

**SOLUTIONS TO ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF THE  
HOUSEKEEPING DEPARTMENT**

Case Natural Homestay (Hoi An, Vietnam)

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The purpose of this study was to focus on identifying the problems that have occurred in the Housekeeping department and the solutions to these problems, helping to reinforce the important role Housekeeping plays in the development process of the hotel. The commissioner of this study was Natural Homestay - a hotel in Hoi An, Vietnam. The results of this study would be useful in improving the service quality at the hotel for the guests staying.

This thesis incorporated various theoretical sources, ideas, and overview forms of the Housekeeping department in order to fulfil the intended aim, as well as demonstrating the relevance of this department in the hotel company. Furthermore, the approach employed in this thesis was qualitative methodology, with a focus on semi-structured interviews. Accordingly, the hotel and its leadership team would recognize the challenges that the housekeeping department was having based on the findings of the interviews and proposed appropriate remedies.

Through semi-structured interviews with Housekeeping staff, various information was collected about the current working situation of this department and employees' feelings when asked about customer issues. hotel. Based on the results of the above interviews, it showed the necessity and importance of improving the quality and spiritual value of employees in this department.

**Key words** housekeeping, housekeeping department, housekeeping process, quality improvement,

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The hotel room is the hotel's principal commercial product (Dudovskiy 2016). This perspective is further supported by Gray's (2017) observation that the hotel's primary job is to provide a location for travellers to stay. Contemporary passengers, on the other hand, expect much more, and hotels have had to rise to the occasion. As a result, maintaining and improving the quality of housekeeping is one of the most important responsibilities. It is also a crucial component that has a direct influence on the business's success and intensifies competition in comparison to competitors (Servi-Tek 2021).

This thesis is on the hotel's housekeeping department. The study aims to enhance the quality of service and service quality management at accommodation providers and offers a series of recommendations to improve the room service process and contribute to business strategy. It can answer the main research question: "What works well and what should be altered to simplify and improve the housekeeping quality?" Thus, the thesis deals with issues that need to be changed to handle unnecessary and inappropriate elements.

The thesis discusses the commissioner's background, Natural Homestay hotel, and a broad introduction to the housekeeping department of this accommodation provider. The main research method used for this thesis is the qualitative research method, namely the semi-structured interview. The results from the interviews are very helpful in deepening the understanding of the influencing factors to the quality of the housekeeping process, from objective to subjective. However, there are still some limitations when making this thesis, which is the subject and the number of interviewees. The author would like to delve deeply into the personal opinions of the staff at the housekeeping department, that the above factors are limiting. Therefore, the results are for reference only and can hardly be applied in other accommodation businesses and the interview results do not represent the big picture of the housekeeping.

## 2 COMMISSIONER BACKGROUND – NATURAL HOMESTAY

Natural Homestay was established in 2012, located near the ancient centre city of Hoi An, which as the hotel's strategic location ensures that guests can quickly and easily reach many local points of interest (TripAdvisor 2022). The business idea of this accommodation is about offering a rustic and simple image of Vietnam to foreign visitors. This is also a special highlight of the ancient land of Hoi An, comparing with other modern domestic tourism destinations such as Ho Chi Minh city, Da Nang as well as Nha Trang city.

The Natural Homestay hotel is an excellent choice for both business and leisure guests (Priceline 2022). Natural Homestay is a three-star hotel that is the ideal location for exploring Hoi An and its surrounds. Customers can easily visit the city's must-see attractions because of its handy location. (Agoda 2022a.). This is also the main reason that most tourists visit this Southeast Asian country. The homestay rooms are built in a simple style, but still provide essential amenities for tourists. According to Expedia (2022), there are four shared rooms with air conditioning, minibars, and hair dryers are available at Nature Homestay. Separate eating spaces are available in the accommodations. Cable channels are included with LCD televisions. Bathtubs or showers are available, as well as complementary amenities. Free wired and wireless Internet connection is available at this Hoi An hotel. (Agoda 2022b.). The Homestay functions all year and collaborates with other forms of tourism services, such as transportation and travel since Vietnam's temperature and weather are hot and humid all year, which is suitable for tourists' demand.

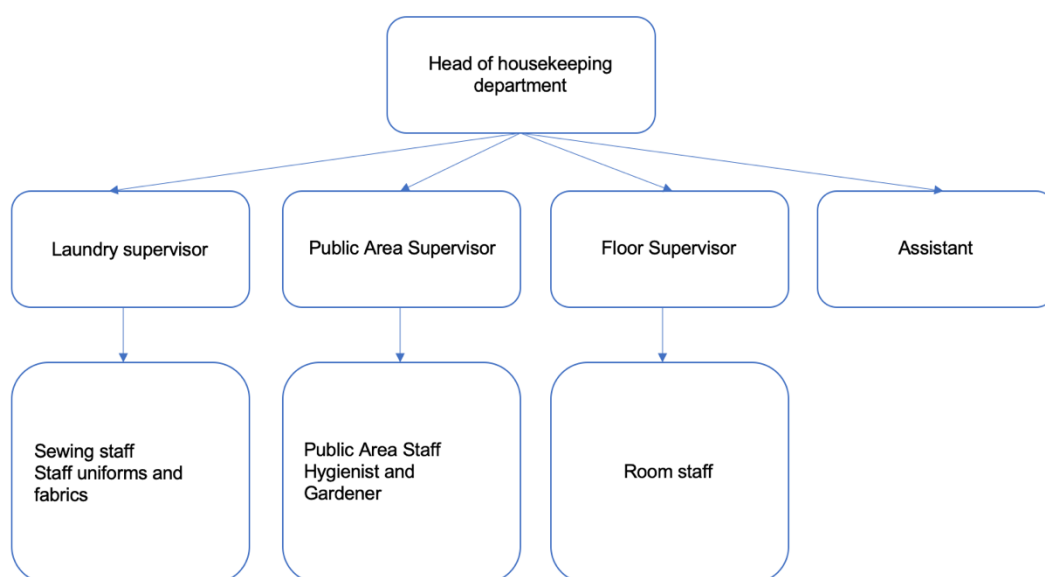


Figure 1. The organizational structure of the Housekeeping department at Natural Homestay (Huynh - The Manager of Housekeeping Department 2022)

The function and duty of the Housekeeping department at Natural Homestay is to be responsible for cleaning the entire living room area, corridor, lobby, and all other areas in the hotel to meet standard hygiene standards. hotel standards. In addition, the hotel's Housekeeping department also provides laundry services for guests as well as undertakes the provision of uniforms for staff and linens for the entire hotel. Ensuring effective management, saving electricity and water costs and maintaining hotel properties and ensuring the safety of property and lives of guests staying at the hotel is also the responsibility of the department.

The author collects information from the manager of the Housekeeping department that there are total of 14 employees in the housekeeping department, including 1 department manager, 1 assistant, 2 floor supervisors, 4 housekeeping staff, 2 public area staff and 2 in charge of garment staff. (Huynh 2022.) Depending on the type of contract, employees have a certain number of working days in per week. Most have 3 or 4 working days a week. However, particularly for the department manager who will be in charge of supervising weekdays and the assistant will take charge on weekends. Floor supervisors are responsible for re-checking the room after cleaning and reconfirming with the reception area. Department managers are responsible for assigning and creating worksheets for

employees. In addition, the manager also takes care of taking notes and ordering items for the department as well as reporting back to the hotel manager about the goods for the minibar. The manager also reports daily productivity by noting problems that arise during work and assisting in the hotel in calculating salaries for departmental staff. Issues related to working days and hours, shift changes and sick leave are also carefully considered by the management.

### 3 INTRODUCTION OF HOTEL HOUSEKEEPING DEPARTMENT

#### 3.1 Concept and Organisational Structure of Housekeeping Department in Hotel

Housekeeping is an integral and basic component of every lodging operation. The idea for the term comes from “hospitality, the cordial and generous reception and reception of guests or strangers, socially or commercially”. Others are in need of a resting spot, cleaned and well-kept, with a pleasant atmosphere (Jones 2008, 3). At any level of hotel growth, this is regarded a must-have component of business strategy. Furthermore, equipment such as faucets, light bulbs, and plugs must be in excellent working condition and there must be no risk of fire or explosion owing to an electrical short, among other items (The National Institute of Open Schooling). The Managing Director of the hotel chain is in charge of this department. In other words, housekeeping can be described as a fundamental key to success of any accommodation provider businesses, which contributes up to 70% in generating turnover for the hotel, as reported by Uttarakhand Open University (2022).

The organisation structure of the Housekeeping department varies depending on the star-class and size hotel, which is described by the organization chart, according to Chitkara University Research & Innovation Department (2020). The more structured the workforce in the Housekeeping department is, the more clearly specialized they are. Each person in the department has a specific position and duty, and they all work together to ensure that the department runs smoothly (Setup My Hotel). The head of the Housekeeping department is the head of the department at small hotels, and that person is responsible for overseeing all subordinates in his department. In modest hotels, the housekeeping department might take responsibility for any tasks from cleaning rooms to maintaining the cleanliness of public spaces. Based on the Figure 1, it can be observed that an organization chart is always used to show the organizational structure of the housekeeping department in a small or large hotel chain. An organization chart is a diagram that depicts the relationships and interactions between roles within a department, displaying how each job fits into



the larger organization and the division of duties and authority boundaries. As Figure 1 illustrates that the organizational structure of the Housekeeping department at 4 to 5-star hotels has a high level of expertise. The Head of Housekeeping department serves as an executive, manager, and is responsible for the department's functioning. Supervisors are directly responsible for the operation, supervision, and administration of staff for the department's head. As a result, the Housekeeping department is split into four distinct sections. Supervisors are in charge of each of these groups, and they will manage and oversee the employees in their groups directly.

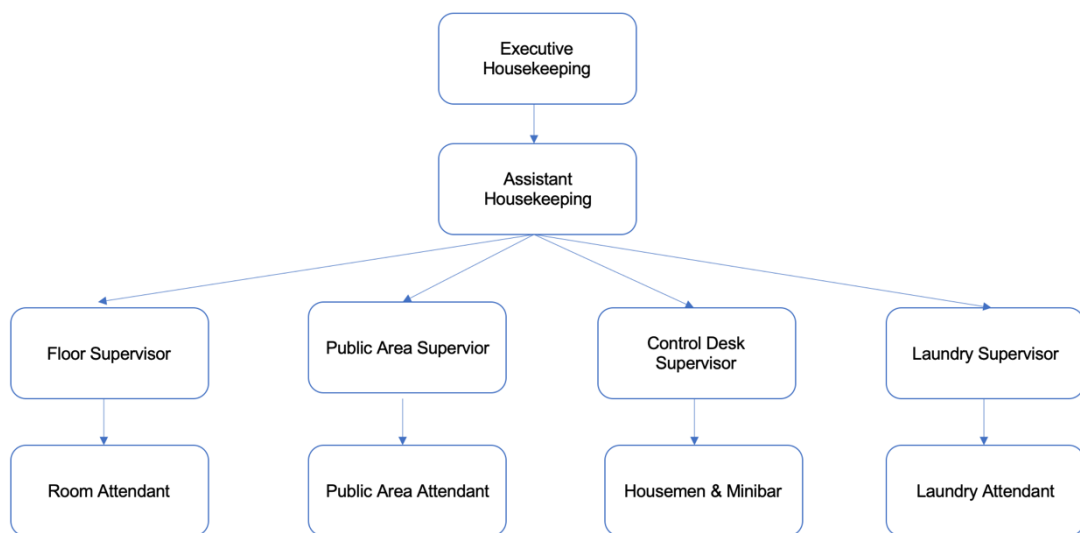


Figure 2. The basic organizational structure of the Housekeeping Department at a hotel (Setup My Hotel 2022)

### 3.2 Role and Function of Housekeeping Department in Hotel

The major purpose and responsibility of the hotel's Housekeeping staff are to clean and serve the bedrooms to the highest standards in order to provide the maximum convenience for visitors throughout their stay. Furthermore, this section is in charge of maintaining the cleanliness of the hotel's public areas. The lobby, the restaurant (Front of the house) and till the places for staff, the workstations of the departments (Back of the house) must be cleaned daily or on a regular basis. (Fleming 2020.)

According to Roberts's article (2016), housekeeping, in particular, plays a critical function in the hotel sector, since it is responsible for ensuring the comfort and attentiveness of visitors, as well as the hotel's operation. This entails providing a professional and welcoming ambiance, as well as ensuring that hotel employees are trustworthy. The Housekeeping staff is responsible for maintaining a high degree of cleanliness across the hotel and following regular maintenance practices in the areas under its control. (Andrews 2008, 120.) Providing necessary goods such as linen, towels, a minibar, and other amenities in hotel rooms also necessitates careful consideration (Hotel Management Institute 2022; Jeffery 2022). These objects must be made of the same material, be the same whiteness, and be free of tears before being used. (Rizzo 2017.). They must also be straightened before usage. Employees are given uniforms, which are washed after each shift to provide basic hygiene and prevent bacterial cross-contamination. Flowers in the lobby and throughout the hotel are also required of cleaning employees in hotels. (Roberts 2016.). The housekeeping department is responsible for dealing with lost and found issues at the hotel, and the personnel is trained to handle these circumstances. Links to different components are always built in a consistent and close manner. Overall, in all of its work, the purpose of the housekeeping department is to maintain consistent standards along with impeccable room service – this is reflected in customer satisfaction.

The Housekeeping department is extremely beneficial to the hotel's overall operations. According to Starkov (2020), 92 % of travellers surveyed and answered that cleanliness is one of the most important factors when choosing a room. Therefore, the fact that customer reviews about the hotel are not clean and uncomfortable, which greatly damages the image of the business and directly affects sales. The results from the same report show that the number increases to 90% when travellers read bad reviews of hotel rooms. Because the hotel's primary source of revenue is the sale of rooms to tenants, as mentioned. As a result, ensuring a clean and comfortable room hygiene level is critical when marketing to clients. It has a direct impact on customer reviews and hotel revenue.

### 3.3 Housekeeping Service Process in Hotel

#### 3.3.1 Overview of the Housekeeping Service Process in Hotel

Housekeeping workers must guarantee that they follow a scientifically determined methodology while cleaning hotel rooms. The purpose of establishing such a working procedure is to assist employees in limiting potential mistakes, reducing redundant activities, saving time, and increasing labour productivity. The cleaning Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is a word used to describe this standard for hotel room service. According to Brush (2022), the cleaning SOP is defined as follows a set of written instructions that specifies the step-by-step procedure for performing a routine action correctly. To ensure that the company stays consistent and in accordance with industry legislation and business standards, SOPs should be followed in the same manner every occasion. In details, the SOP includes a series of checklists that housekeepers may use to log the phases of the cleaning procedure as they move through each room, according to the newspaper. The SOP also is a written work method that assures housekeepers do jobs in a certain order for efficiency and safety. (Flexkeeping 2022.). The room service procedure, in particular, offers thorough instructions to the housekeepers on steps from knocking on the door to entering the room, cleaning the bedroom and restroom, cleaning quality requirements, and cleaning standards criteria for each type of space, as well as the settlement of problems that arise during the course of the construction. (Hickman & Hyland 2012.). The significance of sanitary SOP is a factor that directly affects customer satisfaction. Rooms must meet a specified level of cleanliness. As a result, SOP is used as a template for the housekeeper to follow in order to monitor and assess the room's quality before it is placed into service. (Louveau 2022.)

The room service cycle is set up as a loop. The loop is simply understood as follows: a room in a vacant state will be sold to guests, they check-in procedures and receive their room key. Therefore, the room service staff takes on the role of cleaning the room when guests check out, therefore the room is always in a clean condition ready for the front office to sell to other guests.

On the work schedule at Natural Homestay, there is always such a time frame for all employees (from 7AM to 2PM). During the shift, each housekeeping staff member will be provided with information on room availability in his or her area of responsibility. Each employee will take on 16 to 20 rooms and the employee must be responsible for managing the rooms within the assigned area. Master key control for housekeeping staff is extremely important. Management can also control which floor keys have been used by employees. The floor key is only to open the doors of the rooms within the scope of their duties and must be returned to the Housekeeping office at the end of the shift.

Checking the condition of the room is an important first step in housekeeping. Room status includes clean rooms - Vacant Clean (VC), dirty rooms - Vacant Dirty (VD), guest rooms - Occupied (OD), damaged rooms - Out of order (OOO), Rooms with guests coming check out – Due out (DE). After receiving their worksheet, the room staff checks the actual room condition if there is a difference on the task board, reporting back to the supervisor directly managing his floor. The purpose of checking the Room Status is to understand the difference in status, besides being able to promptly handle arising situations.

For a dirty empty room (VD) means a guest room check-out, the staff mainly check if the guest has left anything behind. If the guest has not left the hotel at check-out, the staff must notify the floor supervisor to bring the items back to the guest or make notes on their task assignment board and conduct Lost & Found procedures for found items. Next, for the stayover room (OD), the staff checks whether the guest has a need to make the room. Besides, for damaged rooms (OOO), according to hotel policy, rooms that do not meet the prescribed standards are placed in a damaged condition, reported to the relevant department for correction and repair in a short time to return to the original clean room (VC) condition for sale to customers.

### 3.3.2 Procedure of Housekeeping Service in Hotel

Based on the cleaning SOP, it is possible to set up the service process of the Housekeeping department in a basic method according to the following diagram (Figure 3).

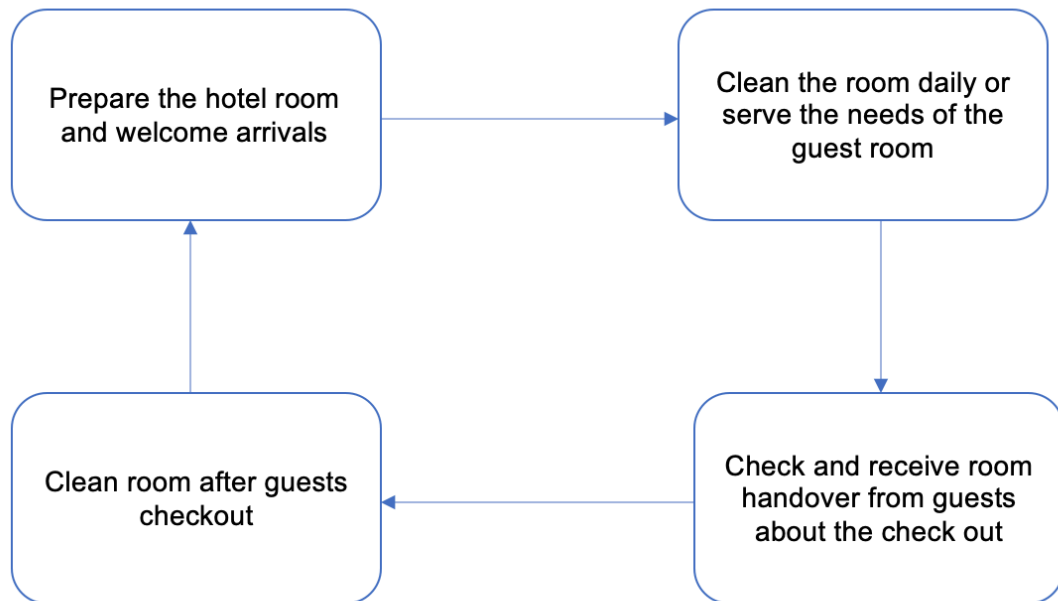


Figure 3. Housekeeping department's customer service simulation process (Flexkeeping 2022)

In the first stage - Prepare the hotel room and welcome arrivals and begin the procedure of housekeeping service in the hotel loop. The reception and handover of rooms to guests are closely coordinated between two departments: the front office department and the housekeeping department. (Firdaus 2011.) The front desk department notify the Housekeeping department in the hotel about the number of guest rooms to be in, the arrival time, the type of guest (VIP guests, regular guests, group guests), the special requirements of the guests to the standard Housekeeping department.

Next, the stage “clean the room daily or serve the needs of the guest room” comprises the housekeeping task must comply with the guest service process of the housekeeping department set forth. The task must be the process of knocking

on the door and entering the living room, procedures and technical requirements for cleaning the bedroom, process and technical requirements of restroom cleaning, process and technical requirements for bed making, procedures and technical requirements for the appropriate and safe use of chemicals and other service standards. Based on the documents of Cadieu, Rabelais & Dardilly and Tutorialspoint (2022) about the cleaning standard procedures, the author summarizes the specific steps according to the specific simulation diagram (Figure 3)

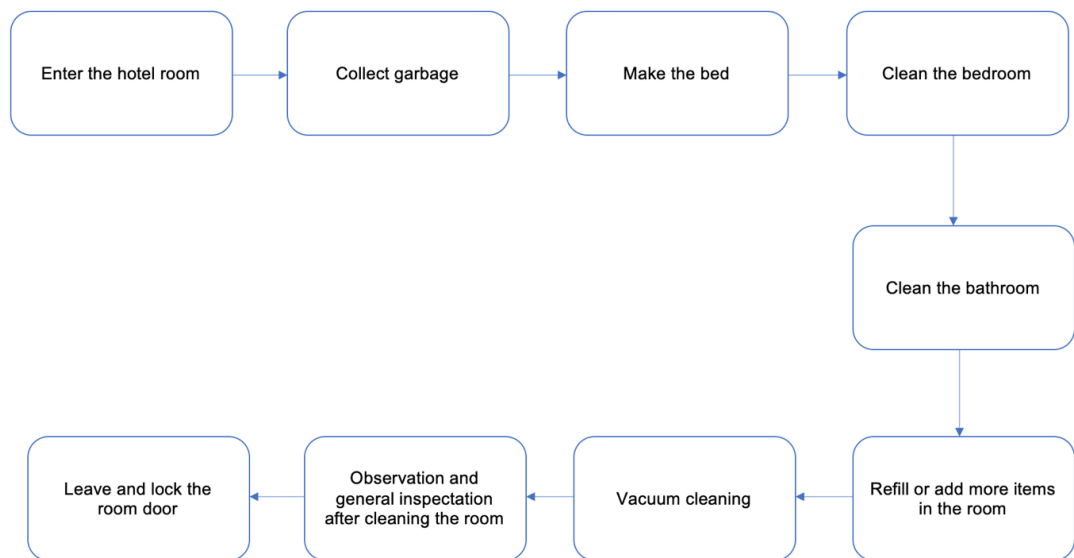


Figure 4: The process of cleaning the guest room (Cadieu, Rabelais & Dardilly; Tutorialspoint 2022).

In a precise manner for the phases of Figure 3, the first point to do when the housekeeper enters the room is to open the room door. Hand washing and wearing gloves are mandatory to ensure hygiene for housekeeping. (Davies 2022.). The next stage is to empty trash bins. This step is critical because if the garbage is not gathered, it has an immediate impact on the comfort and hygiene of new arrivals since “cleanliness is supreme when a guest needs to book a hotel” (Global Service 2022.). After this step, the room attendant will dust and clean stains on surfaces such as TV tables, shelves, nightstands. If a customer's forgotten item is detected, the lost and found procedure will be conducted, which will be mentioned later. The cleaning part of the bathroom is considered a separate part from the bedroom. These two stages can flexibly swap positions, depending on the hotel's SOP and management. The vacuum cleaning step is a

general cleaning step for both the bedroom and bathroom areas. Dust, gravel or hair should be carefully vacuumed. According to Mogelonsky (2019), the average room attendant requires 20-30 minutes to clean a room adequately in general.

Check and receive room handover from guests about to check out is the third step. Avoiding loss or damage to hotel property caused by guests must be reported in a timely manner to be included at the guest's expense. (Fallon & Rutherford 2001, 209.). The room check is also to check if guests have used the drinks or utensils in the Minibar or not so that the front desk department prints the bill for the guest. Additionally, the important factor of this job is to discover the belongings and possessions of guests left behind at the hotel. (Joshi 2022.). These items will be returned to the customer and follow the Lost & Found procedures at each hotel.

### 3.4 Customer Service

Customer service skills are essential in industries that contribute significantly to the country's economic growth such as tourism, restaurants, and hotels. According to Gul (2014), it is the foundation for future reputation and customer loyalty. Customer service is "the direct interaction between a consumer purchasing a product and a representative of the company selling the item". (Grade 2022.). similarly, hotel customer service is the care that a hotel gives to guests before, during and after their stay. (Zendesk 2022) Customer service skills are required in hotel roles such as front desk, and sales representative. However, housekeeping staff also need to have customer satisfaction skills. As reported by the Indeed Editorial Team (2021), to be effective, a housekeeper must be able to provide excellent customer service. This is because their work is dependent on customer approval, therefore, demonstrating that the customer is satisfied with the housekeeper's performance is crucial to their success. A procedure of employee training to comprehend the hotel's standards are required in order for the customer service process to be excellent. According to Indeed Editorial Team (2021), this program tries to improve employees' awareness of proper customer interaction. This training aims to provide consumers with a favourable picture of the firm based on their interactions with the customer service staff.

### 3.5 Sustainability and Green Values in Cleaning Industry

Sustainability and green values are now key goals in the business strategies and visions of businesses in many industries. The hotel industry is no exception to this scale. (Shen, Qian & Chen 2020.). Currently, there are many hotels that embody sustainability into the business process. It is possible to list ecological patterns or behaviours related to sustainability in the habitat. (Kang et al. 2012.) Because at present, the environment is in an alarming state of pollution and if the hotels do not focus on sustainability and green values at the core of their business, then that business cannot be developed. (Berezan et al. 2013.) Sustainability and green values include activities, such as using natural energy from the sun, wind, or from renewable energy. In addition, reduce the amount of water consumed to save clean water. Hotels use reusable fabrics to avoid releasing waste into the environment and prioritize the use of durable and easy-to-recycle items. (Shinn 2018.)

Currently, there are solutions to help hotels easily access sustainability and green values, in line with business standards. According to Thomsen (2018), cleaning products that housekeeping staff use every day are a major cause of great impact on the living environment. Besides the above hazards, they can also indirectly affect the health of employees if used for a long time and inhaled toxic substances. Accordingly, it must alter those liquids to environmentally friendly products. Another problem is that the division of waste also partly reduces the amount of waste discharged into the environment. According to a report by the European Commission (2017), some hotels face challenges in sorting waste because of a lack of facilities and local waste management. According to the latest Mordor Intelligence figures, "about 85% of the waste generated in Vietnam is being buried without treatment in landfill sites, 80% of which are unhygienic and pollute the environment". Consequently, the garbage sorting is still in the process of starting the implementation process.



## 4 FUNDAMENTAL OF ENHANCE QUALITY OF HOTEL HOUSEKEEPING DEPARTMENT

### 4.1 Concept of Service Quality

The definition of the concept of service quality is “the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs” (OECD 2022). It is called International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO). There are several approaches to the notion of service quality. Those approaches might be based on excellence, property-based quality, or product longevity and sturdiness, as reported by Garvin (1984). A technique of increasing product quality is to approach it from a production viewpoint, which is focused on the perfection and conformance of the product manufacturing process, preventing mistakes in the production process, and reducing product errors. Furthermore, the idea of quality may be viewed through the lens of value. As a result, quality is a nebulous word that is dependent on the consumer's or producer's point of view, as well as the customer's capacity to pay and the value of the product. (Alarassi 2016.) The selling price and the amount that the buyer must spend are weighed against the quality. Furthermore, quality is viewed through the eyes of the consumer, based on Poovathany's report (2015). Because the perception of quality originates from the buyer's thought, businesses always follow the "customer-oriented" attitude. It is regarded a quality product to create items that fulfil and satisfy customer demands. In other words, a product's quality is determined by the value it provides to customers, as cited by Indeed Editorial Team (2021). These techniques demonstrate how people's perceptions and understandings of quality differ. And the pursuit of the quality of products or services of an enterprise in order to enhance the image and reputation, enhance the competitive position as well as consider quality as the key to business success of the enterprise. In general, quality is associated with the satisfaction of customers' needs, so any product or service that does not meet customer needs is considered poor quality even though the level of production technology may be poor no matter how modern.

In the hospitality industry, service quality is provided by individuals, which is the communication and employee-customer relationship, making them feel comfortable and satisfied, the values that they received compared to their pre-consumption expectations and the amount of money they spent. (Ali et al. 2021, 15.) The simultaneity between supply and consumption occurs at the same time and customers must come to the place to enjoy and feel that service. Customers can only know if the service is of good quality or not only when they have used the service, they have had the experience and exposure to it. Besides, the human factor has a great impact on the perception and evaluation of hotel service quality. Because all services in the hotel are mostly provided directly through the service staff, through their attitude and appearance. Room service quality is about providing customers with attentive and dedicated service, customer satisfaction with the attitude and customer care of the room service staffs during the guest's stay at the hotel. Therefore, service quality is a cumulative evaluation process of customers based on the comparison between the expected service quality and the satisfaction level of the service quality that the customer has received. Therefore, the service quality of the housekeeping department, from the consumer's perspective, depends on the subjective feelings of the guests, which is the level of customer satisfaction and satisfaction with the service of the housekeeping department. It can be affirmed that the concept of service quality is the level of customer satisfaction about the hotel's guest service, compared with their previous expectations (Milan, Snežana & Marija 2019, 62.)

#### 4.2 Characteristics of Service Quality

Due to the specificity of the service business, it is difficult to distinguish and to be able to evaluate and manage the service quality of the hotel better, it is necessary to understand its specific characteristics. Hotel service quality has a number of characteristics, which are intangibility, inseparability, variability, and perishability (Kotler & Keller 2009).

The intangibility feature comes from the very specificity of the type of service. The inability to touch or grasp is a service because it does not have a specific shape (Ronisky 2016). According to Novak (2017), the hotel product is a package

service, it consists of four components: travel and tourism, food and beverages, lodging and recreation. When considering and evaluating the quality of a service, as well as to know how its quality must go through a process, from the time of purchase, usage and feel, to the post-purchase evaluation. (Klementovaa, Zavadskyb & Zavadskab 2015.). This process depends on the subjective perception of the customer. As for the two components of the travel and tourism as well as food and beverages, they can be judged their quality easily because they are both concrete and tangible service. (Fleming 2019.). It can be touched, seen, as well as weighed and counted because they all have specific physical and chemical properties such as length, size, weight, colours, and taste. However, for two components such as visible services (lodging) and hidden services (recreation), to accurately assess its quality depends on the consumer's perception after using the service. (Fleming 2020b.). Meanwhile, the services that it directly impacts in affect the perception as well as the customer's assessment of the service quality, influencing the decision whether to use that service or not is in the reception of the baggage porter, the attentiveness and politeness of the staff. Those assessments depend on each different customer, but the customers staying at the hotel have different psychological, ethnic, and personality characteristics. Therefore, the higher the level of the hotel, the higher the service quality requires more professionalism, the efforts and contributions of all employees and all departments in the hotel. This requires high alignment and cooperation between departments in the hotel. A small mistake in the customer service process that makes them unhappy will also affect the reputation of the whole hotel. (DiScripio 2017.)

The inseparability is expressed in the production and used in a service, seems to coincide in time frame and space, as reported by Nandini (2022). Customers must come to the place to be able to consume the service. Therefore, the role of the customer in the service implementation process is extremely important that process can only be completed with the completion of the customer's consumption. Customers play the main role in the implementation process, having both an insider's view and a direct consumer (Dennis 2020). Moreover, their evaluations after using the service at the hotel are considered as the most exactly. Satisfied service quality indicates a higher level of customer satisfaction.

From this feature, hotel managers always stand on the point of view of customers, direct consumers and take customers as the central to serve and to evaluate their current service quality.

Next feature is about the variability. This feature is derived from the inseparability feature. They cannot be kept since the manufacturing and consumption processes occur virtually simultaneously (Chand). Additionally, because the hotel's goods are developed and delivered by the hotel's workers, this service cannot be automated or replaced; it must be performed by the human themselves. This is the primary reason why a hotel strives to optimize room capacity: if room capacity is low, it means that a certain number of rooms are not offered to clients, and these rooms are regarded incapable to generate money for the hotel on the particular day.

In the hotel business, service quality is always the top concern of managers and is the key to creating a competitive advantage for businesses (Trilyo Team 2018a). Therefore, it is very important to be consistent in the awareness and actions of all departments and all members of the hotel about the quality of their service. Maintaining a good quality of service in the business can both create a good image and reputation and can enhance a competitive advantage over other competitors. A service can be provided by many different people, at different times and places, and the intervention of customers in the process of creating the service has created instability and heterogeneity. "Given that services are heterogeneous. It is essential that every customer receives excellent service" (Lumen Learning). The synchronization and consistency of service quality must reflect the hotel's commitment to guests, anytime, anywhere and for all customers. That quality of service must be maintained and must be in accordance with the hotel's standards. It is not possible to have good service quality initially and only for a certain period of time or only for first time guests to the hotel, and subsequent visits are not necessary. There can be no service quality that is just advertising to compete with competitors. Service quality cannot be built once and applied forever. As cited by PlayVox Team (2021) that service quality must be maintained uniformly and constantly changing to match the diverse needs of customers in the target market segment and to compete with other competitors.

### 4.3 Effects on Service Quality

The service quality of the hotel is strongly influenced by objective and subjective factors. Therefore, the management and assessment of the impact and influence of these factors on service quality support to take remedial measures to minimize errors and possible risks, affects the image and reputation of the hotel. Factors affecting service quality include internal factors of the enterprise and external factors mainly due to the evaluation and perception of customers (Mohammed 2016).

The group of subjective factors depends on the quantity and type of services of the housekeeping department in the hotel. Daily housekeeping is the main service of the department. In addition, cleaning and sanitizing public areas, including those inside and outside the hotel premises, ensures cleanliness in accordance with hotel standards. Some hotels provide guests with laundry and shoeshine services. Housekeeping department also undertakes to take care of ornamental plants as well as decorative flowers throughout the hotel.

The Housekeeping department not only assumes the role of cleaning the hotel room area, but the types and services of the housekeeping department in high-class hotels are diverse and professionally performed. Each employee in the housekeeping department takes on a role and has a reciprocal interaction, in order to fulfil their duties well as well as to serve the hotel's guests well. The service of the housekeeping department creates a comfortable feeling for customers like they are in their own home, as reported by Meelen (2018). Any needs of guests must be fulfilled quickly and all staff in the department must always be in a state of readiness to serve.

Products and services offered in the hotel are closely related and complement each other. In accordance with Bitesize, they stated that although the hotel sector is a service industry, it does supply clients with both products and services. A hospitality outlet's products are the stuff it sells. Services are supplied to suit the customer's wants and expectations, as well as to improve their overall experience. They are viewed as a complex structured service delivery requiring

high synthesis and synchronization, a logically structured set of services that are closely related and interact together, complement each other in the process of creating benefits for customers. Combining these services with each other at different levels and structures will form different service mixes. The problem is that each business needs to know how to skilfully combine these different types of services to create for themselves a relatively complete set of services that are suitable for their strengths and at the same time best meet their specific characteristics of each target market that the enterprise has selected. In Friedlander's blog (2019) cited that "the cornerstone to great hospitality stays the same: great guest service and great guest experience". Besides, because human's needs are always changing, it is always necessary to learn new needs and new trends in consumption to serve customers in the most effective way.

The system of technical facilities is considered subjective factors. Depending on the ability to pay and the level of acceptance of tourists, they can choose for themselves an appropriate place to stay. According to Minsker's report (2019), for customers with high payment ability, they are willing to accept money if they receive a really good quality of service. Entering a high-class hotel, the first thing they can feel is the luxury, splendour and surface of a hotel. Facilities play an important role in building the first image of the hotel (Ogle 2009). Along with the change of human needs, the hotel industry has also grown in breadth and depth. The equipment and facilities serve to create the most perfect service quality, to satisfy the needs of customers. From the original facilities just for overnight guests, rudimentary equipment, until now the hotels have been equipped with modern facilities. Remote control computer system, satellite TV, wi-fi network in the room, magnetic door lock system instead of the classic key, water heater system in the bathroom to really comfortable beds for you. customers a good night's sleep. This equipment is to give customers a great experience, and the purpose is to improve the service quality of the hotel.

The human factor is also extremely important in the process of building and developing a business. In the accommodation provider business, the role of the personnel is very important. Because the staff is the person who directly serves the guests, they treat customers on behalf of the hotel. Depending on the

standards of each hotel, the staff must show their professionalism (Kaufman & Ricci 2014). From appearance, dress, posture to working style, all must be standard. Guests coming to the hotel will feel very satisfied with the attentive and attentive service of the staff. As analysed, this service cannot be replaced or mechanized but is performed by people themselves. Therefore, the quality of service is reflected in the quality of the hotel's staff

Customer's perception of service quality is said to be an objective factor that affects service quality (Mmutle 2017). Mmutle also stated that customers play an important role in the implementation process as well as evaluating the service quality of a hotel. They must come to the place to experience and to be able to give their assessment of the service quality of the hotel. When the actual perception of what they received is higher or equal to the previous expectation, the hotel is considered to have good service quality and vice versa. These reviews are influenced by many different factors depending on each customer coming to the hotel such as: age, experience in consumption, preferences, needs (Neirotti, Raguseo & Paolucci 2016). Therefore, service providers understand what their customers need and expect. In order to customers to have a good sense of service quality, it is not only necessary to create a variety of services to meet their needs. It is not only equipped with modern material facilities just to create a flashy look on the outside, but also has a team of highly qualified staff, providing perfect service, creating customers' satisfaction. customers feel comfortable, warmly welcomed, cared for and appreciated.

#### 4.4 Housekeeping Service Quality

In today's industrialized economy, the emergence of a plethora of lodging options ranging from affordable to high-end fosters tough rivalry in the market to attract visitors. In a certain sense, the products and services offered by the hotels are similar in several ways, according to Bean-Millinger (2020). Therefore, the implementation of many measures to satisfy customers such as: upgrading facilities, creating new products and services to meet the diverse needs of consumers. However, improving service quality is one aspect that might make a significant difference and provide you a competitive advantage (Al-Ababneh

2016). Employee training programs and professional development are critical for improving service quality.

One of the reasons for improving the quality of room service is that in the accommodation business as initially analysed, the business is mainly selling rooms to tenants. The needs of guests when coming to our hotel are that they want to have a comfortable sleep, help them recover their health to continue their journey. The lack of attentive room service or any causes that makes customers unhappy when they stay at the hotel will affect the reputation and image of the hotel and the hotel's profit goals. This issue is mentioned in the objective factors section. In addition, increasingly demanding requirements of tourists, they are not only people with high payment ability but also have a lot of experience in tourism and accommodation. Therefore, improving the quality of room service will help domestic accommodation businesses affirm their quality and brand. Because the majority of tourists, they compare the quality of room service of accommodation establishments in the places they have visited. (Hargreaves, 2015.)

From the reasons for why quality must be improved, the hotel's revenue will be boosted by providing high-quality service. By cultivating customer loyalty among existing customers, the hotel will have a steady stream of regular clients and will be able to attract more new ones. The quality of hotel experience and consumption will leave positive or negative feedback. That is also a consideration in deciding whether or not to return to the hotel. Furthermore, the positive customer feedback will assist the hotel in attracting more new potential clients without having to spend money on advertising and promotion.

Improving the quality of room service helps to increase competitiveness and raise prices in a reasonable way, as reported by Campos, Juan & Miguel (2015). In fact, high-class hotels are always interested in improving service quality, so it is very reasonable that they can raise prices higher than other competitors (Ye et al. 2012). The quality of room service of these hotels always shows the standards and class of the hotel. In addition to satisfying the most demanding customers, the quality of room service here also helps to increase competitiveness, improve prestige and reputation as well as affirm its position in the market.



The improvement of service quality helps the hotel save advertising and marketing costs (Trilyo Team 2018b). In addition, maintaining measures to improve service quality also helps businesses reduce business costs such as: minimising the waste of labour time, improving productivity, reducing costs for customers. inspection and monitoring process. Improve service quality by managing quality right from the moment of production, continuously improving during implementation. Helps to reduce the costs for correcting errors such as: reimbursement costs for customers, costs for handling complaints, compensation for damage that the hotel has caused to guests.

## 5 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the research methods section of the thesis, the main method is qualitative, which involves data collection and analysis to reach a conclusion. Research responses of a “factual” nature are considered appropriate for quantitative research methods. From the research questionnaire, it is possible to investigate and synthesize information, seek opinions, views, attitudes as well as personal opinions, beliefs and preferences to ask about a topic (Hammarberg, Kirkman & Lacey 2016).

The goal of qualitative research is to acquire data through open conversation. This enables for more in-depth analyses based on respondents' replies to the interviews, which are utilised as a methodical data collection (Bhat 2020.) These interviews give a closer look at sharing, not just about work-related concerns but also about the mental and physical health of employees. The goal of using this strategy is to establish a professional environment. It is, nevertheless, nonetheless personal and respects the staff's contribution. Interviews with them and the use of their perspectives and observations give the research credibility and authenticity.

In qualitative research, semi-structured interview is one of the popular research methods. This type of interview is “data collection method that relies on asking questions within a predetermined thematic framework” (George 2022). It is extremely suitable for interviewees to elicit the characteristics and nature of the matter to be concretized, through words and images. According to Mayo (2014, 90) that in most exploratory studies, semi-structured interviews make a useful contribution. Through semi-structured interviews, it provides insights that can be extended beyond the scope of the question. This means that interviews that tend to be “free communication” can gather useful information, outside of the original plan.

In a semi-structured interview, it has a list of topics and some questions related to that research topic. It is possible that the order of questions and topics will be changed in the context of the interview so that it is coherent. Issues and doubts

arising during the interview process will be flexibly added to find out in-depth details of the answer. As reported by Saunders et al. (2016, 32) that the person asking the questions should express his or her point of view so that the interviewee understands his/her thinking. It is possible that a richer and more specific result will be obtained.

Interviewees are employees of the housekeeping department. Based on the thesis topic, the total number of suitable interviewees is 7 people, including the manager, 2 floor supervisors and 4 current housekeeping staff. Besides, personal information is kept confidential to ensure objectivity and confidentiality. The interviews were mainly conducted face-to-face. However, for those whose schedule is not convenient to get face-to-face interviews, the author uses the internet as a communication tool. The duration of each interview is between 20 and 40 minutes. The interview includes questions from different fields but shared the same characteristics about supporting and improving housekeeping at the hotel. The main language used in the interview is Vietnamese. Interviews are allowed to be recorded for research and analysis later in the chapter.

Sample interview questions cover research-related topics. Specifically, the questions are classified into topics such as basic information of the interviewee, questions related to equipment, tools and equipment, the training process, the process of cleaning the room, questions related to related to partners. The author will disseminate the general information of the interview to the staff in the housekeeping department so that they can be prepared.

## 6 INTERVIEW RESEARCH RESULTS

### 6.1 Training Process

The results from interviews with housekeeping representatives are presented in this chapter. Respondents were asked about questions related to the training process at the beginning of the job. The training process is an important stage in building and shaping the operating procedures of the hotel in general and the cleaning department in particular. According to the interviews, all the interviewees participated in the process. They admit that the process helps them get used to the pace of work. However, the training time varies from person to person.

[...] This training process lasted for 3 days and the next day I had a supervisor working with me to guide the toilet cleaning. However, on the 5th day of training, I had to do it alone. I was feeling very confused because there were so many new things to learn at once and not much practice time [...] (Staff 1)

[...] At the beginning of training, generally, I was very slow with cleaning, but since I was trained by different floor supervisors, I started to swiftly pick up their pace. It took me 5 days to get familiar the instructions [...] (Staff 2)

Some cases (Staff 1, 2 and 4) were trained by more than one person. This can happen in some cases causing confusion in terms of communication as well as instruction as each instructor has a different presentation style. However, this problem can be understood that floor supervisors and managers are extremely busy and taking turns to train is inevitable.

Through interviews, most of the respondents answered that the training time was quite short, from 2 to 3 days. After that process, the interviewees shared that there was more to the process than training, causing confusion when they worked officially.

[...] To me 2 days is enough to imagine how to clean rooms but it is hard to remember everything need to be done extra work [...] (Staff 5)

[...] The training period is not reasonable enough for a person to then be able to work at a good level. During the practice, I learned and practiced the methods and skills by myself every day [...] (Staff 4).

## 6.2 Working Process

Compared with interview sources, they all shared their general workflow in the same order (Staff 1, Staff 2, Staff 3, Staff 4 and Staff 6). Through sharing about the problem, readers can imagine what the entire shift process of a housekeeper.

[...] My working day starts with preparing my tool bag and getting my Master-key and at the same time I receive a working sheet that includes the rooms that need to be cleaned. In addition, preparing a trolley is also essential. Most of the time I start cleaning the first due out or due in rooms [ ...] Once I finished the due in rooms, I took a break and then continued until the list of rooms was complete. At the end of the day need to clean the dirty laundry and tidy up the tool bag [...] (Staff 1).

Prepare trolleys for floors, prepare cleaning stuffs, bring trolleys to the work floor, clean the due out and due in rooms in priority, then stayover rooms, clean bathroom, make bed, check and refill missing things, vacuum and mop floor. (Staff 4).

They also commented that the number of rooms and the location of the rooms in the working sheet are very important because they affect the working time as well as the travel time. If the rooms are arranged in a reasonable way, for example, close to each other or on the same floor, it is easy to move and clean.

General workflow depends on many factors: the number of rooms to clean, and their dirtiness. If the rooms from my list are located on one or two floors, it's definitely easier to follow the list and clean them one by one. It's much more difficult when all rooms are on different floors and I have to move here and there all the time with the whole equipment which is really heavy. (Staff 6)

Unlike housekeepers, floor supervisors and managers have their own duties. They do not need to prepare separate working equipment; their work is more impactful to the customer's perception. They are the ones who directly create and assign working sheets, check the room quality, and supervise other employees. The details are shared in the next sections.

When questioned about the starting time, housekeepers have a general opinion that the starting time is quite early and not reasonable. Nevertheless, this is not a huge concern for other housekeepers, especially for supervisors and the manager.

As for starting hours, I personally think it is pretty early. Some guests still have not checked out and the stayover rooms are still in a do-not-disturb state, so the time spent doing nothing is meaningless. I think the time needs to be adjusted to be more reasonable [...] (Staff 3)

It is not manageable. I think the shift should be started later, maybe 9 AM or 10 AM [...] (Staff 2)

As a supervisor, I spend a lot of time working at the office. For me, the shift start time is quite reasonable (Staff 5)

The most controversial issue is about break time and time to leave. Most of the interviewees felt that their breaks required to be flexible or sometimes absent. This affects the health as well as the quality of unproductive work, which may cause unnecessary errors.

[...] the standard break time is 30 minutes. However, as I share, we sometimes don't get a full 30-minute break for many reasons, such as a guest calling to clean the room or having an unexpected check-in. Therefore, I think a more reasonable solution should be found [...].  
(Staff 1)

[...] Sometimes, I do not have enough break time to recharge my energy to continue with the list. (Staff 2).

[...] The break time is around 15-30 minutes is appropriate, but sometimes break time is a luxury when the number of rooms is large and must be completed before the general time allowed. (Staff 5).

In addition, the time to leave is also a matter of concern. Because the staff in the cleaning department only work one shift per day, the time to leave is greatly influenced by the number of rooms in the working sheet. Most of them are not allowed to leave on schedule and have to work overtime.

[...] As for the time to end the shift, it depends on the working sheet. If the rooms need to be cleaned too much, the completion time will be longer than expected (Staff 1).

[...] It is very rare that I finish my shift according to my schedule. I usually finish work later. When the list of rooms is long, I finish my work late. [...]. It is difficult to make any other plans after work time because you never know what time you would finish. (Staff 6).

[...] On a usual working day, I am almost done around 4 pm. However, I would like to emphasize that the finishing time depends on the number of rooms I need to clean, based on the working sheet [...]. (Staff 2)

Another issue that was also updated during the interview was how the work sheet was divided. For employees with longer working hours, more than 8 months, the

same comment is that there were times when there were many rooms that need to be cleaned for one shift. However, that period, the post COVID -19 pandemic period, is over and the situation has improved recently. They also emphasize that the working sheet is long or short depending on the booking situation of the guest. However, because of the long shortage of people, it caused fatigue for the employees in this department.

I think it is pretty arbitrary. Sometimes the working sheet has more than 30 rooms, sometimes only 14-15 rooms. During the Covid-19 epidemic, the hotel was almost out of business, so it could only clean 2-3 rooms [...] (Staff 3).

Worksheets are flexible so that end time is flexible also (Staff 5)

Each day is a kind of surprise. I never know how many rooms I would have to clean. Sometimes it is possible to predict the day before, but many times the situation may change suddenly (increase of check-ins, lack of personnel). When the list is really long (over 20 for example) it affects my efficiency. I am very tired and the next day I do not have the energy. (Staff 6)

The question of pressure while working for housekeepers is commented on as obvious, whether in the training phase or official work. Each stage has its own set of pressures. As for the training phase, most of the employees are only trained for a short period of time, as mentioned above, they have to learn a lot of knowledge during this period. In addition, when employees have their own working sheets, there is time pressure to complete the cleaning. They also shared that weekends need to be productive and faster than the rest of the day. This is also one of the reasons they do not have or have flexible break times.

This is obvious. For weekends, there are many guests check in, we have to work continuously. At the same time, stayover rooms require cleaning, creating a huge pressure on time. Especially on big



holidays, the hotel is always in a state of being fully booked. That is why I or my colleagues hardly ever take a lunch break (Staff 1).

Much pressure in the first days, but now – when I get used to the work, I feel a little bit of pressure when I need to do fast sometimes (Staff 4)

The author asked more about the standard time to complete cleaning a room, 15-20 minutes is the maximum for two types of due out and stayover rooms. The staff all said that this is impossible, this is only possible when the due out room or stayover room is extremely decent.

[...] in my opinion it's impossible. Depending on the area as well as the cleaning requirement, the standard time should be flexible. Due out rooms need more time to be cleaned than stayover rooms. However, stayover rooms that require changing bed sheets should also take extra cleaning time. (Staff 1)

If you are really fast and full of energy and strength I would say “Yes, it's possible”, but I still wonder if it's possible to clean really well (bathroom, vacuuming, dusting, mopping, replacing missing items plus doing beds) in such a short time [...] (Staff 6).

Yes, if the room is a stayover and checkout room which has a normal situation (not messy or not really dirty). (Staff 3)

Another question concerns productivity. The author asked housekeepers if they had any opinions or evaluations about the steps to clean the bedroom and toilet according to the instructions during the training. There have been two opposing views when answering this question. Others say they have built their own routine because they think room quality and execution time are more important. However, others feel satisfied with the guidance and have no idea to change it.

I think the cleaning steps should be more minimalistic. I read through the instructions for cleaning the toilet and the bedroom. However, there are many steps that can be mixed together or if not done in sequence will be much faster [...]. (Staff 1)

Everyone has their own way to clean room, so do I. I do not follow exactly the instruction (Staff 5).

In my opinion, the steps and their order are good, logical and therefore easy to follow. (Staff 6)

All steps are arranged logically which help save much time (Staff 4).

### 6.3 Customer Service

Communication with customers is an important factor in evaluating the professionalism and friendliness of the hotel with the hotel. When asked about the frequency of meeting customers while working, most of them answered that they often meet them. However, depending on each employee's experience, the frequency of meetings may be less or more.

The staff, who was asked about this issue shared that they have never been trained to communicate with customers. Conversations are instinctively exchanged with customers.

I learned greetings in English from colleagues. As for the case of communicating with domestic customers, it is very easy. (Staff 1)

When asked what special treatment for VIP customer, such as welcome drinks, sweets, or beautifully folded towels, for customers, who performs them. The staff all confirmed that these tasks belong to the responsibility of the floor supervisors and the receptionist. This is considered reasonable because floor supervisors and receptionists directly check the room after performing special treatment to make sure there are no flaws.

As far as I know, these special treatments are usually done by the front desk. (Staff 2).

If there are a few requests from guests such as extra bed or baby cot or change the bed linen suitable for people with allergies, that is my job - a supervisor. However, the requirements asked above, I think belong to the reception and myself (Staff 5)

Sustainability and green values in cleaning process are one of the problems that can seriously affect the environment. The interviewees said that they did not have in-depth knowledge and did not mention this issue in the training process. However, they found that the strong cleaning chemicals in the cleaning process were extremely toxic. In addition, they share about sorting garbage at the end of the day. The hotel also realizes that sustainability and green values in cleaning industry is something that customers also need to pay attention to, so they convey this meaning by arranging many trash cans in the room and reminding customers about this division through trash can lining paper.

It does not seem like I have heard of this, but I can conceivably use cleaners that clean up without harming the environment when released. Also, it can be divided into different types of garbage for easy destruction [...] we use are quite toxic, because stains stick very tightly to the floor as well as the bathtub and toilet. When we use it, it is necessary to wear specialized gloves and a mask to prevent contact with hands and inhalation of gas. However, the hotel has a requirement to separate the garbage. I think this is very necessary for the current environment. (Staff 1).

Not really. I have not been introduced to it during work. [...] sustainability and green values were not in the job description that I was informed about at the start of my position of employment. (Staff 2)

I am not quite sure what I understand but this issue is not mentioned in training nor at present. The chemicals used are very toxic. However, because stains are difficult to remove, such cleaning agents are needed. [...] we "remind" our customers to throw away plastic or glass bottles with the general trash by lining the trash cans with words. However, most customers do not pay much attention to this issue. (Staff 4)

#### 6.4 Infrastructure, Facilities, Equipment

The issue of concern is about facilities, infrastructure as well as about machines and equipment for work. The staff in the housekeeping department were asked about their opinion about the current state of machinery and equipment. Most of them commented that the equipment is quite old, has many failures and is not safe to use, especially vacuum cleaners. Other equipment and tools are still in stable condition but need to be updated regularly.

The machines are quite old and have some damage. The cords of vacuum cleaners are not secure enough when there are many openings [...]. (Staff 1)

[...] the dishwasher in the service room for cleaning used, dirty glasses. It worked just fine and saved a lot of time indeed. [...] However, the vacuum cleaners are quite old and there are many places that need to be repaired or replaced. (Staff 3)

Clothes and other cleaning small tools are placed up to date but there is not enough of good vacuum cleaners (Staff 6).

This issue was also mentioned in the interview with the manager. They admitted that although this issue has been mentioned many times in meetings, it has not been resolved so far because it is related to budget issues. There are more items and tools to pay for every day. Therefore, the problem of old or damaged

machinery is still on the waiting list. However, they added that the hotel will add some equipment during the upcoming renovation.

[...] the problem related to the machine was mentioned many times by other employees, for example, the vacuum cleaner was broken and old, the cleaning cloths were old and needed to be replaced, etc. However, there are many other more important things that need to be covered such as bottles of chemicals, bleach, soap, toilet paper. [...] In the near future, the hotel will invest in renovation and this is the right time to upgrade new equipment for the housekeeping department (Staff 7)

The arrangement of items on the trolley also affects the progress of the work. When asked this question, the interviewee commented that the trolley is quite small to hold all the necessary items. As for the service room, the ability to store objects is also temporary. Small items such as instant coffee bars, packs of milk or beverage trays for the minibar still have limited space.

Trolleys are quite neat and easy to select for bedding items. However, they are still quite small to be able to hold more items. The storage shelves are also old and showing signs of damage [...] (Staff 2)

It took me around two weeks to get use to with stuffs on the trolley. I wish we have more convenient trolley which could be bring to every room that save much time moving around. (Staff 5)

In my opinion shelves and main trolleys in service rooms are arranged really well. I would only improve or change the system of storing small items such as coffees, teas, sugars. (Staff 6)

Most of the interviewees also agreed that the service rooms on each floor should also be upgraded and arranged in a more reasonable manner.

## 6.5 Housekeeping Quality Management

This section is about management question and has been asked by floor supervisors and managers about the quality management process. When asked about problems that arise when checking rooms, both floor supervisors and managers share that they always pay attention to the details during the inspection process. There are various steps to check that a room is properly cleaned. However, careful observation and putting yourself in the customer's shoes to check the quality will yield better results than relying on the built-in checklist.

Small objects such as a pack of candy, chips in the minibar, and tiny rocks that are either under the bed or too close to the hidden corners near the bed tables. It would be hard to detect it and vacuum it. Additionally, hair is also not allowed in the toilet nor in the bathtub. Surfaces and picture frames must be dust-free. (Staff 3)

The room checking process is not periodic and random. Frequently, the floor supervisors and hotel managers and housekeeping department managers jointly conduct the room inspection process.

My manager and the hotel's manager will go together to inspect the rooms. Feedbacks will be specified and noticed to the employee by the end of the inspection [...] (Staff 3)

[...] we take a look around the room to make sure everything looks nice then we go into detail. Everything inside the room should be checked carefully. (Staff 5)

Currently, the communication system between departments has been advanced and used through applications. Support application is called Hotelgram Housekeeping. However, since the app is relatively new, it takes some training to use. This application sometimes also has issues with version update errors, causing machine lag or showing wrong room information, for example, the room has not been due out but shows the room status is empty. Therefore, it is

necessary to fix these errors as soon as possible, to avoid causing unnecessary errors and affecting the customer experience.

Another issue that is directly related to cleanliness is the frequency of changing sheets, blankets, and bedding. The staff all have the same answer showing that the cleanliness and hygiene are guaranteed when a new guest uses the room and they will be replaced with a new bed every 3 days if they stay longer.

For due in and due out rooms, bed linen is required to be changed prior to check-in and after check-out. For stayover rooms, bed linen is changed every 3 days from the date of check-in. In the event that a guest wishes to change the bed linen daily, we will agree to change the bed linen or in the condition that if we detect visible stains on the bedding or towels, we also exchange for a new one. In addition, for pillow and blanket we usually change once a month. However, there are many cases where the previous guest dirty the pillow or blanket or mattress [...] (Staff 3)

[...] we change all pillows or mattresses or blankets when stains are detected and once a month (Staff 5)

When asked about the pressure of being a manager and supervisor, the employees shared that working in a pressurized environment is inevitable, especially for managers.

[...] bad feedback about how specks of dirt are still on the floor or around the room gives me stress. (Staff 3)

[...] I was also under pressure from my boss - the hotel manager. Personally, I am the manager of the housekeeping department, I have to take care of many other issues such as managing the budget, personnel and shifts for the staff, daily reporting on productivity as well as updating missing items and quote. Every quarter, me and the

managers of other departments have a meeting to summarize and report on our department's problems and offer solutions (Staff 7)

## 6.6 Relationship Between Colleagues and Hotel

The recent COVID-19 pandemic caused the hotel to suspend operations and lay-off some staff members, including the housekeeping department. In the post-COVID-19 pandemic, the demand for tourism has increased again, therefore, the number of employees at that time was not enough to work. Besides, the pressure and working hours become overwhelming for the employees. The interviewees also mentioned that their present personnel situation is steadier than before they moved employment, implying that productivity and quality are relatively certain.

It was a very difficult time when the indefinite leave of employees took its toll. [...] There was a day when I had to clean nearly 40 rooms. [...] However, new employees were gradually recruited, so this problem has been solved somewhat [...] (Staff 1)

[...] there are days when the whole shift has to move to more than 40 rooms but only 3 or 2 employees work in that shift, which puts pressure on employees about the work pace. It is very tiring. (Staff 2)

Sometimes, especially during not so busy days, it seems that the number of workers is okay but usually I have the impression that there are too few of us to clean all rooms well and on time (Staff 6).

When asked if co-workers support each other in their work, employees all agree that their colleagues are ready to help them when needed.

I found that the staff support each other very well. Someone who has completed a working sheet is more than willing to help other employees. (Staff 1)



When it's possible we try to support each other. However, sometimes it is difficult because the work is physically demanding. Even though usually everyone is tired whenever we can we help each other. (Staff 6)

Employee morale and motivation are a major source of concern. The author asked if the hotel has any rewards for typical or high-contributing employees during the month. The majority of the respondents stated that they were unaware of the hotel's policy. Despite being promised that the customer ratings were excellent, they received no reward.

Not according to my observations. I think this is very flawed to motivate employees to work. (Staff 3)

I know nothing about this kind of policy. [...] (Staff 6).

## 7 DISCUSSION

The objective of this thesis is to increase awareness of the hotel's service quality in general and the Housekeeping department in particular. On the basis of recognizing the strengths, the weak areas will be promoted and improved. As a result, client loyalty is built via genuine efforts and a tight interaction between the consumer and the hotel. It also delivers essential principles that go above and beyond expectations, such as listening to and promptly handling criticism, complaints, and issues that do not please consumers. Furthermore, the hotel system's ability to maintain consistent quality standards is important.

According to the answers from the respondents, it is shown that not only service quality should be improved, but also other factors such as human resources, facilities and staff morale should also be focused. The results of this semi-structured interview show that building a professional, skilled and highly specialized service staff is the key to delivering the best quality of service to customers. Thereby, conducting a service quality assessment for the Housekeeping department to have a basis for continuous improvement, to bring new experiences in the way of customer service.

The Housekeeping department's human resources need to be properly trained for a prolonged period of time to assure quality and provide them with fundamental knowledge on how to execute their duties, as well as abilities to handle circumstances that emerge throughout the course of their work. The purpose of new employee orientation is to provide them with an understanding of the work process, hotel regulations, and safety tips. Furthermore, this prevents employees from being shocked about how to do their tasks, saving time and enhancing productivity.

According to the results of the interview, the Housekeeping department's workforce is still under a great deal of stress. A housekeeper may be responsible for more than 40 rooms at once, resulting in health issues. Furthermore, cleaning many rooms every day forces each staff to work quickly and efficiently in order to complete the job on time. As a result, it leads to the problem of the lack of free

items provided in the room as well as the imperfect cleaning. Additionally, this may be the source of the majority of customer complaints concerning the Housekeeping department. Therefore, the department should consider reducing the number of staff rooms and hiring seasonal workers will be an effective solution in case of labour shortage.

It is indeed critical to provide personnel with the required skills and expertise in terms of customer service. Customer service is the responsibility of everyone in the hotel, not just the receptionists. The interview revealed that the hotel had not received adequate training in this area. The interviewees answered bluntly that this skill was never mentioned during training. Politeness, cheerfulness, enthusiasm and hospitality, quick thinking and fluent communication are the advantages that leave a good impression on customers using the service. Capturing customer psychology will be the key to success for employees in particular and the hotel in general. The author recommends that there should be regular and problem-based training programs to improve staff knowledge.

In addition, the environmental issue that should also be concerned today is sustainability and green values in cleaning process. With increasingly serious pollution, the use of environmentally friendly chemicals will partly reduce the release of toxic substances into water and soil. On the other hand, the results from the responses in the interview show that the hotel is interested in garbage segregation. This is also the green value that the hotel brings to the community. In short, hotels should learn about more environmentally friendly cleaning chemicals.

The condition of the equipment used in the job is mentioned in the interview. The answers all said that machines, especially vacuum cleaners, were too old and needed to be replaced. The answer was also mentioned to the department manager and they believe that the hotel will upgrade these devices to ensure the safety of the workers. In addition, it is really necessary to upgrade the service rooms to optimize space. The arrangement of items logically also partly increases work productivity and saves time.

Monitoring and checking regularly and irregularly the service process of the Housekeeping department to ensure that the hotel is serving guests well and encouraging staff to provide the best service, while allowing managers to actual control, detect and immediately correct errors in the service process. Managers and floor supervisors must be responsible for solving problems that are beyond the employee's ability to solve. The supervisor is also the bridge between senior management - department head and employees.

In terms of management, it requires supervisors to constantly hone their leadership and management skills, learn and improve their knowledge and experience in the accommodation sector and the principles of governance and motivation. Leadership skills are essential for supervisors to lead a team, direct their employees to do the job according to the correct process and ensure the hotel's standards. It is also important to improve their knowledge and experience to retrain employees. Their contribution is the key to the success of the hotel's business.

Building a suitable labour standard will help employees to make efforts to fulfil their roles and tasks. In addition, appropriate labour standards will facilitate the improvement and maintenance of the hotel's guest service quality. Therefore, labour standards for housekeeping department staff at Natural Homestay hotel should be set up as follows: each employee undertakes to clean 14-15 rooms during the shift. If the employees work in pairs, the number can be increased to 20-22 but cannot exceed 25 rooms to ensure the physical health of employees. In addition, the issue of break time is also a dilemma. Lunch break can be flexibly changed to suit the business situation of the hotel. However, employees have the right to rest and recovery time after work.

Another issue is related to motivating staff to work and contribute to the hotel - Reward. This is considered a salary-reward policy for employees that is appropriate in each practical condition to promote and motivate work, promote employees' efforts in completing the job well.

## 8 CONCLUSION

The theoretical bases and business process analysis of the Housekeeping department at Natural Homestay show an overview of the jobs that the department undertakes. Thereby showing the role and importance of the department in the business activities of the hotel. Learn the business process of the Housekeeping department from practice and then give the strengths and limitations, thereby proposing methods to improve the customer service quality of the Housekeeping department. The results collected through the interviews show that the opinions and evaluations of the staff make a significant contribution to the comprehensive construction process for the Housekeeping department, from the training process and working process to personnel issues and rewards.

Qualitative methods, specifically semi-structured interviews, helped the author achieve more than expected results, serving the purpose of this research project. Conversational interviews revealed aspects of employees' desire to change to be more suitable for their jobs. Through the results from the interviews, the author also makes suggestions for the hotel and the housekeeping department, in particular, to change and upgrade not only the infrastructure, and machinery but also the employee work spirit. It is the basic foundation for the hotel to operate and provide services to guests.

The expected results from the interviews for the thesis are extremely helpful to the author and the commissioner. The author can expand his knowledge on the topic of housekeeping and can gain experience from the staff's answers in this area. In addition, the research results are intended to assist the commissioner in better understanding what employees think and feel about the operating mechanism of the housekeeping department and the hotel. From those results, the management team finds more optimal solutions to improve human resource management, training as well as supervision. The author believes that the information obtained from this thesis, it can partly help employees present their personal opinions, contribute to building a safe, friendly working environment and act as a bridge between employees and the accommodation business Natural Homestay.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix Semi – structured Interview

#### **I. General Information**

- 1.Can you introduce yourself and your background?
- 2.How long have you worked at the hotel?
- 3.What are your duties?
- 4.Can you describe your working day?

#### **II. Process of Housekeeping Department**

##### Training Process

- 1.Did you receive training when you started working?
2. How did you feel about that training process (training time, practice process)?

##### Working Process

1. Can you describe a general workflow in your own words?
2. What do you think about working hours? ((shift start time, break time, end time)
3. What do you think about daily worksheets, the number of rooms that have to be cleaned?
4. Do you feel any pressure during a work shift?
5. Do you feel the standard time to clean a room from 15 to 20 minutes is feasible (due out and stayover)?
6. Can you give your perspective on the steps to clean the toilet and bedroom according to the instructions?

##### Customer Service

1. Do you often meet and greet customers?
- 2.Are you trained in customer communication?
- 3.Do you have any special treatment for customers? (welcome drinks, sweets or beautifully folded towels)
- 4.Do you know what sustainability and green values are considered in the cleaning process?
- 5.Can you describe how it is communicated to the client?

Infrastructure, Facilities and Equipment

1. Can you give your opinion about the current state of machinery and equipment used in work?
2. What do you think about the arrangement of tools and items on the trolley?
3. Do you think the service room on each floor needs an upgrade?

Housekeeping Quality Management (for Floor Supervisor and Manager)

1. What are the common problems that arise during room inspection?
2. What software does the management use to update the room status for the reception department?
3. Can you describe how the actual room inspection is done?
4. How often are items, such as, pillows, mattresses, blankets and mattress replaced?
5. Have you ever experienced any pressure during your work?

Relationship Among Colleagues and with Hotel

1. Can you state your opinion on the number of staff working in shifts?
2. Do colleagues support each other at work?
3. Does the hotel have any reward policy for employees?