Summer 2011

E-mail Management of Japanese Hotels in Comparison with South Korean Hotels

Kyoko Morikoshi
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

E-mail Management of Japanese Hotels in Comparison with South Korean Hotels

by

Kyoko Morikoshi

Bachelor of Arts in English
Hokusei Gakuen University, Japan
1987

A professional paper submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Master of Hospitality Administration
William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration

Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
August 2011

ABSTRACT

E-mail Management of Japanese Hotels in Comparison with South Korean Hotels

by

Kyoko Morikoshi

Dr. Kurt Stahura, Committee Chair
Associate Professor of Hotel Administration
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration

There has been little study done concerning the service quality of Japanese hotels toward foreign guests; especially e-mail management in English has not been analyzed in Japan before.   Since e-mail inquiries in English from foreign guests could be the first step for Japanese hotels to provide good service to prospective guests, managing English e-mails efficiently is a key to attracting more foreign guests.   Therefore this study examined the actual condition of e-mail management at Japanese hotels by sending an English inquiry to them.   Korean hotels were also included because South Korea and Japan have similar linguistic and economic backgrounds.   A mystery guest approach was used in this study and a fictitious customer sent an English e-mail to each hotel, and inquired about hotel room availability.   The e-mail message asked about special room rates, amenities and privileges for a honeymoon couple at the beginning of July, 2011.   Information about the transportation to and from airports was also requested.   After collecting the e-mail replies from the hotels, response rates and time, responsiveness, and the quality of e-mails were analyzed.   At the end, some recommendations for e-mail management by Japanese hotels were proposed.   It is hoped that this study will provide some insights into how Japanese hotels could achieve efficient e-mail management in English.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figure

List of Tables

PART ONE

Introduction

The Japanese government has been vigorously promoting inbound tourism since they

implemented the "*Visit Japan Campaign*" in 2003.　However, their goal of inviting 10

million international travelers by 2010 was not realized (Japan National Tourism

Organization, 2011).　It is obvious that Japan needs strong governmental leadership and

every effort from business properties in the hospitality industry in order to boost inbound

tourism.　Although there are many issues to overcome in Japanese inbound tourism, this

study focuses on the e-mail customer service quality of hotels, with an emphasis on English

language usage.　There are some questions that need to be asked.　Are Japanese hotels

ready to serve international guests using English?　Are hotel employees efficient in

responding to e-mail inquiries in English?　These issues should be clearly examined to

evaluate the competitiveness of Japanese hotels in the global market.

This study also compares the e-mail management of Japanese hotels with that of South

Korean hotels.　South Korea has become very competitive in the world.　Their strong

governmental leadership has been instrumental with respect to the export of many Korean

products: automobiles, TVs, and electric appliances sold throughout the world.　The

launching of Incheon International airport, as a hub airport in Northeast Asia, has succeeded

in attracting many international guests.　Moreover, Incheon airport was named the World's

Best Airport for 2009 by Skytrax (2009).　Furthermore earlier this year Incheon airport

received Airport Council International's (2011) Airport Service Quality award for sixth

consecutive year.　The Korean government has set the high goal of becoming globally

competitive in both the economic market and the tourism market.　According to the World

Economic Forum (2011) , Japan was rated 22nd and South Koreas was 32nd on the Travel &

Tourism Competitiveness Index 2011, but strong leadership by the South Korean government

and recent economical growth of the country could be possible threats for the Japanese

hospitality industry.

South Korea has also taken quick action in their language education.   In Korea and Japan, English is taught as a foreign language (EFL).   The linguistic distance between English and both languages is nearly the same (Oshiro, 2003).   It is considered that the linguistic distance between English and both languages is larger than many other languages. That is Korean and Japanese speakers have more difficulties in learning English than speakers of other languages.   However, South Korea made English compulsory in their elementary schools in 1997, following Thailand which made English a required subject in 1996.   Many young Koreans are going abroad to study English (Ly, 2008).   On the other hand, Japanese elementary schools implemented some forms of English education in 2002, but it was not until April 2011 that fifth and sixth graders were required to take English classes once a week.   Moreover the average score of Japanese on the English proficiency test, TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), was very low among Asian countries in 2010 (ETS, 2011).   It is frequently said that Japanese English education is behind that of South Korea.

In this English educational setting, can Japanese hotels perform better than Korean Hotels when they communicate by using English in e-mails?   Answers to these questions will be of great interest to practitioners in the hospitality industry as well as to professionals in English education.   Working hand in hand with the hospitality industry, Japanese educational organizations need to educate and train their students to be competitive in the global market.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine how effectively Japanese hotels respond to English e-mail inquires in comparison with Korean hotels. This study aims to discover how well hotel employees manage e-mails in English.

Statement of problem.

The Japanese are said to be poor at foreign languages and many of them are not used to communicating with foreigners in Japan. However, Japanese hotels are trying to attract foreign guests and they need employees who can communicate well in English. Some hotels offer basic English training in order to improve their employees' communication skills, but the majority of the hotels cannot afford to do so. In addition, employee training in English writing for e-mails may not be conducted at most hotels. Not much research on how effectively hotel employees manage e-mails and communicate in English has been conducted. This is a gap in the literature that needs to be filled.

Justification

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has brought new forms of communication between customers and hotels. E-mails, on-line forums, social media and other new technologies have been introduced, affecting how hotels will cope with change. These new technologies are being developed much more quickly than hotels can manage and utilize them effectively. They need to adopt new applications of ICT constantly, and to upgrade training for employees to work efficiently with them. Previous studies have shown insufficient ICT application management at hotels in the early 2000s. The management of hotels may have improved in the last few years; but, it is worth examining how hotels are now responding to e-mail inquiries.

It is also significant to conduct research in Asian countries where English is used but considered a foreign language. Some Japanese hotels provide English training for their employees but there is not much discussion on how to respond to English e-mails efficiently. Moreover there has not been much research done on the English proficiency of employees of Japanese hotels.

Constraints

The main constraints of this study are the social impact of the devastating earthquake and tsunami, which struck East of Japan on March 11th in 2011, and resultant nuclear

problems.   Though many parts of Japan did not suffer any direct damage from the earthquake, the hospitality industry including hotels throughout Japan lost many guests. Compared to the previous year, the number of foreign visitors to Japan has sharply declined after the March 11th Disaster.   The statistics show that the number of foreign visitors to Japan decreased by 50.3% in March and by 62.5 % in April compared to that of the same period last year (Japan National Tourism Organization, 2011).   Some hotels have decided to close part of their properties for a while, and lay off some employees.   It is an unusual situation for the Japanese hospitality industry.   Another constraint involves the generalizability of this paper.   This study is not intended to be applicable to other parts of the world but may provide a template or foundation upon which others can build.   In addition, the size of sample used in this study was rather small.   As a result, it would be difficult to apply the results of this study to all Japanese hotels.

Glossary (Operational Definitions)

Service Quality.

Zeithaml, Bitner, and Gremler (2009) stated, "service quality is a focused evaluation that reflects the customer's perception of reliability, assurance, responsiveness, empathy, and tangibles." (p.103).

EFL (English as a Foreign Language).

Someone who learns English in a formal classroom setting, with limited or no opportunities for use outside the classroom, in a country in which English does not play an important role in internal communication (China, Japan, and Korea, for example), is said to be learning English as a foreign language (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, pp. 196-197).

TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language).

A standardized test of English proficiency administered by the Educational Testing Service, and widely used to measure the English language proficiency of international students wishing to enter American universities (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p 592).

PART TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

A long recession has caused the hospitality industry to consider new ways to attract international guests to Japan.   Inbound tourism is believed to help improve the economy, and Japan initiated its Visit Japan Campaign in 2003.   Not only international brand hotels but also independent hotels have started to place importance on international guests in Japan. Now international hospitality management should be clearly understood and improved by hotels in Japan.   In order to win in global business, Japanese hotels should understand the needs of international guests and provide quality service which meets global standards.   This literature review first explores important skills for international hospitality management and then presents an overview of Japanese inbound tourism.   Finally, e-mail management of hotels is discussed.

Important skills for international hospitality management

What are important skills for international hospitality management?   Kriegl (2000) conducted a survey research with Cornell graduates who worked in the hospitality industry outside the United States.   Her study shows that respondents rated cultural sensitivity and interpersonal skills as the most important skills among other skills for international management.   The respondents also consider that internships abroad and second-language studies are the most effective international training activities.   In contrast, the importance of technical and functional skills was rated lower than other skills.   The functional and technical training activities were ranked as being the least effective strategies (Kriegl, 2000).

Foreign language and cultural sensitivity in business.

The importance of English language skills in business is rising along with the globalization of business.   In 2002, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) announced an action plan to cultivate Japanese with English abilities.

5

More recently, some major companies in Japan, such as *Rakuten* and *UNIQLO* decided to use English as a communication medium in their offices.   In response, universities are now expected to nurture students' ability to use English in their future career.

The importance of foreign language in business was discussed by Thitthongkam, Walsh, & Bunchappattanasakda (2011).   They investigated managerial perspectives concerning the roles of foreign language in Thailand and concluded that foreign languages are significant in business administration; especially, managers should use language properly and communicate effectively.   It will help prevent conflicts that can happen in the workplace. They pointed out that "if there are any mistakes or misunderstanding during agreeing working conditions or signing contracts, for example, this can lead to expensive and long-lasting problems" (Thitthongkam et al., 2011. p.10).   They also claim that communication at work should involve as few mistakes as possible.   Foreign languages are also significant in order for companies to compete in the international market; particularly hotels and tourism need a foundation in foreign languages in order to communicate effectively with customers and intermediaries.

Iwai (2010) conducted a survey on English language education in Japanese hotels.   She sent a questionnaire to 1070 hotels in Japan and the 199 hotels ultimately responded were included in her study.   Eighty four percent of the hotels in the study suggested that they needed English training but only 23. 4% of the hotels actually provided English language training to their employees.   Her study has revealed that the number of hotels that provide English training correlated to the number of guest rooms, foreign guests, and fulltime employees of hotels.   The more rooms a hotel has, the higher the likelihood that hotel provides English training.   The results show that the content of English language training at hotels focused mainly on oral English communication skills and little attention was paid to reading and writing skills.   The themes that emerged for not having English language training were a busy workplace and the fact that those few employees who were proficient in

English would be required to take care of the foreign guests. Employees may receive a financial reward when they pass a language skill certification test but such incentives don't encourage them to continue to learn foreign languages. Most hotels do not rate their employees by their language skills; moreover, they do not require language skills for employee promotion. In addition, many hotels do not evaluate employees' language skills properly.

Sizoo, Iskat, Plank, & Serrie (2003) examined the impact of intercultural sensitivity on employee performance in cross-cultural service interactions. Sizoo (2008) replicated the same research in Hawaii, London, and Florida. Both studies focused on the cultural sensitivity of employees who work with international customers. The major findings of the research are as follows. Interculturally sensitive employees provided the international customers with a better service and these employees were more attentive to the needs of customers from other cultures. In addition, interculturally sensitive employees utilized suggestive selling more often, resulting in more revenue per international customer. Moreover, interaction with international customers provided the employees with more satisfaction. The study also showed that hiring and developing interculturally sensitive employees improved the service environment of the organizations. Thus, Sizoo concluded that it would be beneficial for human resource managers to invest in testing for and training with respect to intercultural sensitivity for employees involved in cross-cultural service encounters.

Information and communication technologies in the hospitality industry.

Information and communication technology (ICT) has changed the way people do business. The tourism and hospitality industries have adopted this new technology to reduce costs, operate more efficiently, manage customer data and improve their service quality (Law, Leung, & Buhalis, 2009). People all over the world search for hotels on their websites and contact them directly through e-mails and social media. Now hotels cannot ignore the

7

importance of ICT and they have to utilize them wisely and effectively.   There are several studies related to ICT applications in the hospitality industry.   These previous studies discussed the development of ICT used in the industry as well as, the customer's perspectives and supplier's views on the new technology.   They focus on how hotels utilize ICT to provide quality service from the supplier's perspectives.   Web-site and e-mail management of hotels, e-complaints and service recovery, and social media and customer service are actively discussed (Ip, Leung, & Law, 2011).

E-complaints and service recovery.

ICT has brought new ways of interaction in that customers can easily send complaints to companies by email and they can also post their comments on internet forums.   Neale and Murphy (2007) conducted a study on e-mail service recovery.   The results of their study showed that replying to e-mail complaints and offering compensation had a positive correlation with customer satisfaction.   Answering them completely and thanking the customer correlated with customer satisfaction, positive word of mouth, and re-purchase intent.   Thus Neale & Murphy suggested that firms should answer incoming mail vigilantly and politely.   On the other hand, online comments on the hotel's service quality can be very influential to other customers.   It is very important for hotel managers to pay more attention to negative online comments.   Zheng, Youn, & Kincaid (2009) revealed that hotel managers have not been handling online comments properly.   Many of them just ignored negative comments.   The authors also maintained that hotel managers can improve the situation when they handle online complaints properly.   This can be a very effective marketing measure. By posting service recovery procedures online, hotels can show how much they care about their customers.   It is clear that hotels should promptly reply to e-mail complaints and handle on-line negative comments properly for service recovery.

Social media and customer service.

Today the hotel industry sees that quick responses to customers' concerns are of

quintessential importance in the competitive market.   Stoessel (2010) interviewed a hotel executive who revealed the importance of online technology.   It appears that more and more customers want immediate responses and the company that responds quickly to the customer wins the competition.   Although some customers like conventional ways of communicating such as face-to-face, phone, fax, and e-mails, hotels should provide responses as soon as possible.   The recent growth of social media; such as, Facebook and Twitter, have speeded up communication and they require even quicker responses.   Future research will be needed to examine how hotels handle these social media outlets quickly.   InterContinental Hotel Group (IHG) is said to have replaced old email service providers with a new system such as "StrongMail" which enables seamless integration with its customer data.   The idea behind this improvement was that customers were communicating in real-time and the hotels were not responding immediately.   These days customers require a real-time or near real-time service (Marketing Weekly News, 2010).   Thus, the hotels are increasingly taking proactive measures in order to meet customers' immediate needs.

Japanese inbound tourism

The imbalance between outbound tourism and inbound tourism has been discussed for many years in Japan (see Figure 1).   The Japanese government has tried to boost inbound tourism but it has been struggling to increase the number of foreign travelers.   Overseas travel for natives of Japan gained popularity in 1980s and reached its peak in 2000. According to the Japan Travel Agency (2010), the number of Japanese people who traveled abroad was 3,909,000 in 1980, while the number of foreign visitors to Japan was 1,317,000 in the same year.   The imbalance was made bigger as the yen soared in value during 80s which increased the popularity of overseas travel for Japanese people.   The number of Japanese people who traveled abroad was 16,637,000 in 2010, while the number of foreign visitors in Japan was 8,611,000 in the same year (Japan Tourism Agency, 2011).   The Japanese government has been running the *Visit Japan Campaign* since 2003, however the increase in

the number of foreign travelers to Japan has been rather slow.   As Figure 1 shows, the

number of foreign visitors to Japan was 5,212,000 in 2003, 8,351,000 in 2008, and 8,611,000

in 2010.   It appears that the global economic crisis in 2008 has affected inbound tourism.

In addition, the Japanese hospitality industry was severely damaged by the devastating

disaster on March 11, 2011. Hotels in Japan have faced an enormous number of cancelations

from both foreign travelers and Japanese guests.

Figure 1. Visitor arrivals and Japanese overseas travelers.
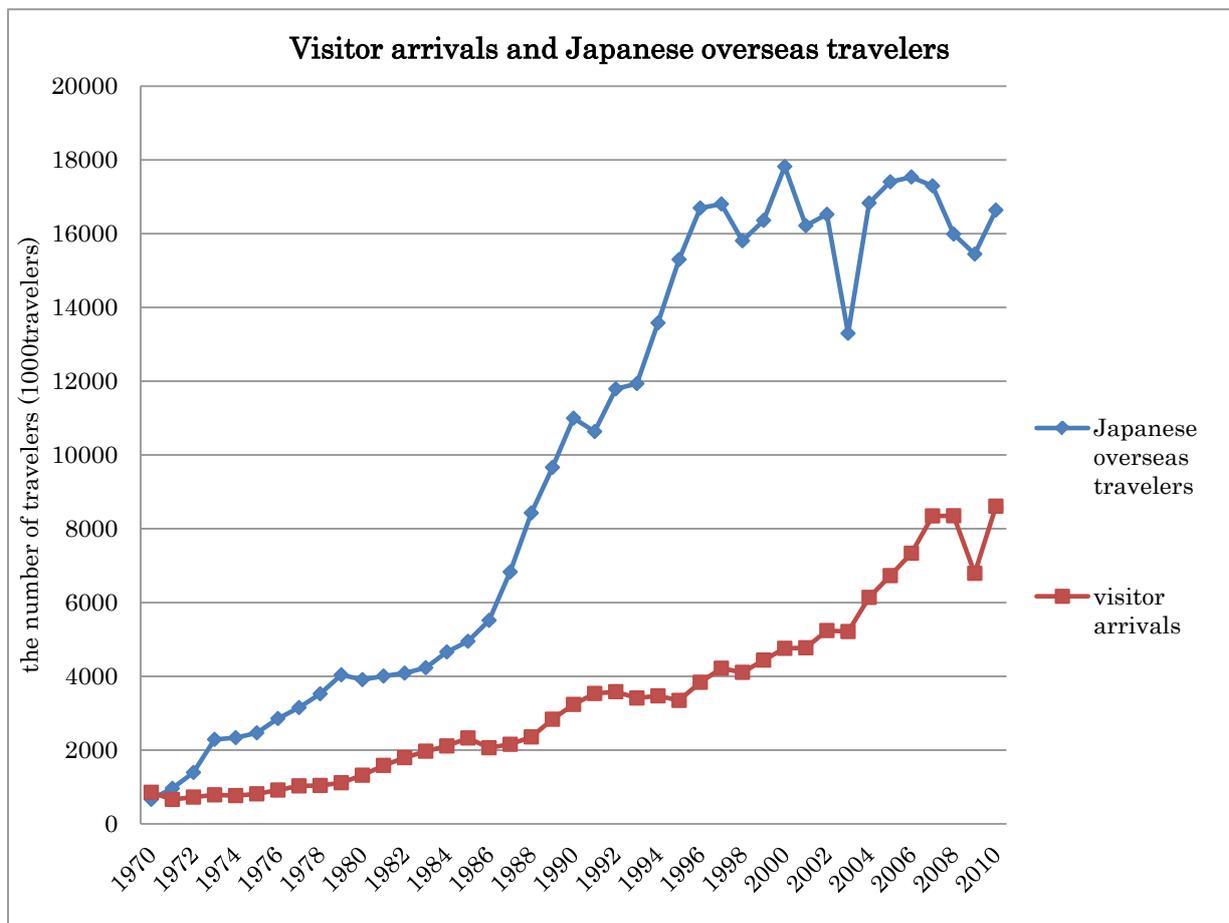
Visit Japan campaign.

When the Visit Japan Campaign was launched in 2003 by the then prime Minister

Juniciro Koizumi, they hoped to achieve the goal of 10 million overseas visitors to Japan by

2010.   It was hoped that the campaign would contribute to a mutual international

understanding and international visitors could revitalize the Japanese economy.   The 12

nations and regions (Korea, Taiwan, China, Hong Kong, Thailand, Singapore, U.S.A., Canada, U.K., Germany, France and Australia) that send a large number of visitors to Japan have been considered as priority markets.   In addition, three nations (India, Russia and Malaysia) were included as promising emerging markets in 2007.   Promotional activities have been conducted throughout the campaign.   Some of the activities are inviting overseas media and travel agents to Japan in order to raise awareness of Japanese inbound tourism, advertising overseas using TV commercials, and setting up *Visit Japan* booths in overseas tourism expositions.   Moreover an investigation into the actual conditions of foreign tourists' trips to Japan and strategic market research have been implemented in order to understand their needs and improve the satisfaction levels of tourists.   However, the goal of 10 million overseas visitors to Japan in 2010 was not achieved.   It was partially because of the global financial crisis in 2008, but there must have been some other factors which prevented Japan from achieving its goal.   Some scholars criticized the campaign as not being very effective at attracting travelers to Japan.   Uzuma (2009) maintains that the travel and tourism industry of Japan is not performing well by world standards.

Current problems and issues in Japanese inbound tourism.

Uzuma (2009) discusses problems in the Japanese tourism industry and has made suggestions on how Japan can attract more international visitors.   He states,

First, Japan must continue to offer new and wide-ranging products and services to its tourism market to boost up the poor performance of older products and services. Japan's airlines, castles, shrines, temples, restaurants, ryokans (budget inns) and hotels in major cities should continue to update their service - foreign language speaking staff instead of the present *Nihonjin dake* (only Japanese welcome) attitude.   (Uzuma, 2009, p. 359).

He suggests that costs to foreign visitors should be reduced to facilitate the purchase of more goods and services.   For instance, entrance fees to tourist facilities should be reduced for

foreign visitors. He also suggested that tourist attractions including cultural sites, castles, temple, and shrines should be renovated and maintained on a regular basis as well.   In addition, the marketing strategy should be changed to show the new Japan which is a peace loving country.   Finally, governmental efforts to attract more international visitors could be facilitated by the removal/simplification of tourist visa requirements.   His suggestions should be discussed positively and problems should be solved as soon as possible.   Many physical changes may be expensive for Japan.   However, changing people's attitudes towards inbound tourism can be improved through education and training.

Kurihara & Okamoto (2010) have focused on eight tourism environmental items; safety, cleanliness, barrier-free, multilingual written instructions/guides, communication (oral communication), price, transportation, and electronic service.   They analyzed which items are important for foreign visitors and evaluated Japan's tourism environment in comparison with the environment in other countries.   Their research results show that the first priority of tourism environment for foreign visitors is safety, followed by transportation and price. Asian tourists highly prioritize price compared with the visitors from North America and Europe.   In contrast, visitors from Europe think communication is more important than visitors from Asia and North America.   Japan was ranked 4th among 14 countries by foreign visitors they interviewed.   They concluded that Japan has strength in safety, cleanliness and transportation, but has weakness in multilingual writing, price, and communication.

Kurihara & Okamoto also evaluated the tourism environment from a quantitative perspective.   They used objective data such as Purchasing Power Parity (PPP), Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, number of official languages, subway operating hours and ten other objective variables. They concluded that Japan is superior in the affluence component such as PPP, Water, GDP and the internet, but Japan is inferior to other countries in the language variety component. They consider safety is the crucial item among eight items making up the tourism environment and recommend providing foreign visitors

immediate and reliable information in critical situations.   In addition, supporting foreign visitors at hospitals and police stations in emergencies is also important.   They think it is difficult to advance the English communication level in Japan, so that they suggest installing multilingual written instructions for foreign visitors.

E-mail management of hotels

Websites and e-mails have influenced how hotels communicate with their customers. An e-mail is a simple but a basic way for the hotels to reach out to their customers.   Murphy, Olaru, Schegg, and Frey (2003) examined web-site design and the e-mail management of Swiss hotels.   The authors sent a short e-mail message asking about room availability, amenities and special rates for two adults and two children in order to measure the responses of hotels.   One hundred and thirteen out of 200 hotels responded by the next day.   Thirty five hotels responded in the next 11 days and 52 hotels never answered the e-mail.   Only 53 % out of 148 responding hotels answered the question concerning room availability and children's amenities.   Eventually, it was reported that only about one in ten of the 200 hotels answered the inquiry promptly, politely, professionally, and personally.   Frey, Schegg, & Murphy, J. (2003) also reported in their article about email customer service in the Swiss hotel industry. The authors suggested that hotels should establish e-service protocols and policies.   Creating e-mail templates consisting of basic business communication procedures that are useful for hotel employees is necessary.   It is also stated that the templates should contain polite greeting, thanking the recipient, addressing the recipient by name, answering the questions, and identifying the sender.

Law and Kua (2009) conducted their research based on the study done by Murphy et al. (2003).   They first interviewed 60 guests in a five-star hotel at a major travel destination in Asia.   The respondents were asked to provide their views on what the major issues are when they communicate with a hotel by e-mail.   After the recorded data was analyzed, eight e-mail responsiveness variables and twelve e-mail quality variables were categorized.   Then

the authors sent two e-mail inquiries to 433 hotels on the Leading Hotels of the World (LHW) list by using a mystery guest approach.   The first enquiry was a polite message asking about room availability and special room rates for a honeymoon suite at the end of November 2007. The other was an impolite message sent to hotels at the end of December 2007.   This impolite message asked about the availability of a suite and its rate for a silver wedding anniversary.   In addition, the information about room amenities, entertainment, and airport to hotel transportation were also requested in the message.   E-mail responses from the hotels were evaluated by using the responsiveness and e-mail quality variables.   Their study revealed that the response rate of bigger hotels (hotels which have more than 100 rooms) was 74.4% and that of the smaller hotels (hotels which have less than 99 rooms) was 78.8%. The average responsiveness of the bigger hotels to e-mail inquiries is a little better (50.4%) than that of the smaller hotels (36.5%).   However, the authors believe that their average scores were both considered low.

Law and Kua (2009) also found that some hotels did not provide the requested information efficiently and professionally.   Many of the hotels did not utilize the positive attributes of e-mails such as an automated response system which can be sent promptly with a pre-written message, a subject line which links for the reader, and an attachment containing further information.   Among a variety of regions, the Asia-Pacific region responded well and the quality of their responses was the highest.   The authors explained that e-mail inquiries are a "touch point" with a potential guest.   Considering these research results, they concluded that the hotels should improve e-mail customer service by implementing basic e-mail policies and standard online service procedures.

Conclusion

It is very important for hotels to improve their international hospitality management in order to be competitive in the global market.   Previous studies have shown that there are several important factors for bettering international hospitality management.   Among them,

good communication skills including foreign language skills and effective utilization of ICT are very important for increasing tourists to Japan.   Therefore hotels should improve their employees' language skills and train them to use ICT efficiently.   Japan, in particular, needs to improve these two points in order to attract more foreign visitors.   The industry should investigate the responsiveness and quality of English e-mails in Japanese hotels first and understand the actual condition of inbound service management of Japanese hotels.   It will show how effectively they manage the barriers often associated with a foreign language and basic functions of ICT, such as e-mails.   By understanding the actual level of their service quality, hotels should then provide appropriate training in foreign languages and ICT for their employees.   Since there has not been much discussion on the quality of service at Japanese hotels in relation to inbound tourism, this study will provide insights into international hospitality management at Japanese hotels.

Part Three

Introduction

There has been little study done concerning the service quality of Japanese hotels toward foreign guests; especially e-mail management in English has not been analyzed in Japan before.   Since e-mail inquiries in English from foreign guests could be the first step for Japanese hotels to provide good service to prospective guests, managing English e-mails efficiently is a key to attracting more foreign guests.   Therefore this study was undertaken in order to reveal the actual condition of e-mail management at Japanese hotels by sending an English inquiry to them.   In this study Korean hotels were also included because South Korea and Japan have similar linguistic and economic backgrounds.   Moreover, South Korea welcomed 8,797,658 international visitors in 2010, while Japan received 8,611,175 international visitors in the same year (Pacific Asia Travel Association, 2011).   The size of the inbound market of these two nations is considered to be similar.

This section will discuss the research methodology used in this study and provide an analysis of how Japanese hotels handle e-mail inquiries in comparison with hotels in South Korea.   At the end, some recommendations for e-mail management by Japanese hotels will be proposed.   It is hoped that this study will provide some insights into how Japanese hotels could achieve efficient e-mail management in English.

Research Questions

Previous studies have shown that efficient e-mail management by hotels is crucial for hotels to improve their service quality and attract more guests.   The study by Law and Kua (2009) found that Asia-pacific hotels on the LHW list responded well and the quality of their responses was the highest among a variety of regions; however, the questions regarding e-mail management by Japanese hotels have not been answered.   Do Japanese hotels respond to English e-mails?   Do Japanese hotels respond to English e-mails more quickly and efficiently than other countries in Asia, such as South Korea?   What are the

characteristics of the e-mail responses of Japanese hotels?   Do the English-language barrier and Japanese cultural features like the slow decision making process affect the e-mail response?

Research Hypotheses

Based on the literature review, the following hypotheses concerning e-mail management by Japanese hotels were considered.   Hypothesis 1) Japanese hotels will respond to an e-mail inquiry more slowly than Korean Hotels.   Hypothesis 2) Some Japanese hotels never answer English e-mail.   Hypothesis 3) What are the differences in the quality of e-mail replies between Japanese hotels and Korean hotels?

Research Methodology

A Mystery Guest Approach.

This research replicated and revised the study of Law and Kua (2009), and Murphy et al. (2003) in order to examine how Japanese hotels handle e-mail inquires in comparison with South Korean hotels.   The project was reviewed by University of Nevada Las Vegas (UNLV) Institutional Review Board (IRB) as indicated in Federal regulatory statutes 45CFR46.   See Appendix A.

A mystery guest approach was used in this study to see how hotels respond to an enquiry in a real setting.   A mystery guest or a mystery shopper approach has been used frequently in order to see the quality of service in a realistic environment in the industry.

Sample.

In this study, only Japanese hotels and Korean hotels which were on the list of their travel bureaus were included.   The official Japanese tourism website provides accommodation information in English for people who are interested in traveling to Japan. The information on accommodation was divided into four categories; Hotels, Ryokan (Japanese style hotels), Youth hostels, and Others.   The accommodation list under the Hotels category was used in this study.   The Japan Hotel Association list on the

accommodation site was recommended as it provides a number of first class hotels which maintain consistently high standards of service and facilities.   The list at that time contained 230 registered hotels from all over Japan.   The Korean Tourism Organization website showed the accommodation in Korea.   Their accommodation information was divided into six different categories; Budget (Youth hostels), Exclusive (resorts), Hotels, Temple Stay, Hanok Stay (stay at a traditional house), and Short Term Rentals.   Among these categories, the list of Hotels included 254 properties at that time, which was about the same number of hotels as on the Japanese Hotel Association list.   Since both lists of Hotels contained the western style hotels, they could be considered to have similar characteristics.   As a result, these two lists were used in this study.   These lists were on the official websites created by their national tourism organizations.   Therefore the information was considered reliable. However, many of these hotel websites did not provide an e-mail address, instead they used an online contact form (web contact box) on their websites for their guests to contact them. In order to send an e-mail inquiry to many hotels at the same time, this study required the e-mail address of each hotel.   Therefore many of the hotels on the list were excluded from this study.   Moreover some e-mail addresses provided by the lists were no longer in use. As a result, the final sample size was 217 hotels (138 Japanese hotels and 89 Korean Hotels). Although the sample size became smaller than what the author planned, the sample in both countries included hotels in different parts of their countries.   The small sample size of this study may be considered a limitation for this study but the data obtained from this study should provide general ideas relative to the research questions and insights as they apply to both nations.

Procedure

This study used a mystery guest approach to measure e-mail management of hotels in Japan and Korea.   First, the author obtained a new e-mail address from a popular free e-mail service, gmail.   Then the lists of hotels were obtained from the websites of the Japan

National Tourism Organization and Korea Tourism Organization.   After obtaining the necessary information on the hotels, including their e-mail addresses, a fictitious customer sent an English e-mail to each hotel, and inquired about hotel room availability.   The e-mail message asked about special room rates, amenities, and privileges for a honeymoon couple at the beginning of July, 2011.   Information about the transportation to and from airports was also requested.   The content of the e-mail message was described in Appendix B.   All of the e-mail inquiries were sent out on the same day by using the blind carbon copy (BCC) function of the e-mail program and from the same computer.   In order to reduce bias, the e-mail message was sent to all the hotels on the lists within 10 minutes.   Some e-mails that failed to arrive, because of the invalid e-mail address, were re-sent on the same day, but they were not included in this study.   It was because they were sent later on that day and many hotels replied within a few hours and most of the hotels replied at least within three days. Due to quick responses from many hotels, the response time (hours and minutes) became a very significant factor in this study.   The author was afraid that sending e-mails in the morning or in the evening would affect the study.

Once the inquiry had been sent to the hotels, the author collected the e-mail response behaviors of the hotels.   The data was analyzed using the following variables created by Law and Kua (2009) and Murphy et al. (2003).   In addition, the author revised them in order to make them fit this study.

Response rate was measured using the following variables.   1) Response rate: Did the hotel reply?   2) Promptness response: Did the response arrive less than 24 hours? Or how soon did the hotel reply?

Responsiveness was evaluated based on the four variables in this study.   1) Room Availability: Did the hotel answer if a room was available or not?   2) Room rate: Did the hotel answer the question about a special room rate for a honeymoon couple?   3) Amenities and privileges: Did the hotel offer information about special amenities and privileges for

honeymoon couples?   4) Airport transportation: Did the hotel offer information about transportation from airports to the hotel?

The quality of e-mails was evaluated using the following 11 variables.   1) Subject line: Did the hotel provide an interesting subject line, including the hotel's name, to attract customers to open the e-mail?   2) Greetings: Did the hotel initially greet the customer with the hotel's name?   3) Appreciation: Did the hotel thank the sender for his or her inquiry and interest in the hotel?   4) Personalized salutation: Did the hotel use the customer's last name or full name with Dear plus Mr. or Ms.?   5) Provisional reservation: Did the hotel hold a room or provide a reservation number upon first contact and keep the room until a certain release date?   6) Preferences: Did the hotel ask for the customer's room preferences, e.g., smoking or non-smoking room?   7) Flight information: Did the hotel ask for flight details?   8) Credit card: Did the hotel ask for credit card details to guarantee the reservation?   9) Contact information: Did the hotel provide a satisfactory e-mail signature response that included the hotel's name, the name and position, e-mail address, direct business number, and fax number of the contact person, and the hotel's website address?   10) Future communication: Did the hotel encourage the customer to write at any time in the future to build the relationship?   11) E-mail marketing: Did the hotel provide relevant information on the hotel, such as, additional promotional activities or hotel facilities?   See appendix C. Lastly the data obtained from the Japanese hotels and those from the Korean hotels were compared to see the differences between them.

Data Analysis

Response Rate.

Among the 138 Japanese hotels, 50 hotels responded by the end of July 2011.   The response rate of Japanese hotels was 36. 2 %.   On the other hand, 37 out of 89 Korean hotels (41.5%) on the list responded by the end of July.   The response rate of the Korean hotels was slightly better than that of Japanese hotels.   Among the hotels responded, 38 of the

Japanese hotels (27.5%) and 35 of the Korean hotels (39.3%) replied within 24 hours.   See Table 1.

The average response time for the Japanese hotels was about 22 hours, while that of the Korean hotels was about 10 hours.   Table 2 shows the response time of the Japanese and Korean hotels. The results indicated that the Korean hotels responded faster than the Japanese hotels.   More than 50% of the Korean hotels replied within 6 hours.   Interestingly, eight Korean hotels (21.6%) replied within one hour.   The results prove hypotheses one and two.

Table 1.

The response rate of the Japanese and Korean hotels. (Japanese hotels n=138, Korean hotels n=89)

Response rate	No response	1 day	2 days	3 days	4 days	5 days	6 days	7 days	TOTAL
Japanese Hotels	88	38	6	2	0	1	0	3	138
(n=138)	63.8%	27.5%	4.3%	1.4%	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%	2.2%	100.0%
Korean Hotels	52	35	1	1	0	0	0	0	89
(n=89)	58.4%	39.3%	1.1%	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100%

Table 2.

The response time of the Japanese and Korean hotels.   (Japanese hotels n=50, Korean hotels n=37)

Response time	2 hours (1hour)	4 hours	6 hours	8 hours	10 hours	12 hours	1 day	2 days	3 days	4 days	5 days	6 days	7 days	TOTAL
Japanese Hotels	5(1)	8	5	9	6	2	3	6	2	0	1	0	3	50
(n=50)	10.0%(2.0%)	16.0%	10.0%	18.0%	12.0%	4.0%	6.0%	12.0%	4.0%	0.0%	2.0%	0.0%	6.0%	100.0%
Korean Hotels	14(8)	4	4	3	3	1	6	1	1	0	0	0	0	37
(n=37)	37.8%(21.6%)	10.8%	10.8%	8.1%	8.1%	2.7%	16.2%	2.7%	2.7%	0	0	0	0	100%

E-mail Responsiveness.

Most of the Japanese (94.0%) and Korean hotels (94.6%) answered relative to room availability and they provided information about the room rates.   As seen in Table 3, 84.0% of the Japanese hotels and 86.5% of the Korean hotels described room rates in their e-mails, but not all of them had special room rates for honeymoon couples.   Some Korean hotels tried to attract potential guests by offering discounts, for example, "a 30% discount."   In contrast, some Japanese hotels offered similar packages, for instance, "How about an anniversary plan?"   However, many of the Japanese hotels did not have any packages or special room rates for honeymoon couples.   It may be because many Japanese couples usually choose honeymoon package tours which are arranged by travel agencies and they do not plan their own trip by themselves, nor do they contact a hotel directly.

The question inquiring about special amenities and privileges for honeymoon couples was not answered consistently.   Twenty three Japanese hotels (46.0%) and 18 Korean hotels (48.6%) provided information about the amenities and privileges.   Half of Japanese hotels and Korean hotels did not offer any information on special amenities and privileges for honeymoon couples.   It may be because many hotels, except five star hotels, do not have much flexibility nor empower their employees to attract customers.

The majority of the Japanese hotels (74.0%) and Korean hotels (78.4%) provided information on transportation to and from airports.   Some hotels attached prepared transportation information.   Prepared templates which can be copied and pasted whenever employees need to reply to their customers' inquiries are very effective.   They would save time for employees because they can reply to English inquiries quickly.   It is a convenient and efficient way for hotels to manage their e-mail inquiries.   Usually English language used in templates is precise and free from grammatical errors.   Hotels should use uniform templates more often.

Table 3.

Responsiveness of e-mails written by the Japanese and Korean Hotels (Japanese hotels n=50, Korean hotels n=37)

Responsiveness Variables	Room Availability	Room Rate	Amenities & Privileges	Transportation from Airports	Total Average %
Japanese Hotels	47	42	23	37	37.25
(n=50)	94.0%	84.0%	46.0%	74.0%	74.5%
Korean Hotels	35	32	18	29	28.5
(n=37)	94.6%	86.5%	48.6%	78.4%	77.0%

E-mail Quality of the Japanese Hotels.

Table 4 shows that the Japanese hotels usually thanked customers for their enquiries (94.0%) and used personalized salutations (60.0%) to show their respect for customers. However the Japanese hotels did not respond as well in terms of contact information (44.0%), subject lines (38.0%), future communication (36.0%), a congratulatory message (22.0%), and greetings (8.0%).   In this study, the subject lines which contained at least a hotel's name were considered to be effective, but none of them had interesting expressions.   These variables can be improved easily without much training.   Hotel managers should ensure that their employees write effective e-mail messages by including these items.   In addition, the results for the other quality – related variables were very poor.   The Japanese hotels were too passive in making a provisional reservation (4.0%) and e-mail marketing (6.0%). Moreover, the majority of the Japanese hotels did not inquire about the customer's flight information (2.0%), credit card number (6.0%), and preferences (4.0%).   Employees at the Japanese hotels may not have been trained for e-mail marketing, nor selling behaviors. Therefore hotels should establish a company policy on marketing to potential customers. Writing manuals which contain these categories or e-mail templates should be prepared as

soon as possible.

E-mail Quality of the South Korean Hotels.

The Korean hotels in general thanked customers for their enquiries (62.2%) well, provided the hotel's contact information (64.9%), and encouraged their customers to engage in future communication (45.9%). Although the Korean hotels did not propose a provisional reservation (5.4%), they asked their customers to provide their credit card information (27.0%) in order to confirm their room reservations. As the results of e-mail marketing (13.5%) show, some Korean hotels were eager to promote their services by providing additional information. The number of such hotels was not significant, but their marketing efforts were clear. These characteristics of the Korean hotels may indicate that they have a more proactive approach to selling than the Japanese hotels. Lastly, although the Korean hotels greeted their customers more often (40.5%) than the Japanese hotels, they did not utilize effective subject lines (10. 8%), personalized salutations (27.0%), and words and phrases of congratulations (5.4%). It may be because many hotels responded very quickly and they did not have much time to pay attention to details of the correspondence. The above results answered the question of the third hypothesis.

Table 4. E-mail quality of the Japanese and Korean hotels.　(Japanese hotels n=50, Korean hotels n=37)

Quality Variables	Subject Line	Greetings	Appreciation	Personalized Salutation	Provisional Reservation	Flight Information	Credit Card	Preferences	Contact Information	Future communication	E-mail Marketing	Congratulations	Total Average %
Japanese Hotels	19	4	47	30	2	1	3	2	22	18	3	11	13
(n=50)	38.0%	8.0%	94.0%	60.0%	4.0%	2.0%	6.0%	4.0%	44.0%	36.0%	6.0%	22.0%	26.7%
Korean Hotels	4	15	23	10	1	2	10	0	24	17	5	2	9
(n=37)	10.8%	40.5%	62.2%	27.0%	2.7%	5.4%	27.0%	0.0%	64.9%	45.9%	13.5%	5.4%	24.5%

26

Discussion

The response rates of the Japanese (36.2%) and Korean (41.6%) hotels were much lower than the results of previous studies conducted on LHW hotels (76.3%) by Law and Kua (2009) and hotels in Switzerland (74%) by Murphy et al., (2003). It was disappointing to find that more than half of the hotels in this study did not respond to an English inquiry at all. It may be because the hotels included in this study handle domestic guests more often than foreign guests and they are not accustomed to replying to e-mails in English.

In addition, the Japanese hotels responded more slowly than the Korean hotels. The quick responses of Korean hotels indicated their efforts in attempting to attract potential customers. Japanese hotels should reply more quickly; otherwise it could affect their business in the near future or over time. Since many customers today expect quick responses from hotels, more attention should be paid to customer service related variables such as their response time to inquiries. In the era of the global business, Japanese hotels should do business quickly and efficiently enough to compete with hotels in other countries.

The quality of e-mails in both the Japanese and Korean hotels had their own features. The Japanese hotels showed appreciation, used personalized salutation and congratulated customers on their special occasions more often than the Korean hotels. It can be said that employees at the Japanese hotels were more careful with respect to politeness. However, they were weak in selling their services. Although Law & Kua (2009) showed that Asian countries such as hotels in Hong Kong and Macau did well on providing information about their latest promotions and updating news, most of the Japanese hotels didn't show marketing efforts along those lines. One of the Japanese hotels, which engaged in e-mail marketing, provided information written only in Japanese. This may not be an effective way to communicate with foreign guests. They should prepare information on special promotions and packages in English and perhaps other languages as well. On the other hand, the Korean hotels casually greeted their customers, provided contact information and more

actively encouraged customers to book a room by asking for credit card information.   The Korean hotels clearly described in their e-mail responses that they were offering discounted room rates for honeymoon couples.   It may be a common way in Korea to do business by offering discounts.   Some Korean hotels asked their customers to provide the information needed for a room reservation.   The questions seemed to have been prepared in advance.   It could be thought that employees in the Korean hotels were well trained to ask these questions in e-mail replies.

A few hotels in both countries did not reply to customer inquiries efficiently.   Some hotels just introduced an online reservation system without answering the customer's questions.   The hotels made customers find out room availability and room rates by themselves.   This could be considered rude by some of the customers.   Hotels should provide information asked by customers properly and professionally.   In addition, when rooms were not available, some hotels offered alternative plans but others didn't.   In order to create new business opportunities, hotels should provide alternatives and different proposals for their potential customers even when it is difficult to meet the specific requests by customers.

Linguistic mistakes were found in some messages.   Some of them were minor mistakes which can be prevented by proofreading before sending the message.   Other errors should be avoided by using templates or learning commonly used English expressions in e-mail messages.   The linguistic quality of e-mails written by the Japanese and Korean hotels was not clearly evaluated in this study but it should be analyzed in further studies.

Lastly, the anxiety expressed by one Japanese hotel employee in his e-mail reply should be mentioned.   The employee added the sentence, "It's quite difficult to express myself in English without your help," after answering the questions.   The message itself was well written in English but the employee showed his worries in communicating in English. This employee's stress and worry in foreign language usage should be eliminated by training

and education.   More efforts in Japanese universities and colleges are needed to build student confidence in communicating in English.

Conclusion

Conducting this research provided us with information about how the Japanese hotels handled e-mail inquiries in English.   The response rate of the Japanese hotels on the list was very low, and only 27.5% of the hotels replied to the e-mail inquiry within 24 hours.   Many Japanese hotels (63.8%) didn't reply to the e-mail inquiry at all.   Compared to the Korean hotels, the average response time of the Japanese hotels was longer.   Some Japanese hotels did not provide proper information requested by the inquiry and many of them were poor at promoting their facilities and services.   However, many of the Japanese hotels at least tried to be polite and to show respect to their customers.

In conclusion, it is essential for Japanese hotels to improve their e-mail management systems in order to attract more customers.   Along with the politeness of Japanese hotel employees, more efficient e-mail usage system and proactive measures in marketing will help Japanese hotels to be competitive in the global market.   Moreover, Japanese hotels should encourage their employees to communicate actively with their guests in English.   It will bring more business opportunities to Japanese hotels and generate more revenue in the future. Japanese hotels should overcome their difficulties in communicating in English and see English e-mail inquiries as a touch point with their potential customers.

Recommendations

Japanese hotels should manage English e-mail inquiries more efficiently in order to attract prospective guests from overseas.   Many things can be improved upon without taking up too much time and money.   For example, hotels should respond to e-mails as quickly as possible.   They can also improve the quality of their e-mail messages by paying attention to the following points.

1. Use an interesting subject line which includes the hotel's name.

2. Address a customer with Mr., Mrs., or Ms. with their last name or full name to show respect to them.

3. Always greet and thank customers. Congratulate them on their special occasions.

4. Clearly answer if a room is available or not. Do not put the link to the hotel's web site on online reservation sites without being prepared to answer questions by customers.

5. Offer special packages, amenities and privileges for certain customers. Special occasions should be considered as one of the marketing strategies.

6. Never forget to provide contact information. Hotels should encourage customers to contact hotels again.

7. Marketing efforts of hotels may lead to new business opportunities so they should establish a common procedure to help them improve their customer service. Asking for credit card information or ensuring a provisional reservation may result in new business opportunities. At least customers may contact the hotel again.

8. As suggested by Frey et al., (2003), it would be significant for hotels to prepare templates and useful English expressions for answering e-mail inquiries. Before sending a message, it is necessary to proofread a message one more time.

9. Build employees' confidence in using foreign languages, especially English.

These points should be discussed in hotel training sessions. Educators can also help their students to improve their business writing skills by focusing on these points before students get a job.

Limitation and further study

In this study, the sample size of the Japanese and Korean hotels was very small and different types of hotels such as traditional Japanese style inns (Ryokan) were excluded even though they are popular with foreign visitors. Therefore the results of this study cannot be applied to all Japanese hotels.

The study was based on the previous studies conducted by Law & Kua (2009) and

Murphy et al. (2003).   The variables used in this study were very helpful to analyze the quality of e-mails written by the Japanese hotels and Korean hotels.   However, they did not help the author to understand the differences in the quality of e-mails between these two countries.   As discussed in the section above, e-mail messages written by the Korean hotels seemed to convey more active marketing intentions than those of the Japanese hotels.   This personal impression should be clearly measured by appropriate instruments in the future. Moreover, the content of e-mails should be evaluated more precisely and deeply to reveal common characteristics of writing patterns in e-mail messages.   E-mails should be linguistically analyzed by focusing on word usage and typical phrases used in the hospitality industry.   The data would be a precious research resource for language teachers.   Based on linguistic analysis, model e-mail examples and useful templates should be proposed for hospitality service training.

Further studies should also examine how effectively hotels use new social media such as Twitter and Facebook.   In fact, they should propose the best way to provide good e-customer service through these new technologies.

References

Airports Council International. (July 2, 2011). Incheon International Airport named Best

    Airport Worldwide. Retrieved from

    http://www.airports.org/cda/aci_common/display/main/aci_content07_banners.jsp?zn=

    aci&cp=1-7-46^41035_725_2__

ETS. (2011). TOEFL® Test and score data summary for TOEFL Internet-based and

    paper-based Tests: 2010 Test Data. Retrieved from

    http://www.ets.org/research/policy_research_reports/toefl-sum-10

Frey, S., Schegg, R., & Murphy, J.(2003). E-mail customer service in the Swiss hotel

    industry. *Tourism and Hospitality Research,* (3), 97-212.

Ip, C., Leung, R., & Law, R. (2011). Progress and development of information and

    communication technologies in hospitality. *International Journal of Contemporary*

    Hospitality Management, 23(4), 533-551.

Iwai. C., (2005). Needs for English education in the hotel industry: A triangulation of

    quantitative and qualitative analysis. *JACET Kansai Journal*, 8, 37-55.

Iwai. C., (2010). The present situation and problems of English language education in the

    Japanese hotel industry: from the perspective of human resource management. *The*

    JASEC Bulletin. 19(1), 93-107.

Japan National Tourism Organization. (2011). 2010 Visitor arrivals & Japanese overseas

    Travelers. Retrieved from http://www.jnto.go.jp/jpn/downloads/2010_total.pdf

Japan National Tourism Organization. (2011). 2011 Visitor arrivals & Japanese overseas

    Travelers. Retrieved from http://www.jnto.go.jp/jpn/downloads/2011_total.pdf

Japan Tourism Agency. (2011). Visit Japan campaign. Retrieved from:

    http://www.mlit.go.jp/kankocho/en/inbound/vjc.html

Japan Travel Agency. (2010). White paper on tourism in Japan 2010. Tokyo, Japan: Nikkei.

Kato, M. (2009, March 5). Elementary school English: Ready or not. The Japan Times Online.

Retrieved from http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nn20090305f1.html

Kriegl, U. (2000) International hospitality management. *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly,* 41, 2, 64-71.

Kurihara, T., & Okamoto, N. (2010). Foreign visitor's evaluation on tourism environment. *Journal of the Eastern Asia Society for Transportation Studies,* 8, 912-925.

Law, R. & Kua, T. (2009).   Analyzing the quality of E-mail responses of leading hotels of the world to customer enquiries. *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism,* 10, 3, 175 -190.

Ly, P. (2008, May 15). The early study abroad trend: a growing number of South Korean students are going to English speaking countries as teenagers in hopes of gaining entry into American universities. Diverse Issues in Higher Education. The CBS Interactive Business Network.   Retrieved from http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0WMX/is_7_25/ai_n25474096/

Murphy, J., Olaru, D., Schegg, R., & Frey, S. (2003). The bandwagon effect: Swiss hotels' Web-site and e-mail management. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly,* 44, 1, 71-87.

Neale, L., & Murphy, J., (2007). Perceived Justice and Email Service Recovery. *Australasian Marketing Journal*, 15, 3, 5-20.

Oshiro, K. (2003). Elementary school English education in South Korea: Implications for Japan. Association of Foreign Languages of Okinawa International University, 6(2), 183-202.

Pacific Asia Travel Association. (2011). Destination Trends.   Retrieved from http://www.pata.org/destination-trends-2011

Richards, J. and Schmidt, R. (2010). Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics, 4th ed.   Harlow: Longman.

Skytrax. (2009). Seoul Incheon Airport named world's best airport in 2009. Retrieved from http://www.worldairportawards.com/Awards_2009/Airport2009.htm

Sizoo, S. (2008). Analysis of employee performance during cross-cultural service encounters at luxury hotels in Hawaii, London and Florida. Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research, 1741-6507, 13(2), 113-128.

Sizoo, S., Iskat, W., Plank, R., & Serrie, H. (2003). Cross-cultural service encounters in the hospitality industry and the effect of intercultural sensitivity on employee performance. *International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Administration,* 4(2), 61-77.

Stoessel, E. (2010, March). Quick response key to sales & catering. *Lodging Hospitality,* 66(3), 48.

StrongMail Systems, Inc.; Strong Mail Enables IHG to Transition from Near-Time to Real-Time Email Marketing. (2010, December). Marketing Weekly News,104.

Thitthongkam, T., Walsh, J., & Bunchappattanasakda, C. (2011). The role of foreign language in business administration. *Journal of Management Research,* 3(1), E8, 1-15.

Uzama, A. (2009). Research in brief: marketing Japan's travel and tourism industry to international tourists. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management,* 21(3), 356-365. doi: 10.1108/09596110910948341

World Economic Forum. (2011). Travel & tourism competitiveness index 2009. Retrieved from
http://www.scribd.com/doc/12970219/Travel-Tourism-Competitiveness-Report-2009

Zeithaml, V., Bitner, M., & Gremler, D. (2009). *Services marketing: Integrating customer focus across the firm.* New York: McGraw-Hill International.

Zheng, T., Youn, H., & Kincaid, C. (2009). An Analysis of Customers' E-Complaints for Luxury Resort Properties. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 18: 7, 718-729. doi: 10.1080/19368620903170240

Appendices

Appendix A: UNLV IRB Review

Appendix B: E-mail Inquiry

Appendix C: Variables for the data analysis

Appendix A: UNLV IRB Review

UNLV
UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA LAS VEGAS

Social/Behavioral IRB –Review
Notice of Excluded Activity

DATE: April 12, 2011

TO: **Dr. Kurt Stahara,** Hotel Administration

FROM: Office of Research Integrity – Human Subjects

RE: Notification of review by /Josi dos Santos/Josi dos Santos, CIP
Protocol Title: **E-mail Management of Japanese Hotels in Comparison with South Korean Hotels**
Protocol# 1103-3769M

_____

This memorandum is notification that the project referenced above has been reviewed as indicated in Federal regulatory statutes 45CFR46.

The protocol has been reviewed and deemed excluded from IRB review. It is not in need of further review or approval by the IRB.

Any changes to the excluded activity may cause this project to require a different level of IRB review. Should any changes need to be made, please submit a Modification Form.

If you have questions or require any assistance, please contact the Office of Research Integrity – Human Subjects at IRB@unlv.edu or call 895-2794.

E-mail inquiry

Subject: Inquiry

To whom it may concern,

Kindly receive this message as an inquiry for stay in your hotel from September 14th to 17th, 2011. Do you have a room available for two people? Do you have a special room rate for honeymoon? This is our special occasion so could you let me know if you have any special amenities and privileges for honeymoon couples? How can we reach your hotel from the airport? Do you offer any transportation? Thank you in advance for your quick reply.

Best wishes,

Katherine Pope

Appendix C: Variables for the data analysis

Variables used for the data analysis

Response rate

1) Response rate: Did the hotel reply?

2) Promptness response: Did the response arrive less than 24 hours? Or how soon did

the hotel reply?

Responsiveness

1) Room Availability: Did the hotel answer if a room was available or not?

2) Room rate: Did the hotel answer the question about a special room rate for a

honeymoon couple?

3) Amenities and privileges: Did the hotel offer information about special amenities

and privileges for honeymoon couples?

4) Airport transportation: Did the hotel offer information about transportation from

airports to the hotel?

The quality of e-mails

1) Subject line: Did the hotel provide an interesting subject line, including the hotel's

name, to attract customers to open the e-mail?

2) Greetings: Did the hotel initially greet the customer with the hotel's name?

3) Appreciation: Did the hotel thank the sender for his or her inquiry and interest in the

hotel?

4) Personalized salutation: Did the hotel use the customer's last name or full name

with Dear plus Mr. or Ms.?

5) Provisional reservation: Did the hotel hold a room or provide a reservation number

upon first contact and keep the room until a certain release date?

6) Preferences: Did the hotel ask for the customer's room preferences, e.g., smoking or

non-smoking room?

7) Flight information: Did the hotel ask for flight details?

8) Credit card: Did the hotel ask for credit card details to guarantee the reservation?

9) Contact information: Did the hotel provide a satisfactory e-mail signature response that included the hotel's name, the name and position, e-mail address, direct business number, and fax number of the contact person, and the hotel's website address?

10) Future communication: Did the hotel encourage the customer to write at any time in the future to build the relationship?

11) E-mail marketing: Did the hotel provide relevant information on the hotel, such as, additional promotional activities or hotel facilities?

The above variables were created by Law and Kua (2009) and Murphy et al. (2003) and revised by the author.