

Nobody Asked Me, But.... No. 12
Portman, Women Homeowners, Minimum Wage, Tipping,
Brooklyn Bridge, Chinese Tourism, Impact Studies

By Stanley Turkel, MHS, ISHC

1. Did you see the article, “The Kubla Khan of Hotels” about the wonderful architect/developer John Portman ([New York Times Travel Section 6/25/06](#))? Starting in 1967 with the opening of the new 800 room Hyatt Regency in Atlanta, Portman introduced the world’s first modern atrium hotel offering an exciting alternative to dull, ordinary and customary lobbies. In the 1970’s and 80’s, Mr. Portman’s designs including the Westin Bonaventure in Los Angeles, the Marriott Marquis in New York, the Hyatt Regency in San Francisco and the Renaissance Center in Detroit created “knock your socks off” spaces that dazzled visitors and guests. Portman recalled that when he designed and built the what became the Hyatt Regency in Atlanta, none of the large hotel companies would put their name on it – not Hilton, Marriott, Sheraton or Loews. It remained for the Pritzker family, who had recently purchased a small chain of airport motels, Hyatt Houses, to have the foresight to put their name on the pioneering Portman hotel.

2. The National Association of Realtors reported that “Last year single women became homeowners at more than twice the rate of single men and made up 21 percent of all buyers.”

Here are two other intriguing facts reported by [This Old House](#) magazine:

- According to the Census Bureau, of the 4.3 million Americans ages 25 to 34 who are living at home with their parents, some 63 percent are men
- About 85 percent of women are, have been or will be solely responsible for a house within their lifetime

Despite the gains in homeownership, the United States ranks only an abysmal 17th worldwide among the best places for women, according to the World Economic Forum. No. 1 is Sweden which is the most advanced country for women, with greater levels of equality, power and well-being than anywhere else.

Rounding out the top 10 places for women based on their health, financial and gender-quality practices were, in order: Norway, (by law, all company boards must be at least 40 percent

women), Iceland, Denmark (women have the highest employment rate in the world and smallest gender wage gap), Finland, New Zealand, Canada, Britain, Germany and Australia.

3. Am I the only one who sees a disconnect between the new emphasis on hotel customer service and the stubborn unwillingness of many hotel owners to support an increase in the federal minimum wage of \$5.15 an hour. It has not been increased in nearly a decade and, at its current low level, flies in the face of Americans' belief that those who work hard and play by the rules will be rewarded. In a recent poll, the nonpartisan Pew Research Center found that 83 percent of Americans favor increasing the minimum wage by \$2 per hour.

Just 23 percent of Americans approve of the job Congress is doing, according to a recent New York Times/CBS News poll. These dismal ratings are no surprise when Congress's highest economic priority is handing out tax cuts to millionaires and oil companies, and its one point of fiscal restraint is protecting employers from having to pay a decent wage to hotel employees, factory workers and waiters. During the past nine years, Congress has raised its own pay by \$31,600.

4. And, a related question: If tipping is part of travel, what about the housekeeping room attendant? An experienced business traveler always makes sure to have a bunch of singles on hand to take care of the parking valet, the bellhop, the doorman and the cabby. But, the maid? Perhaps because they are mostly unseen, working in the room when the guest is out, hotel maids are mostly overlooked by many hotel guests.

As all of us know, the revolution in hotel bedding has added duvets, half a dozen pillows and three 300 thread count sheets making the maid's job even tougher. Some frequent travelers

recommend that \$3 to \$5 per day should be left on the pillow with a note that clearly indicates what it is: “For the room attendant, Thanks.”

5. Did you know that when the Covington and Cincinnati Bridge opened in 1866, it was the longest suspension bridge in the world and the first to utilize both vertical suspenders and diagonal stays fanning from either tower? New York’s Brooklyn Bridge (also designed by John Roebling) surpassed the Cincinnati bridge in length and in almost every other statistical category in 1883.

The Brooklyn Bridge is the only place on earth that an airplane could fly over a pedestrian who was walking over a car that was driving over a boat that was sailing over a train. (The subway runs under the East River).

6. Last month, I wrote about the growing number of Chinese tourists traveling outside their country but there’s also a huge increase in travel to and within China as well. In the next 10 years, China will become the largest in-bound travel destination in the world. There will be 180 million trips in China and tourism from America and Europe will be huge.

The figures behind China’s car boom are stunning:

- Chinese are registering 4000 cars a day
- Total miles of highway: 23,000 or more than double what existed in 2001, second only to the United States
- Number of passenger cars on the road: about 6 million in 2000 and about 20 million today
- Car sales are up 54% in the first three months of 2006

- Beijing's sulphur-dioxide levels in 2004 were more than double New York's
- By 2030, the International Energy Agency predicts that China will be importing as much oil as the United States.

7. The study of impact by a new hotel franchise on an existing franchise is an art not a science. The conclusions of impact studies are, therefore, subjective. Although impact studies are based primarily on a series of interviews and the review of historical data, the conclusion is essentially the judgment of a single consultant. Therefore, it matters a lot which consultant you select to do the job when your franchise company notifies you that new hotel franchise application has been received in your market area. Franchisors usually have a list of authorized impact study consultants who conduct these studies. Almost always, they are members of the International Society of Hospitality Consultants, whose code of ethics is very strong.

Nevertheless, franchisees should interview several approved consultants about their experience, knowledge of your market area, other studies performed for which franchisees, list of prior clients, sample reports, methodology used, etc.

If you need help in making this selection, please contact me.

Stanley Turkel operates his hotel consulting office as a sole practitioner specializing in franchising issues, asset management and litigation support services. Turkel's clients are hotel owners and franchisees, investors and lending institutions. Turkel serves on the Board of Advisors and lectures at the NYU Tisch Center for Hospitality, Tourism and Sports Management. He is a member of the prestigious International Society of Hospitality Consultants. His provocative articles on various hotel subjects have been published in the Cornell Quarterly, Lodging Hospitality, Hotel Interactive, Hotel & Motel Management, Lodging, FIU Hospitality Review, AAHOA Lodging Business, Bottomline, New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Travel & Leisure, etc. If you need help with a franchising problem such as encroachment/impact, termination/liquidated damages or litigation support, don't hesitate to call 917-628-8549 or email stanturkel@aol.com.