Hotel Employees' Competencies and Qualifications Required According to Hotel Divisions

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ABSTRACT

The concept of competency is becoming increasingly more important in human resource management in many industries. The hotel industry also responds in like manner to the use of competencies in human resource management as this industry is people focused and labor intensive. Thus, people with the level of proficiency and types of skills are highly required for a successful business. To some degree, this study attempted to explore hotel employees' competency as well as qualifications according to hotel divisions: General Management; Marketing & Sales; Rooms Division; F&B; and Cooking. The result of factor analysis using 34 competency items produced seven competency dimensions. This study also proved that different types of competencies or qualifications were most necessary for each department. Therefore, the findings will help hoteliers in the future to understand the job requirements for each department in a hotel.

Keywords: *human resources, competency, qualification, hotel divisions*

INTRODUCTION

In today's modern society, the meaning of a job is worth mentioning as it embraces one's social position, financial agreement on task performance, and development of one's ability in terms of self-actualization. In this respect, selecting the job most suited to an individual is an essential part of creating a successful and satisfactory individual life. However, it has led to frequent regrets as people have failed to adjust themselves to their work environment.

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This results from unwary or hasty decisions by people who do not consider their own aptitudes or interests.

To avoid such a wrong decision in accepting a job, the first step to be taken should be to identify the work values the individual is pursuing in the work place. According to previous studies, work values largely consist of intrinsic work values and extrinsic work values (Ros, Schwartz & Surkiss, 1999; Wollack, Goodale, Wijting & Smith, 1971). Intrinsic work values contain the pursuit of individual independence, interest, opportunity for growth or creativity in work to use any specific knowledge or ability, while extrinsic work values are closely linked to the job security or income provided, with the requirements needed for general security and maintenance in life. Meanwhile, competency has an important role as a driving factor to achieve these work values and it includes a variety of personal traits such as knowledge, skills, values, motives and enthusiasm. To maximize these work values, employees should extend their own competencies in performing tasks. If some essential competencies or qualifications are missing, employees should have chances to learn skills or knowledge from participation in workshops, seminars and training courses. At present, the concept of competency is being actively employed by many of the service organizations or firms to improve the function of human resources. The key points of competency management involve firstly, bringing enhanced productivity to the company as it can choose the right person in the right place on the basis of competencies and qualifications identified and secondly, employees are also able to recognize missing skills or knowledge for the tasks and learn about them, ultimately resulting in individual development.

As the hotel industry is labor focused and people-oriented, the concept of competency management should be applied to the hotel industry. If employees are fully competent to perform tasks, their job satisfaction will increase. Then, this will result in positive outcomes for the hotel. (Lee, Kahn & Ko, 2008). Employees' high job satisfaction in the work place can bring an improved quality of service to customers and rule out negative factors such as spending much time on handling customers' complaints, an irreparable reputation for the hotel, and low levels of motivation of employees to work. Hence, there is a need to develop employees' skills and knowledge in terms of competency because hotel employees' job performance has significant effects on the quality of service and the productivity of a hotel.

There are various divisions existing in a hotel and each division requires different competencies or qualifications for tasks. People working in the front line, for example, the front desk or the F&B department, have to provide face to face services to customers while those who are working in the kitchen or accounting department do not need to satisfy customers' needs face to face. To gain superb task performances, it is necessary to examine the differences in competencies or qualifications most suitable for hotel employees in each division. For this, a hotel has been divided into five divisions: the General Management Division

(including human resources, accounting department, purchasing and planning department), the Marketing & Sales Division, the Rooms Division (including the front desk, bell desk and housekeeping department), the F&B Division (consisting of restaurants, cafe and bars), and the Cooking Division.

The aim of this study can be specifically defined as follows:

First, it will examine the required competencies or qualifications mainly focusing on hotel employees. Second, it will show whether the different perceptions of the importance of competencies or qualifications required for hotel employees exist. Third, it will make an industrial contribution based on the results of the study: the results will be profoundly discussed to help job applicants select the most appropriate job in terms of choosing hotel divisions. The current employees will be given chances to carry out self-evaluation in order to figure out what critical competencies are missing in current positions; the results will be applied to design job requirements, especially towards hiring the right person for the right place in order to increase productivity and employees' performances.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Human Resources in the Hospitality Industry

A number of studies have attempted to explore the importance of human resources in an organization (Pfeffer, 1994, 1998; Quinn, 1992; Senge, 1990; Swanson, 1994). These studies have pointed out that employees owned knowledge, capabilities and expertise. This is a key to sustainable competitive advantage because it enables the creation of superior value for both customers and firms (Herling & Provo, 2000). Once well trained employees satisfy customers with the quality of services, this will most likely increase customers' repeat visits in purchasing products or services. Ultimately it can increase profits for organizations or firms (Gupta, McLaughlin & Gomez, 2007; Sulek & Hensley, 2004; Cheng 2005). Tracey and Nathan (2003) have showed that the total amount of time spent on employees' job training to improve skills for restaurant services leads to a low turnover as well as increased sales revenue.

As the hotel industry has a characteristic of being labor intensive, employees must be well qualified to handle customers' needs and wants. That is, the success of hotels depends heavily on how to enhance human resources management in an organization. Above all, a hotel should identify the level of proficiency and types of skills required for a certain position and train employees to be competent in skills and abilities (Chapmann & Loveall, 2006). For example, service staffs in fast food restaurants have to have different proficiencies or skills compared to those who work in fine dining restaurants. People in fast food restaurants only need to be competent in taking orders quickly without any mistakes, while those

who are in fine dining restaurants should be more courteous and attentive to customers' needs. Likewise, hotel employees who provide face to face service at the front desk, restaurants or bars are required to have different competencies or qualifications for performance compared to those who are working in the back of the house in a hotel including human resources, marketing & sales, and planning departments. Therefore, the level of proficiency or different types of skills, which have considerable influence over service providers' performance, should be regarded.

The Concept of Competency and Competency Modeling

The concept of competency has broadly been viewed in two different ways; one is the strategic perspective at the organizational level and the other is central to the domains of human resources at the individual level (Chen & Naquin, 2008; Hoffman, 1999; McLegan, 1997). From a strategic point of view, competencies can be regarded as a firm's competitive advantage that competitors can never copy, including functions, processes and routines (Cardi & Servarajan, 2006; Kochanski, 1997). For example, customers' knowledge of products or services in current market places can be incorporated into creating new products or services by establishing the knowledge system (Canziani, 1996). It must not only be exclusive but also difficult to duplicate by other competitors. Grant (1991) also mentioned that competitive advantage can be produced when a firm's business strategy is combined with organizational internal resources or capabilities. For this, human resource is a vital factor in transferring knowledge and skills into outputs (Phillips, 1999).

The overarching perspective of competency at an individual level has been defined as the underlying work-related characteristics such as knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs, motives, and traits. Previous studies pointed out that these characteristics play a pivotal role in fostering managerial abilities including problem solving, analytical thinking, and leadership (Boyatzis, 1982; Chen & Naquin, 2006; McCllenland, 1973; Mirabille, 1997; Spencer & Spencer, 1993).

There has also been an attempt to classify individual work-related characteristics into structural parts (Bergenhenegouwen, Horn & Mooijman, 1996; Spencer & Spencer, 1993). Figure 1 suggests that detailed human competencies are in the form of an 'iceberg'. As demonstrated in Figure 1, 'knowledge and skills' on the top of the iceberg are possibly trained in over the course of a lifetime and their improvement is observable, while the rest of the competencies on the bottom including motives, attitudes and values are neither easily recognized nor trained. From the components of the competency iceberg model, it would seem that 'knowledge and skills' are related to carrying out work and holding a position that would appear to be learned in job training courses or educational programs. The second level, 'intermediate skills' would seem

to be associated with sociability or communication skills in work situations (Bergenhenegouwen, ten Horn & Mooijman, 1996). The third level of the iceberg consists of 'values, standards, professional etiquette and moral criteria', which are not only invisible, but are also difficult to measure. However, these are the principal components to make people not only behave in a certain way, but also to keep their behavior consistent. The lowest level of structure is represented as 'self-image, motives, effort and enthusiasm', which is what drives people to seek achievement, power, and social belonging. Bergenhenegouwen *et al.* (1996) added that these competencies might be highly essential requirements for successful performance as they work as an important motivational factor to learn skills and knowledge.

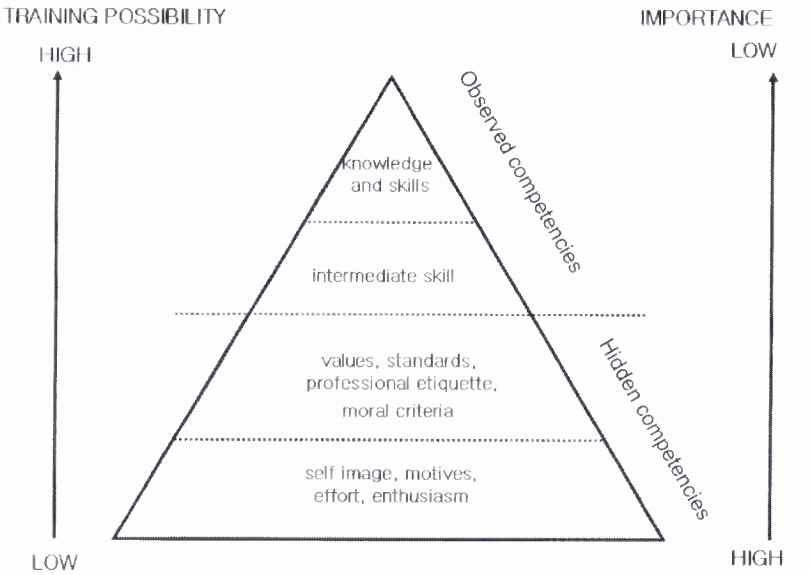

Figure 1: The structure of competency

Competency modeling is the process of identifying a set of success factors including the key behaviors required for excellent performance in a particular role (Kochanski, 1997). Not only can a well-developed competency model provide guidance for differently required job practices, but it can also make those practices become consistent.

Many studies have proved that competency modeling has enabled firms to improve human resources management in regard to personnel recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, mentoring, compensation and reward systems etc (Byham & Moyer, 2004; Chung-Herrera, Enz & Lankau, 2003; Howard, 1997; Lucia & Lepsinger, 1999). As a competency model provides the whole package of needed skills and abilities, it helps to select

or recruit the employees most suited to a certain job position (Chung-Herrera et al., 2003). As competency models contain significant job requirements, firms can build up a rigorous training program for employees. In addition, specified skills or abilities described in a competency model can provide a consistent policy for evaluating employees' performance. From the standpoint of employees, competency models also help organizational members to see what critical skills are missing by comparing their actual performances to required skills and proficiencies on the competency model. When employees identify their deficiencies on performance, they will enhance their skills or abilities and acquire either compensation or reward from the firm.

Competency Management in the Hospitality Industry

Aung (2000) attempted to analyze the core competencies of the Accor multinational hotel chain along with its competitors in the Thai market place at the organizational level. The study focused on examining three main functions in a hotel such as human resources, operations, and marketing. The result concluded that human resources were the determining factor for its success in competition. The Accor chains accelerated their success by using their own training program worldwide: they provided employees with cross-training to improve their adaptability skills and six-month exchange programs were also a productive way learn different cultures in various regions.

Kay and Russette (2000) identified the essential competencies required for hotel managers in the divisions of F&B, front desk, and sales in Spain. The study measured five core competencies based on Sandwith's (1993) measurements which contained competency domains such as leadership, technical skills, interpersonal skills, conceptual-creative skills, and administrative skills. The result of this study reported that the skills required for managers were leadership skills, technical skills, interpersonal skills, administrative skills, and conceptual-creative skills in order of importance. These measurements were similar to previous studies that investigated a list of competencies for top management in all industrial areas including leadership skills, general management skills, interpersonal skills, communication skills, creativity, adaptability and results orientation (Dulewicz, 1989; Thoronton & Byham, 1982).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The questions of competencies or qualifications required for employees according to hotel divisions were adapted from previous findings on major competency studies on the basis of the hotel industry. Then, a pilot study was conducted using a sample size of 10 hotel professionals in five-star hotels in

Seoul to ensure the reliability and the improved readability of the questionnaire. Meanwhile, in-depth interviews with the 10 professionals were also conducted to gather more realistic and on-site information about the hotels.

This study employed the following quantitative research methods to achieve research purposes: first, exploratory factor analysis was used to identify the underlying domains for competencies or qualifications required for hotel employees. Then, reliability coefficients with extracted domains using Cronbach's alpha test were computed to measure the internal consistency among the items; second, one-way ANOVA was undertaken to examine the differences in the competency domains classified from factor analysis among five different hotel divisions. When significant differences were found, Duncan's multiple range tests were employed to see the source of the differences across the respondent subgroups; third, to know the priority of competencies or qualifications required for employees in each of the five hotel divisions, one-way ANOVA tests with Duncan's multiple range tests were again undertaken.

A questionnaire survey was administered to hotel employees who were currently working in five-star hotels in Seoul during the period of August 20, 2007 to October 5, 2007. Eleven out of eighteen five-star hotels were selected to conduct a survey whereas the other hotels were prevented from taking part in the survey owing to administrative policies. The survey was only conducted in five-star hotels located in Seoul as most of job applicants preferred to work in a five-star hotel. A total of 550 questionnaires were distributed to 11 hotels while each division was given ten questionnaires apiece and 462 questionnaires were collected.

RESULTS

Respondents' Characteristics

To know the respondents' socio-demographic characteristics, frequency tests were conducted. The sex ratio of the samples shows a distribution of 61.4% male and 38.4% female. The majority were aged between 20 and 30 and most of the respondents had either a college or university graduate background. The ratio of marital status demonstrates an even distribution, consisting of 45.8% married people and 54.2% unmarried people.

The frequency tests were also conducted to discover the various characteristics of respondents' working conditions. A total of 11 five-star hotels in Seoul consisting of 9 international chain hotels and 2 local hotels were chosen for the survey. As previously mentioned, five different hotel divisions were selected including the General Management Division, Sales & Marketing Division, Rooms Division, F&B Division and the Cooking Division. Among them, the highest response rate was drawn from the F&B division. With regard

to the status of employment, 77.2% of respondents were full-time regular employees. Concerning the working duration in a current division, the majority of the group ranged from more than 1 year to less than 10 years.

Results of Factor Analyses and Reliability Tests

To examine the domains underlying the competencies and qualifications required for hotel employees, a principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation was undertaken. As the KMO (Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin) measure of sampling adequacy indicated .917, the factor analysis was believed to be a useful validation of the factor model. The 31 items yielded seven factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 (Table 1). These factors explained 59.85% of the variance and were labeled: (1) practical competency, (2) adaptability to working environment, (3) ability to make progress in work, (4) interpersonal skills, (5) active participation in social gathering, (6) flexibility of time management, and (7) foreign languages and work-related learning. All 34 items had factor loadings of over 0.40. The reliability alphas, which are designed to check the internal consistency of items within each domain, were greater than 0.619. These coefficients were higher than or close to the standard of 0.70 recommended by Nunnally (1978).

Table 1: Results of factor analysis

Competencies or qualifications items	**Factor loadings**	**Variance explained**	**Cronbach's alpha**
Domain 1: Practical competency			
You should be dexterous in something.	0.765		
You should be patient enough to standby for hours.	0.652		
You should have a good memory.	0.566		
You should be good at documentation (e.g., writing a report, project planning, filing, writing e-mail, note taking etc.)	0.547	31.56	0.884
You should obtain a relevant certificate.	0.539		
You should be excellent in carrying out presentations.	0.537		
You should know how to conduct computer programs related to your work.	0.499		
Domain 2 : Adaptability to working environment			
You should adapt yourself well to the challenging work environment.	0.755		
You should wear a determined uniform.	0.731		
You should easily adapt yourself to the working environment including early arrival, night duty, late work, etc.	0.699	7.41	0.864

Continued

Table 1 *(Continue)*

You should be highly sociable to customers or colleagues.	0.656		
You should perform well even though the work is repetitive and monotonous.	0.652		
You should be neat and decent in your appearance.	0.595		
Domain 3: Ability to make progress in work			
You should take the lead among your colleagues.	0.744		
You should be pleased to meet and talk to customers or any affiliated company workers.	0.711		
You should be pleased to communicate with others such as supervisors, colleagues, customers, partners or affiliated companies.	0.670	5.11	0.846
You should recognize customers' specific requirements well.	0.510		
You should be active in selling products in order to increase profits.	0.438		
Domain 4 : Interpersonal skills			
You should pursue a friendly competitive relationship with colleagues for better achievement.	0.729		
You should cope well with external environmental factors such as increased oil price, exchange rate, terror, the spread of epidemics etc.	0.592	4.69	0.661
You should be able to cope with any criticism or rebuke as one member of a team.	0.582		
You should control your emotions when you are depressed.	0.582		
You should take care of team members.	0.553		
Domain 5 : Active participation in social gatherings			
You should be good at dancing and drinking when dining out with your colleagues.	0.703		
You should keep a close relationship with influential people in work place.	0.693	4.12	0.672
You should be positive in social gatherings with colleagues after work.	0.654		
You should have a sense of humor in the work place.	0.529		
You should know how to make yourself survive at work.	0.510		
Domain 6 : Flexibility of time management			
You should not complain about overtime work due to briefing the next team or changing uniform.	0.745	3.73	0.670
You should be able to work late unless the work is finished.	0.732		
You should be able to work during weekends or holidays.	0.531		

Results of ANOVAs to Identify Different Competencies or Qualifications Required for Employees According to Hotel Divisions

To examine the overall difference among the five hotel divisions, one-way ANOVA tests were employed. When significant differences in one-way ANOVA tests were found, Duncan's multiple range tests were used to examine the source of differences across the respondent subgroups. An inspection of the mean scores indicates that four of the seven domains were found to be significantly different at either the 0.001 level or 0.05 level of significance.

With regard to the 'practical competency' domain, the respondents in the Cooking Division (mean = 5.24) reported that the 'practical competencies' such as excellent dexterity to develop more outstanding menu items against competing restaurants, the ability to stand for long periods cooking, and the possession of any cookery certificates were more important competencies or qualifications than for respondents in other divisions. Moreover, respondents in the F&B Division (mean = 5.23) similarly reported a higher mean score on this competency domain as they needed excellent dexterity for folding napkins, the ability for long periods of standing, and distinctive presentation skills to introduce menus or wine for enhanced selling. Chapman & Lovall (2006) have also emphasized that employees in F&B needed to fold napkins with the skills to turn them into an ornament on the table. Meanwhile, the Rooms Division (mean = 5.08), Marketing & Sales (mean = 5.03) and General Management (mean = 5.01) ranked in the lower groups.

With regard to the 'adaptability to working environment', significant differences ($p < 0.05$) among the five hotel divisions were found. Respondents in the F&B Division (mean = 6.07) placed more importance on this competency domain than other divisions. Thus, it can be said that employees in F&B should maximize their adaptability to the work environment or cultures. They should be competent to provide face to face service to customers who are somewhat different from day to day. There is also an emphasis on consistency in keeping a tidy appearance along with wearing a uniform. Cooperative team work or a close relationship with colleagues is essential for an improvement in productivity since they are all working as a team. Concerning the Rooms Division (mean = 5.92), the high level of the mean score was also assumed from their periodically changing work schedule that makes employees adjust their daily routine to an unstable work schedule. It also demonstrated a high level of mean score in the Cooking Division (mean = 5.92) since employees are required to wear the uniform and keep a tidy appearance in order to maintain a sanitary kitchen. Moreover, other working conditions such as an early shift for preparing guests' breakfasts or repetitive tasks such as trimming, washing and boiling are essential requirements for employees in this division.

On the competency domain of 'ability to make progress in work', the F&B Division (mean = 5.86) showed the highest mean score, indicating employees' activities are entirely involved in generating revenue by selling food or drinks

at restaurants or bars. Likewise, the Sales & Marketing Division (mean = 5.84) also produced a high level of mean score as they sell rooms for nights, banquets and conventions to achieve their sales goals. Although the Cooking Division is not concerned with selling hotel products directly to customers, it demonstrated a high level of mean score (mean = 5.75) because of other required essential competencies or qualifications such as taking the leadership to ensure employees' safety in the work environment or identifying customers' preferences in designing competitive menu items. Meanwhile, the General Management division had the lowest mean score.

An examination of 'active participation in social gatherings' indicated that the F&B Division had the highest mean score (mean = 5.26) among all the divisions. This seems to be concerned with the work environment since restaurants and bars currently not only provide meals and drinks but also have the function of gathering people for social relationships or entertainment. As employees are more exposed to this pleasant atmosphere, they become more familiar with entertainment and amusement. Thus, it can be interpreted that these circumstances have an influence on employees' perception of the need to participate in social gatherings.

As the table shows, significant differences ($p < 0.05$) among the five hotel divisions were not found for three of the competency domains such as 'interpersonal skills', 'flexibility of time management', and 'foreign languages and work-related learning'.

Table 2: Results of ANOVAs by competencies or qualifications required in hotel employees

Competency Domains	General management (N = 83)	Sales & marketing (N = 91)	Rooms division (N = 97)	F&B (N = 104)	Cooking (N = 87)	F-value	P-value
Practical competency	5.01b	5.03b	5.08b	5.23ab	5.24a	3.337	.010
Adaptability to working environment	5.72b	5.64b	5.92ab	6.07a	5.92ab	3.058	.017
Ability to make progress in work	5.34b	5.84a	5.62a	5.86a	5.75a	4.370	.002
Interpersonal skills	5.40	5.58	5.55	5.64	5.54	0.762	.550
Active participation in social gatherings	4.80b	4.72b	4.94b	5.26a	4.86b	3.914	.004
Flexibility of time management	5.10	5.11	5.29	5.37	5.46	2.366	.052
Foreign languages and work-related learning	5.34	5.77	5.82	5.75	5.64	2.123	.077

Note: a, b, and c indicate the source of significant mean differences (a > b > c).

Results of ANOVAs to Identify the Importance of Competencies or Qualifications Required for Employees in Each Hotel Division

All competencies and qualifications required for employees were significantly different across the five hotel divisions at the 0.001 level of significance (see Table 3).

The 'adaptability to the working environment' was identified as the most required competency domain for all the divisions except marketing & sales, where the 'ability of making progress in work' was the most required competency domain. Meanwhile, the competency domain of the 'active participation in social gatherings' produced the lowest mean score in all the divisions.

In the General Management Division which includes human resources, the accounting department, and the purchasing and planning department, 'adaptability to the working environment' (mean = 5.72) was identified as the most required competency domain followed by 'interpersonal skills' (mean = 5.40), 'ability to make progress in work' (mean = 5.34), 'foreign languages and work-related learning' (mean = 5.34), 'flexibility of time management' (mean = 5.10), 'practical competency' (mean = 5.10), and 'active participation in social gathering' (mean = 4.80). The highest mean score drawn from the 'adaptability to working environment' means that employees in general management need to have a tidy appearance even though they do not wear uniforms in their work place. Moreover, they are often required to take on extra work during the high season or closing days. The lowest mean score was produced from the competency domain of the 'active participation in social gatherings'. It would seem to be the result of the individual work pattern in the General Management Division whereas employees in other divisions such as F&B, Rooms Division, and Cooking are working in a team.

For the Sales and Marketing Division, the competencies or qualifications most in demand for employees were regarded as the 'ability to make progress in work' (mean = 5.84) since their main duties were focused on creating revenue for hotels through selling rooms or banquets. Then, 'foreign languages and work-related learning' (mean = 5.77) was shown as the second most important competency domain as a total of 50% of staying guests in Seoul have been visitors from abroad either for holidays or business. Next, the 'interpersonal skills' (mean = 5.05) was also considered an important competency or qualification because one should be polite and pleasant while meeting and talking with customers or any affiliated company workers in order to increase sales. Meanwhile, 'practical competency' (mean = 5.03) and 'active participation in social gatherings' (mean = 4.72) ranked in the lower groups owing to the employees' external activities.

The Rooms Division consisting of the front desk, housekeeping, bell desk and concierge showed the highest mean score in the competency domain of 'adaptability to working environment' (mean = 5.92). Then, 'foreign languages and work-related learning' (mean = 5.82) was identified as having the second highest mean score, but it was simultaneously demonstrated as the first ranked competency domain in comparison with other divisions. Furthermore, those who work at the front desk should speak foreign languages and acquire the skills to operate computer programs such as Fidelio information systems, Opera reservation system, HIS (Hotel Information Systems) to assist the

process of guests' check-in and out and bill posting, and the building of a guests' database.

With regard to the importance of competencies or qualifications in F&B, the highest mean score was shown in 'adaptability to working environment' (mean = 6.07), and was followed by 'ability to make progress in work' (mean = 5.86), 'foreign languages and work-related learning' (mean = 5.75), 'interpersonal skills' (mean = 5.64), 'flexibility of time management' (mean = 5.37), 'practical competency' (mean = 5.23), and 'active participation in social gatherings' (mean = 5.26). It can be explained that a number of changes in the working place, primarily originating from daily visits of guests, force employees to be competent in their ability to adapt to unexpected events including drunken guests or those who leave without paying. Moreover, as they were straightforwardly involved in selling food and drinks, the ability to make progress in work in terms of sales activities was ranked high.

In the Cooking Division, the 'adaptability to working environment' (mean = 5.92) had the highest mean score like other divisions except Sales & Marketing, followed by the 'ability to make progress in work' (mean = 5.75), 'foreign languages and work-related learning' (mean = 5.64), 'interpersonal skills' (mean = 5.54), 'flexibility of time management' (mean = 5.46), 'practical competency' (mean = 5.24), and 'active participation in social gatherings' (mean = 4.86). As previously mentioned, employees perceived the importance of competencies or qualifications related to the matter of the work environment, such as the need to wear a uniform or keep a tidy appearance in order to ensure a sanitary work place. It is also worth noting that 'foreign languages and work-related learning' is an essential competency domain since employees have to communicate with their colleagues from abroad in foreign languages and frequently learn new techniques of cooking, new recipes, or the way to

Table 3: Results of ANOVAs to identify the importance of competencies or qualifications required in employees for each hotel division

Competency Domains	**General management (N = 83)**	**Sales & marketing (N = 91)**	**Rooms division (N = 97)**	**F&B (N = 104)**	**Cooking (N = 87)**
Practical competency	5.01c	5.03bc	5.08dc	5.23c	5.24c
Adaptability to working environment	5.72a	5.64a	5.92a	6.07a	5.92a
Ability to make progress in work	5.34b	5.84a	5.62b	5.86ab	5.75ab
Interpersonal skills	5.40b	5.58a	5.55bc	5.64b	5.54bc
Active participation in social gatherings	4.80c	4.72c	4.94c	5.26c	4.86d
Flexibility of time management	5.10bc	5.11b	5.29cd	5.37c	5.46bc
Foreign languages and work-related learning	5.34b	5.77a	5.82ab	5.75b	5.64abc
F-value	4.882	11.680	14.115	16.227	9.121
P-value	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

Note: a, b, and c indicate the source of significant mean differences (a>b>c).

operate new cooking equipment. Although the highest score was not suggested in this analysis, 'practical competency' would seem to be considerable because it ranked highly compared to other divisions.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study primarily focused on identifying the competencies or qualifications required for hotel employees with a consideration of different types of divisions. Based on this concept, it attempted to achieve the following academic purposes: first, it provided more detailed job requirements for the graduates whose major is relevant to the hotel industry and the high school students agonizing over a decision of academic specialization in college or university; second, it also aimed at offering a depth of information to hotels as well as hotel employees. In the case of employment, hotels can use the result of this study as criteria to hire the right person for the right position. For current hotel employees, they can carry out self-evaluation based on the result of this study in order to identify what essential competencies or qualifications are missing.

Some studies regarding job competencies or qualifications required for hotel employees have been explored, especially focusing on hotel managers' competencies or professional skills (Agut, Grau & Peiro, 2003; Brownell, 1994; Kay & Russett, 2000; Ladkin & Riley, 1996; Nebel, Lee & Vidakovic, 1995). However, little research has been carried out into the competencies or qualifications required according to hotel divisions including the General Management Division, the Sales & Marketing Division, the Rooms Division, the F&B division, and the Cooking Division. Thus, this study put more effort into identifying competencies or qualifications most required for hotel employees overall, focusing on different hotel divisions. For this, the survey questionnaires were distributed to eleven five-star hotels in Seoul from August 20 to October 5 in 2007.

The research results were as follows: first, the most suitably required competencies or qualifications for overall hotel employees were identified. The results of factor analysis using 34 competency items produced the seven competency domains such as 'practical competency', 'adaptability to working environment', 'ability to make progress in work', 'interpersonal skills', 'active participation in social gatherings', 'flexibility of time management', and 'foreign languages and work-related learning'.

Second, the significant mean differences among five hotel divisions based on the seven competency domains were examined. Divisions in four competency domains had significant mean differences. The Cooking and F&B divisions had the highest mean scores in 'practical competency' as their routine activities were closely related to the following performances – excellent dexterity, the ability to stand for long periods of time and chef or bartender certificates. With regard to

the 'adaptability to working environment', three divisions including the Rooms Division, the F&B Division, and the Cooking Division ranked in the higher group of mean scores as their performances were primarily based on team work with a shift schedule, wearing a uniform, and knowing thoroughly customers' preferences. Then, Sales & Marketing and the F&B Division showed the highest mean score in the 'ability of making progress in work' since their activities are closely linked to generating more revenue for hotels by selling hotel rooms and food and drink. Lastly, the highest mean scores were produced from the F&B Division regarding 'active participation in social gatherings'.

Third, the importance of competencies or qualifications required for employees in each hotel division was figured out: the most essential competency or qualification for General Management was identified as 'adaptability to the working environment' while the lowest mean score was for 'active participation in social gatherings'. For the Sales & Marketing Division, the first important competencies or qualifications were suggested as the 'ability to make progress in work' as their activities were mainly focused on making profits for hotels. Then, the Rooms Division showed a high level of mean score in the 'adaptability to the working environment' as well as 'foreign languages and work-related learning', while the lowest level of mean score was shown in 'active participation in social gatherings'. The most important required competency or qualification for both the F&B and the Cooking Divisions was revealed as the 'adaptability to working environment', but their least required competency or qualification appeared to be the 'active participation in social gatherings'.

The results of this study can be considered by any graduates or job applicants in choosing the most appropriate hotel division as well as planning strategies to acquire a job opportunity since they could know what competencies or qualifications are essential for performance. Moreover, hotel businesses can improve their productivity and employees' performances through competency management. For example, if employees find they are deficient in competencies or qualifications through self-evaluation on the basis of this result, they can consider either fixing their weaknesses by attending special programs or transferring to other divisions that are in accordance with their interests and skills. Ways must be found to provide all the employees with more opportunities for training courses or workshops to enhance their skills or knowledge: for instance, language programs for those who have contact with foreign customers in the front line, fitness centres available to those who stand for a long time during work in order to strengthen their physical condition and a mentoring system for helping employees' adaptability to the work environment and cultures.

Despite a great deal of effort in identifying the required competencies or qualifications for hotel employees according to the five different divisions, it is still difficult to generalize the concept for all hotels worldwide. As the current

study only focused on hotels located in Seoul, it might have its own culture, which may not be applicable to all hotels worldwide. Thus, further study should be carried out targeting a wider range of hotels in different regions.

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