Chapter 90
Cultural Norms and Expectations Within the Hospitality Industry

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ABSTRACT

The business environment differs across nations and throughout industries. The hospitality industry is no different; one managerial approach that functions well in one nation might not be necessarily applicable in another. This suggests that to successfully manage across different countries it is vital that managers acquire the necessary skills to effectively manage employees and guests with different backgrounds and expectations. Hence, the objectives of this chapter are to define and discuss culture and cross-culture management, explain the importance of understanding multicultural perspectives, and discuss the managerial approaches of managing workforce diversity and cultural diversity.

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

The business environment differs across nations and throughout industries. The hospitality industry is no different; one managerial approach that functions well in one nation might not be necessarily applicable in another. This suggests that to successfully manage across different countries it is vital that managers acquire the necessary skills to effectively manage employees and guests with different backgrounds and expectations. Hence the objectives of this chapter are to:

● Define and discuss culture and cross-culture management
● Explain the importance of understanding multicultural perspectives
● Discuss the managerial approaches of managing workforce diversity and cultural diversity

INTRODUCTION

According to the labour migration report released by the British Hospitality Association (2017), up to 23.7% of the UK hospitality workforce market is made up by European nationals, other than British, and 15% are nationals of the rest of the world. The percentage varies based on location, with the highest in London, where the hospitality related workforce come from migrant labour force in proportion of 64%. Moreover, in some businesses the percentage of migrant workers can grow to 98% (National Institute of Economic and Social Research, 2016). As the recruitment needs are constantly growing, and currently a quarter of hospitality related businesses have an average of 38% hard-to-fill vacancies the solution links with the use of the international talent pool. Thus, the success of a hospitality firm relies on the management of both multicultural workforce and multicultural guests. This could be an opportunity as different cultural background could be beneficial to companies in the hospitality industry. However, undoubtedly this can also be a challenge for both managers and operational workers as the differences of cultural background may lead to conflicts, which could damage not only the workflow and the work environment, nevertheless the company image as well. Many issues might be related to communication, they could however be beyond language and might reside in the lack of cultural awareness and sensitiveness to understand the differences in culture.

Meanings of Culture and Multicultural Perspective in Hospitality Industry

"A fish only discovers its need for water when it is no longer in it. Our own culture is like water to a fish. It sustains us. We live and breathe through it. What one culture may regard as essential, a certain level of material wealth, for example, may not be so vital to other cultures" (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998, pp:20).

Activity: What does culture mean to you?

The word culture may vary in meaning when used in different contexts; generally, it refers to beliefs, customs, or certain ways of living, which are collective, shared and recognized by people in a given society. It regulates and controls individual's attitudes and behaviours; one culture is not right and the other is not wrong because of differences. Commonly the terminology for culture is applied to ethnic groups or tribes in anthropology for nations and organizations in political science sociology and management.

Numerous experts in the study of this field have strived to devise what they believe would better define the concept of culture. Hofsted (1991), Czinkota and Ron Kanen (1993) and Trompenaars (1993) have demonstrated a common understanding that culture is grounded in religion, languages, economies, values, attitudes, status, social institutions, policies, and customs. Bodley (1994) who worked in the field of cultural anthropology produced a list of definitions of culture constructed based on his analysis of psychological, social, ethnological and linguistic data. Below (Table 1.1) is a summary of Bodley (1994) definitions of culture, which should be taken into consideration from an anthropological perspective.

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