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Spending more on housekeeping does not necessarily lead to higher cleanliness scores.

Study: Hotels' Increased Cleaning Costs May Go Unnoticed

BY HOTEL BUSINESS ON AUGUST 20, 2018

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SARASOTA, FL—Hotels may spend more to clean guestrooms, but that doesn't mean customers will notice, according to a hospitality industry research group at the University of South Florida (USF) Sarasota-Manatee.

A review of customer-service data by the M3 Center for Hospitality Technology and Innovation shows that of 13 major hotel brands that increased housekeeping costs for 2017, only four—Hilton, DoubleTree, Hilton Garden Inn and Hampton Inn—saw higher cleanliness ratings from customers compared to the year before.

Also, spending more on housekeeping doesn't always result in higher scores than at rival hotels. The center noted that Embassy Suites, Marriott, Westin and Hilton outspent all others in the survey, but that didn't earn them higher cleanliness scores compared to those other hotels.

"Spending more money on cleaning a room does not guarantee higher guest scores for cleanliness. However, smart management of housekeeping costs does," the report said. "Ensuring a property operates at the highest possible standards without straining a budget can be achieved when the right practices are in place."

The study was conducted by Dr. Cihan Cobanoglu, director of the M3 Center, researcher Olena Ciftci and Drs. Katerina Berezina and Faizan Ali. Based at USF Sarasota-Manatee, the M3 Center for

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Hospitality Technology and Innovation was founded in 2013 to conduct research to benefit the hospitality industry.

The study, called the "Gradebook for Cleanliness in Hotels," was started to determine whether increased housekeeping expenses translates to higher customer survey scores.

To conduct its research, the center analyzed anonymous data from 1,139 hotels from 15 major hotel brands within three broad categories: upper-midscale, upscale and upper-upscale as obtained from the M3 hotel accounting technology company.

Researchers then examined housekeeping costs per occupied room, taking into account such items as cleaning equipment, cleaning supplies, guest supplies and housekeeping salaries and wages, among other expenses.

The center found that the Hampton Inn & Suites led all others in the cleanliness rating (81.15%), followed by Hampton Inn (77.48%), Hilton Garden Inn (76.13%), Fairfield Inn (76.05%) and SpringHill Suites (76.03%).

However, when researchers compared cleanliness scores relative to housekeeping expenses, TownePlace Suites came out as the most efficient housekeeping operation for 2017.

The report recommends that hotels focus on efficiency in regard to housekeeping costs, noting that more than 65% of those expenses are directed toward salaries and wages.

"Therefore, this area provides the most opportunities for managing costs and potentially achieving a higher cleanliness score while spending less," the report said.

Among other measures, it suggests that hotels train housekeeping staff on an ongoing basis, encourage more efficient housekeepers to train less efficient housekeepers and reduce turnover by implementing employee recognition programs.

"The M3 Center's mission is to provide cutting-edge research for the hospitality and tourism industry," said Cobanoglu. "I am very happy that we could provide this report so that hoteliers can use it to benchmark their housekeeping operations. In the hotel industry, we see a lot of data about the revenue side. However, it is rare to report on actual expenses. This report brings in the expense side as a percentage of sales and cost per occupied room, the two most-used metrics when evaluating costs. In addition, the report shows us that spending more money does not equate to cleaner rooms, at least according to the guests' perceptions."

Cihan Cobanoglu

Embassy Suites

Fairfield Inn

Hampton Inn & Suites

Hilton

Hilton Garden Inn

housekeeping

Marriott

SpringHill Suites

TownePlace Suites

University of South Florida (USF) Sarasota-Manatee

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