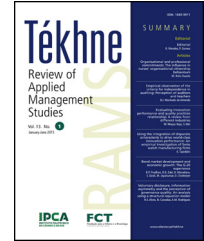




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ARTICLE

# Hospitality experience: Creating value by the front-desk work analysis and organizational innovation

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## KEYWORDS

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Work analysis;  
Front-office operational management

**Abstract** Hospitality is a growing sector in the service field and it sustains a representative position in the tourism productive chain. Rio de Janeiro's hospitality market expects to expand itself with the creation of 6.160 new ones until 2016. That intensifies the need to improve services in order to keep competitiveness. Ergonomics is a science focused on both well-being and performance improvement. This research aims to identify how organizational ergonomics can help creating value on hospitality services. A literature review is the first step, followed by a field research. The Ergonomics Work Analysis (EWA) methodology was applied on a hotel front desk, located in Copacabana, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The preliminary results showed how Human Resources Management and Operational Management works separately, causing difficulties to service quality management. We propose then that Ergonomics might bridge this gap, supporting organizational innovations so as to help increasing system performance and customer satisfaction.

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## 1. Introduction

Lodging is a specific kind of service that integrates the profit chain of tourism. Its importance sustains a representative role on tourism strategic management. In Brazil, this sector represented the biggest expectation of growth from 2013

to 2014, approximately 7.2% (Mtur, 2014)<sup>1</sup> among others on tourism.

The greatest expectation of investment in Brazilian hospitality national sector was projected for 2014. With the new entering hotels, gradually the expectation of investment was reduced for 2015 and 2016. However, despite the

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<sup>1</sup> Mtur: Ministério do Turismo. Translation: Tourism Ministry of Brazilian government.

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reduction, the forecast for new hotel enterprises is significant. Besides, hospitality is characterized by its capacity to create jobs including many different qualification levels, and that is the main reason this research is relevant.

The hospitality sector in the city of Rio de Janeiro is in its expansion phase, based on the expectation generated around the World Cup – 2014 and the Olympic Games – 2016. According to the survey conducted by BSH Travel Research (2013) 70.531 new habitational units will be launched from 2013 until 2016 promoting a new offer context. It also shows that the forecast of new hotels openings totalizes 422 new projects from 2013 to 2016, and 33.892 new job positions in national economy.

Faced with the increased competition in the market, due to new entry and innovation on hosting solutions, the emerging need for training and professionalization on organizational systems in hospitality is seen, in order to optimize their performance and improve the delivered service. This need becomes a condition to generate sustainable competitive advantage, especially for independent hotel management. It is needed to seek organizational innovations for their survival in the competitive market.

However, despite the relevance of the hotel for the service sector, this is a relatively unexplored field of study. In Brazil there are few studies that seek to understand the human resources relevance and use Ergonomics to the pursuit quality on hospitality services. Considering the success of Ergonomics to other service sectors based on relationships, such as telemarketing, this work aims to show how this discipline can be an important tool for operational and strategic management in hospitality, by analyzing the preliminary results on a case of study in Rio de Janeiro.

## 2. Hospitality service management and operation

Reception, telephony and governance are considered by Castelli (2003) as Basic Management Units (BMUs) that consist of the accommodation subsystem, as represented in Fig. 1.

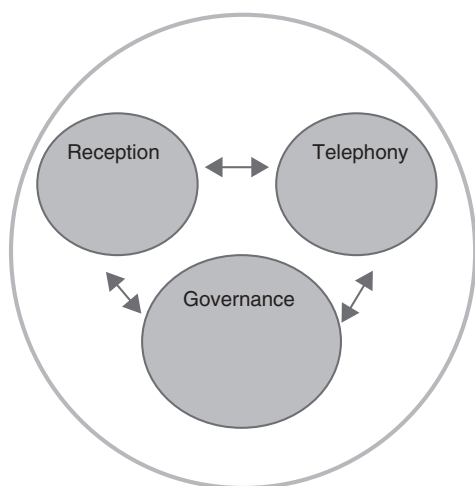


Figure 1 Accommodation subsystem.

Source: Castelli (2003), p. 79.

The author emphasizes the interrelations between subsystems, and therefore the importance of communication between them for the fulfillment of individual units' goals as well as the company's. They are on a larger context connected to administrative and food and beverage subsystems, integrating the hotel system.

Thus, the quality of processes is directly related to the quality of service delivered. Petrocchi (2002) points out some functions in hotels that are relevant for this study, like technical functions (such as reception, governance and reserves) and administrative functions (such as planning, human resources and operational controls). These functions integration represent the capacity to provide service effectively. Petrocchi (2002) shows the distribution of responsibilities between jobs positions. The author points out that management functions like planning, organization, execution and controlling are distributed in many positions and so there is a need to a fluent communication between them, reaching out guest satisfaction.

The subsystem of accommodation is defined by Petrocchi (2002) as the central activity of the hotel enterprise. Its basic tasks may vary according to the hotel size. The reception is responsible for, according to Oliveira and Spena (2012), receiving and registering guests (check-in) from the reservation information. Moreover, it is also responsible for closing accounts (check-out) when guests are leaving and giving the guest all the information they need during their stay. In larger hotels, other parts are involved with guest relations, such as concierge and guest relations.

The reception tasks (Davies, 2010; Oliveira & Spena, 2012; Petrocchi, 2002) include: registration, care and control of in and out guests flow (check-in/check-out); registration of passengers without reservation (walk-in); Control and guest reception box; Night reports; Control of safes; Apartment's key control; Receipt and delivery of mail; Receipt and delivery of messages and others activities related to guest welcome and comfort, among others.

The reception deals with most of the critical moments, which will determine guest satisfaction or dissatisfaction. According to Rutherford and O'Fallon (2007) the front line associate (as the authors call employees) may be the most important person in the hotel, because s/he serves the customers. Furthermore, the supervisor or manager functions involve supporting the front line in order to remove the barriers for a good job and leading people to do their jobs better.

## 3. Human dimension on quality management and Ergonomics contribution

Total quality management in service field is an approach dedicated to improve the good of delivered service continuously, considering the participation of all organization levels (Taveira, James, Karsh, & Sainfort, 2003). Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) believe that quality has a set of dimensions to be considered for their evaluation when it comes to service management and they can vary from one kind of service to another. These dimensions are tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, competence, courtesy, communication, credibility, security, among others. Besides, according to Khairizam, Azmi and Ahmat (2013) service

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