

The Role of Guest Amenities in Wellington Hotels

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This report investigates the role of guest amenities in three, four and five-star rated Wellington (New Zealand) hotels. Specifically it seeks to understand the reasons for a hotel's choice of the amenities and features they provide as part of their accommodation offering and to understand to what extent a hotel's amenity selection provides the hotel with a competitive advantage or differentiation, assists with brand identity and provides a merchandising opportunity. This research also seeks to understand the effects that provision of guest amenities and facilities have on hotel front office and housekeeping staff.

Based on the themes emerging from the literature review, self-completion questionnaires were developed and discussion questions prepared for focus groups. Primary data has been gathered from four samples; Hotel General Managers, Executive Housekeepers and Front Office Managers as they are the hotel personnel responsible for the selection, monitoring and controlling of the amenities; and Hotel Guests, as they are the end users of the amenities and features.

Findings indicate that Wellington Hotels have not been subjected to the concept of 'Amenity Creep' to the same extent as hotels in the USA (as described by international authors). However, there are a number of overseas initiatives regarding the use of hotel amenities and features that could be adopted by Wellington hotels that might improve the accommodation products offered to Wellington hotel guests and improve the marketing of a hotel. The findings also indicate the need for more customer research to be undertaken by hotels to ascertain the amenities and features that could be provided to better meet their guests' needs, to ascertain the amenities and features that provide value for guests, and also those that might provide a competitive advantage for a hotel.

Keywords: Hotel amenities, guestroom amenities, hotel features and facilities, competitive advantage, brand identity, amenity creep, Qualmark.

CONTENTS

	Page No.
ABSTRACT	ii
CONTENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	v
1. INTRODUCTION	
1.1 General Introduction	1
1.2 Aims and Objectives	4
1.3 Dissertation Structure	5
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	
2.1 Introduction	7
2.2 Hotel Amenities Defined	7
2.3 Historical Background and Amenity Creep	8
2.4 New Zealand Hotels Amenity Standards	10
2.5 Hotel Guests' Amenity Preferences and Expectations	14
2.6 Use of Hotel Amenities to Provide a Competitive Advantage	15
2.7 Use of Hotel Amenities to Define a Brand	17
2.8 Costs Associated with Amenity Provision	18
2.9 Use of Hotel Amenities to Provide a Merchandising Opportunity	20
2.10 Issues Concerning Hotel Amenity Provision from a Hotel's Perspective	21
2.11 Related Amenity Issues in Non-Hotel Industry	22
2.12 Conclusion	23
3. METHODOLOGY	
3.1 Introduction	24
3.2 Identification of Hotels to Survey	24
3.3 Selection of Participants within Surveyed Hotels	25
3.4 Development of Questionnaires and Focus Group Discussion Questions	28
3.5 Data Gathering	30
3.6 Human Ethics Approval	33
3.7 Data Analysis	33
4. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS	
4.1 Introduction to Data Analysis and Findings	35
4.2 Participation Results	35
4.3 Hotel Manager Findings	36
4.4 Executive Housekeeper Findings	43
4.5 Front Office Manger Findings	49
4.6 Hotel Guest Findings	54
5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS	
5.1 Introduction	60
5.2 Aims and Objectives of this Research	60
5.3 Hotel Manager Discussion	60
5.4 Executive Housekeeper Discussion	64
5.5 Front Office Manager Discussion	67
5.6 Hotel Guest Discussion	70
5.7 Conclusions	73

5.8 Opportunities for Further Study	75
5.9 Limitations to this Research	76
5.10 Acknowledgements	76
6. REFERENCES	77
7. APPENDICES	
Appendix A: Wotif.com listing for Wellington Hotels June 20, 2010	87
Appendix B: Research Pack – Hotel General Manager Participants	90
Appendix C: Research Pack – Hotel Guest Participants	97
Appendix D: Research Pack – Executive Housekeeper Focus Group Participants	104
Appendix E: Research Pack – Front Office Manager Focus Group Participants	108

LIST OF TABLES

Table Number	Title	Page Number
1	Participation Results	35
2	Hotel Manager Participants	37
3	Hotel Room Amenities (free and with charge), according to hotel rating	39
4	Hotel Room Technological Amenities (free and with charge), according to hotel rating	39
5	Bathroom Amenities (free and with charge), according to hotel rating	39
6	General Hotel Amenities and Features (free and with charge), according to hotel rating	40
7	Control Over Selection of Hotel Amenities and Features	41
8	Customer Research Undertaken by Hotels	42
9	Guest Participants: Age and Income Analysis	55
10	Guest Participants: Reason for and Length of Stay	55
11	Usage of Hotel Amenities (no charge) by Guest Gender	56
12	Usage of Hotel Amenities (no charge) by Guest Gender	56
13	Usage of Hotel Amenities (with charge) by Guest Gender	57
14	Guest Amenity Preferences by Guest Gender	58

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 General Introduction

The following report is the result of an exploratory study into the role that guest amenities play in Wellington hotels and is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Professional Studies (Hospitality & Tourism Management).

Wellington, the capital of New Zealand, is a major business, conference and tourism destination. Over the last few years it has received a variety of accolades and a growing reputation which make it an increasingly popular place to visit (Lonely Planet Guide 2011 – ‘Coolest Little Capital in the World’ and ‘4th Top City in the World to Visit’) (A. Moriarty, personal communication January 12, 2011). Visitors to the capital for whatever reasons are provided with a number of accommodation options from five-star international branded hotels to backpacker establishments and the competition amongst accommodation providers for these room nights is strong. This report focuses on the twenty-four three, four and five-star Qualmark or self-rated properties in Central Wellington that have been identified as the sample used in this research (see Appendix A for listing).

In essence all hotels in Wellington are providing a very similar product, but at the same time are trying to foster guest loyalty and fighting for market share in the current economic down turn. Some hotels manage to do this by the strength of their loyalty programmes that tie customers to their hotels (for example the Accor and Intercontinental Hotels (IHG) Groups); others ‘wow’ guests by the unique and contemporary design of their property (for example the Museum Hotel and Ohtel), others differentiate themselves by offering the lowest rates on distressed inventory websites (for example the West Plaza and Bay Plaza hotels). Some hotels could aim to avoid the competition by looking more closely at the amenities that they provide as part of the guest’s stay and be different from their competitors as a result of the unique and customised product (including guest amenities) they offer which results in a value for guests (Powers & Barrows, 2003).

Initial reading for this dissertation found that there seemed to be no definitive understanding of the term 'guest amenity'. Authors presented some contrasting opinions which are mirrored by the industry personnel that have taken part in focus groups for this research. The researcher offers the following all-encompassing definition that is used for this research: "A guest amenity is not just what is provided in a room as part of a guest stay, but includes the other supplies and facilities that a guest may or may not choose to enjoy or use as part of a hotel stay, whether or not there is a separate charge levied for use of the amenity". Thus, an amenity could be the toiletries in the guest bathroom, the tea and coffee in a guest room, a hotel car park, the ability to connect to the Internet or the ability to enjoy a workout at the gym or a swim in the hotel's pool.

There have been cases of 'amenity creep' documented in overseas countries especially (Rowe, 1990; Hennessey, 1998; Vallen & Vallen, 2009) where, it would appear, there is evidence of guest amenities being used to provide a competitive advantage to render a hotel's accommodation products more appealing to the market, they therefore play a role in assisting the hotel to capture a larger market share. Over time, the addition of extra amenities has led to confusion in the market with traditionally 3 star limited service properties providing a level of guest amenities and facilities more akin to those expected in 4 star properties. The global economic recession felt after 2008 has resulted in hotel guests from all market segments now being more selective about where they stay, the rates they pay and what they want from their hotel stay. This in turn has led to some of the major global hotel companies developing new brand offerings (overseas) to attract this value-driven segment. Examples of this trend are Premier Inns (UK) and Express by Holiday Inn (IHG).

There is strong evidence that guest amenities must be chosen carefully as they represent a cost to the hotel that must be either covered in the room rate charged to the guest or attractively priced so they are accepted by the guest who pays without question (Casado, 2000; Jones, 2005). Some hotels use their amenities to help improve brand awareness and identity amongst potential guests in a crowded market (Powers & Barrows, 2003). A few hotels, for example Holiday Inns, through the offering of package deals and advance selection of guest preference at time of reservation, have instigated a

system whereby the guests themselves are able to select those amenities that represent value to them during their stay.

in order to gain the best understanding of the role of guest amenities in Wellington hotels, four research samples have been chosen. General Managers, Executive Housekeepers and Front Office Managers from hotels have been selected as they are responsible for amenity choice and, the controlling and monitoring of amenities. These hotel personnel are also likely to receive feedback from hotel guests regarding the amenities and features offered in their hotels. Hotel Guest input into this research is vital as they are the end users of the hotel amenities and features. Primary research for this study has been undertaken by separate questionnaires to Hotel General Managers and Hotel Guests. Separate focus groups have also been carried out with Hotel Executive Housekeepers and Hotel Front Office Managers. Secondary research has taken the form of a comprehensive literature review.

Findings from the Hotel Guest participants in this research indicates that hotel guests do expect more amenities when staying in higher star rated hotels and when they are paying higher room rates. The Hotel Guests have also suggested some examples of amenities and features that would add value to their stays and that they would be happy to pay extra charges for. Any intelligence gained by hotels as to what exactly their guests want in their rooms and are happy to pay additional costs for must represent valuable information to assist hotels in their offering of the right product to the right guest at the right time.

The level and nature of guest amenities that are provided as part of the accommodation product or hotel facilities also affects hotel staff. The housekeeping staff responsible for servicing the guest rooms must ensure that the correct level of amenities are replaced in rooms according to the required standards which include completing the servicing process within a specified time (Schneider, Tucker & Scoviak-Lerner, 1998). The front office staff too is affected by the room and incidental amenity charges that must be levied to guests and accounted for and the literature review has highlighted examples where amenity charges and service fees have increased stress levels and workload for the hotel front office (The Denver Post, 2001; Parnes, 2003; Juliana, 2010).

Findings from the Hotel General Managers indicate that only fifty per cent of participants have undertaken customer research to ascertain if the amenities and features offered in their hotels do meet guests' needs, provide a point of difference for the hotel or represent value to guests. This then raises a question regarding the criteria for selection of amenities for those hotels who undertake no research as they could well be choosing amenities that provide no value for guests. Furthermore, it is not known if the customer research undertaken is hotel specific or carried out on behalf of the hotel by a head office, as head office research may indicate amenity options that are not appropriate for Wellington hotels.

Another important finding from the Hotel General Managers indicates minimal retailing of hotel amenities and features, and yet overseas, this can represent a valuable revenue stream for some hotels (Higgins, 2000; Weinstein & Scoviak-Lerner, 2002).

From the data gathered, a number of findings have surfaced; some in contrast with the literature reviewed others in support. However it must be remembered that the extent of this study has been limited by the number of hotels in Wellington and the access to hotel guests, and the final number of responses received from both samples. Further limitations have occurred by the numbers attending the two focus groups as participant numbers were not in proportion to the number of hotels sampled.

The reference section and appendices contain details of the resources used in this research.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

Aims:

- To investigate and understand the role that guest amenities play in Wellington hotels by seeking perspectives from hotel guests and hotel management.
- To investigate whether amenity creep exists in Wellington hotels.

Objectives:

This research aims to test the following hypotheses:

- A. Wellington hotels add more amenities to their hotels and guest rooms to provide a competitive advantage and to help define their brand
- B. Hotel guests do not wish to pay for amenities in their rooms that they do not use
- C. Hotel guests expect more amenities the higher the hotel rating and the higher the room rate they are paying
- D. Housekeeping staff productivity is effected by the level of amenities in guest rooms
- E. Front Office staff workload increases and stress levels are increased by Wellington hotel guests querying their incidental charges for amenities

1.3 Dissertation Structure

This dissertation follows the following structure:

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Chapter 2 -Literature Review

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of issues around guest amenities and highlights the key themes which have then been used to design the questionnaires and focus group discussion questions.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

This chapter outlines the research methods used, justifies the sampling criteria and describes the participants.

Chapter 4 – Data Analysis and Findings

This chapter presents analysis of the data from the four research participant groups.

Chapter 5 – Discussion and Conclusions

This chapter includes discussion of the findings of each group, provides evaluations of each of the hypotheses and offers general conclusions and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 6 – References

A list of references used in the literature review and in the compilation of this dissertation is presented.

Chapter 7 – Appendices

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

An extensive search of academic databases and texts was undertaken to gain an understanding of hotel guest amenities, and matters surrounding this, however, it was disappointing to note that there is little academic literature pertinent to this topic. There is, however, considerable non-academic literature in the form of operational magazines, trade journals and websites, many of which have been referenced in this chapter. A possible reason for such a lack of academic literature regarding 'hotel guest amenities' is that the topic may not be considered of such significance in times of hotel prosperity, however, times have changed and every aspect of operations now needs to be considered regarding its ability to add value to the overall accommodation stay experience, as well as the costs of supplying such amenities

This literature review highlights a number of key themes. The chapter commences with a review of the definition of hotel amenities to present the topic in the context to this research. Section 2.4 narrows hotel amenities into the New Zealand hotel context and standards with reference to Qualmark – New Zealand's voluntary hotel quality grading system. Section 2.5 reviews guests' preferences and expectations which moves to Section 2.6, how amenities provide a hotel with competitive advantage linking to Section 2.7, which reviews how amenities help define a hotel brand.

The review then moves to consider the costs of amenity provision in Section 2.8 and how, in Section 2.9, a hotel tries to utilise amenities as revenue stream, rather than a complementary element. The chapter concludes with literature advising of the negative aspects of amenity provision in Section 2.10 followed by a brief commentary in Section 2.11 on amenity provision in the non-hotel sector.

2.2 Hotel Amenities Defined

Schneider et al (1998) and Jones (2005) clearly distinguish 'guest amenities' from 'guest supplies' with the former being non-essential enhancements to a guest's stay and the

latter being necessary requirements for a guest stay. Casado (2000) is of the opinion that guest amenities are 'non-reusable supplies' or "items that guests are expected to use up or may take away with them at the end of their stay" (Casado 2000, p. 127). Jones (2005, p.135) further suggest that "the term amenity is commonly used to identify luxury items that a hotel gives away to its guests at no extra charge, although the cost of those items is often hidden in the room rate" and that amenities include elements beyond the actual room but which are part of the overall package Thus, amenities can include not only the usual in-room items for example, soap, shampoo, minibar and hair dryer, but also pools, gyms, parking and airport pick-ups especially when the guest does not have to pay anything extra for their usage.

Bardi (1996) Ismail (2002) Gray & Ligouri, (2003) and Powers & Barrows, (2003) have each noted the development of hotel amenities over time, suggesting there has been a steady growth in the variety and number of amenities now available in hotels, such development is further described, in part, in the next section.

2.3 Historical Background and Amenity Creep Defined

Rowe (1990) describes hotels providing an ever-expanding collection of extra amenities in their hotels and guest rooms which over time have become a standard and expected component of amenity provision by both guests and hoteliers. Such early commentary is followed by Bardi (1996), Ismail (2002), Gray & Ligouri (2003), and Powers & Barrows (2003) who provide historical timelines detailing the introduction of various hotel amenities for example, elevators, in-room guest telephones, full length mirrors and newspapers. Such ever-increasing amenity provision has been termed by several researchers (Rowe, 1990: Vallen & Vallen, 2009) as "amenity creep".

Hennessey (1998) suggests amenity creep gained pace in with the competitive hotel market of the 1980's and that the subsequent downturn (early 1990's) has seen many hotels cut back on some amenities and facilities, for example 24-hour concierge lounges and fine dining restaurants. Hennessey believes that amenity creep has occurred

because hoteliers placed their personal opinions regarding the quality and value of hotel amenities and features ahead of what guests really wanted.

In recent years amenity creep has been a topic of debate, especially in the United States between hotel owners, hotel management companies and franchisees for various and differing reasons (Adams 2005; Amenity Creep: Franchisees' Viewpoint (2005); Amenity Creep: Brands' Viewpoint (2005)). The literature describes how Owners need to consider the costs of amenities provided and their return on investment; Management companies need to conform to brand standards and Franchisors need to be wary of the increasing costs they impose on their franchisees who must comply with the amenity standards laid down according to the franchise agreement.

In terms of historical developments Wilson (2006) comments that amenity creep is a concept usually only present in hotels when the economy is good and confirms that the addition of extra features adds value for guests but does become a problem if the extra features become brand standards because then such amenity standards are expected by guests whatever the economic climate. This would appear to be an advancement form and a contradiction to Hennessey's (1998) views which suggested that amenity creep has arisen as a result of what hoteliers deem necessary as opposed to what guests' value.

The concept of amenity creep has been defined as "the proliferation of all guest products and services when hotels compete by offering more extensive amenities". (Vallen & Vallen, 2009 p. 576). Vallen & Vallen liken amenity creep with the hotel industry's ever-improving levels of service. What once was an 'extra' to provide a competitive advantage or to identify a brand (as is discussed in following sections) became a guest expectation and therefore no longer an 'extra'. Rather it became a cost of providing the hotel room and as hotel rooms were upgraded and refurbished, better amenities meant a higher grading or rating and this was reflected in a higher room rate.

Given the development of amenities and their expansion in hotels has come the need to provide hotels with guidance (a benchmark) for what is expected for various standards of hotels, for the benefit of the guest and hotel. The concept of benchmarking in New Zealand is via the Qualmark Standard, further detailed in the next section.

2.4 New Zealand Hotels Amenity Standards

Qualmark is New Zealand's official tourism (activities and accommodation) rating authority providing guidelines that suggest the level of amenity provision required for a hotel to be classified as a Qualmark One- through to a Qualmark Five- star property (Qualmark, 2008). Hotels that wish to be Qualmark-rated undergo a voluntary annual inspection that rates the property according to a number of characteristics including the general maintenance standard of the property, service and hospitality standard, food and beverage facilities and guest bedroom size and contents. Hotel guest amenities and facilities only represent a small percentage of the overall rating that a hotel is awarded, and the guidelines given to hoteliers are only suggestions. In theory it is possible for a Five-star rated property to offer few amenities and a Three- star rated property to offer more amenities than suggested, because of the small percentage of the final score that is awarded to amenity provision. As previously mentioned, achieving the Qualmark standard is not mandatory for accommodation properties in New Zealand. Those that choose not to undergo Qualmark assessment must display the term 'self-rated' in marketing literature when describing the star rating of accommodation provided.

Since 2008, greater importance has been placed on a hotel's environmental credibility and a separate accreditation is carried out by Qualmark in respect to a hotel's sustainable practices. Included in this enviro-accreditation are hotel wastage, use of consumables and the hotel's recycling initiatives.

The following three tables set out the relevant assessment guidelines that are given by Qualmark with regard to standards of guest amenities found in hotel rooms.

6.0 Bedrooms, continued

Room Number Assessed: _____

6.4 Bedroom/Studio Furniture, Fittings and Facilities					
Minimum Entry Requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Ironing board available if not provided in rooms <input type="checkbox"/> At least one window with clear glass providing natural light <input type="checkbox"/> Wake-up facility available for guest use <input type="checkbox"/> Acceptable quality opaque glass, curtains, blinds or shutters provided on all windows, including glass panels to doors, fanlights and skylight windows to afford both privacy and exclusion of light appropriate to type and location of property <input type="checkbox"/> A wardrobe or clothes hanging space with a minimum of five hangers <input type="checkbox"/> Adequate drawer or shelf space available <input type="checkbox"/> Mirror available in room or bathroom <input type="checkbox"/> Acceptable quality floor coverings, wall and ceiling finishes <input type="checkbox"/> Adequate window coverings <input type="checkbox"/> Little transfusion of sound through doors, walls, or windows <input type="checkbox"/> Lined waste bins available					
QUALITY SCORE					
0	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> All window coverings correctly fitted ensuring light exclusion <input type="checkbox"/> Sparing but adequate provision of furnishings and fittings in terms of quality and range with limited co-ordination <input type="checkbox"/> In room tea and coffee facilities available	<input type="checkbox"/> Window coverings of good quality with sufficient width and height to draw completely across the window <input type="checkbox"/> Good quality, well positioned and functional furniture <input type="checkbox"/> Good co-ordination of furniture and fittings <input type="checkbox"/> Minimal wear and tear to furnishings and fittings <input type="checkbox"/> Good range of additional furniture and fittings: e.g. coffee table, hangers, full length mirror, luggage rack, bedside tables at each sleeping position etc (minimum three) <input type="checkbox"/> Good quality iron and ironing board available in room <input type="checkbox"/> Good selection of tea, coffee and appropriate mini bar items with good quality crockery and glassware	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent quality window coverings sufficient so as to ensure privacy, retain heat and keep out light e.g. thermal lining, black out <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent quality modern, reproduction or antique furniture of sound construction <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent coordination of furniture and plush, soft furnishings of high intrinsic quality <input type="checkbox"/> An extensive range of additional furniture and fittings of excellent quality for guest comfort: e.g. luxurious lounge chairs, ample hangers of different types, phone by bed, additional TV, sound system, excellent quality iron and ironing board etc (minimum four) <input type="checkbox"/> No evidence of wear and tear to furniture and fittings <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent selection of tea, coffee and full mini bar items with high quality glassware, crockery and other facilities			
Comments: _____ _____ _____					

6.0 Bedrooms, continued

Room Number Assessed: _____

6.5 Bathrooms

Minimum Entry Requirements

- Shower and / or bath and washbasin with plug available with hot and cold running water
- Soap dish located in each bath / shower cubicle; soap is provided
- Some form of ventilation, either mechanical or outside opening window
- Adequate light distribution
- Windows have opaque glass, curtain or blinds where necessary for guest privacy
- Means are provided for a non-slip environment: e.g. bath mat, non-slip mat or rail
- Flush toilet with seat, lid, toilet paper, holder, spare rolls, toilet brush provided
- Clothes hooks and towel rail, mirror, waste bin provided
- Bath mat, hand towel and at least one bath towel per guest are provided
- Bathrooms in Accessible rooms have required wet area shower, grab rails etc (if international symbol of access displayed / promoted)

QUALITY SCORE

0	1	2	3	4	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Shower heads in sound working condition with adequate pressure and height <input type="checkbox"/> Adequate floor and bench space provided in bathroom <input type="checkbox"/> Flooring, walls and ceilings may show some wear and tear <input type="checkbox"/> Good light distribution <input type="checkbox"/> Adequate hot water capacity to meet guest demand at most times <input type="checkbox"/> Washbasin and toilet may show wear and discolouration <input type="checkbox"/> Functional décor with limited co-ordination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ensuite bathroom offered <input type="checkbox"/> Well maintained fixtures and fittings with co-ordinated décor including no signs of discolouration to washbasin, toilet, shower and bath <input type="checkbox"/> Floor, walls and ceilings all in good condition with minimal wear and tear <input type="checkbox"/> Good amount of floor and bench space and towel hanging space provided in bathroom <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent light distribution to all areas of bathroom <input type="checkbox"/> Mirror is located conveniently and illuminated for all purposes <input type="checkbox"/> Shower (if provided) has good pressure <input type="checkbox"/> Some added fixtures and fittings are provided for guest convenience e.g. adjustable pressure shower heads, full length mirror, power / shaving socket, basic hairdryer, dual flush toilet, and so on (minimum three) <input type="checkbox"/> A good quality range of well presented amenities provided including soaps, shampoo / conditioner, tissues, air freshener and so on (minimum three) <input type="checkbox"/> Ample hot water capacity to meet guest demand at all times: e.g. continuous / instant hot water systems <input type="checkbox"/> Good quality bath linen including face cloths is provided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent quality floor coverings that are functional (e.g. non-slip, waterproof and pleasant to walk on) as well as co-ordinated <input type="checkbox"/> All wall and ceiling coverings are in excellent condition <input type="checkbox"/> Ample space provided in bathroom <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent interior design with high attention to detail <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent range of added fixtures and fittings of excellent quality for guest convenience: e.g. heated towel rail / mirror, spa bath, separate toilet from bathroom, heater, under floor heating, heated mirror, excellent quality hairdryer and so on (minimum five) <input type="checkbox"/> Expansive range of high quality amenities e.g. bathrobe, complimentary slippers, large soap or high quality amenity dispensers if used, perfume, bath crystals, moisturiser, shaving balm and so on (minimum five) <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent quality bath linen: e.g. oversized, thick bath sheets, at least two towels per guest <input type="checkbox"/> Shower is separate from bath and both are of excellent quality 			

Comments:

6.0 Bedrooms, continued

Room Number Assessed: _____

6.6 Seating/Lounge Area					
Minimum Entry Requirements					
<input type="checkbox"/> At least one seat provided per guest room <input type="checkbox"/> Window coverings provided <input type="checkbox"/> Colour television provided <input type="checkbox"/> Heating/cooling available in room (if separate room) <input type="checkbox"/> Adequate natural light and ventilation provided (if separate room) <input type="checkbox"/> Spare power point provided					
QUALITY SCORE					
0	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Limited seating arrangements, mixed style acceptable <input type="checkbox"/> Television and remote of good quality and size / location is appropriate to room	<input type="checkbox"/> Good number of comfortable well maintained and matching seats available <input type="checkbox"/> Good amount of space offering dedicated lounge seating <input type="checkbox"/> Good quality telephone and convenient internet connection offered <input type="checkbox"/> Some added furnishings / facilities for guest convenience: e.g. coffee table, comfortable lounge chairs, additional TV channels, in-house videos, VCR, desk with lighting, ceiling fan, artwork and so on (minimum three)	<input type="checkbox"/> Ample, excellent quality comfortable lounge furniture, all in excellent condition <input type="checkbox"/> Ample free floor space offering spacious lounge seating area suitable for conversation and / or in-room dining <input type="checkbox"/> Well designed and user friendly writing / work surface offering easily accessible phone, modem and power connections <input type="checkbox"/> Provision of a number of excellent quality added facilities / furnishings for guest convenience: e.g. cordless phone, fax, computer, high speed internet access, writing desk, programmable phones, box office movies, large screen TV, TV channels catering for different languages, DVD and / or CD player, in-room safe, pre-quality magazines and so on (minimum five)			
Comments:					

2.5 Hotel Guests' Amenity Preferences and Expectations

Guest amenities has been the subject of research for some time (see Rowe, 1990; Hart, 1993; McCleary & Weaver 1994; Rusnak, 2006; Chan & Wong, 2006; Newth, 2009; Cimini, 2010).

Such research by Hart (1993), Newth, (2009) and Harrison (2010) has focused on the needs of the female traveller while Harrison (2010, p.1) notes that female travellers are “fiercely loyal and willing to pay more to have their needs met”. Harrison adds that hotels have gone beyond special shampoos and lotions and are now adding extra amenities such as yoga mats, special hangers and women-only floors to capitalize on this lucrative market. Cimini (2010) comments on the importance of hotel amenities to a female business traveller and describes how hotel amenities can assist with maintaining efficient routines and the provision of home comforts.

Verma & Plaschka (2003) question whether senior managers actually understand the real customer value of some amenities e.g. a minibar when so few customers actually use them. They confirm that in spite of extensive customer surveying to ascertain needs “too many products and service offerings frequently miss the targeted audience and its ROI” (Verna & Plaschka, 2003 p. 2). Verma, Plaschka & Louviere (2002) advocate businesses should take into account their customer preferences when they design products and services and also that managers “need to understand how customers integrate, value, and trade off different product and service attributes” (p. 15).

Lodging Magazine (2009) states that most guests are very price sensitive and have become value-hungry, especially the corporate sector, during the recession of the last eighteen months (2008-2010). Lodging Magazine adds that many guests are downgrading their stays or question the value they receive from their current hotel's accommodation products. White (2009) outlines how many business travelers are giving up many of the amenities they enjoy by staying in downscale properties in order to cut costs.

One amenity preference -extensively reported on is that of guest internet access (Forth, 2007; Martin, 2010a; Ehotelier.com, 2010; Relaxnews, 2010b; JD Power & Associates,

2008). JD Power & Associates (2008) reports that free Wi-Fi was the most important amenity in nearly every segment of the hotel industry in a 2008 survey of 53,000 US travelers. Yesawich (as cited in Ehotelier.com, 2010) confirms that for some hotel guests, a hotel's technology capabilities are more important than a hotel's brand when they make an accommodation choice.

Internet access is a key amenity preference for a number of hotel guest segments and one amenity than by used by a hotel to provide a level of competitive advantage. The literature review has highlighted other hotel initiatives that could also provide a competitive advantage which are outlined in the following section.

2.6 Use of Hotel Amenities to Provide a Competitive Advantage

Hotels use different strategies to gain a competitive advantage (Powers & Barrows, 2003). Kotler, Bowen & Makens (2006) define a competitive advantage as "an advantage over competitors gained by offering consumers greater value either through lower prices or by providing more benefits that justify higher prices (p. 912). Kotler et al and Powers & Barrows (2003) also suggest that product differentiation is a strategy that hotels commonly use to gain such competitive advantage and can take many forms, for example physical attributes, service, personnel, location or image (brand), or a combination of these. Amenities clearly form part of the hotel product, but are only one of many components available to a hotel to use in the competition to attract guests.

Initially, engaging in amenity creep could provide a short-term competitive advantage for a hotel until the competitive set hotels revised their amenity provision (Vallen & Vallen, 2009). Nessler (2006) is of the opinion that hotels need to be 'smart' when considering which amenities to provide and one way to do this is to be able to anticipate guests' needs. Nessler cites the Intercontinental Hotel Group's (IHG) response to the airlines' onboard liquids and gels restrictions which saw the introduction of the "Forgot Something?" programme, and other similar initiatives offered by hotels that aim to anticipate guests' needs and provide a hassle-free stay therefore, what was a disadvantage to passengers and airlines due to safety issues was turned into an

advantage to IHG by their provision of liquid and gel amenities to their guests that had been previously confiscated by the airlines.

Powers & Barrows (2003) highlight an issue with most services and amenities in that many are easily copied and so do not offer a point of differentiation. Powers & Barrows conclude that potentially the key to being able to provide a competitive advantage is the ability to be innovative in amenity offering and the understanding of guests' needs. This implies that hotels are continuously surveying their guests to ascertain and anticipate those needs (Jones 2005) and, not just relying on the early adoption of overseas trends to stay ahead of the competition (Rumley 2008). Possibly as an outcome of surveying guests, or the starting of a trend, Bernstein (2009) documents how a few hotel companies have clearly used an innovative amenity offering to attract a niche market as demonstrated by the 'Kimpton Hotels Pet Programme' which invites United States hotel guests to bring their pets to stay with them in a Kimpton hotel. Otherwise hotels that do accept animals are very few (Guide dogs accepted) due to the health and safety issues.

In direct contrast to an innovative amenity offering, Gordon (2010) writes that in London, a newly established 'Tune' hotel has gained a distinct competitive advantage by providing a no frills room at a very low nightly rate. Any amenities such as towels, television, use of safe, internet and soap all incur extra charges.

Mullen (2010) writes that some hotel companies have invested a lot of time and money in customer research and in an attempt to future proof their rooms and guest amenities.

No matter that a hotel surveys its guests or follows trends, Schneider et al (1998), Casado (2000) and Jones (2005) are all clear however that the Executive Housekeeper's knowledge and expertise in the careful selection of hotel and guest room amenities is vital, commenting on the role that the selected amenities and supplies can play to enhance a hotel's brand and image, provide a competitive advantage and provide value for guests.

2.7 Use of Hotel Amenities to Help Define a Brand

Kotler, et al (2006) describe how image or brand can be a form of product differentiation which leads to a competitive advantage due to the value that potential guests place on the image or brand that has been created – amenities are part of a brand. This concept is actioned as described by Powers & Barrows (2003) in relation to the ‘W Suites’ hotel concept. Here, accommodation products have been specifically designed for the ‘ultra-connected business traveler’ and include hi-tech amenities such as ultra-fast broadband, printing to confidential laser printers, and wireless internet access throughout each W Suite property. Thus, the provision and promotion of these amenities has helped to place the ‘W Suites’ hotel chain in a position of value in the minds of business travelers and this is their brand.

There is further evidence of the use of amenities to help to define a brand as seen in the ‘Westin Heavenly Bed’ global initiative of Starwood and the Palazzo Versace hotel on Australia’s Gold Coast. These initiatives along with other in-room developments such as luxurious toweling and high thread-count sheeting help to create a ‘wow’ factor brand (Wolff, 2004a) and are seen as an important marketing tool (Casado, 2000). Bernstein (1999) argues that appropriate presentation of the amenities by a hotel is vital to evoke a mind-set of luxury amongst its target market and a number of writers describe how luxury designers have teamed up with hotels to ‘place their mark’ on the hotel in a form of ‘co-branding’ partnership (Clarke, 2004; Hernandez, 2010; Lodging Magazine-Amenities Edition, 2010).

Casado (2000) comments that the adoption of brand-named toiletries provides instant recognition by guests who prefer the quality of brand amenities, and this is confirmed by Jones (2005) who adds that the addition of a hotel logo on the amenities will make them more ‘collectable’ by guests who are seeking to take home souvenirs of their stay.

Andrea (2010) argues that “getting the toiletries right can help a hotel establish its values and brand” (p. 2) adding that there are some golden rules that must be adhered to when a hotel designs its toiletries package including avoiding the use of messy sachets, the need to replenish supplies during a guest’s stay and the annoying use of nice fancy packaging that contains inferior, cheap soap.

In New Zealand “considerable change is underway in the amenities market, a part of the accommodation industry, often underestimated in its effect as a marketing tool on guests” (Accommodation Management Guide, 2010). It is suggested rather than seek the cheapest option available in order to provide this necessity, hoteliers should look beyond the low quality generic imported amenities and look closer to home to source amenities that are more environmentally friendly and those that can bring an element of ‘New Zealand’ into their guest rooms. The adoption of locally produced amenities which are biodegradable and include indigenous fragrances amongst the ingredients is recommended. Relaxnews (2010a) echoes this sentiment commenting that “hotel amenity kits are quickly becoming the latest battleground for hotels looking to assert their green credentials” (Relaxnews, 2010a). However, mindful of the detrimental effect that little plastic bottles can have on the environment, some properties have opted for dispensers especially in the lifestyle or economy segments of the industry (Jones 2005). Accommodation Management Guide (2009), comments that the use of dispensers in New Zealand accommodation properties is a hotly debated topic and warns “that guest amenities provide a very important service and a perceived value to your guest” (p. 35), adding that there is no doubt that the vast majority of guests prefer the individual packaged items.

2.8 Costs Associated with Amenity Provision

Appropriate amenity selection can reduce guest complaints and assist in minimising costs in terms of both the amenity itself and also the costs of servicing the room, thus assisting a hotel’s profitability (Schneider et al, 1998; Casado, 2000; Jones, 2005).

Typically an amenity or guest supply is something that is provided in a guest room at no extra cost to the guest (Jones, 2005). Schneider et al (1998) report that amenity costs are factored into the variable and fixed costs of providing the room and as such is an expense that is controlled. Other costs to be considered include the time taken by housekeeping staff to service guestrooms and replenish the amenities (Schneider et al 1998).

In times of recession or low room demand, hotels reduce their rates and are forced to cut back on the level and quality of amenities in order to remain profitable (Ehotelier.com 2008). Some hotels withdraw some amenities completely and instigate a user-pays system which could cause bill payment issues for front office staff when guests check out if these amenity costs are not clearly indicated in advance to the guests (Ehotelier.com 2008). Schneider et al (1998) have also identified the need to ensure that amenities provided are of the correct quality. They add that the provision of low quality guest supplies, which are cheaper, can lead to guest complaints which in turn take time and money to resolve. They believe that when a hotel's budget is tight "it is better to scale back amenities rather than the quality of supplies" (Schneider et al 1998 p. 174). They advise a housekeeper to stock a selection of 'guest loan items' which can be loaned or provided to guests on request, for example bathrobes and special pillows. Standard provision of such items in all guest rooms may be an unnecessary cost to some hotels, but the attractive nature of such amenities means that a hotel must control and monitor their usage and be prepared to charge guests if they are not returned (Schneider et al, 1998). Barnes (2008) however, comments that careful selection of bathroom amenities can result in long term cost savings and recommends amongst other things the use of coloured toweling, provision of makeup removal cloths and hard wired hairdryers.

The costs associated with amenity provision that have been forced on hotel franchisees or managers as part of franchise or ownership contracts have been identified by a number of authors (Watkins 2005; Wolff, 2004a; O' Connor, 2006; Serlen, 2007). Pierce, (as cited by Wolff, 2004a) stresses the need for franchises to ensure their hotel amenities remain up to date. Wolff, 2004a also implies that the 'refreshed' amenity program his company has designed for its franchise hotels has been formulated as a result of research on changing guests' needs. O'Connor (2006) agrees that enhanced and enforced brand standards have proved to be an attraction for guests who are now enjoying higher standards in economy hotel franchises, however comments that the franchisees who must provide these amenity standards to remain competitive must also adhere to the Franchise's room rate discounting policy. This latter comment from O'Connor (2006) illustrates the dilemma faced by the hotel franchise operators who are

financially constrained by both the cost of amenities they must provide and the room rates that they are able to achieve.

While amenities appear to be seen as a competitive advantage and part of brand, their ongoing costs is also a matter of concern, however, some hoteliers have taken the opportunity to turn amenities into revenue streams as described in the following section.

2.9 Use of Hotel Amenities to Provide a Merchandising Opportunity or Revenue Stream

Whilst Jones (2005) has made reference to the collectability of hotel amenities, especially those with the hotel's logo, and the need to seek monetary recompense from those guests that take some amenities home, a number of authors describe hotel initiatives to actively promote and sell these amenities to guests and the public (Higgins, 2000; Weinstein & Scoviak-Lerner, 2002; Internet Wire, 2008).

Wyndham hotels have launched a 'Wyndham At Home' retail programme that offers discounts to its frequent stay programme members. This online programme offers for sale not only guest room amenities but the furniture and fittings that guests enjoy and experience when they stay at a Wyndham hotel (Internet Wire, 2008). Non-take away amenities are also 'sold' with Higgins (2000) describing hotel staff efforts to engage in personal selling to up-sell personalised spa and massage treatments and to offer guests 'technology' and 'bath' butler services. Weinstein & Scoviak-Lerner (2002) outline the concept behind a hotel lobby gift shop that merchandises hotel branded items and selected luxury goods to hotel guests and passers-by, and stress the importance of having the available stock displayed on-line and in a catalogue in guest bedrooms. This initiative could be likened to the catalogues containing duty free products and merchandise that are available on international flights. Both Weinstein & Scoviak-Lerner (2002) and Moore (2010) are of the opinion that hotel guest shops are not just there for hotel guests and that they should also provide a shopping experience for non-hotel guests, especially those who aspire to the luxury brand of a hotel but cannot afford to stay there. Weinstein & Scoviak-Lerner (2002) describe the success of 'W THE STORE' in New York at the W Hotel, which is often busy at midnight selling W logo items ranging from T-shirts and bath salts to the W music compact disc. "It [the gift shop] reinforces

the style and image of the hotel brand and gives customers who like the hotel lifestyle a chance to enjoy a component of the brand in their homes” (p. 14).

Schneider et al (1999) comment that ‘most hotel companies also make available personal care items that guests may have forgotten such as toothbrush, toothpaste or comb” (p. 177). In higher star rated properties these maybe provided as standard in guest bathrooms, but in lower rated properties could be available with cost via a vending machine, from the reception desk or via the lobby gift shop. Regardless of how they may be offered or retailed their provision represents a service to guests and a potential revenue stream for a hotel.

2.10 Issues concerning Hotel Amenity Provision from a Hotel’s Perspective.

Whilst there is evidence regarding guest amenities adding value, the literature also raises issues in the areas of health and safety of hotel staff. Yancey (2006), Wolff (2004b,) and Cohen (2006) document the stressful conditions and injuries that housekeeping staff can experience as a result of more amenities being added to guest rooms. Jones (as cited by Yancey, 2006) claims that a room “now takes 15 minutes longer to clean because of heavier, elaborate bedding and more amenities”, which represents a significant cost factor both in time and stress on a staff member’s physical well-being. Housekeeping staff productivity is traditionally measured on “minutes taken per room” and so the addition of extra duties in the guest room servicing process will clearly affect productivity and could possibly mean that two room attendants are now required to service a guest room efficiently (Kappa, Nitschke & Schappert, 1997; O’Shannessey, Haby & Richmond, 2001).

Wolff (2004b) reports that more sophisticated technology and amenities have changed the duties of the housekeeper making their jobs harder and at the same time adding to the time required to service a guestroom.

Cohen (2006) comments on the results of a recent union survey of Canadian room attendants that indicated that 91% of respondents reported job-related pain including sore knees and backs as a result of the increasing workload schedule they were required to complete on a daily basis.

Other issues raised by the literature involve the Front Office staff when facing irate guests who are charged for amenities that they believed to be included in their room rate, or even surprise 'resort' or 'service' fees that are automatically added to their bill (The Denver Post, 2001; Parnes, 2003; Juliana 2010). Whilst some charges for amenities are acceptable to guests e.g. minibar, internet and valet parking, and justifiable if the guest has used the amenity, some guests will challenge some amenity charges that appear on their bill in an attempt to reduce the amount to be paid (Braham, 1988; Kasavana & Brooks, 2005). Smith (2002) states that there is also the on-going issue of guest theft of amenities and documents the attempt of one hotel to minimise the effects, for example, of a diminishing towel stock by placing a price list on a guestroom bathroom counter.

Finally, Martin (2010b) highlights the potential loss of hotel revenue both from calls made from hotel telephones and from on-demand movie sales which occurs because of the increasing use of guests' personal cell phones and the hotel's provision of superior internet accessibility for guests to download their own movies and games. Hotels have to bear the costs of supplying guest room telephones which not all guests use and many hotels have made significant investment in IT infrastructure including high speed internet access and docking stations for iPod media players, as a result of guest demands.

2.11 Related Amenity Issues in Non-Hotel Industry

While this research focused on amenity use in the hotel sector, it is important to consider aligned amenity impacts of other areas from which we could gain an understanding of this phenomenon. However, an extensive search of databases highlighted very little evidence of amenity related issues in other industries, hence the reliance on trade publications.

Of possible alignment, Whitelegg (2005) and Hotel & Accommodation Management (2009) make comparisons between the amount of amenities and services offered as part of in-flight service provision on low cost flights and those in hotels. The authors discuss the concepts of business, premium economy and economy class in-flight service provision and the amenities that each category of guest is provided with before, during

and after the flight. In both articles the concept of 'user-pays' is stressed, implying that passengers are happy to pay for a class of service or product that provides the amenities that add value for them.

Outside the tourism industry, the Star Tribune (Minneapolis) (2008) describes a number of amenities and features that come together as a package incorporated within a new home design for example gas fireplaces and bathrooms with dual sinks and whirlpool bath. Rutherford (2010) & Travel Weekly Australia (2007) comment on prototype designs for new kinds of motorhomes which include clever and imaginative interior designs complemented by numerous facilities and amenities that can be customized to meet the individual owners' needs.

2.12 Conclusion

Currently there appears to be little literature with relevance to amenity issues outside of the hotel industry. There is however, a lot of information, mainly contained in operational magazines, from International writers and researchers that have relevance for this research into the role guest amenities play within Wellington hotels.

The literature search has highlighted a number of different roles that hotel guest amenities play, both for hotels and for their guests. It is clear that selection and provision of amenities by hotels must match guest preferences and expectations in order for a hotel to gain a competitive advantage. It is also clear that a hotel that is innovative in its amenity provision can use this as a point of differentiation. It would appear that a key factor for a hotel is to have a thorough understanding of its guests' differing needs and to design an amenity package that adds value to their guests' hotel stay.

The costs associated with amenity provision remain a challenge for hotels as they strive to provide amenities at a quality that is acceptable to guests balanced with the room rate that is being received.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

As the objectives of this research were to investigate and understand the role that guest amenities play in Wellington hotels by seeking perspectives from hotel guest and hotel management, it was believed that a mixed methodological approach was appropriate involving focus groups (qualitative data gathering) and questionnaires (quantitative data gathering). Such an approach is supported by Cresswell (2003) who comments that a mixed method approach is where “data collection involves gathering both numeric information as well as text information so that the final database represents both quantitative and qualitative information” (p20)

Section 3.2 Identification of Hotels to Survey details how hotels were selected to be invited to participate in this research. This is followed in Section 3.3 – Selection of Participants within Surveyed Hotels, with details of how participants were invited to participate. Section 3.4 – Development of Questionnaires and Focus Group Discussion Questions outlines the rationale behind the development and format of the questionnaires and discussion forums lists used in this research and the pre-testing that was undertaken.

Section 3.5 – Data Gathering, details how data was gathered from participants, firstly by giving information on the distribution of the questionnaires and then by describing how the focus groups were planned and conducted. The final two sections include, Section 3.6 – Human Ethics Approval - briefly advises the ethical matters associated with such research and the approval granted by Lincoln University for this research to be conducted, while Section 3.7 presents Data Analysis.

3.2 Identification of Hotels to Survey

Hotels, guests and their associated provision and use of amenities was the focus of this research, therefore it is important to begin by defining exactly what a hotel is, as used in the context of this research. Qualmark (2008), New Zealand’s official hotel grading

company describe a hotel as an accommodation property with at least one licensed bar and restaurant and (at least) standard rooms that have the following characteristics: one room for both sleeping and living together with an en suite bathroom and coffee and tea making facilities. Additionally the provision of breakfast is mandatory and hotel management must be on site at all times. Some hotels may offer conference and banqueting facilities. Accommodation loosely linked to hotels is that of 'apartment hotels' which were excluded from this research on the basis that the guest accommodation provided was perceived to comprise a far wider range of amenities and facilities for example, cooking facilities, DVD players & in-room laundry facilities, than would normally be expected in a hotel.

Given the above Qualmark definition, the Wotif.com hotel listing of June 10 2010 was used to identify all three, four and five star hotels in the Central Wellington region (see Appendix A). Wotif.com is an online hotel reservation system that allows hotels the ability to offer their accommodation for sale through a third party. The Central Wellington region was chosen to limit the number of hotels in the sample, yet yielded twenty-four hotels all of whom were invited to participate in this research.

3.3 Selection of Participants within Surveyed Hotels

Having identified the hotels for this research, four in-hotel research participant groups were identified; Hotel General Managers, Hotel Guests, Hotel Executive Housekeepers and Hotel Front Office Managers. The identification of these groups was made on the basis that these groups are the users of the amenities (Hotel Guests), the suppliers and maintainers of the amenities (Hotel General Managers and Hotel Executive Housekeepers) or the receivers of comments from users and suppliers and maintainers of amenities (Front Office Managers and Hotel Executive Housekeepers). The identification of such groups is critical as they offer judgements as "participants [who] are most advantageously placed or in the best position to provide the information required" (Sekeran, 2003, p. 277).

3.3.1 Hotel Managers

In general, Hotel Managers are ultimately responsible for the hotel's performance in terms of the products supplied, the level of service provided and the financial viability of the hotel. Depending on the ownership or management arrangement of the individual hotel, a Hotel General Manager could be responsible for both the hotel's strategic direction and the day to day decisions; they may also be responsible to the Head Office of a hotel chain and therefore implement brand decisions which include the provision of amenities made at a higher level.

Hotel General Managers of independently owned hotels, in particular, need to be skilled in product development, customer research and other marketing initiatives as the support of a head office corporate team to assist with these functions does not always exist (Reid & Bojanic 2001).

Data gathered from Hotel General Managers will assist with supporting Hypothesis A:

H. A Wellington hotels add more amenities to their hotels and guest rooms to provide a competitive advantage and to help define their brand.

3.3.2 Hotel Guests

Hotel Guests are an essential part of this research because they are the ultimate consumers of the hotel products and amenities (Kotler et al 2006). Given the fact that the focus of this research is Wellington hotels, for the reasons explained in Section 3.2, participating Hotel Guests needed to have stayed in a Wellington hotel for at least one night in the last twenty-four months. The twenty-four month time period eligibility is important to ensure that the participating Hotel Guests do not refer back to older hotel stays when completing the questionnaire and therefore avoid recording their use of potentially out-dated amenities.

Initially, Hotel Guests were recruited from The Wellington Institute of Technology's staff. Whilst this tertiary education provider is based in the Wellington area, there are a number of staff on other campuses in New Zealand and a number of contractors that would need to stay in Wellington based hotel accommodation on a regular basis. In

addition, a number of the Wellington based staff may have enjoyed leisure stays in Wellington hotels.

Data gathered from Hotel Guests will assist with supporting Hypotheses B & C:

H. B Hotel guests do not wish to pay for amenities in their rooms that they do not use.

H. C Hotel guests expect more amenities the higher the hotel rating and the higher the room rate they are paying.

3.3.3 Executive Housekeepers

An Executive Housekeeper is “the person with the ultimate accountability for the (housekeeping) department in terms of staff deployment and development, operational standards and profitability” (Rawstron, 1999, p. 116). Thus, Executive Housekeepers are responsible for training housekeeping staff in the systems and processes required to service hotel guest accommodation (including replenishment of in-room amenities) and public areas of a hotel. Jones (2005), Schneider et al (1998) and Casado (2000) all refer to the expertise and knowledge of an Executive Housekeeper in the selection of the appropriate guest amenities for a hotel and, due to the important role they play in the overall productivity of the housekeeping department, it is appropriate they be included as participants in this research.

A number of (usually fifteen) Wellington hotel Executive Housekeepers participate in a monthly ‘Wellington Executive Housekeepers’ Forum’. Attendees to this forum, who are all either Executive or Assistant Housekeepers, were invited to participate. There is a mismatch between the number of hotels and the number of participants invited in this category as not all Wellington 3, 4 and 5 star hotels have Executive Housekeepers who attend this forum. (See Section 3.5.3).

Data gathered from the Executive Housekeepers will assist with supporting Hypothesis D:

H. D Housekeeping staff productivity is affected by the level of amenities in guest rooms.

3.3.4 Hotel Front Office Managers

The front office of a hotel has been described as the 'hub' or 'nerve centre' of the hotel by a number of authors (Gray & Ligouri,(2003: Ismail, 2002; Vallen & Vallen 2009) due to the level of contact they have with hotel guests and other hotel departments. The front office staff assist guests with questions, receive compliments and complaints, and are responsible for checking guests in and out of the hotel. Consequently they receive valuable feedback from guests on the quality of their hotel stay experience including the use of amenities and are responsible for securing payment for all charges that the guest incurs during their stay and deal with billing and charging issues that may arise.

A number of (usually twelve) Wellington Hotel Front Office Managers participate in a bi-monthly 'Wellington Front Office Managers' Forum'. Attendees to this forum, who are all Front Office, Reservation or Rooms Division Managers, were invited to participate. There is a mismatch between the number of hotels and the number of participants invited in this category as not all Wellington 3, 4 and 5 star hotels have Front Office Managers who attend this forum. (See Section 3.5.4).

Data gathered from the Front Office Managers will assist with supporting Hypothesis E:

H. E Front office staff workload increases and stress levels are increased by Wellington Hotel guests querying their incidental charges for amenities.

3.4 Development of Questionnaires & Focus Group Discussion Questions

An extensive literature review around hotel amenity provision was undertaken to develop the questionnaires. The key search terms used were "hotel guest amenities", "hotel amenities" and "amenity selection". Based on these findings, appropriate questions were developed for different participant groups and separate lists of discussion questions were compiled for each of the two focus groups.

The final outcome of this approach was a separate self-completion questionnaire for Hotel Managers and a self-completion questionnaire for Hotel Guests. The length of each self-completion questionnaire was kept short to encourage participation and the method of responding (tick-box, and Likert scale) was chosen to facilitate ease of completion. This strategy is supported by Boyce (2005) who states that respondents are

more likely to complete questionnaires if they feel interested and motivated by the simplicity of the process of completion. Very few open-ended questions were included in the questionnaires and limited space was given to encourage short, concise, participant responses.

Focus group discussion question lists were developed from the literature review findings for both Executive Housekeeper and Front Office Manager focus groups and included open ended general questions, for example the definition of amenities, to set the scene and ensure the group discussion was focused. Closed questions were also asked to solicit definite opinions from those present; however some flexibility of content was included to allow the ability of the moderator to add value to the outcome of the focus group by probing or deviating from the question list in the event of unexpected comments from the group (Boyce, 2005).

3.4.1 Pre-testing of the Questionnaires

Best practice in any research where questionnaires are used necessitates questionnaires be pre-tested to ensure readability and comprehension (Boyce, 2005; Altinay & Paraskevas, 2008).

The General Manager of one four-star Wellington hotel agreed to pre-test the General Manager questionnaire in conjunction with his Executive Assistant Manager. This gave useful feedback to the researcher which allowed revisions to be made to reduce potential confusion and improve readability. Other feedback received indicated that the questionnaire was quick to complete.

The Hotel Guest questionnaire was pre-tested independently by two WelTec colleagues who had stayed in a Wellington hotel within the last twenty-four months. Feedback received allowed some revisions to be made to the layout to ensure ease of download via the WelTec Intranet and to the wording of questions to improve clarity.

The focus group discussion questions were pre-tested for comprehension, clarity and readability by a fellow Hospitality Management Lecturer. No revisions were recommended.

3.5 Data Gathering

This section describes the processes used to solicit data from each of the four participant groups.

3.5.1 Issuing the General Manager Questionnaire

Twenty-four Hotel General Managers were invited to participate in the research as identified in the Wotif.com hotel list for June 10, 2010 (see Appendix A). Postal addresses for the hotels were obtained from each hotel's Wotif.com listing. Each invitation included a Research Information Sheet, Consent form and four-page (A3 folded) self-completion questionnaire together with a return postage paid envelope to facilitate the return to the researcher (see Appendix B). Each invitation was addressed to 'The General Manager'.

The Research Information Sheet stressed that participation was voluntary and that confidentiality would be assured. Research packs were sent on August 17, 2010 with a requested return date before September 30, 2010. On September 30, further research packs were re-sent to those hotels that had not responded to the first request to participate, with a requested return date of October 31, 2010.

3.5.2 Issuing the Hotel Guest Questionnaire

Wellington Institute of Technology (WelTec) staff members who had stayed in a Wellington hotel within the last twenty-four months were invited to participate via an invitation on the WelTec Intranet. Staff were invited to download a research pack which consisted of a Research Information Sheet, Consent Form and a three-page questionnaire (see Appendix C). The contents of the research pack were presented in a PDF format to ensure that no changes could be made and that they could not be submitted via email in order to protect anonymity of those that had completed them. The Research Information Sheet stressed that participation was voluntary and that confidentiality would be assured. The Hotel Guest self-completion questionnaires were returned to the researcher anonymously via the WelTec internal mail. The invitation was issued on September 3, 2010 and remained open until December 31, 2010.

As responses to the initial invitation for Hotel Guest participants from WelTec staff were slow, an opportunity was taken to boost the overall number of responses and gain more feedback from those attending the Hospitality Standards Institute (HSI) research forum which was held in Auckland on October 10, 2010. Integrity of this research was maintained as those who attended and completed the questionnaire met the criteria of having stayed in a Wellington hotel within the last twenty-four months. These later participants were handed research packs that included return postage paid envelopes.

3.5.3 Issuing the Executive Housekeeper Focus Group Invitation

Focus groups were identified as the preferred approach to gather data from this group because “it allows the exploration of a specific set of issues and involves a form of collective activity” (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999, as cited in Lockyer, 2008). There is also evidence of previous use of focus groups to collect data in research projects where stakeholder perceptions and insights are important (Hardy & Beeton, 2010, as cited in Altinay & Paraskevas, 2008), and one benefit of a focus group is that they can be used to produce a lot of information quickly (Huang & Hsu, 2005, as cited in Altinay & Paraskevas, 2008).

Wellington Executive Housekeepers who are members of the Wellington Executive Housekeepers’ Forum were invited to attend the Executive Housekeeper Focus Group. The Wellington Executive Housekeepers’ Forum meets on a monthly basis at one of the member’s hotels. Members of this forum were sent a research pack (see Appendix D) consisting of a Research Information Sheet, Consent Form and list of proposed discussion questions (as developed in Section 3.4) after the July, 2010 meeting. The Focus Group for this research was planned to be held at the conclusion of the August, 2010 meeting. Members were advised that participation was voluntary and whilst the proceedings would be taped to facilitate transcription, any comments made would remain confidential and would not be attributed to any participant or their hotel.

It must be noted that not all twenty-four hotels that were invited to participate in the General Manager questionnaire have representatives who attend the Executive Housekeepers’ Forum. There are a number of reasons for this including the fact that forum meetings are held in the evenings which preclude attendance by some

housekeepers with families; additionally, there are a number of hotel housekeepers who do not see the benefit of membership of this forum and a number who maintain very sporadic attendance. The relatively high turnover of hotel housekeepers also means that there are some potential members who are not aware of the Wellington forum in spite of it having been in existence for the last fifteen years.

A total of fifteen invitations were issued to members of the forum. They constitute both a 'convenience' and 'judgmental' sample due to their accessibility and their expertise (Altinay & Paraskevas, 2008).

The Executive Housekeeper Focus Group was held on August 10, 2010 in a conference room at a member's hotel. The proceedings were tape recorded with transcription completed by the researcher.

3.5.4 Issuing the Front Office Manager Focus Group Invitation

Wellington Hotel Front Office Managers who are members of the Wellington Front Office Managers' Forum were invited to attend the Hotel Front Office Managers' focus group. The Front Office Managers' Forum meets bi-monthly and is hosted at a member's hotel. Meetings are typically held in the early evening and attendance is fairly erratic with a number of last minute non-attendances due to work pressures and emergencies. Twelve members, who comprised those currently on the membership email list, were sent a research pack (see Appendix E) consisting of a Research Information Sheet, Consent Form and list of proposed discussion questions and invited to attend the focus group to be held on October 19, 2010 at a member's hotel at the conclusion of the regular meeting.

Invited participants were advised that participation was voluntary and whilst the proceedings would be taped to facilitate transcription, any comments made would remain confidential and would not be attributed to any participant or their hotel.

As with the Executive Housekeeper participant group, it must be noted that not all twenty-four hotels that were invited to participate in the General Manager questionnaire have representatives that attend the Front Office Managers' Forum. Many of the reasons for this are the same as the Executive Housekeepers. Also the

timings of the meetings coincide with peak check in times for some hotels which result in last minute apologies or “no shows” by some Front Office Managers. This forum has only been established for the last three years and is not yet widely recognised by all potential attendees. Turnover of hotel Front Office Managers is high and it is known that attendance by Front Office Managers at this forum may not be encouraged by Hotel General Managers due to perceived sharing of confidential information.

As with the Executive Housekeeper participants, the Front Office Managers constitute both a ‘convenience’ and ‘judgmental’ sample due to their accessibility and their expertise (Altinay & Paraskevas, 2008).

3.6 Human Ethics Approval

Veal (2006) describes research ethics as honesty and the respect for an individual’s rights to ensure that those participants in the research process suffer no harm. He adds that all participants should be allowed to consent to participate of their own will, having been sufficiently informed of the research project and the part that they play as a participant. Thus, the nature of this research and the need to seek participation from individuals necessitates the requirement for Human Ethics Approval to be granted by the Human Ethics of Lincoln University. Such approval was gained on July 20, 2010. (Application 2010-22).

Additionally, ethical approval was required from the Wellington Institute of Technology Human Ethics Committee to invite the staff of WelTec as the invitation was made via the WelTec Intranet. This approval was granted on September 3, 2010.

3.7 Data Analysis

Once the self-completed questionnaires were received, they were coded by assigning a numerical value to the different possible responses and entered into the Statistics Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 18 database prior to analysis. SPSS was chosen due to its ability to perform a wide range of statistical analysis. Statistical tests performed included frequency analysis to determine the number of times a particular response was given and cross tabulation which allows reporting of frequencies when

categorised by one of more dimensions (Salkind, 2004). Further details of the statistical analysis performed and results are presented in the following chapter.

Upon completion of the focus groups, the proceedings were transcribed according to the discussion question headings and from the responses given generalisations and conclusions reached. Further details are presented in the following chapter.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction to Data Analysis and Findings

This chapter reports the results and analysis of the data gathered from questionnaires to Hotel General Managers (see Appendix B) and Hotel Guests (see Appendix C), and the focus groups held with Executive Housekeepers (see Appendix D) and Front Office Managers (see Appendix E).

Section 4.2 presents details of participant groups – the number of invitations issued, responses received and subsequent response rates. This section also includes commentary as to why these results are as stated.

Section 4.3 presents the results of the questionnaire to Hotel General Managers, while Section 4.4 the results from the Executive Housekeepers focus groups, Section 4.5 results from the Front Office Managers focus group and Section 4.6 the results of the questionnaire to Hotel Guests.

4.2 Participation Results

Table 1 details the numbers of invitations issued to participants within each participant group, the type of survey instrument selected and the percentage of participation.

Table 1. Participation Results

Participant Group	Survey instrument used	Number of Invitations to participate issued	Number of responses accepted *	% Response rate/Participation rate
Hotel General Managers	Self-completion questionnaire	Total = 24 3* Qualmark = 2 3*+ Qualmark = 8 3*+ self-rated = 1 4* Qualmark = 3 4* self-rated = 1 4*+ Qualmark = 4 4*+ self-rated = 2 5* Qualmark = 1 5* self-rated = 2	Total 12 0 4 1 1 2 2 1 0	50%
Executive Housekeepers	Focus Group	15	11	73%

Front Office Managers	Focus Group	12	6	50%
Hotel Guests	Self-completion questionnaire	200+	17	≤8.5%

Altinay & Paraskevas (2008) indicate that a response rate of 20% is deemed an acceptable level for this type of survey, Keegan & Lucas (2005) comment on the typically low response rates usually received by researchers undertaking postal surveys for the hospitality industry. While the pool of WelTec staff is in excess of 200, attracting Hotel Guests to participate proved more difficult than expected. The researcher underestimated the number of WelTec staff that would be both willing and eligible to participate. As outlined in Chapter three (Methodology), Section 3.3.2, a convenience sample was used. The invitation to participate (see Appendix C) was issued via the WelTec intranet on 3 September 2010 and was promoted to 'top of the list of items' a total of five times over the next 5 weeks to ensure that it stayed immediately available to any WelTec staff member who logged on. Approaching actual hotel guests (in hotels) would incur privacy issues which hotels will not breach. Further participant Hotel Guests were recruited via the Hospitality Standards Institute conference held in Auckland on 10 October 2010 which was again a convenience sample.

4.3 Hotel Manager Findings

Data gathered from the Hotel Manager participants was intended to primarily support Hypothesis A:

Wellington Hotels add more amenities to their hotels and guest rooms to provide a competitive advantage and to help define their brand.

A competitive advantage for a hotel can be evidenced in a number of ways, for example by offering consumers greater value or by product differentiation (Powers & Barrows, 2003; Kotler et al, 2006). Vallen & Vallen (2009) say that providing different amenities or a larger range of amenities can assist a hotel to remain competitive, at least in the short term. A hotel's amenities and facilities can also enhance and strengthen a hotel's brand (Powers & Barrows, 2003), as hotel amenities can be used to display the hotel's logo or retained or purchased by the guest to provide a constant reminder of their hotel stay in the minds of guests (Weinstein & Scoviak-Lerner, 2002).

4.3.1 Hotel Manager Participant Analysis

Table 2 provides details of the twelve Hotel Manager participants as described by their hotel size (number of guest rooms), star rating and ownership/management arrangement. In order to protect the anonymity of the one five-star participant, data gathered from this hotel is presented with that of the four-star plus hotels.

Table 2. Hotel Manager Participants

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Star rating												
3*+Qual							x		x	x		x
3*+self			x									
4* Qual		x										
4* self				x								
4*+ &5* Qual	x					x					x	
4*+ &5* Self					x			x				
No. of guest rooms												
Less than 100			x	x						x		
100-129									x			x
130-189		x			x							
190-229							x	x				
230 and above	x					x					x	
Ownership/ Management arrangement												
Chain hotel	x					x	x	x				
Franchise												x
Independent			x	x	x				x	x		
Management Contract		x									x	

4.3.2 Female only Guest rooms and Green Hotels

Hotel Managers were then asked if their hotels provided Female-only rooms or if they participated in 'green' guest initiatives.

Harrison (2010) says that hotels offering female-only rooms and floors can gain some competitive advantage within the lucrative female traveller market. None of the participant Hotel Managers indicated that their hotels offered Female-only guest rooms.

Relaxnews (2010a) reports that a hotel can use its 'green credentials' to provide a

competitive advantage and help support brand image, however green-hotel aspects received a mixed response with seventy-five per cent of hotel managers indicating that their hotel offered some kind of 'green' guest programme. With regard to the 'green' hotel, managerial comments included:

"Towels/Laundry not replaced if left hanging in bathroom"

"Linen/towel replacement program, recycling in rooms"

"Guest has the opportunity to reuse towels if staying for more than one night"

"Plant for the Planet towel recycling in rooms"

"Recycling station on each floor, all room amenities (shampoo etc) recycled by a charity, corridor lights motion activated"

"Green room tags which means no service to rooms and charity work is done with monies saved"

All three hotels whose managers indicated that no 'green' guest programme initiatives were undertaken also indicated that they were all independently owned or managed.

4.3.3 Number of Amenities Provided

The concept of amenity creep arose as hoteliers added more amenities to their rooms and hotels in order to compete (Vallen & Vallen, 2009). The number of amenities provided by hotels to guests, either for free or with an extra charge, is shown in the following tables. The amenities have been categorised into four different areas:

(1) Hotel Room Amenities - Table 3 (from a predetermined list of 28 options)

(2) Hotel Room Technological Amenities - Table 4 (from a predetermined list of 18 options)

(3) Bathroom Amenities - Table 5 (from a predetermined list of 18 options); and

(4) General Hotel Amenities - Table 6 (from a predetermined list of 16 options).

Table 3. Hotel Room Amenities (free and with charge), according to hotel rating.

	Number of hotel room amenities provided <u>free</u>				Number of hotel room amenities provided with <u>charge</u>		
	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	0	1-5	6-10
3*+Qual	3	1	0	0	0	4	0
3*+self	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
4* Qual	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
4* self	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
4*+& 5 * Qual	0	2	0	1	1	2	0
4*+ & 5* self	0	2	0	0	0	1	1
Total	4	5	2	1	3	8	1

Table 4. Hotel Room Technological Amenities (free and with charge), according to hotel rating.

	Number of hotel room technological amenities provided <u>free</u>			Number of hotel room technological amenities provided with <u>charge</u>	
	1-5	6-10	11-15	0	1-5
3*+Qual	3	1	0	1	3
3*+self	0	1	0	0	1
4* Qual	0	1	0	0	1
4* self	0	1	0	1	0
4*+& 5 * Qual	0	3	0	1	2
4*+ & 5* self	0	1	1	1	1
Total	3	8	1	4	8

Table 5. Bathroom Amenities (free and with charge), according to hotel rating.

	Number of Bathroom amenities provided <u>free</u>			Number of Bathroom amenities provided with <u>charge</u>	
	1-5	6-10	11-15	0	1-5
3*+Qual	3	1	0	3	1
3*+self	1	0	0	0	1
4* Qual	0	1	0	0	1
4* self	0	1	0	1	0
4*+& 5 * Qual	0	1	2	2	1
4*+ & 5* self	0	0	2	0	2
Total	4	4	4	6	6

Table 6. General Hotel Amenities and Features (free and with charge), according to hotel rating.

	Number of general hotel amenities provided <u>free</u>		Number of general hotel amenities provided with <u>charge</u>	
	1-5	6-10	0	1-5
3*+Qual	3	1	1	3
3*+self	1	0	1	0
4* Qual	1	0	0	1
4* self	1	0	1	0
4*+& 5 * Qual	0	3	1	2
4*+ & 5* self	1	1	0	2
Total	7	5	4	8

In addition to the above data supplied, one hotel manager indicated that their hotel provided a guest laundry facility free of charge (4 star+ & 5 self-rated category). Another hotel manager indicated their hotel provided conference facilities (3 Star+ Qualmark rated category).

4.3.4 Control over Selection of Hotel Amenities and Features

The design and selection of a hotel’s amenities can assist with providing a competitive advantage as the individual hotel manager may identify those amenities that best fit with the hotel’s guest mix. Furthermore, the hotel manager may be able to use their amenity selection to promote and re-enforce their brand by placing the hotel logo on the amenity or by using amenities from a named brand that ‘fits’ with that of the hotel. Hotel Managers were asked to indicate on a Likert scale of 1-5 (where 1 is no control and 5 is total control), the extent to which management was allowed to design and select the amenities and features offered by their hotel. Table 7 shows the frequency of responses given according to hotel rating and by hotel ownership or management arrangement.

Table 7. Control Over Selection of Hotel Amenities and Features.

	1 No control. Decision is Head Office driven. Must purchase from head office	2 Head Office define standards & nominates suitable suppliers	3 Guidelines given by Head Office but supplier choice rests with hotel	4 Some Head Office influence re standards but allow for hotel customization	5 Total control. All decisions are made at hotel level
Hotel Rating					
3*+Qual	1	0	0	1	2
3*+self	0	0	0	1	0
4* Qual	0	1	0	0	0
4* self	0	0	0	0	1
4*+& 5 * Qual	1	1	1	0	0
4*+ & 5* self	0	0	0	0	2
Total	2	2	1	2	5
Ownership/ Management					
Chain	2	0	1	0	1
Franchise	0	0	0	0	1
Independent	0	0	0	2	3
Mgt. Contract	0	2	0	0	0
Total	2	2	1	2	5

The findings show that five hotels, or just under half, of participants indicated that they had total control over the design and selection of amenities and features within their hotels.

4.3.5 Identification of Amenities/Features that Provide a Competitive Advantage.

Hotel Managers were asked to name up to three amenities or features offered by their hotel that they believed best provided their hotel with a competitive advantage.

Ten out of twelve Hotel Managers chose to complete this section. The two Hotel Managers that declined to complete the section represented a 4 star and a 4 star+ hotel, both of which had been Qualmark-rated. Responses that Hotel Managers gave included the following: Leisure Centre, Free airport pick-ups, recently refurbished rooms, free on-site car parking, harbour views, LCD TVs, art throughout the hotel, complimentary wi-fi broadband, Molton Brown guest amenities, personalised welcome cards for guests, guest loyalty programme linked with frequent flyer miles and club executive floors.

4.3.6 Retailing of Hotel Amenities or Features

The ability to retail hotel amenities can provide the hotel with an opportunity to extend and publicise its brand (Weinstein & Scoviak-Lerner, 2002). Hotel Managers were asked to indicate if their hotel retailed any amenities or features to guests or the public either via a hotel gift shop or on-line merchandise site. Only one hotel (3 star+ Qualmark rated) gave a positive response indicating that they retailed items such as “toothbrush, razors and sanitary products”.

4.3.7 Customer Research Undertaken by Hotels

Verma et al (2002) confirm the importance of understanding what hotel guests want from their stays. The ability to provide amenities and facilities in a hotel that add value for particular guest segments and ‘fit’ with the guests needs can provide a competitive advantage. Hotel Managers were asked if their hotel had ever undertaken any customer research to ascertain if the amenities and features selected by their hotel met guests’ needs, provided a point of difference for the hotel or represented value to the hotel’s guests.

Table 8. Customer Research Undertaken by Hotels.

	Customer research undertaken to ascertain if amenities and features selected by the hotel:-					
	Meet guests’ needs		Provide a point of difference for hotel		Represent value to guests	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Hotel Rating						
3*+Qual	3	1	2	2	2	2
3*+self	0	1	0	1	0	1
4* Qual	1	0	1	0	1	0
4* self	0	1	1	0	1	0
4*+& 5 * Qual	2	1	2	1	2	1
4*+ & 5* self	0	2	0	2	0	2
Total	6	6	6	6	6	6
Ownership/ Management arrangement						
Chain	2	2	1	3	1	3
Franchise	1	0	1	0	1	0
Independent	1	4	2	3	2	3
Mgt. Contract	2	0	2	0	2	0
Total	6	6	6	6	6	6

One manager (4 star+ & 5 Qualmark rated category, and with a management contract) indicated that their hotel company was continuously undertaking global customer research. The other Hotel Manager (4 star, self-rated, independently owned) said “on deciding to change guest amenities we asked mostly ladies what was important to them”. The fact that only two Hotel Manager participants chose to provide written comments may indicate the level of importance Hotel Managers place on the amenities they offer.

4.4 Executive Housekeeper Findings

The following section outlines the findings from the Executive Housekeeper focus group and commences with demographic details for the participants. In order to protect the anonymity of participants from the one five-star hotel, data gathered from this hotel is presented with that of the four-star plus hotels.

Over fifty per cent of Executive Housekeepers represented hotels in the 4 star+ & 5 star hotel (Qualmark and self-rated) rating. Ten out of the eleven hotels represented had undertaken a Qualmark inspection, the exception being a hotel in the 4 star+ & 5 star category.

Data gathered from the Executive Housekeeper participants was primarily intended to support Hypothesis D:

D: Housekeeping staff productivity is effected by the level of amenities in guest rooms.

The literature indicates that housekeeping productivity can be effected, either positively or negatively, by the level of amenities in guest rooms (Kappa et al, 1997; Yancey, 2006).

During the focus group a number of pre-prepared questions were posed (see Appendix D). From the answers to these questions and the discussion that arose, the following findings are reported

4.4.1 What is an amenity?

In order to break the ice and to ensure that all Executive Housekeeper participants understood the term ‘amenity’ an introductory question was posed. Generally,

Housekeepers were clear on their understanding of the term 'amenity'. However, whilst a number of them agreed that toiletries were an amenity, some Housekeepers felt that toiletries were also considered "*guest supplies*". One housekeeper felt that toiletries were "*standard issue in any hotel room*" so not specifically an amenity which could be classed as a "*gift or recognition of the guest*". A number of housekeepers outlined their hotel's use of some types of amenities as gifts in acknowledging the status of the guest (e.g. fruit bowls that might be placed in the guestrooms of VIPs). However all were in agreement that amenities were things that make a guest's stay more pleasant and usually free of charge and this included those facilities and services (e.g. pools and gyms) that were also offered by hotels and not charged separately for.

Verbatim comments included:

"(An) amenity is anything tangible that adds value to the property"

"No one would stay if no shampoo etcetera – they expect it"

"Amenities help add to the hotel's image"

"Some amenities are charged for to provide value to the guest"

4.4.2 Changes in Hotel Amenities and Features over the Last Five Years.

It was important to understand if there had been any changes in hotel amenities and features and how these changes had impacted on the Housekeeping Departments of hotels. The last five years was the time period selected as this would include both pre-recession (pre-2008) and the time period after until the current day.

The Housekeepers felt that generally more amenities were now provided by hotels than five years previously, as exemplified by the additions of body wash, facial wipes, sewing kits, shoe shine clothes and toothbrushes as new trends. The Housekeepers felt that the reasons for this increased amenity offering were clear: initially the wider and increased range of amenities offered were a marketing initiative, but as a result of this increased amenity offering guest expectations have been raised. A number of Housekeepers commented that particular guests had definite expectations – for example "*Asian guests expect to find slippers in hotel rooms*".

However more recently (from 2008 onwards), the Housekeepers reported that some hotels had *“started to withdraw some amenities in an effort to save costs in response to lower room rates during the recession”*. Typically, withdrawn amenities included *“biscuits, plunger coffee and slippers”*. One Housekeeper outlined the cost savings achieved by withdrawing biscuits from her hotel, *“With two biscuits at 60 cents each per room, 180 rooms in the hotel, 365 days per year at an average of 70% occupancy we (their hotel) estimate an annual saving of \$50,000”*. Other Housekeepers commented that some amenities were now only available on request, for example slippers and bathrobes, or *“available only as standard in the hotel suites”*. Some Housekeepers reported that their hotels had received some complaints from guests as a result of the amenity withdrawal and two Housekeepers cited *“Air Crew guests and the weekend package guests as those more likely to complain”*.

The Housekeepers gave more information on how these and other changes have impacted on the work of their departments as reported in the next section.

4.4.3 Housekeeping Productivity, Costs and Associated Concerns

Housekeeping productivity is measured by ‘minutes per room’, that is, the length of time taken to service each guest room (O’Shannessey et al, 2001). Typically, this is averaged out within a hotel to include all rooms (suites, standard rooms, executive rooms).

Housekeepers indicated that a time of between *“twenty-five to thirty minutes per room”* was expected and that in some cases, servicing rooms and replenishing amenities as part of the servicing *“process did take longer than average”*. This was noticed when there had been an extra guest (and bed) in the room, for example tour guests, who were generally perceived by the focus group participants as *“amenity hungry”* and looking for *“souvenirs of their stay”*. However, rooms may also take longer to service if they were *“particularly untidy”* or *“if the room attendant was not up to speed”*, which could be the case if a room attendant was still ‘in- training’. All Housekeepers agreed productivity levels suffered when room attendant training was needed as a result of guestroom refurbishments and amenity changes.

The Housekeepers reported that as a result of recent room refurbishments in their hotels, many hotels have introduced new bedding standards which include *“three sheet*

beds, *“cumbersome throws”* and *“a variety of different pillows”*. Whilst these new guestroom trends have affected productivity levels, the Housekeepers also expressed health and safety concerns. The Housekeepers were critical of some hotel guest room designers who, they felt, had come up with *“impractical room design features”*. The examples of heavy beds and bedding were given by a number of participants. One Housekeeper explained that *“a ‘Hollywood King’ bed which is an extra-large bed designed to ‘make a statement’ within any hotel room, can weigh up to eight kilos more than a standard queen bed and requires two room attendants to make it”*.

One Housekeeper described how her housekeeping team had *“written letters of concern to hotel management regarding a designer’s choice of bed”* and as a result of this feedback the bed had been changed. Another concern is the requirement for housekeeping staff to undertake the *“physically demanding task of ‘splitting’ king beds to create two separate beds, often at short notice”*, and this is another housekeeping practice that impacts productivity.

All Housekeepers stated that they were concerned for the physical wellbeing of their staff and ensured that all were trained in the use of appropriate *“posture and bending techniques”* to reduce any *“strains and sick leave”*.

Wastage of amenities and their cost was something that all Housekeepers were concerned about. In order to standardise the housekeeping servicing process and allow easy room allocation to arriving guests, *“most hotel rooms are prepared for double occupancy”*, that is two guests per room, hence two sets of amenities are provided even if only one guest occupies the room which could lead to wastage. The Housekeepers reported that in an effort to conserve amenity wastage, some hotels did not *“automatically replenish all amenities every day”* and all housekeepers indicated they *“no longer placed soaps in shower boxes to prevent (the packaging of) unused ones being destroyed by water”*.

The Housekeepers were all concerned with the amount of amenity wastage and a lack of opportunities for recycling. A number of the Housekeepers were actively involved in their hotel’s environmental initiatives and had been ‘Enviro’ endorsed as part of the Qualmark rating process. One Housekeeper commented that their *“half-used shampoo*

containers were given to foodbanks and night shelters". This was particularly common in hotels that had a large number of one-night only guests.

One Housekeeper reported that her hotel had *"recently changed to a New Zealand amenity supplier which was cheaper than importing from Hong Kong"*; this Housekeeper felt that it was not as appropriate to have amenities with a distinct New Zealand 'flavour' in Wellington hotels, but it would be a good opportunity in the tourist areas of Rotorua or Queenstown, where the hotels were more likely to accommodate a higher proportion of international guests.

In order to minimise wastage and control costs a number of hotels have introduced dispensers for some amenities (Jones, 2005). All Housekeepers participants were of the opinion that using wall dispensers was not an option for their hotel and one that *"presented health and safety issues and refilling challenges for their staff"*.

4.4.4 Guest Feedback to Housekeeping Staff Regarding Amenities

Housekeepers noted that hotels had a number of ways that guests might give feedback regarding their hotel stays and the amenities they received. Such methods of feedback included comment cards, online feedback and personal conversations.

A number stated that it was common for hotel guests to approach room attendants either in hotel corridors or guest rooms to make comments regarding the amenities that were in their rooms. In a few hotels, guests had been observed *"nicking items off the trolley"* or *"helping themselves to amenities from housekeeping trolleys"*, which some Housekeepers did see as a positive endorsement of their hotel's choice of amenities and evidence that they were either valued by the guest or that the guest wanted more amenities in their room

One housekeeper said that her hotel *"had received a lot excellent feedback regarding its pillow menu"*. She added that the pillow menu was *"difficult to control by the hotel as the extra pillows requested by guests, tended to go missing"*. Another Housekeeper added that in her hotel extra pillows had *"different coloured pillowslips to make them more visible and easier to control"*. In contrast to this, one Housekeeper commented that a lot of male business travellers had actually complained about the number and variety

of pillows on their beds, indicating that guests felt that *“this was not what they had at home”* and that the pillows *“were unnecessary”*.

Further negative amenity feedback reported by the Housekeepers concerned the different types of Internet access and the cost of providing access to guests. The Housekeepers noted that a high proportion of hotel guests regularly complained about the Internet charges and some guests believed that *“Internet access should be provided free of charge”*. Speed of internet access was also criticised, especially by international guests. Other feedback from guests that was mentioned by participants included the non-availability of all SKY channels and small television screens.

4.4.5 Housekeepers views of Guest Amenity Preferences

Housekeepers felt that *“today’s guests had great expectations”* regarding their hotel stay experiences, some of which were *“based on the amenities and features they were able to enjoy in their own homes”*. One Housekeeper said that *“Leisure guests, in particular, had expectations built on what they had read in magazines and seen in movies. They arrived at a hotel with a wonderful vision of what their stay was going to be like”*. The Housekeepers felt that corporate guests, on the other hand, were more likely to be regular hotel guests who were used to the hotel, but they too had expectations of the amenities they should be receiving for the rate they were paying.

A number of Housekeepers indicated that their hotel kept a supply of ‘guest loan items’ that could be temporarily loaned to guests on request. These were items that were not usually required by all guests and included items such as adaptors, baby cots, fans and hypo-allergenic pillows.

4.4.6 Selection, Purchasing and Cost Control of Amenities

Responsibility for purchasing of amenities varied from hotel to hotel. Some Housekeepers reported that they controlled the whole process from selection to purchase to control; others commented that they selected amenities (often in conjunction with Hotel Managers) and controlled amenity usage, but that the purchasing function was dealt with by the Hotel’s Purchasing Officer.

A number of Housekeepers from chain hotels, in particular, commented that there was *“pressure from their Head Office to adhere to certain amenities in order to standardize across the chain which also enabled bulk purchasing economies”*. One Housekeeper argued that *“it was cheaper to buy from within New Zealand especially when the carbon footprint cost was considered”* and indicated that this had been considered as part of their hotel’s Enviro-accreditation. One Housekeeper commented that her hotel had changed from hotel named toiletries to a generic brand as this meant that they could *“purchase in smaller quantities and refresh amenities on a more regular basis”*. In contrast, another Housekeeper reported that her hotel *“continued to have its name on the toiletries as it was considered a good advertising point”*.

The Housekeepers commented that pressure had also been placed upon them by their Hotel General Managers to control amenity costs but were keen to point out that *“no matter what rate is charged to generate occupancy for the hotel, the costs of servicing the rooms remain the same”*. The following verbatim comments were offered:

“I can control my wage and amenity cost but not the (room) rates”

“It costs more to service a \$90 tour room than a \$180 corporate room”

4.5 Front Office Manager Findings

The following section outlines the findings from the Front Office Manager focus group. In order to protect the anonymity of participants from the one five-star hotel, data gathered from this hotel is presented with that of the four-star plus hotel. Six participants took part in the Front Office Manager focus group.

Data gathered from the Front Office Manager participants was primarily intended to support Hypotheses E:

E: Front Office staff workload increases and stress levels are increased by Wellington Hotel guests querying their incidental charges for amenities.

4.5.2 What is an amenity?

For the same reasons given in Section 4.4.1, this question was also asked to the Front Office Manager focus group participants. The Front Office Manager participants were all

of the opinion that an amenity is *“anything that is free and included in the room rate”*. One Front Office Manager added *“any amenity or feature that a guest must pay extra for is an income channel”*. One Front Office Manager stated that she felt that the amenities and features that guests *“did not pay for and did not expect were ‘delight factors’ that added value to their stay”*.

Verbatim comments included:

“It’s the amenities that make this room better than the one down the road – free internet, complimentary newspapers”

“Jogging maps, shoe shine are services that we provide that are amenities to our guests. There are no expectations by guests, its value added”

“Toiletries to me are the key amenity. All ours are hotel branded. It’s something that we have recently refreshed, however we have not experienced an increase in bookings. The problem would be if we stopped {them} or took away. It’s a good reminder that they take home”

4.5.3 Changes in Hotel Amenities and Features over the Last Five Years.

The Front Office Managers agreed with the Executive Housekeepers that there had been changes in the number of, the quality and the range of amenities provided over the last five years. They cited the examples of *“wireless internet which was once a ‘wow factor’ but was now expected”*, and *“slippers, which had originally been provided to satisfy the Japanese guest market, were now expected by guests in some hotels”*.

The Front Office Managers noted that recently some hotels had withdrawn some amenities for example shower caps and shaving sets. One Manager added that their hotel *“ did have limited amenity items for sale at the reception desk but these were only small items for example toothbrush, combs and sanitary items that might have been forgotten by guests”*.

One Front Office Manager reported that their hotel had withdrawn the wrapped biscuits that used to be offered with the tea and coffee in each room, but *“continued to offer a small platter of cookies to regular guests to recognise their loyalty to the hotel”*. This last sentiment echoes that of the Executive Housekeeper who described their withdrawal of biscuits as a cost saving measure, and also confirms the provision of amenities as

recognition of guest loyalty which could provide the hotel with a source of competitive advantage.

4.5.4 Feedback from Guests to Indicate the Value Placed on Amenities and Features Provided.

Whilst not necessarily supporting Hypothesis E (**Front Office staff workload increases and stress levels are increased by Wellington Hotel guests querying their incidental charges for amenities**), the Front Office Managers were also asked if they had received any feedback from guests which indicated how the guests felt about the amenities they received. The researcher wanted to see if the Front Office Managers were able to provide supporting or contrasting information that might be used in discussion regarding the other Hypotheses to be tested, especially if there were any differences between the Hotel Guest responses and what the Front Office Managers said the hotel guests were telling them.

One Front Office Manager commented on their guests' use of hotel named pens that were provided in rooms and to conference attendees. This hotel had calculated that each conference guest took away approximately three pens which the hotel deemed to be a good way to ensure recognition of the hotel's name, brand and contact details for future bookings. They added that *"the hotel had received positive feedback regarding the quality of the pens it provided and the hotel pens continued to be the hotel's biggest sales tool as they contained website information and a 0800 reservations number"*. The Front Office Manager reported that the unit cost per pen was only fifty cents given the quantity they ordered.

Two Front Office Managers reported that their guests did not like Internet charges, particularly the high costs that guests were charged. One Front Office Manager said that their hotel *"had decreased their internet charges, but still received complaints"*. Another participant added that *"some hotels do provide free internet which may encourage guests to complain at hotels where they are charged for internet access"*. This Front Office Manager's hotel continued to provide some free internet access, which was appreciated by guests, but *"due to abuse by some guests this amenity was currently being reconsidered"*.

One Front Office Manager said that they *“continued to receive positive feedback from guests”* regarding the complimentary airport transport service her hotel provided.

4.5.4 Use of Hotel Amenities and Features by Guest Segments

In order to provide further supporting or contrasting data to support the other Hypotheses,

- A. Wellington hotels add more amenities to their hotels and guest rooms to provide a competitive advantage and to help define their brand**
- B. Hotel guests do not wish to pay for amenities in their rooms that they do not use**
- C. Hotel guests expect more amenities the higher the hotel rating and the higher the room rate they are paying**
- D. Housekeeping staff productivity is effected by the level of amenities in guest rooms**

The Front Office Managers were asked about the use hotel amenities and features by certain guest segments. One Front Office Manager reported that leisure guests were more likely *“to use the hotel’s car park as they may have driven to the hotel whereas corporate guests were more likely to use taxis for transport which they might charge to their employers”*.

All participants agreed that the pay movies were watched by all guest segments and were a popular amenity, however some guests *“did complain about the cost of the movies”* but one Front Office manager added that *“generally they (the movies) were priced at a level that enabled the hotel to just recover its costs”*.

The issue of theft of amenities by guests arose and all Front Office Managers reported that their hotels had experienced this. The consensus was that there was no one segment that was more likely to steal hotel amenities. They all agreed that when *“theft was suspected it was not always possible to charge the guest”*, but that where possible they did try and place a charge for the missing item on the guest’s bill.

One Front Office Manager commented that their hotel had previously included a gym facility, but this was removed because *“very few guests actually used it, it did not bring in any extra guests and the hotel had another use for the space”*. However, on closing the gym the hotel did receive some complaints and some guests chose not to return to the hotel. Another participant commented as follows:

“The reality of the usage of the gym is nowhere near the level of enquiry you get. The gym is most requested by least used. School holidays are the exception to this. However it looks inviting and is good on our website. Our pool is outside and freezing but in the summer it does get used”

Another Front Office Manager added:

“We get a lot of requests for in-room massages but have no spa facility. For most hotels it’s a question of space and what it could be otherwise used for”

Another participant offered the following comment regarding guests’ technology expectations:

“We don’t have SKY at the moment. However it is an expectation that we will have SKY, just like the guests do at home”

4.5.5 Extra Charges for Hotel Amenities and Features

One Front Office Manager reported that a lot of international guests at her hotel think that *“breakfast is included in the room rate”*. Another participant said *“that at their hotel a lot of guests assume that car parking and internet are included in the room rate”*. Often guests were heard to say to the reception staff *“I’ve stayed in hotels all over the world and I have never had to pay for...”*. Another Front Office Manger commented that *“some New Zealand guests were unhappy to provide credit card details on check-in and often questioned the necessity for this commenting that they did not intend to incur any extra charges”*

The Front Office Managers commented that responding to guest queries concerning the extra charges, and the time this took did increase the front office workload.

All participants agreed that guests at their hotels often questioned hotel charges at check-out time. Common charges that were challenged included *“parking, phone calls, internet use, drinks (that had been forgotten by the guests) and minibar”*. One Front Office Manager added that *“sometimes the codes used for the different hotel charges caused confusion for guests and reception staff often needed to explain the hotel account to guests”*. Another Front Office Manager indicated that *“some guests, particularly business guests, requested that some charges they had incurred be re-coded”* for

example to show liquor as food, or movies as breakfast, but this was “*not as common now as it had been in previous years*”. One Front Office Manager felt that this was because “*employers were now much clearer at defining which costs their employees were permitted to charge back to the company*”.

One Front Office Manager commented that the process to watch a pay movie at a hotel “*involves a conscious decision and guests are asked to confirm their intentions to watch the movie using the remote console in the hotel room. If there was a problem at time of watching, then most guests would call reception immediately to report the fault and not wait until checking-out of the hotel to try and ‘get away without paying the charge’*”.

Local telephone call charges incurred by New Zealand guests also continued to be challenged as most are used to having free local calls as part of their residential telephone arrangement. However, hotels must pay local call charges as they are a business.

All Front Office Managers reported that their reception staff had clear instructions regarding removing queried charges from guest accounts, and most staff felt empowered to do so. They were all of the opinion that the queried charges and the time spent addressing them with guests added to the Front Office staff workload, but did not necessarily increase stress levels.

4.6 Hotel Guest Findings

Data gathered from the Hotel Guest participants was intended to primarily support Hypotheses B and C:

B: Hotel guests do not wish to pay for amenities in their rooms that they do not use.

C: Hotel guests expect more amenities the higher the hotel rating and the higher the room rate they are paying.

4.6.1 Hotel Guest Participant Analysis

The following tables provide details of Hotel Guest participants and are analysed according to gender, age and income (Table 9.) and gender, reason for stay and number of nights stayed in the last twenty-four months (Table 10.).

Table 9. Guest Participants: Age and Income Analysis.

	Age				Income				
	25-39	40-54	55 +	Total	0-35K	36-49K	50-74K	75K+	Total
Male	1	2	4	7	1	0	3	3	7
Female	3	2	5	10	0	1	5	4	10
Total	4	4	9	17	1	1	8	7	17

Table 10. Guest Participants: Reason and Number of Nights Stayed.

	Reason for stay			Number of nights stayed			
	Business	Leisure	Total	1-2	3-5	6+	Total
Male	4	3	7	0	3	4	7
Female	5	5	10	6	4	0	10
Total	9	8	17	6	7	4	17

4.6.2 Confusion at hotel checkout with regard to charges for hotel amenities and facilities

Hotel guest participants were asked if they had ever experienced confusion while checking out of the hotel regarding charges for hotel amenities and facilities.

A total of five female guests responded that they had experienced confusion with charges at hotel checkout. The following comments were offered by these guests who were asked to give brief reasons for their positive response:

“Understanding the staff discount process”. (It is understood from this response that this guest participant was also an employee of a hotel company).

“Confusion over parking/valet costs”

“For a movie that we did not accept of even book”

“Bar billing – we were over charged”

One guest participant did not provide written comment.

4.6.3 Use of Amenities Usually provided Free

Hotel guest participants were then asked to indicate using a five-point Likert scale their typical usage of hotel amenities (Table 11. - soap, shampoo/conditioner, tea & coffee) and a four-point Likert scale their typical usage of hair dryer, television, gym, swimming pool and free internet access) usually provided by hotels at no extra charge (Table 12.).

Table 11. Usage of Hotel Amenities (no extra charge) by Guest Gender.

		Male Guest	Female Guest
Amenity	Usage rate	N=7	N=10
Soap	Never	0	2
	Often	2	1
	Always	3	3
	Take Home	2	4
Shampoo	Never	0	2
	Sometimes	2	0
	Often	0	1
	Always	2	2
	Take Home	3	5
Tea & coffee	Never	0	1
	Often	1	0
	Always	5	7
	Take Home	1	2

The above table indicates that female participants were more likely ‘to never use’ the soap, shampoo and tea and coffee amenities. Both male and female participants were more likely to “take home” soap and shampoo than they were tea and coffee.

Table 12. Usage of Hotel Amenities (no extra charge) by Guest Gender.

		Male Guest	Female Guest
Amenity	Usage rate	N=7	N=10
Hair Dryer	Never	4	2
	Sometimes	1	1
	Often	1	2
	Always	0	4
Television*	Sometimes	1	0
	Often	1	0
	Always	4	9
Gym	Never	1	3
	Sometimes	4	3
	Often	0	2
	Always	1	0
Swimming Pool **	Never	3	2
	Sometimes	2	5
	Often	1	0
	Always	0	1
Internet*	Never	1	3
	Sometimes	2	3
	Often	2	1
	Always	1	2

* Two participants chose not to answer these questions.

** Three participants chose not to answer this question.

Both male and female guests were more likely to “never” or “sometimes” use a hotel gym and swimming pool.

4.6.4 Use of Amenities Provided with a Charge

Hotel guest participants were then asked to indicate using a four-point Likert scale their typical usage of hotel amenities (internet, pay movies, minibar, car parking, spa facility and business centre) provided by hotels with an extra charge.

Table 13. Usage of Hotel Amenities (with charge) by Guest Gender.

		Male Guest	Female Guest
Amenity	Usage rate	N=7	N=10
Internet	Never	3	5
	Sometimes	3	3
	Often	0	1
	Always	1	1
Pay Movies*	Never	6	9
	Sometimes	1	0
Minibar	Never	4	4
	Sometimes	2	5
	Often	1	1
Car Park	Never	2	2
	Sometimes	2	8
	Often	1	0
	Always	2	0
Spa Facility*	Never	6	2
	Sometimes	0	6
	Often	0	1
	Always	1	0
Business Centre*	Never	5	6
	Sometimes	2	3

*One participant chose not to answer these questions

4.6.5 Guest Amenity Preferences

Participants were then asked to consider the statements listed below and indicate on a five-point Likert scale how they felt about each statement. The table shows responses analysed by gender.

Table14. Guest Amenity Preferences by Gender.

	Strongly Disagree		Somewhat Disagree		Neutral		Somewhat Agree		Strongly Agree	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
When staying in a hotel, I do not wish to pay extra for any amenities & facilities I use (i.e. everything should be included in the room rate).	1	0	2	4	1	2	2	2	1	2
When staying in a hotel, I expect to pay extra charges for the amenities and facilities that I choose to use.	1	1	3	3	1	1	2	4	0	1
When staying in a hotel I would like the option to book a 'no frills' room i.e. a room with limited amenities (no soap, TV, tea/coffee, minibar).	1	3	2	2	2	0	2	5	0	0
When staying in a hotel, if I don't use the 'free' amenities I take them home.	1	4	2	0	1	0	2	2	1	4
I expect to receive more amenities & facilities the higher the hotel's star /Qualmark rating.	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	6	8
I expect to receive more amenities & facilities the higher the room rate (\$\$) that I am paying.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	7	9
I would be prepared to pay a higher room rate to have a customized amenity package (i.e. a combo-type deal that included only those amenities that added value to my stay).	1	0	0	2	2	2	3	5	1	1

The data indicates that the majority of guest participants agree they expect to receive more amenities and facilities the higher the hotel's star or Qualmark rating and the higher the room rate that they are paying.

4.6.6 Participant Preferences

Hotel Guest participants were then asked to list up to four amenities or facilities not currently in hotels or hotel rooms that they felt should be provided without extra charge.

Thirteen guest participants answered this question and listed items which included: Internet access (3), Bottled water (2), hair straighteners (2), Coffee plunger or machine (2), Shaving kit (2), and, the following which were all listed once; - vanity pack to include make-up removal pads, toothpaste, dental floss, range of herbal teas, torch, choice of in-house movies, local calls and bowl of fruit.

The following comments were also written:

I am ok with the variety already available, obviously depending on the hotel rating and each situation.

Flashing emergency lights would be good as I am deaf.

Hotel Guest participants were then asked to list up to four amenities or facilities not currently in hotels or hotel rooms that they felt should be provided and that they would be prepared to pay an extra charge for.

Seven guest participants answered this question and listed items which included: Fast Broadband Internet access (3), fruit bowls (2), snacks or drinks (2), and, the following which were all listed once:-Pillow upgrades, amenity upgrade (better standard of shampoo/conditioner), shaving kit, hair straighteners, take-away amenity packs (like airlines), slippers and use of bathrobe. No further supporting comments were offered.

Finally, Hotel Guest participants were given the opportunity to provide any further comments or details that they felt important. No comments were offered.

5. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

This section includes discussion arising from the key findings of the research and conclusions. Firstly, the discussion is presented from the findings from each of the four participant groups (Hotel Managers, Executive Housekeepers, Front Office Managers and Hotel Guests). This is then followed by conclusions which include evaluations of the hypotheses that were to be tested. Finally, this section highlights areas that have been identified as opportunities for further study and outlines limitations that have impacted on this research project.

5.2 Aims and Objectives of this Research.

As outlined in the Introduction section (Section 1.2), the aims of this research were:-

- To investigate and understand the role that guest amenities play in Wellington hotels by seeking perspectives from hotel guests and hotel management.
- To investigate whether amenity creep exists in Wellington hotels.

Specific objectives were to test the following hypotheses:-

- F. Wellington hotels add more amenities to their hotels and guest rooms to provide a competitive advantage and to help define their brand**
- G. Hotel guests do not wish to pay for amenities in their rooms that they do not use**
- H. Hotel guests expect more amenities the higher the hotel rating and the higher the room rate they are paying**
- I. Housekeeping staff productivity is effected by the level of amenities in guest rooms**
- J. Front Office staff workload increases and stress levels are increased by Wellington hotel guests querying their incidental charges for amenities**

5.3 Hotel Manager Discussion

The invitation to participate and complete the questionnaire was addressed to the Hotel General Manager as all hotels have someone in this role. The General Manager is the

most senior position in a hotel and should have an in depth knowledge of their hotel and its amenities and features.

Participation

As with many businesses, hotel managers are often busy with what might be considered 'pressing matters', a point that may be applicable here as three questionnaires (which were clearly addressed to "The Hotel General Manager") were completed by someone else as indicated by the informed consent statements on which they either gave their job title or just wrote their name. However, it is considered that the integrity of this participant group is not breached as it is believed that where the questionnaire was not filled out by the General Manager; all three participants are employed as Front Office Managers in their hotels and did not participate in the Front Office Manager focus group for this research.

It is also noted that two Hotel General Managers indicated different ratings for their hotels than the ratings indicated on the wotif.com website listing, which was the basis used for the research group selection. These hotels were analysed according to the rating indicated by the Hotel Manager, which, in both cases, were lower than that on the Wotif.com listing. This action of over-representation on the Wotif.com site represents a potential misrepresentation of the hotel product to the guests and can lead to confused positioning for the hotels in the minds of guests (Kotler et al, 2006).

Amenity offering

The tables in Section 4.4.3, (Table 3. Hotel Room Amenities (free and with charge), according to hotel rating; Table 4. Hotel Room Technological Amenities (free and with charge), according to hotel rating; Table 5. Bathroom Amenities (free and with charge), according to hotel rating; and Table 6. General Hotel Amenities (free and with charge), according to hotel rating) confirm that there were a higher number of hotel amenities, both free and with charge, offered in the higher star-rated hotels which concur with the Qualmark criteria (Qualmark, 2008). For example, the Qualmark guidelines for bathroom amenities in a 3 star hotel include:

“A good quality range of well-presented amenities provided including soaps, shampoo/conditioner, tissues, air freshener and so on (minimum three)” (Qualmark, 2008)

Whilst the Qualmark guidelines for bathroom amenities in a 5 star hotel include those of the 3 star hotel and more as follows:

“Expansive range of high quality amenities e.g. bathrobe complimentary slippers, large soap or high quality dispensers if used, perfume, bath crystals, moisturiser, shaving balm and so on (minimum five)” (Qualmark, 2008).

Competitive Advantage and Brand Definition

From the data gathered it is difficult to confirm to what extent the amenities offered by a hotel assist to provide a competitive advantage or help the hotel to define its brand. Seven of the Hotel Managers did indicate that they had either a ‘degree of control’ or ‘complete control’ in the choice of amenities (see Table 7. Control Over Selection of Hotel Amenities and Features) which demonstrates that the opportunity does exist for these Hotel Managers to be able to select amenities that ‘fit’ with the hotel’s brand. This also implies that these seven Hotel Managers have the ability to select amenities that will offer a point of difference for their hotel. Such control over selection could also allow the Managers the option of branding the amenities with the hotel’s name and logo or allow them to select a well-known amenity brand that will appeal to the hotel’s target market (Casado, 2000).

Competitive advantage is an important factor in today’s world (Kotler et al, 2006; Nessler, 2006). With regard to unique amenities that provide a competitive advantage, Managers listed amenities and features such as free car parking, complimentary airport shuttle, or “Molton Brown” toiletries for a boutique hotel. They also indicated those amenities that would not normally be expected by guests according to the hotel’s rating, or were amenities and features not offered by their competitive set hotels such as ‘hush glass’ (which allowed no street noise), leisure centre (pool, spa, sauna and gym) and LCD televisions. Two Hotel Managers failed to respond to this question which may imply that they feel they do not offer any amenities or have features that make their hotel different.

There may well be a place for minimisation of amenities - as opposed to amenity creep - as one Hotel Manager justified their hotel's decision not to offer many amenities by saying that it was this lack of amenities that gave their hotel a competitive advantage. This Hotel Manager stated that their hotel offered "*limited amenities as we are 'EC3 Earth Checked' and do not like too many bottles, wrappers for waste*" This was quite clearly explained via the hotel's Environmental Policy on their website and promoted as a reason why guests should choose to stay at that particular hotel. EC3 Earth Check Global is an environmental accreditation agency offering an environmental and sustainability rating service for accommodation properties throughout the world.

When questioned if customer research was undertaken, fifty per cent of the Hotel Managers confirmed that their hotels did research customers to ascertain if the amenities provided met guests' needs, provided a point of difference for the hotel and represented value to guests. This raises the question that if half the Hotel Manager Participants do not undertake research to ascertain which amenities guests value, then, how do they then decide which amenities to offer? Given the findings in Table 7., (Control Over Selection of Hotel Amenities and Features), four of the Hotel Manager Participants indicated that they received instruction from their Head Office as to which amenities to provide. It is good that Head Office may well be researching customers and making informed amenity choices for their group's hotels, but those choices may not be the best ones for Wellington hotel guests. Verma et al (2002) indicate how important it is for a business to take into consideration its customers' needs and that managers must have a good understanding of how their customers value different product and service attributes.

Retailing of Amenities

The literature talks about the retailing of hotel amenities (Weinstein & Scoviak-Lerner, 2002; Moore, 2010) however, only one Hotel Manager indicated that their hotel retailed amenities and these were typically only personal emergency items that a guest might have forgotten to pack for example, toothbrush, deodorant and shaving items. It is possible that the retailing of amenities is an un-tapped revenue opportunity for the research group hotels and a way to extend and promote their brand (Casado, 2000; Woolf, 2004a). Careful selection of amenities and features that are unique to the hotel

and can be retailed to guests and passers-by, could be made available for sale via a physical or virtual gift shop like that of the 'Wyndham At Home' concept (Weinstein & Scoviak-Lerner, 2002). Some amenities and features e.g. artwork with New Zealand designs or soaps and shampoos using indigenous ingredients, might be particularly attractive to international guests.

5.4 Executive Housekeeper Discussion

The Executive Housekeeper in a hotel plays an important role in the selection of amenities, control of amenity costs and the over-seeing of servicing of guestrooms which includes the replacing of used amenities (Schneider et al, 1998; Casado, 2000; Jones, 2005). The key findings from the Executive Housekeeper focus group are discussed in the following sections.

Attendance

The Executive Housekeeper focus group consisted of eleven participants. Boyce (2005) indicates that a group of this size which consists of specialists in their field may be too large to elicit equal participation from all attendees, however, the prepared discussion guide and list of questions posed assisted the moderator in keeping the discussion focused and allowed all to participate without domination from a couple of vociferous members of the group (Veal, 2006). The eleven participants represented eight different hotels as there were a few hotels represented by both their Executive Housekeeper and Assistant Housekeeper.

Over fifty per cent of participants represented hotels in the 4 star+ & 5 star hotel (Qualmark and self-rated) rating which typically offered a wider range of amenities and features than the lower rated hotels (see Section 4.3.3 Number of Amenities Provided). Ten out of the eleven hotels represented had undertaken a Qualmark inspection, the exception being one hotel in the 4 star+ & 5 star category. The participants representing these Qualmark rated hotels indicated that they had all been involved in the accreditation process due to the fact that general hotel hygiene and cleanliness standards, environmental issues, provision of amenities and servicing standards in guest rooms are all part of the Qualmark inspection criteria (Qualmark, 2008).

Productivity

Productivity, in terms of time to clean rooms – a measurement factor, is a matter that housekeepers need to manage well, a point mirrored by authors such as Kappa et al, (1997) and O'Shannessey et al, (2001). Participants indicated that the time take to service a guest room was between “twenty-five to thirty minutes per room”, but that there were also a number of factors to consider that could result in a shorter or longer average time such as the addition of extra and more elaborate amenities and features and the condition in which the guest had left the room. Furthermore the housekeepers' concerns regarding the health and safety of their room attendants and housekeeping staff (muscle strains and bending and back injuries) echo that of the literature confirming that hotel housekeeping is a physically demanding job (Yancey, 2006; Wolff, 2004b; Cohen, 2006).

It is clear that housekeeping productivity is affected in two ways; firstly by the addition of the extra and more elaborate amenities and features which take extra time to replenish. Also affecting housekeeping productivity was the ability of the room attendant to maintain the required speed of work when suffering from physical fatigue and the strains and sprains gained by working as a room attendant and being exposed to the health risks that the extra and more elaborate amenities and features in the rooms bring to the job.

Minimising Waste and Environmental Issues

As a number of Executive Housekeepers had played a key role in their hotel's Qualmark and Enviro/Green accreditation processes (as described above), they were keenly aware of the need to minimise wastage in their departments. The lack of recycling options for half-used amenities are limited and whilst it is permissible to donate half-used shampoo and shower gel bottles to food banks and night shelters, the reuse of opened bars of soap is not allowed due to health and hygiene regulations. The typical short-stay corporate or weekend leisure guest in a Wellington hotel compounds this problem in the respect that they do not stay sufficient nights to use all of the amenities provided. Also of concern to the Housekeepers was the 'journey' that hotel amenities might have travelled prior to reaching the hotel and guestroom which, for some chain-owned hotels,

was via a head office on the other side of the world after having been manufactured in a different country.

A New Zealand manufacturer, Health Pak, has recently launched a “Naturally New Zealand” range which incorporates the use of native botanical extracts and biodegradable and GE free formulations. The products are offered in recyclable bottles and the soaps 100% vegetable based, which means that the un-used soaps can be converted back to bio-fuels. The “Naturally New Zealand” range of amenities is also offered in full size versions (Accommodation Management Guide, 2010). A hotel that does have a retail outlet or gift shop could promote these for sale to hotel guests that do wish to take home a memory of their hotel stay and of New Zealand.

In spite of positive comments in the literature regarding the use of amenity dispensers as an environmentally- friendly option in hotel bathrooms (Jones, 2005; Accommodation Management Guide, 2009), the Executive Housekeepers did not view the use of dispensers in their hotels as an option as they believed that dispensers “*presented health and safety issues and refilling challenges for staff*”.

Amenity Provision pre and post 2008

The role that the Executive Housekeepers played in amenity selection and cost control, especially since the impacts of the recession (2008) were felt in Wellington hotels, was also clearly understood by the focus group participants. Whilst there was a wide range of amenities offered now in Wellington hotels, there appeared to be more careful consideration of which amenities to offer with some amenities being selected by hotels as adding value for guests (for example internet access) or being withdrawn by hotels due to cost issues. The withdrawal of some existing amenities (e.g. biscuits and plunger coffee) and careful selection of new amenities to better reflect the needs of today’s guests, indicates a move away from the “amenity creep” phenomenon described by a number of authors (Rowe, 1990; Vallen & Vallen, 2009) (see Section 2.3).

Today, Wellington hotels continue to make a number of amenities “available on request” or only available as part of special hotel promotional packages or suite offerings, or for larger, more specialised amenities then as “loan items” for guests to use during their stay. From a marketing perspective the hotel still is able to publicise the ‘wide range’ of

amenities that the hotel offers which can make it an attractive accommodation option to guests (provide differentiation and competitive advantage), but at the same time the hotel is able to better monitor and control the usage of the amenities and features.

5.5 Front Office Manager Discussion

The Front Office of a hotel is an important department of a hotel, as demonstrated by its reference as 'the hub', the 'nerve centre' or the 'face of the hotel' by a number of authors (Ismail, 2002; Gray & Ligouri, 2003; Kasavana & Brooks, 2005; Vallen & Vallen, 2009). In any hotel it provides a focal point for guests throughout their stay, a place to check in on arrival and a place to settle a guest's hotel bill prior to checkout. The Front Office Manager coordinates a team of staff that are trained to deal with a variety of guest encounters and requests, process and monitor the financial transactions for the hotel and leads a team that can provide the level of service, welcome and personal interaction appropriate to the hotel's rating, brand and market orientation (Kasavana & Brooks, 2005). The key findings from the Front Office Manager focus group are discussed in the following sections.

Attendance

The Front Office Manager focus group consisted of six participants. The participation rate was slightly disappointing given the previous indications of a high level of attendance from invitees who had initially replied to confirm their attendance. However, on the evening of the scheduled focus group the bad weather and the problems this caused for Wellington airport meant that hotels received last minute cancellations and extra bookings, so they became unexpectedly busier. This meant that some Front Office Managers had to remain in their hotels to supervise the busy arrival time and therefore missed attending the focus group. There was no opportunity to reschedule this focus group. Boyce (2005) however, suggests that six is an ideal number. The six participants represented four different hotels as two hotels were represented by both their Front Office Manager and Assistant Front Office Manager or Reservations Manager which indicates that some hotels were keen to ensure that their hotel Front Office personnel did participate in the focus group.

Defining Amenities

In order to ensure that all participants were clear in their understanding of a hotel amenity, the participants' ideas and examples of amenities in their hotels were discussed. The Front Office Managers' definition of an amenity was any part of the accommodation offering that was included in the room rate which included any hotel facility that the guest was able to enjoy at no extra cost. This definition concurs with Jones (2005) who agrees that amenities can be elements beyond the actual room. One participant indicated that her hotel included extra "*delight factors*" (*jogging maps and shoe shine*) which were amenities and features that guests "*did not pay for and did not expect, but which added value to their stay*". This implies that this hotel is both attempting to add value for the guest and to provide a point of differentiation and competitive advantage for the hotel at least in the short term. Knowledge of this point of differentiation and advantage was spread by positive word of mouth from satisfied guests as evidenced by Trip Advisor and other hotel website comments. However, it needs to be remembered that this is how amenity creep started, with the 'delight factors' becoming the expectation and then the norm for guests, and then finally any competitive advantage or differentiation lost as other hotels in the competitive set offer very similar amenities (Vallen & Vallen, 2009). It also needs to be remembered that once a hotel has an established level of amenities that guests enjoy, potential guest dissatisfaction will arise when those amenities are changed or withdrawn in response to recessionary impacts, for example the lower room rate achieved and the need to control costs. Ultimately this will affect a hotel's brand and positioning in the minds of guests' and could lead to an increase in the number of queries that Front Office staff receive in regard to amenities and what is included in their room rate.

Retailing of Amenities

One Front Office Manager was of the opinion that any amenity or feature that was used by the guest which incurred a charge for its use was viewed as "*an income channel*" or revenue stream. The concept of charging guests for the use of some hotel amenities and potential issues this presents to a front office, is dealt with in a later section below, however some hotels offer a retail outlet or gift shop for hotel amenities and features

which can also be viewed as a revenue stream as evidenced by the literature (Higgins, 2000; Weinstein & Scoviak-Lerner, 2002).

Two Front Office Manager Participants indicated that their hotels only retailed basic guest emergency items as a result of current guest demand. The main issue regarding a dedicated retail outlet for any hotel was the physical floor space that this would utilize which, for many hotels did not exist. Furthermore, Front Office Managers were aware of the need to maximise a hotel's revenue from its available floor space and one participant indicated that one former hotel gym had been converted back to hotel guest rooms due to the fact that it had not attracted enough guest usage to remain viable "*very few guests actually used it, it did not bring in any extra guests*". It was apparent that the physical locations of the Front Office Managers' hotels - all near to a range of shops - was another reason why a wider range of amenities and any hotel gift shops were not currently offered in Wellington hotels.

Querying of Charges

All Front Office Manager Participants agreed that some guests do query their incidental charges, especially minibar, internet, breakfast, phone calls and parking – all amenities. This differs from those 'surprise resort or service fees' highlighted in the literature (Denver Post, 2001; Parnes, 2003; Juliana, 2010) but generally such charges were 'surprises' to the guests who assumed that they were included in the room rate. The Front Office Managers commented on the procedures that were in place for verifying guest charges (as demonstrated by the process described by one participant for accessing a pay movie -see Section 4.5.5 Extra Charges for Amenities) and outlined the training that front office staff undertook which ensured that the staff had confidence and knowledge in hotel procedures and policies. Both documentary evidence of guest usage of the amenity or facility and the empowerment of staff are tools used in Hotel Front Offices in response to any guest account queries (Baker, Bradley & Huyton (1998). The Front Office Managers were of the opinion that the queried charges and the time spent addressing them with guests added to the Front Office staff workload, but did not necessarily increase stress levels if front office staff had been correctly trained.

5.6 Hotel Guest Discussion

As indicated in the Introduction, as well as seeking feedback from Hotel Management representatives, it was important to seek some input into this research from Hotel Guests as they remain the end users of the hotel's amenities and features. This section discusses the findings from the Hotel Guest Participants and whilst the sample number is low, there are a number of key findings that have relevance for this research, as described in the sections below.

Issues with Charges

Less than a third of the Hotel Guest Participants, (five in total, all of whom were all female), indicated that they had experienced confusion with hotel charges on checking out of a Wellington hotel. The Hotel Guest participants indicated problems with charges for parking, bar, movies which are similar to those indicated by the Front Office Manager Participants. Again these charges are not the 'surprise resort of service fees' indicated by the authors (Denver Post, 2001; Parnes, 2003; Juliana, 2010), but to the guest they were surprises as they were either assumed to be included in the room rate or had been charged in error, for example - *"for a movie that we did not accept or even book"* and *"Bar billing – we were over charged"*.

Guest Amenity Preferences

When asked about their amenity preferences, Hotel Guest Participants gave a mixed response with equal numbers both agreeing and disagreeing with the responses:-

"When staying in a hotel I do not wish to pay extra for any amenities and facilities I use (i.e. everything should be included in the room rate)"

"When staying in a hotel, I expect to pay extra charges for the amenities and facilities that I choose to use"

When staying in a hotel I would like the option to book a 'no frills' room i.e. a room with limited amenities (no soap, TV, tea/coffee, minibar)

The responses to the above statements indicate that some guests still wish to be able to choose those amenities and facilities they use and would rather not pay an 'all inclusive' rate. This maybe a sign of the current recession and a signal that guests are seeking greater value for money. For Hotel Managers this presents a number of issues as

potentially they may need to provide differing accommodation offerings to suit the needs of these groups. On the one hand there is the guest that does want access to all amenities and facilities at one cost and on the other hand there is the guest that wishes to have a 'user-pays' approach towards the amenities and facilities they enjoy as part of their hotel stay. This guest is potentially happy to stay in a room which has few or no amenities, for example a room with only a bed and basic furnishings provided. Some Managers may wish to solve this dilemma by offering a range of hotel accommodation packages which incorporate the use of selected hotel amenities and facilities and at the same time offer a basic 'room only' rate, which is similar to the 'Tune' hotel room concept described by Gordon (2010).

As could be expected, Hotel Guests do expect to receive more amenities and facilities the higher the hotel's star or Qualmark rating and the higher the room rate they are paying. Fifty-eight per cent of Hotel Guest Participants also indicated that they would be prepared to pay a higher room rate to receive a customised amenity package that included those amenities that represented value to them. Potentially this represents a further marketing opportunity for Wellington Hotels and one that might be used to strengthen guest loyalty especially if the guest was able to select from a range of possible amenities to meet the needs of that particular stay (leisure, corporate) for a set room rate. The setting up accommodation packages and administrating and monitoring guest preferences can be facilitated by the use of most Property Management Systems e.g Opera, Fidelio (Vallen & Vallen, 2009). The monitoring of the preferences selected could give Hotel Managers valuable market intelligence and an indication of which amenities do add value for particular guest segments and, whilst this may take some time, if a hotel is able to offer exactly what the guest wants at an agreeable price, then why would the guest choose to stay anywhere else?

Taking Home Amenities

Less than half of the participants indicated that they took home amenities from guest rooms that they had not used whilst staying in the hotel (35% soap, 47% shampoo and 17% tea & coffee). The fact that they are not used but taken home could be interpreted as the guest seeking value for money and not wanting to pay for provided amenities that remain unused during their stay in the hotel. This does provide a marketing opportunity

for a hotel to advertise its brand if the hotel amenities include the hotel logo and are then used or displayed at the guest's home and this is confirmed by Jones (2005) who comments that the addition of a logo makes such items 'more collectable'.

It is also a possibility that the amenities are being taken home by guests because the guests love the products and therefore they may potentially welcome the opportunity to be able to purchase further supplies from a hotel retail outlet for personal use at home or for gifts. This idea is confirmed by the Executive Housekeepers who had witnessed guests asking for further supplies and seen guests "*helping themselves from the housekeeping trolleys*". Whilst this quote from the Executive Housekeepers also implies that theft of amenities is occurring, the actual amenities are still ending up somewhere being used with a logo displayed or with memories of a hotel stay being evoked, thus ensuring that the hotel name and brand remains visible.

What do Guests Expect to Find?

The hotel guests have provided some good examples of amenities they expect to find in hotels and rooms (offered at no extra cost) for example – Internet access, bottled water and hair straighteners; and have offered the Wellington Hotel Managers some excellent suggestions of amenities that they would be prepared to pay extra for, for example – Fast Broadband Internet access, fruit bowls and snacks and drinks (see Section 4.6.6 for further details). These latter suggested amenities (Fast Broadband Internet access, fruit bowls and snacks and drinks) are the ones that could be included as options in an accommodation deal for the individual guest seeking a customised amenity package as these are the ones indicated by guests that they believe should be provided and they are prepared to pay for. Whilst it is appreciated that these amenities are wanted by guests, inclusion of them in the room rate and standard provision of them in all guest rooms at no extra cost to the guest would present issues due to the perishability of food items and the potential abuse of unlimited fast Broadband Internet access. This last amenity, Broadband Internet access, was also confirmed by the Front Office Managers as being an amenity in demand from guests but difficult to control, further evidenced by the comments from one Front Office Manager participant "*due to abuse by some guests this amenity was currently being reconsidered*".

5.7 Conclusions

As outlined in the Introduction Chapter (Section 1.2), the aims of this research were:-

- To investigate and understand the role that guest amenities play in Wellington hotels by seeking perspectives from hotel guests and hotel management.
- To investigate whether amenity creep exists in Wellington hotels.

Specific objectives were to test several hypotheses:-

- A. Wellington hotels add more amenities to their hotels and guest rooms to provide a competitive advantage and to help define their brand.**

This hypothesis remains unproven.

From the data gathered it is difficult to confirm to what extent the amenities offered by a hotel either assist to provide a competitive advantage for a hotel or help the hotel to identify its brand. There is no doubt that opportunities to attain competitive advantage and brand identification can be gained by effective use of amenities as evidenced in the literature reviewed, but currently these opportunities are not being fully exploited by Wellington Hotels.

- B. Hotel guests do not wish to pay for amenities in their rooms that they do not use.**

This hypothesis is proven.

The majority of Hotel Guest Participants have indicated that they would be happy to pay a higher rate to enjoy a customised hotel package which included only those amenities that they valued and wanted to use during their stay.

- C. Hotel guests expect more amenities the higher the hotel rating and the higher the room rate they are paying.**

This hypothesis is proven.

The Hotel Guest Participants agreed that they expected more amenities the higher the hotel rating (ninety-four per cent of participants) and agreed that they expected more amenities the higher the room rate that they are paying (one hundred per cent).

D. Housekeeping staff productivity is affected by the level of amenities in guest rooms.

This hypothesis is proven.

Findings from the Executive Housekeeper Focus Group have indicated that housekeeping staff productivity is affected by the level of amenities in guest rooms. This is evidenced by the extra time that the housekeepers described was required to replenish amenities as part of the servicing process and also the physical injuries suffered by the housekeeping team as a result of the more elaborate amenities which results in a slower speed of work.

E. Front Office staff workload increases and stress levels are increased by Wellington hotel guests querying their incidental charges for amenities.

This hypothesis is partially proven.

Findings from the Front Office Manager Focus Group have indicated that Front Office staff workload does increase as a result of Wellington hotel guests querying their incidental charges for amenities, but that Front Office staff stress levels do not increase due to the confidence that staff have as a result of training and empowerment.

General Conclusions

There appears to be no definitive understanding of the term 'guest amenity'. Authors (Scneider et al, 1998; Casado, 2000; Jones, 2005) present some contrasting opinions which are mirrored by the industry personnel that have taken part in focus groups for this research. The authors and industry personnel question whether a basic guest item e.g. soap is a "guest supply" as this is expected by guests to be in their room. Both the Executive Housekeeper and Front Office Manager Participants also viewed an amenity as something that could be used by the hotel to acknowledge the guest's loyalty or status, and something that would be recognised by the guest as such. In this capacity, the amenity is clearly providing differentiation for the hotel and a competitive advantage as this guest would not be likely to receive such an amenity if they stayed at another hotel (at least in the short term).

The findings from both the Executive Housekeeper and Front Office Manager focus groups agree on the concept of 'amenity creep'. Whilst there was an increase in the number and range of amenities provided in a number of Wellington hotels prior to 2008 in order to remain competitive, this level of amenities described by the focus group participants was well below that depicted in the literature concerning amenity creep (Rowe 1990; Vallen & Vallen, 2009). Since 2008 amenities have been withdrawn as a result of the recession and the need to control hotel costs and, it remains to be seen if, when the demand for Wellington hotel accommodation increases, the hotels start to add a wider range and more amenities to remain competitive.

The use of a hotel's amenities as a marketing tool for the hotel is clear: they can provide differentiation, assist with brand identity and image building and, when implemented as a result of customer research, provide a competitive advantage for a hotel, at least in the short term. It appears that currently, General Managers of Wellington hotels are not optimizing their use of their hotel's amenities to provide these marketing advantages. Whilst the findings from the General Manager Participants indicate that half are undertaking customer research, it is not known whether this research is being conducted at a hotel level or being undertaken on a national basis by the head office; in which case the outcome of decisions arising from the customer research may not be appropriate to the Wellington market. Any intelligence gained by hotels as to what exactly their guests want in their rooms, and that they are happy to pay additional costs for, must represent valuable information to assist hotels in their offering of the right product to the right guest at the right time.

5.8 Opportunities for Further Study

The role of guest amenities in any hotel has not previously been researched. The findings arising from this study have relevance for Wellington hotels and the research methodology could be used to investigate the role of guest amenities in hotels in other cities both within New Zealand and other capital cities.

There are a number of trends arising from the literature review for example, Female guest expectations, retailing of hotel amenities and the need to provide amenities that add value for guests, which present further research or feasibility study opportunities.

5.9 Limitations to this Research and Subsequent Generalisations.

The extent of this study is limited by the number of hotels in Wellington and the access to Hotel Guests. Further limitations have potentially occurred by the numbers attending the two focus groups as the participant numbers were not in proportion to the number of hotels sampled and Focus Group Participants did not necessarily represent the same Qualmark or self-rated categories as those participants in the Hotel Manager group.

Given the above limitations, it is not possible to generalise the findings of this research to other major cities; however, replication of this research, including more emphasis on the hotel guest perspectives would help build the understanding of the use and value of amenities in hotels.

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7. APPENDICES

Appendix A

Wotif.com listing for Wellington Hotels June 20, 2010

Choose accommodation

Advanced Search Options

- Restaurant
 Pool
 Balcony
 Broadband Internet
 In-room Spa
 Kitchen/ette
 Fitness Centre
 24hr front desk
 Satellite Cable TV

North Island, Wellington Central Rates are TAX inclusive, per room, and will be charged in New Zealand Dollars (\$)

		Thu 10 Jun	Fri 11 Jun	Sat 12 Jun	Sun 13 Jun	Mon 14 Jun	Tue 15 Jun	Wed 16 Jun	Thu 17 Jun	Fri 18 Jun	Sat 19 Jun	Sun 20 Jun	Mon 21 Jun	Tue 22 Jun	Wed 23 Jun
<u>Wot Hotel? Mystery deal</u> 	NZ\$--		120	120	120	120			125	120	120	120	120	125	125
<u>Duxton Hotel Wellington</u> 	NZ\$395	165	155	155	155	155	195	195	165	155	155	155	155	165	165
<u>InterContinental Wellington</u> 	NZ\$440	259	229	229	259	259	369			229	229	259	259	259	259
<u>Ohtel</u> 	NZ\$465	229	245	245	245	265	265	265	265	295	295	265	265	265	265
<u>Wot Hotel? Mystery deal</u> 	NZ\$--	125	109	109	109	125			125	109	109	109	125	150	150
<u>Copthorne Hotel Wellington Oriental Bay</u> 	NZ\$355	190			145	145	145	145	145	145	145	145	145	145	145
<u>Holiday Inn Wellington</u> 	NZ\$370	199	169	169	199	199	259	259	179	139	139	179	179	207	207
<u>James Cook Hotel Grand Chancellor</u> 	NZ\$383	169	140	140	140	169	175	175	169	140	140	140	169	175	175
<u>Museum Hotel</u> 	NZ\$394	199	179	175	179		199	199	199	175	175	149	190	199	199
<u>Quality Hotel Wellington</u> 	NZ\$299	186	146	141	132	177	176	177	177	172	147	132	172	164	166
<u>The Wellesley Boutique Hotel</u> 	NZ\$290	199	159	159	159	199	199	199	199	159	159	159	199	199	199
<u>Central City Apartment Hotel</u> 	NZ\$400	129	129	119	119	139	139	139	139	119	115	115	129	129	129
<u>Novotel Wellington</u> 	NZ\$429	179	149	149	169	169	189	189	179	149	149	149	149	149	179
<u>Travelodge Wellington</u> 	NZ\$310	150	100	100	100	150	180	89	89	89	89	89	89	89	89
<u>West Plaza Hotel</u> 	NZ\$208	250	115	110	99	125	130	125	110	105	110	100	105	125	110
<u>Wot Hotel? Mystery deal</u> 	NZ\$--	95	95	95	95	95				95	95	95	95	95	95
	NZ\$400	84	84	84	75	130	130	130	130	140	90	75	90	90	90

<u>Abel Tasman Hotel</u> SELF-SERVED	NZ\$197	99	95	99	95	152	125	130	125	95	95	95	125	135	99	
<u>Bay Plaza Hotel</u>	NZ\$203	135	153	144	115	125	125	153	144		153	105	144		125	
<u>Brentwood Hotel</u>	NZ\$163		100	100	100	110	110	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	
<u>Hotel Willis Lodge</u>	NZ\$399	149	119	129	109	149	129	149	129	89	109	89	109	129	129	
<u>Ibis Wellington</u>	NZ\$225	124	99	99	99	129	149	149	139	99	99	99	114	114	134	
<u>Kingsgate Hotel Wellington</u>	NZ\$339	112	122	102	102	112	122	122	119	92	92	92	101	101	101	
<u>Mercure Wellington</u>	NZ\$315	89	74	74	74	89	107	107	125	98	89	89	89	107	107	
<u>Mercure Wellington Willis Street</u>																
			Thu 10 Jun	Fri 11 Jun	Sat 12 Jun	Sun 13 Jun	Mon 14 Jun	Tue 15 Jun	Wed 16 Jun	Thu 17 Jun	Fri 18 Jun	Sat 19 Jun	Sun 20 Jun	Mon 21 Jun	Tue 22 Jun	Wed 23 Jun
<u>Trinity Hotel</u>	NZ\$200	99	99	99	99	89	89	89	89	89	89	89	89	89	89	
<u>Cambridge Hotel</u>	NZ\$140						61	61	61	99	99	99	70	70	70	
<u>Comfort Hotel Wellington</u>	NZ\$152	106	77	77	77	77	77	77	89	98	77	77	110	77	77	

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Appendix B

Research Pack – Hotel General Manager Participants

Contains: Research Information Sheet

Consent Form

General Manager Questionnaire

Faculty of Commerce

T 64 3 325 3627

F 64 3 325 3847

PO Box 84, Lincoln University

Lincoln 7647, Christchurch

New Zealand

www.lincoln.ac.nz

Research Information Sheet

The Role of Guest Amenities in Wellington Hotels – Perspectives from Guests & Managers

You are invited to participate in a research project called 'The Role of Guest Amenities in Wellington Hotels – Perspectives from Guests and Managers' by completing the following questionnaire.

Amenity Creep has been defined as "the proliferation of all guest products and services when hotels compete by offering more extensive amenities" (Vallen & Vallen, 2009 p 576) and include such items as toiletries, internet access, coffee makers, pools, & parking. The primary objective of this research project is to see how amenity creep has affected Wellington hotels and their guests. Other objectives include identifying to what extent amenities play a role in providing a competitive advantage for a hotel and helping to define a brand; the effect that the level and quality of amenities have on hotel staff, and whether such amenities provide value to a guest.

The questionnaire is anonymous. If you complete the questionnaire it will be understood that you have consented to participate in the project and consent to publication of the results of the project with the understanding that anonymity will be preserved. Once the data is received and analysis started, it cannot be withdrawn. While participation is voluntary, your participation will help to ensure that the response rate is sufficiently high to allow me to draw meaningful conclusions.

This project is being conducted by Clare Jay, a WelTec staff member and a Masters student within the Faculty of Commerce at Lincoln University.

This project has been reviewed and approved by Lincoln University Human Ethics Committee. (Application 2010-22 approval date 20 July 2010)

Contact details for the researcher:

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Please return by 30 September 2010

Contact details for the research supervisor:

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**The Role of Guest Amenities in Wellington hotels – Perspectives from
Guests and Managers**

Consent Form

I have read and understood the attached Research Information Sheet related to this research titled 'The Role of Guest Amenities in Wellington Hotels – Perspectives from Guests and Managers'. On this basis I agree to participate as a subject in this research, and I consent to publication of the results of the research with the understanding that anonymity will be preserved.

Name: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Please note:

This signed page will be detached from the following questionnaire when it is received by the researcher, therefore guaranteeing your responses will be totally anonymous.

Please return with your questionnaire by 30 September 2010

The Role of Guest Amenities in Wellington Hotels – Perspectives from Guests & Managers

Hotel General Manager Survey

Please take a few moments to complete this survey about the amenities and facilities you provide in your hotel. Your responses will help to identify issues around the concept of Amenity Creep in Wellington hotels. You are not asked for identifying details and all data will be presented in aggregate form.

This survey will take about 10 minutes to complete.

Your Hotel

1. Please indicate with a ✓ current rating of your hotel

	Qualmark	Self-rated
3 star		
3 star+		
4 star		
4 star+		
5 star		

2. Please circle the number of guestrooms there are in your hotel

Less than 100 100-129 130-189 190-229 230 and above

3. Please describe the ownership/management arrangement of your hotel (✓)

Chain hotel (property owned & managed by chain)

Franchise hotel

Independently owned/managed

Management contract (property not owned by the management company)

4. Does your hotel offer any of the following? (please circle 'Yes' or 'No')

Club/Executive floor rooms Yes/No

Club floor facility Yes/No

Female only guest rooms Yes/No

'Green' guest programme initiatives Yes/No

If 'Yes' to any of the above, please give brief details

.....

5. Your Hotel Room Amenities/Features

Please think about the standard rooms (most basic of rooms) that your hotel has and the general hotel amenities/features in your hotel. Please place a ✓ in the correct box for those that apply. If your hotel & hotel rooms do not have the amenities described below then please leave blank. If your hotel offers amenities/features not on this list then please add in the spare rows.

Hotel Room Amenity/Feature	✓ Provided Free	✓ Provided with charge
Extra pillows		
Pillow choice/menu		
Superior/branded bed		
Bed linen with high thread count		
Three sheet beds		
Cookies/biscuits		
Selection of herbal teas		
Plunger Coffee		
Espresso machine		
Minibar with beverages		
Minibar with food items		
Minibar with non F&B items		
Iron & ironing board		
Kitchenette/cooking facilities		
In-room safe		
Bible		
Peephole on door		
Security chain on door		
Fresh flowers/plant		
Daily newspaper delivered to room		
Local phone calls		
Magazine selection		
Full length mirror		
Selection of clothes hangers		
Guest information compendium		
Other (please specify)		
Other (please specify)		
Other (please specify)		
Hotel Room Technological Amenity/Feature		
Alarm clock/Wake up call system		
Flat screen /plasma TV		
Television		
SKY channels inc. movies		
In-house movie system		
Broadband Internet access		
Wireless Internet access		
I Pod docking station		
DVD player		
Fitness channel on TV		
Use of TV for hotel information		
Use of TV for hotel checkout		
Voice mail on telephone		

	√ Provided Free	√ Provided with charge
Heating/air-conditioning system		
Fax machine		
Other (please specify)		
Other (please specify)		
Other (please specify)		
Bathroom Amenity/Feature		
Bathrobes		
Slippers		
Vanity sets (cotton buds, comb etc)		
Soap (s)		
Shampoo/conditioner		
Bath/shower gel		
Own brand toiletries		
Generic brand toiletries		
Designer brand toiletries		
Sewing kits		
Toothbrush set		
Shaving set		
Spa bath		
Massage jet/rainforest shower head		
Separate shower from bath		
Hair dryer		
Other (please specify)		
Other (please specify)		
General Hotel Amenities/Facilities		
Swimming Pool		
Sauna		
Spa Pool		
Gym & fitness area		
Hair or Beauty salon (spa facility)		
Parking in hotel car park		
Airport/Ferry pickup & drop off		
Valet parking		
24 hour room rates		
Late checkouts		
Concierge assistance & advice		
Hotel courtesy car & driver		
Frequent Guest/Loyalty Programme		
Other (please specify)		
Other (please specify)		
Other (please specify)		

Survey continues overleaf.....

1. Amenity/ Feature Selection

Please indicate below, on a scale of 1-5 the extent that your hotel management team is allowed to design and select the amenities/features that are offered by your hotel. Please circle the most appropriate box.

1	2	3	4	5
No control. Decision is Head Office driven. Must purchase from head office	Head Office define standards & nominates suitable suppliers	Guidelines given by Head Office but supplier choice rests with hotel	Some Head Office influence re standards but allow for hotel customization	Total control. All decisions are made at hotel level

2. Please identify the three amenities/features that your hotel offers that you believe best provide a competitive advantage for your hotel.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

3. Does your hotel retail any amenities or features to guests and the public e.g. via a hotel gift shop or on-line merchandise site? YES/NO

If YES, then please give further details.....

4. Has your hotel ever undertaken customer research to ascertain if the amenities/features selected by your hotel:- (Please circle the appropriate response)

- a. Meet guests' needs YES/NO
- b. Provide a point of difference for your hotel YES/NO
- c. Represent value to your guests YES/NO

Please provide any details or further comments below

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Please now return to the researcher in the postage paid envelope provided by 30 September 2010.

Appendix C

Research Pack – Hotel Guest Participants

Contains: Research Information Sheet

Consent Form

Hotel Guest Questionnaire

Invitation to Wellington Institute of Technology Staff

Research Information Sheet

The role of Guest Amenities in Wellington Hotels – Perspectives from Guests & Managers

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate I thank you. If you decide not to participate there will be no disadvantage to you of any kind and I thank you for considering this request.

Amenity Creep has been defined as "the proliferation of all guest products and services when hotels compete by offering more extensive amenities" (Vallen & Vallen, 2009 p 576) and include such items as toiletries, internet access, coffee makers, pools, & parking. The primary objective of this research project is to see how amenity creep has affected Wellington hotels and their guests. Other objectives include identifying to what extent amenities play a role in providing a competitive advantage for a hotel and helping to define a brand; the effect that the level and quality of amenities have on hotel staff, and whether such amenities provide value to a guest.

To be eligible to participate you need to have stayed at least one night in a Wellington hotel within the last 24 months. Should you agree to participate you will be asked to complete a short questionnaire which should take you less than 5 minutes to complete. You will need to print out the following consent form and questionnaire, complete both and then return them via the WelTec internal mail to the researcher, Clare Jay, School of Hospitality & Tourism. I am based at the Church Street campus.

The questionnaire is anonymous. If you complete the questionnaire, it will be understood that you have consented to participate in the project and consent to publication of the results of the project with the understanding that anonymity will be preserved. Once the data is received and analysis started, it will not be possible to withdraw your questionnaire because it will contain no identifying information. While participation is voluntary, your participation will help ensure that the response rate is sufficiently high to allow me to draw meaningful conclusions.

You are most welcome to request a copy of the results of the project, please contact me, should you wish. The data collected will be securely stored and I will be the only person with access. At the end of the project any personal information will be destroyed immediately except that any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which it will be destroyed.

If you have any questions about the research either now or in the future please contact the researcher below.

This project is being conducted by Clare Jay, a WelTec staff member and a Masters student within the Faculty of Commerce at Lincoln University. This project has been reviewed and approved by Lincoln University Human Ethics Committee, (Application 2010-22 approval date 20 July 2010). This project has also been reviewed & approved by the Ethics Committee of the Wellington Institute of Technology.

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The Role of Guest Amenities in Wellington hotels – Perspectives from Guests and Managers

Consent Form

I have read and understood the Research Information Sheet related to this research titled 'The Role of Guest Amenities in Wellington hotels – Perspectives from Guests and Managers'. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I know that:

- My participation in the research project is entirely voluntary;
- The questionnaires will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project but any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which they will be destroyed;
- The results of the project may be published and available in the library but every attempt will be made to perseve my anonymity.

I agree to take part in this project.

Name: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Please note:

This signed page will be detached from the following questionnaire when it is received by the researcher, therefore guaranteeing your responses will be totally anonymous.

This project has been reviewed & approved by the Ethics Committee of the
Wellington Institute of Technology

The Role of Guest Amenities in Wellington Hotels – Perspectives from Guests and Managers

Hotel Guest Survey

Please take a few moments to complete this survey about the amenities and facilities you have experienced when staying in Wellington Hotels. Your responses will help to identify issues around the provision of appropriate guest amenities and facilities for Wellington hotels.

This survey will take less than 5 minutes to complete. It is important that you print it out and fill in the hard copy. Once completed, please return to the researcher anonymously via the WelTec internal mail. You are not asked for any identifying details and all data will be presented in aggregate form.

Part A - Your Hotel Stay

1. How many nights have you stayed in a Wellington hotel in the last 24 months? (Please circle the correct response).

1-2 3-5 6 or more

2. What were the main reasons for your stays? (Please circle all relevant responses).

Business Leisure Other (please specify).....

3. Have you ever experienced confusion while checking out regarding charges for hotel amenities & facilities? YES/NO

If YES please give more details (When? Where? How frequently? What about?).....

Part B – The Use of Amenities

The next few questions concern the amenities, features and facilities in a hotel.

Some of the amenities provided by a hotel are in the guest room and included in the room rate. Other amenities can incur charges or are only provided in a certain standard of room or hotel package deal.

Please indicate your use of these following amenities – usually provided free: (please tick)

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always	Take Home
Soaps/shower gel					
Shampoo/Conditioner					
Tea/Coffee					
Hair Dryer					n/a
Television					n/a
Gym/fitness centre					n/a
Swimming pool					n/a
Internet access					n/a

Please indicate your use of these following amenities – usually provided at a cost: (please tick)

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
Internet Access				
Pay Movies				
Mini Bar				
Car Parking				
Spa facility				
Business Centre				

Part C – Your Amenity Preferences

Please read the statements below and indicate with a tick in the box, the response that best represents how you feel about that statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
When staying in a hotel, I do not wish to pay extra for any amenities & facilities I use (i.e. everything should be included in the room rate).					
When staying in a hotel, I expect to pay extra charges for the amenities and facilities that I choose to use.					
When staying in a hotel I would like the option to book a 'no frills' room i.e. a room with limited amenities (no soap, TV, tea/coffee, minibar).					
When staying in a hotel, if I don't use the 'free' amenities I take them home.					
I expect to receive more amenities & facilities the higher the hotel's star /Qualmark rating.					
I expect to receive more amenities & facilities the higher the room rate (\$\$) that I am paying.					
I would be prepared to pay a higher room rate to have a customized amenity package (i.e. a combo-type deal that included only those amenities that added value to my stay).					

Part D – Which Amenities do you Prefer?

Please list below any amenities not currently in hotel rooms that you feel should be provided and not charged for.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Please list below any amenities not currently in hotel rooms that you feel should be provided and charged for.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Finally - Questions about You. (Please circle the most appropriate response.)

Are you:	Male	Female		
Age:	24 & under	25-39	40-54	55 & over
Do you earn: (Gross)	\$35K & under	\$36K-\$49K	\$50K-\$74K	\$75K & over

Is there anything else regarding hotel amenities and facilities you would like to add?

.....

.....

.....

Thank you for taking time to complete this survey. Please now return to the researcher, Clare Jay, School of Hospitality & Tourism via the WelTec internal mail.

Clare F Jay

From: ITServices Helpdesk
Sent: Wednesday, 19 January 2011 9:07 a.m.
To: Clare F Jay
Subject: FW: Attn Jo: Piece for WelTec Intranet
Attachments: Hotelguest info pack.pdf
Categories: to do

From: Clare F Jay
Sent: Friday, 3 September 2010 11:01 a.m.
To: ITServices Helpdesk
Subject: Attn Jo: Piece for WelTec Intranet

Hi Jo

I would like the following call for volunteers to help in my research to be placed in the WelTec staff Intranet. I have permission from Julia Hennessey.

Volunteer Hotel Guests Required!

Sadly I am not paying for you to stay in a hotel, BUT **If you have stayed overnight in a Wellington hotel** (for whatever reason) within the last 2 years then I would like to hear from you!

By completing a short survey about the guest room amenities and hotel facilities you enjoyed/disliked during your stay, you will be assisting me with my Masters Dissertation research.

You will need to download the attached PDF file, print it out, read it, fill it out and return to me both the consent form and the survey via the WelTec internal mail. Due to the need to protect anonymity, I am unable to use surveys that may be returned via email and all survey answers will remain confidential.

If you have any questions regarding participation please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you in anticipation – Clare Jay, School of Hospitality & Tourism x 228



Appendix D

Research Pack – Executive Housekeeper Focus Group Participants

Contains: Research Information Sheet

Consent Form

Executive Housekeeper Focus Group Discussion Question list.

Faculty of Commerce

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F 64 3 325 3847

PO Box 84, Lincoln University

Lincoln 7647, Christchurch

New Zealand

www.lincoln.ac.nz

Research Information Sheet

The Role of Guest Amenities in Wellington Hotels – Perspectives from Guests & Managers

You are invited to participate in a research project called 'The Role of Guest Amenities in Wellington Hotels – Perspectives from Guests & Managers' by participating in a focus group.

Amenity Creep has been defined as "the proliferation of all guest products and services when hotels compete by offering more extensive amenities" (Vallen & Vallen, 2009 p 576) and include such items as toiletries, internet access, coffee makers, pools, & parking. The primary objective of this research project is to see how amenity creep has affected Wellington hotels and their guests. Other objectives include identifying to what extent amenities play a role in providing a competitive advantage for a hotel and helping to define a brand; the effect that the level and quality of amenities have on hotel staff, and whether such amenities provide value to a guest.

If you participate in this focus group you are assured that your comments will not be recorded by name, rather by 'a participant'. Data provided during this focus group cannot be withdrawn at a later stage. Please make only those comments that you are prepared to have recorded. While participation is voluntary, your participation in the focus group will help to ensure that I can draw meaningful conclusions.

This project is being conducted by Clare Jay, a WelTec staff member and Masters student within the Faculty of Commerce at Lincoln University.

This project has been reviewed and approved by Lincoln University Human Ethics Committee.

Contact details for the researcher:

Clare Jay MIH, PG Dip Commerce, BHM

Programme Leader –

Tourism & Hospitality Management

School of Hospitality & Tourism

Wellington Institute of Technology

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Lower Hutt 5045

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Contact details for the research supervisor:

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Senior Lecturer - Business and Hotel Management

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Lincoln 7647, Christchurch

New Zealand

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To be put on Lincoln University letterhead paper

The Role of Guest Amenities in Wellington Hotels – Perspectives from Guests & Managers

Consent Form

I have read and understood the attached Research Information Sheet related to this research titled 'The Role of Guest Amenities in Wellington Hotels – Perspectives from Guests & Managers'. On this basis I agree to participate as a subject in this research, and I consent to publication of the results of the project with the understanding that anonymity will be preserved. I understand that while my comments may be recorded, my name or that of my hotel will not be; I will be identified only as 'a participant'.

Name: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Please note:

This signed page will be detached from the following focus group questions prior to participants participating in the focus group.

Questions for the Executive Housekeepers Focus group:

1. What do you consider to be an amenity?
2. Have these amenities/features changed over the last 5 years? If so, what are these changes?
 - a. If there have been changes, has this required extra time to be added to or deducted from the optimal servicing time (minutes per room allowed)?
3. How is your housekeeping department's productivity measured?
4. If by minutes per room, how many minutes do you allocate per room?
5. If by rooms allocated to an attendant, how many rooms do you allocate per attendant?
6. If any extra amenities/features have been added, has this resulted in the need for extra training of housekeeping staff?
7. Are there any issues resulting from amenities/features in your hotel rooms that concern housekeeping staff?
8. Can you describe any feedback from guests e.g. from comment cards or in person, which indicates the value placed on amenities/features provided by your hotel?
9. Are there any differences in values indicated between corporate/leisure guests?
10. At your hotel, who is responsible for purchasing amenities and their cost control?
11. Do participants have any other points related to in-room amenities or general hotel amenities they would like to add?

Appendix E

Research Pack – Front Office Manager Focus Group Participants

Contains: Research Information Sheet

Consent Form

Front Office Manager Focus Group Discussion Question list.

Faculty of Commerce

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New Zealand

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Research Information Sheet

The Role of Guest Amenities in Wellington Hotels – Perspectives from Guests & Managers

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If you participate in this focus group you are assured that your comments will not be recorded by name, rather by 'a participant'. Data provided during this focus group cannot be withdrawn at a later stage. Please make only those comments that you are prepared to have recorded. While participation is voluntary, your participation in the focus group will help to ensure I can draw meaningful conclusions.

This project is being conducted by Clare Jay, a WelTec staff member and Masters student within the Faculty of Commerce at Lincoln University.

This project has been reviewed and approved by Lincoln University Human Ethics Committee.

Contact details for the researcher:

Clare Jay MIH, PG Dip Commerce, BHM

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Contact details for the research supervisor:

**Anthony Brien PhD, MSc Hospitality Mgmt,
DipTchg. MIoD, FloH**

Senior Lecturer - Business and Hotel Management

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To be put on Lincoln University letterhead paper

The Role of Guest Amenities in Wellington Hotels – Perspectives from Guests and Managers

Consent Form

I have read and understood the attached Research Information Sheet related to this research titled 'The Role of Guest Amenities in Wellington Hotels – Perspectives from Guests & Managers'. On this basis I agree to participate as a subject in this research, and I consent to publication of the results of the research with the understanding that anonymity will be preserved. I understand that while my comments may be recorded my name or that of my hotel will be not; I will be identified only as 'a participant'.

Name: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Please note:

This signed page will be detached from the following focus group questions prior to participants participating in the focus group.

Questions for the Front Office Managers Focus Group:

1. What do you consider to be an amenity?
2. Have these amenities/features changed over the last 5 years? (Increase/Decrease, different kinds). If so, what have been the changes
3. Please describe any feedback from guests which indicates the value placed on amenities/features provided by your hotel?
 - a. If such feedback exists, are there any differences in values indicated between corporate/leisure guests?
4. Are there any differences in the use of amenities/features between corporate and leisure guests? If so, what are the differences?
5. Do guests give you feedback about how they feel about paying extra charges for amenities/features?
6. Have guests ever challenged extra amenity charges on their bills at checkout time (or later)
 - a. If so, what are the charges that they commonly challenge?
 - b. If so, what actions do staff take when charges are challenged?
7. Do participants have any other points related to in-room or general hotel amenities they would like to add?