Tourismus Management

Passport

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Hospitality today – an historical misunderstanding

Prof. Dr. Thomas Bausch

Hospitality as moral obligation in the ancient world

A study of ancient and holy writings proves that hospitality in the ancient world and up until the early Middle Ages was a social obligation for everyone in olden times (cf. e.g. Hiltbrunner (2005)). Anyone who knocked on a stranger’s door could be sure that they would be afforded food and accommodation. It was a social obligation and a matter of course for every citizen to put up travellers of the same or similar social status. To shirk this duty was serious sacrilege punishable by God or the gods. At the same time people firmly believed that the gods were benevolent towards those who afforded hospitality.

In all epochs in the ancient world and in early Christendom there are stories which tell of the visitation of godly beings (gods, angels, God himself). People are put to the test and these stories focus on the theme that someone looking for hospitality might possibly be a godly representative.

Nevertheless, the main motive behind this moral obligation to extend hospitality was a practical one. Both host and guest have a mutual interest: either one of them can get into a situation where they are dependent on hospitality. An asymmetric situation characterizes the relationship between host and guest: the host offers something which the guest needs and cannot achieve without outside help: accommodation, food and safety.

In wide open spaces in particular where extreme conditions make survival difficult, hospitality as a moral obligation plays a particularly prominent role. The hospitality which is still a distinctive feature of Arab states goes back to the Bedouin tribes living on the outskirts of deserts (Buck (2005)). The host assumed comprehensive responsibility for looking after the guest and guaranteeing his safety. It was the host’s duty to offer the guest special food of a higher quality than the food they were accustomed to every day. This usually included meat, which was something valuable and normally only served on feast days, even if it meant slaughtering the family’s only animal. Conversely, it was considered an insult to the host if the guest stayed less than three days, as this was taken as a sign of a poor host.

In the Old Testament the experiences of the Israelites during their exodus from Egypt reinforce the ethical significance of extending hospitality. Moses for example justified the duty to extend hospitality more or less as follows: „Do not ill-treat an alien or oppress him, for you were aliens in Egypt (Ex 22:21-22,) and „An alien living with you must be treated as one of your native born, love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the LORD, your God“ (Lev 19: 34).

In the New Testament many handed down actions and parables by Jesus are testimony to the obligation to love one’s neighbour and thus also to extend hospitality, now also explicitly in a manner which transcends social boundaries. At the same time they include criticism of the social exclusion of the poor and sick (in particular of lepers), to whom no hospitality was extended. The commandment to be a completely unselfish host is emphasised, with the focus clearly shifting from being a „friend of the guest“ towards receiving and helping strangers (Riemer (2008)):

“When you put on a dinner, do not invite friends, brothers, relatives and rich neighbours, for they will return the invitation. Instead, invite the poor, the crippled, the lamp and the blind. Then at the resurrection of the godly, God will reward you for inviting those who cannot repay you.” (Lk 14: 12-14).
Limits of hospitality force new solutions

The expansion of the Roman Empire led to the building of a network of roads, to be used primarily for military purposes. At the same time the number of travellers along these routes increased, particularly due to the increase in trade. After the persecution of the Christians under Emperor Constantine ended in the year 313, the waves of pilgrims also began. The most important holy places were Rome and Jerusalem. The concept of hospitality as understood up until then quickly came up against both quantitative and economic limits. The private hosts along the pilgrim routes were no longer able to offer hospitality to all pilgrims at all times of the day and night. The moral obligation to extend hospitality, which goes back to ancient times, could be longer be fulfilled by the hosts. Thus buildings offering temporary hospitality and shelter to travellers and strangers grew up along the main routes – the hostels (lat. hospitia).

These hostels later developed into hospitals which not only provided accommodation but also cared for the sick or weak among the travellers. Safe accommodation, food and if need be care as well thus develop more and more into a barter business from the early days of Christendom on. The travellers paid for the accommodation and safe environment (Nessler (2005)). Providing protection from robbers and from inclement weather – there were no weather forecasts at that time – was another reason for the development of a dense network of hostels and inns along the travel routes. In the Middle Ages the post and pony stations as well as the intermediate and transport stations along the trade routes were added to these (Kürzeder (2000)).

Field of conflict – hospitality and the hotel trade

As in those early days when trips were usually embarked on reluctantly because of the dangers involved it was on principle morally frowned upon to demand money in return for hospitality, innkeepers who demanded money for their services had a bad image. In the eyes of the travellers they were little better than highwaymen, who only wanted their money and to capitalize on their need.

If we however compare the historical background to hospitality on the one hand and providing accommodation on the other hand, it becomes clear that we are talking about two completely different concepts.

Hospitality as a moral obligation forbids economic gain for the host. The host assumes responsibility for the guest and in this way secures for himself a right to hospitality should he himself ever need to go on a journey. Accommodation on the other is based on providing a service in return for a negotiated price without any social moral component.

Hospitality today means something different

Today we find a confusion of two terms or concepts. hospitality and the hotel trade, which originally were fundamentally mutually exclusive. Nevertheless, now as in the past the traveller expects to be welcomed by the accommodation provider as a guest in a spirit of hospitality even if at the end they have to financially pay for it. The guest expects to receive a better quality of food than they are used to on a daily basis and wants to be comprehensively looked after and protected.

The expectation that one will be accepted as a person and as a guest be treated particularly politely and courteously, which still exists today, has its origins in the ancient rules of hospitality. And still today those accommodation establishments which apply the rules of hospitality are as a rule more successful than those which limit themselves to providing only basic accommodation.

People who demand comprehensive hospitality in its traditional sense for developed tourist regions likewise disregard the historical background. If in ancient times it was often demanding too much of the local people to alone do justice to a guest in accordance with the rules of the time, this applies even more so today in an age of mass tourism. Friendliness towards a guest should therefore not be confused with a right to genuine hospitality.

Criticism of tourism in the 1980s inspired by the concept of hospitality in ancient times

The criticism levelled at tourism in the 1980s, which through Robert Jungk (Jungk (1980)) led to the coining of the term “soft” travelling and later ecotourism (Krippendorf et. al. (1986), was inspired by the ideal of hospitality in ancient times. Ecotourism is characterized for example by the tourist adopting the local lifestyle, by genuine shared experiences with the local people to whom one gives presents.

At the same time Krippendorf formulates the term “Revolt of the Visited” again the consequences of mass tourism. He sees the personal living environment and social structure of the local population endangered by the dictum that everything has to be subordinated to fulfilling the wishes of the guest and therefore demands a self-confident rethink. The interests of the local people should come before those of the guests.

This criticism of tourism however disregards the fact that this exaggerated emphasis on meeting the needs of the guests is not a question of mass tourism. The ecotourism propagated by the critics demands a much higher level of willingness on the part of the “visited” to extend genuine hospitality. It increases the excessive demands on the hosts, if the eco-tourist is to preserve his travel experience in an authentic form.

More appropriate hospitality

A business-like and professional relationship between accommodation service providers and those accommodated is therefore in the long run the only sustainable basis for the tourism industry. That at the same time it has to do justice to the guest’s desire for hospitality in its modern interpretation results from our traditional understanding of the traveller which goes back to ancient times. He or she wishes to be treated in a friendly way and to receive a service which is of a quality commensu-
Of Strangers and Gods and Guests

Theo Eberhard

In ancient times the gods made life easy for themselves. As migrant journeymen they loved wandering around on Earth and anonymously taking up quarters with people. And they didn’t like being turned away and having to knock on one door after the other only in the end to spend an uncomfortable night in the open. They described one of their visits among humans and the meeting with Philemon and Bacchus to Ovid, their godly biographer. These two were the only ones in the town who granted them shelter and were richly rewarded. They turned the town however, which was full of unwelcoming people, into a lake. Ovid’s job was to tell this story to the people so that from then on every stranger would be made welcome and the gods would not be left standing in the rain. The two heroes were in reality Mercury and Jupiter – and thus the divine law of hospitality came into being.

And when Odysseus once again ended up on a foreign shore he sat up and thought: “O my, in what mortal land have I ended up this time? Are they wanton and wild and not at all just? ...But the daughters of Alkinoos spoke: “But as you have managed to reach us, our town and country, you shall neither want for clothing nor anything else ... They are all in Zeus’s keeping. (Homer, Odyssey, 6th song)

Even the Old Testament speaks of godly messengers in the form of strangers. Abraham opened his doors to welcome three men he did not know and, io and behold, they were angels who announced to him the birth of his son Isaac.

The background to these stories is more likely to be that people in those days saw the numinous as something very real. They were convinced that the gods (or angels, who also visited the shepherds in the fields) really did exist and could interact directly with people. And it was not a good idea to get on the wrong side of the gods.

In Christendom, hospitality became a necessary element of charity. The focus of action was shifted from the outside world to the inner world: from one’s duty towards God to one’s duty towards one’s neighbour in the sense of charity which was intended to reflect God’s goodness. Hospitality is a symbol of God’s merciful acting, of His gracious and freely given devotion to humankind and at the same time of the outwardly directed love of people towards their neighbours. (Christian Frevel)

It was of course by no means the case that in those olden days everyone was welcomed with open arms. It is more true to say that the world was full of hate and jealousy, mistrust and intrigues, blood and thunder, all of which started with Cain and Abel. Strangers in particular always represented a threat. Since the beginning of humanity people had gone on journeys until the last tiny corner of the world had been settled. And no matter where people landed, they usually came up against strangers.

The Romans understood this better. The Latin word hostis means both stranger and enemy at the same time. In a world full of wars and conquests any stranger outside one’s door could be one’s worst enemy. In the Middle Ages the city gates were locked at night and no strangers were allowed in. The tension between welcoming and turning away a stranger is described nowhere better than in the Asterix story “Caesar’s Gift”:

The new arrivals present a real danger (at first all the villagers wanted to drive them away), at least in order to maintain peace in the village. They disrupt the often fragile web of relationships and the social hierarchies (Danger, Look Out: and the young girl is a real tart). They could possibly in the end destroy the community and...
the solidarity which are the basis for successful defence against an external enemy. As was the case in the Asterix story. It was only the magic potion that saved them from the worst.

What we call “hospitality” is in the end the ritualized relationship between alien and host, which both parties hope will afford them greatest possible safety. For the alien too, what is “alien” is a threat. Visitor and visited equally face uncertainty which can only be resolved by cultural rules of behaviour (rituals). Hospitality is always a give and take: food in exchange for news, pride for safety. These rules make it possible to minimize the potential dangers that may emanate from strangers and allow the alien/stranger to move around more or less safely in a cultural situation which is new to him.

Hospitality is also a pledge: the host has a bill of exchange which can be drawn on when he himself travels to the stranger’s country, when he makes a return visit. In the past this was actually documented in a concrete way. Clay fragments were exchanged when people took their leave and the hospitality extended was repaid during a return visit if the two fragments fitted together. In this way it was also possible to pass on a right to hospitality. It guaranteed that one would survive unharmed in the stranger’s country and would be welcomed in the same way as one had welcomed the stranger. Hospitality is based on mutual trust. Usually not one to one, but certainly between peoples.

The status of guest however is only granted to those who are passing through, who are not staying, not unpacking their suitcases and who are authentic only in their foreignness. The stranger who stays on usually becomes a problem, an intruder, a foreign body. He is no longer a guest, but a danger.

Back to friend and foe. Every society, clan, tribe or nation has to protect itself from external dangers. It is hardly ever a matter of chance whether someone waiting at the door to get in is a friend or foe. An eloquent example of this is the Achuar in the lowlands of Ecuador. The Achuar are a warlike people who could never really be sure whether visitors (strangers from other remote villages) were friends or foes. There were many reasons for hostility and danger: gain, revenge for the evil eye, for illnesses which the shaman from the other village had brought upon the community, or the abduction of women. To enable them to recognize visitors’ friendly intentions, the Achuar have developed a ritual as a confidence-building measure: Aneamate. Through loud shouting or blowing of horns, the visitors announce their arrival from a long way off. Then news is exchanged, ritualized forms of greeting celebrated and, accompanied by loud shouting, weapons are symbolically shown so that everyone is convinced of the strength of the other. Once trust has been established (the ritual is observed meticulously), the women offer all the men chicha (fermented yucca mush), both to the strangers and to their own men, as a sign of friendship/hospitality – to seal a non-aggression pact. Nothing illustrates the civilizing process more clearly, the transition from barbarism to civilization, which expresses itself in particular in the meeting between strangers.

Hospitality is also often a survival strategy in a hostile environment, particularly among nomads, whose “home” is only of a temporary nature. The list of “dos and don’ts” for Mongolia includes: “Never knock when you enter a yurt”. Hospitality here is a question of survival. Hospitality is everything or nothing! It affects a
Hospitalität

person, a neighbour in need, to whom nothing can be denied!

There is a paradox surrounding hospitality: the stranger who is a potential danger is showered with affection. Odysseus is bathed, dressed in new clothes and entertained by Menelaus; Philemon and Bacchus are richly rewarded. The right to hospitality is holy – at least as far as the rules and rituals are concerned. By giving everything the host shames the guest and in this way tries to dissuade the stranger from behaving aggressively. The most important service the guest can provide in return is to leave again. One cannot buy into the right to hospitality, it is granted to one – for a short space of time. Permanent guests may endanger the resources needed for survival.

If possible, one never comes empty handed. Presents for the host are ultimately a sign of trust, of peaceableness and of respect. Among the Yanomami in the upper Orinoco presents are first checked for their value before the stranger is accepted as a guest. Among the Toraja in Sulavesi records are kept of the value of the presents (for example in the case of weddings or deaths), as it is unacceptable to come with a less valuable present when returning the visit.

The basic elements of this ritual still exist in our society today. Invited guests bring at least a bottle of wine or a bouquet of flowers with them for their hosts. And in our society the rule also applies: when we accept hospitality we are accepting an obligation to return the hospitality received. We also still exchange the symbolic clay fragments.

The guest (hostis) also widens our own horizon. As a result of the stranger’s interest in our own culture, the everyday becomes something special. Things which seem banal, a matter of course, practised patterns of behaviour acquire a value. Our own identity becomes visible in the eyes of the stranger. We can see ourselves reflected in the stranger as in a mirror, through him we recognize ourselves.

Strangers are also an object of fascination, messengers from other worlds and civilizations. They bring with them other goods and opinions, other religions, customs and conventions and tell of the world outside! They are the alien become flesh, the incarnation of the virtual existence of the alien; what had always only been talked about actually does exist in reality! The alien is the foreign place to which one travels; the stranger is the new arrival, the messenger from the outside world. The stranger triggers intercultural communication which can further develop one’s own culture.

Bernhard Waldenfels speaks of foreignness in one’s own home ..., as “internal yet foreign”. It brings the outside world into one’s own home without us having to leave it. Through the presence of the stranger we experience new worlds, receive messages from foreign cultures, our own borders are transformed into horizons.

Maybe we no longer need any guests, any strangers, because the media provide us with the “internal yet foreign”, the guest sits together with us in our living room, but needs neither bed nor food? But this is a virtual foreignness, an aseptic foreign world. Real encounter, real discussion and real involvement with the alien are missing. The wild that the media bring to our living rooms lacks wildness of any kind. When we switch off or switch over, the alien leaves the real room without leaving any trace of an encounter.

In today’s well-organized tourism business, some islands of ritualized hospitality still exist. Pilgrims on the way of St James to Santiago de Compostela still experience free charity. But here too there are strict rules and rituals which have to be observed, if
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Die mediterrane Lebensart
Can the Hospitality Gap be measured? – An outline of ideas

Sonja Munz

Destinations develop very differently from each other. Some of them are very successful, others don’t make any headway. The explanation for this lies in the competitiveness of the destinations, which is multifaceted and made up of a number of factors. We are talking here about supply-side factors such as the regulation framework (regulations, laws, the environment, safety, health and hygiene, the local value of tourism), the infrastructure and the market environment of touristic establishments and companies (infrastructure in air and land traffic, touristic infrastructure, infrastructure in information and communication technology and price competition) as well as the human, cultural and natural resources available at the destination.

With the help of these factors the touristic competitiveness of destinations, as well as of countries and locations (cf. WEF 2011) can be measured. The World Economic Forum (WEF) takes on this task regularly by preparing a competitiveness report for the travel and tourism industry which ranks the destinations, which is multifaceted and made up of a number of the destinations, which is multifaceted and made up of a number of factors. We are talking here about supply-side factors such as the regulation framework (regulations, laws, the environment, safety, health and hygiene, the local value of tourism), the infrastructure and the market environment of touristic establishments and companies (infrastructure in air and land traffic, touristic infrastructure, infrastructure in information and communication technology and price competition) as well as the human, cultural and natural resources available at the destination. With the help of these factors the touristic competitiveness of destinations, as well as of countries and locations (cf. WEF 2011) can be measured. The World Economic Forum (WEF) takes on this task regularly by preparing a competitiveness report for the travel and tourism industry which ranks the destinations, which is multifaceted and made up of a number of factors. We are talking here about supply-side factors such as the regulation framework (regulations, laws, the environment, safety, health and hygiene, the local value of tourism), the infrastructure and the market environment of touristic establishments and companies (infrastructure in air and land traffic, touristic infrastructure, infrastructure in information and communication technology and price competition) as well as the human, cultural and natural resources available at the destination.

Mazanec and Ring (2009) thus developed the outlined WEF system of touristic competitiveness further by specifying as demand-side categories for measuring competitiveness, indicators such as the number of arrivals per head, change in the arrivals per head (for a defined period of time) and touristic spending per head (cf. Fig. 1). Such specification is a precondition to allow an assessment of the influencing factors presented in the WEF system with regard to their relevance, i.e. degree of influence, using econometric methods.

But what has this got to do with hospitality and hospitableness? Hospitality and hospitality are undoubtedly also important elements of touristic competitiveness. But how can we measure these factors? Conceptually, the concept following Pechlaner and Raich (2009) shown in Figure 2 is useful. The starting point for customer satisfaction is the so-called service quality. The level of service quality achieved depends on the degree to which objectively measurable criteria are met. Meeting objectively measurable criteria can however only be understood as a necessary condition of hospitality. Nonetheless, the condition of such a product-orientated approach is not sufficient. Rather, it must be assumed that quality is also determined from the perspective of the customer and does not come about merely on the basis of objectively measurable criteria. This means that quality is also determined by meeting the customer’s service expectations, and quality is measured here in accordance with subjective criteria. This form of customer-orientated approach can be understood as hospitality. Hence achieving guest-related service quality is a question of meeting customer wishes within an optimal cost structure framework, so that the customers are satisfied.

Customer satisfaction however does not provide an adequate explanation for existing differences in competitiveness between destinations. For it is well-known that even satisfied customers do not necessary come back again. Often several alternative touristic products exist side by side which, from the customer’s point of view, also offer satisfactory service quality and the desired touristic attractions. To become a unique selling proposition, the touristic products offered by the destination must therefore in addition to service quality possess a relationship quality which gives the products offered a special intimationeness and individuality (cf. Tirol Werbung 2006 in Pechlaner/Raich 2007:13), so that the destination is not longer substitutable.

This is precisely the point where a distinction can be made between hospitality (Gastlichkeit), which to a...
large extent can be professionalized, and hospitableness (Gastfrequenz). The latter arises through the interaction between touristic service providers, non-touristic players at a destination and the individual tourists. If this interaction succeeds in a positive sense, this leads to sustainable customer retention and thus a greater likelihood of the customer returning. The destination can in this case no longer simply be substituted by, for example, another skiing destination which also offers a guarantee of snow, suitable accommodation etc. This customer retention, which is not “producible” with the help of touristic service providers alone, can be measured on the basis of increased numbers of arrivals, higher growth rates in the number of arrivals and/or also increased spending by tourists at a destination.

But how can the factor hospitality resp. hospitableness be measured? For this purpose we can fall back by analogy on the statistical approach of the Oaxaca-Blinder analysis frequently used in wage studies (Blinder (1973) and Oaxaca (1973)). This methodical approach isolates different destinations; the model shown in Figure 1 is calculated on the basis of regression equations. Factors which justify a possible difference in competitiveness are included in the equation. Finally, the respective equations are subtracted from each other and converted in order to analyse differences in competitiveness between different destinations (or other groups). The difference in competitiveness can thus be analysed in two parts. An explained part of the difference in competitiveness on the basis of the average provision with touristic and non-touristic relevant factors between the destinations compared, and a second non-explained part which can be attributed to hospitality resp. hospitableness. The bigger the unexplained part for a destination is, the better the relationship quality to its guests is in this destination. It is of course risky to interpret this rest component as an absolute must for the factor hospitality resp. hospitableness. Nevertheless, this approach could contribute to an approximation in the ranking of different destinations. It should however be pointed out at this point that the empirical execution of the appraisals described, which can incidentally be applied by analogy completely to different regional or operational aggregates, is still subject to considerable data restrictions.

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Even back in ancient times it was the custom to view travellers who were looking for protection and food as friends and guests and to offer them whatever the household had to offer. The Greeks looked on strangers as protégés of Zeus, whose byname was “the convivial”. Whole tribes and peoples guaranteed hospitality for themselves by forming alliances. Individual families and people did so through contracts. As a welcome ceremony, gifts were exchanged and the host thus “rewarded”.

As traffic between the towns increased, the custom of hospitality no longer sufficed. Bartering was replaced in favour of money transactions and the first accommodation establishments came into existence. For the first time ever, the right to hospitality was sold and bought. The host became an innkeeper who acted out of economic interest. As competition between the inns and public houses increased, so did the power of the guests. There was a demand for special services and hostel furnishings, depending on the social status, the financial possibilities and the individual needs; a range of different accommodation establishments and categories grew up. This in turn necessitated establishment-specific capital and personnel. The maids and servants became employees with a requirements profile which constantly developed in line with changing environmental conditions.

The role of the guest has also undergone a lasting change. Whereas they used to be seen as a “friend” they are now responsible for the economic well-being of the host and thus of the hotel and catering company. Moreover, through their individual wishes they play an active role in designing services in line with market requirements, which if successful are then optimized and offered to a public who is willing to pay for them.

It is to hoteliers such as for example Casar Ritz, who among other things established the Frankfurter Hof in Frankfurt and in 1898 opened the Hotel Ritz in Paris, at that time the world’s leading hotel, and employed Auguste Escoffier as chef, that we owe an increasing professionalism in the industry.

In Germany, one of the trailblazers was the caterer Berthold Kempinski who because he didn’t have any male heirs passed on the business to his son-in-law Richard Unger around 1889, with the business continuing to operate under the name Kempinski. With all their ideas they together not only had a lasting influence on the catering industry, but also on the hotel industry. Thus from 1928 on Richard Unger ran the Haus Vaterland with a range of different catering facilities and in 1932 opened as the first M. Kempinski & Co. hotel Schloss Marquardt at Schlanitzsee. The years from 1939 to 1945 saw the Aryanization and destruction of the Kempinski hotels. The unstable times could not hold back the Kempinskis’ sole surviving grandson, Frederic W. Unger, who in 1951 laid the foundation for a new hotel, the Kempinski Bristol in Berlin, which started operating in 1952.

In 1930 Albert Steigenberger founded what is today the Steigenberger Hotel Group. The family business was transformed into a public limited company in 1985, in which the Steigenberger family held a majority share of 99.6 percent until 2009. Since 2009 the Egyptian Hamed El Chaerty has been the new commercial owner of the Steigenberger Hotels AG.

The internationalization and concentration process is above all due to the dynamic world economy whose market participants look for globally available accommodation options (ubiquity) in a range of categories and at best prices which offer product safety and can be booked at any time and from any place. The Arabella Hotels established in 1969 by Josef Schorghuber reacted in 1998 to the increasing dynamism on the market and joined forces with the

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4 www.steigenbergerhotelgroup.com/18, accessed on: 10.01.13
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North American Starwood Hotels & Resorts in a joint venture. The portfolio comprised at that time 13 hotels, which were added to the brands Sheraton, Four Points by Sheraton, The Luxury Collection. In August 2010 the ArabellaStarwood Hotels & Resorts GmbH comprised 43 hotels in Germany, Switzerland, on Mallorca and in South Africa under the brand names Sheraton, Four Points by Sheraton, Westin, The Luxury Collection, St. Regis and Le Méridien. Then the surprise: “The Schörghuber Group is dissolving its management company ArabellaStarwood which it runs together with Starwood” was the title in the AHGZ on 28. 8. 2010.6 The former Arabella Hotels have meanwhile been repositioned and integrated into the Starwood portfolio.

Independent German hotel chains such the Lindner Hotels set up in 1973 by Otto Lindner as well as internationally known owner-run private hotels such as the Bayerische Hof in Munich which was opened in 1841, the Bareiss in Baiersbronn which began operating in 1951 or Herrmann’s Posthotel in Wirsberg which has been family-owned since 1869 are increasingly disappearing as “lone warriors” in an intensely competitive environment; most of them start cooperating with a hotel group.

The hospitality industry not only makes a decisive contribution to national economic well-being by making available its facilities and its catering services. This personnel-intensive industry also employs nearly 1,800,000 workers7, does not relocate abroad and pays taxes in Germany.

Challenges faced by hosts

Compared to other branches of industry the hospitality industry is one which is particularly dependent on the state of the economy and is personnel-intensive. As a location-dependent service industry the hotel and catering industry reacts at least indirectly to cyclical developments. An upturn in overall economic activity as a rule produces only delayed demand. When on the other hand there is a downturn in the economy an immediate drop in demand can be expected.

Furthermore, hotel capacities such as for example guestrooms, conference rooms, spa facilities and restaurant places are not storable products but are, in a figurative sense, perishable on a daily basis. Every unoccupied guestroom or guest bed means an irrecoverable loss in revenue for the establishment.

In addition to high costs (for example non-wage labour costs and investments in modernization) and the problem of acquiring qualified and motivated staff (due to the unfavourable working hours and low pay level), pricing and cut-throat competition is seen as the main problem in the industry. Demographic change as reflected in an ageing population is steadily continuing in Germany as it is in many other industrialized nations, exacerbating the situation on the job market.8 The main reasons for this are dramatic falls in the birth rate and increased life expectancy. An ever-increasing number of older people are retiring and have to be supported by a decreasing number of younger workers. Not only the big hotel companies have already started working on strategies for effective employer branding9 and are putting appropriate measures into practice.

We see particular efforts on the part of the hotel industry to recruit exceptionally well-trained managerial staff and talented young executives in order to do justice to the increased customer wishes and increased business-management requirements. The way of training hotel managers has changed in the past few years. Up until now, in the German-speaking countries, a trainee manager’s career usually followed the traditional path which consisted of a branch-specific training occupation and several years’ job experience followed by two years at a school of hotel management.

Due to the expansion of the international hotel chains, small and medium-sized hotel businesses are being crowded out more and more for the reasons stated in this article. It

6 www.ahgz.de, accessed on: 28.08.10
7 www.dehoga-bundesverband.de/daten-fakten-trends, accessed on: 08.01.13
9 Branding concepts are used to make a company appear on the whole an attractive employer and thus stand out positively on the job market from its competitors.
Hospitality can be assumed that as a result of this process global management know-how will become the key factor to success and that a university degree in business management will become more important as prerequisite for a successful career. In the future, as in industry, in the hospitality industry a small number of very qualified hosts will ensure even more efficient, standardized processes and thus increased added value.

Constant market observation, managerial controlling and continuous investment are essential for market success. The internet will continue to decisively increase the transparency of offers and prices. Management’s task will be to look carefully at the latest booking methods and marketing instruments and create preferences through unique selling propositions, added values and customer retention programmes, in order to prevent their guests from taking their custom elsewhere. Moreover, the establishments will have to convince the consumers that the offer is worth its price and during their stay provide the guests with individual problem solutions which exceed their expectations. The putting into practice of these measures requires managers who have global management know-how and who are open to innovation.

The trend towards escapism, meaning getting away for a few hours or days from one’s daily routine at home or at work will increase in the next few years. Staging an experience such as for example in the idyllic and rustic Almdorf Seinerzeit, in the Europark Rust, in the VIP area of the Allianz Arena, in Restaurant Ikarus im Hangar 7 or fast-casual concepts such as Vapiano or hans im glück Burger Grill will in the future be a much more relevant success factor for hosts.

Hospitality companies who successfully cater to this trend bear above all three success factors in mind: attractions: these make the offer unforgettable, and unforeseeable; imagination: illusions and staged magical backdrops, as realistic as possible; perfection: planning and checking down to the last detail.

To survive the competition, changes will be inevitable as for centuries, especially in the hospitality industry, the saying has been: “If you don’t go with the times, in time you go.”

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Hospitality – expensive gifts for guests as a sign of quality

As described in the previous article “From Hospitality to the Hospitality Industry […]” by Axel Gruner and Burkhard von Freyberg, the hospitality industry has changed greatly since ancient times. Every age meant new challenges. Whereas in the past it was the guests who brought presents with them as a token of thanks for the expenses of their hosts, a characteristic of hotels today is the giving of all sorts of little presents to their guests to bind them to the hotel or hotel chain. As guests today have a wide range of media at their disposal (travel agencies, reservation portals and review sites on the internet etc.) through which they can find hotels which meet their personal requirements, can compare prices with each other and read reviews by other guests, modern hosts are increasingly obliged to “give presents” to their guests. These “presents” are nowadays considered by guests to be a matter of course. If they are missing, the guest equates this with the low quality of the hotel, and if they are reduced this is seen as a loss of quality. This was among other things the case during the financial and economic crises from 2008 to 2010 when hotels had to contend with sharp drops in turnover. In the case of the international hotel chains in particular, so-called contingency plans kick in whenever turnover has dropped by a certain number of percentage points. These contingency plans also contain provisions for reducing or completely abandoning guest amenities and complimentary services and gifts for the guests.

Also very popular is removing modern flat-screen televisions which are either located on a television mounting bracket or are attached to a wall holder. Many guests go to a lot of trouble to conceal this theft as well as possible. The disappointment they feel after they get home and connect and switch on the television must be great when they have no reception or only snow on the screen. The reason for this is that hotel televisions are connected up to a hotel network which is why special EDP boards are additionally installed in the television set. This hotel network enables various functions such as for example Pay TV programmes, view of guest bills, room service orders etc.

But which articles are guests quite free to take home with them? The Uniform System of Accounts for the Lodging Industry¹, in short USA-LI, which is an invoicing, accounting and controlling instrument for the international hotel industry, lists in its final chapter all articles which can be booked as Guest Amenities and Complimentary Services and Gifts. The great majority of these gift articles are recorded in the lodgings department. The USA-LI lists 92 possible examples, of which are the most common are: soap, shower gel, shampoo, body lotion, nail files, mouthwash, dental floss, shoe polishing cloth, sewing kit, free mineral water, bedroom slippers (or shower flip-flops), matches, ballpoint pens, notebooks, postcards, writing paper, playing cards, newspapers and magazines, umbrellas or

the like. Whole branches of industry have specialized in the production of such complementary gifts, from low-cost ones to luxury and well-known brands. Also very popular with regular guests is the well-known welcoming bowl of fruit, chocolates or a bottle of champagne.

The question here is: How much do these gifts cost the hotel? There are various ways to express these costs: as (1) the sum in euros of all individual articles per room, as (2) POR (per occupied room) ratio, as (3) percentage of the turnover or as (4) total value of all bought-in complementary gifts within a certain period of time, usually one month.

Variant (1) shows the total value of all gift articles per room. This figure fluctuates and depends on the category of hotel and room. Standard rooms usually have no-name products of normal to low-cost quality. A good way to test this is to take the soft bedroom slippers. Many guests like wearing them in the spa area, where these slippers are subjected to water. Low-cost articles soon disintegrate, as their insides are made of cardboard. High-quality slippers do not disintegrate even in the shower. The price of a pair of slippers can be anywhere between € 0.15 and € 2.20. Thus it is not possible to put an overall figure on the value of all gift articles per room, but it usually lies somewhere between € 0.00 and € 100.00, with no upper limit.

Variant (2) gives the value in euros per occupied room. It is as a rule lower than in variant (1), as guests usually do not take all the gift articles in the room with them, with the result that the articles left behind in the room can be used by the next guest. In four- to five-star hotels in Munich, the value per occupied room lies between € 7.50 and € 20.00.

The average percentage of lodgings turnover [variant (3)] is between 0.5 and 5 percent. In other words: when the guest pays a net price of € 100, the hotelier pays a sum of between 50 cents and 5 euros. This may not seem much at first sight. However, variant (4) can add up to quite considerable sums.

Assuming that the percentage for gift articles is 2.2% of lodgings turnover and that a 200-room hotel with an occupancy rate of 75% generates net lodgings receipts in a business year of € 8.2 million, the total value of the complimentary gift articles is thus € 180,400 – a not inconsiderable sum.

The guest rates the quality of the hotel on the basis of the number and quality of the complimentary gift articles. Hotels which get into financial difficulties tend to increase their prices and at the same time reduce the number and quality of their complimentary gifts. This strategic step is usually fatal and regular guests in particular do not accept it. It leads to poor ratings and a loss of guests to other establishments and triggers a negative downward financial spiral. Hotels must therefore think very carefully before they decide on how much to reduce “complimentary gifts” for their guests.

SOURCE: Internet http://www.25hours-hotels.com/levis/design-und-geschichten/atmosphaere.php [accessed on 09.01.2013]