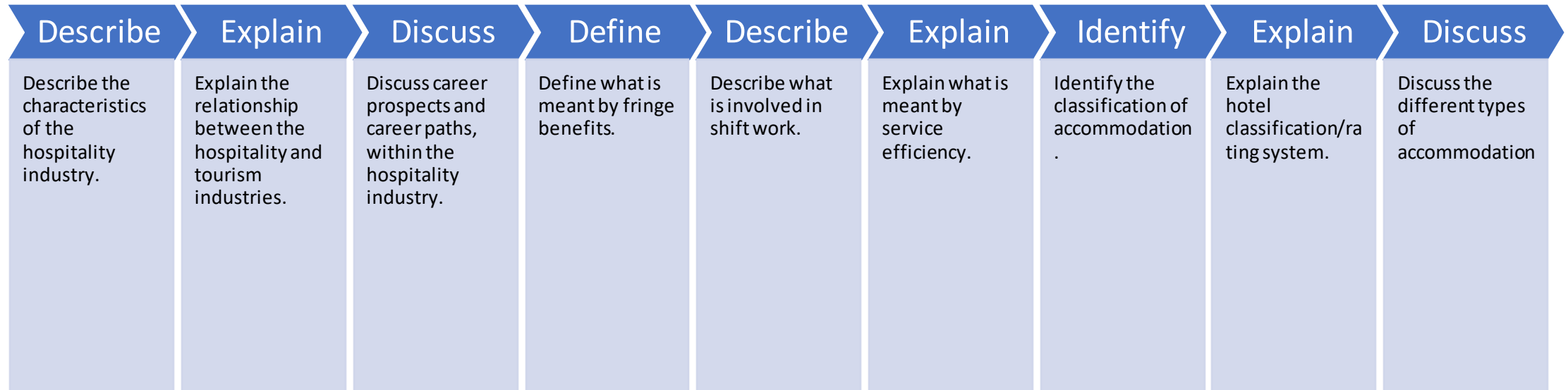


Guest Service Operation

By Miss Yalina Keith

Learning outcome






What is the **meaning of Hospitality**? There is no one single and simple definition to explain the term hospitality.

Some have tried to summarize the scope of the industry and its characteristics of involving both **tangible and intangible** features in the service delivery process.

Others attempted to describe the industry by exploring the stakeholders involved, mutual benefits generated and the industry's impacts to the society and economy.



Hospitality is the act of kindness in welcoming and looking after the basic needs of customers or strangers, mainly in relation to food, drink and accommodation.

A contemporary explanation of hospitality refers to the relationship process between a customer and a host. When we talk about the “Hospitality Industry”, we are referring to the companies or organizations which provide food and/or drink and/or accommodation to people who are “away from home”.

Activity

- Think about the different sectors within the hospitality industry. (Hint: A sector of hospitality industry can be profit-making or non-profit-making.) You may also give the names of some enterprises in the hospitality industry. Draw up a list like the one below, (one example has already been given). Work on the list to see if you can come up with appropriate examples.

Hospitality Industry			
Sector	Products/Services	Example	Name
Food and Beverage	Food and Drink	Fast Food	McDonalds

Activity

1. Have you been to any hospitality enterprises or organizations?

a) What services did you receive from them?

b) Were you satisfied with the way you were treated?

c) Did they understand what services you required?

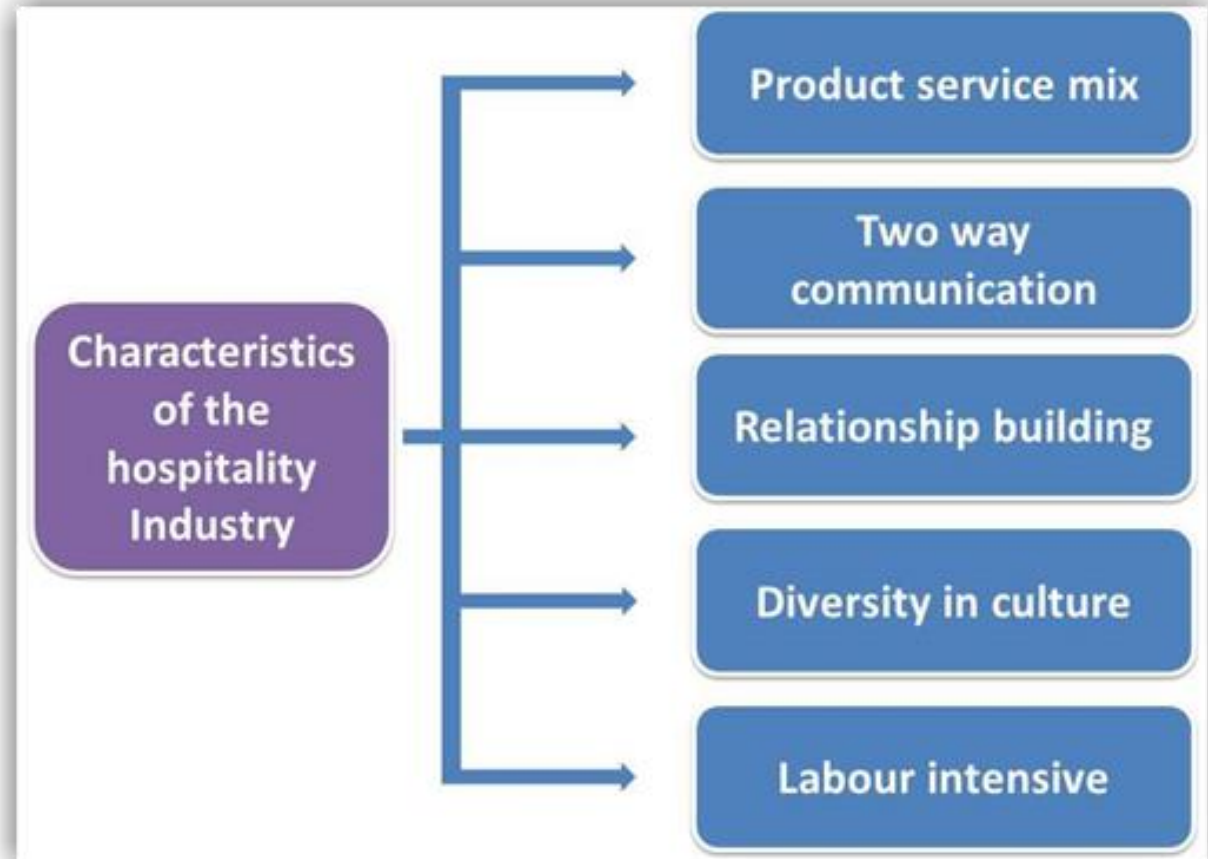
d) Did they provide what you wanted quickly and accurately?

e) Were the staff members friendly or rude?

2. Write down five qualities or traits that a successful staff member in the hospitality industry should possess.

a) Do you possess any of these qualities or traits?

- working in the field of hospitality could be quite challenging.
- Different from other sectors, the hospitality industry is unique in its nature which tends to be service-oriented and has a strong emphasis on human interaction and exchange in the service delivery processes.



- There are five key characteristics which relate to the hospitality industry:
 - Product/Service
 - Communication
 - Relationships
 - Cultural Diversity
 - Labour





Product-Service Mix

- Think about your experience of being a customer in a restaurant or a customer in a hotel. What else, apart from the food in restaurants and the facilities in hotel rooms, do you think can make your hospitality experience more enjoyable and satisfied

In the hospitality industry, customers rarely consume pure products but a mixture of products and services.

- For example, one who dines in a restaurant will not only pay for the food and drinks but the services provided by the servers. The bill has covered both tangible and intangible experience.
- Tangible
- Intangible

Tangible features

For example, a steak as the main course, a glass of house wine, well-groomed service staff and decoration of the restaurant.

As products and other tangible features can be easily imitated by competitors, hospitality operations which aim for high-end customers and 'superior' quality gradually spend more and more resources in enhancing the service standard as a strategy of differentiation.



2 way communication

In order to achieve service excellences in the hospitality industry, two-way communication is one critical factor which requires the involvement and participation of both customers and service staff in the service delivery process.

Through interactions with customers, important messages about their needs and expectations can be received by service staff for their immediate attention.

Interactions between internal staff or inter-departments is also critical since total experiences of customers in using any lodging or food and beverage services usually involve team work and exchange of information within the organization.



Relationship Building

The hospitality industry **depends on repeat customers** for survival.

Building long term relationship with customers can benefit the organization in generating stable revenue regardless of the instability of seasons and at the same time, developing brand reputations through word-of-mouth.

In order to develop brand loyalty, different methods are currently applied by the lodging and food service sectors, such as **membership programmes which give privileges and incentives to frequent customers.**

However, top management of organizations do believe that the informal ways of building “friendship” between front-line staff and customers through high degree of personal attention and customization can win the loyalty of customers in the long run.



As the hospitality and tourism industry are closely related, it is not surprising that people involved in this sector, whether customers or staff, experience a diversity of culture through interacting with others.

Staff who work in a hospitality organization always have interactions with customers from different regions, or work and co-operate with other colleagues who may have different backgrounds or cultures. Due to their differences in religious beliefs and values, some conflicts and misunderstandings can easily occur. Therefore, staff should be open-minded, and come up with solutions together in resolving problems in their duties.

Such cultural diversity implies that staff should generally understand different cultures, so flexible services can be provided to customers based on their national cultures.

From a customers' perspective:

Some customers may abstain from meat due to social beliefs, religious beliefs or habit.

From staffs perspective:

Therefore, restaurants should provide vegetarian food as an option in order to satisfy customer needs.



Labor intensive



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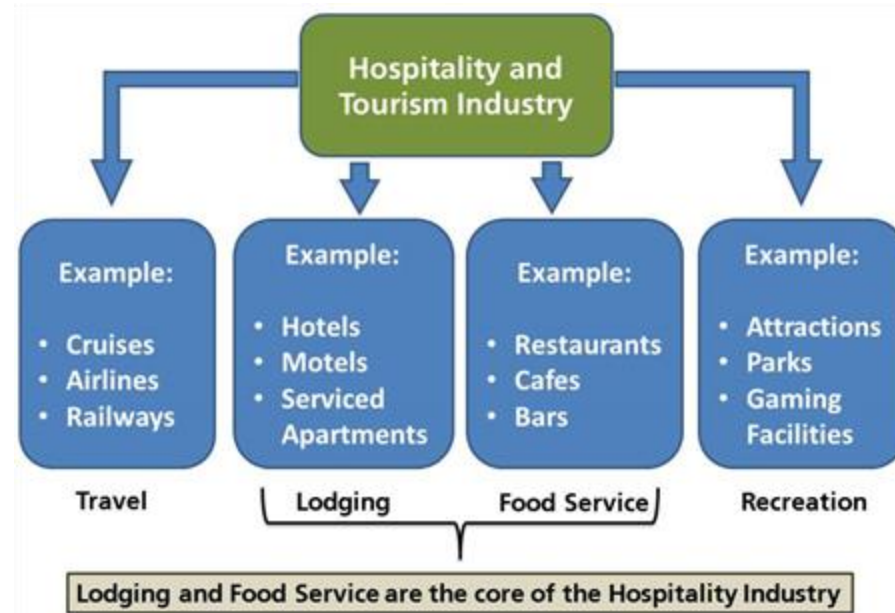
Since the hospitality industry is service-oriented in its nature, it requires a large supply of labour to create a memorable experience for the customers.

This characteristic is especially true for those enterprises which target high-end customers. For example, staff-to-guest ratios are high in fine dining restaurants and 5-star hotels which aim at providing one-on-one services to their customers.

Although the advancement in technology contributes to the replacement of some simple tasks in the service process, customers generally expect a high degree of human contact and personalized service in their consumption experiences.

This explains why the industry always has a high demand for labour, and spends time and resources in training and recruiting potential candidates to join the hospitality workforce.

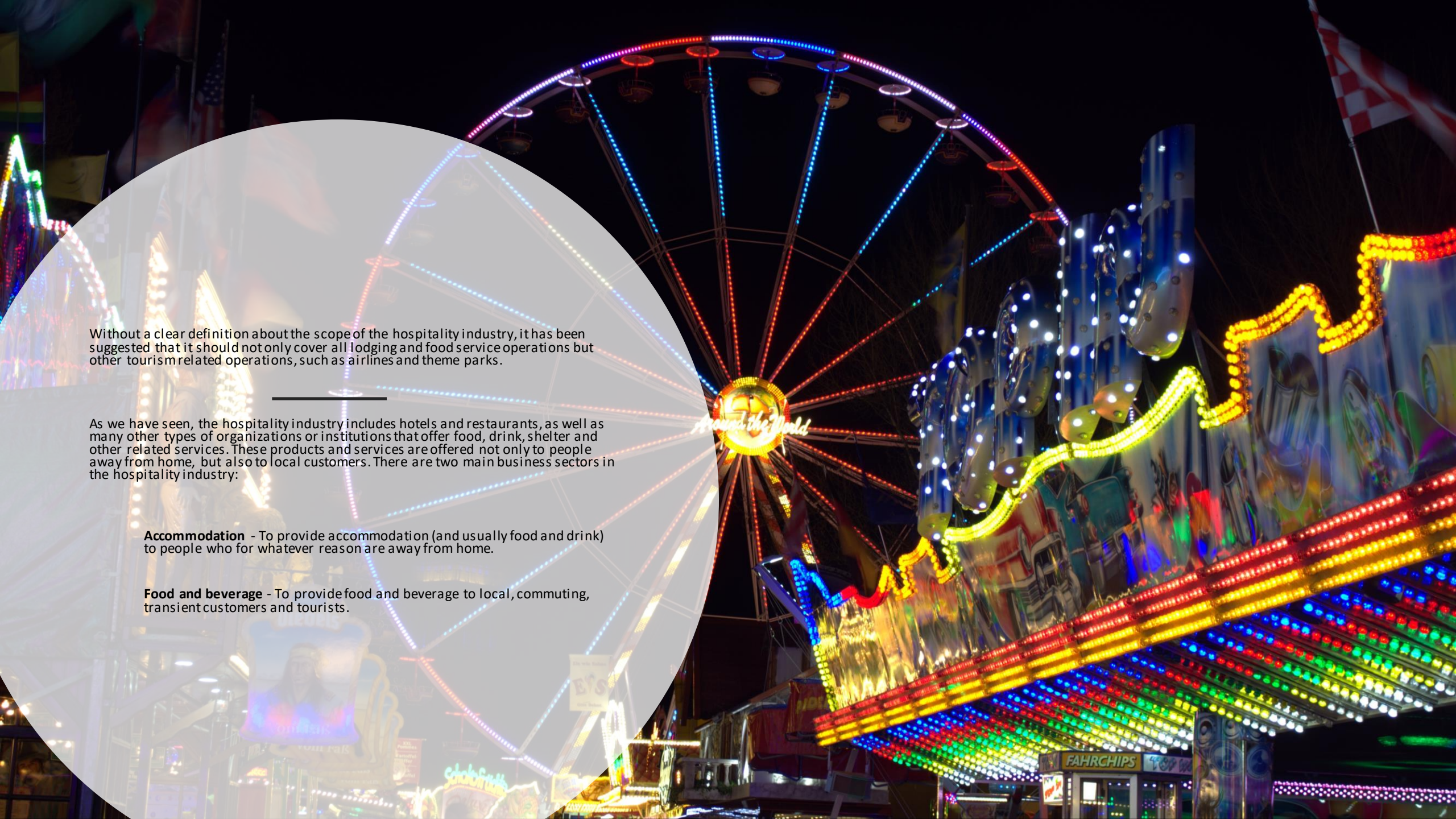
Scope of the hospitality Industry





The term “Guest” can be defined as a person who patronizes a hotel, restaurant, etc., for lodging, food, or entertainment purposes.

It, therefore, has generated a perception that the hospitality industry should include or overlap with the tourism industry to a certain extent.

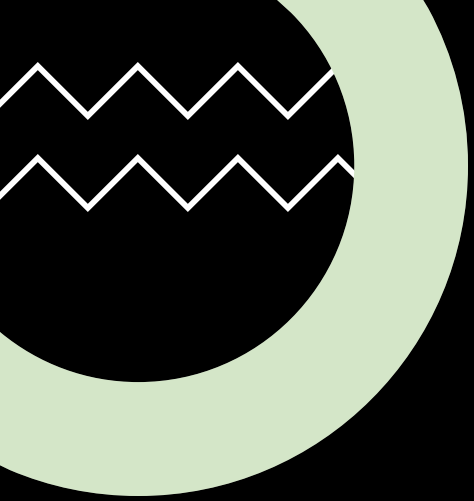


Without a clear definition about the scope of the hospitality industry, it has been suggested that it should not only cover all lodging and food service operations but other tourism related operations, such as airlines and theme parks.

As we have seen, the hospitality industry includes hotels and restaurants, as well as many other types of organizations or institutions that offer food, drink, shelter and other related services. These products and services are offered not only to people away from home, but also to local customers. There are two main business sectors in the hospitality industry:

Accommodation - To provide accommodation (and usually food and drink) to people who for whatever reason are away from home.

Food and beverage - To provide food and beverage to local, commuting, transient customers and tourists.



A manager in the hospitality industry, therefore, must keep the following three objectives in mind:

- Make the customers feel welcome
- Make things work for the customer
- Make sure that the operation provides a service and meets its budget

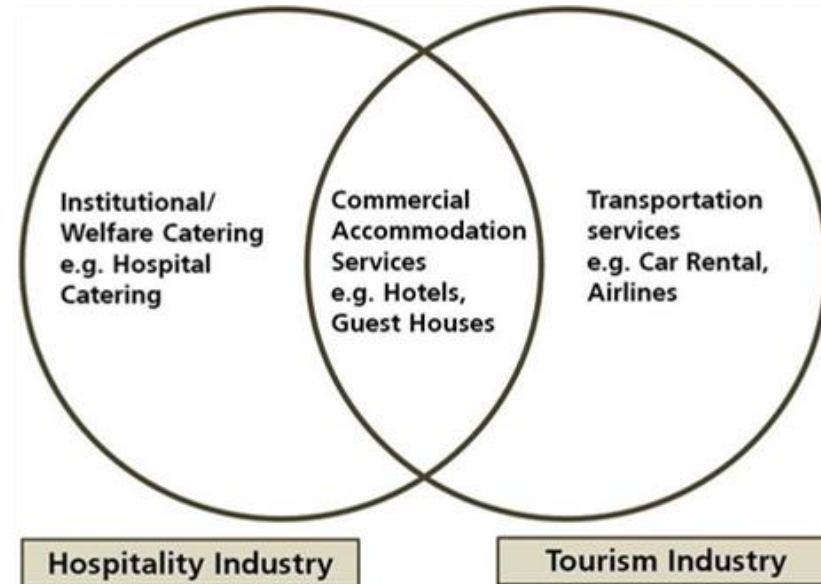


Activity

1. Service Experience in the Hospitality Industry

Based on your past experience in using the services in accommodation or food service operations, try to think about and list 4 important requirements for being a professional staff member within the hospitality industry.

2. The following diagram shows the relationship between the hospitality and tourism industries. Can you think of more services with examples, to add to the diagram?



Q & A

Career Prospects in The Hospitality Industry

There are always some pros and cons for working in the hospitality industry. **The concern about whether a position suits you or not is mainly dependent on your own character and personal interest.**

Some general views, both positive and negative, about the career prospects of the hospitality industry are summarized in this module as a reference for those who may have the intention of joining this unique and challenging industry.



Variety of career choices

Due to the development of the hospitality and tourism industry, **new hotels and restaurants are constantly opening**, catering to the needs of both visitors and locals.

This has facilitated a **huge demand for labour** in the market, especially in some developing countries.

Career choices are not limited to any one country but to job positions offered by international chains.

These positions can vary from back-of-house to front-of-house, and are at varying levels within the hospitality industry

Accommodation Positions:

Below are some of the hospitality positions that can be selected by graduates with their certificates or diplomas in the accommodation sector:

- Front desk receptionist
- Room attendant
- Telephone operator
- Reservation
- Concierge
- Bellman/Doorman
- Business center associate

Food and Service sector

- Waiter / waitress
- Host / hostess
- Cashier
- Food runner/Busser
- Bartender
- Apprentice Chef
- Commis Chef
- Banquet server

Other related positions

Tour guide

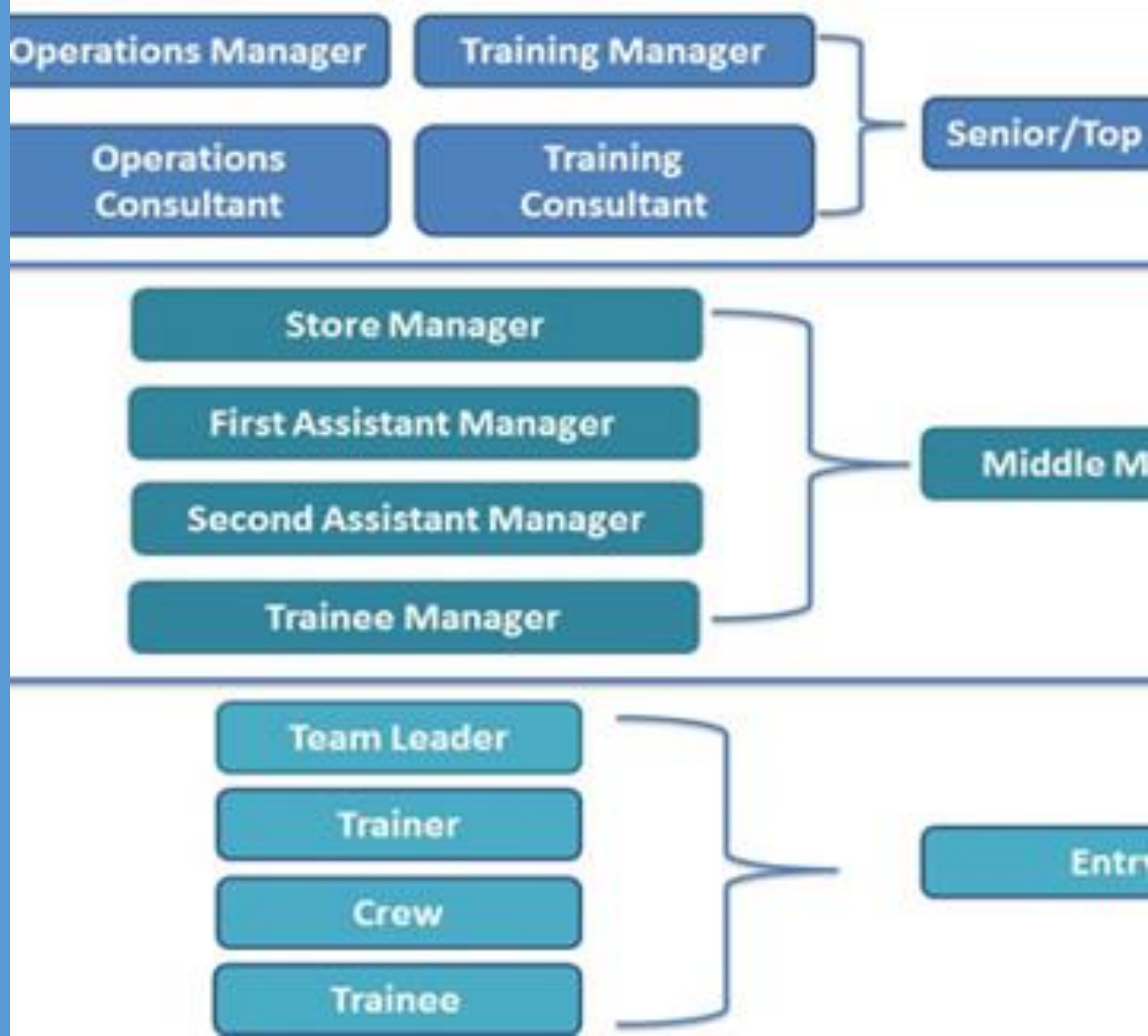
- Tour escort
- Travel agent
- Theme park crew
- Event sales
- Other “customer service” positions

Activity

Your Preferred Job in the Hospitality Industry

1. Think of two different positions in the hospitality industry, which you would have an interest in experiencing in the future.
2. State the advantages that can be provided by choosing the selected positions as your future career.
3. What are the advantages or disadvantages of the selected positions?
4. Among the two choices, which one is more preferable and suitable to you?

Long term career



Fringe benefits

Different from other business and service operations, staff working in hotels and food service operations can usually enjoy some **other benefits in addition to the basic salaries, annual bonus and insurance coverage.**

Benefits Example:

Hotel and restaurant staff are normally provided with 2 duty meals in their work days. Some hotel staff are also allowed to enjoy a discount rate or associate rate for booking rooms, which may be applied to hotel outlets under the same brand all around the world.



Non-Regular working hours

Shift work is very common in the food and beverage and accommodation sectors. Some positions require staff to work overnight, such as night auditors at hotel front desks and hotel security officers.

As there are no such things as public holidays in the hospitality sector, **staff can be required to work on weekends or special days, such as Christmas and Easter, etc.**

“Long working hours” seem to be the norm of many positions in the hospitality industry. Working over-time due to a shortage of staff at peak seasons of businesses are frequent for both operational staff and managers.

The concerns about the bad effects on one’s health and family life can lead to people hesitating in joining the industry

Work under pressure

In most situations, staff are expected to provide quick service and high quality service without keeping their customers waiting.

The pressure of **maintaining service efficiency and consistency**, especially in peak seasons can be tremendous.

The need for **frequent communications with customers** has especially created intense pressure for staff in front line positions.

Receiving complaints or handling angry customers can cause problems for people starting out in their careers in this industry.

Activity

Mary is a university student who is now studying a degree in hospitality and tourism management. She was assigned an internship as a waitress in a hotel for 3 months. Expecting to be an event planner in the future, Mary has a strong feeling that what she did in her internship seems to be irrelevant to her career objective. She disliked being a waitress because of the long working hours, low pay and heavy physical workloads involved.

Think about Mary's internship experience and answer the following questions:

Do you think the workload of being a waiter/waitress is heavy?

How much do you expect a full-time waiter/waitress can earn monthly?

How many hours should a waiter/waitress work per day?

If you are the internship supervisor, how would you convince and encourage Mary to appreciate her internship opportunity?



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The accommodation sector

Classification of Accommodation

There are no generic rules for classifying accommodation establishments globally.

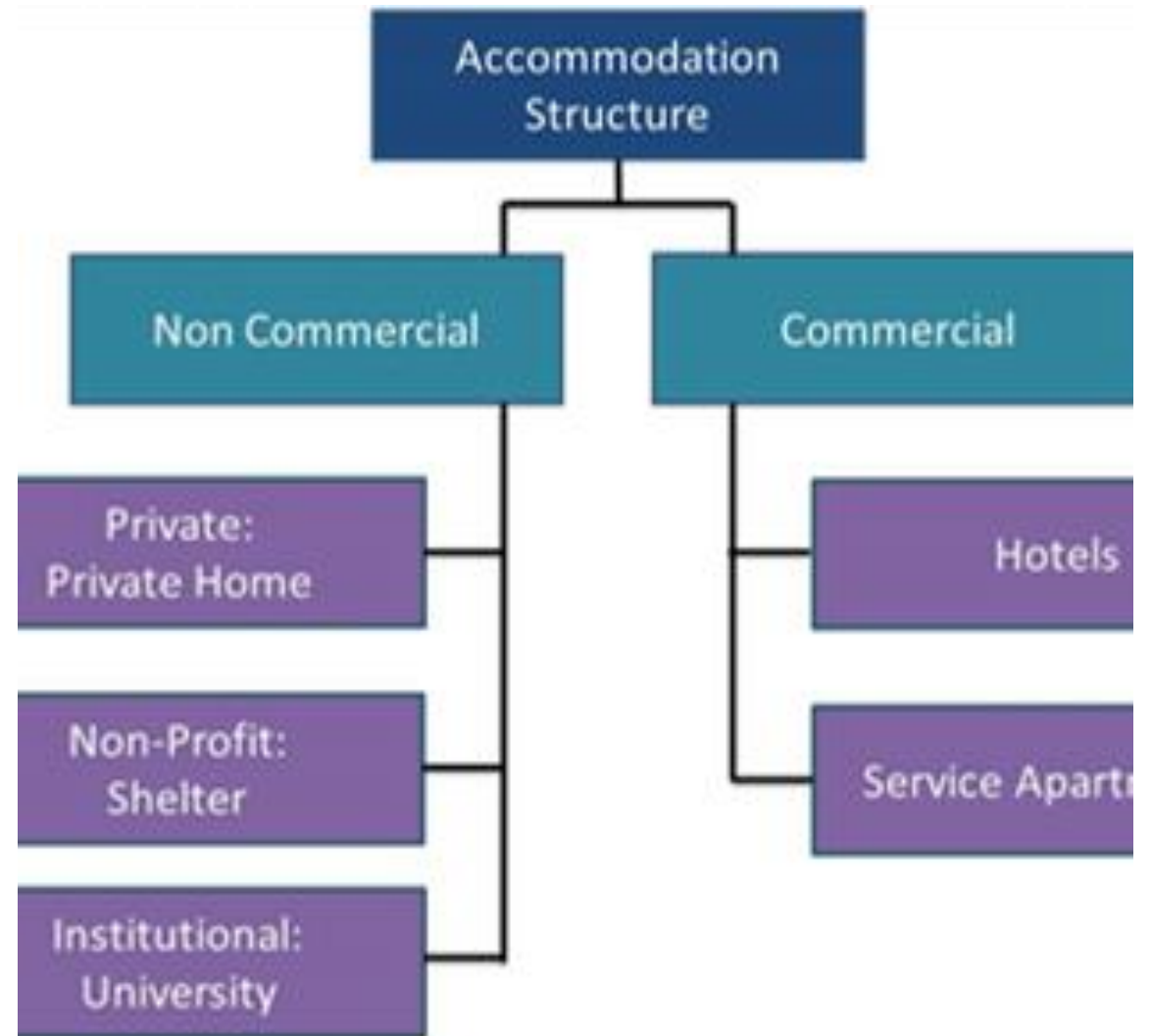
One method used, is to divide accommodation into two main groups:

Non-commercial:

- Home (nursing, retirement)
- Institution (university)
- Shelter facility

Commercial:

- Hotels
- Serviced apartments
- Villas/Chalets



Hotel classifications

A “Hotel” is defined as an establishment held out by the proprietor as offering sleeping accommodation to any person presenting himself, and who appears able and willing to pay a reasonable sum for the services and facilities provided and who is in a fit state to be received.

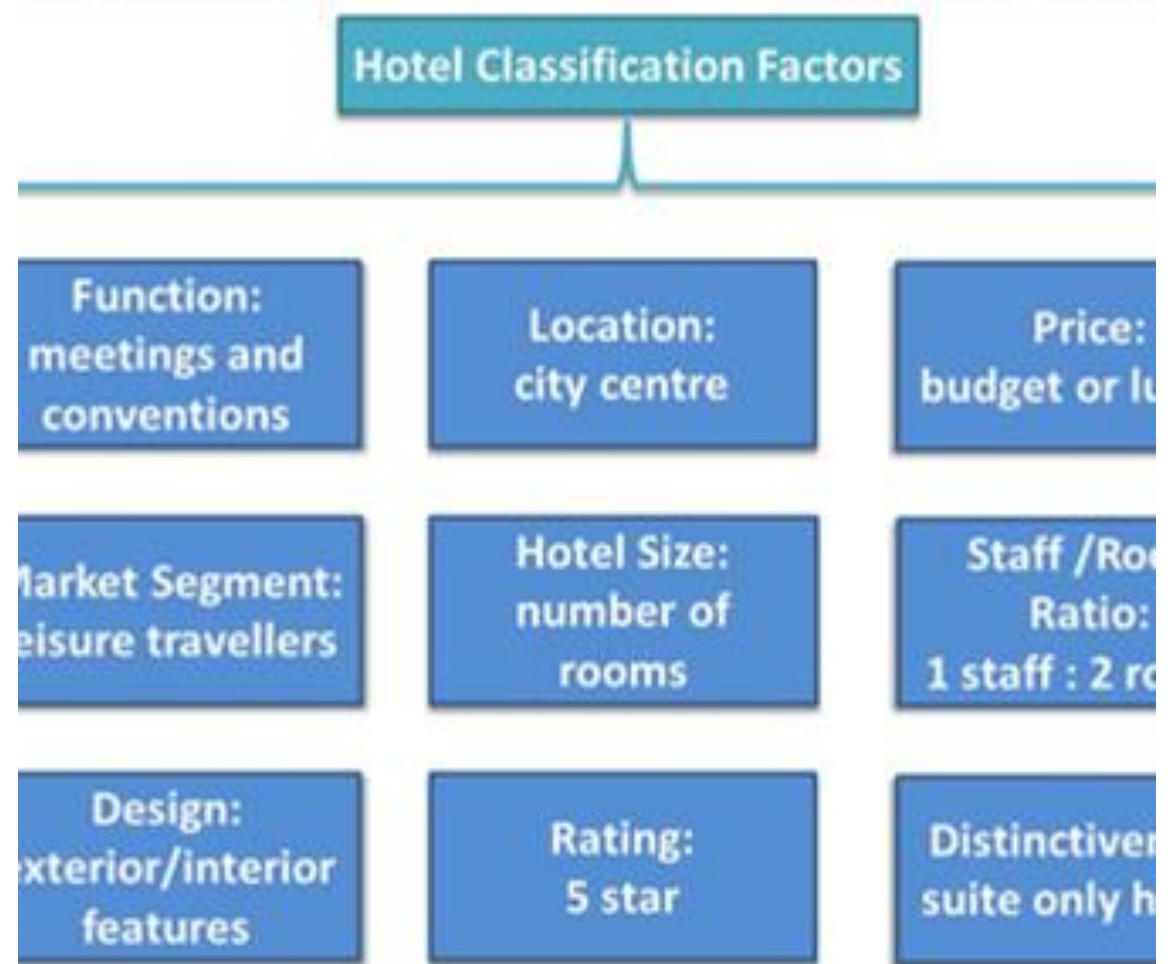
A hotel is classified as a commercial establishment providing accommodations, meals and other guest services. Originally, guests had two choices: luxury hotels and budget hotels.



Through classification, the characteristics of different hotels can be highlighted which provide travelers with a brief idea about the different options available and allow them make comparisons before their reservation.

Classification Example:

Regal Airport Hotel in Hong Kong, is located near the main airport. Its major target groups include transient guests, such as business people, travelers, and air crews. It is a 5-star rating hotel and has a hotel size of above 1,100 guest rooms available.



In some countries, hotels were built to serve middle-class families and, when the economy in general boomed and room supply increased; hoteliers then focused on setting themselves apart by offering specialized accommodation for:

Conventioneers

Business groups

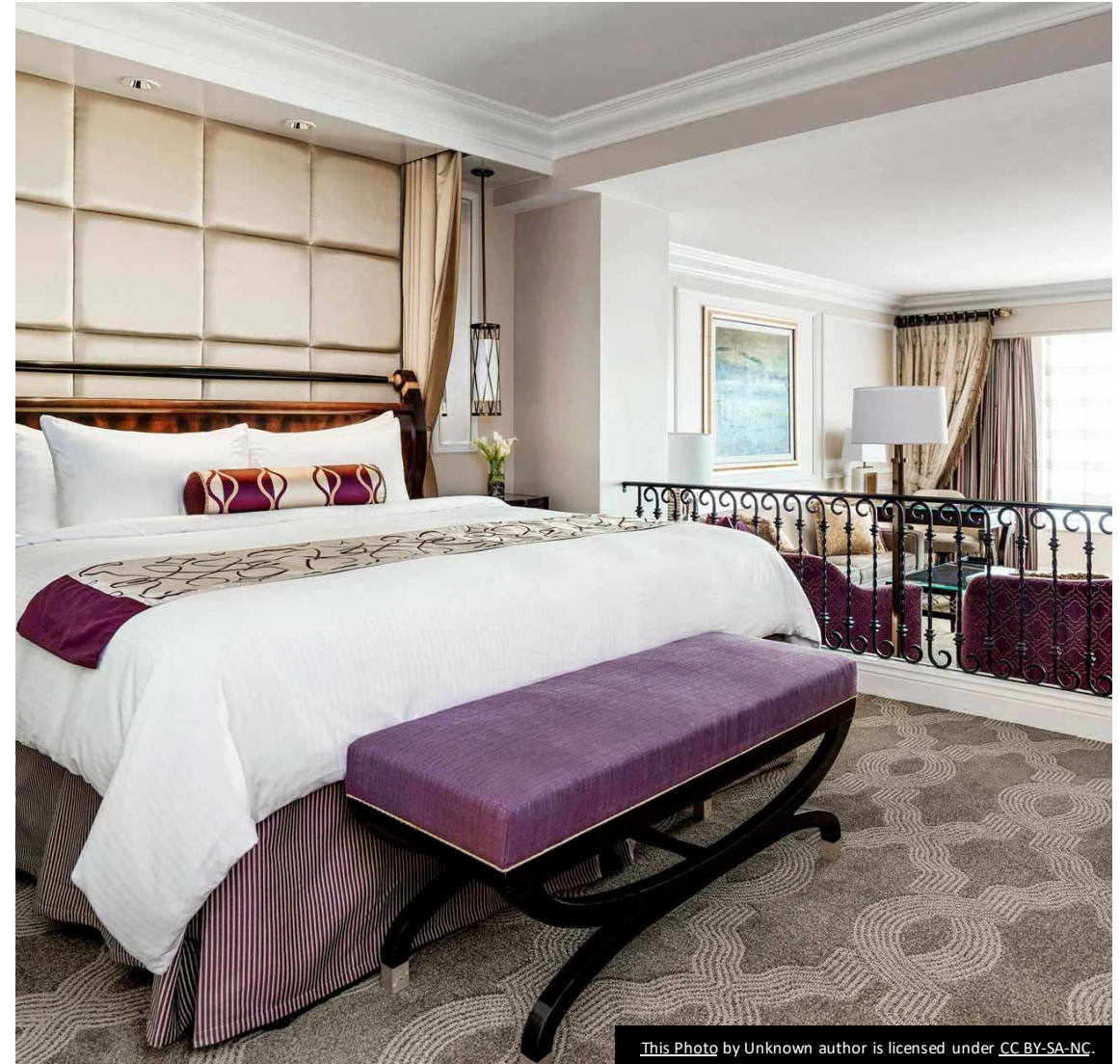
Special weekend events and families

As diversity flourished so did competition and brand loyalty. Anyone who can pay (within reason) can rent a room for a night in a hotel. Hotels vary greatly in style and services, from luxury, business, resort, townhouse to boutique and budget.

Hotel Room Example:

A standard room will have a bed, bathroom facilities, shower, telephone, TV, lounge area and mini-bar. Housekeeping services available include laundry and dry-cleaning.

Nowadays guests would usually have access to a wireless computer network and also to a business centre. Most major hotels will have restaurants and bars available for guests and if they are situated in a large city they are usually located near the business districts, tourist destinations and/or airports.



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Types of accommodation

City Hotels:

These hotels are located within the heart of a city.

This Hotel type may vary greatly from business, residential and economy rooms, mid-scale to luxury suites, and also have a mid-scale to luxury pricing system.



Commercial Hotels:

They are located in downtown areas.

They tend to be smaller than convention hotels.

Meeting and function spaces are smaller, and there are fewer banquet areas.



Suburban Hotels:

This hotel type tends to be located within smaller properties which usually provide a full-service, and are located in suburban areas.



Resort Hotels:

These hotels are located in picturesque, sometimes remote settings. Customers travel long distance to resorts. Usually, they tend to stay longer.

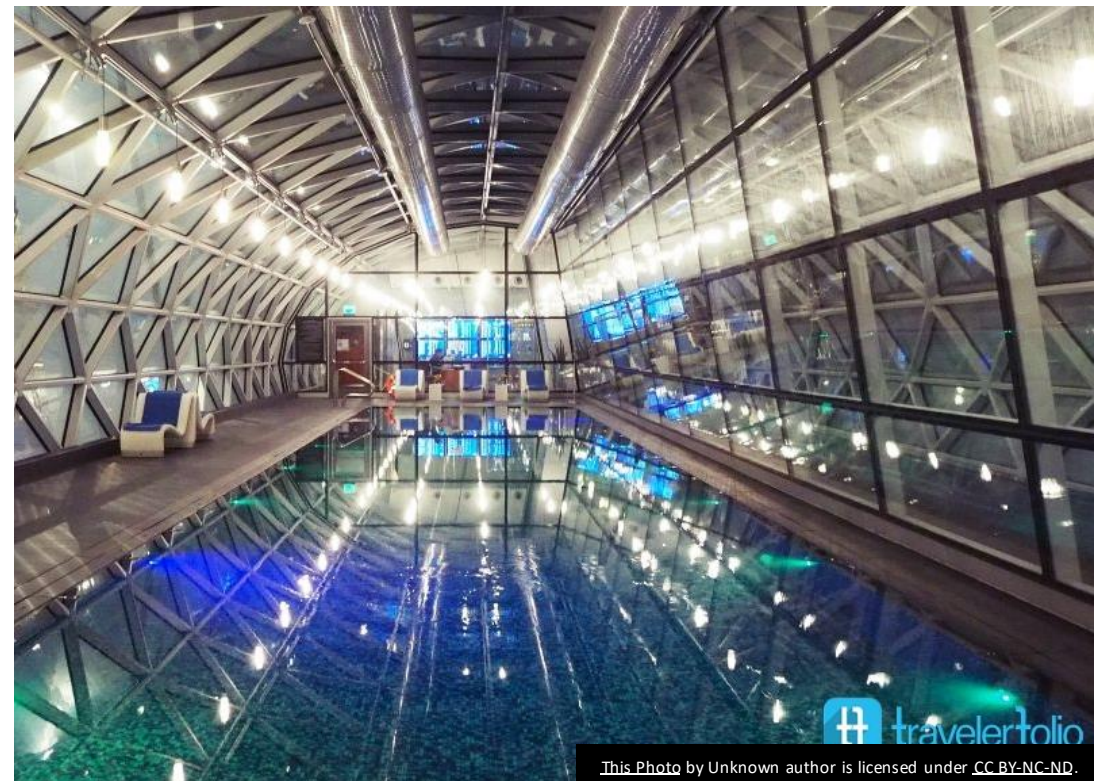
Resorts typically provide a comprehensive array of recreational amenities, as well as a variety of food & beverage outlets, ranging from informal to fine-dining restaurants.



Airport Hotels:

These hotels are designed specifically to accommodate air travelers. They offer a mix of facilities and amenities.

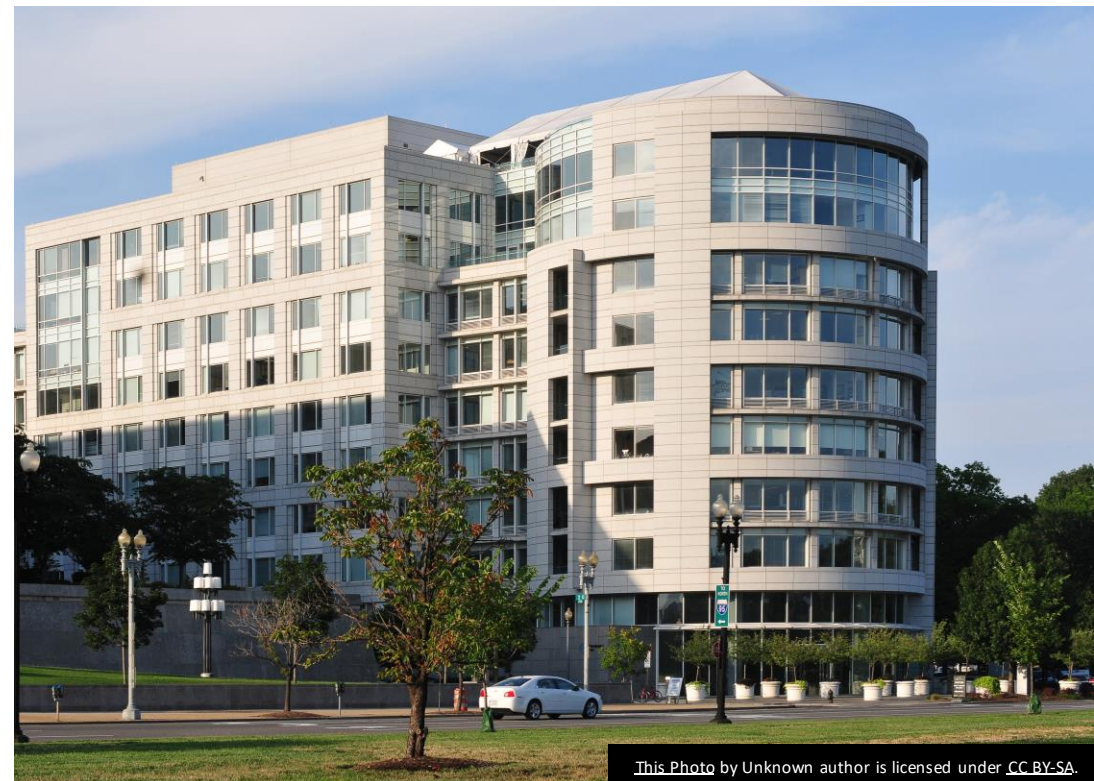
The majority also offer customers transportation to and from the airport.



Convention Hotels:

These hotels can provide a large quantity of rooms. In addition to accommodation, they provide extensive meeting and function space for holding conventions. There are banquet areas within and around the hotel complex.

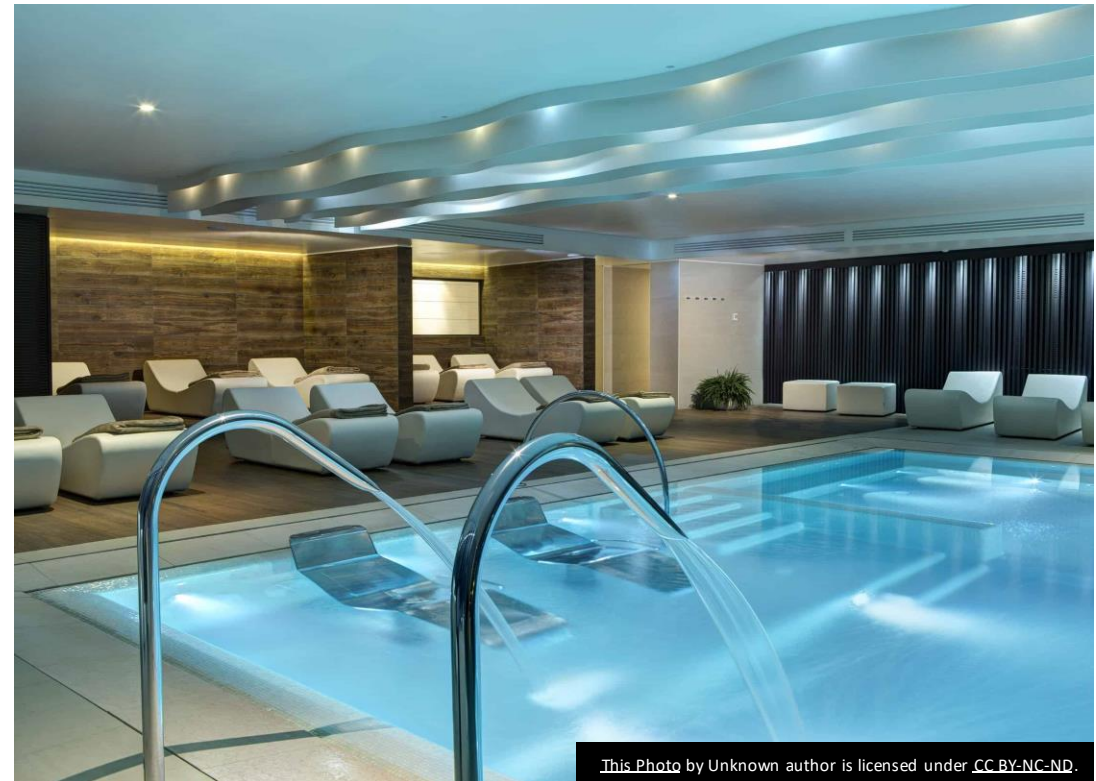
Most of them provide an in-house laundry, a business centre, airport shuttle service, and 24-hour room service. They are often in close proximity to convention centres and other convention hotels.



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Spa hotel

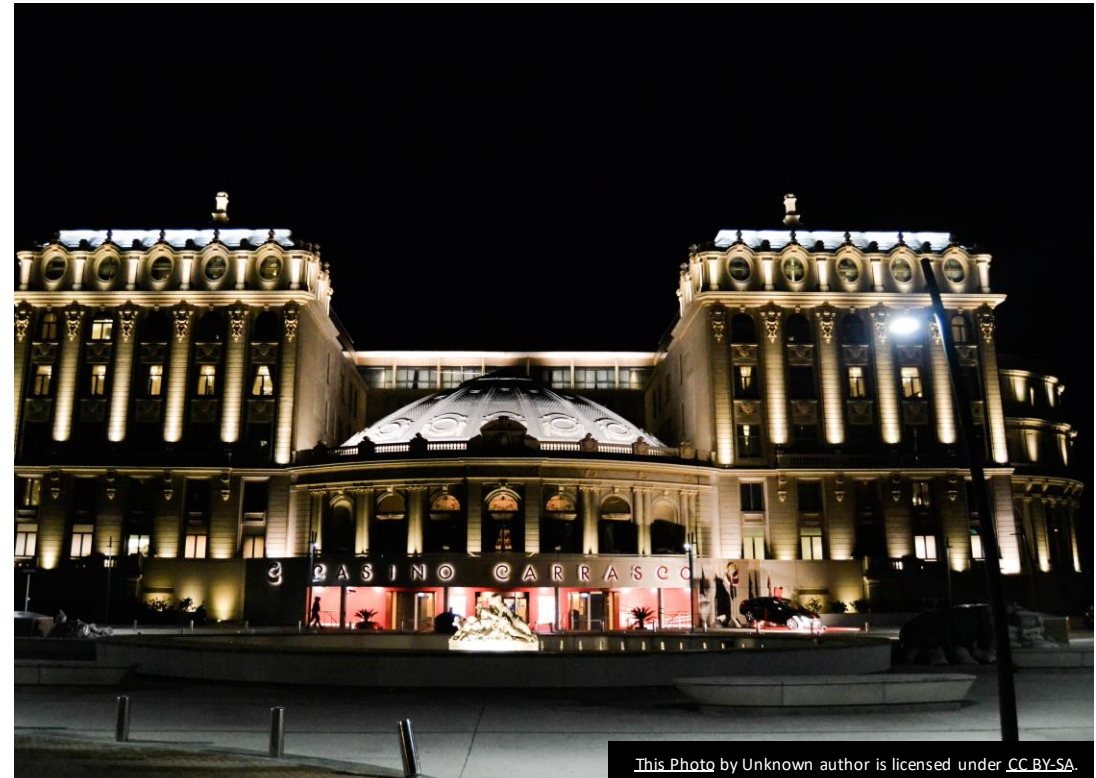
They are located in resort-type settings or as part of city spa hotels. They provide accommodations, spa treatments, and cuisine. They may include relaxation/stress management, fitness, weight management, and pilates/yoga. Spas have professional staff that often include dietitians, therapists, masseurs, and exercise physiologists.



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Casino hotel

They have gambling operations which are the major revenue centres. They also provide live entertainment. A wide variety of luxury amenities, hotel services including fine and casual dining and shopping centres are typically available on site.



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All suite hotels

The guest rooms in these hotels are larger than normal hotel rooms, with separate areas for working, sleeping and relaxing. A living area or parlour is typically separated from the bedroom, and some properties offer a kitchen set-up in the rooms. The amenities and services can vary widely. They can be found in various locations such as urban, suburban, or residential.



Boutique hotels

Boutique hotels differentiate themselves from traditional hotels by providing personalized accommodation and services/facilities. They are sometimes known as "design hotels" or "lifestyle hotels". The price varies greatly. They are very different in their "look and feel" from traditional lodging properties. They are more intimate, and, perhaps, more luxurious, and stand out as an individual. The amenities vary greatly depending on what the hotel's environment and theme chosen.



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Historic conversions

These properties have historic significance. They have been converted into lodging establishments with retention of their historic character.



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Serviced Apartments

These properties cater to customers who stay for an extended period. They usually offer full kitchen facilities, shopping services, business services and limited housekeeping services.



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Bed and breakfast

They are private homes whose owner lives on or near the premises and rents out rooms to overnight customers. The paid accommodation typically includes breakfast. A popular term is “B&B” (i.e. bed and breakfast provided). The host often provides customers with assistance regarding directions, and information regarding the local area including sightseeing suggestions.



Guest House

Guest houses are similar to bed and breakfast inns. They range from low-budget rooms to luxury apartments. They tend to be like small hotels in bigger cities. Though the facilities are limited, most rooms are air-conditioned with en-suite shower and toilet.



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Hostels

They are very cheap accommodation. The sleeping arrangements are usually in dormitory style and there may also be self-catering facilities on site.



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Motels

They are designed for overnight stays for car travelers, often with very basic facilities. The rooms usually have direct access to an open parking lot. They are often smaller than most hotels. They are located on the outskirts of towns and cities.



Villa/Chalet

They are self-catering accommodation in a private bungalow, usually rented to customers. In many cases, it refers to a small cottage with an overhanging roof in a seaside resort, e.g. beach houses.



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Activity

Types of Tourist Accommodations

1. By utilizing information from the Internet, check if any of the hotel types mentioned in the previous slides are available in your local area/country.
2. Write out a list giving one local example for each type of tourist accommodation or an overseas example if it is not locally available.

Unusual hotels

Ice hotels are mainly built using snow and ice. The first ice hotel is located in Sweden and its concept has been followed by Canada and some other European countries in building their own ice hotels to attract visitors.

Different from other general hotels, this type of hotel is temporary in its nature and is torn down and then rebuilt by artists and designers in different seasons. Due to this reason, a guest who chooses to stay in an ice hotel in different seasons would find his/ her experience entirely different once the hotel is rebuilt.



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Cave hotel

Examples of cave hotels can be found in Turkey, originally these caves were used by people in the past to avoid the disturbance and attack.

Some of these old caves have been reused and redeveloped into hotels which attract visitors who would like to experience the culture and tradition of the host countries.

These hotels are also preferred by visitors who look for environmentally friendly accommodation and can provide a 'close-to-nature' experience in their journey. Some cave hotels are also built underground, such as the Coober Pedy in South Australia which has been restructured from an opal mine.



Capsule hotel

This type of hotel originated in Japan and provides small, bed-only cabinets for its guests. The cabinet size is roughly 2m x 1m x 1.25m and they are mainly designed for local citizens who look for cheap accommodation when traveling back to their homes is not an option.

Services and facilities are limited, e.g. some may not have restaurants and guests are required to share the common washrooms inside the hotel properties.



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Tree house hotel

Tree house hotels are mainly located in countryside, especially in forests. Hotel rooms are built in harmony with trees which mainly follow the local native building method.

The most valuable experience is not provided by the 'no-gimmick' in-room facilities but a variety of tours and tourist activities, such as jungle walks, nightlife animal tours and visits to native houses.

Such activities provide visitors an opportunity to have a closer contact with the natural environment. Examples of tree house hotels can be found in Costa Rica, Kenya, Brazil and the Amazon.



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Underwater hotel

The hotel concepts associating with water have contributed to the development of innovative hotels with their rooms being built under the water. One example of an underwater hotel can be found in Florida (U.S.).

Hotel guests are required to have a diving certification so they can dive in order to get into their rooms. Travelers, who may have issues staying under the water, may prefer choosing other alternatives, such as floating hotels or those which have been built above the water.



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Hotel rating systems

Hotel rating systems can generally be classified into two different categories: official and commercial.

Official rating systems refer to those implemented by government units, systems which are commercially-oriented are usually set up by associations or privately owned enterprises. **Hotel ratings are often used to classify hotels according to their quality, with the purpose of informing customers about hotel facilities and amenities.**

There are a wide variety of rating schemes in use around the world. Many have a system involving stars, with a higher number of stars indicating higher quality.

Some of the hotel features or services taken into consideration when establishing a grade/rating are:

- Location
- Food Quality
- Room Variations
- Cleanliness
- Entertainment
- Ease of Access
- Additional Amenities





Hotel Rating Systems

Two examples of commercially-oriented hotel rating systems are developed by the **Mobil Travel Guide (re-branded as Forbes Travel Guide in 2009)** and the **American Automobile Association (AAA)**.

These two key organizations give ratings to hotels according to objective criteria such as facilities, scales and staff to room ratios.

The Mobil Travel Guide introduced the 'star-award' system and the AAA has also applied a similar concept - 'diamond-award' which are used for rating those participating hotels under a five-point scale from 1 to 5 in a regular basis.

The assessments of hotels are conducted by 'mystery shoppers' which usually consist of industry professionals and frequent travelers. Comparatively, visitors worldwide are more familiar with the ratings of private bodies which act as standard indicators of hotels' quality for visitors' references.

The key points from this module are:



Hospitality is the act of kindness in welcoming and looking after the basic needs of customers or strangers, mainly in relation to food, drink and accommodation.

Five key characteristics:

- Product/Service
- Communication
- Relationships
- Cultural diversity
- Labor

There are two main business sectors in the hospitality industry:

Accommodation - To provide accommodation (and usually food and drink) to people who for whatever reason are away from home.

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