and all employees were treated with dignity and respect. Of the three hotels, two of them mentioned that they allowed their departmental managers some latitude in regards to employment policies and one hotel stated that they closely followed procedures and policies set by the general management.

A qualitative research analysis was selected as the approach to data collection in the present study. In September 2016, empirical material was collected by in-depth, one-on-one interviews with 14 participants, of whom 5 were executive housekeepers and 9 were room attendants at the time of data collection. Rather than recording answers to only the questions asked, an interview was chosen instead of a survey, as it allows the subject to speak freely and as a result, has high validity. It is believed that the material produced by this method is wide-ranging and as a result raises some unexpected concerns.

Participants ranged in age from 26 to 45. They were all provided with information on the research and its aim and were assured about the confidentiality of the information they would provide. Interviews took place in the interviewee's office and were conducted in Turkish, as both the interviewees and the interviewer were native Turkish speakers. The interviews ranged from 30 to 55 minutes, with an average time of 40 minutes and were noted verbatim, as digital recording was not allowed in hotels. A profile of the interviewees is provided in Table 1. In the table numbers were given to interviewees according to their occupation. The executive housekeepers were abbreviated as EH (EH₁ to EH₅) whereas room attendants were abbreviated as RA (RA₁ to RA₉).

Table 1
The profile of the interviewees

No	Gender	Age	Education	Occupation	Total job experience	Job experience in this hotel
EH ₁	Female	40	Voc school (2 years)*	Executive HK	15 years	5 years
EH ₂	Female	45	High school	Executive HK	22 years	8 years
EH ₃	Male	35	Voc school (2 years)*	Executive HK	12 years	2 years
EH ₄	Female	42	Voc school (2 years)*	Executive HK	20 years	10 years
EH ₅	Male	32	University (4 years)	Executive HK	10 years	2 years
RA ₁	Female	26	University (4 years)	Room att.	2 years	1 year
RA ₂	Female	28	High school	Room att.	5 years	2 years
RA ₃	Female	32	High school	Room att.	10 years	2 years
RA ₄	Female	32	Voc school (2 years)*	Room att.	8 years	2 years
RA ₅	Male	30	Voc school (2 years)*	Room att.	5 years	1 year
RA ₆	Female	30	High school	Room att.	3 years	1 year
RA ₇	Female	27	High school	Room att.	1 year	6 months
RA ₈	Female	30	High school	Room att.	5 years	1 year
RA ₉	Male	28	Voc school (2 years)*	Room att.	5 years	1 year

*Note that university education in Turkey is arranged in two different forms as vocational schools where the education ends in two-years and graduate programs for four-years of education.

As seen in Table 1; 2 out of 5 executive housekeepers and 2 out of the 9 room attendants were male. The overwhelming abundance of female employees could be easily seen in the department. Aside from 1 executive housekeeper, 4 graduated from university. The average age for the executives was 39, whereas it was 29 for the room attendants. The educational background of the executive housekeepers was mostly from the tourism-related departments of different universities, and 3 executives graduated from a vocational school where the education program was for a period of 2 years. On the other hand, half of the room attendants only graduated from high school, while the others were again university graduates of either 2 years or 4 years. It can be said that all executive housekeepers were experienced enough in terms of total years of experience, and 3 of them worked in the same hotel for more than 5 years, perhaps proving that the turnover rate for the executives was relatively low. Whereas the total job

experience for room attendants was generally about 5 years or more, their time employed at their current hotel was quite short. As seen from the profiles above, most of them were hired 1 year or less ago.

The research had two different sections, as both the room attendants and executive housekeepers were included in the study. The executive housekeepers and room attendants were mostly asked the same questions, however the executive's section has some special questions related to the occupation. The first section was devoted to the interviews with the room attendants, in order to collect accurate information about their perception of the work in housekeeping department. The second part of the study was devoted to the interviews with executive housekeepers, in order to compare and contrast how different groups perceive the same subjects distinctively.

Results

The results of the study showed that there were five main subjects defining housekeeping work from the perspective of both room attendants and executive housekeepers. The five main subjects are: nature of work, image of work, motivation, payment and opportunities.

Nature of work

Based on the findings, daily housekeeping tasks mostly included: vacuuming the carpet, cleaning the room and bathroom, changing the bed linens, also restocking amenities such as towels, soaps, information brochures, mini-bar and tea/coffee. Each day, room attendants at different hotels were required to make 15-18 rooms on average, with some making up to 22 rooms or more. There was a consensus among all room attendants that the housekeeping work is 'physically tiring and demanding' as the following comments show:

You're always pulling, bending over and lifting. It is tiring (RA₃, female, 32 years old, with 10 years' experience).

...I have had housekeeping experience in different hotels. I can sincerely say that the work in housekeeping is always tiring, even for young people, in all hotels (RA₁, female, 27 years old, with one year's experience).

The job is hard and tiring as most of the materials are really heavy to carry {showing the housekeeping cart/trolley} (RA₄, female, 32 years old, with 8 years' experience).

As the trolley was repetitively mentioned during the interviews of room attendants, the views of executives related to trolleys were also taken. Most of the executive housekeepers asserted that it was not the trolley that made the job physically tiring; in fact it was the problem of overloading them that made the job tiring. With 10 years' experience, a male executive housekeeper added his comment on the subject as:

The trolley is a piece of functional equipment that transports cleaning materials easily. Moreover, it indicates an image to the guests that the action of cleaning is underway. I mean, like a signal, a tangible sign. The problem is about room attendants who do not organize it properly (EH₅, male, 32 years old).

On the other side, executive housekeepers also commented on the physical demanding aspect of the work in department. An executive housekeeper with 15 years' experience in hotel housekeeping commented:

I am sure that all room attendants will definitely mention that the work is hard and tiring in housekeeping. I know it, everybody, including the other departments, knows it. But, here is my question: So, why do

employees from other departments also find their own work tiring? For example, front office (EH₁, female, 40 years old)

A male executive housekeeper, 35 years old, with 12 years experience similarly commented as:

The housekeeping work is physically tiring, this is a characteristic feature for the housekeeping department, but this is also the characteristic of service, isn't it? We {referring to people working in hotel industry} always look like we are running somewhere, pulling, carrying, cleaning, and tidying something. This is the service part of the job (EH₃, male, 35 years old).

Another common remark was about the likelihood of housekeeping work leading to physical injuries. In other words, room attendants reported on the existence of excessive physical demands and high rates of injury as the main problems about housekeeping, as the following room attendants' comments show:

I fell down last month during work, my elbow was injured, and I can't lift my arm to clean the shower walls now (RA₆, female, 30 years old, with 3 years' experience).

There is always pain in my back. The pain is getting worse each day; the doctor said that it's related with my job (RA₈, female, 30 years old, with 5 years' experience)

Another negative aspect of housekeeping work was the time-pressure imposed on employees with an allocation of 25 to 30 minutes to clean each room. Room attendants described these times as 'difficult', 'stressful' and 'compulsive' as the following comments show:

You have to finish the entire task in 25 minutes. When the rooms are messy, you essentially need extra 10 minutes. I feel stressed when I enter a messy room (RA₆, female, 30 years old, with 3 years' experience).

Even 1 minute is important during the cleaning process. You have 30 minutes. That's why you have to be quick and if you are behind schedule, the executive housekeeper will warn you, this is stressful (RA₁, female, 26 years old, with 2 years' experience).

Image of work

Regarding the idea that housekeeping is a woman's job and/or suitable for a woman, women's predominance in terms of the occupation itself was obvious in the research and the interviewees also confirmed this by their comments as:

I have just remembered one of my friends, who were a receptionist at my previous hotel, asking me why I chose housekeeping, although I was male and knew a foreign language. This is actually how other departments see us {laughing}. They are sure that this is a woman's job (RA₉, male, 28 years old, with 5 years' experience).

I am the only male worker in the housekeeping department in this hotel and I am the executive housekeeper. My team is made up of women; they are everywhere {smiling}. Did you say woman's job? (EH₅, male, 32 years old).

On the other hand, 7 out of 9 room attendants mentioned that housekeeping work was considered low in prestige and status by other people in society and even by guests as the following comments show:

I see my work as providing a useful service to guests, but I don't think that the guests have the same view. They don't even want to communicate with housekeepers (RA₂, female, 28 years old, with 5 years' experience).

My family was very upset when they heard my new job. They got angry because I graduated from university and didn't deserve being a room cleaner (RA₄, female, 32 years old, with 2 years' experience).

From my point of view the guests think that we {referring the housekeepers} are unqualified. Sometimes the guests ask me my education and when they learn of my university graduation, I can understand that they feel pity for me (RA₅, male, 30 years old, with 5 years' experience).

Moreover, two room attendants mentioned their feeling that they {the housekeeping personnel} were being treated differently from colleagues in other departments. Their comments were as follows:

We do the job, we know the job, but the administrative staff decides the change in room decoration for example... If they had asked my opinion, I would recommend some ideas so that they would not choose the wrong chairs for the rooms (RA₆, female, 30 years old, with 3 years' experience).

Can we request something better from the managers? We are just the housekeepers; we cannot offer any idea about our job, because we are lower in status (RA₁, female, 26 years old, with 2 years' experience).

Herein, the same question was asked to executive housekeepers in order to compare the different group members' opinions. Although the executives didn't share the same view with room attendants, they mentioned their knowledge about the probable feelings of room attendants at this subject.

I don't think that our colleagues in other departments treat the housekeeping department differently. We all work in the same condition. They {the room attendants} sometimes misunderstand the different responsibilities of each department (EH₃, male, 35 years old).

I am sure that all other departments understand our tiring working conditions and they never underestimate our efforts (EH₄, female, 42 years old).

Motivation

In terms of motivation, it is essential to remember the expression of Janes and Wisnom (2010) as "if there is one thing has been learned about motivating employees, it's that one size definitely does not fit all." It is understood that most room attendants were motivated extrinsically whereas the executive housekeepers mentioned the importance of intrinsic motivation. This difference between two parties can be seen in the following comments:

What motivates me is actually extra revenue, extra payment for my high performance (RA₂, female, 28 years old, with 5 years' experience).

Money reward is the most important motivator as we {referring room attendants} have a low income (RA₅, male, 30 years old, with 5 years' experience).

Tangible things are important. This can be money, special gifts or even a bunch of flowers (RA₃, female, 32 years old, with 10 years' experience).

Felling valued and praised is important, but I look for extra payment sometimes, because the wages are low. But, when someone gets an extra payment for his/her high performance, I definitely want to work more to get that reward (RA₆, female, 30 years old, with 5 years' experience).

There were also two room attendants mentioning the importance of positive feedback by the department manager and top management as the most important motivator. Their comments were as follows:

Positive feedback by the management is something notable and this is sometimes more important than being 'the employee of the month' (RA₄, female, 32 years old, with 2 years' experience).

Face-to-face communication with hotel top managers or rewards such as a lunch with a general manager is an important motivating factor. If I get a reward like this, I would feel that I am valuable to this hotel (RA₁, female, 26 years old, with 2 years' experience).

The executive housekeepers, on the other hand, commented mainly on intrinsic motivation factors. Their comments were mainly as following:

I think that room attendants can be motivated by the supportive supervision of the manager. They want to be praised and honored. We have a very close relationship with our departmental colleagues and this is also a very important motivator (EH₃, male, 35 years old).

A manager can create a motivating environment by adequately rewarding employees. The reward can be anything; it does not have to be an extra payment or gift. Mostly, to congratulate an employee for his/her good performance can be enough (EH₂, female, 45 years old).

Employees must trust you, that their performance will be properly evaluated. They must feel that they are all important for the company (EH₁, female, 40 years old).

An employee is motivated when he/she sees the executive manager's positive attitudes towards workers. Some employees are better motivated by recognition (EH₄, female, 42 years old).

Payment

According to Kline and Hsieh (2007) pay and employee benefits consistently rank as the two most important factors considered in a job offer. These subjects were also frequently mentioned in the motivation part of the research. In the research it was obvious that the room attendants were not satisfied with their wages. Some of their comments were as follows:

There is minimum wage legislation... The salary is not enough but I have general health insurance paid by the company. The wages of the workers should increase not only in hotels but in all sectors (RA₃, male, 28 years old, with 5 years' experience).

We do not earn much, the salary is fixed and moreover room attendants are largely neglected in terms of tipping (RA₇, female, 27 years old, with 1 year' experience).

Adequate payment is required. For now, I do not think that any of my colleagues are satisfied with their wages (RA₂, female, 28 years old, with 5 years' experience).

Opportunities

Despite the fact that until this point mostly the disadvantageous parts of housekeeping work has been highlighted, there are also some opportunities in this sector that are generally overlooked by especially new graduates and some workers. Throughout the research, both a close relationship with departmental colleagues and the sense of responsibility towards other workers among the executive housekeepers were very strong. Here are some of their comments:

I often go to work even when I am very ill. I think that my absence can negatively affect the staff. We are like a family (RA₃, female, 32 years old, with 10 years' experience).

Even though we sometimes have problems with our colleagues, I think that we are a team and we always support each other during work hours (RA₃, male, 30 years old, with 5 years' experience).

We create a very friendly atmosphere in the department. We have a close relationship in the department. This relationship decreases the stress level among workers (EH₂, female, 45 years old).

Another opportunity in the department that is mostly overlooked by others is the relatively short time for advancement and promotion. It was clear that the housekeeping department was definitely

offering more promotion options in the short-term than other departments in the hotel. It was obvious that not only becoming a room attendant was easier than other jobs but also being promoted as an assistant executive housekeeper or an executive housekeeper was done in a short amount of time. It is also important to note here that although housekeeping work is generally accepted as an unskilled position, becoming a manager in the housekeeping department requires much knowledge, not only in chemicals, cleaning materials, electrical equipments and textiles, but also sufficient knowledge about management functions, human resources, guest relations, leadership and even architecture was entailed. Some of the comments were as following:

I can confess that if a room attendant does their best and if he/she is qualified enough, the time required for the promotion is up to 2 or 4 years. This is a rapid promotion when compared to front office for example (EH₄, female, 42 years old).

If you ask new graduates, most of them will not want to be a housekeeper, but at the same time these graduates want to be a manager of any department. Becoming a manager requires a starting point that passes from cleaning a guest room (EH₅, male, 32 years old).

Being a housekeeping manager is, of course, all room attendants' dream, but it requires job experience in the field. In reality, if you are skillful and hard working it is easier to be promoted in housekeeping (EH₁, female, 40 years old).

Which subjects you need to know in housekeeping? If you just answer 'cleaning materials and equipments' you failed. It is about architecture, management, human resources. It is about hospitality (EH₂, female, 45 years old).

Discussion and suggestions

As specified in the introduction, researchers have mostly overlooked the contributions of the hotel personnel working back-stage; particularly the room attendants go unnoticed. However, it is vital to recall that these employees are of paramount importance to the delivery of the main product of the hotel, which is accommodation. In contrast with this basic information, it can be easily observed that several aspects of the work in the housekeeping department have quite a negative image among most people, including students studying tourism in universities. Additionally, a quick review of the tourism literature can indicate that jobs offered by the hotel industry are commonly characterized by inadequate pay, low job security, high turnover, limited training and limited opportunities for advancement (Cheng & Brown, 1998; Deery & Shaw, 1999; Davidson, Guilding & Timo, 2006; Yang, 2012). According to the results of the current study it can be mentioned that these job characteristics are perceived more intensively in the housekeeping department, as the jobs offered by the department are generally believed to be for those who have little or no qualifications. Fortunately, some positive feedback from the housekeeping department was also found as well, including the close relationships with departmental colleagues and the rapid career advancement opportunities when compared to other departments in hotels.

Consequently the suggestions of the research are categorized into two subheadings as (1) recommendations for tourism graduates and tourism academicians in universities and (2) suggestions for hotel managers.

Recommendations for tourism graduates and tourism academicians in universities

- It should be ensured that the students in tourism are informed about all the departments in the accommodation enterprises during their education. In order for the students to direct their career in a more reliable way.
- The sector and university cooperation should be developed in terms of the housekeeping department. The importance of the housekeeping department for its lodging operations should be emphasized during the educational process so that the qualified labor needs of the department can be provided in the long run.
- In order to eliminate the perceived negative image of the work in the housekeeping department in society and in the work environment, internship practices in the university's training programs should be increased in number. Also during these internship programs, students should be directed to different departments in order to let them better recognize the whole lodging industry operation process.
- In the universities that offer tourism education, realistic information about the current situation of the department, and the general perception of the housekeeping department and its employees, should be clearly mentioned to students in housekeeping management and in other related courses.
- Tourism students, while planning their careers especially in the lodging industry, tend to prefer some "popular and glamorous departments" and often neglect some departments such as housekeeping. One of the main reasons of this choice is about the nature of housekeeping and the low image of the department perceived by young people. Related studies should also be carried out in order to eliminate certain prejudices, which are created as a result of social judgments.
- As new tourism graduates constitute the future employment in the tourism industry, it needs to be taken into account that the employment of qualified labor in all areas of the lodging sector is more crucial than ever and it is also a requirement for the future success of the industry. Moreover, it is also imperative that lodging operations be directed towards applicants with tourism education during their hiring processes. This will help to reduce the ratio of employees graduating from other fields apart from tourism.

Suggestions for hotel managers

- Minimum wage policies in some hotels, makes the room attendants' economic situation more complicated. Economic improvements therefore should be addressed not only by the businesses themselves, but also by government regulations and legislations. In addition to these macro precautions, results of the research showed that room attendants have been largely neglected in terms of tipping. Therefore the tipping practices in hotels should be revised and extended to a system in which all employees in the hotel could have the same possibility to benefit from tips.
- A room attendants' position in the organization causes much frustration for the same reason that they think that they have a low hierarchical position in the organization and subsequently, society. Moreover, they have adopted the notion that even the other employees in different departments, do not take the housekeeping personnel's educational background into consideration when evaluating the department. Their claim is that there are multiple ways in which housekeeping personnel are considered as lower-status employees and subsequently lower-class members of society, when compared to other groups of workers at a hotel. In order to overcome this problem, managers have to encourage and support co-operation and communication between different departments within the hotel.
- For room attendants, positive feedback by the management is something notable and this is sometimes more important than being "the employee of the month". It is clear that employees become more stressed with a heavy work-load, when they do not feel adequate recognition or praise from managers.

Furthermore, housekeeping personnel should be included in the decision-making processes regarding certain subjects {such as decoration} that have a direct impact on their jobs.

- The housekeeping personnel rarely have the chance of communicating face-to-face with the top management of the hotels. It can be stated here that upward communication in the hotels, does not work adequately for the housekeeping department. For most department employees top managers are someone with whom they never or rarely encounter. The employees cannot voice their opinions and needs. With the utmost and paramount importance, correcting this neglect is highly suggested to the top management in any hotel.
- The use of job rotation should be encouraged for the development of coordination and cooperation between departments, so that all employees in the business can understand the other departments' role in the overall services the hotel provides.
- In terms of motivation, the importance of offering diverse and creative options by managers should be understood and applied. In addition, remembering the expression of Janes and Wisnom (2010), "if there is one thing has been learned about motivating employees, it's that one size definitely does not fit all" is vital.

Future more in-depth studies of the housekeeping department of hotels would be helpful in providing richer insights into this neglected area of the lodging industry, both for academicians and students studying tourism. To cross-validate the current findings of this study and broaden the scope for further generalization, studies among other samples of housekeeping employees and executive housekeepers are needed. Future studies could deepen the antecedents and outcomes associated with the image of the work in housekeeping departments and augment more of an interest in housekeeping, as a field academic study.

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