

Tourism today and importance of front office tourism essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Today tourism is one of the largest and most dynamic sectors, of the economy. It is growing at a fast pace, leading to infrastructure development, considerable, volume of foreign currency inflows, and good job opportunities. So it affects various sectors of the economy, contributing to the social and economic development of the country

as a whole. According to recent statistics, tourism provides about 10 per cent of the world's income and employs almost one tenth of the world's workforce. All considered, tourism's actual and potential economic impact is astounding.

The hospitality industry came into existence in order to accommodate tourists.

When guests stay in a hotel and use the various services and facilities provided by the hotel, they seldom think about the complexity of hotel operations. The smallest of their demands, like for a cup of tea, requires coordination among a series of people. The hotel industry is a people-oriented industry. It is the effectiveness, efficiency, and courteous behaviour of the hotel employees that make a lasting impression on the guest's total experience.

The front office department of a hotel is the hub of guest activities. This department looks after the guests' needs-right from the booking of rooms to receiving and registering guests, to assigning rooms, to handling guests' mails and messages, to presenting bills and settling guests' accounts at the time of check-out. It is important for the front office staff to provide excellent

and flawless services to guests, as it goes a long way in creating an indelible image of the hotel.

FRONT OFFICE GM AT WORK AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

Most general managers depend on the performance of an outstanding front office to help them meet their guest service and profitability goals. The front office and its manager(s) are responsible for, a variety of important hotel functions.

Because the rooms sold by a hotel are extremely perishable (an unsold room on a certain day is an eternal and unchangeable circumstance), it is very important that hotels do the best job possible in matching guest room availability with guest room demand. Also, since it is not possible to change the number of rooms available to sell up or down on a daily basis due to the constructed fixed number of rooms, an important responsibility of the front office is the sale of rooms at a rate that management feels will maximize revenue per available room. A well-managed and talented front office will do this well.

The making of guest reservations is often the first thing that comes to mind when considering the major functions of a front office, and this is indeed an important and often complex aspect of the front office`s role. In addition to reservations, however, it falls upon the front office to actually assign arriving guests to specific guest rooms and respond to their special needs during their stay. These needs can include anything from transportation and information to medical assistance. In all of these situations and more, the

unwavering role of the front office is to make the guest's stay as comfortable and as welcoming as possible.

An essential aspect of the front office is its responsibility for collecting the revenue charged to guests for their rooms, restaurant meals, telephone calls, and a host of other hotel services. This means that the front office manager, working with the G. M. and controller, must devise and administer revenue management systems that ensure guests are properly charged for the services they use and that the hotel fully collects all monies it has earned.

When forecasting room demand, accommodating guests, and collecting monies for services rendered, the front office generates a large quantity of data, much of which are critical for management decision making. It is the role of the front office to collect, sort, and present these data in a way that assists in management decision making. As a G. M. my daily tasks can be made much easier by the support of an effective front office.

OVERVIEW OF THE FRONT OFFICE

The front office sometimes referred to as the front desk, the front office usually controls much more than the activities occurring at the front desk. In a small, limited service hotel, the front office may consist, physically of only that area reserved for guest registration. In a larger property the front office may include several staff members, each responsible for a portion of the office's management or operation.

Regardless of its size, the front office must be organized to manage its key tasks and areas of responsibility.

<https://assignbuster.com/tourism-today-and-importance-of-front-office-tourism-essay/>

TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY GROWTH + economically

Tourism and hospitality, which are inextricably linked to each other, are among

the major revenue-earning enterprises in the world. They happen to be among

the top employers too. There has been an up market trend in tourism over the

last few decades as travel has become quite common. People travel for business, vacation, pleasure, adventure, or even medical treatment. The present-day tourist, who has higher levels of disposable income, international exposure, and refined tastes, wants specialized versions of products and services, such as quieter resorts, family-oriented holidays, or commercial hotels. This has led to a demand for better quality products and services, mainly regarding accommodation and travelling, thus feeding the growth of the hospitality industry as a whole.

The developments in technology and transport infrastructure, such as jumbo jets, low-cost airlines, and more accessible airports have made tourism affordable and convenient. There have also been changes in lifestyle—for example, now retiree-age people sustain tourism round the year. The sales of tourism products on the Internet, besides the aggressive marketing of tour operators and travel agencies, have also contributed to the growth of tourism.

With several business-related activities associated with tourism, the industry

has a tremendous potential of generating employment as well as earning foreign exchange. There are many countries in the world, such as Mauritius, Malaysia, Singapore, Fiji, and Caribbean, whose economies are primarily driven by tourism. Tourism can contribute to the economic growth of a country in the following ways:

Employment generation: It creates a large number of jobs among direct service

providers (such as, hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, tour operators, guide and tour escorts, etc.) and among indirect service providers (such as, suppliers to hotels and restaurants, supplementary accommodation, etc.).

Infrastructure development: Tourism spurs infrastructure development. In order

to become an important commercial or pleasure destination, any location would require all the necessary infrastructure, like good connectivity via rail, road, and air transport, adequate accommodation, restaurants, a well-developed telecommunication network, and medical facilities, among others.

Foreign exchange: The people who travel to other countries spend a large amount of money on accommodation, transportation, sightseeing, shopping, etc. Thus, an inbound tourist is an important source of foreign exchange for any country.

HOTELS DEFINITION AND CORE AREAS

The term hotel was used for the first time by the fifth Duke of Devonshire to name a lodging property in London sometime in AD 1760. The word hotel is derived from the French h[^]tel, which refers to a French version of townhouse. Historically in the United Kingdom, Ireland, and several other countries, a townhouse was the residence of a peer or an aristocrat in the capital or major cities.

A hotel or an inn is defined by the British Law as a ‘ place where a bonafide traveller can receive food and shelter, provided he is in a position to pay for it

and is in a fit condition to be received’. Hence, a hotel must provide food (and

beverage) and lodging to a traveller on payment, but the hotel has the right to

refuse if the traveller is not presentable (either drunk, or disorderly, or unkempt)

or is not in a position to pay for the services. Alternatively, a hotel may be defined as ‘ an establishment whose primary business is to provide lodging facilities to a genuine traveller along with food, beverage, and sometimes recreational facilities too on chargeable basis’. Though there are other establishments such as hospitals, college hostels, prisons, and sanatoriums,

which offer accommodation, they do not qualify as hotels since they do not cater to the specific needs of a traveller.

A hotel is thus an establishment that provides paid accommodation, generally

for a short duration of stay. Hotels often provide a number of additional guest

services, such as restaurants, bar, swimming pool, healthcare, retail shops;

business facilities like conference halls, banquet halls, board rooms; and space for private parties like birthdays, marriages, kitty parties, etc. Most of the modern

hotels nowadays provide the basic facilities in a room—a bed, a cupboard, a small table, weather control (air conditioner or heater), and bathroom—along with other features like a telephone with STD/ISD facility, a television set with cable channel, and broadband/Wi-Fi Internet connectivity. There might also be a mini-bar containing snacks and drinks (the consumption of the same is added to the guest's bill), and tea and coffee making unit having an electric kettle, cups, spoons, and sachets containing instant coffee, tea bags, sugar, and creamer.

Areas of a Hotel: An Overview

The organization of a hotel today is very complex and comprises various

departments. The number of departments varies from one establishment to another. All departments may have their own managers, reporting to the general manager and the assistant general manager.

The front office is where my principal research were held during this task:

This department is headed by the front office manager, the front office department is the operational department that is responsible for welcoming and registering guests, allocating rooms, and helping guests check out. Uniformed services like concierge and bell desk, and EPBAX operators are part of the front office department.

-Hotels are commercial establishment that provide accommodation, meals and other guest services. In general, to be called a hotel, an establishment must have a minimum of six guests' rooms, at least three of which must have attached private bathroom facilities.

Although hotels are classified into `star` categories, there is no standard method of assigning these ratings, and compliance with customary requirements is voluntary. An American hotel with certain rating, for example, may look very different from a European or Asian hotel with the same rating, and would provide a different level of amenities, range of facilities, and quality of service. Although hotel chains assure uniform standards throughout, non-chain hotels (even within the same country) may not agree on the same standards.

In the travel and tourism industry, the hotel industry plays a very significant role, as all tourists need a place to stay at their destinations, and require many more services and facilities to suit their specific needs and tastes.

FUNCTIONS (FRONT OFFICE)

Front office is the first department of the hotel with which guests come in contact at the time of their arrival and also the last department they interact with when they depart from the hotel. This department performs various functions like reservation, reception, registration, room assignment, and settlement of bills of a resident guest.

This chapter is aimed at providing an understanding of the organization of the

front office department. Here, we will study the various sections of the front office

and their functions, the organization of the front office staff, and the qualities,

attributes, duties and responsibilities of front office personnel.

FUNCTION AREAS

The front office personnel are mostly in direct contact with guests throughout

their stay. Guests contact the front desk to book a room; check-in; inquire about

hotel services, facilities, and about the city or surrounding areas; and finally, to

settle bills and check out from the hotel. Apart from these services, the front desk also provides services like handling guest mails and messages, maintaining guest accounts, paging guests (locating guests within the hotel), arranging travel services, and various other services as per the guest's requirement.

The front office is the contact point between the guest, management, and other

departments. It handles guests' complaints, dispatches housekeeping and engineering requests, prints and files reports, receives and answers phone calls, and sends and receives faxes. Thus, the front office personnel perform the following functions:

Sell hotel rooms to guests, which may be standard or deluxe rooms, executive or presidential suites, etc.

Accept advance booking of hotel rooms through telephone, fax, e-mail, websites, etc.

Receive and register guests when they arrive at the hotel and assign them rooms according to their preferences-smoking/non-smoking, pool view/garden view/sea view, high floor/low floor, near the elevator/far from the elevator, etc.

Maintain accurate room status information.

Maintain guest accounts and monitor credit.

Handle guests' demands and complaints.

Prepare account statements of guests.

Settle bills at the time of check-out.

Coordinate guest services like handling of guest mails and messages, locating guests within the hotel premises, connecting guest telephone calls, keeping guests' valuables in safety deposit lockers, handling of room keys, making sundry payments on behalf of guests, and so on.

Provide information about the hotel's facilities and services, the city, important events, festivals and shows, and places of tourist interest.

FRONT OFFICE LAYOUT

-For the efficient and smooth functioning of a department, it is important to divide it in sections and delegate tasks accordingly.

-The front office department is divided in sections:

*Reservation / Reception / Information desk / Cash and bills / travel desk / Communication / Uniformed services (which include bell desk and concierge)

-A well designed layout should involve proper space utilization, aimed at improving the efficiency and control of the staff. The front desk should be located at a prominent place in the lobby for example.

-the hotel lobby is an area furnished with seating arrangements just inside the hotel, where hotel guests and their visitors can meet and wait.

-located just beyond the entrance to the hotel, the lobby is the first and last point of guest contact with the hotel.

-A well-appointed lobby creates an impression about the overall standard of the hotel in the eyes of the guests.

RESERVATION

While planning business or pleasure trips, people like to ensure that they will have a safe and comfortable accommodation at their respective destinations. This can be achieved by booking a room of their choice in advance.

-

The reservation section of the front office department of a hotel is responsible

for receiving and processing reservation queries. Depending upon the level of

automation, volume of business, and house customs, the procedure of processing reservation queries may differ from hotel to hotel in terms of reservations handling, maintenance of reservation records, confirmation, amendment, and cancellation of reservations. This section is headed by a reservation manager, who is assisted by a reservation supervisor and a team of reservation clerks or assistants.

Layout of the Reservation Section

The location of the reservation section depends upon the size of hotel and the volume of business of the hotel. In a very small hotel, the function of reservations can be performed by the front desk. In a large hotel, a separate section is needed, which should preferably be located behind the reception counter and should have a communication door between the reception and reservation sections.

Functions of the Reservation Section

The following functions are performed by the reservation section:

- Receiving reservation requests through various means like telephone, fax, e-mail, websites, sales representatives, or central reservations department.
- Processing reservation requests received from all means on the hotel property management system (PMS).
- Depending upon the availability of desired room type and projected sales during and around the requested stay dates, the reservation, waitlisted, or denied.
- Updating the room availability status after each reservation transaction, i. e., after each confirmation, amendment and cancellation.
- Maintaining and updating reservation records to reflect accurate information about room status.

-Preparing reservation reports for the management.

RECEPTION

This section of the front office receives and welcomes guests on their arrival in the hotel. It is headed by a supervisor and comprises a team of receptionists and front desk assistants. The personnel of this section procure all the necessary information about the guest to complete the registration process. After finishing the registration formalities, a room is assigned to the guest, and a bell boy carries the luggage and escorts the guest to her room. The entire process is carried out professionally in a warm and friendly atmosphere.

Layout of the Reception Section

The reception section is located in close proximity to the entrance of the hotel. The layout of the section depends upon the size of the hotel and the volume of business generated by it. The front desk assistant carries out many tasks like receiving guests, registration, etc.; hence, the reception area should be designed in such a way to assist the staff in performing their tasks efficiently and effectively. The front desk may be circular, L-shaped, curved, or straight depending upon the requirement.

Functions of Reception

The following functions are performed by the reception section of hotel:

- Receiving and welcoming guests.

- Completing the registration formalities.

-Assigning the room.

-Sending arrival notification slips to the concerned departments.

INFORMATION DESK

As the name suggests, the information desk provides information to guests.

It is

manned by an information assistant. In a small hotel, the same function may be

performed by the receptionist. The need of a separate information desk is felt in

large hotels where the traffic of guests is higher. The information desk may be

located next to the reception.

Functions of Information Desk

Some of the functions of the information desk are as under:

-Maintaining resident guest rack.

-Handling guest room keys.

-Coordinating guest mails, telegrams, faxes, couriers, parcels, etc.

-Providing information to guests regarding hotel facilities and services, city information, etc.

-Handling guests messages.

-Paging guests.

CASH AND BILLS

The cash and bills section records all the monetary transactions of guests. It maintains guest folios and prepares the guest bills to be settled by the guest at the time of departure. This section is headed by a cashier.

Functions of the Cash and Bills Section

This section performs the following tasks:

-Opening and maintaining of guest folios.

-Posting room charges in guest folios.

-Recording all credit charges in guest folios.

-Maintaining a record of the cash received from guests.

-Preparing bills at the time of check-out.

-Receiving cash/travellers cheques/demand draft for account settlement.

-Handling credit! debit! charge cards for the settlement of a guest account.

-Organizing foreign currency exchange for the settlement of a guest account.

Travel Desk

The travel desk takes care of travel arrangements of guests, like air-ticketing,

railway reservations, sightseeing tours, airport or railway station pick up or drop,

etc. The hotel may operate the travel desk or it may be outsourced to an external travel agency.

Functions of Travel desk

The travel desk performs the following tasks:

- Arranging pick-up and drop services for guests at the time of their arrival and departure.

- Providing vehicles on request to guests at pre-determined rates (charged kilometre/hour wise and depend on the kind and size of vehicle used- premium cars, semi-luxury cars, coaches, mini vans, etc.)

- Making travel arrangements like railway reservations/ cancellations/ amendments, or purchasing air-tickets for guests.

- Organizing half-day or full-day sightseeing tours in and around the city.

- Arranging for guides who can communicate in the guest's language.

COMMUNICATION SECTION

The communication section maintains the communication network of the hotel,

which is generally quite complex. The hotel may have its own private branch

<https://assignbuster.com/tourism-today-and-importance-of-front-office-tourism-essay/>

exchange (PBX), along with post and telegraph lines. Earlier all outgoing calls were routed through the telephone operator. This was done to ensure proper accounting of outgoing calls. Switchboard operators were required to place wake- up calls, monitor automated systems, and coordinate emergency communications.

Recent technological advancement in telecommunications has revolutionized the way hotels operations are run. Now guests are able to make outgoing calls without routing them through the operator. There is a computerized call accounting system that charges the outgoing calls to the guest's account. Wake-up calls may also be registered on the system, which dials the guest's extension at the pre-registered time and plays a pre-recorded message when answered. So hotels can now manage with lesser number of telephone operators per shift. The telephone operators, who answer incoming calls, protect the guests' privacy and contribute to the hotel's security programme by not revealing guest room numbers to any unauthorized person. Many hotels also provide guest paging services over the public address system. These systems generally operate through the communications section.

Functions of Communication Desk

The duties of the telephone operator include:

- Answering incoming calls.
- Directing calls to guest rooms through the switchboard/PABX system.
- Providing information on guest services.

- Processing guest wake-up calls.
- Answering inquiries about hotel facilities and events.
- Protecting guests' privacy.
- Coordinating emergency communication.

•

UNIFORMED SERVICES

The uniformed services in the hotel include the bell desk team and the concierge.

Bell Desk

The bell desk is located very close to the main entrance of the hotel. This section is headed by a bell captain, who leads a team of bell boys (also called bellhops) and page boys. They handle the guest luggage from the guest vehicle to the lobby and to guest rooms at the time of arrival and from their rooms to the guest vehicle at the time of departure. They escort guests to their rooms and familiarize them with hotel facilities, safety features, as well as in-room facilities.

The bell desk person is the last front desk employee who comes in contact with guests at the time of their departure.

Functions of bell desk

The bell desk is responsible for the following tasks:

- Handling guest luggage at the time of arrival and departure

- Escorting guests to their rooms on arrival.

 - Familiarizing guests about safety features and in-room facilities.

 - Providing information to guests about hotel facilities and services when asked.

 - Locating a guest in a specified area of the hotel.

 - Posting guest mails.

 - Making sundry purchases like postage stamps, medicine etc. for the guest.

 - Keeping guest luggage in the left luggage room if requested by the guest.
- â€”
- Checking if in-room amenities are in their original condition at the time of departure of guests.

CONCIERGE

A concierge is a hotel employee who provides information and personalized services to guests like dinner reservations, tour and travel arrangements, and obtaining tickets for special events in the city, etc. A concierge is often expected to achieve the impossible, dealing with any request a guest may have, relying on an extensive list of personal contacts with various local merchants and service providers. The concept of concierges came from the days of European royalty; the concierge was the castle doorkeeper in those times. His duty was to ensure that all castle occupants were safe in their rooms at night. When the royal families travelled, they often took their

concierges with them for security and for making food and lodging arrangements. As the hotel industry grew, concierges became a part of the hotel staff to provide personalized services to hotel guests.

Functions of concierge

The concierge provides the following services to guests:

- Making reservations for dining in famous restaurants.

- Obtaining tickets for theatres, musicals, sporting events, etc.

- Arranging for transportation by limousine, car, coaches, buses, airplanes, or trains.

- Providing information on cultural and social events like photo exhibitions, art shows, and local places of tourist interest.

+++++

GUEST CYCLE

The guests of a hotel have four main stages interaction with the hotel " at pre-arrival / arrival / stay / departure. All guests go through the same procedure as they proceed from reservation to arrival and allotment of rooms, to their stay in the hotel, to the settlement of their bills and departure from the hotel, these various stages of activities constitute the guest cycle.

PRE-ARRIVAL

The interaction between a guest and a hotel before the guest arrives at the hotel forms the pre-arrival phase of the guest cycle. Reservation is the most important pre-arrival activity. During this phase, the guest first selects a hotel for stay.

The guest's choice about a particular hotel is affected by factors. Like advertisements, recommendations from family and friends, previous experience with the hotel, reputation, location, contractual agreement with the hotel, etc. Once a hotel has been chosen, the guest or a person designated by him (who could be his secretary or spouse or a travel agent) contacts the selected hotel through telephone, e-mail, or fax for reserving a room for the period of his proposed stay.

The reservation request is received by the reservation staff, whose efficiency and

competence in handling the request creates a good first impression of the hotel in

the mind of the guest.

Before confirming a reservation, the hotel may ask for a credit card guarantee

or an advance deposit from the guest. In case of high occupancy periods, guests

are requested to pay retention charges. This is to ensure minimum loss to the hotel

in case of any last moment cancellations or no shows. Once the retention charges

have been paid, the room is reserved or 'blocked' for the guest for the required

stay dates. The hotel also makes note of any special arrangements to be made, like a wheelchair and a barrier free room; airport or railway station transfers; an extra bed or crib in the room; etc.

Thus the functions of the front office in the pre-arrival phase include:

Processing the reservation request of the guest.

Creation of guest folio (in case the hotel has received any advance payment).

Blocking the room for the guest.

Making special arrangements for the guest (if required).

The data collected during the process of reservation can be utilized in future front

office and sales activities. A well-managed reservation system can maximize the

room sales and revenue by constantly monitoring the room status and forecasting

the room revenue.

ARRIVAL

Guests have their first face-to-face interaction with the hotel staff on their arrival at

the hotel. This is a very critical stage as guests form an opinion about the standards

and services that the hotel can provide to them. During this phase, guests are greeted by the front desk staff and the registration process begins. The guests are asked to verify the details printed in the registration card – these details are generated from the information received in the pre-arrival stage.

The registration activity is an agreement between the hotel and the guest, whereby the hotel offers the accommodation product and services to the guest, and the guest agrees to pay for the services received. A hotel might pre-register guests (i. e., register guests before their arrival) like VIPs, groups, airline crews, and frequent guests.

Once the guests have been registered with the hotel, they are assigned a room at the negotiated room rate. The guest is then shown to their room and their luggage is brought to the room by the bell desk. If any mails or messages have arrived at the

hotel before the arrival of the guest, they are given to her.

Thus the functions of the front office on the arrival of a guest include:

- Reception and welcome of the guest
- Registration of the guest
- Room rate and room assignment to the guest.
- Handing over the room key to the guest.
- Luggage handling of the guest by bell desk.
- Delivering the mails and messages that the hotel has received on behalf of the guest.

The front office staff maintains lists of expected arrivals and departures on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis. They keep updating these lists, along with the arrival and departure details, and keep the other departments informed of any changes in the schedule of guests. This is very essential to provide a flawless service to guests and to avoid embarrassing situations like not arranging for the pick-up of a guest, or not having the room ready in time and making the guest wait for it.

STAY

During this stage the guest gets a first-hand experience of the facilities and services

offered by the hotel. These services and facilities are the most important part of a guest's overall experience at a hotel. An excellent level of services would lead to the satisfaction of the guest, which would make him, come back to the hotel and give positive feedback to other potential customers.

The front office is the interface between the guest and the other departments of the hotel, so it must coordinate well