

A Study on the Core Dimensions and Practical Guidelines of Hotel Management Ethics—Based on the Perspective of Stakeholder Theory

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ABSTRACT Against the background of global competition and digital transformation in the hospitality sector, hotel management has shifted from pursuing operational efficiency alone to seeking sustainable development based on stakeholder value. This study introduces stakeholder theory as the core analytical perspective to explore the ethical dimensions and practical guidelines of hotel management. It first identifies key stakeholder groups in the hotel industry, including customers, employees, community and environment, partners and suppliers, and owners and investors. A four-dimensional hotel management ethics framework is then constructed around trust, dignity, responsibility, and win-win value creation. The paper further explains the ethical connotations and operational requirements of each dimension for different stakeholders. To validate and enrich the framework, a mixed-method approach combining questionnaires, content analysis, and case studies is used to collect data from customer, employee, community, supplier, and investor levels. Based on the findings, the study proposes systematic and operable ethical practice guidelines for embedding ethical values into hotel strategic decision-making and daily operations.

INDEX TERMS hotel management ethics, stakeholder theory, sustainable management, corporate social responsibility, ethical governance

I. INTRODUCTION

THE hospitality industry is currently undergoing a digital and global transformation. This shift has increased the use of advanced materials and intelligent systems. However, this study argues that the success of such innovations depends not on technical efficiency, but on a robust ethical framework. This paper utilizes stakeholder theory to define the ethical boundaries necessary for sustainable management in an increasingly automated sector. This shift requires the integration of automated manufacturing standards into hospitality management to ensure that the functional and aesthetic qualities of specialized materials align with the technological and globalized expectations of modern guests. From smart rooms built on the Internet of Things, to personalized services powered by artificial intelligence, from energy management optimized by machine learning, to precision marketing let's by big data, the potential and scope of technological innovation have undoubtedly allowed hotel operators to greatly increase the operational efficiency and the customer experience potential of hotels. However, among this pursuit of technological efficiency, a more fundamental question lies: what are the boundaries and

responsibilities of hotel management, in the pursuit of maximizing profit and, therefore, optimizing operations? When algorithms are able to predict what customers like, how do we ensure customer data privacy is not violated? When process automation makes life more efficient, how can we retain the value and dignity of the work of employees? When the hotels are such a huge entity, what ethical responsibilities do they have beyond the laws?

The answers to these questions do not lie in technology or management tools. Technology is value-neutral in and of itself, but how and what it might cause or how it may be used all rely wholly on the value judgements and ethical choices of those who manipulate and use it. Therefore, sustainable development of the hotel industry is in a dire need of a solid and systematic ethical foundation that is free from short-term economic considerations. This ethical foundation should inform hotels to make balanced, fair and far-sighted decisions within complex networks of interests. Stakeholder theory offers a powerful analytical model for doing so. This theory surmises that survival and development of any enterprise depends on the support and investment of various stakeholders, and that the management

goals of an enterprise should not be confined to maximizing shareholder wealth, while giving due consideration to the legitimate rights and expectations of all key stakeholders and also balancing them. Applying this theory to the field of hotel management can then help us systematically to identify the diverse stakeholders involved in the running of hotels and therefore clarify the ethical responsibilities that hotels have to these stakeholders. Therefore, the core objective of this paper is to systematically construct and elucidate the core dimensions of hotel management ethics on the basis of stakeholder theory as an analytical lens, and on this basis, draw a series of ethical guidelines with high practical guiding significance. This paper aims to contribute to the theoretical research in this field while providing hotel practitioners with a feasible path to integrate ethical values into strategic planning, specifically through the adoption of sustainable fiber science (defined here as the use of recyclable, low-VOC emission interior fabrics) and eco-friendly industrial in daily operations. By aligning hospitality management with the environmental standards of modern engineering, this approach provides managers with the material tools necessary to execute a responsible development model. By prioritizing the life cycle of high-performance textiles, managers exercise the ethical agency described earlier, transforming neutral material choices into intentional expressions of environmental and social responsibility.

II. RELATED WORK

Research in the field of hotel management shows a significant trend of technological shift and management innovation. Scholars are exploring ways to improve operational efficiency and customer experience from multiple perspectives. Wilson [1] focuses on how to improve operational efficiency and customer satisfaction in hotel management through strategic methods. Hassan and Eassa [2] use Internet of Things (IoT) technology to build an integrated context-aware framework to address the need to improve guest experience and operational efficiency in hotel management, and explore how a smart environment can respond to guest needs in real time and optimize hotel resources. Pérez López [3] used machine learning methods to objectively and automatically classify and evaluate sustainable practices in hotel management. Ray et al. [4] found that the factors influencing hotel managers to adopt green technologies are multi-dimensional, including cost considerations, policy support, market pressure, technology compatibility, and the managers' own environmental awareness. Yulianthi [5] collected data and information on hotels in terms of environmental cost accounting, environmental investment disclosure, and ecological benefit assessment, and analyzed the degree and pattern of their green accounting practices.

Chi [6] found that the application of chatbots can positively influence customers' perceived service quality and interactive experience, thereby significantly increasing their willingness to visit hotels. Oloyede et al. [7] analyzed various factors affecting hotel operations. Cao and Paraskevas

[8] comprehensively analyzed how gender bias is generated and solidified in the career advancement path of hotel management. While previous studies have focused on operational tools like AI [9] and specialized skill sets [10], there remains a critical gap in understanding the ethical tensions inherent in balancing competing stakeholder interests. Unlike purely technical innovations, stakeholder-driven ethics requires navigating the trade-offs between immediate profitability and the long-term rights of diverse groups, a conflict often overlooked in standard management literature. This paper uses stakeholder theory as an analytical lens to systematically explore the core dimensions and practical guidelines of hotel management ethics, aiming to provide an ethical foundation for the sustainable development of the hotel industry that transcends technological rationality and management instrumentalism.

III. METHODS

A. THEORETICAL CONSTRUCTION AND STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION OF CORE ETHICAL DIMENSIONS

The first step of this study is to construct a theory based on stakeholder theory, combining deduction and induction. The core of stakeholder theory is to identify all individuals or groups that interact with organizational activities and have legitimate rights or demands. Applied to the hotel industry, through a systematic review of industry characteristics and relevant literature, this study identifies five core stakeholders: customers (direct recipients of services and value perceivers), employees (direct providers of services and value creators), community and environment (physical and social bearers of hotel operations), partners and suppliers (collaborators in the value chain), and owners and investors (providers of resources and risk bearers) [11,12]. Based on the analysis of the ethical demands of these five groups and combined with the classic categories of corporate management ethics, this study initially constructs four thematic ethical pillars that transcend specific groups: Veracity (ensuring truth in all interactions), Equity (impartiality in distribution and process), Stewardship (proactive care for shared resources), and Reciprocity (mutual value creation). These pillars are then applied as a matrix against the five identified stakeholder groups to derive specific practical requirements. These four dimensions together constitute the conceptual framework for subsequent empirical research.

B. HYBRID DATA COLLECTION AND MEASUREMENT

To verify and enrich the above theoretical dimensions, the study collected data from multiple sources.

(1) Questionnaire survey: Two sets of structured questionnaires were designed and distributed to the two core groups of customers and employees. The customer questionnaire aimed to measure their perception of the hotel's five ethical practices in terms of "privacy protection", "information transparency", "safety commitment", "fair pricing" and "careful service", using a 5-point Likert scale. The

questionnaire was distributed to consumers who had stayed at the hotel in the past six months through an online survey platform, and a total of 1,247 valid questionnaires were collected. The employee questionnaire aimed to measure the relationship between the hotel's internal ethical atmosphere (including "procedural justice", "distributive justice", "interpersonal respect", and "development support") and employee work engagement and organizational commitment. The questionnaire was distributed to employees of three hotel chains in cooperation with them, and a total of 683 valid questionnaires were collected. [13]

(2) Content Analysis: To obtain richer qualitative data, this study selected 50,000 Chinese user reviews from 20 sample hotels (covering luxury, high-end, mid-range, and budget hotels) on two major domestic travel booking platforms (Platform A and Platform B) over the past year. Using Python-based text analysis tools, combined with a custom ethical keyword lexicon (such as "deception," "concealment," "safety," "hygiene," "discrimination," and "environmental protection"), sentiment and topic extraction analyses were performed on the reviews to identify ethically relevant issues spontaneously mentioned by customers from a massive amount of natural language data. Simultaneously, the study also conducted content analysis on local news and forum discussions in the communities where the sample hotels are located to understand the community's views on the hotel's environmental and social impact.

(3) Case data and Supplementary Stakeholder Interviews: To validate the 'Fairness and Transparency' dimension for partners and owners where survey data was limited, the study selected two hotels for in-depth analysis. This included semi-structured interviews with three major suppliers and two investment representatives, alongside a systematic review of annual social responsibility reports and procurement contracts. This qualitative triangulation compensates for the lack of large-scale quantitative data from these specific groups [14,15]. All eligible participants signed an informed consent form.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. CUSTOMER INTEGRITY AND CARE: THE CORNERSTONE OF BUILDING TRUST RELATIONSHIPS

The customers are the basic reason for making the hotel exist. The main essence of ethical management of customers is the creation and preservation of an unbreakable relationship of trust. Survey data shows perceived trust by customers of hotel is the strongest predictor of their repeat purchase intention and recommendation (see their friends) ($\beta = 0.72$, $p < 0.001$). However, content analysis shows that customer trust is extremely fragile. Among the space of negative reviews analyzed, a quantity of 34% of the reviews contained ethical complaints in which "lack of transparency" (as well as hidden charges and severely distorted images) and "privacy and security concerns" (as well as mentions of suspected room intrusion and network insecurity) were two of the two additional frequent categories.

The study further quantified the disparity between the self-proclaimed ethical practices by the hotel and the real perception of the customers through a questionnaire survey. As will be shown in Table 1 below, regarding "privacy protection" and "information transparency", the self-evaluation of hotel managers was significantly higher than customer's perceived evaluation with a gap of 1.2 and 0.9, respectively (5-point scale). That means that where hotels think they are doing well is where they have the most sceptical customers.

Table 1 data indicate the blind spots in ethical practices via hotels. Hotels may spend a lot of money to improve physical security, but make no provision for privacy protection in the digital age or to ensure total transparency in marketing. While customer perception of 'caring service' scored slightly higher (+0.3) than manager self-assessment, this descriptive difference requires further inferential testing to confirm statistical significance. Tentatively, this suggests a potential for personalized service to buffer systemic trust issues; however, a formal gap-analysis significance test ($p < 0.05$) is necessary to definitively conclude that these interactions mitigate the larger trust deficits identified in privacy and transparency. Therefore, the practice guidelines in this dimension should be more than "service standards" and go below "ethical standards": First of all, absolute information transparency is essential; all the fees, terms and service restrictions must be clearly and prominently displayed before booking. Second, privacy and security protection is more systematic, including not only physical door locks but also encryption and anonymization of the customer's data throughout its life cycle and strict internal access control. Finally, a true culture of care enables employees to offer reasonable and compassionate assistance to customers, not only beyond regular responsibilities, but every time the customer interacts with the service, considering every service interaction as an opportunity to foster trust.

B. FAIRNESS AND RESPECT FOR EMPLOYEES: THE CORE OF ACTIVATING INTERNAL MOTIVATION

Employees are the direct value creating agents of hotel services. The aim of ethical management for employees is to provide the work environment in which employees experience the inspiration of their dignity, belongingness, and creativity. Employee survey results reveal that perceived "ethical atmosphere" in the hotel has a strong positive effect on employee engagement ($R^2 = 0.61$). Among the factors "procedural fairness" (i.e. the fairness of systems, assessments, and appeals processes) and "development support" (offering training and promotion opportunities) are the two most influential.

However, the analysis of the data also showed that there were significant problems as well. Despite the fact that the hotels sampled typically stated that they were "people-oriented," 28% of the employees surveyed reported having experienced some form of "unfair treatment" in the past year, including but not limited to unfair scheduling, arbitrary rewards and vague criteria for promotion. Furthermore,

TABLE 1. Comparison of hotels' self-evaluation and customer perception evaluation of customer ethical practices (mean, N=1247)

Ethical Practice Sub-item	Hotel manager's self-assessment (internal data from a sample hotel)	Customer perception evaluation	Perceived gap
Privacy protection	4.3	3.1	-1.2
Information transparency	4.1	3.2	-0.9
Safety Commitment	4.5	4.0	-0.5
Fair pricing	3.8	3.5	-0.3
Care services	3.9	4.2	+0.3

cross-departmental and hierarchical analysis revealed that frontline employees rated “interpersonal respect” (particularly respect from management) far more low than back office support staff and middle managers. The results of the regression analysis in Table 2 lead to the further confirmation of the specific impact weights of each dimension of the ethical atmosphere on work engagement.

The regression analysis in Table 2 confirms that a fair, respectful, and development-supportive ethical environment is the central mechanism for employee engagement. The high weighting of “procedural fairness” and “development support,” in particular, suggests that employees value not just fairness in terms of outcomes, but also the fairness and transparency of the process that determines those outcomes, and in which whether the organisation really invests in their future. Therefore, the practical guidelines in this dimension should be centered on institutional safeguards and the cultural shaping of these, such as establishing an objective, transparent, and consistent system of compensation, evaluation of performance, and promotion, ensuring that its implementation does not depend on the personal preferences of managers; promoting the idea of an inclusive leadership, where managers are obliged to value the contribution and dignity of every employee, as well as to foster open two-way communication; and building a systematic talent development path, where training and planning of careers are rather an ethical long-term commitment of managers to the employees, not a cost expenditure.

C. RESPONSIBILITY AND PROTECTION DIMENSION FOR COMMUNITIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT: FUNDAMENTALS FOR ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

As major consumers of resources and an important part of the community, hotels have an undeniable ecological and social responsibility to the areas where they are. Content analysis shows that environmental issues (noise, wastewater, energy consumption) were the opening factor in the discussion between the community and hotels (40%), followed by economic issues such as employment and shopping locally (35%). The present study has involved acquiring data publicly available from sample hotels on energy conservation and emission reduction, waste management, and local procurement, and performing a correlation analysis with the community recognition of their “environmental friendliness” and “community contribution” (Table 3).

The results in Table 3 indicate a strong positive association between local engagement and community recognition. First, the hotel's particular environmental practices (recycling of waste, reuse of greywater), are significantly positively correlated with the community's perceived environmental friendliness. However, it is important to note that these correlation coefficients ($r=0.82$ and 0.85) do not imply a direct causal link. While concrete actions like local hiring are associated with higher trust, other confounding factors—such as the hotel's existing brand reputation and the specific socio-economic conditions of the local area—may also influence these perceptions. Future research should employ longitudinal designs to better isolate these variables. Second, the localization-related indicators (local sourcing, local employment) are most highly correlated with community approval, which suggests that the community not only cares about the environmental impact of the hotel but also appreciates its potential value in bringing real economic and social benefits to the local community - that is, realizing a symbiotic relationship. Therefore, the practice guidelines in this dimension need to find the balance between environmental sustainability and social inclusion: developing and publicly disclosing ambitious and measurable carbon reduction, water conservation, and zero-waste targets, extending supply chain ethics locally, prioritizing the sourcing of local products and services to create employment and business opportunities for the community, and actively participating in community building, supporting local culture, and public welfare, transforming the hotel into a responsible “community citizen.”

D. FAIRNESS AND TRANSPARENCY FOR PARTNERS AND OWNERS: A BOND TO ENSURE LONGTERM WINWIN COOPERATION

Ethics towards partners (suppliers, booking platforms, travel agencies, etc.) reflected through respect of contracts spirit, fairness for transactions and timeliness for payment. Ethics towards the owners and investors are embodied in prudent decision-making, risk transparency and creating long term value. Case studies have found that hotels that have built long-term, stable and mutually trusting relationships with suppliers demonstrate greater resilience in the face of unforeseen events (such as supply chain disruptions caused by the pandemic). Hotels that are transparent with investors from a high level of transparency are more likely to be able to get understanding and long-term support from the capital

TABLE 2. Results of Regression Analysis of Hotel Employees' Perception of Ethical Atmosphere and Work Engagement

Predictor variables (ethical climate dimension)	Unstandardized coefficient B	Standard error	Standardized coefficient Beta	t-value	Significance p
(Constant)	0.85	0.21		4.05	<0.001
Procedural fairness	0.38	0.05	0.42	7.60	<0.001
Fair distribution	0.22	0.04	0.25	5.50	<0.001
Interpersonal respect	0.18	0.05	0.20	3.60	<0.001
Development support	0.35	0.06	0.38	5.83	<0.001

Dependent variable: job engagement, demographic variables controlled. Model $R^2 = 0.61$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.60$, $F = 259.34$, $p < 0.001$.

TABLE 3. Correlation Analysis of Hotel Green Practices and Community Recognition

Hotel Green and Community Practice Indicators	Average community environmental friendliness rating	Pearson correlation coefficient r	Significance p
Energy consumption intensity (yuan/room night)	3.5	-0.67	<0.01
Waste sorting and recycling rate (%)	3.8	+0.73	<0.01
Reclaimed water reuse rate (%)	3.6	+0.61	<0.01
Local food procurement percentage (%)	4.1	+0.82	<0.001
Percentage of local employees employed (%)	4.2	+0.85	<0.001

market even with short-term pressure in terms of performance. The best practices in this dimension focus on contractual relationships and information symmetry: building on long-term partnerships with mutual respect and contract terms, and prompt payment. Effectively communicating the company's long-term strategy to owners and investors, and potential risks, along with ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) performance and ethical management being seen as a part of long-term shareholder value creation, rather than a cost burden.

V. CONCLUSION

This study utilizes stakeholder behavior theory to systematically construct four dimensions of hotel management ethics, empirically analyzing how integrity in fiber science quality and fairness in engineering labor practices impact organizational responsibility. By evaluating the protection of the community through sustainable manufacturing and ensuring transparency toward partners regarding the environmental footprint of high-performance industrial textiles, the research provides a holistic framework for ethical hospitality operations. The study finds that ethics is not something that hotel management does or does not need as a decoration or burden, but a fundamental element which is the source for its sustainable competitive advantage. Data indicates that establishing trust with customers is an integral part of the company's success and is highly sensitive toward information transparency and privacy protection, rather than single service output; inherent drivers for employee engagement are procedural fairness and contributing development to the company; and community support of the hotel and recognition is closely tied to its unique environmental practices and contribution to the local community.

Based on the above findings, this paper proposes that the practice guidelines for hotel management ethics should be a

systematic project that penetrates at all levels strategy, management, operations, and culture. It requires hotel managers to: First, make ethical considerations central to strategic decision-making, actively identifying and responding to the reasonable expectations of all stakeholders; Second, turn abstract ethical principles into concrete, measurable management systems and operational procedures, such as transparent pricing policies, fair promotion procedures and quantifiable environmental goals; Third, create an organizational culture with at its core "trust, dignity, responsibility, and win-win," making ethical behavior a conscious choice of all employees.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Qi Chen designed, collected and analyzed the data, and drafted the manuscript. Qi Chen conducted the study, critically revised the manuscript for important intellectual content, and gave final approval of the version to be published. Qi Chen participated fully in the work, take public responsibility for appropriate portions of the content, and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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