

CONCIERGE SERVICES

Introduction

Overseas visitors often approach the concierge for transport or tourist services while local guests may approach them for parking spaces within the hotel compound. The concierge operation is an area of concern because there are many loopholes that could be exploited for a corrupt purpose. For example, compromised staff could assign parking spaces to hotel visitors in return for a bribe; or accept advantages from tourist agents, transportation companies or restaurants for recommending their services to overseas visitors; or refer to colluding taxi-drivers those visitors who request for long haul journeys, e.g. from the hotel to the airport.

This chapter recommends possible measures that could help the hotel management to reduce the risk of abuse in concierge operation.

Allocation of Parking Spaces

The number of parking spaces for guests in hotels usually falls short of the demand. To prevent abuse in the allocation of parking spaces, the following safeguards are recommended:

- The hotel should make known to guests its **parking policy** (e.g. any parking fees to be charged or waived for guests patronizing its restaurants), availability of vacant parking spaces and the scale of parking fees.
- If parking spaces are allocated **on a first-come-first-served basis**, the priority order of guests should be properly recorded and made available for checking by managers.
- For hotels with a large number of parking spaces to manage, a **computer system** with audit trail function could be used to generate parking tickets and record details such as the date/time of ticket issue, payment of fees, vehicle's registration number, etc.

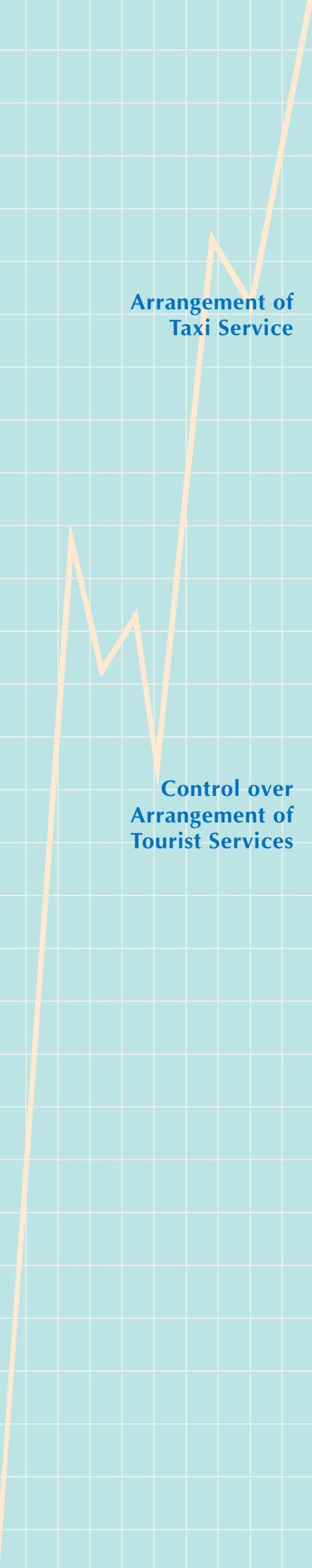
Handling of Complimentary Parking

To reduce the risk of misuse of the complimentary parking labels or unauthorized waiver of parking fees, the following safeguards are recommended:

- The **policy and criteria** for offer of complimentary parking to guests should be laid down and made known to the staff concerned.
- Complimentary parking labels should be **serially numbered** for control purpose and the stock of labels should be recorded (e.g. the number of labels issued and replenished). The stock should be subject to random checks by a designated supervisory staff member.
- Each complimentary parking label issued should be supported by proper **documentation**, such as records of date of issue and authorization.
- **A list of persons and their vehicles' registration numbers** eligible for the complimentary parking should be updated periodically and kept at the carpark or concierge. The parking labels should be marked with the vehicle registration numbers of the vehicles concerned.
- The **waiver of parking fees** on a particular occasion or for a specific purpose should be approved by a staff member of the appropriate rank.
- Supervisory staff should be assigned to regularly **patrol** the carpark or parking spaces in the hotel to detect any unauthorized parking.

Payment of Parking Fees

In handling cash received for parking, hotels should ensure that **proper accounting practices** are in place, such as safekeeping and recording of cash received, and reconciliation of cash collection against the parking tickets issued.



Arrangement of Taxi Service

The following measures are recommended to deter and detect malpractice in the arrangement of taxi service for hotel visitors:

- Hotels should have **a policy** stipulating that taxi-drivers should queue up **for assignment of guests on a first-come-first-served basis** as far as practicable. The policy should be made known to the hotel bellboys/attendants and taxi drivers (one possible way is through the trade association).
- Supervisory staff should conduct **surprise checks** at the taxi-stand area to detect any malpractice.
- Where practicable, the guests/drivers' **waiting area** should be so **designed** as to minimize queue jumping by taxis.

Control over Arrangement of Tourist Services

Tourist services arranged by hotels for visitors usually refer to bookings for sightseeing tours, escort services, and coach services. Sometimes, visitors may also ask the hotel staff to recommend places for dining. The staff at the concierge may accept advantages, without the permission of the hotel, from travel agencies, transportation companies or restaurants in return for referrals of business.

The following measures are recommended to minimize the risk of abuse and corruption:

- Where practicable, the hotel management should **shortlist a number of reliable and reputable travel agencies or transportation companies** to whom they could refer visitors.
- The staff at the concierge should be required to make **referrals** to the listed travel agencies/transportation companies **on a fair-share basis** (e.g. by rotation) as far as practicable. Any deviation from the policy should be justified, recorded, and subject to supervisory checks.

- The hotel could consider drawing up **a *shortlist of recommended restaurants*** for reference by guests on request.
- The shortlists of travel agencies, transportation companies and recommended restaurants should be subject to ***regular updating***.